



**Advancing Peace Building Programs to Counter Violent Extremism Messaging in Sidi  
Moumen District, Morocco**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy: Public Administration – Peace Studies  
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## DECLARATION

### **Advancing Peace Building Programs to Counter Violent Extremism Messaging in Sidi Moumen District, Morocco**

I declare that the thesis herewith submitted for the PhD: Public Management-Peace Studies at the Durban University of Technology has not been previously submitted for a degree at any other University worldwide.

.....  


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I hereby approve the final submission of the following thesis.

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14/03/2023

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I would like to take advantage of this space to celebrate all those people and places that have sustained me throughout this research process, a process that I would say it is, in equal parts, as lonely and brittle as it is generous, a reunion, a place of dialogue and, above all, learning from the outside in and in the opposite direction.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my grandmother

– to whom I promised to dedicate

this dissertation before she left this world.

## ABSTRACT

Digital platforms and communication tools have transformed the way we seek information and interact with others. Extremist groups are effectively using media to spread their ideas, propagate hate, and mobilize youth. This research examines the role of new media in countering violent extremism, preventing youth radicalization and fashioning political and religious discourse throughout the implementation of the “Youth Leaders for Peace” project. Youth from marginalized urban areas of Casablanca in Morocco were engaged in a participatory action research utilizing the power of new media and technology to build peace, deliver impactful messages, and influence positive change in both online and offline spaces. They worked with civil society organizations to identify, engage, and explore issues critical to the effective use of new media to enhance youth participation in political and civic life in their community. Activities were designed and implemented to encourage marginalized urban youth to participate constructively in countering violent extremism using dialogues about the principles and mechanisms of democracy, civic engagement, political participation, peaceful coexistence, and constructive conflict resolution.

**Key words:** social media, youth participation, peace, conflict transformation, political socialization, violent extremism, civic education

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ADB	African Development Bank
ANAPEC	National Agency for Promotion of Employment and Competencies
AVE	Against Violent Extremism Network
CR	Conflict Resolution
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CTED	UN Counter-Terrorism Committee
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DAD	DerbGhalef Association for Development
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FTFs	Foreign Terrorist Fighters
F20	The February 20 Movement
HCP	High Commission for Planning of Morocco
HCP	Le Haut Commissariat au Plan
INDH	The National Initiative for Human Development
KII	Key Information Interview
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
ONDH	Northern Observatory for Human Rights
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PWD	Person with Disabilities
YC	Youth Council
UNODC	The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
YWD	Youth with Disabilities
WDB	World Development Bank

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# **CHAPTER 1:**

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Since 2001, the world has entered a new period in history, the war against international terrorism. Over the past 20 years, countries have developed both common and unique strategies to combat and prevent extremism. For the region of North Africa and the Sahel, this topic remains relevant even in 2021, since it is in Africa that the number of countries and regions is growing where Islamist jihadist groups are gaining momentum and the risk of new terrorist attacks increases. Despite the fact that the ISIS "caliphate" was destroyed in Iraq and Syria, the group continues to expand through branches in the Sahel, West and Central Africa, destabilizing the situation on the continent as a whole (Counter Extremism Project 2020). Prior to the 2003 Casablanca bombings, which went down in history as the "Moroccan September 11," Islamist jihadism was not perceived as a serious challenge to the kingdom's authorities or a challenge to their legitimacy. On Friday night, May 16, suicide bombers slit the throats of the guards before entering the facilities and blowing themselves up. Five explosions targeted places frequented by tourists. In addition to the 12 attackers, at least 30 residents were killed and nearly 100 injured. The terrorist attack was later attributed to a splinter al-Qaeda group operating in Morocco. The deadliest attack in the country's history has shaken Morocco's long-standing belief that the country is protected from violent extremism and challenged the kingdom's claim to be the model of moderate Islam. Subsequent terrorist attacks in 2007 and 2011 increased fears about strengthening the positions of radicals in the country. In a speech in the summer of 2014, ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi singled out Morocco as a potential target for terrorist attacks, prompting fears about the possibility of further attacks (Zherlitsya 2020). The last high-profile terrorist attack took place in Morocco in December 2018, when two Scandinavian tourists were beheaded in the Atlas Mountains (Berrada *et al.* 2019). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC 2021) describes continued concerns and possible interventions to identify the problem and develop possible solutions. But apart from the internal danger, Islamist radicalism jeopardizes Morocco's image in the outside world: the participation of Moroccan citizens in the bombings in Madrid in March 2004 and young Moroccan jihadists joining ISIS in Syria, and then in Libya, raise new concerns. The number of Moroccans who joined ISIS in Syria and Iraq between 2013 and 2017 amounted to 1,664; in Libya, as of January 2018, the number reached 300 (Counter Extremism Project 2020). This ongoing war raises an important policy question for countries

in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). How have the states of the region and, in particular, Morocco, responded to the challenge? What role do youth play in this process? This study focusses on analysing the aspects of Youth, Media and Peacebuilding. The study discusses the Moroccan approach to security by drawing attention to youth, their challenges and the impact of violent extremism and extremist rhetoric on their everyday lives through media. In the last decade, studies on youth participation have acquired great relevance in the field of social sciences. This study also highlights the emergence of different social movements at the international level, which position youth practices, their forms of expression and social participation as unique to this generation, where the use of media platforms is impacting these youth movements. The study also focusses on aspects that can be useful in preventing youth radicalisation.

## **1.1 Background to the study**

Radicalisation is referred to as the gradual social process that converts into extremism. It is often applied to youth to explain the changes in their behaviour and ideas. Furthermore, it was observed that differences exist between the behavioural and cognitive dimensions of the radicalisation. Behavioural radicalisation is analysed to have a strong engagement with extremist activities. Radicalisation took place in Moroccan youth as a result of cultural and professional marginalization, stigmatization, latent and active racism, Islamophobia, and even generational conflicts. Media platforms play a major role in highlighting the negative image of Moroccan youth in Europe. The February 20th movement of 2011, which was inspired by the Arab Spring protests throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, was the largest manifestation in recent Moroccan history of primarily young, middle-class Moroccans who wanted to effect positive change in their communities (Fakim 2014). This phenomenon was driven by the high youth unemployment rate, the desire for more political accountability and representation, and youth's disillusion vis-à-vis the Moroccan government due to the disparity between the vision of recent government reforms and the reality of the status quo they were living.

Though Morocco has invested heavily in expanding access to education to accomplish the second Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of providing universal primary education, investment has focused on achieving high enrolment rates rather than on increasing the quality of education (Subrahmanyam 2011). As a result, Morocco has high dropout rates, and students are not internationally or regionally competitive and are not receiving the skills or training required to enter the labour market. According to a MacroTrends report (2022), the literacy rate in 2018 was 73.75. Furthermore, in a recent report of the Social, Economic and Environment Council (CESE) it was noted that “[t]wo-thirds of young people between the ages of 15-34 are out of school, 20% are unemployed, 50% are on low pay, 82% are not physically active, 75% have no social security coverage, and 20% suffer from



psychological disorders” (2018:28). The issue now is that both educated and uneducated youth aged between 15-34 years old lack access to decent work with benefits, regular pay, and some job security. This economic malaise is leading to a sense of exclusion from public life and the country’s political scene, as evidenced by the low voter participation of this group. There are multiple factors that lead to youth radicalisation. This might include economic aspects such as poverty, discrimination and policies that lead to a behavioural change among the youth of Morocco. Socio-economic factors might also lead to radicalisation such as unemployment, nepotism, corruption and lack of opportunities for youths’ self-realization, while there are deficiencies in the political structures, such as inability of government to handle the issues of youth. The political aspects are an external factor for radicalisation. The actual influence of civilians in democratic states is small and political events generally occur outside the scope of individual power.

Since 1998, Morocco has served as a regional leader in progressive reforms and participatory democracy. Significant benchmarks in the reform process include the National Initiative for Human Development of 2005, the Decentralization Law of 2008, the local elections of 2009, and the 2011 constitutional reform, which came as a response to the February 20th protests. Despite these reforms, many challenges in realizing greater socio-political inclusion of youth still remain as “Morocco scores ‘weakly’ on the Africa Integrity Indicators for its performance on elections” (WDB 2018:221). Ongoing reforms are driven by the capital and progress is often slow. A lack of tangible dividends from these promising reforms feeds into grievances at the community level. Slow progress, coupled with the absence of communication between most local elected officials and the communities that voted for them, is eroding citizens’ trust in government institutions, discouraging them from active civic engagement, and depressing voter turnout. The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs states that Moroccan youth feel particularly isolated from structures of local government. According to the findings from the World Bank’s 2018 report on youth participation and opportunities in the Maghreb, over 50% of young people in Morocco think that their elected officials do not adequately represent them and 70% of youth do not trust politicians. This situation has resulted in youth being more interested in non-traditional and diverse political participation types than before. New media have changed the political involvement of citizens (Norris 2003; Sloam 2007).

According to the CIA World Fact Book (2015), Morocco has a young population, with a median age of 28.5, approximately 44% of the population is below the age of 25, and 17.5% of the population falls into the 15-24 youth cohort. These changing demographics, commonly called youth bulges, contribute to the high rates of youth unemployment in Morocco. According to a recent economic brief by the African Development Bank (ADB), if a growing young population is harnessed properly with sound policies that provide quality education and create high value-added jobs, then youth bulges can provide

developing countries with the opportunity for rapid economic growth and contribute to reducing poverty. Failure to create decent jobs for young people, however, will lead to a variety of societal problems, such as structural youth unemployment, increased informality of the economy, and a greater potential for social and political instability (Fakim 2014). Urdal (2011) states that these socio-economic problems associated with a young population leave youth more vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist organizations. Extremist recruitment and radicalisation pose a significant challenge to Moroccan national security as well as the regional stability of the Maghreb. Over 1,500 Moroccans have gone to fight in Syria and hundreds more have joined Daesh's expanding outpost in Libya (Masbah 2015), making Morocco one of the world's largest contributors of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) (Alja 2016). In early 2016, Daesh launched an extensive propaganda initiative that included videos of Moroccan FTFs, articles, online posters, and Twitter campaigns directed at Morocco and the broader Maghreb. This is illustrative of Daesh's sophisticated communications strategy, which is both coordinated across multiple platforms and targeted to specific communities and populations (2016). Daesh's targeted, multi-platform approach to communication is very effective, and many Moroccans, including current and former prison detainees, are deeply affected by this messaging.

Morocco has launched a counterterrorism program similar to the strategies of other states in the MENA region, including anti-terrorism legislation, anti-money laundering measures, cooperation with foreign partners, and de-radicalisation and rehabilitation campaigns. Morocco enacted its first anti-terrorism legislation in May 2003, 10 days after the coordinated suicide bombings in Casablanca. This law was updated in 2014, amended to provide for imprisonment of 5 to 15 years and fines of up to 500,000 Moroccan dirhams (49,000 USD) for any Moroccan who joins or attempts to join any type of non-state armed organization, whether inside or outside Morocco. This provides a legal basis for the prosecution of extremists. In addition, a new preventive security mechanism, Hadar (Vigilance), was created, which provides for the deployment of armed elements of the Royal Armed Forces, gendarmerie, and police and auxiliary forces in key strategic locations such as airports, train stations, administrative buildings and some tourist areas. In 2015, Morocco announced the formation of the Central Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCIJ) a highly professional unit often referred to as the Moroccan FBI. The bureau is designed to counter terrorism, arms smuggling and kidnapping. In the context of the fight against terrorism, Morocco is also investing in strengthening its intelligence and special services. In the years following the terrorist attacks, the monarchy also carried out a reform of immigration policy and the Family Code, which gave more rights to women (Rybalkina 2020). Moroccan de-radicalisation programs are designed to help prisoners reintegrate into Moroccan society after release. They provide educational opportunities in prison and work with Moroccan employers to find employment opportunities for prisoners after release. Prison de-radicalisation programs are implemented by the

Ministry of Endowment and Islamic Affairs, under the supervision of members of local and regional Ulema councils. In 2016, the Moroccan General Directorate of Prisons announced a prison modernization program with 36 new prisons and launched the Musalaha (Reconciliation) program to de-radicalize and reintegrate jihadists. This program was designed for both jihadists returning from hot spots and convicted terrorists who have never left the country. It was created by the General Administration of Prisons, the Ulema Council and the Moroccan Human Rights Council. The program is designed to run for 4 months and is a combination of lectures and seminars focused on psychological counseling, theological teachings and reintegration into society. Enrolment in the program is on a voluntary basis and participants successfully passed it. The mentors who implement the program undergo special training: in the first year, there were 47 trainees. In 2018, the number of volunteers was approximately 300 prisoners in prisons in four cities: Casablanca, Tangier, Tiflet and Meknes (Berrada et al. 2019).

The uniqueness of the Moroccan approach to the fight against terrorism, in comparison with other Muslim countries, lies in the special relationship with the country's religious institutions. A year after the Casablanca bombings, the authorities began a complete overhaul of religious policy. This had started in the 1990s, and the accelerated reform of the religious sphere in 2004 is a key element of Morocco's approach to countering extremism and radicalisation. The strategic position of the kingdom's authorities is aimed at preserving moderate Islam in Morocco, carried out through an updated interpretation of cultural and religious traditions. One of the most significant components of Moroccan political and religious system is the figure of "Amir al-Muminin" (Commander of the Faithful), a title held by the Moroccan king. The Alawite dynasty is believed to be descended from the Prophet Muhammad. The figure of the Commander of the Faithful makes Morocco a unique country: no other modern head of a Muslim state has the right to such a high title. The new 2011 Constitution, initiated by the Arab Spring protests, further strengthened the symbolic role of the monarch and reinforced his dominance in the religious sector. King Mohammed VI is the country's highest religious leader, not only symbolically, but also structurally. A national strategy, implemented under his leadership since 2004, aims to further institutionalize the widespread adherence to the Maliki school in Islamic law within the framework of Sunnism: a direction of Muslim theology which offers flexibility in reconciling religious practice with the modern world and the traditions of Sufism, which are supported by religious associations and structures that help Moroccans deepen their spirituality (Alaoui 2017). It was Mohammed VI who launched political and religious reforms in 2004 aimed at improving governance and greater homogeneity of the religious sphere, delivering a keynote speech on the importance of rethinking a national religious strategy. The king insisted on the need to support those elements of the religious sphere that form the basis of Moroccan identity: "The question of religion requires us to focus on our

unique historical traditions, namely the Maliki Sunni rite, on which the unity of our nation is based, and the protection of which is a duty and the mission, of which we are the keeper ” (Nejjar 2018:4) These words sound like a clear counterbalance to what was perceived as the unnamed culprit in the 2003 attacks: the country's overgrowth of Saudi-style Wahhabi Salafism as a phenomenon alien to Moroccan religious traditions. The reforms were launched with the aim of “protecting Morocco from the tendencies of extremism and terrorism and preserving its identity, which bears the stamp of balance, moderation and tolerance” (Nejjar 2018:5).

"Spiritual security" – a term that came into use with the beginning of the reform of the Moroccan religious sphere - has become an imperative of national security and means comprehensive government control in this area. An extensive series of reforms initiated by the monarchy had a comprehensive impact on the state of the religious sphere in the kingdom. One of the most notable changes brought about by these reforms was the increase in the formal presence of the state in the religious sphere and the “bureaucratization” of imams and other religious officials as civil servants. Under the Ministry of Habus and Islamic Affairs, new departments of religious bureaucracy were formed, institutions of Islamic education and their programs were taken under control, the Supreme Council of Ulema monopolized the issuance of fatwas, the position of women preachers was legalized (murshidat) in public administration, and a large-scale training program has been launched for about 46 thousand imams in the country (Bruce 2018:47). The creation of a significant stratum of religious bureaucracy was intended to transfer the centre of spiritual power from one group (the ulema) to another (bureaucrats), dependent on the state machine and accountable to it. The reform included modernizing the operation of religious institutions such as the Council of Ulema and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, as well as providing greater transparency in funding mosques and other religious institutions. The restructuring of the Moroccan religious sphere, in general, relied heavily on monarchist appointments. The Ulema council is made up of scholars appointed either by the king himself or on the basis of royal criteria. In the Moroccan religious bureaucracy, all people are hierarchically arranged according to the wishes of the king himself and obey him, which makes him the supreme religious leader of the country, not only in words, but also in organizational terms. It is therefore not surprising that more than half of Moroccan religious institutions are named after Mohammed VI. Thus, the authorities sought to change the way Islam is taught and interpreted to Moroccan citizens. The government is also working to delegitimize fundamentalist interpretations of Islam through comics and games for children, and educational programs for teens. The authorities also organized training for women – Murshidat for the subsequent preaching of Islam to other women.

## **1.2 Youth in Morocco: Challenges in Social, Economic and Political Inclusion**

### **1.2.1 Social and economic inclusion**

According to a study carried out by the Moroccan statistical institution, Le Haut Commissariat au Plan (HCP), during the general census of the population and housing in 2014, young people between 15 and 24 years old represented about 20% of the Moroccan population. Women outnumbered men of the same age by 1%, and about 59% of these young people lived in the urban environment (HCP, 2018a). If we expand the age band up to 29 years, young Moroccans represent about 30% of the population (Snijder, 2015: 6). The World Bank was clear in 2012, when in a report on the opportunities and participation of young people in Morocco it stated that the so-called “youth bulge” in Morocco was exercising so a great deal of pressure on the labour market which was not able to assimilate the number of young people who were looking for jobs (World Bank, 2012: 31).

Based on data published by the HCP analysing Moroccan statistics on youth employment in the third quarter of 2017, Moroccans between 15 and 24 years old are the group with the highest unemployment rate in the country, which registers an unemployment rate of 29.3%. Separately, this rate is higher among women of this age, reaching a figure of 39%, and is somewhat smaller in the case of men, with 26%. In the next age group, from 25 to 34 years, the rate of unemployment stands at 15% for both sexes and although there is also a significant difference between men and women, the difference is somewhat smaller than in the group of younger age (HCP, 2018b: 22). Regarding the rate of unemployment among young people, people who hold a diploma (18%) and women (15%) are the groups that represent the highest percentages. The rate has increased in the three groups with respect to the same period of the previous year (HCP, 2018b: 5-6). If we look at the percentage of activity among young people, the gap in gender is also visible, especially among the age group between 25 and 34 years where the activity rate exceeds 90% in the case of men and does not reach 30% in the case of women (HCP, 2018b: 16). These numbers show that the gap between genders in terms of the unemployment rate in this age group is not so pronounced, due to the reduced percentage of activity among women of this age. The women in Morocco remain under-represented in both political and economic participation. Women are also observed to have less education as compared to the male population. The major resistance in giving the women of Morocco equal rights is due to the Islamic political parties of country. These parties are against the idea of a liberal society. These aspects have resulted in the radicalized behaviour of women. Many women have migrated to other Islamic countries.

Floris (2009b: 12) states that the unemployment rate increases as the education level increases, and in the case of women this predisposition is even more evident. Floris highlights two extreme situations, the unemployment rate in the third quarter of 2017 among urban women with a higher-level diploma was 31% while during the same period the unemployment rate among rural men with no diploma or a

primary school level is less than 6% (HCP, 2018b: 24-26). Although the HCP does not provide cross-statistics on the unemployment rate by place of residence, age, and educational level, it is intuited that in the case of urban young women with higher degrees, the unemployment rate could be higher than that of women in general with this profile, as collected by other studies (Snijder, 2015: 10). For Paciello and Pioppi (2017), high unemployment rates among Moroccan graduates are due to the government abandonment of employment creation policies for young people and the transfer of such responsibility to the private sector.

If we look at the type of jobs that most Moroccan youth occupy, according to Snijder (2015: 10), the author of a study of the EuroMed Youth Program IV on youth work in Morocco, half of the young people are employed by private companies, only 5% are public workers, and 13% are workers on their own account. By sectors, Sougrati (2011) presents results of a study of the HCP developed in 2011 on young Moroccans and estimated that more than 50% of young people between 18 and 34 were “blue collar workers”, an expression used to describe the lowest category of the working range. Regarding the remaining occupations, 20% of young people are artisans, 12% merchants, and just over 1% hold managerial positions. This phenomenon, which is related to the majority of young Moroccans occupying the lowest ranking of the labour hierarchy, is a result of the informal sector that is so widespread in the country. It is calculated that 88% of young working Moroccans do so without a contract, a reality that leaves them out of social and health coverage and that is even more visible in rural areas (Snijder, 2015: 11; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2011: 12) and is the main indicator of poverty of young workers and a space where sexual and other types of abuse usually occur in the case of young women (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2011: 12).

All of these issues have led a group of young people and specifically those in marginalized neighbourhoods in the big cities to adopt two possible trajectories, that of crime and drugs or that of religious fundamentalism (Floris, 2009b: 14).

Among those who choose the first path, is the phenomenon known as "Tcharmil", often related to violence and vandalism. Toufiq (2016) describes this behaviour that is expressed individually and collectively. It is marked by three characteristic features: the Arab revolts of 2011 that have placed young Arabs as political subjects, the Moroccan local context that has not allowed the social integration of youth and, therefore, makes young people political and social subjects, and finally, internet that has exponentially favoured making this phenomenon visible (El Atri, 2016: 125-126). This is a phenomenon of self-affirmation of young people through violence, exposure through the internet, and alienation through aesthetics and consumption (El Atri, 2016: 131).

### 1.2.2 Political Inclusion

The political structure of Morocco is considered to be dependent on multi-party politics. Morocco is divided into 35 provinces which are led by governors that are appointed by the king of Morocco. The politics of Morocco follows the framework of a parliamentary constitutional monarchy. The prime minister of Morocco is referred to as the head of government and a full-party system is followed in the country. On the other hand, executive power within the country is exercised by the government of Morocco. Religion is the basis of the Moroccan political structure. There is an inter-connection among the political structure and religion of the country. Through the basis of religion, the political parties in the country get the support of the nation to capture power. Through religion in politics, the government uses religious aspects to win public support and surpass the other political parties. In 2011, through the framework of the Arab Spring that was developed throughout the region, The February 20 Movement (F 20) emerged in Morocco. This movement has been described by some authors as a youth movement (Snijder, 2015: 12; Colombo, 2016: 19) and it has turned out to be one of the social highlights among young Moroccans that emerged as a result of a call for protest on Facebook in 2011. This movement attracted young people from different political backgrounds, generally independent activists who acted over the internet, detractors of the political parties, traditional or Islamist (Laine, Roberts, Saleh, Boucherf, Ait Mous, 2015: 15-16) but also the groups that were most reluctant to participate for fear of breaking the traditional system of values and with which there was a bond of adhesion to the movement. This spark was struck by a promotional video that moved the most undecided (Velasco de Castro, 2016: 57-58) and more organized youth belonging to associations or political parties of the left (Desrues, 2012a: 33). The demands of the movement included a radical change of the government system, a constitutional reform for a transition from a constitutional monarchy to a parliamentary monarchy (Laine et al., 2015: 15-16).

Despite the distant horizon of the demands, the winds of the Arab Spring did not blow with the same intensity in Morocco as in Egypt or other Arab countries, partly due to some dissuasive measures carried out by the monarch and the Moroccan government, which began after the constitutional reform of 2011. With regard to young people, these measures came to include announcements of vacancies in public institutions aimed at young graduates (Martín, 2011b), reservations of parliamentary seats for people under 40 (Martín, 2011a: 14), the creation of a Youth Council and Associative Action that launched in 2014, a national strategy that empowers young people and youth organizations (Snijder, 2015: 12; Colombo, 2016: 12), and other reforms aimed at young people in order to maintain the social contract. After the rise of the protests, the post-revolutionary era in Morocco also led to the creation of movements with a high youth participation and characterized by the use of social media and information, communication and technology (ICT), for example, the Democratic Movement Anfass

that continues with some of the aims of F20 (Maïche et al., 2017: 35), and the “Non-Fasters” movement, also known as “Massayminch”, which is a protest movement against the law that prohibits breaking the fast during the day during Ramadan (Camozzi et al., 2015: 51). Also, the use of political satire became very popular during this period. Videos were created and disseminated through the internet by young people themselves to generate a counter-discourse to the diffusion known as *Majzen* in Arabic (El Marzouki, 2015, 2018), term used to name the political and economic elite of the country surrounding the monarch and Moroccan government. For Snijder (2015: 28-29), the protests that occurred in several Arab countries, including Morocco, started in the F20 Movement “[...] did not trigger a revolution but rather it started an evolution” (Snijder, 2015: 28) in other countries where young people’s demands were met. After the protests, there was an increase in the number of youth associations and the institutionalization of the value of youth political participation.

El Hachimi (2016: 10-11) recognizes that the reforms carried out in Morocco after the Arab protests managed to stop the F20 Movement but did not erase it from the political and social horizon of the country. He considers that the actions carried out by youth activism since then, such as the dissemination of political podcasts, the creation of alternative *Mamfakinch* or the abovementioned Anfass Movement, have achieved, through their mechanisms of collective awareness, pressure and intervention in public debate, a change in the socioeconomic and political status of young Moroccans.

A research poll on religious affiliation of Moroccan youth conducted in 2019 shows the high degree of religious identification of young people with Islam, which they prioritized over their national or ethnic identification. In this survey, which included more than 1000 young people between 20 and 30 years of age, 92% of respondents defined themselves as Muslims, two points above identification as Moroccans, 30 points above Arab identity and well above the 25% of respondents who identified as Amazigh (Bekkaoui, Laremont and Rddad, 2011: 50). Furthermore, young people cultivated their religion more through their own means than by official or family channels (Desrues 2012: 29). Forty-five percent of respondents believe that young people are interested in joining religious groups instead of political ones, with 23% preferring to be part of Sufi orders (Bekkaoui, Laremont and Rddad, 2011: 54-57). Regarding this last aspect of Islam, it is the authors’ conjecture that it is making its way among young Moroccans, as the majority of respondents associate Sufism with positive values and believe it can be an alternative to the participation of young people in religious extremism. More than half of the respondents are in favour of the adoption of Sufism as the main element of the religious identity of Moroccans (Bekkaoui, Laremont and Rddad, 2011: 60-63).

In 2010, Bennani-Chraïbi reflected on the relationship of young Moroccans with political Islam and concludes that the position of Moroccan youth is mutable, based on internal and external factors, and



that young people understand their religious identification in multiple ways. In general, they feel as young Muslims, they identify with Muslim causes and consider the Muslim community a victim of injustices; however, this feeling is not enough to take collective action (Bennani-Chraïbi, 2010: 76). It is very important to highlight that most of the studies were carried out in the “anteroom” of the Arab uprisings, when the theme of the impact of political Islam on youth participation was very prevalent.

To summarise, according to the 2019 Global Youth Wellbeing Index (2019:02), Morocco is located towards the middle of the ranking, occupying the 16th position of the total of 30 countries on issues such as health and safety. The report highlights the low rates of mortality, suicide and interpersonal violence of young Moroccans and Morocco ranked above average in these areas. On the other hand, economic opportunities, education, and civic participation of young people are issues valued below average, especially in the area of economic opportunities, due to rising unemployment rates among young people and the reduction of entrepreneurial activity. In the educational field, the degree of success in secondary education is well below most countries as is civic participation. Additionally, there is low involvement of young people in volunteer activities. In aspects related to the use of ICT and gender equality, Morocco occupies the fourteenth and thirteenth positions respectively, with 75% of young Moroccans participating in the millennial point of view global survey that is included in the index in favour of equalization of rights between men and women (International Youth Foundation, 2017: 108-109).

### **1.3 Youth and Violent Extremism in Morocco**

#### **1.3.1 Introduction**

The growing interest in the phenomenon of violent extremism has led to many debates over defining the meaning of radicalisation. Although there is no agreed-upon definition of radicalisation, it is necessary to explain the key distinctions that so far have been put in context. Already two main areas of contention can be distinguished: the first relates to the markers of radicalisation and the second connects to the context in which radicalisation is considered.

David Mandel explains that “radicalization is to extremism as velocity is to position. That is, radicalization is a (positive) change in the degree of extremism expressed by an individual or group” (2009:111). As such, this definition considers radicalisation as a process that plays over time. Therefore, studying radicalisation comes to defining the nature of this as a process rather than an end goal. By linking radicalisation to the notion of extremism, Mandel (2009) associates the process of change to a set of political ideas that oppose a society's core values. However, the assumption is being disputed and

some authors claim that not abiding to extremist actions does not necessarily require one to abide to extremist beliefs.

Normatively, the concept radicalisation is loaded with meaning. Not only does it depend on what is considered as "mainstream" at a particular time and in a particular place, but also on how a section of society reacts to this "mainstream". Therefore, labelling a group of people as radical, should trigger the question "radical in relation to what?" This inquiry holds particularly true when studying the process that leads to radicalisation. Consequently, radicalisation, like the concept of terrorism, is political in context and time-dependent.

### **1.3.2 From Radicalisation to Extremism in Morocco**

This section below explains that processes of radicalisation in Morocco have to be understood within the context of the role played by Islam in politics and society. It unpacks several aspects, especially with regard to the socio-economic challenges the country faces, which are different from countries across the wider Middle East. While there are some recognizable trends and patterns, there are only a few areas of consensus that exist among researchers.

Religious extremism in Morocco:

For centuries, Islam has formed part of the foundational pillars of Morocco's governance and society. The Alaouite monarchy derives its legitimacy by claiming direct descent from the Prophet Mouhamed. As such, the king holds the title of "Commander of the Faithful". Since the 1970s, an Islamist opposition rose against the backdrop of economic and social crisis (ElMarzouki 2018). The following brief historical background is relevant to understanding the changes in the way religious belief is practised and expressed in Morocco (Mandel 2009: 105).

In the 1970s, a Moroccan religious opposition emerged against the backdrop of serious social discontents and attempts to weaken the Moroccan monarchy. To counter the rise of this religious opposition, Morocco developed an intricate and ambiguous relationship with ultra-conservative groups. In 1980, King Hassan II responded to the growing Islamist opposition by turning to Saudi Arabia and ultra-conservative Wahhabism. This move opened the gate for ultra-conservatives to settle in Morocco. The Saudi/Wahhabi model was convenient for Morocco because of its blending of religious purity with political obedience. However, it also challenged Morocco's Malikiist tradition and laid the foundations for the rise of Salafi-Jihadist groups in the country (Palmer 2014). In the early 1990s, the intertwined relationship between Morocco and Saudi Arabia was vividly criticized by Salafist preachers (Palmer 2014). At the same time, it is reported that recruiters also integrated local Salafi structures, in particular

in the North, and were able to survive the security crackdowns conducted by the Moroccan authorities (Pargeter 2005).

The rise of Wahhabist influence in Morocco, in combination with Moroccan jihadists returning from Afghanistan and elsewhere in the mid-1990s, resulted in the emergence of an extremist threat from Morocco (Palmer 2014). After the expansion of Salafism in Morocco, the conflict in Syria created a new boost to *Jihadi* ideology. In small cities of Morocco, local sheikhs sporadically started to echo *fatwas* of *Jihad* against the Assad Regime (ElMarzouki 2018).

Local violent extremist groups are mainly *takfiri* groups, inspired by a doctrine entailing the systematic rejection of state and society, and the justifying of violence against both, on the basis that they consist of apostates. The embrace of this extremist ideology of rejection only mirrors the (economic, societal, and cultural) rejection felt by those who espouse it.

These groups include al takfirwalhijrah, al takfirbidounhijrah, ghoulat al takfirbidounhijrah, and al takfir bi al mahkama. They are inspired by the “Salafi jihadist”. Salafism takes its name from the term salaf ("predecessors", "ancestors") used to identify the earliest generations of Muslims, who, its adherents believe, provide the epitome of Islamic practice. Even though it has become associated with literalist, strict and puritanical approaches to Islam, Salafism is not violent in essence, with the exception of some branches such as the Salafijihadism global movement to which Al Qaeda belongs. It considers Morocco to be a corrupt society that they should not associate with and, to various degrees, from which they should seek some form of exile. Most of them settle in remote areas or on the outskirts of cities in marginalized neighbourhoods. Individuals who carried out the Casablanca attacks in May 2003 were members of a takfiri group from the slums of the Sidi Moumen neighbourhood on the outskirts of Casablanca (Arif 2008).

Religion as a push factor:

These extremist groups have built a rhetoric of *Jihad* supporting their recruitment strategy on both religious and non-religious arguments. Violent extremist groups distort and exploit religious beliefs, ethnic differences, and political ideologies to legitimise their actions, establish their claim on territory, and recruit followers.

Mosques and Islamic schools built throughout the country with the financial support of Saudi Arabia complement the rigorist reinterpretation of *Salafism*. In addition, the radicalisation of individuals has been fostered through different propaganda tools. Distortion and misuse of religion are utilised to divide nations, cultures, and people, undermining humanity. Faith and community leaders are critical in

mentoring vulnerable followers so as to enable them to reject violent ideologies and in providing opportunities for intra- and interfaith dialogue and discussion as a means of promoting tolerance, understanding, and reconciliation between communities.

#### Socio-economic and Political Factors:

Violent extremism tends to thrive in environments characterised by poor governance, corruption, and the widespread culture of impunity for unlawful behaviour engaged in by the state or its agents. Extremist groups actively exploit contestation over repressive policies and other grievances in their questioning of the legitimacy of a government and to galvanize individuals (especially in marginalized communities) to mobilise against the state.

The effect of a traumatized past on the individual predisposition to be recruited into a violent extremist group is partly explained by the historical repressive measures undertaken by the Kingdom of Morocco on the Oriental region (Suarez 2015). In this region, youth developed a firm conviction that the economic and political sectors are held by a corrupted elite. A growing sense of marginalisation stemmed from difficulty in accessing services and low employability rates (El Marzouki 2018).

In this particular geographical context, we can observe unique patterns of interaction with the centre of Moroccan power. Citizens may consider weak development outcomes as confirmation of the lack of a government's legitimacy, making state institutions less effective in responding to violent extremism when it arises (lotfi 2012). For this reason, the absence of alternative employment opportunities can make violent extremist organisations an attractive source of income.

Morocco's economy has close links to Europe and is rooted in relatively low labour costs (for example for textile production), a strong agricultural sector, and a tourism industry attracting European holiday-makers. Additionally, Morocco, and in particular Casablanca, has established itself as a key African business centre. In an effort to cut government expenditure, the government eliminated subsidies on gas and fuel in 2014. However, subsidies on many food staple products remained in place.

According to Masbah (2015:4), this marginalization is directly related to why young men from these areas are joining extremist groups abroad:

For quite a few, traveling to Syria is just another option to escape a social reality that offers limited prospects for a decent living, and constitutes an almost seamless transition from one type of illicit activity to another.

A serious economic crisis was exacerbated by a growing rural exodus and increased poverty and unemployment in urban areas, notably in the region of the North. This rural migration has taken place

despite government efforts to modernize the system by implementing economic and political reforms. As explained by Botha (2008), Islamist groups gained in popularity due to the deteriorating social and economic situation, which included the growth of slum areas with high poverty and illiteracy rates.

Grievances related to the socio-economical context have become fruitful area for the intervention of a charismatic leader or political entrepreneur, and through informal family and social networks. Prolonged and unresolved conflicts tend to provide fertile ground for violent extremism, not only because of the suffering and lack of governance resulting from the conflict itself, but also because such conflicts allow violent extremist groups to exploit deep-rooted grievances in order to garner support, seize territories and resources, and control populations. Resolving these conflicts will undermine the impact of the insidious narratives of violent extremist groups.

Morocco has also failed to generate high and sustainable levels of growth to create decent jobs for its youth, to reduce poverty and unemployment, to improve equality, to control corruption, and to manage relationships among different communities in line with its human rights obligations. In the most-affected communities, youth are more prone to joining violent extremist groups (Benaissa 2017). Extremist groups develop a narrative of recruitment upon the illustration of weak development as confirmation of the lack of a government's legitimacy. The absence of alternative employment opportunities can make violent extremist organizations an attractive source of income. Unless state institutions address these issues, it becomes difficult for them to respond to violent extremism.

By means of illustration:

- The 14 Moroccans involved in the 2003 Casablanca attack were from one of Casablanca's most marginalized slums, Sidi Moumen. While 3 aborted, the remaining terrorists blew themselves up, along with 34 civilians.
- Abdel Aziz El Mehdali (Abu Usama al-Maghribi), a street vendor in the city of Casablanca, struggled daily with local authorities and police. He managed to maintain his activities by bribing the local authorities in exchange for tolerating them. He participated in the 2011 protests (F20) for political and social reforms. When he joined the fight in Syria, he became a hero in the eyes of many youth of his neighbourhood, inspiring others to follow his engagement (Masbah 2015).

While it is not possible to separate political belief from political action, the observation that strategies of recruitment are based on social and economic grievances concur with the assumption that there is no inevitable link between extremist beliefs and violent actions. As such, being an extremist is not a precursory condition necessary for engaging in violent activities, and radicalisation is one of the pathways into violent extremism (Horgan 2011).

### 1.3.3 Process of recruitment

The Northern Observatory for Human Rights (ONDH) explains that most recruitment processes involve young people from the same neighbourhoods brought together through friendship channels and later strengthened through social networks, like Facebook, where they can be lured through published images of fighters in Syria shopping, dining, riding luxury cars and engaging in sports and fishing that reflect a life of luxury and upmarket malls. These images show the reality in Syria as being recreational, nothing like a war zone. Many young people have been lured with these images onto idealizing the life in Syria.

#### a) Stages of Radicalisation (Theory)

Radicalisation is understood as a key transformative aspect of one individual deepening into violent extremism. It engages individuals towards a path with direct involvement in terrorist activities (Silber and Bhatt 2009). This process is deconstructed in four stages: conditioning, self-identification, indoctrination, and action.

**The first stage** consists of placing the individuals in an environment favouring receptivity to extremist religious ideology. As seen above, this process can be driven by internal or external incentives (a personal grief, experiences of marginalization or alienation, frustration, and dissatisfaction). External motivations could refer to an external factor (such as economic, ethnic, political, religious). This first stage marks the beginning of the individual's attitude change.

**In the second stage**, "self-identification", the individuals can start building a new character based on religion and support for extremist ideologies. This process is usually supported by guidance from supervisors who encourage the individual to socialize with other 'like-minded' individuals, which reinforces their new sense of identity and commitment (Mulcahy et al 2013). Therefore, overseas travel can have a significant impact on the acceleration of the radicalisation process. Overall, the individual's needs and wants are increasingly removed and replaced by those of the collective.

Mulcahy et al. (2013) explains that the **third stage**, indoctrination, further pushes the individual into this newly acquired identity. As they explain, "it occurs once an individual has accepted the radical ideology but may be unsure or unfamiliar with how to participate" (Mulcahy et al 2013:13). This process usually involves a small group who act as supporters and recognise the individual's potential as a jihadist.

Finally, **the fourth stage** is direct engagement in terrorist activities. At this stage, it is observed that the initial conditioning and self-identification are crucial to the erasing of a sense of individualisation. Rather, the individual act is conducted in the name of the group and for the group (Mulcahy et al 2013).

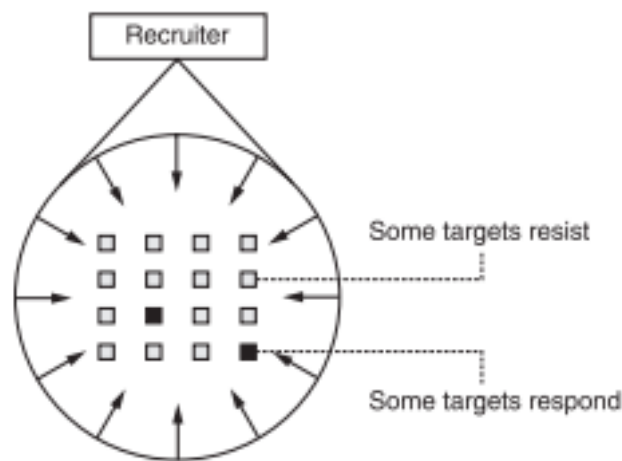
#### b. Recruitment models

This section reviews different processes of recruitment that could find a relevance in the content development of the comic book. Gerwehr and Daley (2006) pertinently referred to four different patterns. Below is a summary of these patterns, namely: the net, the funnel, the infection, and the seed crystal (Gerwehr and Daley 2006).

**The "net model"** refers to the situation where individuals are recruited with a singular strategy. In this

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#### The net.



instance, the target audience is viewed as homogeneous and the group can be approached with an undifferentiated narrative (Gerwehr and Daley 2006: 82). This can notably become the case when all members are given the same book to read or are invited to a meeting.

Figure 1.1. Net Model (Source: Gerwehr and Daley, 2006)

Gerwehr explains that **the "funnel model"** occurs when a recruiter takes a snowball or incremental approach to approach individuals whom he seeks to recruit. Milestones in which the individual undergoes a transformation in identity often characterize it. Therefore, an individual starts at one end of the process and is transformed into a dedicated group member at the other end (Gerwehr and Daley 2006).

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### The funnel.

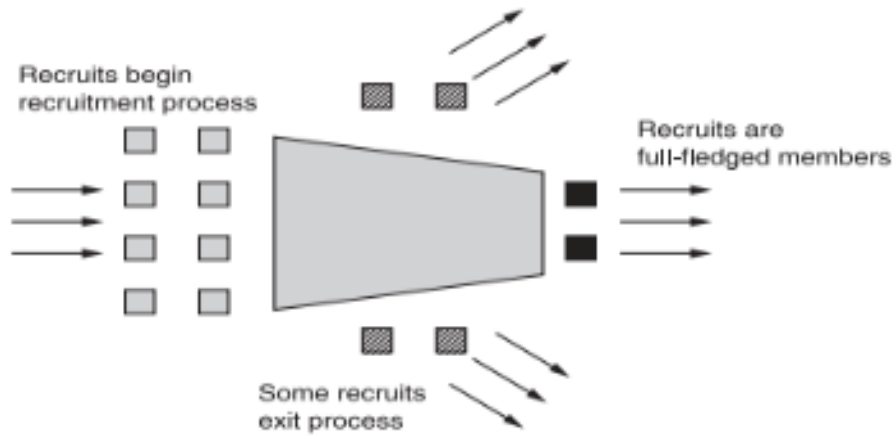


Figure 1.2: The Funnel Model. (Source: Gerwehr and Daley, 2006).

**The "infection model"** is likely to be successful where most members are not extremists; this allows the infiltrator to be able to convert selected members who are dissatisfied (Gerwehr and Daley 2006:78). The infection pattern occurs when a trusted agent is inserted into the target population to rally potential recruits through direct personal appeal.

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### The infection.

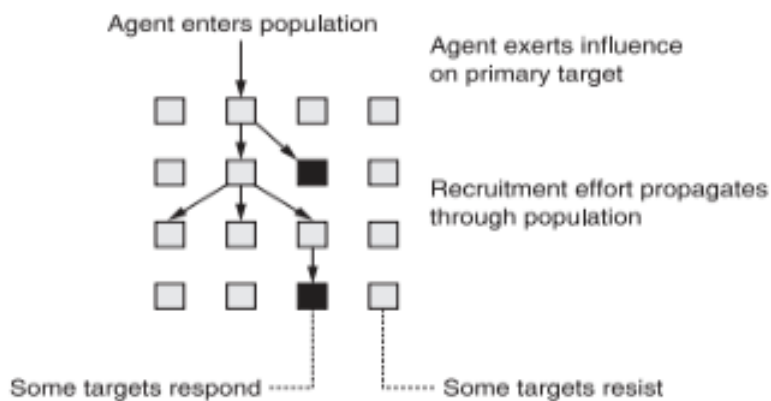


Figure 1.3: The Infection Model. (source: Gerwehr and Daley, 2006).

**The "seed crystal model"** is particularly relevant to the context of prisons as it occurs when the target is very difficult to access and is very remote (Gerwehr and Daley 2006:79). As the figure below shows,



it relies on the charisma of a recruiter who may or may not be inside the prison, but whose message inmates can reach. It is then disseminated by supporters or sympathizers.

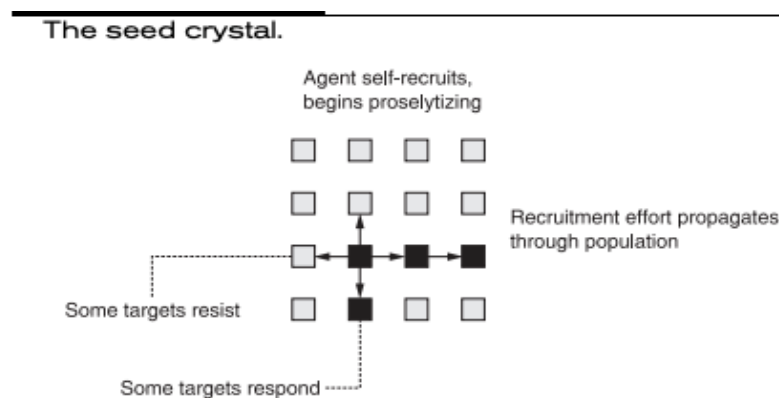


Figure 1.4: The Seed Crystal model. (Source: Gerwehr and Daley, 2006).

It is important to note that these stages are not chronological, and individuals can skip stages, reaching highly violent actions more quickly; nor are these stages sufficient to understand the emotional and behaviour transformation of an individual (Al-Lami 2008). It also means that individuals may stop the process and may not be fully radicalised. Conversely, even if they are fully radicalised, they will not necessarily carry out a terrorist attack. A way out for Jenkins is to constantly "calibrate and re-calibrate" the commitment to counter violent extremism. Further, he adds that "a component of [our] counter-recruiting strategy must be to always offer a safe way back from the edge" (Jenkins 2007).

Certain steps can be adopted by the government of Morocco and other states that are facing youth radicalisation in prevention of or resistance to radicalisation. The strategies can be promotion of a human-rights approach or increasing participatory decision-making along with enhancing the civic space at local as well as national level. Along with this, provision of efficient socio-economic alternatives is critical for groups or individuals that are involved in radicalisation. Promotion of equality and justice among the youth and engaging the youth in development of social cohesion are essential and the government can join hands with the media to promote human rights and tolerance, and respect for other individuals, diversity and culture.

#### 1.4. The Profile of Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Extremists in Morocco

Moroccan authorities estimate the overall number of Moroccans joining Da'esh (standardise this word - you have used 3 different spellings) as foreign fighters to be at least 1,350 individuals since 2016 (Telqel 2017). Additionally, up to 2,000 European nationals of Moroccan descent are thought to have joined the fight in the Levant.

The Central Bureau of Judicial Investigations (BCIJ) was established in 2015 to lead all anti-terrorism investigations in Morocco. Since then, 98 cells have been dismantled and more than 570 people have been arrested. Despite these efforts, at least 1,600 Moroccans have left to join violent extremist organizations in Syria and Iraq, mainly DAESH (900+) but also groups linked to Al Qaeda. Of these, some 1,000 were men, over 270 were women and some 370 were children. Most of them left between 2013 and 2015 and departures appeared to be declining in 2015 with a slight increase in early 2016. Once on land controlled by DAESH, most analysts agree that these foreign fighters faced harsh realities and challenges. By the end of 2017, 596 had already died in Syria and Iraq. Returns have started to increase and by the end of 2017, 213 Moroccans (143 men, 52 women and 15 children) are said to have returned to their countries of origin. In December 2019, official Moroccan figures indicated that 280 women, 391 children and an unknown number of men remained in camps (women and children) or prisons (men) in Syria and Iraq.

To date, there is no sociological study that allows for a precise profile on the Moroccan foreign fighters. The ONDH has been conducting studies on a limited sample and is limited to a set of information (ONDH 2017). A more complete study would require the contribution of data from the Ministry of the Interior in collaboration with other countries and international organizations.

#### **1.4.1 Political Affiliation of FTFs Prior to Radicalisation**

The ONDH study reports low participation or involvement in political life among FTFs prior to their departure. Ten percent were engaged in social movements, notably the movement of February 20<sup>th</sup>, a movement of contestation that emerged in parallel to the Arab Spring and the joint committee for the defence of political prisoners.

The 10% who are found to be involved in social movements typically applies to young people who joined during the beginning of the Syrian Revolution (first generation), while the other 90% did not engage in any activity within these social movements.

#### **1.4.2 Socio-Economic and Educational background**

Fifty-seven percent of the sample of FTFs studied stopped attending school at the primary education level. Twenty-seven percent of other respondents reported having a lower secondary education level vs 6% and 10% who had at least finished high school. One theory is that the lack of education explains their attraction to extremist ideology.

Furthermore, relatives and friends reported that 40% of those who defected to Syria were educated in a “traditional” manner (i.e., strong patriarchal upbringing). Families report that their relatives also demonstrated traditional ways of dressing, routine practice of the five prayers, reading of simple religious books, and an urge to fight for Jihad. This was also followed by stopping their affiliation to the February 20 movement and joining the committee for the defence of Islamist detainees and attending the social activities of a group of Salafis that included obscurantism and other religious concepts.

It is also relevant to note the role of peer influence and a form of admiration on the part of youth from northern Morocco for those who joined the fight in Syria. Before the tightening of control of materials disseminated online, photos, videos and stories of individuals who went to Syria and Iraq to join Daesh were widely circulated on social media. Many were showing themselves as living in luxurious homes, driving luxurious cars, reflecting a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment associated with a life of comfort in “paradise on earth,” away from the perception of residing in a war zone.

Furthermore, a significant part of the Moroccan population, including a large number of youths, are being lured to emigrate in hopes of a better life, particularly in northern Morocco. Youth can literally see the Spanish neighbouring cities from the seashore while daydreaming about a better tomorrow. The extent of this phenomenon reveals a widespread malaise and despair among the youth who will do anything, including risking their lives, to cross the Strait of Gibraltar using illegal means. Faced with high rates of unemployment, educational failure, and poverty, prospects for a better life appear stronger anywhere beyond the country –a perception fuelled by the relatively weaker sense of belonging to the country as a result of historical exclusion and marginalization in Morocco.

Daesh integrated these appeals to Moroccans with the reframing of the emigration project, in the Islamic concept of *hijrah*. The broad idea is that instead of emigrating to a land ruled by the disbelievers, emigration should be to any land that is ruled by Muslims, where the Shariah is the supreme law, and Muslims hold political power. Subsequently, images and stories are disseminated on social media, showing youth who were once living in marginalised neighbourhoods driving luxurious SUV cars, eating in restaurants, getting married, sending income to their families, and sharing feelings of bliss, ecstasy and accomplishment in videos, seen as resulting from living in compliance with Shariah law in their new society.

#### **1.4.3 Morocco’s role in supporting immigrants**

Considering the fact that in the last decade Moroccans living in Europe have very often become victims of the recruitment of extremists, the reform of the Moroccan religious sphere could not bypass this category of compatriots. Islam is the factor that can strengthen the ties with the Moroccans who have

left their homeland. The significant Moroccan diaspora is an important source of economic growth in Morocco: for example, in the first half of 2018 alone, they sent about 31.9 billion dirhams (\$ 3.5 billion) to relatives (Nejjar 2018:6). Today, Moroccan migrants and their descendants can be found in all countries of Western Europe. They represent established demographic groups in France, the Netherlands and Belgium, and most recently joined the largest minorities in Spain and Italy. Unsurprisingly, the Moroccan state has long pondered the development of a religious policy aimed at providing religious services to Moroccans abroad, ranging from sending imams during the month of Ramadan to directly funding the construction of mosques and Islamic associations in foreign countries. In 2008, Muhammad VI founded the European Council of Moroccan Ulema in Brussels and Rabat with the aim of improving the coordination of Moroccan Islamic associations across the continent. An institute for the training of imams named after Mohammed VI welcomes French students of Moroccan origin thanks to a 2015 agreement signed by French President Hollande and the Moroccan authorities. Franco-Moroccan students receive full scholarships and study specially-designed programs with the aim of returning to Europe and taking up positions as religious leaders. The number of French students ranges from 30 to 50 (Bruce 2018:47). Likewise, Al-Karaouin University in Fez signed an agreement with the University of Siena in Italy in 2017 to participate in the training of Italian imams. Thus, there is a pragmatic, long-term and active international policy in Morocco in relation to religion. Its goal is to proactively protect the kingdom's national security based on the shared commitment of Morocco and neighbouring African countries to Malikism. Morocco's strategy is to spread the policy of "spiritual security", not only within the country, but also on a regional scale, in order to combat potential threats remotely.

"Spiritual security" in Morocco is not limited to control over traditional religious institutions. The authorities are actively working with the media, shaping public opinion (Vasilyev & Zherlitsyna 2019: 89). In 2005, a new radio station, Radio Muhammad VI of the Holy Quran, was established, which by 2015 had become one of the most popular in the country. A new TV channel, "Al-Sadisa" (literally translated as "The Sixth"), was also launched, but here, too, the connection with King Mohammed IV is visible. Al-Sadisa is a satellite channel available to viewers not only in Morocco, but throughout the region. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs has initiated a partnership with state media company SNRT to create religious radio and television programmes in line with the state's religious policy. The hallmark of all media content of Moroccan religious broadcasting is positivity. Unlike rivals in the Gulf countries, which portray Islam as being attacked, Moroccans do not seek an enemy, but seek to educate in their compatriots on the personal responsibility of each Muslim to provide for themselves and solve their own problems. The popularity of Moroccan religious broadcasting is also promoted by its distinctive features, such as focussing on local issues, frequently inviting guests from the provinces and

broadcasting in local dialects of the Arabic and Berber languages. In accordance with the tasks proclaimed by the state religious policy, the radio and TV channels promote progressive Islamic values, including the emancipation of women, popularizing art and hosting a wide range of representatives of civil society, not just religious leaders. And although all these media are named after the king, again, unlike the Gulf countries, Moroccan broadcasters do not promote the cult of the personality of the head of state or owner but demonstrate an institutional approach.

#### **1.4.4 Summary**

The Moroccan counter-radicalism experience shows that by focussing on institutional control rather than coercive methods, the kingdom's authorities have demonstrated the mechanisms by which the state can translate the discourse of the war on terrorism onto a political plane. By placing the training of religious elites under state control and incorporating them into the bureaucracy, the Moroccan state has largely succeeded in establishing control over circles that have historically been a source of opposition to the regime. It was the early implementation of the religious reform that largely neutralized the consequences of the "Arab Spring" in Morocco. Although here, as in a number of other Arab countries, an Islamist party came to power in 2011, the moderate nature of the Justice and Development Party contributed to the rapid stabilization of the situation in the country. The focus on bureaucratization of religion as a counter-terrorism strategy has left the youth and other issues on the margins. The country's future depends on empowering youth and creating programmes to overcome poverty, inequality and corruption which can be fertile ground for radicalisation.

### **1.5 The context of the study**

This study takes place in the district of Sidi Moumen, a locality of Greater Casablanca which depends administratively on the prefecture of the districts of Sidi Bernoussi, and whose area is 42 km<sup>2</sup>. It was created in 2003 following the new administrative division. It is located near boroughs experiencing great economic dynamism, such as Hay Mohammadi, Sidi Bernoussi and Aîn Sebaa in the North; Moulay R'chid to the south and Tit Mellil to the east.

According to the General Census of Population and Housing (RGPH) of 2018, the population of Sidi Moumen is estimated at 289,253 inhabitants, and has 58,029 households. The arrondissement has recorded the highest population growth rate among the arrondissements of Casablanca since 1994 with 8.9% growth (the national average is 1.4% and the urban average is 2.1%). The arrondissement is, in fact, due to its location (proximity to industrial districts), a residential destination for a poor population that lives off informal work, characterized essentially by precariousness, insecurity and lack of

qualifications. Sidi Moumen has more than 12 slums and approximately 22,757 slum households, or 39% of the total number of households living in the district.

Within the framework of the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), the district of Sidi Moumen benefits from a convention for the development, of a total cost of more than 2.511 billion dirhams. Under this agreement, major structuring projects will be carried out throughout the territory of the borough, particularly in slum resettlement sites, and will target the areas of urban development, housing, health, education, youth and sport, vocational training, etc. A budget of around 1.855 billion Moroccan Dirham (DH) is devoted to financing housing projects intended for the rehousing of households living in slums, including the Thoma and Sekouila slums, as well as the inhabitants of the region's agricultural zone. The transfer operations of these slums are in progress. Douar Skouila is one of the oldest slums in the district of Sidi Moumen. Born in the 1960s on the northern outskirts of the city of Casablanca, this shantytown developed little by little on agricultural land to reach today an area of 40 ha and a population of approximately 30,480 inhabitants.

Two phenomena have accentuated the development of the slum. On the one hand, the industrial development of the city of Casablanca which has resulted in a significant need for labour, encouraging the influx to this city of rural people in search of employment. On the other hand, the rural exodus following the drought of the 1980s which pushed thousands of rural people to seek asylum in the city of Casablanca.

The majority of its inhabitants come from the countryside of Chaouiya and Rhramna. The slum is limited:

- To the north by the rural commune of Chellalat and the rural commune of Sidi Hajjaj and Oued Hassar;
- To the south by the head municipality of Melill belonging to the rural commune of Lahraouiyine and the road National 106;
- To the west by constituency 71 depending on the 20th circle of the district of Sidi Moumen and the Anassi administrative annex.

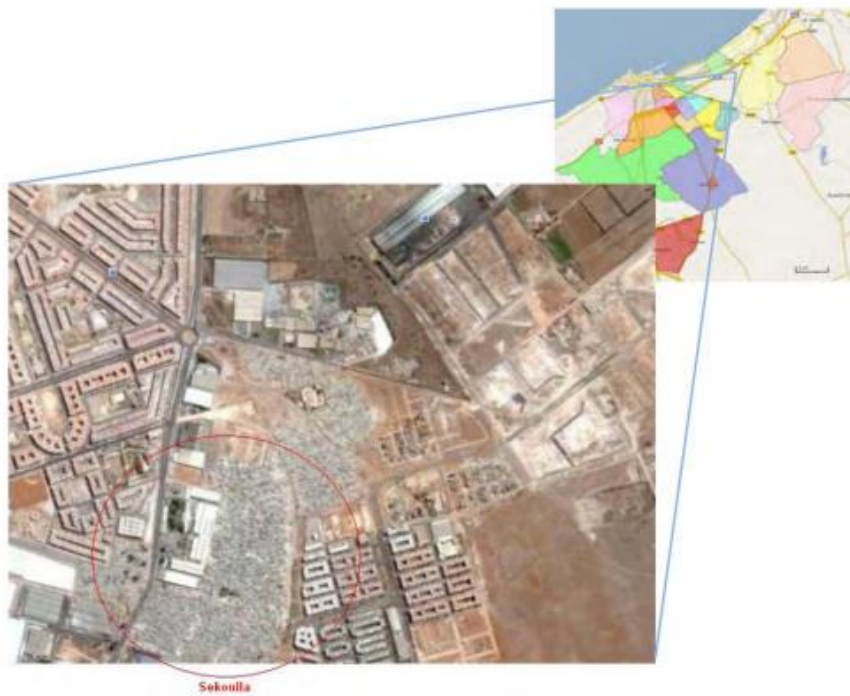


Figure 1.5 Location of Sidi Moumen District. (Source: Google Maps of the Sidi Moumen District, 2022)

Its urban environment is made up of several valued subdivisions intended either for economic housing (Anassi and Al Azhar subdivisions), or for the rehousing of the Thomas and Sekouila slums, in particular the Essalam 1 and 2 projects. After the attack in Sidi Moumen, the perpetrators of which were young people from this slum, the local authorities decided to eradicate the slum. They programmed household resettlement operations in the EsSalaam 1 and 2 neighbourhoods near the Anassi neighbourhood. The inhabitants agreed to leave the premises in return for the 84m<sup>2</sup> two-family plots of land made available to them. While waiting for the self-construction work to be completed, the beneficiaries received three months of Dhs 3,000 in aid for the rental of temporary accommodation.

A good part of the population is currently settled in the new reception site, most of them residing in houses under construction. The project to strengthen young people from poor neighbourhoods in the Greater Casablanca Region provides, in its action plan, support for young people from the Thomas and Sekouila slums in their new reception sites through the creation and strengthening of a youth committee in the Esalam 1 and 2.

The population of Douar Sekouila is estimated at 30,480 inhabitants, or 10.5% of the total population of the district of Sidi Moumen. The distribution of the population by age bracket highlights the importance of young people in this population. They represent 20% of the total population. It also

appears that the population of working age individuals is predominant in the district; it represents about 47% of the total population. As for the number of households, it is around 5,893 households, that is an average size of 5.17 people per household. The size of households in this neighbourhood is significantly higher than that recorded in the district of Sidi Moumen, which is 4.98. A high density is recorded in this district amounting to 762 inhabitants per hectare.

Because Sidi Moumen is sadly famous, it has nonetheless succeeded in attracting dozens of associations and people of goodwill. The number of NGOs has multiplied by twenty since 2003 and the enrolment rate has increased by 40% in ten years (Alaoui 2017:11). Since 2007, the Center for Associative Initiatives of Sidi Moumen has offered training of all kinds (plumbing, electricity, physiotherapy, etc.). The Casablanca School of Film Trades has also set up in the neighbourhood and offers free training in technical trades such as editing, make-up or sound. Recently, the INDH has provided valuable assistance for the rehousing of slum dwellers, but also for schooling and prevention programs.

## **1.6 Statement of the problem**

Twelve years after the Arab spring uprisings, youth are still expressing deep grievances about economic, social and political marginalisation. They use the internet as a playground to rehearse cultural citizenship practices that are political in nature but are manifested as participatory media forms (El Marzouki 2018). Although Moroccan youth currently represent more than a third of the population, they remain very weakly present and represented in the political sphere in general (Youth Policy 2014). Indeed, only 2% of young Moroccans participate in decision-making processes and only 1% are members of political parties or unions (Zerhouni 2017:8). Empirical findings from quantitative surveys find that many young Moroccans have expressed interest in activism through informal means of participation, such as protests and the use of social networks. However, more than 50% of the respondents from this study are neither interested in politics nor engaged in any form of participation. The low level of youth engagement is more related to the lack of trust in political institutions than distrust in democratic institutions as a means of governance (Zerhouni 2017:14). For many years, young people remained determined to boycott the polls, and they have clearly lost all confidence in political actors who are supposed to represent them and defend their interests. Young Moroccans, not being able to find a productive outlet for their growing frustrations, took advantage of the capacities offered by new media and the internet to mobilise and express their frustration online (El Marzouki 2018). There is no doubt that, with the internet and social networks, young people express themselves more and benefit from the possibilities offered by social media. Social media has transformed the everyday social settings of political talk: the interactional frameworks, the publicity, the opportunities and the potential risks (Vromen, Xenos and Loader 2014; Thorson 2014; and Sveningsson 2014). However, most youth



discussions online are actually revolving around fake news, emotions, and conflict; they are full of uncivil performances and negativity. For youth, talking politics has been described as a delicate, risky, and unsafe topic, best suited for intimate backstage settings (Eliasoph 1998; Mutz 2006). It is stipulated that without tangible benefits from the reforms that have been institutionalized since 1998 and 2011, and in the absence of a genuine platform for dialogue among elected officials and their youth constituents, frustrations among young people will build and susceptibility to extremist ideologies will increase as a result.

Despite governmental and non-governmental initiatives to prevent and counter violent radicalisation in the country as a whole, such efforts have fallen short when faced with the specific circumstances of the country's under-served neighbourhoods in urban cities. Violent radicalism is distributed as follows: Tangier contributed 16%, Fez 15%, Casablanca 14%, Tetouan 13% and Salé 9% of the radicals going to join war, starting in 2011 (Masbah, 2019: 189). The cities of Casablanca and Tangier alone account for 30%. Thus, Casablanca provides 18.5 jihadists per 100,000 inhabitants, while Tetouan provides 28 per 100,000 inhabitants. To effectively pursue counter-radicalisation efforts in Morocco, there is a need for a research initiative that takes into account the unique challenges and cultural nuances present in these areas to build a multi-faceted understanding of radicalisation. The UK's PREVENT strategy to counter violent extremism acknowledges cultural nuance by recognizing that extremist interpretations of local ideologies are the problem, rather than the ideologies themselves, and seeks to root its CVE initiatives in local communities in order to ensure their efficacy

It is said that violent extremism in Morocco is not a local phenomenon. It has transnational dimensions. Whether it concerns the procedures for carrying out terrorist attacks, such as those in Casablanca on 16 May 2003, the funding resources or the emergence of Moroccan jihadists, violent extremism is a phenomenon that transcends national borders (Filali, 2019). Three factors are put forward to explain its emergence and evolution:

- the influence of international jihadism on Moroccan youth;
- the raise of populism and conservatism among society;
- and the deterioration of the socio-economic conditions of the populations.

In addition to these factors, there are other elements that promote radicalisation, namely media propaganda and the distribution of CDs, cassettes and paperbacks funded by Wahhabism (Smiri 2020).

Other studies identify the source of conflict to be the frustration youth feel due to the social conditions in which they reside. Rachik (2014) states that 17,000 protest actions took place in Morocco in 2012, with an average of 52 actions per day. Providing youth with viable communication channels to local

authorities can alleviate these frustrations by sensitising both parties to each other's demands and needs. The concept of frustration is an inherent part of grievance literature, which forms a popular theoretical explanation for conflict in the academic field of peace and conflict. The pioneer of grievance literature is Ted Robert Gurr, who argues that the relative deprivation of identity groups of perceived discrepancies in economic, cultural, and political factors creates grievances (Gurr 1968). One of these identity groups vulnerable to such grievances is youth. Gurr asserts that grievances are the product of direct incentive, one example being collective disadvantages (Gurr 2000:69-74). Collective disadvantages are socially resulting inequalities in material well-being, political access, and cultural status as compared to other, often more dominant groups (Gurr 2000: 71). These grievances felt among relatively deprived groups, such as youth, motivate them to protest and turn against the state and thus serve as the causal precondition for conflict.

When applying this theory to the situational contexts of suburbs of Casablanca, it becomes clear that youth are, relative to other segments of society, suffering from the collective disadvantages that Gurr outlines. There is high youth unemployment as compared to other segments of society as well as low socio-political inclusion of youth. This region has been historically and remains currently marginalized compared to the rest of Morocco (Paciello 2018). Consequently, the theory of change that would be taken into consideration aims to alleviate frustrations, and by extension grievances, theoretically justifies this research project's intervention. Moroccan youth need an urgent intervention for democratic emancipation and if they are empowered to voice their concerns and access their rights, they would be able to enjoy their autonomy and effectively participate in decision-making processes that impact their everyday life. Therefore, this Participatory Action research PAR aims at countering violent extremism by encouraging social and political participation as well as reducing the incidence of recurrent public agitation, grievance, and violence.

If marginalized urban youth are provided with the skills and channels of communication for constructive civic engagement to effect concrete, positive changes in their own communities, and, in parallel, if local politicians are sensitized to youth concerns and become more willing and able to implement changes, then frustration and disaffection among youth will be reduced, in turn decreasing their receptiveness to violent or extremist ideologies. The current study focuses on analysing the Youth radicalisation and role of media in promoting it. Along with this, the study also analyses the peace-making strategies that can be adopted by the Moroccan government to overcome the increasing radicalisation among the youth.

## **1.7 Aim of the Study**

Through engaging youth in a Participatory Action Research (PAR), this study aims at promoting the inclusion of youth in peacebuilding and conflict transformation as well as sharing their perspectives on political participation and civic engagement. One assumption of this study is that inclusion can effectively counteract violent extremism particularly amongst marginalized youth. A fundamental aspect of this process is the construction and dissemination of the knowledge produced. For this reason, the process and experiences become a key resource which, together with the PAR, allow for the creation of new knowledge while generating changes for the community in question (Bassi, 2013). When youth research their own community using a researcher's lens, they become able to define their needs, expectations, and interests, as well as to organize themselves and solve problems that affect them (Vazquez, 2005). This unique process of data collection, data analysis, reflection, and communication among different community members and stakeholders creates an inclusive and pluralistic system of knowledge, providing a starting point for young people to become agents of social change.

## **1.8 Objectives of the study**

There were 3 main objectives to this study, as follows:

**Objective 1:** Raise awareness among young people and other marginalised and at-risk target populations about the principles and mechanisms of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and constructive conflict resolution in order to strengthen community integration and increase youth resistance to messages of violent extremism.

**Objective 2:** To conduct a conflict assessment and offer marginalised urban youth the opportunity to contribute to local public governance and to constructively debate their vision of good governance and local priorities with local officials.

**Objective 3:** To create real and virtual spaces for debate, inspiration, and exchange of information among Moroccan youth regarding citizenship, participation in local public and civic governance, local initiative-taking, and national policies on youth concerns.

## **1.9 Justification of Focus Area**

In Morocco, as in many other countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the alienation and deprivation of youth facilitates their adherence to militant extremist ideologies, which in their eyes represent a viable alternative to their harsh reality. With alarming social indicators as a backdrop, a number of extremist groups have successfully recruited underprivileged youth in Morocco. Twelve suicide bombers blew themselves up in Casablanca in May 2003 in the deadliest terrorist attack in the country's history, and another seven blew themselves up in March and April 2007. In both cases, most of the bombers were from the shantytowns of Sidi Moumen in the suburbs of Casablanca (Hamil 2011).

Since 2003, the Sidi Moumen neighbourhood in the suburbs of Casablanca has been a sad symbol for all Moroccans. This is where the twelve perpetrators of the attacks of May 16, 2003 were born and raised in the centre of the economic capital. It was there, too, in a cybercafé in 2007 that a young man died after detonating the bomb he carried on him. This neighbourhood, Sidi Moumen, exemplifies the misery of its suburbs, and the disarray of its youth, plagued by unemployment and readiness to sink into delinquency or extremism.

During the reign of King Mohammed VI since 1999 and in the process of modernizing Morocco, new reforms have been put in place in order to engage the state in dynamic productive and social intervention (Jaidi, 2014). These reforms have been a symbol of the King's will to provide solutions to the major issues facing the country by linking public authorities to all components of civil society (El Mnasfi, 2015). Morocco's recent reform process indicates the government's commitment to the development of genuine participatory democracy and represents an opportunity for civil society to participate in its realisation. This willingness to implement democratic reforms, coupled with Morocco's recent efforts to position itself as a model of political and religious unity (Map 2016), makes this the opportune time to push for greater inclusion of youth in political processes in order to increase their impact in their communities.

### **1.10 Significance of the Study**

According to the Internet Society report launched in 2017, Morocco, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Egypt alone account for nearly 50% of the active technology centres in Africa, approximately 157 centres. With a percentage of 58.3%, Morocco has the highest internet penetration rate in Africa. In this regard, interactive social media plays an essential role, since it has become available to the majority of Moroccans. Internet and mobile phone usage today represent a qualitative leap forward in the information and communication movement, forcing traditional media to enter a frantic race in order to adapt to this technological progress. The Moroccan government made major legal and institutional reforms during the 1980s, particularly in terms of telephone networks and infrastructures. Mobile phones and the Internet began to timidly occupy public space in Morocco from 1994. These two modes of mass communication would nonetheless register an acceleration from the 2000s. During the last decade, mobile phones, combined with the extended use of the laptop and household access to the Internet, are in the process of producing significant changes in society. This development has moved the world to a virtual village where every offline individual also plays a role online. New information and communication technologies bring more than technical solutions; they change the way of thinking that in some cases provokes situations of distress, exposing the most fragile of society – children and adolescents – to high risks of manipulation.

Social media is becoming more and more popular with politicians, parties, and organizations in Morocco as a means of disseminating political messages, discovering the areas of interest for voters, raising funds, and building support networks. In many cases, these activities occur on private social networking sites that allow institutions and politicians to communicate directly with the public in forums online. Recently many political parties represented in the Moroccan Parliament have opened accounts on Facebook and Twitter. Each party also has started its own channel on YouTube in which news clips, announcements, and other video recordings about the party and its representatives are broadcast to the public. The official websites of each party offer links to these accounts, as well as allowing internet users to "bookmark" elements of these sites and share them with their online networks.

According to the World Development Bank (WDB), “There are four complementary key mechanisms through which citizens can engage with policy makers and become ‘agents of change’: political participation, political organization, social organization, and public deliberation” (2018:120). However, despite all of these efforts, young people are not perceived as being interested in institutions and representatives, and they do not trust them much. In addition, they are less likely to vote or join a political party than previous generations of Moroccans. Drawing on longstanding research on political participation and media use in Morocco, this research adapts the language of theorists of media studies in relation to peacebuilding and conflict transformation theories. This research project will present peace technologies as one of the possible ways to counter violent extremism and empower Moroccan youth to take action and be part of the democratic process. Because young people today want instant and engaging interaction when they communicate, the new media tools may be a better solution to promote youth participation than the complicated administrative channels of many governmental institutions.

### **1.11 Research design**

This research study relies on a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, a mixed method approach is followed, and data was collected through a literature review, focus groups, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and surveys. The reason for selecting this approach was to include all the required information on the study topic and increase the quality of the research. Following the research objectives, raw data was collected and coded from focus groups and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and concluded with the triangulation of data through quantitative surveys and questionnaires. A conflict assessment was conducted to determine the best and most suitable intervention. the conflict assessment focuses not on economic drivers of discontent, but rather on the socio-cultural drivers of youth frustration and disengagement. The research adopts a bottom-up approach, first collecting data from the community level with grassroots stakeholders (men, women, and youth, including their families) and

key community leaders (Civil Society Organisation (CSO) representatives, religious leaders, academics, journalists, university faculty, and other local figures), and then advancing the research to the implementation stage where the project “Youth Leaders for Change” came to life using a participatory approach that involved youth and stakeholders.

### **1.12 Research methodology**

The research methodology is based on a mixed method approach via a literature review, key informant interviews, focus groups and surveys. Regarding the literature review, literature was selected to assess the current state of research on youth, media, political participation, and violent extremism which would help determine what is already known and how extensively it has already been researched. It also helped to discover new angles and additional questions that needed further exploration. was used for the key informant interviews, which allowed for new ideas to come up as a result of what the interviewee said. It enabled informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms and it allowed the researcher to capture reliable and comparable qualitative data.

### **1.13 Location of the study**

DerbGhalef Association for Development (DAD) is a non-profit organisation of public utility. It was established in 1993 and its main objective is helping the population to improve their welfare and life conditions. DAD promotes development projects within different socio-economic sectors, always in collaboration with some local institutions. Its approach and working method are participative, based on reciprocal technical exchange and know-how, on solidarity, and on the recognition of the importance of human values and their potentiality. The participants in this research are youth from marginalised neighbourhoods in Casablanca (Sidi Moumen). Twenty-five young people between the ages of 18 and 25 years old were responsible for deciding what parts of the programme were to be investigated and researched. In addition, they were given the ability to choose how the data should be collected and what to do with the results (Baum, et al. 2006; Owen, 2006; Greene, 2006). They worked together with the researcher to identify the issues under investigation, conducted a needs assessment, reached out to their community, and provided potential solutions. When all participants meet with the CSOs’ representatives and technologies, they decided which intervention needs were and should take place and worked together to identify the root causes of the problem and the solution. As part of this research, they were asked to reflect on this process to see the changes that occur during these interactions.

### **1.14 Population and Sample**

The study used a non-probability purposive sampling method. It favoured personal judgement to select subjects that are considered to be representative of the population. Participants were chosen to obtain the most meaningful data on youth participation in political activities and violent extremism among youth. The objective was to select the participants who had experienced the real-time scenarios regarding youth participation in local public governance and media interventions as well as radicalisation and violent extremism. The sample size of FGD is 104 participants including CSOs, school teachers and directors, the youth council, and young people. For the interview the researcher selected 22 participants including CSOs, school teachers and directors, local and national government representatives, and 144 for the questionnaire, including CSO representatives, local businesses, and young people in Sidi Moumen.

### **1.15 Data analysis**

The analysis of data arising from participatory research was one of the most complex aspects of this work methodology, since the instruments were very varied, the data collection conditions were not always the most suitable, and the processes were rarely linear. When analysing, the researcher must give special attention to the "meanings" that people attribute to things, situations, and to his own life. This method sought to capture the perspective of the participants, trying to understand the dynamics of the situation under study (Reason and Bradbury, 2008). In addition to the data from the participatory research cycles, a large amount of data came from semi-structured interviews and conversations with the participants. For these reasons, each type of data was treated as a separate unit, and then put side by side to see where differences and similarities emerged. To help facilitate this process, a matrix table was used, where the rows represent questions and the columns represented individual interviewees. This allowed me to look at themes as they emerged by looking at each interviewee's response to the same question, side-by-side. The qualitative responses from the interview were analysed using thematic analysis.

In total, 75 survey responses were collected, and audio recordings were conducted. The focus groups were a mixed group of men and women and included youth leaders and individuals, religious researchers, and scholars. Focus groups were organized in semi circles with a lead facilitator and a note taker, creating an open group discussion.

Organising and facilitating these focus groups resulted in a productive discussion around a number of themes: *what is terrorism, what is the terrorism narrative, why does it appeal, and how can it be countered?* In particular, Group 2 was described as a focus group that proved productive and insightful.

## **1.16 Overview of significant findings**

More details about the findings can be found in Chapter Six. However, a brief description is provided below.

After the implementation of the Youth Leaders for Peace there was a clear evolution in the beneficiaries' views of the concepts of “tolerance”, “diversity”, “violence”, “freedom of thought”, and “women’s rights”. In the focus group discussions, youth confirmed seeking out opportunities and spaces to deepen the discussions at the communal level that were initiated during the conflict transformation workshop. Discussions on violent extremist messaging have become an integral part of the daily lives of youth and other beneficiaries of the programme. They have gained a deep knowledge of necessary tools that they can pass on to their immediate environments.

The majority explained that *D’aesh* is no longer a taboo word. Where they had previously feared to talk about it, they were now able to discuss the subject amongst themselves and their families to strengthen dialogue and sensitise their loved ones and people in their communities. The project also allowed for greater self-expression as participants explained having developed a new status for themselves in their community. We requested their points of view and one of these stated that they had created solid links with certain institutions in their community.

The women at youth centres have affirmed that people around them have witnessed the changes and are impatiently waiting to be invited to benefit from the next opportunity to be involved in a training about peace and conflict transformation.

The initiation of dialogues on the concepts of the status of women was well received by the diverse beneficiaries. This could have been optimised through the participation of young religious leaders, who are active in at-risk neighbourhoods. A boost to self-esteem can show real leaders within the group. These are qualities that need to be cultivated in the next projects to benefit the reputation of the “Social and Opinion Leader” that was acquired through the project.

Self-esteem is another impact that was underlined by the beneficiaries. They felt valued and needed in the framework of the programme and the evaluation. This good feeling has positively impacted the sustainability aspect of the project.

## **1.17 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. In Chapter One I provided an introduction to the main topic by shedding light on different components that are relate to the context and background of the study.



Chapter Two deals with literature review and the theoretical framework. Discussing the main research pieces related to youth, media, participation, peace and conflict transformation. Chapter Three introduces the research design and the methodology that has been considered to lead this researcher forward. Chapter Four is a description of the conflict assessment that was implemented to guide the intervention. Chapter Five goes deeper into the prevention that was tailored to the needs of the population in question - “Youth Leaders for Peace Project’. Finally, Chapter Six deals with evaluation and analysis of the project and the main data that has been extracted in order to draw conclusions and recommendations for future programs. Chapter Seven provides a summary of the study and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.0 Introduction to the Chapter**

This chapter will be divided into three parts. The first part is the theoretical framework that aims to link this investigation to the theories of peace and conflict transformation. Particular interest will be given to conflicts between people and the state, political violence, youth grievances, and the problem of inclusion. The second part focuses on the problem in the framework of the theories on youth participation, centering around information technology, democracy, and public opinion. This concept provides a fundamental tool for the analysis of the functioning of democratic societies. Particular attention will be paid to the notion of the role of social media in advancing political and civic participation. Finally, the third part will deal with the role of the media in peacebuilding to set the last theoretical base for research by exploring the tools and practices that have been used to promote peace.

The role of the media in positively influencing conflict and democratisation processes is increasingly recognized, considering the fact that multilateral peacebuilding interventions now include media support projects. This research is highly relevant as it contributes to the production of new knowledge in the sense that it touches on a striking theme: that the role of the media in peacebuilding and conflict resolution has not yet been systematized in the Arabic-French-speaking world. It also provides a unique opportunity to discover and investigate the existing peace media seeking to influence the behaviour and perceptions of youth through multiple instruments (social media, TV, and radio programmes).

This chapter explores the evolution of the concept of peacebuilding, which has gone from a focussed approach in post-war situations to a broader concept that encompasses the conflict as a whole, from prevention and management to transformation. This is a long-term framework of action that is facing many difficulties. Within this area, I will offer a vision of the role of civil society as one of the actors involved in the construction processes of peace.

#### **2.1 Introduction to the theoretical framework**

The theoretical influences of this research are based on three complementary fields of research: 1) theories of conflict and peace; 2) youth participation studies; and 3) media studies in relation to

peacebuilding and democracy. Using these three theoretical anchors, the aim is to analyse the complex links between democratic governance, media, and peacebuilding.

I propose a conceptual, theoretical, and practical intervention around the concepts of youth engagement and participation in civic and political life within the framework of studies in peace education. Although the concept of peace education may appear broad and difficult to translate empirically, the proposed operationalisation brings a renewed focus on how social problems can be understood and represents a modest contribution in initiating a program to promote peace education and conflict transformation among marginalised youth using media production.

As part of this study, young people approach their experience from the perspective of marginalised and under-served populations in Morocco. This will allow us to adopt a unique point of view in problematising the difficulties experienced by this population in engaging in civic and political life.

I put the participatory action research in context to explore its relevance to this study and the impact of such methods in bringing about social change and empowering communities.

## **2.2 Peace Education**

Compared to other methods, peace education proves to be a superior and more efficient approach to re-educating young individuals. It instills the importance of steering clear from radicalization. Peace education is also a way to educate youth about the skills and attitudes that are necessary to achieve peaceful goals. According to studies, radicalisation and violent extremism sometimes become the approaches to achieving peace goals (Agastia, Perwita, and Subedi, 2020). Although this seems to be contradicting the peace definition, it is acceptable in some scenarios. Besides this, a violent approach may be used to gradually and firmly establish a sense of power, fear, and control and this is not a case of showing a selfless attitude toward the well-being of humanity. Human motivation for peace education is related to belonging and the power to control individuals. The motivation for violence can be a wrong use of power, control, religious terms, and poverty. The concept of radicalisation and violent extremism has long been addressed by many authors, but a clear definition cannot be developed due to a lack of focus and precision. The Department for International Development (DFID) defined violent extremism by reporting that it refers to the use of violence for rectifying grievances, to target civilians (Kulidtod, 2019). Another definition provided by UN Resolution 2178 says that violent extremism “can be conducive to terrorism”.

Mass violence emerging in society indicates that there are biological and social stimuli that encourage individuals to indulge in the act of violence (Brown, 2019). The motive of violence is negative, and it

cannot help in peacebuilding. Peace education is an effective way to promote knowledge, skills, and behaviours to help people prevent conflict, resolve conflicts, and create conditions that promote peace. Dealing with violent extremism through education is a new way in the international discourse and many national and international policies and educational programs are formed to cater to the situation. Some of the root causes of violent extremism are removed by providing quality education to all individuals and focussing on equal educational opportunities (Mohammadi, 2021). This will reduce unemployment and inequality, which benefits in reducing violence among individuals. Besides this, there is location-specific counter-violent-extremism programming that especially focusses on the individuals that can be more attracted to violence. Youth are considered to be more vulnerable to radicalisation and therefore the major focus of international counter-terrorism strategies (Aiello, Puigvert, and Schubert, 2018). In the current era, the World Bank provides funds for countering violent extremism, and educational programmes have been developed to target youth. However, peace education is limited by the quality of teachers and parents' intentions.

## **2.3 Conceptualising Peace building and Conflict Transformation**

### **2.3.1 Conceptualising Peacebuilding**

Peacebuilding is not an autonomous process that runs parallel to the dynamics of society as a whole. On the contrary, it occurs within societies, in their relationships and environment, in their conflicts, and in the context of their virtues and miseries. Peace is built from the inner peace of each person, but also in its relations with organisations and institutions in which people organise and act, whether at the local, regional, national or international levels. Some academics, researchers and activists have moved towards a broader concept of peace that relates it to social justice, equality, and dialogue (Lederach 1995; 1998; Galtung 1969). According to Diamond and McDonald (1996:13), peacebuilding covers a wide range of activities that contribute to the process of conflict resolution at various stages. Appleby (2001:822) defines peacebuilding as a broad concept that covers various functions, such as conflict prevention, conflict management, mediation, negotiation and decision implementation, reconstruction of societies, support for human rights, and the consolidation of the rule of law in conflict-affected areas. Peacebuilding is traditionally defined by the United Nations (UN) as an objective task of addressing internal conflicts.

There are several broadly defined concepts of peacebuilding that highlight several important aspects of peacebuilding: the prevention of future conflicts, the importance of understanding localized contexts; capacity development of stakeholders; the sequential nature of peacebuilding.

The UN former Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1992) states that peace-building is a medium-term and long-term perspective directed to rebuilding processes in warring communities (Choeden 2010: 41).

Boutros-Ghali (1992: 21) defines peacebuilding as

Action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict ... and ... action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts, and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur.

Brahimi's 2000 peacebuilding report defines peacebuilding as “activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war” (United Nations 2000: 3).

In 2007, the Secretary-General’s Policy Committee has described peacebuilding as:

A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives (Conceptual basis for peacebuilding for the UN system adopted by the secretary-General’s Policy Committee in May 2007).

Ultimately, Ali and Matthews offer us the best overview of peacebuilding:

“...peacebuilding is best perceived as a sequence, beginning with negative peace or the mother of absence of armed forces, and then moving into different layers of positive peace, including the cultivation of political processes and institutions that can manage conflict without resorting to violence; the reconstruction and development of a national economy which addresses the underlying issue of regional inequalities; and the rebuilding of society on the basis of justice and reconciliation” (Ali & Matthews 2004:397).

While the actions of the international community over the last fifty years have been aimed at conflict *management* and reducing their effects, peacebuilding seeks to *resolve* them (*Conflict Resolution, Conflict Transformation*), discussed below. This is a completely different approach that is part of a long-term vision. For some, these issues represent an unattainable ideal. Other experts are confident that it is possible to envisage the construction of a lasting peace based on a peacebuilding mechanism encompassing security, political, and socio-economic aspects.

### **2.3.2 Peace and violence**

Traditionally, peace has been understood as the absence of direct violence or war: “negative peace”. However, Galtung’s (2000) concept of “positive peace” offers an alternative definition that is more than the absence of violence. It includes being safe from various types of oppression and deprivation. This kind of definition mixes development and security projects and is part of a wider debate on “human security.” While these goals are important, including development aid, security, and good governance in the definition of peacebuilding, no longer makes it possible to distinguish causes and effects. “Positive peace” is a complex, medium- and long-term process that is related to human rights, development, and respect for the environment. Galtung (2000), and Kenneth and Elsie Boulding (1995) address the construction of peace from a perspective centred on the causes and structures of conflicts, or “bottom up” approaches, which start from the individual and their needs in society. One of the most relevant contributions was that of Galtung (1969) and his concepts of direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence (see Figure 2.1). Direct violence is related to physical aggression and its maximum expression is war. Structural violence comes from oppressive social, political, and economic structures, which prevent people developing all of their potential, such as poverty, hunger, and the lack of access to education or health. Cultural violence comes from the imposition of cultural values or patterns, denying cultural diversity, and legitimizing the use of force as a way of resolving conflicts. Therefore, building peace is a process aimed at reducing all of these forms of violence, be they direct, structural or cultural.

## Varieties of Violence

Johann Galtung



Source: Johan Galtung (2004), “Violence, War and their Impact, On Visible and Invisible Effects of Violence”, *Forum for Intercultural Philosophy*, available at: <http://them.polylog.org/5/gal-en.htm>

Figure 2.1: Galtung’s Varieties of Violence (Source: Galtung, 2004)

Consequently, Galtung (1998) establishes a relationship between these three manifestations of violence, with the so-called 3Rs: Reconstruction after violence, Reconciliation of the actors in conflict, and the Resolution of the underlying conflict.

The problem of reconstruction after the direct violence; The problem of reconciliation of the conflict parties; The problem of resolution of the underlying, root conflict; If you do only one of these three without the other two you will not even get that one (Galtung, 1998:8).

Conflict transformation and prevention are mainly based on the combination of the “3Rs” working together. Reconciliation will happen if the parties collaborate in resolution and reconstruction. Galtung (1998) adds that reconstruction becomes a process that encompasses four forms of simultaneous action: rehabilitation that addresses short-term healing and abolition of the long-term war; economic and physical reconstruction that takes into account human, social, and cultural development based on a dialogue that includes citizens; building new structures and eliminating old ones on the basis of a democracy that has legitimacy and is based on the participation of civil society; and re-culturation that allows introduction of knowledge and skills basic to the resolution of conflicts at all educational levels. In addition, Galtung (1998) addresses reconciliation in two dimensions. The first is related to conduct, in order to prevent hostilities from emerging. The second deals with attitudes and healing, in the sense that people are rehabilitated.

Reconciliation brings about the personal healing of survivors, the reparation of past injustices, the building or rebuilding of non-violent relationships between individuals and communities, and the acceptance by the former parties to a conflict of a common vision and understanding of the past (Huyse 2003:19). In this way, it is worth mentioning that the discipline of peace research, and especially the Transcend School founded by Johan Galtung, has contributed to the development of the Theory of Reconciliation, providing specific methodologies for the analysis and intervention of those social conflicts where there has been an escalation that causes the appearance of violence and the rupture of relationships between those involved.

Another theorist who has been a key in the process of conceptualizing peacebuilding and conflict transformation is Jean Paul Lederach. Lederach highlights the fact that genuine peacebuilding is more than the post-conflict support of a peace agreement. Rather, it “involves a wide range of activities and functions that both precede and follow formal peace accords” including “processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships.” (1997:20). Therefore, there should be a wide range of activities and functions that precede and follow a formal peace agreement. Metaphorically, peace is not seen only as a phase in time or a condition; it is a dynamic social process that incorporates different functions, roles and strategies by different people at different stages of conflict progression. It involves investment and materials, architectural design, work coordination, foundation placement, and finishing work, in addition to continuous maintenance (Lederach 1998:47). Lederach expresses this notion through an explanatory pyramid (see Figure 2.2)

to position individuals in a system in order to locate and distinguish the approaches and methods that would work best in a certain area or level of society.

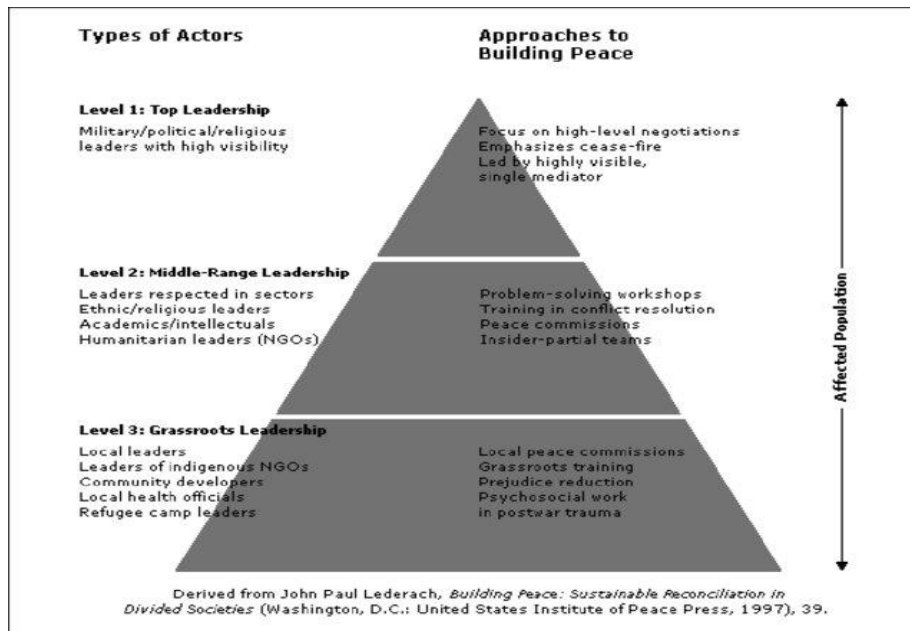


Figure 2.2: Lederach's Peacebuilding Theory (Source: Lederach 1997).

Lederach's theory relies on the ideal model of post-conflict society. This model has the form of the above pyramid, which is divided into three parts –three levels of analysis. The top of the pyramid is composed of the top representatives of society: military, political and religious leaders. The middle level of the pyramid is reserved for middle class leaders, such as academics, intellectuals, and ethnic or religious leaders. The lowest level is reserved for individuals of civil society, i.e., local people, NGO representatives, and tribal leaders.

Lederach stresses the idea that the way to build a lasting peace is through the bottom-up approach, by involving not only the internal structures of society but also external actors (Waisova 2011:34). The journey from the top of the pyramid is inappropriate in his view because it is totally incapable of grasping and understanding the basic needs and problems of people affected by the conflict. Those at the top of the pyramid are unable to identify the challenges that ordinary people face (Waisova 2011: 34). Lederach's approach can be seen as the foundation of a conceptual grasp of building peace from the bottom and not from the 1% of those who hold and accumulate the "power factors" (Carr 1994). The power to generate social and political changes is much more decentralised. Change can occur in activities and processes that are situated on opposite shores and opinions: when people find some ways



to bond, relate and imagine, the “moral imagination” (Lederach 2005:284) is activated, and when this happens social and political change take place in all forms.

In peacebuilding, when we think about strategy, we should think about what life gives and what keeps things alive. In simple terms, being *strategic* requires that we create something beyond what exists from what is available but has exponential potential. In reference to social change, it means that we have to develop a capacity to recognize and build the *locus* of the potential for change (Lederach 2005:157).

Throughout history, conflicts have been one of the motivating forces of social change and an essential creative element in human relationships. Lederach (2008) adds that conflict goes through various stages (confrontation over incompatibilities, negotiation, and resolution) before transformation. In this sense, the construction of peace would mean the passage from confrontation to the transformation of the conflict in peaceful and sustainable relations. These holistic approaches raised from peace research marked the origins of the concept of peacebuilding. Lately, this has been acquiring more relevance as a more operational approach focussed on actions, programmes and policies necessary to resolve civil conflicts and create the necessary conditions for a sustainable peace (Keating et al 2004).

### **2.3.3 The Role of Society: A Bottom-up Approach for Peacebuilding**

Peacebuilding is defined as the practice of non-state actors using different resources to create friendly relationships with national, ethnic, racial, religious or political actors, and building a social structure that will be capable of promoting sustainable peace. In this connotation, non-state actors are not considered transnational corporations or large international NGOs, but just local members of civil society (Oda, 2007: 7). Building peace from the bottom is based on Lederach's theory of the division of peace ownership by relying on people's potential (Lederach, 1997, 2001; Waisova, 2011: 34-36).

Lederach is a supporter of the theory of positive peace in the sense that peacebuilding is based on a conceptually positive definition of goals, which is different from peace-making and peacekeeping which are built on a negative delimitation (United Nations, 2010). Positive peace, for Lederach, is a sustainable peace, characterised by the absence of structural violence that originates as a product of structure relations between individuals and groups.

Positive peace further promotes a high degree of cooperation between individuals around shared values, norms, goals, institutions, and values of individuals' identity. If the ideal model of positive peace is applied, all disputes would be resolved in a non-violent manner (Waisova, 2009: 76). Bar-On understands building peace from the bottom as a necessary complement to the traditional peacebuilding way which enhances the role of the political elites (Bar-On, 2002: 110).

Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2011) have developed the concept of peace building in their book *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*; for the development of the bottom-up peace concept they consider mainly the experiences of the wars in Eastern Europe. Past practice and experience were based on efforts to support local groups in order to protect and develop peace cultures in areas of armed conflict. These practical efforts were based on the theoretical framework of Boulding (2000), who argues that peace cultures can survive the most violent conflicts. The practice of conducting active mediation, with the help of a neutral external actor who intervenes, absolutely fails in the face of a specific form of conflict. Traditional methods of post-conflict restoration seemed to be a failure and totally inadequate for some concrete realities. The consequence of this failure created the necessity of transforming the approach from outside neutral interference to building partnerships with local actors, which is the main aspect of building peace from the bottom (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall 2011: 217). The mediation model in which there is the intervention of an external actor in a neutral position is not sufficient, and often not a relevant model for building and promoting peace. It is necessary to take into account the peace-building potential of the communities in conflict, which implies building peace from the bottom.

After the end of the Cold War, peacebuilding became an advisory role as a consultative tool for local peacemakers, which was realised through workshops, or different training programs in thematic areas that local people themselves considered to be important. The challenge has been to strengthen the position of local actors to rebuild democratic institutions. Peacebuilding initiatives continue to struggle because of the top-down decisions that are made in headquarters outside conflict areas.

Linden and Last (2007), on the other hand, highlight the two challenges to building peace. The first is to control violence to stop violence, and the second is to link this control of violence with rebuilding relationships at community level. This idea draws attention to the insufficiency of political-administrative structures and military security mechanisms to protect and target the sphere of ordinary citizens. NGOs are then seen as very weak, under-funded, and scattered. Their biggest problem remains the inability to have sufficient influence in conflict areas, because their influence often remains only symbolic. There is a need to bring the voices of the “locals” to the decision-making tables, and to make efforts to get their understanding of the role that they can play in recommending governmental strategic solutions to tackle the root causes of the conflict (Hirblinger and Simons 2015: 423). The best solution is to find a complementary strategy in which missions to restore the country and the missions to sustain collaboration with a wide range of actors are both put on a broad agenda within the framework of empowering local initiatives for peacebuilding (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall 2011: 218).

It is easily noticeable that the interrelation between conflict, insecurity, and poverty is intuitive. Conflict generates insecurity, which prevents development and, therefore, causes poverty. This, in turn, feeds the conflict and starts the cycle again, which generates a vicious circle that feeds and grows. Therefore, it is necessary to create minimum peace and security conditions that allow for certain development, from which poverty levels will be improved and the conflict will be weakened. In this way, a reverse cycle will be established, in which peace and security will increase stability and, consequently, development.

### **2.3.4 Factors Leading to Conflict and Violence**

According to Burgess and Fonseca (2020), there are many factors that lead to conflict and violence, including instability, mental stress, and breakdown of community. The community that shows inequality in the distribution of resources will experience conflict and violence. When individuals are not able to get access to quality education, it will lead them to be involved in other activities that may be constructive or destructive. In most cases, the individuals who do not get an education are involved in terrorist activities that promote conflict and violence. According to studies, other factors include politics, economy, demography, culture, security, and environment (Buhaug and von Uexkull, 2021). The theory in this section is beneficial for understanding the factors that harm the process of peace education.

## **2.4 Youth Participation in Context**

### **2.4.1 Introduction**

In various countries, particular importance is given to youth participation policies. Beyond their electoral weight, increasing or decreasing, governments, especially in developed countries, are promoting youth programmes that enhance community building, strengthen agency and empower youth inclusion in society. Many projects are sponsored to develop policies that foster and guarantee the necessary conditions for young people to be active citizens. The literature is rich in work on the political participation of young people, especially in democratic regimes. In this section, I will shed light on political participation in general, and its relation to youth development in the specific context of Moroccan youth. One of the most recognized definitions of participation is:

the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built, and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured (Hart 1993:7).

The term participation can be conceptualized from different theoretical perspectives. It can refer to the ways of justifying the legitimacy and consensus of a given population (i.e., democratic participation) or it can also refer to the ways of fighting social inequality and developing agency and community connections (Krauss et al. 2013). Political participation refers to "all individual or collective activities, that may give the public an influence on the performance of political actions" (Braud 2006:379). In democratic regimes where this value is established as a fundamental value, it is associated with the concept of citizenship. But there are also non-institutional modes of participation that citizens can use (demonstrations, online activity, etc.), to achieve changes generated through power relations.

Social movements have become the key element of a modern civil society, and an important form of participation in the life of the city (Cohen 1994). This idea was confirmed in 2011 with the "Arab Spring" because of the role that was played by civil society. However, there are two types of civil society to be distinguished: an organised and institutionalised civil society, and an unorganised and non-institutionalised society, in which some of the social movements play a part. The latter became a key player during the Arab spring (Luizard 2011:9).

At the end of 2010, in the countries of North Africa and the Middle East, popular uprisings began, with citizens who took to the streets, passing from Tunisia and jumping to Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Morocco, and finally to Syria, protesting against the authoritarian regimes that had governed for more than forty years, and impacting the world. The protesters had had enough of inequality, of humiliation, and of a terrible quality of life. These were reason enough to renounce the traditional regime. Virtual communication mechanisms such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs gained prominence in the development and conclusion of these processes, as in the case of Egypt (Rodriguez 2011).

"The Arab Spring" reflected the inability of governments to maintain legitimacy as a result of the absence of policies that regulate social tensions and/or social, political or economic needs. In a sense, technology, social networks, and the media played a vital role, not only to accelerate or hinder the path of mobilisations as a tool, but also, as the stage on which the nonviolent revolution developed, exposing every moment of these processes to the world and challenging the regimes by destabilizing them nationally and internationally.

#### **2.4.2 Youth and Political Participation**

A study has shown that youth are frequently used by political parties to promote violence (AbdulRahman and Peter, 2018). This matter is related to poverty among the youth, as it is observed that the majority of youth have no source of income and are thus facing poverty and therefore the political parties attract them with an amount of money to commit crime and promote violence. Child

soldiers are a common example of youth involved in violent activities. Unfairness, injustice, and unaddressed deprivations cause African youths' participation in violence. The youth in Africa perform a wide range of roles for politicians such as activists, voters, members of parliament, party members, ministers, and apparatchiks (Van Gyampo and Anyidoho, 2019).

There is another aspect to youth participation, that is, that youth are frequently used by political parties for a variety of reasons: for example, to campaign for the party, or to foster violence against the opposition. This is also linked to issues of poverty as youth are often poor and are enticed by food or payment. You may also consider the cases of child soldiers, children and youth who are used to carry out violent acts. Youth are thus both actors and pawns. They also become very idealistic or disillusioned by poor examples from politicians and older adults, and therefore withdraw or fight back, etc. This is an important discussion.

A current concern of many democratic countries is the low electoral participation of young people. For example, in the United Kingdom, only 43% of 18-24-year-olds went to the polls in 2015, compared to 78% of people aged 65 or over (Ipsos 2015). In the United States, the rates of voting among young people have fallen to 46.1% compared to voters 65 years and older who constitute 70.9% of registered voters (Sombart 2017). This phenomenon is also seen in developing countries. Young people are three times less likely than older people to vote (Milner 2018). Several authors have indicated that the factors of one's life cycle play an important role in explaining the low rates of participation of young people, finding that the electoral participation of an individual tends to increase with the passage of time (Pharr et al 2018). This index usually increases when a person grows and adopts "the role of an adult" (Schaffner 2018). Furthermore, these types of studies were already being conducted in 1971, when it was observed that the differences related to behaviour in political life can be explained in terms of the age groups, given the events that they face at each stage and seeing the decision to vote as a reflection of the perspectives and needs of the different stages of the life cycle (Seagull 1971). Unlike the approach that explains the relationship of abstentionism in terms of the life cycle, the generational approach states that this phenomenon becomes a permanent feature in the political orientation of young age groups, which would imply that when these young people become older, they will not be able to reach the participation levels of their predecessors (Leppaniemi et al 2010). On the other hand, this participation gap between young people and older adults has led to the assumption that young people today are satisfied with the way democracy is taking place and that they are not concerned about electoral participation (Pharr et. al 2018). In addition, another interesting explanation highlights that people are more likely to vote if they have done so in previous elections, even after a series of individual factors which are usually related to abstention, which shows that the people who vote regularly become gradually comfortable with this activity (Dassonneville et al 2017). This is especially likely when

individuals are affected by the result of their action, for example through the victory (or defeat) of their preferred candidate (Alvarez et al 2018). This concept is adopted since often the abstentionism is associated with a definitive exit of the voters of the electoral market, but it is not considered that there are also "entry movements" of those who have abstained temporarily and return to vote (Schaffner 2018). Given the above, it is an error to categorise simply as abstentions those who have not voted. Therefore Crewe (2002: 225-6) suggested breaking them into the following four types:

- **Apathetic abstainers:** those who lack knowledge and interest in politics;
- **Alienated abstainers:** those who abstain because they have no confidence in the electoral system in general, since they believe that it does not address their concerns;
- **Indifferent abstainers:** those who are reluctant to participate in an election in particular, because they believe it does not matter who wins;
- **Instrumental abstainers:** those who are convinced that their vote would make no difference.

There are two other types of abstainers: those who voluntarily do not vote, adopting a decision explicitly to abstain (sticking to one of the four categories previously mentioned); and those who involuntarily do not vote, who despite having the intention to do so, give up for some reason (Johnston and Pattie 2003). In the case of Morocco, studies have shown that a proportion of the population defines their vote moments before marking the card and their decision is achieved by exposure to advertising or opportunism in the media.

It is argued that there is a lack of motivation for parties to mobilise larger numbers of voters, since most parties seek to attract undecided voters who may have a preference for them and leave aside the possibility of building campaigns that generate a greater participation, even if not everything is in their favour (Fisher et al. 2008). Likewise, it is stated that the control of the characteristics of the participation tends to be smaller when there are more parties. Therefore, a greater number of parties and the possibility of coalitions discourages voters from voting (Fisher et al. 2008).

In this context, there are several reasons that have been explained by various authors for the phenomenon of electoral abstention, among them those who explain that citizens do not vote, either because they cannot (lack the resources or capacity), or because they do not want to (lack motivation) (Lutz & Marsh 2007). On the other hand, it is argued that a large percentage of those who do not vote, do so because of lack of interest, low awareness, and indifference towards elections and politics in general. It is also argued that the greater the perceived gap between votes among the candidates, the higher the expected abstention rate (Geys 2006). In addition, it is vital to take into account the state of political affairs at the national level at the time of the vote, since a political crisis that affects the government can lead to the separation of the electors (Pharr 2018).

### **2.4.3 Relationship Between Educational Level and Electoral Participation**

One factor that has been considered "unexpected" in current political arena is the high level of political apathy that occurs among young people today, given that their educational levels are so high. A case shows the record of annual abstention of university students in the United States, where only 26% of young people in 2002 compared to 58% registered in 1970 (Wattenberg 2003); however, diverse investigations report that there is a pattern in the relationship between political knowledge and participation, where the latter tends to be stronger when the level of education in a society is higher (Fisher et al. 2008). An example is the study conducted during the presidential elections in the United States in 2004, where only 51% of individuals with a secondary education reported that they had voted, in contrast to 92% of those who had a university education. Thus, the effective participation of citizens depends on the functioning of the nation's educational system (Dassonneville et al 2017).

A 2017 research study in Morocco found that youth who participate in community-based programmes have higher levels of school attendance, performance, and motivation than those who do not get involved in such activities (Zerhouni 2017). In this sense it is observed that the political commitment of university students is an important area of study, because they are more likely to vote than their non-university peers. In addition, various features related to this population are important in relation to the perceptions, attitudes and behaviours regarding politics (Bernstein 2005). This is how educational level has become an important predictive factor in the political activity of an individual, but the reasons why it has changed over time are due to the fact that content provided by formal education could have changed (Dassonneville et al 2017).

Currently, several investigations show direct effects of the curriculum of university studies on political participation. Now the question that arises in this respect is whether what defines the prediction of the political participation is the quality of the academic institution, the specific curriculum of studies or the effort exerted by each student (Hillygus 2005). The most important explanation for the link between education and political participation can be the so-called theory of civic education. This is rooted in the belief that education provides the skills and knowledge necessary to be politically active and accept democratic principles. Consequently, it seems logical that higher education in itself can directly affect democratic behaviour (Hillygus 2005). This line of thinking affirms that people with more education are more likely to participate in formal political processes because they have greater access to social networks that favour it. It is argued that instruction in the classroom and belonging to social networks allows the encouragement of a sense of civic duty, making it clear that there are multiple avenues through which formal education can influence the probability of voting or refraining from voting (Burden 2009).

The interest of young people today in politics is hard to pin down. Despite the figures, the idea of the politicisation or de-politicisation of young people is largely questionable. It should be noted that young people intervene in contexts different from those of previous generations. The field of "politics" has greatly increased, and its meaning has changed a great deal. The policy is no longer limited to organising institutions and the domain of state power. It is everywhere and characterizes all relationships. To understand young people's interest in politics, it would be wise to adopt a broad definition of the policy and take into account interests and forms through which young people get involved in public life.

#### **2.4.4 Summary**

The new landscape drawn by new technologies and the media demands different skills, abilities and competencies that allow individuals to take charge and develop themselves. Consequently, Area and Pessoa (2012) specify the need for new learning and literacy approaches and models that respond to the challenges that face the current society. Given this panorama, media literacy presents itself as a key factor for the development of the competences that allow individuals to use the media tools that are available in their environment and act ethically, critically, and responsibly. The promotion and development of media literacy requires different actors and stakeholders. It is high time for educational institutions to acquire new models and new types of teaching, using media to close the gap between education and the everyday life of this new generation.

### **2.5 Virtual Zones of Peace and Conflict**

#### **2.5.1 Introduction**

Throughout the twentieth century, there have been important technological innovations that have caused significant changes in people's way of life (cars, planes, televisions, mobile phones, computers, etc.). However, undoubtedly, it is from the nineties and especially in the last decade when these changes have been generated most rapidly due, to a large extent, to the constant and vertiginous technological evolution. Sachs (2015) states that the current technological wave is unique for its speed and its level of impact on economic development and social transformation. Sometimes called the "fourth technological revolution," it "is characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres" (Klaus 2016). There is no doubt that the irruption of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is one of the symbols of these social changes – especially the Internet and mobile phones, which have completely transformed the way in which individuals communicate, interact, and access and disseminate information.



### **2.5.2 Internet, New Media and Everyday Life**

Today people are spending more and more time meeting a range of needs in these universal web spaces. Curran (2016) states that the Internet is not just a place that we visit occasionally to look for something special; it has become more and more the central ground of individual daily life. Young people in particular are consumers of its tools, not only to send spoken or written messages, but also to download, link, and share various content, with increasingly complex skills. Whether interacting on social networks with friends, chatting on blogs, searching for music or information, shopping or finding a partner, the web is the main link to the world now. "It influences how we meet people and nurture relationships, the hierarchies upon which we depend, our health, and maybe sooner than we think, it could lead to forms of human augmentation that cause us to question the very nature of human existence" (Schwab, 2017: 92). The internet mixes in the most intimate way with an individual's life, even outside the network, especially with groups, organizations and institutions. If the web provides an important environment for societal participation, it is hardly –especially among the youngest –felt as radically apart from their life in general. However, from the sociological point of view, it can be argued that certain social functions also require elements of face-to-face encounters in order to be recognized. Democracy is one of them.

This dramatic transformation of the media landscape as well as the social universe obviously has consequences for democracy. On this point, the visibility of debates accelerates, with these force fields of optimism and pessimism very close at hand. While some highlight the overall positive effect of the web on democracy (Benkler, 2006; Castells, 2010), some authors, for example, Morozov (2011), claim that this argument is overrated, and that not only do internet technologies not contribute to democratising the world, but also, they are used by authoritarian regimes to control their citizens and silence opposition. From a cognitive perspective, Nicholas Carr (2010) advances the idea that digital media reduce the ability to think, read, and remember, making the very foundations of civilisation problematic. While many analysts share the idea of Cass R. Sunstein (2008), who states that the "wisdom of the crowds" (as embodied in Wikipedia and the blogosphere) will democratically produce new and improved forms of knowledge, others like Andrew Keen (2008) point to the dangers of participatory web 2.0 and claim that it erodes values, norms, and creativity.

However, observers also point out that the use of the internet for political purposes is far less important than its uses for consumption, leisure, and social connection. For example, Matthew Hindman (2009) estimates that there is only 0.10% of traffic towards political sites. For the majority of people, political issues are not the main subject of concern, and while the web is an impressive tool, it is not capable on its own of mobilising citizens who would not be inclined to engage.

It would be too easy to dismiss this sceptical analysis. At the same time, research has continued to highlight the potential of the internet to broaden and deepen democratic engagement (Curran, 2016). If a policy continues to represent a limited use of the network, its vast universe of communication facilitates its appearance in online exchanges. We can even say that it "burst in", especially in its new post-partisan forms that are currently manifesting. The web environment offers a wide range of means of political participation that take different forms: websites for activist groups, forums for discussion and debate, or documentaries about protests and political clashes on YouTube. Who would have thought, when first introduced, that Facebook and Twitter would become important institutions in the public arena, playing a role in debates and opinion formation.

Since the early 2000s, information technology has played a significant role in peacebuilding. Communication technologies, in the hands of citizens, are powerful and efficient tools for mobilization and advocacy (Fortier 2015). Information technology provides alternative ways to bring about new balances in the foundations of power.

From the arrival of simple email, to dynamic publishing websites, to the advent of social media, there are many communication tools in the hands of citizens that the protesters in the Arab world have effectively used. "We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world" (Chebib and Sohail 2011). There is no doubt that Facebook and Twitter have played a significant role in this course of events which "have demonstrated the relevance and impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) on governance and conflict transformation processes" (UNDP 2013). Using the digital web, people have used these tools to disrupt the traditional exchange of information by providing real-time, accurate audio-visual information. In many other examples, technology has taken a supportive role in social and political movements throughout history. The added value that technology was able to provide, however, has always been the speed of information diffusion (Sturm and Amer 2013: 352). It is now possible to quickly mobilize, motivate and co-ordinate the action of certain individuals to achieve efficient and effective social change movements.

### **2.5.3 Social Media, Fake News and Misinformation**

The media are great channels for transmitting information, but they are not neutral. Most belong to companies that have their own financial and political interests. They therefore generally have an editorial line that influences the treatment of news. The fact that today information can flow freely in our communities through communication technologies is certainly an important and constructive asset of our democratic societies, but that does not necessarily guarantee positive outcomes. False

information and false collective memories may be the price to pay for our freedom of expression. Studies have shown that lies are spread in the US very easily through the use of the internet (Al-Rakhami and Al-Amri, 2020). This is linked to the youth as they are the largest consumers of social media.

Recently, much attention has been given to this phenomenon, and many information verification platforms have emerged, such as PolitiFact and Factcheck, which are tools for checking information on Facebook. These tools are still relatively young, and their developers are working continuously to improve their algorithms. However, some will say that these computer resources do not solve the problem at the source but only on the surface. Indeed, rectifying false information in our news feed is not the same thing as making people aware of the existence of the phenomenon and the credulity of certain people who are confronted with it. In this regard, Higgins (2016) emphasizes the importance of publicly recalling the social mission of science and the basic intellectual virtues on which it is based.

The term "post-truth" may not be a new era in its own right, but rather a way of making us aware of how we treat the information around us. Indeed, we are never neutral in the face of new information because of our convictions, our values, our social influences and our cognitions. Moreover, the information presented to us on virtual platforms is generally the result of complex algorithms favouring the presentation of information likely to correspond to our vision of the world. In the long run, as the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump have shown, this can lead to very different social constructs of reality that can sometimes lead to social breakdown in a community. The academic and scientific world must therefore pursue its social mission by reminding people that the truth is never a given, but a perpetual pursuit of questioning.

## **2.6 Peace Technology: A Promising Tool for Building Peace and Preventing Violence**

### **2.6.1 Introduction**

The term 'peacetech' appeared in mid-2015, indicating and creating a relationship between technology - or information and communication technologies (ICTs) - and peacebuilding. As the name indicates, it consists of "technology" and "peacebuilding". According to Johan Galtung, "peacebuilding achieves positive peace by creating structures and institutions of peace based on justice, equity and cooperation, thus addressing the underlying causes of conflict" (Galtung in Paffenholz 2010: 45). "Technology" can be defined as "the different types of hardware, software or systems that enable people to access, generate and share information." This extends traditional definitions to include technologies such as video games that provide new spaces to share information and communicate, or even unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that provide new ways to collect information remotely "moving beyond a focus on equipment

to the ways people use technologies” (Gaskell et al 2016). It has become a means of communication that has given rise to the development of a new form of society: the “network society,” as Manuel Castell (2011) calls it.

In this context, the so-called Information Society (IS) has been developed –in which the Internet and technology play a decisive role, which, as UNESCO points out in the Prague Declaration in 2003, “must revolve around human rights: it must be based on equality, in human dignity and social justice and must conform to the needs and aspirations of all social groups” and “must respect peace and be guided by the fundamental values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, shared responsibility and respect for nature.” The focus here is on the use, rather than the tools, of technology that can be contextualized in the peacebuilding environment, enabling the “democratization of information” and allowing anybody, from anywhere at any time, to exercise their fundamental right of “freedom to access and use information” for the common good.

The Internet - with 3.2 billion users worldwide - plays a fundamental role, since it is currently the main instrument for accessing and managing information that, together with peace education, is an essential tool to promote a “global citizenship” committed to respect for life, human rights, cultural diversity, gender equity, development cooperation, the fight against poverty, environmental sustainability, peace, justice, disarmament, etc. Therefore, the usefulness of innovations in promoting peace and transforming violence in order to generate awareness and commitment among youth will depend on the creativity, efficiency, and effectiveness of the tools being used. For instance, technology such as social media is such a powerful way in which ideologies are spread and is helpful in spreading peace education among a large group of audiences.

## **2.6.2 Understanding the Role of Technology in the Peacebuilding Context**

We tend to forget that technology is a double-edged sword. Along with the benefits of each breakthrough comes the potential for it to be used for destructive purposes. For example, ISIS created its own drones, *botnets*<sup>1</sup> hijack services to shut down large portions of the Internet, and ubiquitous web postings make fake news that outnumber real news on social media (Piazza 2021:18).

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<sup>1</sup>a network of private computers infected with malicious software and controlled as a group without the owners' knowledge, e.g. to send spam.

It is a daunting task to follow the rise of these trends in the information sphere in which we live today. The powerful tools that give people the ability to create, acquire, and distribute information are rapidly being adopted by government agencies and corporations to expand their influence, collect data, and monitor communications. Brockwell (2019:5) explains that when people celebrate the launch of a new smartphone, they should be aware that the latest geolocation and connectivity technologies, as well as cloud tools and virtual assistants, have as much potential for abusive use as for increasing personal productivity.

The danger presented by today's technology are harder to see than those faced by previous generations. While the nuclear threat was easy to visualize through the image of annihilation under a mushroom cloud, there is no parallel or symbol to visualize the damage that cyber weapons can inflict. It has been claimed that experiencing a data breach is now more likely than rainfall (Brockwell, 2019:2).

“People have to be prepared for whatever form it may take. Whether they use phones, drive a car, or relax at home, they are constantly producing data that will be collected, shared, and analysed. We ask for privacy, but we also ask for data-sharing technology that compromises that privacy” (Brockwell, 2019:2)

A vital way to balance such requests is to monitor who is collecting information and what they are using it for. The more data people create, the more they need to be vigilant about those who collect it. It is one thing to have information collected by law enforcement agencies subject to oversight by a democratically elected government, free media, and watchdog organizations and another thing for agencies like the dark net hackers serving authoritarian states. In the first case, people may not like their information to be accessible to the authorities, but in the second, they cannot prevent it from being used for notorious purposes. Dictators and terrorists see the new lines of communication as a way to spread their ideals because it is not possible to prevent technology from falling into their hands.

One way to promote this change is to think about the use of technological tools as the means to promote a culture of peace. The proper use of technologies could help promote issues such as democracy, human rights and the elimination of inequalities, as well as promoting societies where there is greater equity, justice, peace and solidarity. In this regard, Howard (2013: 31) writes that:

“Digital media can strengthen social cohesion to such a degree that when regular government structures break down, strong social ties can substitute. In other words, if the state is strong but the society weak, information technologies can do a lot to facilitate new forms of governance.”

Different technologies are being used to carry out new forms of citizen participation, as well as mobilization and protest; that is, for the organization of social movements and collective actions. “Technology is making certain aspects of peacebuilding that seemed idealistic thirty years ago, like

mobilizing social movements from the ground up, suddenly possible and tangible” (Berns, 2015:3). For all these reasons, technology has become a fundamental ally for the development of the activities of institutions and organisations, regardless of their field of action (education, health, immigration, peace, environment, disarmament, etc.).

The usefulness of technological innovations in peacebuilding organisations is very broad and, generally, they are used for: the optimisation of internal work; the organisation of social mobilizations; work on the ground; to publicise activities and projects, etc.; that is, as communication tools of the organisation. However, in spite of the important advantages that different technological applications offer to organisations, there are very few that use them regularly and effectively, or they do not use the most appropriate ones for the purposes they pursue, thus losing the potential that offers to help them develop their activities more effectively. In this sense, it is very important to distinguish between peacebuilders and activities that rely on technology as part of their general everyday organizational management (emails, website, social media presence, etc.), from those that use technology with the intention to build peace. Focussing on Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa, the ease of getting digital jobs, increased internet access, digital skills and healthcare, opportunities in digital media, and digital payments can improve the way of life and reduce poverty in the regions that show the link of technology with peacebuilding.

Many reports and research focus on three main functions of technology in peacebuilding initiatives:

- **Promoting peaceful attitudes** (more voices, alternative narratives, sharing information);
- **networking and mobilisation** (alternative spaces, engagement towards collective action) and
- **processing data** (aggregation, gathering, analysis, visualization).

### **2.6.3 Promoting Peaceful Attitudes**

The power of popular media in influencing attitudes and beliefs has been well documented. It has been shown to contribute both to conflict and to reconciliation, particularly in Africa (Stauffacher et al. 2005: 48). Conflict is a dynamic process in which structure, attitudes, and behaviour are constantly changing and influencing one another. In essence, conflict management and peacebuilding are about changing attitudes and behaviour to avoid a tense situation escalating into violence (Galtung 1969; Mitchell 1981; Miall 1992). As we have seen in other fields, newer technology can be an efficient tool in influencing attitudes and behaviour. It has become a fundamental instrument for the development of a culture of dialogue, tolerance and diversity that faces the demands and new challenges facing society. Shirky (2009:17) highlights the idea that “when we change the way we communicate, we change society”. Drawing on the same concept, many researchers explored the roles that new technologies can play to increase or reconfigure social interactions or “to make new forms of sociality possible” (Rheingold

2012:192). Others have shared the same view (Shirky, 2009; Gauntlett, 2011; Castells, 2013) in its relation to the development of social media tools to increase civic engagement. Shirky (2009:106) argues that “new technology makes new things possible: put another way, when new technology appears, previously impossible things start occurring”. This can be clearly seen on a multi-level basis and, as such, it reveals the potential of technology to enhance social innovation in promoting peaceful attitudes.

#### **2.6.4 Data Processing**

Mobile phones and the internet have changed the way we view the world, opening enormous opportunities for people’s mobilisation. With more and more people available to participate in this process, this opportunity to participate in mobilisation is also an opportunity to participate in new peace-building processes. With the growth of the field of peace-building technology, the greatest attention has been paid to the capabilities of new technologies to bridge the gap between warning and response. There is much involvement in this area of rapid growth. Training people to participate in the management of local conflicts and other techniques can assist in peace-building processes by providing tools that enhance cooperation, transform attitudes and give a stronger voice to societies.

Many organisations have developed the idea of peace technology and recently they have launched technologies that can assist with the collection, organisation, and examination of data related to a conflict context (Kahl & Puig Larrauri 2013). These technologies focus on crisis mapping using the *Ushahidi* platform to collect and map data. Other tools that have been helpful for mapping data are *Google Crisis Map*, *CaerusGEO*, and *MapsData*. Emphasis on mapping has sometimes eclipsed other useful data processing software that allows practitioners to collect data via SMS (*FrontlineSMS*) or smartphones (*Magpi*, *KoBoToolbox*), to capture social media data (*Geofedia*) or to process vast amounts of data, often referred to as “big data” (*AIDR*). Many of these tools are free, open source, and increasingly user-friendly.

#### **2.6.5 Small, but Important Steps towards Advancing Peace Technology**

The perception that technologies affect the power dynamics in our societies is obvious. Does each technology bring about a rebalancing of power for the people? Often only time allows us to go beyond immediate appearances. We must allow time for the dynamics of power to make their place. It is inaccurate to claim that nonviolent popular movements are rooted in specific technologies. Every wave of nonviolent popular revolt can be associated with a breakthrough in communication and information technologies. These technologies have often had an advantage for the speed and extent of mobilisations.

The UN started integrating new technologies into its peace operations. In 2014 the UN secretary-general mandated a panel of experts to look into the use of technology and innovation in UN peacekeeping. In its final report, the panel stated that “the availability and effective use of [modern] technology represents the essential foundation—the very least that is required today—to help peacekeeping missions deploy to and manage complex crises that pose a threat to international peace and security.” (UN 2014): The report advances incorporating new technologies into many aspects of peacekeeping operations. These advances in information technology can undoubtedly play an important role in the prevention of international conflicts. However, many of these programs focus on structural and ecological conditions for conflict. They look at patterns they can observe in the context which will allow them to predict a conflict incident. The reality is that most peacebuilders are not interested in these social, structural, and ecological factors. Rather, they are more concerned about the motivation, the reasons that make people choose to engage in violence, which is a difficult type of information to monitor. The work to respond to the impact of armed conflict is progressing slowly, and, without the implementation of appropriate civilian intervention, the impact of these advances will remain limited. There are many tools that are already in place, but it is not enough; more trust and financial resources should be given to peace innovations.

#### **2.6.6 Summary**

Technology can be powerful and efficient, but it still remains a tool. The challenge is to mobilise its specific skills in the best interests of democratic and non-violent processes. The main objective is to make people come out of the silence and struggle that surround their daily lives and to express themselves and work collaboratively in order to voice out their concerns and demands. Technology is changing the flow of information in the field of peace and conflict transformation by providing accessible and low-cost alternatives to visualise, validate, and transform social inequalities using local knowledge in innovative ways that deepen civic engagement, democratise data, expand educational opportunities, inform policy, and mobilise community assets.

### **2.7 The Role of Online Platforms in Countering Violent Extremism and Preventing Radicalisation: Five Experiences**

#### **2.7.1 Introduction**

This section analyses the role that the leading companies in the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) sector have played in countering terrorism (CT) and preventing violent extremism (PVE).



The growing importance of the nexus between terrorism and ICT has attracted numerous researchers and analysts. This link has been highlighted at the level of national security strategies and in international organizations, addressing the need to tackle the illicit use that terrorist groups make of global technology platforms.

Terrorist groups have increasingly acquired high technological capabilities, especially in the field of social networks and online platforms, services that allow them to achieve both strategic and tactical objectives. The growing adaptability to Web 2.0 has led to a series of international efforts aimed at curbing the use of online platforms by these groups. These initiatives are aimed at helping the technology industry to protect itself from terrorist exploitation based on respect for freedom of expression and human rights.

To illustrate these measures, five leading companies in the sector have been selected, participating in most international efforts at CT / PVE: Facebook, Twitter, Google, Microsoft, and Telegram. For each case, the position they have regarding terrorism will be analysed, as will the measures they adopt to face it, the role they play and their effectiveness. These five cases were selected mainly since their services are the most-used for terrorist activities and because they receive great pressure from public opinion to take responsibility for those actions. Additionally, these companies can be considered leaders in the sector.

### **2.7.2 Facebook, Twitter, Google, Microsoft, Telegram**

To prevent violent extremism, in recent years there has been a change in the approach to the problem, that is, from taking traditional security measures to more holistic approaches. Building resilience against violent extremist ideologies, both at the individual and community levels, and addressing the root causes of this violent radicalization is now critical. Under pressure from governments in Europe and the United States after a series of attacks by extremist militants, the internet giants (Facebook, Google's YouTube, Twitter and Microsoft) were tasked to share technical solutions to remove terrorist content, conduct investigations and work more with counterterrorism experts. The initiative comes in response to a request from world leaders for technology companies to establish an industry forum and develop new technologies and tools to improve automatic detection and removal of extremist content.

Despite these initiatives, Tech Transparency Project in 2021 warned that the Facebook algorithm continued to promote content from hate groups. The new findings underscore how Facebook, now under the Meta parent company, remains a powerful vector for domestic extremism, even after the attack on Capitol Hill that sought to overturn the 2020 election — it censored the early 2022 Tech Transparency Project —. For those militia groups, Facebook remains an unparalleled platform to spread their anti-

government message, communicate with members, and reach new recruits. Brownsword (2016: 106-7) argues that:

“On the one side, it remains important that governance - now in the form of power exercised through technological management - is properly authorised and limited; and, on the other, although citizens might have less opportunity for ‘non-compliance’, it is important that the constraints imposed by technological management are respected”.

“...it is the ideal of legality together with the Rule of Law that stands between us and a disempowering techno-managed future” (Brownsword 2016:138).

Regardless of how complicated control can be, staying out of the big networks has a key impact. Although the hate speeches continue to be heard on Parler, Gab or other "niche" networks, in terms of visibility, their reach is not comparable to that offered by Facebook, with 2,910 billion users, or YouTube, with 2,6 billion users. “Yes, they still operate on alternative platforms... but in the first layer of evaluation that we could do, it is the main platforms that matter the most,” (Tromble 2021:18). Since rethinking its policy, in 2020, Facebook would have given its approval to 75,500 suspensions, between profiles and groups related to militarized groups. In the case of Twitter, in January 2021, the network reported the removal of 70,000 accounts associated with QAnon. So far, no company has been able to efficiently automate the removal of videos with terrorist content. Either the algorithms are too lax, or they are too strict, which causes a malfunction for the user.

The following section discusses the major social media platforms currently used by people throughout the world and some of the actions that have been taken by them to counter violent extremism online.

Facebook:

The company comprises three platforms: the social networks of Facebook and Instagram, and the encrypted instant messaging system WhatsApp. All the efforts that the company makes with respect to CT / PVE extend to these three platforms.

Facebook has received great pressure from public opinion regarding the use of its platforms by terrorist groups, so it has made several statements in its corporate blog where it asserts that it agree[s] with those who say that social networks should not be a place where terrorists have a voice. “Since we do not want terrorists to have a place in any of the applications of the Facebook family, we have started working on systems that allow us to take action against terrorist accounts through all our platforms, including WhatsApp and Instagram” (Bickert & Fishman, 2017:45).

Terrorists use Facebook mainly to spread their messages and create related groups to socialise with followers of the cause and to establish contact in order to radicalise. There have also been cases of

groups buying and selling illegal weapons through these platforms (Chivers, 2016). Facebook prohibits gun sales on its service. But buyers and sellers can violate the rule 10 times before they are kicked off the social network. For example, David Ali Sonboly, who opened fire near a mall in Munich in July 2016, had bought his pistol on the dark web (Paoli, 2018). Another example is Luca Trainini, an Italian Far-right extremist who used a legally-owned weapon bought from Facebook Market to target six African migrants in 2018 (Duquet and Goris, 2018). Facebook has maintained that it adequately controls gun sales, arguing that such deals represent a small fraction of the content on its networks and that many who violate the policy are unaware that they are breaking the rules, as the gun sales are legal in the United States. Despite the fact that illegal arms sales have always existed in countries with armed conflicts, it is clear that the use of Facebook is convenient due to the ease it provides in displaying images, providing information and access. The use of WhatsApp is aimed more at communication between terrorists, mainly for the organisation and execution of operations and for the dissemination of information. This encrypted messaging platform has been severely criticized for making it impossible to provide a way to access the messages that terrorists exchange in it.

Twitter:

Twitter is a social network where links, photos, videos, or messages are shared. The company is aware of the use that terrorists make of their platform: in their corporate blog, they also address the measures they adopt to combat the terrorist use of their platform. Twitter has significantly increased its efforts against terrorists by shutting down thousands of terrorist accounts and hiring more staff to monitor terrorist activity on its network.

“There is no place on Twitter for terrorist organizations or violent extremist groups and individuals who affiliate with and promote their illicit activities. The violence that these groups engage in and/or promote jeopardizes the physical safety and well-being of those targeted. Our assessments in this context are informed by national and international terrorism designations. We also assess organizations under our violent extremist group criteria” (Twitter, 2019: np).

Twitter is mainly used by terrorists for the dissemination of messages and propaganda. On their home page Twitter updates the measures they adopt in order to combat these types of uses, mentioning the challenges they face. Other tools in Twitter's arsenal against terrorists are anti-spam software designed to hunt down the accounts of terrorists. Twitter has also partnered with law enforcement and internet organizations working to counter terrorist recruiting efforts.

There is no 'magic algorithm' to identify terrorist content on the Internet, so global online platforms are forced to make challenging judgments based on very limited information and guides. Despite these challenges, we will continue to aggressively apply our rules in this area and engage with authorities and other relevant

organizations to find solutions to this critical problem and to promote powerful narratives against hate speech (Twitter Inc., 2016: n.p).

Google:

Google LLC is a subsidiary company of the American multinational Alphabet Inc., which includes, among others, the Google search engine and the YouTube video viewing platform. Google condemns terrorism as an "attack on open societies" considering that "addressing the threat posed by violence and hate is a critical challenge for all of us" (Walker, 2017:95). Committed to being part of the solution, they state that there is no place for terrorists in their services. YouTube states:

We do not allow terrorist organizations to use the platform for any purpose (including the recruitment of followers). YouTube also strictly prohibits content related to terrorism, which encourages terrorist acts, incites violence or commemorates this type of actions" (YouTube, 2018: n.p).

After conducting extensive research to understand how terrorist groups take advantage of technology to spread their messages and recruit new members, Google has announced new features to combat the search for terrorist content on its video platform. From now on, users searching for terrorism-related content on YouTube will be directly redirected to pages designed against extremist ideologies. They created the so-called "Redirect Method", which uses specific content to direct users away from these recordings and redirect them towards content oriented to the anti-terrorist fight. With this new measure, Google's audio-visual content platform intends to go one step further to counter Internet violence. Despite the fact that even today it is no longer possible to find scenes of extreme aggression or recordings of sex - with a few exceptions - there are still hundreds of videos on YouTube containing violent scenes that user are exposed to.

Microsoft:

The Microsoft company knows that, although it does not have any of the leading online platforms, there is terrorist content that can be shared using services hosted by Microsoft. On its corporate website, it alludes to the universally acceptable definition of terrorism and specifies that they consider as terrorist content that which is published by or in support of the organisations included in the Consolidated List of Sanctions of the United Nations Security Council which describes graphic violence, encourages violent action, supports a terrorist organization or its acts, or encourages people to join such groups (Microsoft Corporate Blogs, 2016).

Telegram:

The Telegram platform is an encrypted instant messaging system. It is considered the preferred app by terrorists, specifically ISIS, and is based on public communication channels and private chats. The terrorists have co-opted both for the distribution of propaganda, incitement to violence, the coordination of foreign fighters, and the allusion of responsibility for terrorist attacks. According to counterterrorism expert Steven Stalinsky, Telegram has already overtaken Twitter as the most important platform for ISIS (Counter Extremism Project, 2018).

The company, which has a controversial position, has reaffirmed that "all chats and group chats are private among their participants. We do not process any type of requests in relation to them" (Telegram, 2018). However, as will be seen below, the company is not indifferent to the use of its platform by terrorist groups.

### **2.7.3 How do Terrorists Use These Platforms?**

Terrorists have become adept at exploiting technology and the Internet to achieve tactical and strategic objectives. To explore the use of these diverse technology platforms, we will focus on the classifications that Cohen-Almagor performs, the experts of the United Nations initiative TechAgainstTerrorism, and Resolution 2129 (2013) that indicates how terrorists use ICT platforms for the recruitment and incitement, financing, planning, and preparation of terrorist acts. The incident of looting in Durban in South Africa was driven by social media. Social media spread rumours about the looters and the communities, and this resulted in open fighting back and looting (Ngcamu and Mantzaris, 2021). In 2016 social media technology played a major role in the radicalisation of 90% of the extremists in the PIRUS data (Start, 2015). Besides this, between 2005 and 2016 technology favoured radicalisation of 50.15% of individuals who were part of extremist groups (Start, 2015).

A study by Cohen-Almagor showed that terrorists use the aforementioned platforms for: a) propaganda and indoctrination – including psychological warfare and dissemination of instruction manuals and tactics, b) sociability and motivation – including networking, c) recruitment, d) fundraising – including illicit purchase and sale of weapons, and e) planning and coordination of operations and attacks (Cohen-Almagor, 2016: 59-61).

According to the Tech Against Terrorism initiative, terrorists use technology mainly for: a) propaganda, radicalisation, and recruitment through social networks and file sharing platforms, through the use of content storage and knowledge exchange, and b) coverage of operations through communication and messaging and financial technology platforms and payments (Tech Against Terrorism, 2018).

According to Europol's European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) of 2017, terrorists are very agile in the diversity of fundraising mechanisms, both legal and illegal. This report highlights how the growing number of young terrorists, most of them with technological knowledge, has also brought an increase in the use of modern technological financial services, such as mobile applications of encrypted and partially anonymous transfers, which allow a financial mechanism without borders, reliable and protected (Europol, 2017). In addition, Tech Against Terrorism points out a very important aspect, that of future threats posed by new technologies, such as blockchain and decentralized platforms, online transfers, alternative financing through crowdfunding, or cryptocurrencies. This aspect will also not be considered due to the absence of sufficient necessary data.

The use of these platforms also means greater facilities for attacks by “lone wolves”. The calls to carry out attacks in solitary wolf mode spread online through a sophisticated information strategy that was based on the use of platforms such as the ones mentioned and other similar sites, for example, anonymous sharing portals such as *Justpaste.it* that allows for easy ways of sharing information (Shehabat, Mitew & Alzoubi, 2017: 27-53).

A very common concept that encompasses these activities is that of electronic jihad. This has been enhanced by ISIS to recruit numerous affiliates to a distribution network dedicated to disseminating propaganda videos, organising financial support, generating battlefield updates, reaching potential recruits globally, and illustrating a utopian propaganda image of the day to day activities in the territories controlled by ISIS. Activities as simple as the dissemination of weekly Dabiq or Rumyah magazines, or the sharing of instructions to establish encrypted communications, count as electronic jihad (Shehabat, Mitew & Alzoubi, 2017: 36-37).

#### **2.7.4 What Can be Done to Stop online terrorism?**

Experts point to various methods and strategies to curb the use by terrorists of the platforms mentioned. The methods used by three initiatives have been selected: The Radicalisation Awareness Network of the European Union (RAN), TechAgainstTerrorism, and the Department of the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE)

##### **Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)**

The RAN identifies seven categories of approach to counteract extremism: a) training for frontline professionals, b) exit strategies, c) commitment and empowerment of the community, d) youth education, e) family support, f) delivery of contrary or alternative narratives, and g) and multi-agency approaches (RAN, 2017: 14).

## Tech Against Terrorism

The use of online platforms by terrorists is not limited to the aforementioned platforms and services. The boom of start-ups and online applications has not left counterterrorism experts indifferent. The initiative is committed to the development of knowledge exchange tools that support the smallest technological firms in their fight against the terrorist exploitation of their services, and advocates for a self-regulated industry and a more cohesive and systematic approach in the fight against the use of technology by terrorists. This more global and integral approach comes from the understanding that the removal of shared or published content is part of the solution, but not the solution itself.

## LIBE Committee

The LIBE Committee conducted a study in 2017 on counteracting terrorist narratives. The study highlights four trends in the current efforts in the fight against terrorist propaganda:

- a) Disruption: The main objective is to interfere with the distribution of propaganda by stopping it directly at the source, thus preventing it from reaching its target audience. This method is carried out by withdrawing content and suspension of social network accounts. It suffers from some criticisms, such as the risk that the activity moves from the usual platforms to other alternatives. Research in 2017 indicates that pro-ISIS accounts on Twitter were linked up to 39 platforms or websites with different content (Maura et al. 2017: 6). This limitation of effectiveness implies a renewed interest in actions to counteract narratives (Briggs & Feve, 2013). An example of the application of this method is carried out by Europol's Internet Referral Unit (IRU).
- b) Redirection: This seeks the redirection of the viewers towards different messages with the hope of altering their behaviour, mainly by denying the theories of the extremists. This is a pioneering method inaugurated by Jigsaw, Google's Think Tank, and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue in its "The Redirect Method" project.
- c) Design of messages and campaigns: This tries to provide information and skills to civil society organizations (CSOs) to develop communication campaigns, usually based on counter-narrative or alternative narrative approaches, so that they confront and detract from the terrorist propaganda.
- d) Government communication and synchronization between message and action: This focuses on the importance of synchronization between communication campaigns and the actions that are carried out. This comprehensive perspective aims to link message and action and coordinate the different messages between governments and international partners to prevent the weakening of a narrative due to the "say-do gap", limiting the possible contradictions.

The UN Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTED) focusses its work on countering and preventing the terrorists' use of ICTs using four methods: a) incorporate ICT in advising Member States of the implementation of resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), and 2178 (2014); b) promote self-regulation

of the industry; c) strengthen the legal assistance of digital content; and d) promote counter-narrative techniques.

### **2.7.5 What is Currently being Done: Five Case Studies**

In relation to established methods, the main platforms used by terrorists have developed a series of projects to limit or prevent such use. In addition to the projects carried out by each company, either individually or in collaboration, it is worth discussing the initiatives taking place now.

#### *a. Tech Against Terrorism*

Tech Against Terrorism is a project commissioned by UN CTED and implemented by the ICT4Peace foundation. Its mission is to help the global technology industry to protect itself from terrorist exploitation, respecting freedom of expression and human rights. They support companies of all sizes in the technological ecosystem, including social networks, storage, encryption, security, financial technologies and eCommerce, as well as CSOs and academia.

In 2017, it launched the Knowledge Sharing Platform (KSP), a collection of tools that start-ups and small businesses can use to protect themselves from the exploitation of their services by terrorists. Additionally, they work on the creation of online tools to assess the risk that services can be exploited by terrorists, the possibility of defending themselves against such exploitation, and advise on the creation of Terms of Service.

#### *b. Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT)*

In 2017, CTED and ICT4Peace inaugurated the GIFCT in San Francisco, USA, built on the basis of initiatives such as the Internet Forum of the European Union. Its purpose is to formalize and structure existing and future collaboration areas, and encourage cooperation between companies in the sector, academics, CSOs, governments, and supranational organizations.

They focus on technological solutions, research on counter-narrative efforts and elimination of terrorist content, and exchange of knowledge (Twitter Public Policy, 2017). This forum has been criticized for the lack of evidence that it has resulted in any kind of progress (Woron, 2018).

#### Case study number 1: Facebook

Facebook focuses its most innovative techniques on the terrorist groups that pose the biggest threat globally in both the real world and online, ISIS and Al Qaeda. In its website the company exposes the techniques that it uses to combat terrorism, namely:



a) Artificial Intelligence (AI): It makes use of AI for "image matching" and understanding of language to improve the possibilities of eliminating terrorist groups online. "The offline trend is reflected online as well. When we identify pages, groups, publications or profiles that support terrorism, we use algorithms to try to identify related material that can support terrorism "(Bickert & Fishman, 2017). AI avoids recidivism by detecting new accounts created by repeat offenders and improves cross-platform collaboration.

b) Human capacity: Facebook believes that algorithms are not as good as people when it comes to understanding complex contexts. Therefore, the number of specialists who work on the elimination of terrorist content have been increased. In addition, they have a global team that responds in a matter of minutes to emergency requests that come from law enforcement agencies. The latter falls within the recommendations of the European Commission, specifically in "the one-hour rule", which is: "Given that terrorist content is most harmful during the first hours of its appearance online, all companies must withdraw them, as a general rule, within one hour of notification " (European Commission, 2018).

After the Facebook scandal with Cambridge Analytics that was uncovered in March 2018, which revealed the data leakage of more than 50 million users that was used to interfere in political processes, the company has worked on improving both its AI capabilities and the growth of the hiring of personnel in "Security and Community Operations". There are currently around 7,500 content moderators working in coordination with AI algorithms detecting fake accounts, improving authentication, and reducing harassment and fraud, among other tasks related to security (Rosenbaum, 2018).

c) Collaborations: Facebook cooperates with governments and intergovernmental agencies in the Internet Forum of the European Union, the Global Coalition Against Daesh, and the Ministry of the Interior of the United Kingdom. In 2017, Facebook expanded its collaboration with various organizations specialising in global terrorism or cyber-intelligence, such as Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) or the SITE Intelligence Group, to help detect content for review (Bickert & Fisherman, 2017).

Facebook mentions the problem of encryption of WhatsApp, noting that while they cannot read the content of encrypted messages, they provide all the information possible to validate requests from law enforcement and the law, consistent with the laws that apply and company policies.

Facebook has a series of programmes in collaboration with different entities:

1. *Shared "hashes" database*: With Microsoft, Twitter, and YouTube, the hashes are unique digital fingerprints for photo and video. By sharing these traces, the content produced by or in support of terrorist groups can be more easily detected through these platforms (Facebook, 2016).
2. *Online Civil Courage Initiative (OCCI)*: With the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), this project collaborates with more than a hundred organisations that counter hate and extremism in Europe. It supports them in amplifying their work and increasing impact. It seeks to combine

experiences among NGOs, CSOs, and academics to promote new alliances and campaigns. It has an assistance service for NGOs that carry out counter-narrative campaigns. Their monthly perception reports contain analysis and information on how extremist ideologies are supported and extended online. The OCCI community consists of closed Facebook groups in which you can share experiences and content.

3. *Hackathons*: In collaboration with Affinis Labs, in places like Manila or Jakarta, community leaders and technology entrepreneurs join forces to develop innovative solutions against online hatred and extremism.
4. *P2P: Facebook Global Digital Challenge*: With Edventure Partners, this student competition reached, in less than two years, more than 56 million people through more than 500 campaigns created by university students in 68 countries.
5. *Average Mohammed Campaign*: This is run in collaboration with ISD, Twitter, and Google. It is a preventive education campaign composed of a series of videos aimed at young Somali Muslims living in the USA. It tries to establish the critical thinking necessary to build resilience among young people and prevent violent radicalisation. The ultimate goal is to empower young Muslims through messages that counter extremist ideologies and discourage them from joining extremist groups. This campaign aims to establish itself as an online voice against extremism and for democracy (Silverman et al., 2016: 18-19).
6. *"The Counter-Narrative Toolkit"*: This web page, founded by Facebook and inspired by a Jigsaw (Google) pilot project, sought to work with credible messengers to select, disseminate, and analyse counter-narrative content. It was created after seeing that the individuals who could best produce credible counter-narrative messages did not always have the skills or capabilities to do so. The toolkit is freely accessible and is intended to be a basic guide for beginners.
7. *Training sessions for NGOs*: Due to the greater effectiveness of the counter-narrative measures that come from credible spokespersons, Facebook trains NGOs that work in this area, helping them to reach their target audiences in a positive way.
8. *Tech Against Terrorism and GIFCT*: In addition to collaborating with governments, they prepare a joint investigation on how governments, technology companies and CSOs can fight against online radicalisation (Facebook, 2017).

Facebook mentions as a mission the substantial disruption of the terrorists' ability to use the internet to extend their causes, always respecting human rights. This disruption includes addressing the promotion of terrorism, the dissemination of propaganda, and the exploitation of terrorist acts. To achieve this, it is committed to the union of forces through three strategies: a) use and improve technology, b) share knowledge, information and good practices, and c) direct and finance research.

The company affirms: "Today, 99% of the terrorist content related to ISIS and Al Qaeda removed from Facebook is detected before anyone in the community has marked it as inappropriate, and sometimes even before it has been published" (Bickert & Fisherman, 2017).

Case study number 2: Twitter

Twitter maintains a policy of zero tolerance with respect to accounts belonging to or affiliated with violent extremist groups, which are suspended permanently.

On its policies and general guidelines page, it states:

The behaviours we consider when determining whether an account is affiliated with a violent extremist group include the following: a) state or suggest that an account represents or is part of a violent extremist group, b) provide or distribute services in order to benefit the declared objectives of a violent extremist group, c) carry out or encourage acts in favour of the violent extremist group, d) recruit members for the violent extremist group (Twitter, 2018 )

The main measure that it adopts, therefore, is disruption through the elimination of accounts. In 2016, it mentioned the suspension of 360,000 accounts since mid-2015, with daily suspensions 80% higher than the previous year (Twitter, 2016). The response time to complaints, the time that accounts remain on Twitter, and the number of followers that accumulate have decreased dramatically in recent years. They have also made progress in preventing the return of those suspended to the platform and use of anti-spam tools to find similar accounts. It is also known that these measures involve a significant migration of these activities to other platforms (Schiloach, 2016).

Among the projects carried out to counter terrorism and violent extremism we find: *Collaborations with organisations that work in CVE and participation in government initiatives in CVE*: The Public Policy team continues to expand its collaborations with organisations working in PVE online, for example Parle-moi d'Islam (France), Imams Online (UK), Wahid Foundation (Indonesia), The Sawab Center (UAE), and True Islam (US) to empower credible non-governmental voices.

Case study number 3: Google

The company states on its blog how both Google and YouTube work with governments, law enforcement agencies and CSOs to counter the problem of violent online extremism.

Their actions against online terrorism can be divided into three aspects: a) Staff that review and combat the abuse of their platforms by terrorists, b) engineers who develop technologies to prevent the re-loading of known terrorist contents and to identify new content, and c) collaboration with groups of experts, CVE agencies, and other technology companies to strengthen their efforts (Walker, 2017).

Among its developed projects are:

1. *YouTube's Trusted Flagger*: This program based on machine learning makes use of independent experts whose reports help to improve efforts and identify areas of emerging concern. Videos that do not clearly violate their policies but have inappropriate content (for example, incendiary

religious content) will appear under a warning and will not be monetized, recommended, or allow comments, in a way that will be more difficult to find.

2. *Creators for Change*: This program promotes YouTube voices against hate and radicalisation.
3. *Redirect Method*: This consists of the use of Google Adwords targeting tools and selected YouTube videos to confront online radicalisation. This project focuses on the ISIS target group most susceptible to their messages and redirects them to videos that discredit ISIS recruitment issues. To reach the target audience, it makes use of the tools used in online advertising. They have credible content which does not need to be created because it has already been loaded by internet users. The pilot project obtained 500,070 minutes of visualized video and 320,906 individuals reached in its 8 weeks of duration. The demand for online material created by ISIS presents an opportunity to attract the most vulnerable individuals to YouTube's messages, an opportunity that can be exploited through sophisticated online advertising.
4. *Against Violent Extremism (AVE) Network*: This is an alliance of ISD, Jigsaw, Gen Next Foundation, and Rehabstudio. The AVE network brings together former violent extremists and survivors of violent extremism to work together in order to counteract violent narratives and prevent the recruitment of young people. AVE uses technology to connect, exchange, disseminate, and influence all forms of violent extremism. Through the website and YouTube channel, members can share ideas, collaborate, find funding, or project their messages to larger audiences.

#### Case study number 4: Microsoft

Microsoft is modifying its terms of use to specifically prohibit the publication of terrorist content in the services that the company hosts. It has a notice and withdrawal process for the removal of content prohibited by its terms of use, which works through an online reporting tool (Microsoft, 2016).

In addition, with respect to its Bing search engine, the company is committed to the promotion of free expression, presenting links to all relevant information available on the Internet. However, they remove links to content related to terrorism as long as the withdrawal is required by local laws.

Microsoft also collaborates with other organizations in various projects:

1. *Online Security Programme of Youth Spark Hub*: Part of the Youth Spark initiative provides access to educational and economic information and opportunities for young people around the world.
2. *Redirect Project* (with ISD): Similar to the Redirect Method, it is based on ad-based interventions in the Bing search engine. The purpose of the project is to "help us and the NGOs to better understand the problem, develop an effective and proportionate response, and offer individuals a positive alternative to violence and extremism" (Microsoft, 2017).



#### Case study number 5: Telegram

For the last case study, the company Telegram has been selected. This company has endured harsh criticism about its position in relation to the alleged lack of measures taken to prevent the illegal use of its platforms.

Terrorists use Telegram to recruit new members, raise funds, incite violence and coordinate terrorist acts. A list of private messaging applications recommended by ISIS was circulated by the group in January 2015, where they classify Telegram as "safe," ahead of Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. Thus, they recommend its use. Telegram is promoted as an ultra-secure instant messaging system and has a reputation as a means of communication that cannot be decrypted (Tan, 2017).

## Under the Radar

Islamic State issues regular tech tutorials intended to keep followers' communications out of reach of government surveillance. This guide, circulated in January 2015, ranks the encryption of chat apps.

'Safest'	'Safe'	'Moderately safe'	'Unsafe'
 SilentCircle	 Telegram	 CoverMe	 Viber
 Redphone	 Wickr	 BBM	 WhatsApp
 OSTel	 Threema	 iMessage	 Nimbuzz
 ChatSecure	 Surespot	 FaceTime	 Hike
 Signal (formerly Textsecure)		 Hangouts	 Tango
		 Facebook Messenger	 Chat ON
			 ooVoo
			 Kik
			 Kakao Talk
			 Voxer
			 WeChat
			 GroupMe
			 MessageMe
			 Imo.im
			 TalkRay
			 IM+

Source: SITE Intelligence Group

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Figure 2.3 "Under the radar". [Source: Site Intelligence Group, 2015].

Telegram seems to have surpassed Twitter as the most important platform for ISIS. The terrorist group used to coordinate their public relations campaigns on Twitter and other social media platforms by sharing relevant materials stored on other pages, such as Justpaste.it or SendVid, before publishing them. This process seems to have moved mostly to Telegram, where the secret coordination of campaigns is carried out before taking them to Twitter or YouTube (Counter Extremism Project, 2018).

Jade Parker, a specialist in the use of the internet by terrorists, points out how the combination of three different functions (communications by channels, groups or secret chats, in a single platform) is the reason why these groups use this platform as a centre of command and control. "They congregate in

Telegram, then they go to different platforms. The information starts in this app, then spreads to Twitter or Facebook "(Tan, 2018). However, experts point out that the privacy and safe nature of Telegram does not offer the same momentum and ability to reach potential recruits as Twitter. This platform requires sufficient know-how and so potentially deters those who do not have enough interest or who lack technical skills (Watkin & Whittaker, 2017).

After the Paris attacks in 2015, which were planned and coordinated in part through Telegram and WhatsApp, Telegram revised its position and agreed to withdraw ISIS accounts from public channels by closing 78 of them, but refused to eliminate the private chats, where coordination is actually carried out. "Our policy is simple: privacy is paramount. Public channels, however, have nothing to do with privacy. The public channels of ISIS will be blocked" said its founder and CEO, Pavel Durov. However, experts point out that such blocks are not very reliable, not necessarily because the platform does not try to counteract the terrorist material, but because the nature of the app makes it much more difficult to block users selectively. Ahmet S. Yayla, expert in counterterrorism, points out: "You can create a new channel in 30 seconds. So now, instead of opening three channels, they open 50 to spread propaganda. Eliminating channels does not affect your activity."

Durov rejects the idea of giving the security forces access to the application, noting that even if Telegram were completely turned off, it would do little to stop communications between terrorists (Robbins-Early, 2017). In a statement on its corporate blog, Telegram spokesman Markus Ra states how government officials call for "back doors" in applications with end-to-end encryption, to stop terrorism, omitting the fact that it cannot work nor will it work (Ra, 2017). He also explains how they consider that terrorist organisations use the platform, and what can be done to stop that use. Regarding private messages, he points out that if end-to-end encryption were discarded, terrorists accustomed to facing obstacles to ensure that their communications are secure and their missions victorious, would immediately switch to tactics such as creating their own apps, using coded language, or use other methods of communication. Ra details how they take action by eliminating public channels, through the "ISIS Watch" platform, based on user reports. The channels are reported almost immediately and eliminated in a matter of hours; nevertheless, the nature of Telegram demands collective efforts directed by the users to suspend them.

Thus, Telegram considers that the elimination of accounts, channels, or messages is not the solution. This is in line with the position of Tech Against Terrorism regarding the fact that the withdrawal of content is part of the solution, but it is not the solution itself. But that consideration does not exempt Telegram from responsibility in the eyes of the majority of public opinion, which believes that more could and should be done about it.

Despite all the above-mentioned initiatives, these actors often shield the shortage of results in justifications of various kinds, such as reasons based on the principle of freedom of expression, reasons of a pragmatic and business-oriented nature anchored in the need to innovate, or technical reasons based on the difficulty of monitoring the enormous volume of content uploaded to the Internet on a daily basis (Cohen-Almagor, 2017: 430).

### **2.7.6 Data Change**

Numerous experts in this area consider that obtaining data that determine the success or failure of the measures taken by the actors considered is complex. One can list the number of deleted accounts or the intercepted messages, but as we have seen, if a certain number of accounts are closed, next time a higher number will be created. Even so, one can collect data in this regard, such as those advertised by Twitter on their blog. Joshua Stewart (2013) points out the complexity of evaluating changes in behaviour in a specific way: "It's strange when someone steps forward and says 'Well, I almost joined the clandestine group but then I saw your video'" (Stewart, 2013:81). The debate is whether these measures really deter radicalisation, since one cannot find enough data.

There is a difficulty in trying to establish a causal relationship between the measures established and the reduction in the profile of an extremist group in the same period of time. It is a great challenge to causally connect the activities of an initiative with objectives that are as complex and abstract as the diminishing interest in extremist narratives. In the field of counter-narrative campaigns, the Counter-Narrative Monitoring & Evaluation Toolkit of the ISD exposes two categories of social network metrics: awareness and engagement, which when combined and analysed form a comprehensive picture of the performance of a campaign, helping to understand the impact they are having (Reynolds & Tuck, 2016). On the other hand, the Europol IRU has a series of metrics by which it can measure the success of its tasks of counterterrorism and prevention of radicalisation. Since its creation, the unit has developed campaigns consisting of large operations for the rapid elimination of online material, during which up to 1,800 pieces of extremist content have been evaluated (Reed et al., 2017).

The privacy of the internet user must be taken into account when collecting data. The Redirect Method, for example, points out how to measure the performance of its method; they only collected data that did not infringe the privacy of the users, and that other actors could also use (AdWords, YouTube Analytics and Tubular Labs). It was thus designed to favour the exchange of data, to establish common parameters, and share good practices to optimize campaigns. (Jigsaw, 2016).

Therefore, a special sensitivity is necessary when establishing causality relationships or affirming that a measure is succeeding according to the metrics. since it is a complex issue in which false assumptions

can be easily made. However, it should be mentioned that there is a notable decrease in terrorist propaganda in social networks today, and although deleted accounts are easy to recreate again, it takes time to get the previous number of followers. Taking the Islamic State as an example, it is far from reaching the level of propaganda distribution efficiency it had between 2014 and 2015. None of the content distributed in 2016 was comparable, in terms of proliferation, to the infamous executions of James Foley or Steven Sotloff. This is probably due to the fact that they are more difficult to find than before, but also to other causes such as the loss of uniqueness that prevents the virality they had at the beginning. The combination of proactive measures taken by ICTs, in addition to campaigns to counter terrorist propaganda carried out independently by Internet users, and the aerial bombardment of the coalition against Daesh have finally led to tangible effects (Lakomy, 2017).

Therefore, the usefulness of these measures in the CT / PVE efforts is not ruled out, but it is necessary to bear in mind that these measures are not a single solution, but rather go hand in hand with other actions.

## **2..7 Domestic terrorists**

Terrorism emerges in the modern world as a form of extreme violence, a political-social expression that calls into question the values and institutions of a society and whose aim is to make it fearful, uncertain and unstable. Terrorist attacks and acts have been gradually increasing in the world, combating and counteracting these anti-system and harmful actions for societies in the 21st century is one of the priorities for international security, the viability of human life, the governance of democracies and prosperity based on economic development, trade and the free expression of ideas.

International and domestic terrorism are defined similarly, starting with the following three elements:

[They] (1) involve violent acts or acts dangerous to human life, (2) violate federal or state criminal laws or would do so if committed in the jurisdiction of the United States or any state, [and] (3) appear intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping. (McCord 2018:n.p)

Domestic terrorism arises mainly as a result of internal contradictions caused by various reasons and is one of the most acute forms of internal political confrontation. Bjelopera (2017:25) points out that domestic terrorism has two main manifestations: first, the activities of internal, extremist-oriented political forces, organizations and individuals in relation to the existing government; secondly, the activities of opposing political forces and extremist organizations.



Piazza (2021:14) argues that false online information spurs a certain type of domestic terrorism; namely terrorism motivated by issues and grievances prevalent in online social media communities. This manifestation of internal terrorism is often characterized by such goals as the elimination of leaders and activists of political opponents, pressure on their course, the defeat of their organizations, the intimidation of their supporters, as well as strengthening their ranks, attracting the sympathy of the population, etc.

After the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York, terrorism began to be analyzed from its international perspective, relegating domestic terrorism to isolated cases. This seems counterintuitive if one bears in mind that the number of domestic terrorist acts is significantly higher than international ones (Kis-Katos et al., 2011). Abadie (2006:25) reports that for the year 2003 the “MIPT Terrorism Knowledge base” recorded 1,536 domestic terrorist acts and only 240 international ones. Additionally, it has been argued that international terrorism finds its antecedents in domestic terrorism. (Abadie, 2006; Kis-Katos, 2011).

Berkebile (2017) states that the literature has focused on differentiating domestic from international terrorism according to the nationality relationships between perpetrator, victims and location, thus domestic terrorism would be the one where the previous points coincide. According to Berkebile:

"willful use or threat of use of violence by individuals or subnational groups against non-combatants to further a political or social objective by intimidating an audience beyond the immediate victims in which the nationality of the perpetrators, victims and location of attack match" (Berkebile, 2017:5).

In addition, Berkebile (2017:7) establishes seven criteria to determine if an act constitutes domestic terrorism:

- 1) The perpetrator must be a sub-national entity,
- 2) The terrorist act must affect a non-combatant objective,
- 3) It must be directed at a public greater than the immediate victims,
- 4) It must have a political, economic, religious or social objective,
- 5) The location of the terrorist act,
- 6) Nationality of the targeted victims and the public,
- 7) Nationality of the perpetrator, coincide.

Few studies have pointed out the origin of domestic terrorism to the Cold War (Castaneda, 1993; Feldmann and Perala, 2001). These studies argue that domestic terrorism is far from having disappeared and continues to be a relevant phenomenon to analyze. Indeed, during the period of (2013-2016) the "Global Index Database" reported a total of 1,000 incidents of domestic terrorism in twenty countries

in North, Central and South America where two of them, Colombia and the United States, are considered by the Global Terrorism Index (2016) as countries with "high impact of terrorism".

In the African continent, it is argued that colonization played a very important role in the emergence of domestic terrorism. African countries were colonized by foreigners, became republics after achieving independence between the 18th and 19th centuries, most of them have enjoyed short periods of political stability in an unstable environment, and have an unequal distribution of wealth (Feldmann and Perala, 2001). Economic theories are rooted in what Ted Gurr (1970) called "relative deprivation" that manifests itself in poverty, inequality, and lack of economic opportunity. From this perspective, violence would be generated when there is a discrepancy between what individuals think they deserve and what they really receive through the economic process. Therefore, poor structural economic conditions would cause frustration, which makes the emergence of violent acts more likely.

However, paying attention only to the economic conditions of the countries is not usually a good predictor of terrorism because it is ignoring that those who perpetrate terrorist acts correspond to subgroups within societies (those who are concerned with unemployment and unequal distribution of income).

Therefore, the approaches of Gurr (1993) and the findings of Piazza (2011) and Cleary (2000) who assert that economic discrimination towards ethnic minorities can be interpreted as a catalyst for the tensions of minority groups and as a condition that reinforces the social exclusion they experience and the sense of otherness they perceive. This leads to ethnic minorities being more susceptible to becoming radicalized and projecting their tensions into violent acts. According to the authors, the perception of discrimination against minority groups is used and exploited by extremist movements or terrorist organizations that function as organizing vehicles for the tension of these groups.

## **2.8 The influencing factors of social media platforms on terrorism**

From an ideological point of view, ISIS does not differ radically from other Islamist terrorist organizations. Being in the shadow of Al-Qaeda for years, ISIS was not of particular interest to the international community. Everything changed when the organization learned to use modern technologies. The leadership of ISIS quickly realized that the media war is often as important as the actual armed clashes. In the early stages of its existence, the organization distributed low-quality propaganda content on CD, but soon switched to using online tools.

Social media has enabled the organization to achieve two key objectives. First, online propaganda provided the organization with a steady stream of recruits, second, videos of the atrocities of ISIS

militants acted as a powerful means of intimidating potential opponents (Neubaum and Krämer 2017:519). The soldiers and residents of the besieged cities knew well what awaited them in the event of resistance, due to the caliphate's finely-honed propaganda machine. Videos of captured ISIS enemies, who were burned alive, whose heads were cut off, before which they were subjected to horrific torture - these recordings have become the same tool of war as machine guns and artillery. But, of course, the propaganda videos were not only about the atrocities. Mah-Rukh Ali said about ISIS's propaganda:

“ISIS's propaganda material is in many cases advanced, contains elements of the truth, and crucially is presented using modern techniques. But despite the rise of social media, it scores badly when people are asked to rate its accuracy and reliability. ISIS propagandists know this fact. They therefore structure their propaganda to have a wide appeal. ISIS adopts many methods to make sure that the global media use their own material and "facts" provided by ISIS, thus giving the group access to millions of homes, and credibility it would not otherwise achieve.” (Ali 2015:10)

It is clear from the quality of the content that ISIS spared no expense in making the videos. Many of the special effects and processing techniques used by ISIS come directly from Hollywood action films, often not inferior to them in terms of entertainment. Piazza (2021:19) explains that the leaders of the terrorist organization were aware of the importance of digital content in their struggle. ISIS cameramen and videographers could be paid many times more than ordinary fighters. At its peak, ISIS managed to put the production of extremist materials on streaming sites. According to the documentary report "Virtual Caliphate", in 2015 the organization could produce about 40 pieces of content per day. Feature-length documentaries, newspapers, photo essays, audio clips - everything has been adapted to different countries and target audiences. Ingram (2017:193) writes:

“The central purpose of ISIS messaging is to shape the perceptions and polarise the support of contested populations. It is an approach that enables ISIS to draw on an extraordinary variety of themes in its messaging while retaining the overall coherence of its campaign. ISIS seeks to achieve this via messaging that appeals to both pragmatic and perceptual factors. Pragmatic factors – like security, stability and livelihood – are drawn upon in communiques that are designed to promote ISIS's politico-military efforts. This type of messaging also seeks to make its audience aware that ISIS does what it says”.

As part of its propaganda activities, the caliphate actively used various digital channels and tools. ISIS media content was present on all significant platforms and social media. Remarkably, the terrorists were able to create a relatively decentralized digital broadcasting network. Although high-quality content was created and initially distributed with the money of the central cell of the organization, in the next stages, the processes were crowdsourced. ISIS sympathizers voluntarily responded to the call and distributed extremist materials. Another characteristic and important moment was in the caliphate's

investment in terrorist influencers, who regularly appeared in the organization's propaganda materials and who became stars of the extremist media space.

The use of digital tools has allowed terrorists to spread their influence far beyond the Middle East. The ISIS media holdings managed to create an informational picture that did not correspond to reality in any way, successfully working to attract people and resources, as well as to intimidate enemies. On one hand, ISIS existed as a geopolitical unit, a permanent blockade and fighting with a superior enemy. On another hand, there existed (and continues to exist) a digital version of ISIS, a simulacrum that is completely out of touch with reality (Neubaum and Krämer 2017:519). Digital ISIS, in turn, demonstrates colossal resilience, has an inexhaustible amount of resources and is engaged in a holy war against the what they believe to be forces of evil.

Thus, this method allowed the terrorist organization to expand its influence far beyond the Middle East. While the real ISIS suffered numerous defeats, the digital ISIS carried out large-scale terrorist operations around the world. Neubaum and Krämer (2017:517) suggest that a significant part of the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks in Europe and the United States, who acted on behalf of the caliphate, was not connected by financial, political and even national ties with the central organization. Most jihadists in the United States were white or African-American and had no direct ties to the Middle East. Their actions were exclusively ideologically motivated, and the propaganda materials of the organization were the main conductor of destructive ideas. Ingram (2017: 195) writes:

“Additionally, ISIS draw on perceptual factors by playing upon identity, crisis and solution constructs to shape how its audiences perceive and judge the world. The central narrative of this type of messaging is simple: ISIS are champions and protectors of Sunnis (the in-group identity), ISIS’s enemies are evil Others (out-group identities) that are responsible for Sunni crises to which ISIS are the only hope for solutions. ISIS disseminate this type of messaging as a means to convince its audiences to engage in identity-choice decision-making, i.e. choices made in accordance with one’s identity”.

The stake on the digital media space has significantly strengthened the caliphate and allowed the terrorists to multiply their influence, thanks to access to a colossal resource base, a constant source of recruits, as well as an effective tool of intimidation (Piazza 2021:16). Of course, one should not reduce the root of ISIS success solely to the organization's digital competencies and completely ignore the geopolitical aspects. However, without a doubt, it is precisely the bet on digital that has helped ISIS to succeed where many other terrorist organizations have failed.

In addition to this, the success of ISIS in the media space can be reproduced in one way or another by other extremist organizations. This means that one of the priorities of the international community should be the development of a clear and effective methodology with which to fight extremism online.

I posit that if the fight against terrorists in the digital space had begun earlier, the world could have avoided many victims, broken destinies and enormous economic damage.

## **2.9 Summary**

After studying the way in which terrorist groups make use of the leading online platforms and services, it has been observed how these terrorist groups make use of the Internet for propaganda and indoctrination, radicalisation, socialisation and motivation, recruitment, fundraising, and planning, coordination and coverage of operations; and they do it mainly through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Telegram and Microsoft, which offer immediacy, low cost, and extensive distribution capacity.

These companies, being aware of such exploitation, adopt a series of measures to combat them, both individually and in collaboration with other companies, governments or experts. The measures have several approaches, from disrupting messages to designing terrorist or extremist counter-narratives, through redirection, training of professionals, or education of the online community. They focus in general on technological solutions, research, and exchange of knowledge and good practices.

The terrorist groups, especially ISIS, are both a mass media conglomerate and a combat force; their media strategies were effective and represent a global danger, so the battle being fought in the online arena should not be dismissed.

There is still a long way to go. Efforts should not focus solely on disruption, as has been the trend up to now, but should be evolving towards counter-narrative or alternative narrative methods, redirection and preferably online community education. Therefore, efforts must continue. Internet gatekeepers have the responsibility to take all possible measures to prevent the scourge of terrorism from having its place on their platforms and services. This is something that is not only demanded by public opinion but is included in legal frameworks and resolutions of international organisations, as has been seen with the United Nations and the European Commission.

Finally, the effectiveness of the measures adopted cannot always be proven with accuracy, since there is a lack of access to precise data and measurement mechanisms. We must take into account the complexity of the causal relationships that can be established and the implication of the privacy of user data, among other things. However, this lack of precision does not prevent us from affirming that these measures, added to other initiatives in other spheres of the fight against terrorism, are giving rise to tangible positive effects. It can be said that the role played by technology companies in the ICT sector in the efforts of CT / PVE is, in effect, important.



## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This study addresses the problem of violent extremism, youth radicalisation, and their relationship to media. The reason for choosing this topic was to resolve the problem of poor youth representation in political activities. The purpose of this study was to promote youth in peacebuilding programmes and allow them to share their perspectives on civic engagement and political participation. The study aimed at providing a chance for young people to become agents of change and advocate for social change in their community. Moreover, the study was based on three main objectives designed to raise awareness among young people about peaceful coexistence, mechanisms of tolerance, and conflict resolution to let them avoid violent extremism. The objectives were designed to identify the means of raising civic awareness of youth and to provide an opportunity for them to debate their vision and make contributions to local public governance. In addition, the study was designed to determine the impact of youth contributions in media interventions and local public governance to reduce youth radicalisation. The objectives were stated as follows:

**Objective 1:** Raise awareness among young people and other marginalised and at-risk target populations about the principles and mechanisms of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and constructive conflict resolution in order to strengthen community integration and increase youth resistance to messages of violent extremism.

**Objective 2:** To conduct a conflict assessment and offer marginalised urban youth the opportunity to contribute to local public governance and to constructively debate their vision of good governance and local priorities with local officials.

**Objective 3:** To create real and virtual spaces for debate, inspiration, and exchange of information among Moroccan youth regarding citizenship, participation in local public and civic governance, local initiative-taking, and national policies on youth concerns.

The proposed intervention was developed after data collection and determining the causes of extremism. The project centred on a people-to-people approach, which is magnified through participation and community building. This approach focusses on those communities where indicators show that social inequality has damaged or severed the relationships connecting youth and local and national government representatives. Utilizing the data that had been collected during the needs assessment and reasoning that strong, positive relationships would mitigate against the forces of dehumanisation, stereotyping, and distancing that facilitate violence and recruitment to extremism, this intervention

brought youth together to interact purposefully in a safe, equalising online space to forge trust and empathy among youth, and between them and their community.

### **3.1 Research Design**

This research study utilized a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology. Participatory action research is a form of action research that focuses on reflection, data collection, and action (Baum et al: 2006:854). PAR attempts to make the distinction between the research and those being studied so that subjects are actively involved in the production and acquisition of knowledge. This process calls for researchers to intentionally step back and reflect on their role, as well as on their power within the relationship with their subjects (Bergold 2012).

Following the research objectives, raw data was collected and coded from focus groups and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), concluded with the triangulation of data through quantitative surveys and questionnaires. The research adopts a bottom-up approach, first collecting data from the community level with grassroots stakeholders (men, women, and youth, including their families) and key community leaders (CSO representatives, religious leaders, academics, journalists, university faculty, and other local figures), and then advancing the research to collect data from higher-level stakeholders in KIIs with government officials and international organizations. The focus group discussions (FGDs), KII, and questionnaires were all designed to explore and draw recommendations for programming. A conflict assessment was conducted to determine the best and most suitable intervention. Therefore, as mentioned in Objective 2, a conflict assessment was conducted shed light not on economic drivers of discontent, but rather on the socio-cultural drivers of youth frustration and disengagement. In this study, a mixed method approach was followed, and data was collected through a literature review and interviews/surveys. The reason for selecting this approach was to include all the required information on the study topic and increase the quality of the research. Mixed methodology lets the researcher gain both up-to-date primary data and secondary data on the study topic.

To implement mixed methodology research that combines qualitative and quantitative methods, it is important to understand the nature, possibilities and limitations of each of the approaches. For example, the main characteristics of traditional quantitative research are a focus on deduction, theory/hypothesis validation, explanation, standardized data collection, and statistical analysis. The main characteristics of traditional qualitative research are inductive logic, continuous search, exploration, hypotheses/theories, continuity of data collection and analysis.



“Mixed methods means the combination of different qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and data analysis in one empirical research project” (Kuckartz 2014, 31).

The method of PAR was followed in this study as youth are often the victims of an epistemological injustice, and to involve the subjects actively was essential to determine their views. The researcher used document review to cross-reference the data collected in the interviews. The mixed-method approach means that the data was to be collected through KII interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions and document and literature reviews. The qualitative and quantitative data were integrated by merging quantitative and qualitative results. The fundamental point of a "mixed" design in the study is the condition that the combination of methods draws upon strengths from each of them. Thus, the main argument of mixed studies is that the data obtained from a combination of methods will exceed the possibilities from using a single method.

The intervention relied on the results drawn from the conflict assessment. I conducted a conflict assessment to gain a better understanding of the overall environment in which the project is operating and to use participatory methods to design an inclusive and robust intervention. Reed et al. (2009: 1933) state that a conflict assessment:

“ i) defines aspects of a social and natural phenomenon affected by a decision or action; ii) identifies individuals, groups, and organizations who are affected by or can affect those parts of the phenomenon (this may include non-human and non-living entities and future generations); and iii) prioritize these individuals and groups for involvement in the decision-making process.”

The findings of this conflict assessment are intended to create a more comprehensive understanding of the primary grievances of urban youth in the suburbs of Casablanca to ensure that the intervention addresses the grievances at the local level. This research was conducted according to the following stages:

1. Identification of the dynamics of social, political, and community youth mobilisation
2. Coordination with young people and establishment of the research team
3. Training, research, and definition of the problem
4. Participatory execution of the action projects
5. Reflection and evaluation

### **3.2 Research Methodology**

The research methodology is based on a mixed method approach via a literature review and key informant, FGD and interviews/surveys. Regarding the literature review, literature was selected to

assess the current state of research on youth, media, political participation, and violent extremism which would help determine what is already known and how extensively it has already been researched. It also helped to discover new angles and additional questions that needed further exploration. A semi-structured interview/survey guide was used for the key informant interviews, which allowed for new ideas to come up as a result of what the interviewee said. It enabled informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms and it allowed the researcher to capture reliable and comparable qualitative data.

### 3.3 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Participatory Action research (PAR) is a qualitative method that attempts to make the distinction between the research and those being studied so that subjects are actively involved in the production and acquisition of knowledge. This process calls for researchers to intentionally to step back and reflect on their role, as well as on their power within the relationship with their subjects (Bergold 2012:13). The aims of AR are focused on social change and transformation, grounded in an activist approach toward research. McNiff (2002:26) argues that “action researchers are real people in real situations”, researchers who are willing to direct the process by which change should occur, and work at the same time with the participants to establish goals, design and implement programmes, and interpret resulting information. This brings together the researcher and the community being studied under one single umbrella in which they both claim ownership of the final result and its impact.

“The fundamental aim of participatory action research is to improve practice rather than to produce knowledge. The production and utilization of knowledge is subordinate to, and conditioned by, this fundamental aim.” (Elliott 1991:49). Most authors (e.g., Lewin 1946; Elliott 1991; Dick 2002), when writing about PAR, stress its cyclical, or to be more precise, its spiral nature. The number of stages in the cycle may vary but can be generally summarized as

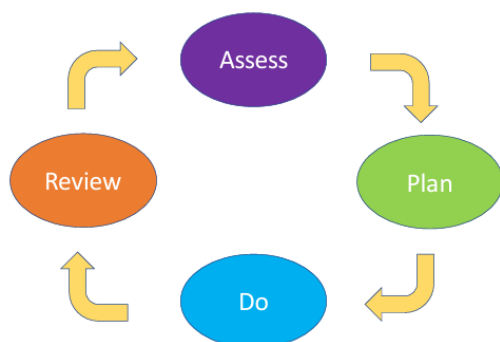


Figure 3.1 Participatory Action Research. (Paxon et.al 2020)

However, this is probably too simplistic to be helpful, and a more detailed plan is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: The participatory action research cycle (adapted from Elliott 1991)

Cycle		Stage	
1	PLAN	1. Identify initial idea	What aspect of practice do you want to improve?
		2. Reconnaissance, reflection and initial planning.	Find out what is already known in relation to your initial idea including analysing what the literature says.
		3. General plan - your action steps	Decide what you are going to do and how you are going to investigate your initial idea (in the light of what you have learnt from your reconnaissance).
	DO	4. Implement action steps	
		5. Monitor implementation and effects	Monitor and analyse what is happening as you implement your action steps.
	REVIEW	6. Revise General Idea	In the light of your reconnaissance, analysis and reflection, refine your thinking and refocus your investigation
2, 3, 4 ...	PLAN	New action steps	
	DO	Implement action steps	
		Monitor implementation and effects	
	REVIEW	Revise General Idea	

Another way to look at the participatory action research cycle is as a sequence of spirals, each marked by the same four steps: planning, acting, observation, then an act of collective reflection on the entire process. In this way, a new planning stage would begin to perpetuate the spiral (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005).

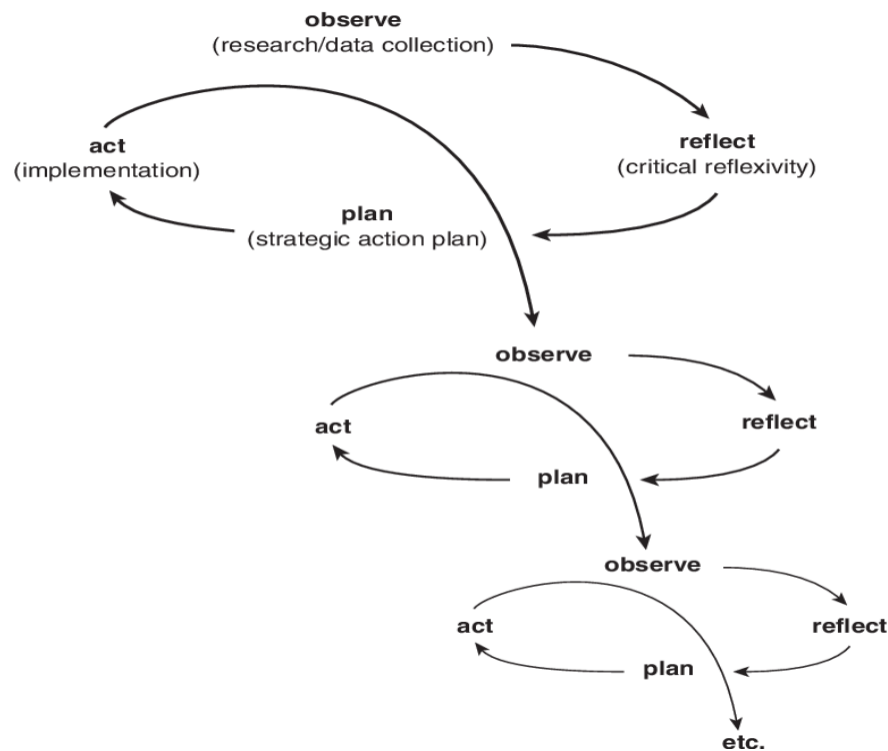


Figure 3.2 The Action Research Spiral. (Reprinted from Participatory Action Research: Communicative Action and the Public Sphere by Kemmis and McTaggart, 2006, Educational Action Research, 14:4, p.278).

This model is one of the contributions of Lewin (1946), although in no case is it strict, since each stage affects the development of the following, so, “in reality, the process will probably be more fluid, open and receptive” (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005:563).

Pring (2000:251) points out four significant characteristics of PAR:

- Cyclic, recursive. Similar steps tend to be repeated in a similar sequence.
- Participatory: subjects and informants engage as partners, or as active participants in the research process.
- Qualitative: it deals more with language than with numbers.
- Reflective, critical reflection on the process and results are important parts of each cycle.

A specific feature of PAR is the need to integrate action. The focus of the investigation will be the plan of action to achieve the change or improvement of the practice, "doing something to improve a practice" is a trait of PAR that does not occur in other investigations.

### 3.4 PAR Relevance to this Study

The use of participatory action research with youth in this project appears particularly relevant, because this group is often the victim of an epistemological injustice in the production of knowledge to their subjects in the scientific field (Caron, 2019). Epistemological injustice stems from an inability to recognise the quality of a person or a group as holders of credible knowledge, as well as active and legitimate participants in the production of knowledge about themselves (Fricker, 2007). Indeed, throughout most traditional research, young people are seen as "objects of knowledge rather than knowing subjects" (Caron, 2019:56). PAR is a method of both research and intervention (Paillé, 1994), inscribed in the belief that the real understanding of social issues requires access to the knowledge of those directly affected by them, in our case, youth (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009). Thus, this research method includes two types of co-researchers: local researchers, directly affected by the subject under study, and external researchers, such as myself. I do not consider myself an expert, but rather a collaborator (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009). The participants are seen as special partners whose knowledge is respected and valued (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009; Flores, 2007).

PAR was formed by selecting the youth from Sidi Moumen neighbourhood who wished to comment on their lived reality. Indeed, PAR makes it possible to engage those who participate in:

- a) a research process by which they have the opportunity to reflect critically on the issues and challenges of their day-to-day lives; and
- b) a process of prevention and intervention through which they have the opportunity to develop their skills to be positive and effective agents of change (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009; Buckley-Marudas, 2018).

In addition, the PAR approach is recommended for marginalised youth who lack opportunities to comment on the issues that concern them (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009). The data collected was used to plan an effective intervention with the professionals, stakeholders, partners, and decision-makers who are interested in youth, to have a better understanding of their reality and thus be able to create or offer more adapted solutions to their struggles (Brown & Rodríguez, 2009, Kennedy 2018). At the individual level, the participation of youth in PAR process has contributed to their positive social, emotional, and cognitive development (acquisition of research knowledge, growing awareness of social justice, decision-making processes, teamwork development, leadership skills, a feeling of belonging to the community, etc.). On the organisational level, a positive evolution of local cultures is associated with youth participation. Indeed, organisations and institutions become more sensitive to the needs of young people and more inclined to promote their inclusion. At the community level, PAR projects with young people make it possible to create shared spaces between young people and adults promoting respectful

and collaborative intergenerational dialogues (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017). The effectiveness of the PAR study is evaluated by assessing the accuracy of the knowledge gained on the ongoing process of change.

### **3.5 The Role of Participatory Action Research**

Adopting PAR has played a very important role in positioning the researcher as well as the participants to bring about change during the process of this research. Selener explains (1997:17) that AR “is a research method in which people are actively involved in conducting a systematic assessment of a social phenomenon by identifying a specific problem for the purpose of solving it.” In both cases, the researchers and the participants are engaged in research as collaborators. However, this relationship does not absolve the researcher from assuming a leadership role. In PAR the researcher is given the opportunity to enter the research site with more skills and expertise than participants.

PAR provides us with a sense of critical consciousness that has previously been denied to participants, as they get to reflect on the process before moving to the next stage. Roberts (n.d.) highlights that with PAR “the researcher(s) tries to directly improve the participating organization(s) and, at the same time, to generate scientific knowledge”. With this intervention I exhibit more of a leadership role in challenging participants to consider the research problem from a new perspective by utilising traditional conflict resolution procedures which are closely related to those of restorative justice (Harris, 2017: 139). The main role of PAR can be clearly seen in its central processes of planning, action, and reflection, with the reflective process providing the understanding and meaning required to take the next step needed (Kaye, 2017:13). In this sense, PAR has played the role of the architect in designing the youth leaders for peace programmes.

### **3.6 Brief Description of the Hosting Body/Context**

DerbGhalef Association for Development (DAD) is a non-profit organisation of public utility. It was established in 1993 and its main objective is helping the population to improve their welfare and life conditions. DAD promotes development projects within different socio-economic sectors, always in collaboration with some local institutions. Its approach and working method are participative, based on reciprocal technical exchange and know-how, on solidarity, and on the recognition of the importance of human values and their potentiality.

DAD provides mainly a technical contribution to a project and local training aimed at the creation of solid and autonomous bases of development. In its different programmes, DAD gives strategic

importance to institutional empowerments. For this reason, the following components are always integrated in project development actions:

- Training
- Close collaboration
- Capacity building
- Project financing

DAD's partners are both governmental (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Economy and Finance, local authorities and provinces) and non-governmental (international organisations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, ILO, etc.), bilateral aid organisations (USAID) and many national NGOs.

One of their biggest programmes involves some 10 local associations in different regions of the country and a new programme is about to be launched in the East Region with ten other associations. Two other programmes are about to be finalised: one on the environment and the other on gender empowerment at local association level. DAD has always been very conscious of the need to promote youth and women's participation in their programmes and projects and related specific training is normally integrated into their actions.

The participants in this research are youth from marginalised neighbourhoods in Casablanca (Sidi Moumen). Twenty-five young people from DAD between the ages of 18 and 25 years old were responsible for deciding what parts of the programme were to be investigated and researched. In addition, they were given the ability to choose how the data should be collected and what to do with the results (Baum, et al. 2006; Owen, 2006; Greene, 2006). They worked together to identify the issues under investigation, conducted a needs assessment, reached out to their community, and provided potential solutions. When all participants meet with the CSOs' representatives and technologies, they decide which intervention needs to take place and work together to identify the problem and the solution. As part of this research, they were asked to reflect on this process to see the changes that occur during these interactions.

### **3.7 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure**

The study uses a non-probability purposive sampling method. It favours personal judgement to select subjects that are considered to be representative of the population:

- Civil Society Organisations

- Local Government
  - Local Elected Officials
  - Representatives of Communes
- National Government
  - Regional Coordinator of National Cooperation
  - Delegate of Ministry of Education
  - Delegate of Ministry of Youth and Sports
  - Delegate of the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs
  - National Agency for Promotion of Employment and Competencies (ANAPEC)
- Young people living in targeted neighbourhood
  - Young people enrolled in school
  - Young people enrolled in vocational training programs
  - Unemployed and out-of-school young people
- School Teachers and Directors
- Representatives of Private Sector Employers
- Parents

The people listed above were chosen to obtain the most meaningful data on youth participation in political activities and violent extremism among youth. The objective was to select the participants that had experienced the real-time scenarios regarding youth participation in local public governance and media interventions as well as radicalisation and violent extremism. The sample size of FGD is 104 participants including CSOs, school teachers and directors, the youth council, and young people. For the interview the researcher selected 22 participants including CSOs, school teachers and directors, local and national government representatives, and 144 for the questionnaire, including CSO representatives, local businesses, and young people in Sidi Moumen.

In June 2019, the research team conducted a one-day training for 25 selected participants/co-investigators on research methodology, interviewing techniques, and filling out questionnaires. In addition, each participant installed the *Open Data Kit* app on Android mobile devices. The team held piloting of instruments sessions, and they conducted surveys before, during, and after each activity of the intervention phase. Moreover, the baseline data was used to integrate different measures that align with the study objectives.

### **3.8 Sampling for Participatory Action Research**

The study used a targeted sample to select representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sport, NGOs, and youth for KII and surveys, more details are provided in following paragraph. The participants were selected according to their understanding of the issue and its characteristics. For this purpose, contacts were established with relevant organisations and provided with information about the study to determine the most suitable officials/participants who could provide the necessary information.



FGDs with teachers, community leaders, parents and children were held in Sidi Moumen Youth Centre (Dar Shabab) or Derb Ghalef Association Local Centre. Details of FGDs (for example, the number of FGDs performed with each subject) is presented in Table 5 in Appendix 1. Areas were purposefully selected in this district to represent the geographical diversity of the neighbourhood. Efforts were made to randomly select parents and youth so that they represent different social strata of the population. Community figures were selected purposefully so that they provide relevant information. Each FGD consisted of 6 - 12 people. All interviews and FGDs were recorded and further transcribed. Transcripts have been studied to identify important topics and themes recurring in the data. The codes were based on interviews and FGD questions that were linked to the research questions. The assessment of the identified themes was detailed and described, and links were established between the various topics in the research.

### 3.9 Data Collection Procedure

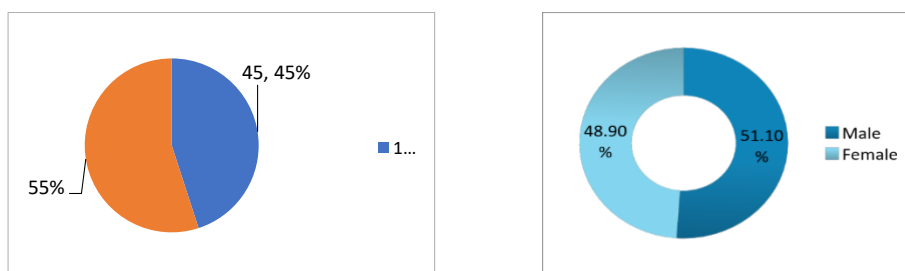
Data collection instruments were a combination of a survey questionnaire, focus group discussion guidelines, meetings, observation notes, photographs, and interviews. Table 3.2 summarises the procedures utilized. Details relating to each of the data collection instructions follow below.

Table 3.2: Data Collection Instruments

Method	Description
Meetings	Meetings were held at the community level to discuss the results obtained.
Observation	Participant observation was a constant for all members of the co-investigation team. "All participants are, at the same time, participants and observers who combine their observations in order to achieve successful results" (Greenwood, 2000: 34)
Discussion guidelines	During each discussion in the workshop, notes were taken about the development of the session. These notes include listings, ideograms, idea maps, post-it maps, collective drawings, etc.
Photos	Pictures were taken at all times to record the progress of the investigation. Many of the pictures were taken by the participants themselves and were shared on social media as well to draw attention and attract other people who are interested in the project.

Informal talks	Much of the research work was developed in the specific framework of training workshops or formal interviews. Informal talks with co-investigators during leisure time constitute a fundamental piece of this research.
Survey Questionnaires	In addition to FGDs and KII, questionnaires were distributed to a total of 133 CSO representatives, local businesses, and young people.
In-depth interviews & KII	Throughout the process, numerous personal interviews were conducted with co-investigators, community leaders, other entrepreneurs, and stakeholders. Interviews were both open and semi-structured. The interviews covered a wide historical spectrum with reference to the past, present and future of the interviewees (see Tables 3.2 and 3.3 for a complete list of the interviewed).
Diaries	These are notes that I collected throughout the process to record detailed descriptions of the observations, feelings, relationships, fears, insecurities, and other emotional reactions about the process.
Focus groups	In order to include the opinions of a diverse group of stakeholders and to include as many people as possible, FGDs were conducted to get qualitative data.

Figures 3.3 and 3.4 indicate the ages and gender of participants in the focus groups.



Figures 3.3 and 3.4: Age of Participants, Gender of Participants. (Source: own data).

### 3.9.1 Focus Group Discussions:

In order to include the opinions of a diverse group of stakeholders and to include as many people as possible, a total of 8 FGDs were conducted:

- one with teachers and school directors,
- two with CSO representatives,
- one with youth council representatives, and
- four with young people from Sidi Moumen.

FGDs were conducted by the researcher and coresearchers in Moroccan Arabic, and each FGD included an average of four people with a range of 4-15 participants per FGD (see Appendix 2 for the translated English FGD forms). Table 3.3 summarises participants of the FGDs.

Table 3.3: Focus Group Discussion Summary

Stakeholder	Male Participants	Female Participants	Total
CSOs	10	5	15
School Teachers	3	3	6
School Directors	1		1
Youth Council	3	4	7
Young People	45	30	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>104</b>

### 3.9.2 Key Informant Interviews:

Due to scheduling conflicts and, in the case of some Community Service Organizations (CSOs), unwillingness to participate in FGDs with other CSOs, we conducted KII to supplement the FGDs. A total of 22 KII were conducted with representatives from 12 CSOs, national government ministries, local government, and schools. KII were conducted by the research team in Moroccan Arabic (see Appendix 2 for the translated English interview forms). Table 3.4 summarises the KII respondents.

Table 3.4: Stakeholders Interviewed in KII

Stakeholder	Male Participants	Female Participants	Total Interviews
CSOs	8	4	12
Local Government Representatives	2	1	3
National Government Representatives	2	1	3
School Teachers	3		3
School Directors	1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>22</b>

### 3.9.3 Questionnaires:

In addition to FGDs and KII, questionnaires were distributed to a total of 144 CSO representatives, local businesses, and young people in Sidi Moumen. Table 3.5 below shows the total number of

completed questionnaires by stakeholders (see Appendix 3 for the translated English questionnaire forms).

Table 3.5: Stakeholders Participating in Questionnaires

Stakeholder	Male Participants	Female Participants	Total
CSOs	23	13	36
Local Businesses	21	10	31
Young People	39	24	77*
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>144</b>

*\*Includes 4 surveys where the respondents chose not to indicate their gender identity.*

We targeted key stakeholders and CSOs in Casablanca with the dual aim of 1) triangulating the data collected through focus groups and KIIs, and 2) mapping the local government and non-governmental organisations and civil society groups working on community-level efforts to advance youth political and civic engagement. The questionnaires were designed based on the data collected from the focus groups and KIIs.

A mixed methodology was utilised for this study, beginning with the set of research questions outlined below and further developed through the literature review, then collecting and coding raw data from focus groups and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and concluding with the triangulation of data through quantitative surveys prior to the final analysis. The project relies on a bottom-up approach, first collecting data from the community level with grassroots stakeholders (men, women, and youth) and key community leaders (CSO representatives, political leaders, academics, journalists, university faculty, and other local figures) with the support of the co-investigators, and then advancing the research to collect data from higher-level stakeholders in KIIs with government officials and international organisations. The final quantitative phase serves the purpose both of triangulating the data and mapping the local and international organisations working to advance youth political and civic engagement in Morocco.

During the start-up phase, the methodology and data collection tools were prepared for the stakeholder focus groups and key informant interviews (KIIs) that were held in the next phase of the research. The exact number of focus groups and target populations were confirmed following the literature review, but two focus groups were held in each of the two targeted neighbourhoods in Casablanca city, one specifically targeting CSOs, religious leaders, academics, journalists, universities, and community leaders, and the second specifically targeting young people in the community. A minimum of 2 KIIs

were conducted in each phase, targeting youth, local authorities, international NGOs, and political parties.

The FGDs, KIIs, and questionnaires were all designed to answer the questions below. Responses were codified according to selected themes in order to perform a thematic analysis of the qualitative data to discern the frequency with which certain themes were mentioned and whether or not there were any patterns that emerged.

- What are the conflicts?
- Who is involved and why?
- How is the conflict manifested?
- Why is the conflict happening? What are the root causes?
- What small changes can be leveraged for change?
- What is your opinion on citizenship, participation in local public and civic governance, local initiative-taking, and national policies on youth concerns?
- What is the impact of youth contribution to local public governance?
- What is the impact of media interventions in overcoming youth radicalisation?

#### **3.9.4 Timing of Assessment:**

The assessment team began collecting data during the summer, from June – August 2019, when many students and families take vacations and those with temporary seasonal work are unavailable, and during the month of *Ramadan*. This limited the number of people who were able to participate in the study and prevented certain groups from participating, such as young people with summer jobs.

#### **3.9.5 Assessment Timeframe:**

Due to the need to translate all questionnaires and FGD and KII notes from Arabic into English for the assessment and due to changes on the assessment team, the conflict assessment took longer than originally anticipated.

The assessment targeted the youth's needs and grievances in order to help tailor the appropriate intervention. The assessment informs on the themes of the training on multimedia that was offered to youth and outputs of which (such as short films) were screened during these events. The purpose of the Conflict Assessment is the following:

- Obtain a thorough understanding of the key aspects of violent extremism.

- Obtain an understanding of how the environment can affect the project's interventions.
- Obtain an understanding of the possible needs and opportunities.
- Inform the project targets, objectives, and programming.

The scope of the Conflict Assessment is limited: it focusses on the current status of potential, ongoing, and latent conflicts. The Conflict Assessment was conducted during a period of approximately one month to quickly and systematically answer the five major questions detailed above.

### **3.10 Data Analysis (Qualitative and Quantitative)**

The analysis of data arising from participatory research is one of the most complex aspects of this work methodology, since the instruments are very varied, the data collection conditions are not always the most suitable, and the processes are rarely linear. When analysing, the researcher must give special attention to the "meanings" that people attribute to things, situations, and to his own life. This method seeks to capture the "perspective of the participants", trying to understand the dynamics of the situation under study (Reason and Bradbury, 2008).

In total, 75 survey responses were collected, and audio of interviews and FGD recordings were conducted. The focus groups were a mixed group of men and women and included youth leaders and individuals, religious researchers, and scholars. Focus groups were organized in semi circles with a lead facilitator and a note taker, creating an open group discussion.

Organising and facilitating these focus groups resulted in a productive discussion around a number of themes: *what is terrorism, what is the terrorism narrative, why does it appeal, and how can it be countered?* In particular, Group 2 was described as a focus group that proved productive and insightful.

The process that was developed to analyze data is an extremely complex and dynamic process, which combines elaborate elements after conscious rationalization and more intuitive thinking that occur throughout the investigation. As an example of this, I reference the entire process of analytical categorization. This process was a constant journey back and forth between the experiences in the field, the data collected with their "pre-analysis", and the different theoretical revisions, until reaching the thematic matrix used for all the analysis.

For the analysis of the material, after the transcription of the recordings of the interviews, the ATLAS-ti qualitative analysis program was used (8.1.28 version). For this purpose, all material was prepared in documents in the following way: a document for each entry of the Journal, which corresponds to a specific observation moment, and a document for each interview transcript, plus a document for the transcripts of the discussion groups that were included.

Documents were named by the date the observation or interview was conducted; the latter followed by the letter "t" (transcript). And they were included sequentially in the program so that the consecutive numbering of the primary documents is corresponded to the dates and type of document, first all diary entries and then the interviews. In total, 136 documents were included, and a total of 109 documents have been analyzed.

The final analysis process occurred through two processes of reduction and cluster. The documents were codified marking extracts of them through two types of categories: more defined and related ones directly to the theoretical framework, which we will call initials; and more ambiguous ones of emergent characteristics/themes, that is, from ideas emerged in the documents themselves. These second emerging categories have served to give depth to the initial categories.

In addition to the data from the participatory research cycles, a large amount of data came from semi-structured interviews and conversations with the participants. For these reasons, each type of data was treated as a separate unit, and then put side by side to see where differences and similarities emerged. To help facilitate this process, a matrix table was used, where the rows represent questions and the columns represented individual interviewees. This allowed me to look at themes as they emerged by looking at each interviewee's response to the same question, side-by-side. The qualitative responses from the interview were analysed using thematic analysis.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

“Do No Harm” principles and conflict-sensitivity are integral to this approach. We ensured confidentiality of participants and created “safe spaces” during the activities where constructive conversations were held without attribution. Throughout the assessment and analysis phase and during the entire implementation of this project, we tried to uphold international standards of research ethics set by DUT’s ethical guidelines. In interviewing stakeholders, we did not offer any incentives to speak with representatives, and all efforts were made to remove any undue pressure or coercion to participate during conversations.

All interviews were conducted in the interviewee’s own language rather than through translation. Focus group interviewees remain anonymous and are identified in research notes by numbers/alternative names rather than by their real names. Subjects of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were not at risk, as all identifying data about individuals interviewed were kept in password-protected files.

All activities were designed to ensure equal opportunity and access by all stakeholders, including youth, women, and different ethnic groups. Separate focus groups were held for young women participants,



and we conducted separate focus groups in each of the two targeted neighbourhoods to ensure that both were well represented in the focus groups and interviews.

### 3.12 Validity and Reliability

A rapid mixed methodology (qualitative and quantitative) baseline was created at the beginning of the programme's activities phase to be able to capture key results. The data collection tools involved observations and semi-structural informal interviews, FGDs, and surveys. The baseline rolled out accompanying the first project activities and a report was written at the end of each stage of the research.

An internal mid-term reflective process was conducted. This process captures key lessons learned, including programmatic barriers and areas of excellence. When possible, quick guidance notes or short case studies were prepared that could be shared with participants and co-investigators. The reflective process also involved the participants in an open discussion and led to adjustments in existing action plans based on evidence collected.

Authenticity Criteria	Definition	Sample Question
Fairness	Researcher's ability to value and to honor the evaluation process	To what extent do you think you have exercised balance in representing the thoughts, perceptions, feelings, concerns, assertions, and experiences of all participants?
Ontological authenticity	Criteria for assessing an increased level of awareness among participants in the research study	What strategies have you used to monitor your own developing constructions (i.e., progressive subjectivity) and document the process of change from the beginning of the interview process/study until the end?
Educative authenticity	Extent to which participants understand and appreciate diverse value systems of others	To what extent do you think your own empathy and insights of the participants evolved during the course of the interviews?
Catalytic authenticity	Appreciations and constructions that lead to actions or decisions by the participants	To what extent do you think that participants' newly evolved constructions and appreciations of the position of others have led to some action(s) taken or decision(s) made by the participants?
Tactical authenticity	Degree of empowerment of participants and stakeholders to act on increased understanding that emerged from the study	To what extent are all participants more skilled than they were previously (e.g., since the study began; since the last interview) in understanding and using power and negotiation techniques?

Figure 3.5: Fourth Generation Evaluation. (Source: Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S., 1989.)

Validity and reliability in research are concepts used to assess the quality of a study and are primarily used in quantitative research to indicate the extent to which a method, technique, or test effectively measures something.

Validity is defined as the extent to which a concept is accurately measured. In this sense Oluwatayo (2012:392) highlights that:

“Historically, validity has been defined as the degree to which a test or measuring instrument actually measures what it purports to measure or how well a test or a meaning instrument fulfils its function”.

Reliability refers to the extent to which a research instrument consistently obtains the same results if it is used repeatedly in the same situation. Oluwatayo (2012:395) adds that:

“Reliability is one of the most desirable technical merits in any educational research though its meaning differs in quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research assures the possibility of replication. That is, within a certain limit of experimental error or random error, if the same methods are used with the same sample, then the results should be the same”

To ensure the validity of the research, I took into account the values constructed around the five “criteria of authenticity” described by Guba and Lincoln (1989) in the “Fourth Generation Evaluation” as Fairness, Ontological, Educative, Catalytic and Tactical.

A final evaluation was conducted to measure the accumulative systemic impact that the programme has had on youth. This evaluation encompasses qualitative and quantitative methodology and includes sections of the assessment to validate changes before and after the projects. The evaluation focusses on processes that lead to success, utilising process-tracing methodology or outcome mapping, and identifying what the existing barriers are to peaceful coexistence and a culture of tolerance, and reintegration. Findings were shared with the participants and key stakeholders that were part of this project.

### **3.13 Limitations of the Study**

Given the difficulties in accessing marginalised urban neighbourhoods of Casablanca, the fieldwork for this research only took place in Sidi Moumen, one of more than 10 areas that have the same issues. This will have a negative impact on the geographical representation of the studied population. Furthermore, working in three languages (Arabic, French and English) could have impacted the collection and interpretation of data by the youth researchers, as the meaning of critical terms might be lost in translation. Finally, the overall quality of the youth researchers’ data collection and analysis have been assessed and reviewed, as none of them had any prior research experience.

### 3.14 Reflection and Summary

I was greatly influenced by the perspectives of the authors who support the need for incorporating reflexivity into our research studies (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson and Collins, 2005; Fullagar and Wilson, 2012; Hall, 2004), especially those who address it as an indispensable requirement in research with under-served populations (Nicholls, 2009; Russell-Mundine, 2012; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). Reflexivity is the process of critical reflection on oneself as a researcher, an attempt to discover what we take with us to fieldwork, and how it helps us change in the process (Lincoln et al., 2011). The researcher is not only an active part of the studied reality, but also an influencer who continually modifies the processes and interventions. I began this investigation with of knowledge, theories, worldviews, and values that affected the way in which I came into contact with the context and with its protagonists; the relationships that I built with the rest of the research team; the way I was perceived by others and, above all, my interpretation of all the phenomena. These worldviews are determined by socio-economic, cultural, gender or ethnic factors that I, as a researcher, carry with me and will inevitably lead to the research (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004). Therefore, it is necessary for us as researchers to reflect on our own lives, in order to act conscientiously, choose each alternative carefully, and understand the effects and the impacts of our actions on the outside world.

Subjectivism could be considered as a negative deviation from triangulation, contextualisation, and reflexivity. It is used frequently to remind the reader of the researcher's influence on the research process, confirming, on the other hand, the validity and quality of the process (Cole, 2005). Tribe (2005 :5) sees the increase in reflexivity in research works as “a sign of increasing maturity” in academic research. Nicholls (2009) proposed that research should take into consideration 3 levels of reflexivity: self-reflexivity, interpersonal reflexivity, and collective reflexivity. This frame led me to reflect on my position of privilege, power, and control over research; the effect and role played by the relationships established between all participants in the investigation; on my actual ability to work collaboratively, as well as the collective impact that the research had on the broader goals of empowerment and training to give practical answers to the problems of the group I was working with.

Every day more authors advocate not only for incorporating reflexivity in academic texts, but also including the first person as a form of writing. Although it is becoming more and more common, first-person research papers are still an exception in academic literature and, furthermore, they can pose a risk. I decided to write my doctoral thesis in the first person singular when the narrated decisions had been made exclusively by me and in the first-person plural when they came from the research team, whether it was confirmed by researchers from DAD or by the co-investigation team from Sidi Moumen.

The final analysis included the voices of the participants and co-researchers in all steps of the process, not only through verbatim selection, but also of the inclusion of the results of their direct work during the research process (photographs, drawings, notes, etc.). With the same critical intention, I tried to include a personal statement of value through which I reflected on my privileged situation in front of my co-investigators, my theoretical and personal influences, and my personal motivations to approach the subject of study, thus incorporating the three levels of reflexivity from Nicholls (2009) and from Reason and Bradbury (2008).

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **CONFLICT ASSESSMENT**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter is focused on presenting the data collected from the youth to address the study question and explore possible interventions. This conflict assessment helps to gain a better understanding of the state of youth civic engagement and the concerns of young people living in marginalized neighbourhoods in Sidi Moumen. This was done to achieve the objectives of the study regarding promoting good governance and civic participation among marginalized urban youth. Therefore, the chapter presents the findings of this conflict assessment, which will help in informing programming decisions to ensure that the intervention is tailored to empower young leaders and address their specific grievances at the local level. This conflict assessment is intended to supplement our literature review findings on the economic grievances of young people living in marginalized areas and its relationship to violent extremism. The objectives are restated below:

**Objective 1:** Raise awareness among young people and other marginalised and at-risk target populations about the principles and mechanisms of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and constructive conflict resolution in order to strengthen community integration and increase youth resistance to messages of violent extremism.

**Objective 2:** To conduct a conflict assessment and offer marginalised urban youth the opportunity to contribute to local public governance and to constructively debate their vision of good governance and local priorities with local officials.

**Objective 3:** To create real and virtual spaces for debate, inspiration, and exchange of information among Moroccan youth regarding citizenship, participation in local public and civic governance, local initiative-taking, and national policies on youth concerns.

#### **4.1 Economic grievances of young people**

The following conflict assessment represents information and insights gathered from an initial sample of 75 individuals, male and female, aged between 18 and 25 years old, from Sidi Moumen neighborhood. Focus group discussion (FGD) was adopted as a tool for the collection of data. The survey was administered among the 75 participants of the study. The information collected in this conflict assessment study provided a starting point from which a comparison could be made, which in turn permitted the research team to implement activities throughout the lifecycle of the project in accordance with the project indicators. This conflict assessment study provides information on participants in marginalized areas, their struggles, hopes, fears, and expectations.

Their responses and concerns fell into three main categories, presented and analysed below:

- the education system,
- community involvement, and
- barriers to youth community engagement.

#### 4.1.1 Educational System

Bullying and Violence within Schools:

60% of the respondents that participated in the FGDs noted that bullying and violence were a problem within their schools. Respondents reported that violence and bullying are commonplace in schools and are frequently used by both students and teachers. Participants claim that young people in their communities resort to the use of violence or bullying, as it is how they were taught to deal with conflict and the only way they know how to respond in the face of disagreement or conflict. Teachers, local government, and CSO representatives likewise reported a prevalence of violence. The most frequently reported causes of conflicts among students are listed below in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Primary Drivers of Conflicts within Schools

Primary Drivers of Conflicts within Schools	Source*
Differences in ideologies and/or political views	Youth, teachers, local government, and CSOs
Failing grades	Youth and teachers
Drug use	Youth, teachers, and local government
Need to prove oneself	Youth, teachers, and local government
Lack of extracurricular activities	Youth, teachers, local government, and CSOs
Young males either fighting over or fighting to impress young women	Youth and teachers

\*Refers to the stakeholder groups who participated in the surveys

Surveyed youth, teachers, and local government representatives also report that “*teachers and school administrators lack techniques to constructively manage conflicts*” [KII1]. The major technique that is lacking is the ability to mediate between the two conflicting parties, while continuing to monitor and follow up on the conflict.

Teachers reportedly use violence as a tool to teach and punish their students. One of the respondents in a FGD claimed that “*young people in the community consider violence the only way to resolve conflicts and necessary to prove their manhood*” [KII2]. Fifty percent of the students also report corruption and the prevalence of nepotism among teachers, stating that students with connections to teachers and administrators are treated differently to others.

Young women and students with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to experiencing violence in schools. One student with disabilities in a FGD reported “*feeling excluded and marginalized by their teachers, who allegedly underestimate their abilities based on preconceived beliefs about people with disabilities*” [FGD1]. Young women are sometimes sexually harassed and assaulted by both teachers and students in schools. Several male respondents claimed that young women were sometimes to blame for this harassment due to “*their provocative clothes.*” [FGD2] A lack of proper management by school administrators and overcrowding within schools exacerbates the problem of teachers’ poor conflict management and encourages the use of violence.

### School Dropout

Findings confirm that educational and vocational training programs are not preparing Moroccan students for entry into the job market and that violence within schools and a lack of conflict resolution skills has led to high rates of school dropout. All participants report that there are high rates of students who drop out of school before obtaining a degree, illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

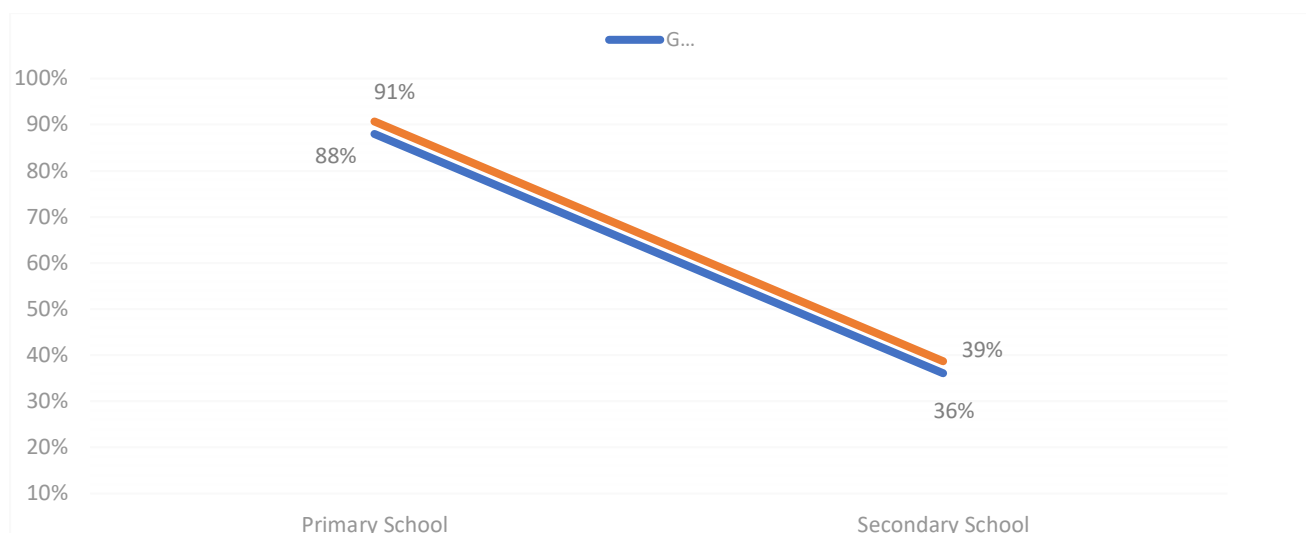


Figure 4.1: Net School Attendance Ratio. (Source: UNICEF 2021).

The most recent statistics from UNICEF (December 2021) show that net school attendance rates for Morocco drop from an average 91% of boys and 88% of girls in primary school to 39% of boys and 36% of girls in secondary school, as shown in Figure 4.1. Though respondents reported that dropping out of school could have positive consequences, such as allowing young people the opportunity to start their own businesses, most believed that dropping out of school was likely to lead to depression, drug use, and crime. In addition to these negative consequences, teachers, local government representatives, and CSOs also report a link between school dropout and extremism.

This point was also supported in our findings that 45% of the FGD participants reported that students drop out of school due to bullying and violence, along with attendance rates potentially dropping. This is presented in Table 4.2. Fifty-six percent of the respondents reported similar factors driving school dropouts. Thirty-four percent of the youth respondents were more likely than other stakeholders to reference violence, bullying, and sexual harassment as primary drivers of school dropout. A group of youth also reported that students' and teachers' lack of conflict management techniques often resulted in an escalation and spill over of school conflicts into the wider community KII1.

Table 4.2: Drivers of School Dropout

Drivers of School Dropout	Most at Risk
School bullying/violence	All students
Sexual harassment/assault	Females



Failing grades	Males
Lack of hygiene facilities (e.g. indoor toilets)	Females and youth with disabilities
Lack of extracurricular activities	All students
Overcrowding	All students
Emigration	Males
Poverty	Youth living in marginalized urban or rural areas
Lack of infrastructure in rural areas, i.e. transportation	Students living in rural areas
Marriage	Females
Employment	Females in primary school and males in secondary school
Lack of employment opportunities	All students

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Source: UNICEF Morocco Country Statistics (2021)

Teachers were more likely to list structural and cultural factors as driving school dropouts. A lack of transportation to schools from rural areas, hygiene facilities, and lack of family support for an education were the most commonly reported drivers reported by schoolteachers. The lack of transportation infrastructure makes accessing schools difficult for students living in rural areas, especially for students with disabilities, during the winter and in poor weather. Young women are also reportedly more likely to drop out due to sexual harassment as they are sexually harassed and assaulted on their way to school and when using the outdoors as a toilet due to the lack of hygiene facilities. Overall, teachers report that children's education is a low priority for parents, who perceive the immediate costs of education as outweighing the benefits of investing in education. Families with financial constraints will often prioritize boys' education over girls', if necessary. Teachers were more critical of the Moroccan school system and also cited problems with the current system as driving dropouts.

Representatives of local government who participated in the KII responded to questions about drivers of school dropout. [KII2] reported a lack of incentive to complete education given a dearth of employment opportunities. All stakeholders also cited problems with overcrowding and a lack of

extracurricular activities as contributing to dropout rates. Lack of space available for after-school activities has reportedly served as a barrier to offering extracurricular activities.

### Disconnect Between Education and Employment

The majority of respondents in FGDs expressed frustration with the Moroccan education system's inability to prepare young Moroccans for entry into the labour market. Forty-one percent of youth respondents in the survey reported that certain types of degrees are not relevant and can even serve as an impediment to finding a job in Morocco's labour market. The population of Morocco is rising beyond the economy's capacity to create jobs. In 2019, 22.29% of the youth were unemployed, while 1.6 million people in Morocco were unemployed in the year 2021 (Statista, 2021: np). A baccalaureate in literature was the most commonly cited type of degree that limits students' options for various careers and enrolment in vocational training programs, as most career paths or vocational programs will not accept someone with this type of baccalaureate. What is more, any type of university degree is perceived as a barrier to entry into the labour market, as employers are less likely to hire those with an advanced degree due to fears that they are more aware of their rights as employees. However, vocational training in Morocco has traditionally been associated with failure at school (Kozakowski 2020:2)

Teachers, representatives of local government, and CSOs echoed this sentiment as well. All respondents emphasized the importance of vocational training programmes in light of the paucity of employment opportunities for youth with a bachelor's degree. Fifty percent of the survey respondents emphasized the necessity of learning a trade in order to have a better chance of finding employment, given employers' preference for hiring less-educated employees. In the survey, 20% of the teachers and local government representatives reported that some in their communities perceive vocational programs as a last resort for troubled youth at risk of dropping out of school, and most respondents stated that vocational training programs were the best way to address the issue of high youth unemployment rates and to prevent at-risk youth from engaging in criminal activity.

Though 80% of the respondents claimed that vocational training programs are essential for young Moroccans, one of the respondents also stated that

“it is very difficult for some youth to access training facilities and a training certificate does not guarantee young people will be employable once they complete these programmes” [Survey data].

Forty-five percent of the youth respondents, particularly, report that

“vocational training centres are located far from [their] neighbourhoods and a lack of public transportation prevents [them] from being able to access these facilities” [FGD1].

Ten percent of the young people with disabilities in the FGD reported that they

“frequently have trouble not only with transportation, but also with entry into vocational training and school facilities due to a lack of handicapped facilities in the buildings themselves” [KII2].

It is reportedly also difficult for those with a vocational certificate to find stable employment, as not all vocational training programmes ensure that their trainees learn the necessary skills they will need for their selected career. In the FGD one local government representative claimed that

“this is partly due to the disconnect between vocational training programmes and employers, which results in programmes that offer training in outdated trades that do not connect to the current job market” [FGD2].

Thus, respondents felt that the Moroccan education system does not prepare young Moroccans for employment and has resulted in many young people feeling discouraged and unaware of how to enter the labour market.

#### **4.1.2 Community Involvement**

Despite high rates of school dropout and youth unemployment, few youth survey participants reported that they are actively engaged in their communities. This assessment focused on three primary channels of community involvement: *civil society organisations (CSOs), political parties, and youth councils*.

##### **Youth Engagement with CSOs**

Overall, participants reported that they were more interested in and likely to participate in CSO activities and become CSO members than in joining a political party. Youth respondents, teachers, CSOs, and even local government representatives participating in this assessment widely perceive CSOs as more active in community development than state institutions and politicians

“it is very clear to everyone the work that CSOs do; they bridge the gap that the governmental institutions have left” [KII2].

Furthermore, they think that CSOs are necessary to provide services that the government fails to provide its citizens. The most commonly cited example of this is the work CSOs do for people with disabilities (PWD) in their communities. According to respondents, there are a few CSOs who provide programming that benefits PWD in their communities, whereas the government has reportedly not followed through in providing support for PWD in these communities. Although the majority of youth looked favourably upon the work CSOs do in their communities, only 28% of youth who participated in the surveys claim that they actively participate in CSOs, either as a member or by attending CSO events. This highlighted that many youths are interested in participating in the CSOs. As shown in

Figure 4.2, the majority of youth in the Sidi Moumen area are not involved with CSOs in their communities.

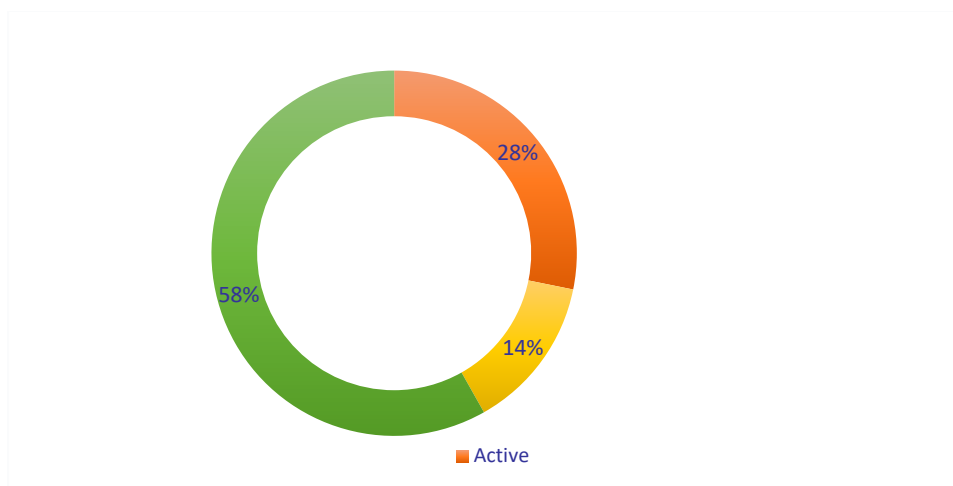


Figure 4.2: Youth Involvement in CSOs. (Source: own data.)

Low rates of youth engagement with CSOs are potentially linked to suspicions about the motives of some CSOs. During our focus groups, some youth claimed that some CSOs in their communities are established exclusively for the personal benefit of their founders: either by gaining public support for those with political ambitions or for financial benefit by embezzling CSO funds. Representatives of local government surveyed also reported that CSOs have become “trendy” for political parties, who fund CSOs to further party interests, but which are only established in order to raise funding. Despite these concerns, most local government representatives claim that CSOs have a positive impact on their communities and that they generally have more contact with youth in their communities and are better positioned to work with youth than the government. Reasons for low rates of youth engagement with CSOs are explored further in the Barriers to Community Engagement section below.

### Political Involvement

The majority of youth respondents held a negative view of local government and Moroccan political parties, which are both reportedly characterised by nepotism, patronage, and corruption. Several youth respondents reported that local government officials exploit their constituents’ lack of awareness of their rights to lead citizens to feel as though politicians are doing them a favour by providing basic services that they are entitled to in the first place. Most youth respondents also reported that politicians only make appearances in their communities during elections.

In addition to feeling exploited by local politicians, youth respondents largely felt that politicians are not trustworthy, as they often do not fulfil promises to improve conditions within their communities.

The only time that government officials, allegedly, undertake development projects within their communities is when the king is planning to visit. As a result, most youth claim that they are uninterested in politics and do not trust their local government. This is reflected in low rates of political participation by youth, as shown in Figure 4.3 below.

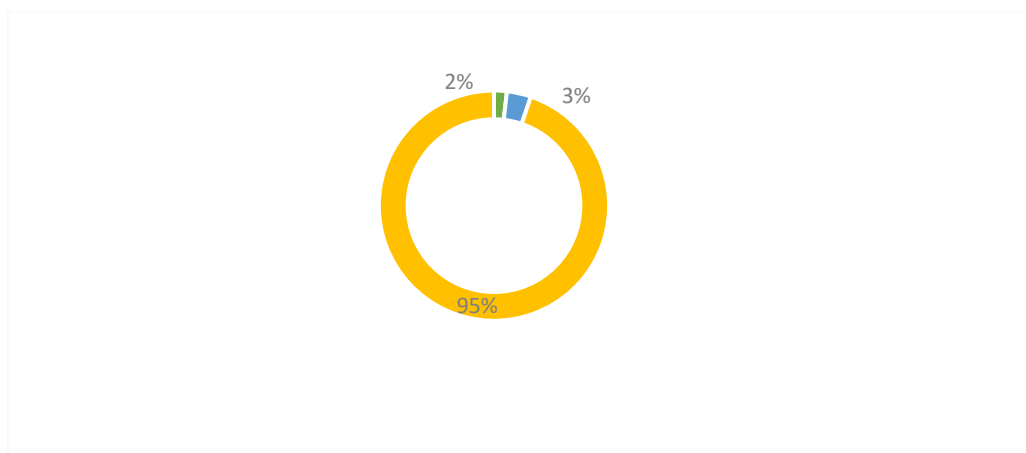


Figure 4.3: Youth Participation in Political Parties

Only 2% of respondents report that they are active members of a political party. Of the remaining 98%, the majority of the respondents stated that they are not members of any political party while 3% of youth claim to be inactive members of a political party.

Participating CSOs also claimed that “politicians use youth during the lead up to elections as ‘stage props’, but do not engage youth in events or decision-making”. The majority of local government officials interviewed confirmed that youth do not trust politicians or the government. Most government representatives confirmed that though most politicians and officials talk about encouraging youth participation in government, few, if any, allow young people in their communities to participate in local governance. Additionally, CSO representatives claimed that complex administrative and bureaucratic policies also prevent young people from engaging in local government.

### Youth Councils

Youth Councils (YCs) provide young people with a platform to work together and engage with officials and community leaders to advocate for their priorities and achieve real change in their communities. A commune is referred to as group of people living together and sharing their responsibilities and possessions. The context in which commune is highlighted here is based on youth groups living together, such as for higher education in hostels. This will push the youth into participating more in the CSOs. Currently there is a pre-existing YC in Sidi Moumen. The commune created a YC using a

participatory approach, involving young people and CSOs, to elect members to the YC. YC representatives who participated in this assessment stated that since the YC was created, it has acted independently of the local Commune. Although the Commune still supports the YC by providing resources, it does not provide any financial support for YC activities. YC representatives claimed that they were concerned with the (at the time) upcoming local elections, fearing that a change in local elected officials could result in the YC losing Commune support, which would jeopardize the YC.

Youth respondents and local government officials who participated in this assessment, however, did not have a very favourable impression of the YCs. One of the youth respondents claimed that *“as a Commune initiative, the YC was established to achieve the goals of the political party and does not serve the interests of local youth”* (Youssef, 19 yr) Of the representatives of local government that participated in FGDs, there were 2 members from the Commune that participated in the YC initiative. They stated that:

“The Commune established the YC in order to encourage youth participation in local governance and as a way of ensuring the Commune addressed the needs of local youth. However, they deemed the initiative a failure, as members of the YC lack the necessary skills to effectively engage in local governance. Furthermore, the commune is unable to provide YC members with the necessary skills trainings. As a result, the Sidi Moumen YC is not active in the community”.

#### **4.1.3 Barriers to Youth Community Engagement**

The majority of young people who participated in this assessment claim that they would like to be more engaged in their communities. However, poor relationships with key stakeholders and negative perceptions of youth by key stakeholders serve as barriers to greater youth community engagement.

##### **Negative Relationships Between Youth and Key Stakeholders**

Young people’s perception of various stakeholders in their communities greatly influences their relationships with these stakeholders and their willingness to engage in their communities. Participants were asked about their level of confidence in various stakeholders in their neighbourhood, (i.e. police, civil society organizations, local government, and imams), in order to assess their willingness to engage with these stakeholders. The results are presented below in Figure 4.4:

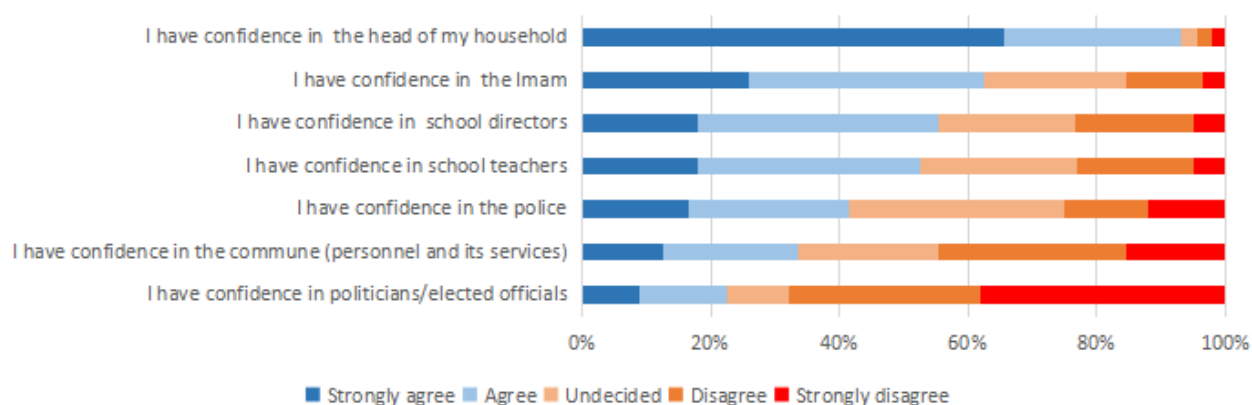


Figure 4.4: Confidence in Key Stakeholders. (Source: own data.)

Young people who participated in this assessment had the least amount of confidence in politicians and elected officials. As discussed previously, the lack of follow-through on campaign promises, political corruption, and the exploitation of youth have all contributed to young people's lack of trust and confidence in politicians. Young people had slightly more confidence in Commune members, potentially due to the fact that Commune members remain based within their communities following elections and have greater visibility than political representatives, who relocate to Rabat (the capital).

The majority of youth who participated in the FGDs held a negative view of the police in their neighbourhoods, claiming that the police do not actually solve crimes or address problems within their community. Police are said to discriminate against young people from marginalised neighbourhoods by profiling them and disproportionately arresting them. They also abuse their power by violently repressing peaceful protests or young spectators at soccer matches.

On average, young people expressed confidence in school directors and teachers, though as discussed in previous sections, they felt that both groups need training in conflict resolution techniques to effectively engage with youth. The majority of respondents stated that they have confidence in imams, but do not look favourably upon them. Participants claimed imams have no impact on the lives of young people in their communities due to the fact that imams' sermons are controlled and written by the state. Respondents felt that imams could be doing more to connect with youth in their communities and prevent recruitment to violent extremism.

Young people reported the highest level of confidence in their head of household. Many young people who participated in FGDs, however, frequently referred to families' role in preventing young people from participating in their communities, particularly for young women or PWD from conservative households.

## Negative Perceptions of Young People

Most youth also expressed frustration at the lack of opportunities for them to affect real change in their communities. Young people are excluded from the decision-making processes in CSOs and local governance and do not feel as though decision-makers take their needs seriously. These suspicions were echoed in the interviews with local government officials, who described youth interests as fleeting and young people themselves as lazy. Some officials mentioned wanting to work more closely with youth but claimed that the young people in their communities lacked the necessary skills to engage with the local government and that the generational difference inherently prevented adults from being able to work effectively with youth. Additionally, all stakeholders referred to a lack of training in youth engagement as a factor that prevents them from engaging with young people in their communities.

### 4.2. Objectives of a Conflict Assessment

The research team included three students who conducted this conflict assessment to gain a better understanding of the overall environment in which the project is operating and to use participatory methods to design an inclusive and robust intervention. The FGDs were adopted for conflict assessment and a survey questionnaire was administrated, after which a group discussion was conducted. The goal of this conflict assessment was to examine the diverse aspects of extremism and gain insight into participants' attitudes towards countering violent extremism. The findings of this conflict assessment were intended to help the research team to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the primary grievances of urban youth in Sidi Moumen, and to help make programming decisions, which would ensure that the intervention addressed the grievances at the local level.

### 4.3 Findings

The findings here reflect the results from surveyed and interviewed youth from the Sidi Moumen neighbourhood. Their responses and concerns are divided into three main categories: *their definition of extremism, their relationship to extremism, and their attitudes towards extremism*, which are presented and analysed below.

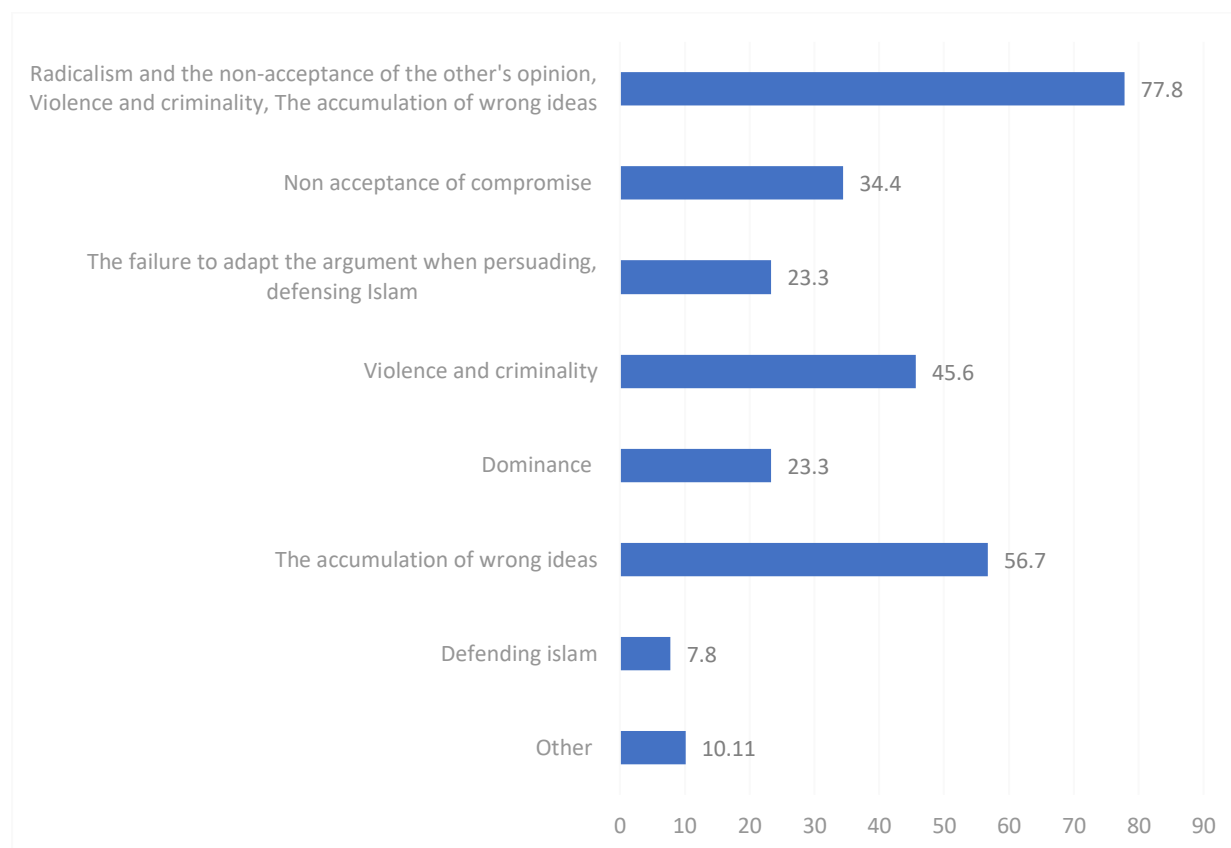
#### 4.3.1 Understanding extremism

Extremism is a notion that varies according to the context and one's understanding of it. Without a clear understanding of what this notion may entail and how it can lead to various connotations, it is difficult to develop a cohesive and effective approach. The result of the surveys, as shown below, offers an overview of these different connotations as respondents defined this notion in different ways (Table



4.3). The participants of the survey were asked to list the characteristics which they felt defined extremism.

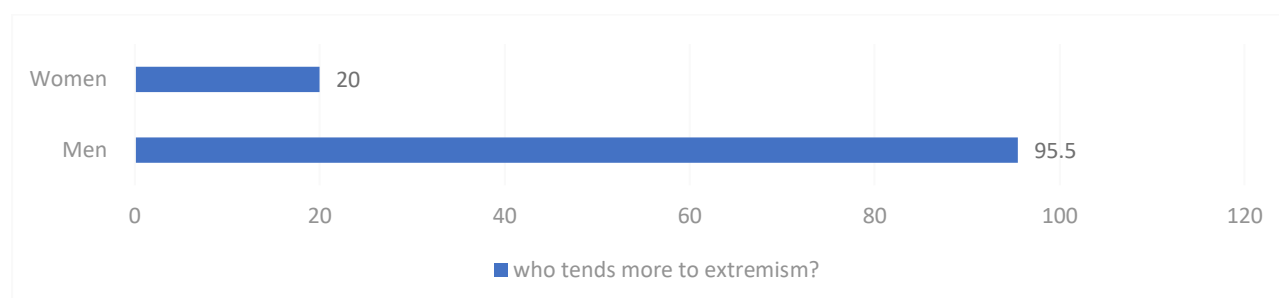
Table 4.3: Defining Extremism



The results of the survey show that a great majority of respondents (77,8 %) consider that extremism is attached to the notion of religious radicalism and the non-acceptance of other opinions. For a majority of respondents, extremism stems from the accumulation of “wrong ideas” (56,7%) and 45,6% of respondents considered that violence and criminality also define extremism. Extremism is also characterised by the “lack of possible compromise” (34,4%) and it is considered as an expression of dominance (23,3%). According to these results, the notion of extremism brings about connotations of misinformation, religious radicalism, intolerance, and violence.

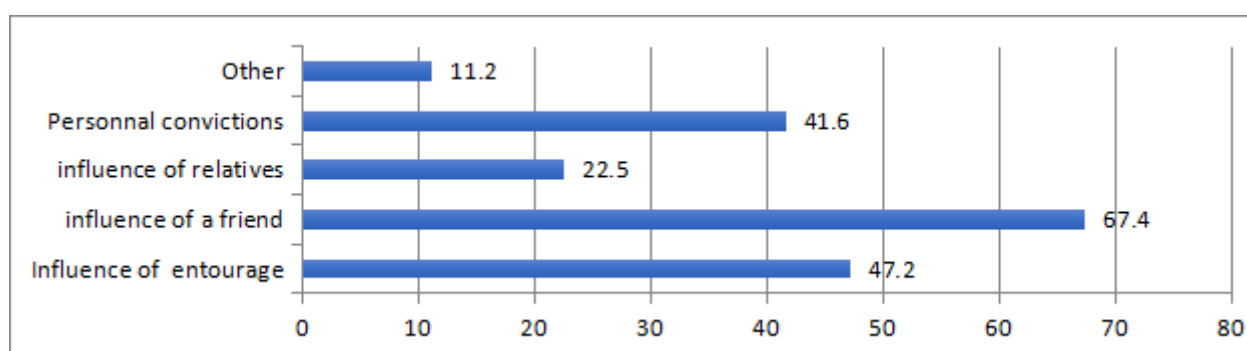
Another feature of extremism highlighted by respondents is its male predominance: 95,5% of respondents feel men are more likely to be attracted, in contrast to 20% who consider that women can also be extremist (Table 4.4). Researchers have argued that "terrorism and violent extremism are highly gendered activities" (Ndung'u and Shadung, 2017:3). The major reason can be that the status of women and men feature in their motivations for joining extremist groups, as well as that their roles in and the recruitment patterns of such groups, is central to tailoring effective prevention measures.

Table 4.4. Who Tends More to Extremism?



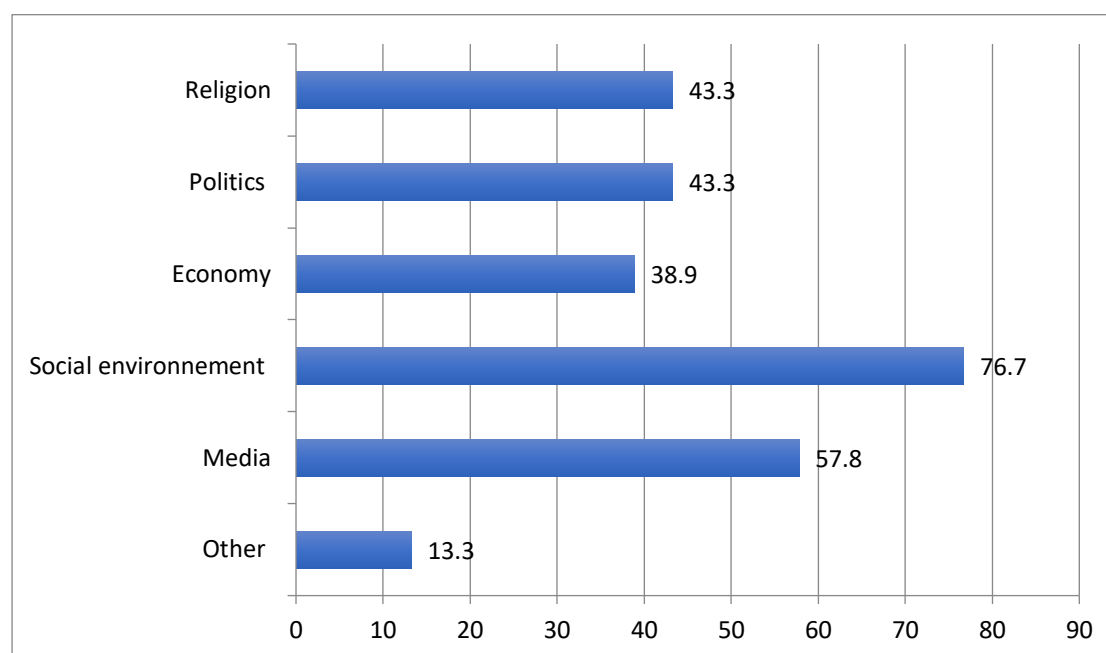
The results shown in **Table 4.4** suggest that women compose a minority of extremists. This perception that women are less inclined to be extremists leads to a lack of research on the specific role women play in the spread of extremism and of their potential to play a role in countering it. Nevertheless, the engagement of women in extremism provides insightful information on the development of this phenomenon. First, as Table 4.5 shows, there are several reasons that could drive a woman into this type of ideology: 67.4% of respondents considers that women enter extremist ideology under the **influence of their friends**. This result is followed by **the influence of entourage** (47,5%) while 41.6% of respondents surveyed find that women's extremism can also be the result of **personal conviction** and 22.5% via the influence of relatives.

Table 4.5. Reasons that Drive Youth into Extremism



The engagement of women in extremism is the result of external and internal factors (Ndung'u and Shadung, 2017:11).; however, it is difficult to accurately determine the set off factors that would drive an individual into extremist ideology. Not only do these factors vary from one context to another, but they are also often the result of a combination of indirect influences: 76.6 % of respondents identified the social environment as a potential root for the growth of an extremism, while 57.8 % of respondents reported that media can also play an active role. This result is followed by religion (43.3%), politics (43.3%), and the economic situation (38.9), noted below in Table 4.6:

Table 4.6: In your opinion, what are the Roots of Extremism?



Throughout this conflict assessment, we also sought to deconstruct the process of radicalisation that could attract marginalized youth and women at risk of violent extremism. This objective led to gauging the respondents' views on why people turn towards extremism: 72.2 % believe that unemployment and poverty are the principal reasons. Media and family (54.4%) were followed by religious bigotry (45.6%). On the other hand, while the lack of education is cited by 58.9 % of respondents, 22.2% reported that school curricula may be the reason that someone turns extremist.

Table 4.7: In your opinion, what are the Reasons that Make Someone Extremist?

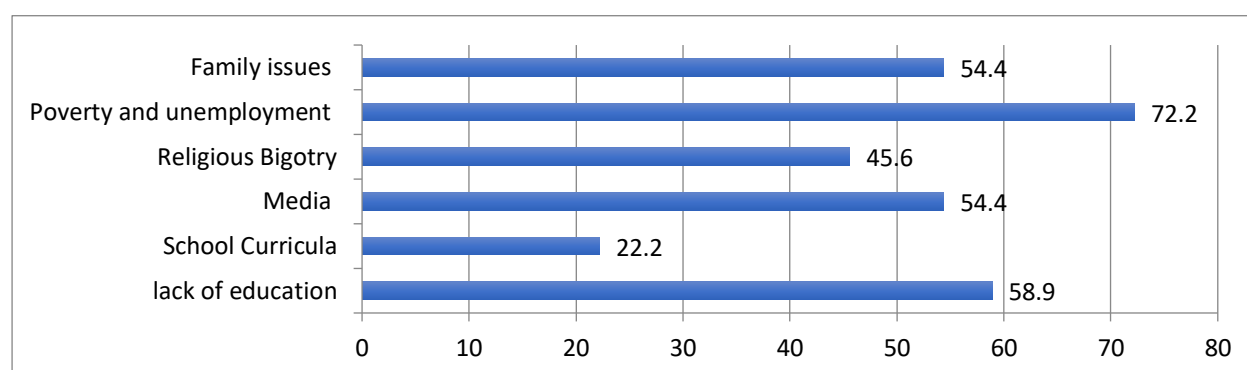
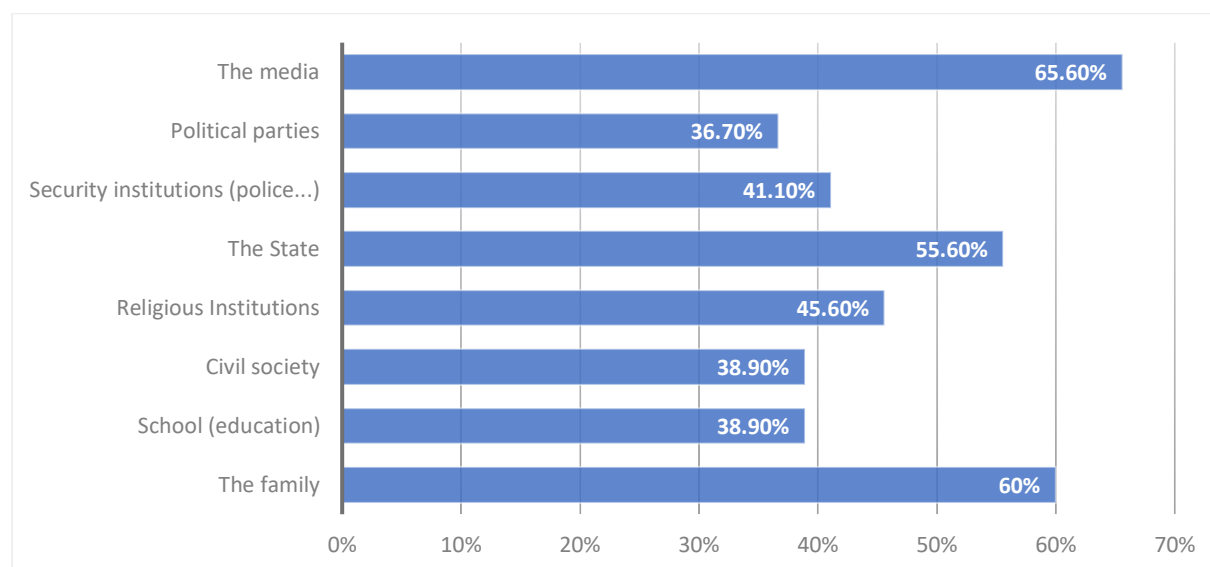


Table 4.8: In your opinion, what is behind the Prevalence of Extremism?

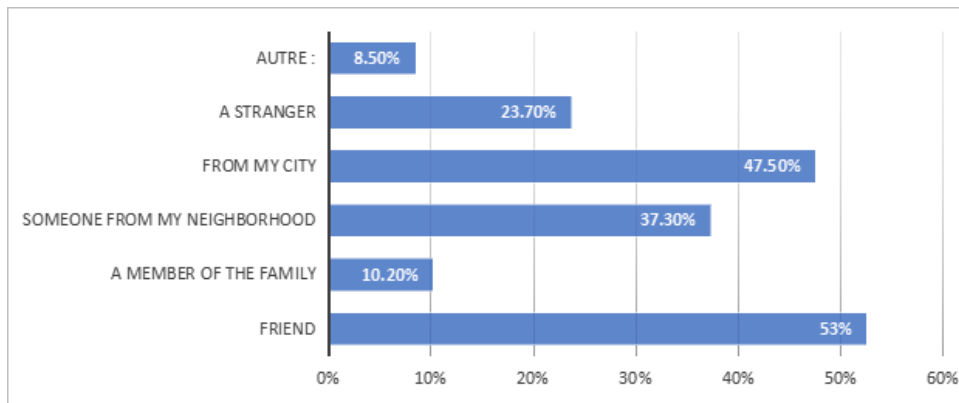


Many of the respondents report that the prevalence of extremism is multidimensional. Respondents surveyed point out the role played by the media (65.60%), family (60%), the state (55.6%), and religious institutions (45.6%).

#### 4.3.2 Relationship to Extremism

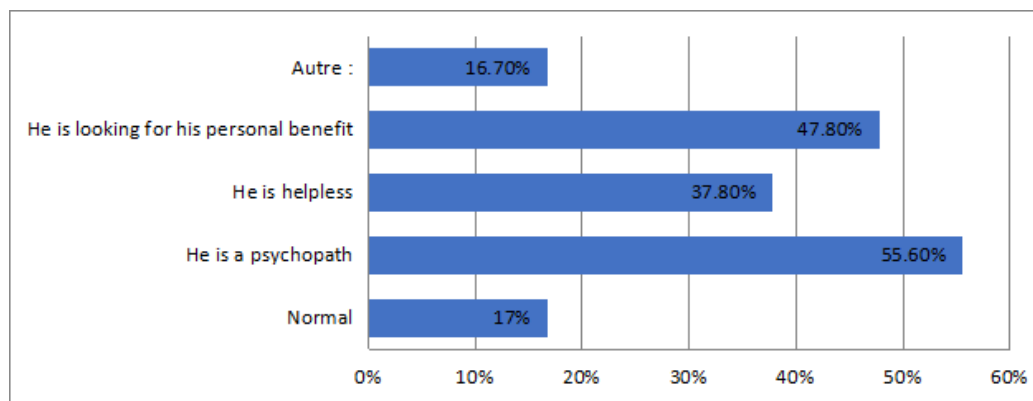
Within this conflict assessment, we also wanted to understand the type of relationship the general population of Northern Morocco may have with an extremist. The survey demonstrates that extremism is not a phenomenon alien to their daily life and that Northern Moroccans may know extremists through a variety of ways. Sixty percent of respondents surveyed reported knowing an extremist. When asked about how they knew that person, as noted in Table 4.9, 22% responded that they were from the same city, 27% said that person is a “friend”, 22% reported that it was a stranger, and 11% noted that the person was from the same neighbourhood. From this sample of respondents, 53% said they knew this person through their circle of friends.

Table 4.9: How do you know him/her?



When asked to describe the person's character, 55.6% of participants reported him/her to be considered a psychopath while 47.8 % thought s/he was looking for personal interest. For 37%, this person seemed helpless, and only 17% considered him/her to have "normal" behaviour.

Table 4.10: How would you define his/her Attitude?



In another set of questions, the participants of the survey were asked whether they had ever been asked to participate in a type of activity related to extremism and 47.2% responded that they had been asked to participate in activities inciting violence against another person (Table 4.11). Forty-six percent were asked to participate in activities related to promoting religious awareness among young people, and 39.3% were asked to participate in activities involving damaging public property. Incidentally, 6.7% were asked to assist in taking part in activities against a person in authority. These results highlight the violence and religious proselytising embedded within extremism. As Table 4.12 shows, the request was mostly made by friends (84%), and groups (33%).

Table 4.11: What types of Activities have you been asked to participate in?

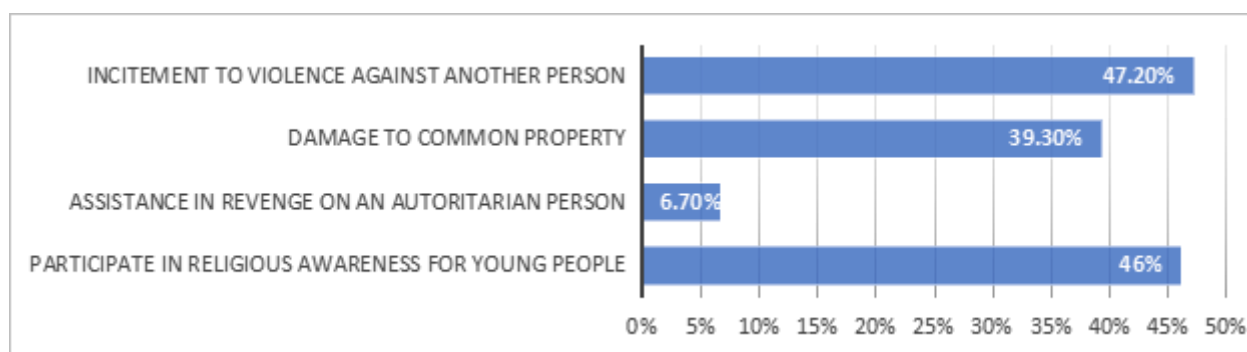
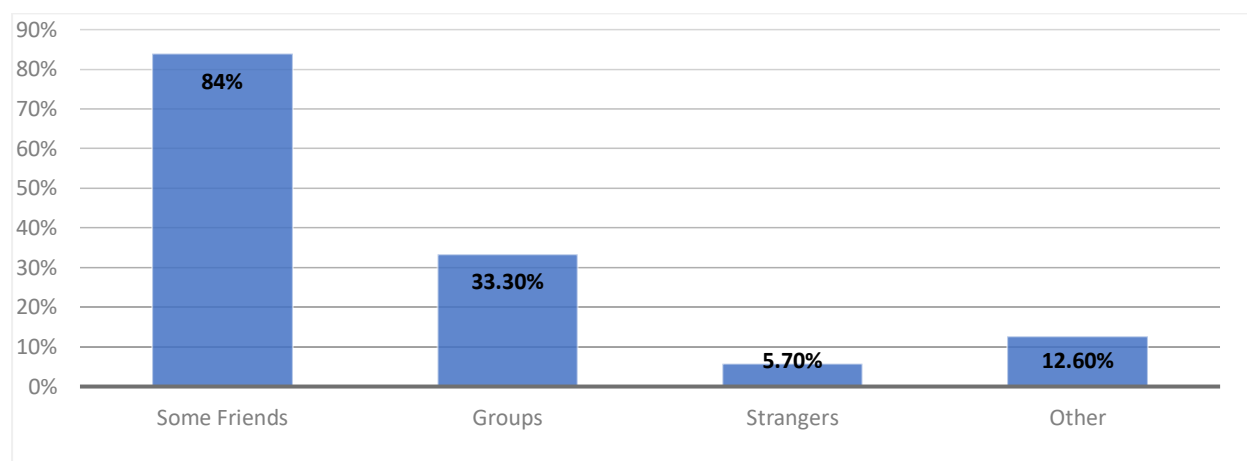


Table 4.12: Who was behind this request?



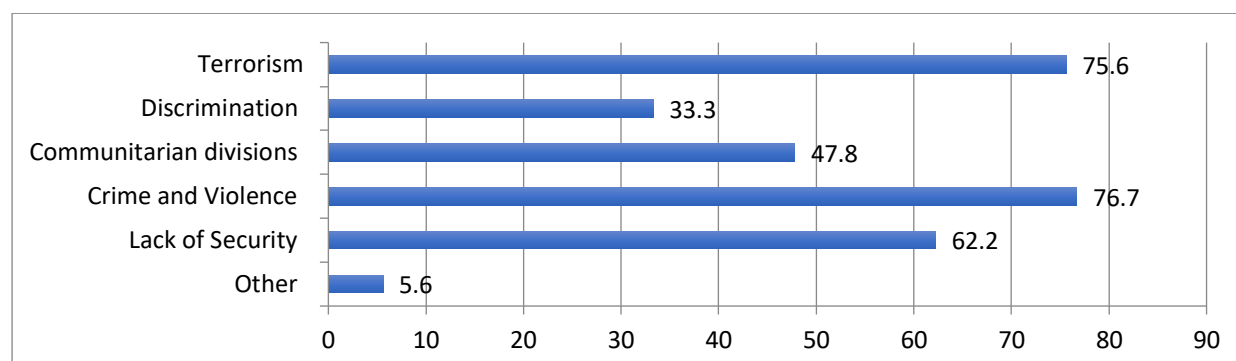
After understanding the relationship respondents maintained with extremists, they were asked how they would deal with them: 75.3 % advocated for helping him/her. For 36%, it was necessary to report him/her. On the other hand, a minority of respondents considered ignoring him/her (4.5%) and 1.1% would attack him/her.

### 4.3.3 Understanding the process of radicalisation and attitudes towards extremism

After having explored the nature of relationships that may exist between the general population and extremists, this section further examines the process of radicalisation and the attitudes adopted towards extremism. It is clear that extremism presents a risk to security; the role of this survey was to explore ways that could be developed to address the issue of extremism and hear from civil society actors how they would respond to this phenomenon. Respondents to the survey highlighted three major risks:

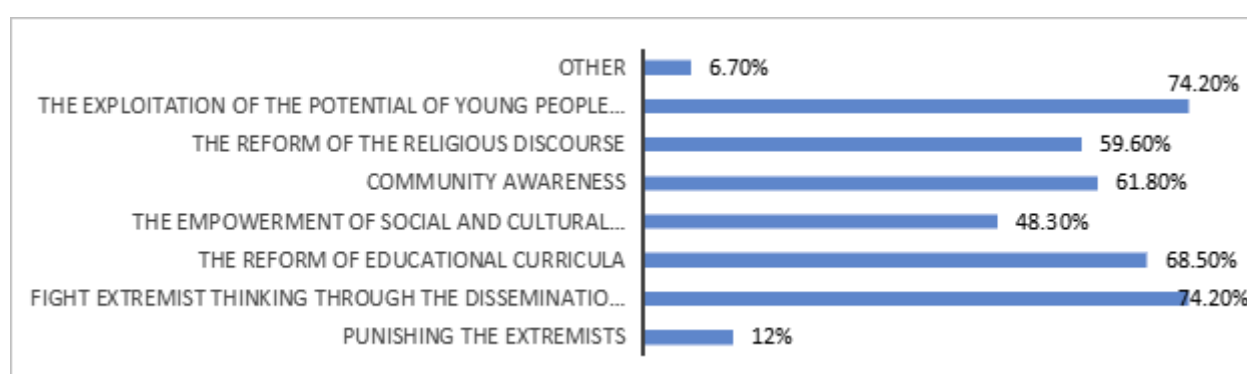
terrorism (75.6%), the risk of crimes and violence ( 76.7%), and a general sense of insecurity (62.2%). Others mentioned more specific risks, such as discrimination (33.3%) and community division (47.8%).

Table 4.13: What are the most Serious Problems facing Society as a Result of Extremism?



To the question “How can we reduce the risk of extremism?” the respondents offered a wide array of potential strategies. The majority felt that it was more effective to use restorative and educative measures, and 74.2 % of respondents suggested that a way to reduce the spread of extremism is through the **development** of youth ability and skills and exploiting their potential, while 59.6 % reported that there is a need to reform religious discourse, 61.8% reported that the community must be engaged and aware of the potential dangers of extremism, 48.3 % noted that it was important to empower social and cultural infrastructures, 68.5 % commented on the need to reform the education curriculum and 74.2% consider it necessary to disseminate alternative ideas. However, only 12 % suggested that a way to deal with extremist was through **retributive actions** and notably punishing extremists.

Table 4.14: How to Reduce the Risks of Extremism

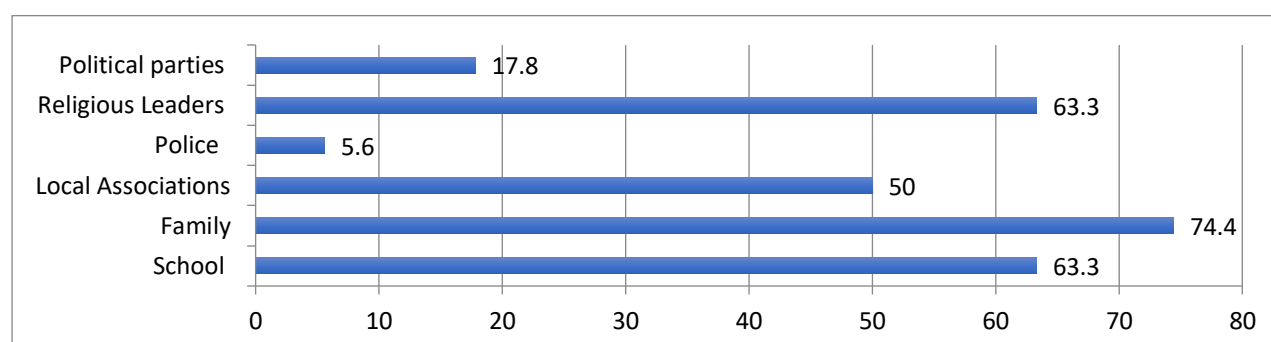


When asked about **particular means** to fight extremism, respondents suggested a wide array of potential actions (see Table 4.15). These means ranged from radio programmes (49.4%) to featured

stories (43.8%), and conferences and round tables (51%) to advocacy and sensitization campaigns (71.9%). Most strikingly, an overwhelming majority of respondents highlighted the role of specialised websites (82%) as an effective means to reduce the risk of extremism.

Overall, family is considered to be the most effective institution to counter extremism (74.44%). Family circles present an important structure to address the issue of extremism. As previous results showed, family can have a great influence on someone who is introduced to extremism. Conversely, this influential position can offer potential to reverse the process of radicalisation into extremism. Family members can offer support to people vulnerable to extremism and also prevent them from committing criminal acts. Besides these results, external institutions such as educational institutions are also relevant in the fight against extremism. Schools and religious leaders have an important role and can debunk myths and misinformation that could attract people to extremism. Respondents also reported the importance of local associations (50%), though a small minority included the role played by political parties (17.8%) and the police (5.6 %).

Table 4.15: What is the most Effective Institution to Fight Extremism?



People had varied perceptions of which means to adopt in order to reduce extremism. Extremist ideas are spread through different forms of communication and tend to be at the cutting edge of technology. The Internet offers great advantages for the spread of information and is a quick, effective means accessible to anyone, any time. The following results reflect an urge to adopt a targeted strategy taking advantage of this method of information dissemination to creatively counter extremist messaging. A great majority of respondents indicated the development of specialized websites (82%) could play an important role in spreading counter-messages. Respondents also referred to the development of sensitisation campaigns (71.9%), movies (67.4%), television programmes (59.6%), radio programmes (49.4%), and features stories (43.8%). Audio-visual media has proven powerful in breaking the imagery created by extremists which has drawn people towards criminal activity. Conversely, the reconstruction of images and reframing of narratives also creates a space to discuss these images and stereotypes.



Additionally, training courses (69.7%) and conferences and round tables (51%) can have an important role in reducing the risks of extremism.

Table 4.16: Means to Reduce the Risks of Extremism.

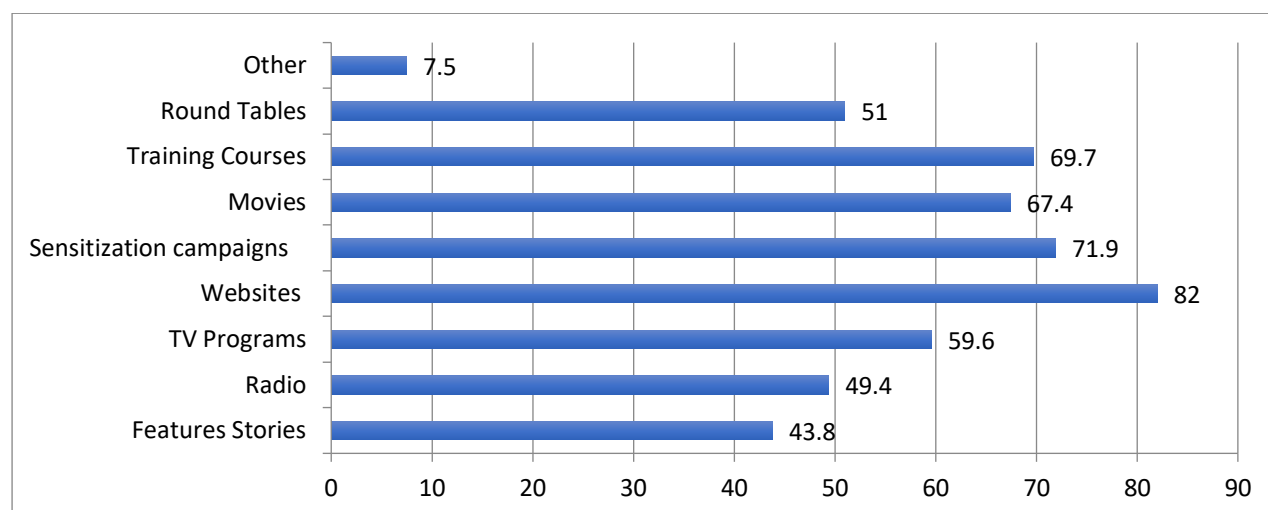
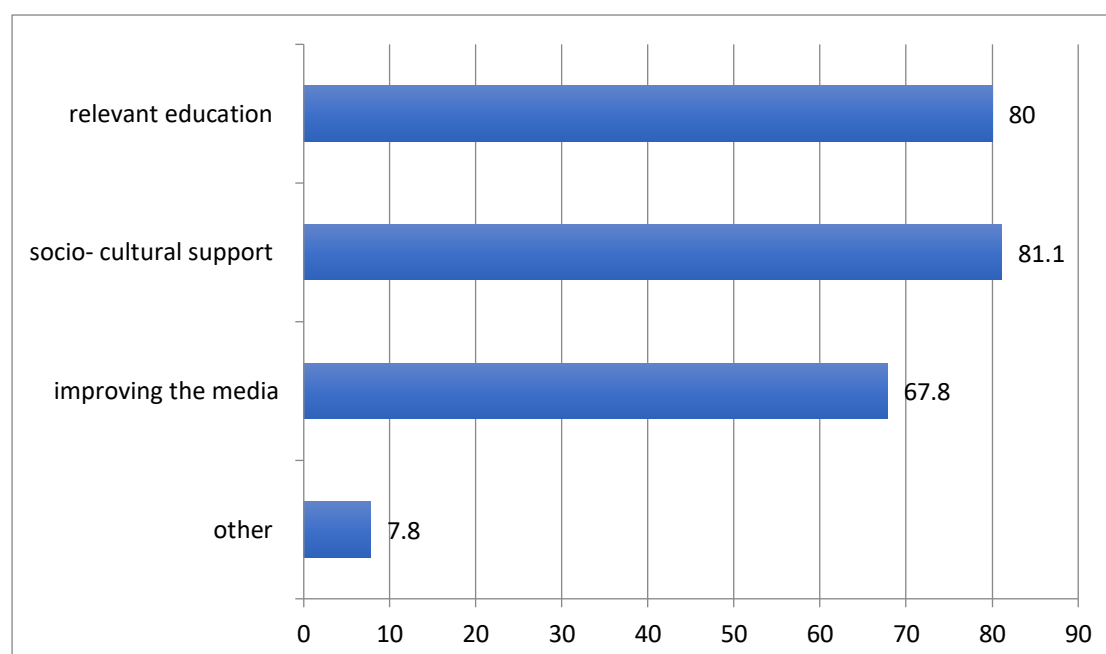


Table 4.17: How can we Protect Future Generations against Extremism?



Overall, the respondents reported that protecting future generations against extremism comes down to three principal aspects: education, societal support, and information. As the results below show, it is important to develop relevant curricula (80%) that can address the main issues that drives someone into extremism.

Family and civil society also have a notable role and should be more supportive of vulnerable people (81.1%). Media are also involved in the fight against extremism and need to be able to disseminate accurate and well-sourced information to avoid spreading myths that could trigger one's interest in extremism. This triangular relation between education, society and the media reflect the needs to adopt a multi-layered approach to initiatives countering extremism.

#### **4.4 Discussion of the conflict assessment**

Though the findings of this conflict assessment touch on a wide variety of issues, there are a few overarching themes, including the inability to resolve conflicts non-violently, the lack of productive opportunities for youth to engage with their communities, greater vulnerability of young women to exploitation and harassment, the lack of opportunities for Youth with Disabilities (YWD), and the lack of professionalism and necessary skills among youth to engage key stakeholders in order to advocate for their needs. As a result of these issues, as well as the exploitation and exclusion of youth from decision-making, young people in these marginalised urban neighbourhoods of Casablanca are disenfranchised and exposed to societal risks, including extremist ideologies. With this in mind, the research team made several recommendations.

The findings of this conflict assessment provide insight into the key aspects of conflict faced by young people in marginalised neighbourhoods of Casablanca, the needs of and opportunities available to these youth, and the roles that key local actors can potentially play in the project. These findings helped to provide a better understanding of the targeted neighbourhood's environment and how this can affect and inform the researcher and the partner organisation to choose the most effective and efficient intervention. A summary of the main findings can be found below:

##### **Education System**

Violence and bullying are prevalent in schools throughout the neighbourhoods sampled in this assessment. A more recent investigation (Moroccan Institute for Evaluation and Research of Educational Quality 2019), which worked with a sample of 2,391 high school students, revealed that the most common type of violence in the school context occurs between students, especially manifested in shouts and insults (24.1%), pushes (13.6%) and threats or intimidation (7.1%). 69.1% of the student body reported having witnessed peer violence and 38.6% have been harassed in the last 2 months. Olweus (1994) explained that the term bullying applies when a student is mistreated (bullied) or victimized by exposing themselves, repeatedly and for a long time, to a series of negative actions by one or more students. Negative actions are those intentional actions that inflict or intend to inflict injury and discomfort on others, which can be verbal (in the form of threats, insults, teasing and nicknames)

or physical (through hitting, slapping, kicking, pinching and other aggressions), but can also be expressed through looks of contempt and discriminatory gestures that promote rejection and exclusion (Stoffels 2010). These can be done individually or in groups and the target of bullying can also be an individual or a group. Also, for bullying to occur, as Diaz (2016) explains, there must be an imbalance in strength (an asymmetrical power relationship), such that the attacked character has difficulty defending himself /herself and is powerless against those who harass and mistreat him/her.

Other investigations that have worrying results are those of Alvarez (2015), Jalon (2005) and Diaz (2016), who show the limited participation of teachers and other adults such as parents to counteract the problem and support the victim. This factor probably helps the harassment/ bullying to last for long periods of time and to violate the fundamental right of every human being to be free from any type of oppression and humiliation. The authors express that bullying, for example, occurs in the least expected places, since after the family, the school today is the privileged place for socialization and learning of social models and values (Ortega et al. 2015).

In addition, the assessment has shown that widespread societal acceptance has resulted in both students and teachers regularly resorting to the use of violence to resolve conflicts, due to a lack of knowledge of alternative conflict resolution techniques. According to a UNICEF survey published in 2014, 73% of Moroccan teachers admitted using corporal punishment. 87% of students declared having been beaten at school with a stick, a ruler or a rubber tube. Violence, sexual harassment of female students, nepotism, overcrowding, lack of hygiene and handicapped access facilities, and lack of economic incentives to continue education have all contributed to high dropout rates. School dropout is a crucial risk factor for violence, substance misuse, psychiatric disorders (Kearney, 2008). Those who drop out are vulnerable to depression, drug use, crime, and recruitment to violent extremist organisations. While some cite vocational training programmes as an alternative to traditional schools and as being more likely to lead to employment, most perceive them as a last resort for troubled students and the low quality of these programmes does not actually guarantee employment for graduates. Neither schools nor vocational training programs sufficiently prepare students to enter the labour market.

### **Community Involvement**

Findings show three main channels for youth involvement in their communities in the surveyed neighbourhoods of Casablanca: CSOs, political involvement, and Youth Councils. Young people surveyed were most likely to engage with CSOs although rates of youth engagement with CSOs are low in big cities. Only 2% of youth reported being actively engaged with political parties. Corruption, nepotism, failure to fulfil election promises, and exploitation of youth for political purposes disincentivise youth from political engagement. Though there is a YC in Sidi Moumen, it has not been

very active or effective in the community due to a lack of skills and professionalism among YC members. There is a committee which intends to implement another YC; however, concerns over government involvement and local elections have delayed the development of this YC. The majority of stakeholders participating in this assessment agreed that in order to ensure that youth concerns are heard, and their needs are met, young people need to take an active role in coming together to advocate for their needs and have to be taught the skills that will allow them to effect positive change in their communities.

There are many factors that hinder youth involvement in their communities. Felix (2003) identified other challenges to youth involvement, including a lack of communication and awareness of opportunities, turf issues among organizations competing for youth participants, youth fears of speaking out, lack of diversity, and adultism or the systematic mistreatment of young people simply because of their age. In context of this assessment, data showed that poor relationships between youth and key stakeholders in their communities serve as barriers to greater youth engagement in their communities. Young people do not trust the police due to their excessive use of force and discrimination against young people in their communities. In authoritarian regimes, police violence has the general support or acceptance of political leaders (Bayley, 2006), but in democratic ones, police abuse represents a failure of the police institution, of the State or of the two actors together, which is processed differently by each. In addition, the consequences of abuses in democracies can be devastating (a crisis of the institution, a crisis of legitimacy or the dismissal of the authorities), which shows that the violation of human rights is not something exclusive to authoritarian regimes.

Religion was also taken into consideration in this assessment as it has much to do with community involvement. Religious leaders and in the context of Morocco (Imams) play an important role in shaping the daily life of many Moroccans. Kane (2013) states that:

“Individuals and groups may seek their advice, guidance and sanction, and tell religious leaders their hopes, dreams, secrets and sins. These functions are formally recognised and codified in religious organisational law as well as in some countries, especially countries in which there is a state-religion.” (Kane 2013: 226)

However, young people do not consider imams as relevant to their lives, given that imams’ sermons are sometimes written by the state and do not reflect the needs of their communities. At a household level, the head of a household was frequently reported as negatively impacting YWD’ and young girls’ community engagement, either indirectly through a lack of support, or directly by prohibiting young people from active participation in their community. Local government officials and CSO representatives reported a desire to work with the young people in their communities but claimed that the lack of skills and professionalism among youth prevented them from doing so effectively. Local

government representatives also frequently stated that they had not worked with youth due to the generational differences and the inherent laziness of young people in their communities.

### **Conflict Resolution Skills**

To date, a fairly large amount of theoretical material has been accumulated on the problem of conflicts between students and effective ways to resolve them (Slyck and Stern, 1991, Argudas et al. 2016, Cobb et al. 2019). Students need to know how to manage and resolve conflicts. Many schools in developing countries have adopted conflict resolution skills in their curriculum in order to provide the students with tools to constructively solve conflicts. At the moment, there is no single program in Moroccan schools. Without knowledge of conflict resolution techniques, disagreements and conflicts frequently escalate from bullying and verbal violence to physical violence, which is perceived as the only way to resolve conflicts. Additionally, a failure to constructively resolve conflicts prevents greater engagement of youth in their communities and collaboration among key societal stakeholders, including CSOs and government officials. In order to see a decrease in rates of violence and to allow for increased collaboration among stakeholders, Youth Council members, local government officials, and CSO representatives should be trained in methods of alternative conflict resolution.

As we looked into designing an intervention following this assessment, Tindall (1995) suggests that:

“a good program must have the following characteristics: First of all, each participant in the program should also participate in the planning process and the education program must have a special design. Supervision, evaluation and research must be a part of education and peer mediation program could measure the process and external problems. The ethical aspects of education and implementation should be properly considered and continuously controlled.” (Tindall 1995: 98)

Many opportunities exist in terms of educating students in conflict resolution skills in order to promote a culture of peace, understanding and coexistence. Models considered for this purpose were: case studies, discussions and simulated conflict situation allows students to practice the acquired knowledge in real situations, to understand what to do in a difficult interpersonal situation, to exercise control over their feelings and emotions and constructively engage in conversation outside of their comfort zone. Familiarizing students with as many methods of conflict resolution as possible was argued to increase the likelihood of constructive conflict resolution. The organization of the process at this was aimed at ensuring the habitual observance of moral standards, which stem from moral motivations.

Analysis of the assessment also revealed the need to develop a group of behavioural and communication skills. In particular, both CSOs and participants agreed that it is very necessary to develop skills such as correctly expressing one's thoughts, active listening, empathy and sympathy.

## **Inclusivity and Diversity in Youth Programming:**

YWD are routinely prevented from engaging in their communities, from school attendance to CSO/YC engagement, as a result of a lack of transportation and necessary handicapped-accessible facilities. Women are also routinely excluded from community engagement due to concerns over their safety and traditional gender roles. The research team planned to ensure that all project events and activities were held in venues that are handicapped-accessible and are sensitive to the needs of YWD and young women.

People who participated in this assessment have a complex vision of reality that accepts its heterogeneity and continuous change, that is, reality is complex because it is dynamic and diverse. Brown (2018) asserts that this diversity and dynamism is positively valued since on one hand it increases different views and potential of the group itself to have great outcomes from conversations and the other hand, it is an essential condition for social transformation. Therefore, several attitudes were considered essential: attitudes of openness and flexibility that favor adaptation and the ability to benefit from changes of attitudes within the intervention; the ability to experiment and improvise.

“When youth reside in socioeconomically homogenous neighbourhoods, attend single-sex schools, or belong to classrooms that are segregated by ethnicity, they have limited opportunities to interact and form social bonds with dissimilar others. Even when diversity is present (such as in mixed-sex classrooms), there are often high rates of de facto segregation and little opportunity for diverse interactions”  
(Brown 2018:1)

Because of this assessment we now had a greater scope to create equal access opportunities for young people with fewer opportunities (and the entities that work with them, the CSOs), by providing a space for conversations that address barriers to access and promote the diversity of youth in projects, organizations and institutions associated with the youth ecosystem.

Based on the analysis of different resources and recommendations, as well as the reflection on the situation in Morocco, we planned to:

- Highlight some difficulties faced by programs aimed at youth to achieve effective impact on people with fewer opportunities.
- Offer ideas and recommendations to overcome them and take advantage of the new legal framework of the Moroccan Youth Programs.

## **Extracurricular Activities:**

Surveys in the conflict assessment were tailored to approach the contexts and activities in which youth engage. From this analysis we can say that new and different competences and learnings that youth

experience depend on the contexts and activities that they go through (Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006), and the degree of structure or organization that these possess (Fredricks, & Eccles, 2006. Mahoney et al. 2000, Mahoney & Stattin, 2000). Based on previous studies, participation in organized extracurricular activities, e.g., those that are generally self-determined outside the school institution, that have a certain structure, rules, objectives with the coordination of an adult, are the ones that promote greater development.

The difference between school or curricular activities and extracurricular activities is that the former require compulsory attendance for the student, are taught during school hours and are made up of teaching activities (formal education) and complementary activities (artistic activities and sports). Extracurricular activities, on the other hand, have as their main characteristic voluntary or self-determined participation and are activities that take place outside of school hours.

Extracurricular activities play an important role in the socialization of youth with their environment (Gracia, & Herrero, 2006). In addition, participation in extracurricular activities would allow youth to make use of their free time that provides them with opportunities for growth and development (Eccles, & Gootman, 2002, Larson, 2000). Likewise, it was also found that individuals who participated in extracurricular activities presented higher levels of intrinsic motivation, more positive moods and the perception of having skills according to the challenge posed by the activities in contrast to those who did not participate in these activities (Vandell et al., 2005).

Unfortunately, a lack of extracurricular activities was one of the most commonly-cited factors that contribute to high rates of school dropout in many places in Morocco. Our participants claimed that providing extracurricular activities for students will help incentivise education and provide students with valuable skills. Though creating extracurricular activities for schools in the targeted neighbourhoods of Casablanca may be beyond the scope of our project, the research team should encourage dialogue between schools, students, CSOs, and parents to develop extracurricular activities. Many CSOs offer youth programming, and collaboration between these CSOs and schools could help schools with limited resources to offer more activities and services to meet the needs of their students. The involvement of students themselves, as well as their families, will be necessary to ensure that any programming developed is relevant to the needs of young people and will encourage greater support among families.

### **Sporting Venue Availability:**

Most young people, government, and CSO representatives surveyed reported that most CSO programming and youth outreach efforts have most recently focused on sports, particularly soccer.

However, a lack of available sporting venues has made practising and holding matches challenging. Government and CSO representatives both claim that there are sporting venues under the management of various government ministries, such as the Ministry of Youth and Sports; however, the ministry has not made these venues available to young people or CSOs.

While many young people enjoy sport, it is important to encourage a diverse range of activities for youth. Sport can be a good way to engage young people. However, only offering sporting activities runs the risk of excluding certain segments of the youth population, particularly young women and YWDs. Offering a diverse range of programming will help ensure greater inclusivity and wider youth engagement.

### **Training in Civic Engagement:**

The definition of democracy currently goes beyond a system of government, as it is now understood as a lifestyle that entails civic, moral and social values that must permeate all activities, not only government, but also citizen involvement. In this sense, education in Morocco must be oriented towards educating citizens with values that contribute to the democratic system. Another civic commitment that, in turn, is part of the existing societal political values is found in the relationship with the actions of activism; that is, political participation and identity is a feeling that is worked on or generated due to various situations, among which the following stand out: interest, enthusiasm, attention, interpersonal relationships and belonging (Barrett, 2020).

Scherman and Arriagada (2012) affirm that in recent years, the political participation of young people has been in decline, which represents a problem for countries where this exists. Generally, the lack of participation is associated with the little trust of government institutions, the lack of credibility of public officials, proposals that are not measurable and achievable. Political participation in young people is found under various positions that encompass disciplinary reflections that not only prioritize citizen participation but are also related to other categories of analysis such as democracy, ethics, socialization and decision-making (Cardona and Alvarado, 2015).

Civic engagement is understood by students as a necessity and is primarily intended to counteract a lack of training in political matters, mainly due to the lack of awareness and political education in the family. Citizen education is a necessary way to access information to participate politically. Community participation demonstrates the needs of citizens, the opportunity for development, communication and coexistence of the population and the degree of trust that the State has with the population.



Following the assessment data, 63% percent of surveyed youth reported that they are interested in engaging with local governance; however, only 2% of youth report being actively engaged in politics/governance. This discrepancy is largely due to a lack of knowledge about how to engage with local governance and poor perceptions of government officials. By providing youth with the necessary information and skills about how to effectively engage with local governance, youth civic engagement will increase and regular interactions with government officials can help improve young people's perceptions of government officials.

### **Transparency:**

Throughout this assessment, the majority of stakeholders expressed concerns about nepotism and corruption among politicians, government officials, CSOs, and YCs. These suspicions negatively impacted perception of these individuals and groups and reduced young people's willingness to engage with these various actors. In order to achieve the expected project results and ensure stakeholder buy-in, it will be essential for the research team to thoroughly vet partners, be transparent in decision-making processes, and to provide information on project purposes and intended outcomes. Furthermore, given the public perception of government and politicians, it will be important to be transparent in the process of creating initiatives and to select partners for the project carefully in order to gain community support.

According to empirical evidence, there is a relationship between corruption and the absence of good governance. Opportunities to act corruptly increase when institutional transparency, accountability, capacities, effectiveness, equity and access are lacking (Hyden 2004). And where corruption is endemic, the task of improving governance performance becomes more difficult. It further has negative economic implications (Mlambo et al. 2019). Scholars, practitioners, and policymakers may disagree on the exact causal relationship between corruption and good governance, emphasizing the various components of good governance (Kaufmann, 2003), whilst acknowledging the relationship.

Despite the many advances in techniques for measuring corruption over the past decade, there is still no consensus on what the most appropriate tools and indicators are to assess its scale and scope (Maghraoui 2012). In Morocco, the term “endemic” is often used to describe corruption in the independent press, local NGOs, and international organizations (Maghraoui 2012). Corruption, whether minor or major, seems to permeate every aspect of life: politics, business, central administration, local government, public services, and the judicial system.

### **Relationships to extremism:**

Extremism is a notion that varies according to context and individual understanding. Without a clear understanding of what this notion may entail and how it can bring about various connotations, it is difficult to develop a cohesive and effective approach. Results from the assessment show that for a majority of respondents, extremism is a familiar phenomenon and 60% of respondents reported knowing an extremist. This confirms the argument of Zinchenko, et al. (2016) of the degree of extremism amongst youth. Cairns (1987: 285) had related extremism to group membership as an underlying factor:

“Tajfel's theory suggests that we tend to structure our social environments in terms of groupings of persons, or social categories, thus simplifying the world we live in. These categories are to some extent based upon our own experiences but also largely determined by our society. Our knowledge of our own membership in various of these social categories is defined as our social identity and forms an important part of our self-concept. To enhance our social identity, we tend to behave in ways that make our own group acquire positive distinctiveness in comparison to other groups. If this is not possible we may seek to change our group membership; or if this is not possible, we may attempt a redefinition of the existing social situation so as to achieve a more positive social identity”.

This study has revealed that extremism is a pervasive phenomenon and the general population interacts daily with extremists. The infiltration of extremism into the family and social circle is aggravated by the diffusion of extremist messaging through media, state institutions, religious leaders, and in school. Generally, the role played by civil society has contributed to the prevalence of extremist rhetoric in everyday life.

### **Process of radicalisation and Attitudes towards extremism:**

This assessment sought to understand the internal and external dynamics that can play a role in the appeal of extremist ideology to youth and women. As the results show, the process of radicalisation may occur through different channels: 65.6% of people surveyed considered the media a key player in the prevalence of terrorism, though 60% also reported that family is another way to enter the process of radicalisation, followed by 55.6% citing the role of the state and institutions in charge of security (41,1%). Additionally, the participants noted the significant role played by schools (39.8%), civil society (38.9%), political parties and religious institutions. Underlying these findings is the appeal of such movements to the need for belonging. Luckabaugh et.al. (1997:7), for example, explain that:

“the real cause or psychological motivation for joining is the great need for belonging, a need to consolidate one's identity. A need to belong, along with an incomplete personal identity, is a common factor that cuts across the groups.”

Varvin (2018) writes about the importance of understanding group dynamics and its role in extremism, positing that group dynamics is a significant consideration when examining the root causes. The sense of belonging to a group is a matter of importance to most people.

Similarly, Post (1984:64) adds that:

“the need to belong, the need to have a stable identity, to resolve a split and be at one with oneself and with society- ... is an important bridging concept which helps explain the similarity in behaviour of terrorists in groups of widely different espoused motivations and composition.”

In a later article, Post (2015) discusses the phenomenon of the “lone wolf”, that is, a person operating on their own. This is a more recent aspect of terrorism due to the rise of the internet, arguing that the group in this case is a group of hate.

It is clear that extremism presents a risk to security. The purpose of this survey was to explore ways to address the issue of extremism and hear from civil society actors how they would respond to this phenomenon. The overwhelming majority of respondents reported that they would approach an extremist to help (75.30%). On the contrary, only 1.1 % stated that they would confront and attack him/her.

In order to reduce the risk of extremism, the results of the survey show that restorative and educational measures are considered to be more effective. It is reported that the community must be engaged and aware of the potential dangers of extremism: 48.3 % reported that it was important to empower social and cultural infrastructures, 68.5% feel there is a need to reform the education curriculum and 74.2% consider it necessary to disseminate alternative ideas.

#### **4.5 Conflict Assessment and development of an intervention**

The findings of this conflict assessment provide insight into the key aspects of conflict faced by young men and women in marginalised neighbourhoods of Casablanca. These findings provide a better understanding of the targeted environment and how this can affect and inform the intervention. The results shed light on an unknown phenomenon. As a matter of fact, the results of the assessment show that each individual possesses a different understanding of extremism. However, four primary aspects may be emphasised as major features of extremism: misinformation, religious radicalism, intolerance, and violence.

This conflict assessment touch on a wide variety of issues, there are a few overarching themes, including the inability to resolve conflicts non-violently, the lack of productive opportunities for youth to engage with their communities, greater vulnerability of young women to exploitation and harassment, the lack of opportunities for YWD, and the lack of professionalism and necessary skills among youth to engage key stakeholders in order to advocate for their needs. As a result of these issues, as well as the exploitation and exclusion of youth from decision-making, young people in these marginalised urban

neighbourhoods of Casablanca are disenfranchised and exposed to societal risks, including extremist ideologies.

The project design process was pretty organic and organized in nature. I met with participants and representatives from the CSOs almost every day for three to four hours at a time for a week in preparation of the suitable intervention. After forming the team, we shared our learner and training styles, where we fall on Kolb's learning quadrant. We shared our hopes, expectations, and fears for the project and were very candid to what we needed from the training. From our initial conversation, we established norms and understood each other's background in relation to our culture and religious background. We worked together as a group by working physically together to gather and analyse data, talk through ideas, and listening actively each other. Together, we created, administered and reviewed the needs assessment. Here we look at how our individual members contributed in the planning process and then in the execution of the intervention. We were aware of our individual strengths and utilized our talents in the planning and preparation process.

As mentioned earlier, some of the recommendations from the needs assessment are outside the scope of the intervention, such as the sports venues and extracurricular activities at schools. However, with the proposed intervention, the Youth Leaders for Peace Project, the team hoped to provide training on CVE/PVE, conflict resolution, multimedia management and community engagement skills. It is through this indirect approach that we intended to empower youth to improve their current living conditions and pursue the recommendations and areas of interest that have been identified in this conflict assessment.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **YOUTH LEADERS FOR PEACE INTERVENTION**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter addresses the factors, based on the data collected from the primary respondents in which different questions were asked them and the results are presented. The analysis has been conducted with the use of aforementioned techniques by which detailed insights were developed and study objectives were fulfilled in the desired manner. Moreover, all the 75 leaders were included within this study in this project stage and they played their role accordingly. This was intended to achieve Objective 3:

**Objective 3:** To create real and virtual spaces for debate, inspiration, and exchange of information among Moroccan youth regarding citizenship, participation in local public and civic governance, local initiative-taking, and national policies on youth concerns.

#### **5.1 Project Background**

Programme Context: Since 1998, Morocco has been implementing major political and government reforms around democratisation, human rights, and decentralisation. Youth participation in the local political process needs to be improved through greater transparency, accountability, and community interaction with local elected leaders. Several capacity barriers hinder youth participation in local civic governance. Chief among these is the fact that most youth and youth associations lack the advocacy, leadership, and communication skills necessary to constructively engage and effect positive change at the community level.

#### **5.2 Overview of the Program**

In light of the situation of the youth in Casablanca, the Youth Leaders for Peace project was implemented in marginalised neighbourhoods of Casablanca with the help of partner civic organisations. The overarching aim of this project is to reduce delinquency and recidivism among youth aged 18-25 in Sidi Moumen by building the capacity of relevant local and national partner institutions and work with at-risk youth. This project's main expected outcome is that marginalised youth from this huge city are better able to access economic and social opportunities. By providing positive alternatives to at-risk youth, the Youth Leaders for Peace project also plays a role in countering violent extremism (CVE). The research team focused on encouraging local communities to promote peace and personal growth of youth in the targeted areas of Sidi Moumen.

Taking the conflict assessment results into consideration, the team designed and implemented activities to encourage marginalised urban youth to participate constructively in local and public governance in order to effect positive change in their own neighbourhoods. Specifically, the Youth Leaders for Peace project intended to identify and train local youth leaders in deprived urban and peri-urban areas, creating at least one Youth Council (YC). With support from the partner organization DAD, the team held a round-table that facilitated debates with local and national elected officials, candidates for office, and community youth. Through project activities, the team created spaces for debate and exchange among urban youth and local officials regarding citizenship, advocacy, local governance, and national policies. These activities also equipped both YCs and local Communes with the skills to identify common interests and to develop win-win solutions in a spirit of collaboration. Working with youth researchers from Sidi Moumen and Derbghalef Association for Development, as well as the recommendations from the conflict assessments, we implemented a project that promotes the bottom-up civic engagement of marginalised urban youth and reinforces their constructive participation in local governance.

The objective of the project was to encourage marginalized urban youth to participate constructively in local governance in order to effect positive change in their own neighbourhoods, develop a sense of civic responsibility and community belonging, and inspire other youth through local competitions, online social media, and radio and television programming. The target population was young people between the ages of 18 and 26 years old, living in the marginalised urban neighbourhoods of Casablanca and are active members of DAD. These high population areas also constitute an appealing audience for engagement by local and national elected officials.

Specific objectives and of the expected results of the project include:

Objective 1: Raise awareness among young people and other marginalised and at-risk target populations about the principles and mechanisms of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and constructive conflict resolution in order to strengthen community integration and increase youth resistance to messages of violent extremism.

- Expected Result 1.1: At-risk youth have increased knowledge of the benefits, principles, and mechanisms of peaceful coexistence, tolerance, and constructive conflict resolution.

Objective 2: To conduct a conflict assessment and offer marginalised urban youth the opportunity to contribute to local public governance and to constructively debate their vision of good governance and local priorities with local officials.

- Expected Result 2.1: Offer marginalized urban youth opportunities to connect and engage in constructive exchange with elected officials.

Objective 3: To create real and virtual spaces for debate, inspiration, and exchange of information among Moroccan youth regarding citizenship, participation in local public and civic governance, local initiative-taking, and national policies on youth concerns.

- Expected Result 3.1: Create virtual spaces for constructive debate, inspiration, and information exchange among youth about peaceful coexistence and tolerance.

Direct outputs of the project include the following:

- 75 leaders from one of Morocco's most deprived urban areas underwent intensive training in citizenship, alternative methods of conflict resolution, and social entrepreneurship.
- Members of two local Communes were trained in constructive engagement with young people, non-violent communication, political negotiation techniques, and lobbying with national authorities.
- Youth directly participated in round table facilitated debates with local and national elected officials, as well as candidates for government offices.
- A practical toolkit on principles, methods, and good practices of youth engagement in local civic governance was produced and disseminated.

A step-by-step design of the project main elements was put together as follows:

1. Baseline Study.
2. Marginalized Urban Youth – Training (Citizenship, alternative methods of conflict resolution, social entrepreneurship).
3. Training of Local Communes (Non-violent communication and constructive engagement with youth, political negotiation techniques).
3. Creation of local youth councils.
4. Communication through social media, radio, and television.
5. Roundtables and Town Hall debates with local and national politicians.
6. Training of trainers and capacity development of Partner Organizations.
7. Final Evaluation.

The focus of this PAR was building the capacities of Youth Leaders in Civic journalism, common ground, and social entrepreneurship. In addition, we encouraged youth to create a real space for debate and exchange between the youth themselves and local officers. Additionally, we looked at dealing with media and developing youth capacities in how to promote their voices. The project members succeeded in writing more than 20 opinion articles –one is already published, and the rest are under review.

### **5.3 Project Activities**

Based on an extensive data analysis from the conflict assessment the project Youth Leaders for Peace came to life. A series of workshops on preventing and countering violent extremism and conflict transformation (CT), social entrepreneurship, conflict resolution, multimedia management and community engagement skills were planned carried out, all of which were intended to indirectly counter violent extremism in Sidi Moumen neighbourhood by providing a space for learning and open conversation.

**Workshop Series on preventing and countering violent extremism and conflict transformation (CT).**

Over the course of two days, the research team facilitated a series of workshops for 45 participants and CSO representatives. Training relied as much as possible on participatory education techniques, including discussions and debates, group work, simulations, and role-plays. This training was organised in close partnership with the DerbGhalef Association for Development (DAD) and drew on the expertise of national consultants. Specific training content was developed based on the needs of the target communities as determined in the conflict assessment. A brief framework for the programme is described below:

**July 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> 2019,**

**Day 1:**

**Workshop 1: Introduction to P/CVE & CT Concepts:** The first workshop introduced participants to the fundamental concepts of preventing and countering violent extremism in Morocco, building an understanding of the linkage between P/CVE, CT and fostering community resilience, exploring various case studies of successful community initiatives aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism.

**Workshop 2: VE Risks and the Process of Radicalisation** The second day of the workshop focussed on building participants' understanding of the following concepts: identifying the populations most at risk of radicalisation, identifying the signs and stages of radicalisation, and understanding and analysing the recruitment tactics and rhetoric of violent extremist groups. The facilitation team drew on the tools and approaches it had previously developed in the literature review. We looked into the spectrum of radicalisation from the induction to the execution stages and I proposed specific interventions according to each stage, bearing in mind the extremists' tactics in deconstructing the existing referential community system to create their violent extremist systems among their potential recruits.

**Day 2:**



**Workshop 3: CVE Programs in Practice** The second day of the workshop focused on applying the theoretical concepts from the previous day to specific case studies and local needs. The session was highly participatory and presented various case studies from the Moroccan context for participants to discuss, analyse, and apply their local knowledge and experiences. Participants provided their feedback on the findings of the needs assessment in order to arrive at a common understanding of the key gaps and needs of local communities in Sidi Moumen in the areas of P/CVE. All participants were encouraged to bring in relevant knowledge and experiences from their own context, ensuring a diversity of perspectives and an ongoing peer-to-peer learning model.

**Workshop 4: P/CVE Tools and Approaches** This workshop took participants' understanding of P/CVE & CT concepts and specific case studies in Morocco and equipped them with specific tools and approaches to realise the programmatic solutions to the needs and gaps previously identified. Specific tools and approaches were developed based on the needs assessment; these included: developing and amplifying credible alternative narratives to violent extremism, designing and facilitating community dialogues to diagnose localised drivers of radicalisation, and building community resilience to violent extremism.

### **Day 3:**

**Workshop 5: Practical Simulation** On the third day of the workshop, participants were engaged in a practical simulation on how to analyse and address violent extremism using community-based approaches. The simulation divided participants into groups, provided them with a description of a fictional community and scenario, and asked them to devise an intervention strategy to prevent and counter violent extremism in that fictional community. Through this exercise,



participants were able to describe their strategy for identifying who is most at-risk in the community, identify the relevant drivers of violent extremism and recruitment tactics of extremist groups, describe the specific needs of the fictional community, and write a brief concept note outlining the strategy, including specific tools and approaches, for addressing community needs. In this way, the practical simulation became a culmination of the previous days, allowing participants to collaboratively apply

their new knowledge and strategies. We concluded with presentations and peer evaluations of the proposed initiatives.

### **Capacity Building: Civic Journalism and Common Ground training session.**

Purpose: to strengthen the media outreach ability of members of the youth leaders of Casablanca, we provided youth with a training session on Civic Journalism and Common Ground. The training was divided into four phases:

Phase I: Introduction to Civic Journalism & the Common Ground approach

Video: making and editing documentaries, interviews, and opinion articles

Phase II: Transfer of the skills gained to the rest of the members of the groups

Phase III: - Screening documentaries and constructive criticism

Theory: press releases and opinion articles

Practice: video editing, media journalism and writing articles

Phase IV: Documentary Screening

Feedback: Q & A with journalists

The following discussion provides information regarding each Phase.

#### **Phase I: Introduction to Civic Journalism & Common Ground approach**

July 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in Sidi Moumen

We organized the first phase of this multisession training to help the youth leaders improve their media and communication skills and ability to produce quality media outputs. The main goal of this activity was to acquaint the participants with journalistic, technical, and creative tools to discuss certain topics that are primarily about youth and their engagement in local policies. The training also coached the participants in adopting the common ground approach in an effective way in future productions to avoid bias. This activity then engages members in the heart of their communities by encouraging them to investigate specific social dilemmas and share them with the public.

The training focused more on the practical, rather than the theoretical side and adopted an inductive approach to coaching. Firstly, the attendees attempted to learn about common mistakes in video production by watching numerous shoots that were fully explained by the trainer later in order to make the participants aware. Then, they were introduced to frames and camera movements, as well as when they should be used. The attendees had an opportunity to discuss ethics and objectivity in journalism. Moreover, we trained the members on how to give strong interviews and write articles respecting the

common ground approach that should always be taken into consideration. Finally, a workshop on video editing was delivered to all participants after they shot a video themselves.

*Phase II: Transfer of the skills gained to the rest of the members of the groups*

July 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019

After benefitting from the training on civic journalism and the common ground approach in Phase I, the attendees had to pass the skills they had learned to the other members of their groups. In this second stage of civic journalism, those who attended the training organized interactive workshops for the benefit of the members of their groups. They took advantage of the same resources used by the trainer and attempted to explain everything they had learned, from the audio-visual techniques to the ethics of journalism. Some groups even started thinking about the topics they were going to write on or film. These workshops proved to be very efficient in using peer-to-peer education as a tool for learning and sharing skills.

*Phase III: comments and constructive criticism of the opinion articles and scenarios developed by the groups.*

July 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019

This training aimed at reviewing and commenting on the products of the participants. To do so, they had to present their written articles and to read them in front of their peers. To help them understand more clearly what an opinion article should look like, the project coordinator shared the EU's 2011 Best Opinion Article by a young woman from Egypt. The participants reacted positively, as it tackles the issue of gender respect in Egypt. Afterwards, the participants were given around 45 minutes to start writing or rewrite their articles.

Youth unemployment, lack of infrastructure, and youth political participation were the most popular issues for the articles. Due to time constraints, the participants read their product, shared their ideas, and received comments and observations from their peers and the project coordinator.

A deadline was set to submit all articles to move forward to the fourth and final phase of the civic journalism training, one that would gather young leaders with professional journalists for feedback and guidance.

In summary, the training session was very successful; this is evident by the 40 opinion articles submitted by the young leaders, one of which is already published by three electronic newspapers (see appendices).

### **Capacity Building: Training on Social Entrepreneurship.**

July 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019

The training on social entrepreneurship is part of whole process of transforming the beneficiaries into real influencers. It aimed to help the participants understand the concept of social entrepreneurship as a tool for social change, and how it can be applied in a Moroccan context for profit on a personal and communal level. The training also attempted to convince the attendees of the benefits of establishing a social enterprise, especially when most of them are unemployed university graduates.

Following an experiential learning model of training, the training session was more than 70% practical, and based mainly on group work and discussions. The participants were exposed to the concept of social entrepreneurship gradually and inductively, directed and guided by the facilitator who was informative at certain stages.

The training covered the key fundamentals of the social entrepreneurship movement as well as laws and legalities linked to its creation. Using the “case study method”, our young leaders learned how to examine the challenges of starting, counselling, serving, assessing, and funding social ventures. The training provided an overview of the emergence and definition of social entrepreneurship and explored the intricacies of establishing mission/vision/values, legal structures for both non-profit and for-profit social ventures, managing and sustaining growth, board governance, the profit and purpose tension, impact investing, and creating shared value. This basic knowledge set informed the participants, who sought to advise, launch, and/or serve on the board of a social enterprise. By engaging with these case studies, the young leaders also learned the basics of leadership and management decision-making.

Then participants had an opportunity to put their newly learned skills into practice. They were grouped into four teams and partnered up with each other. With the guidance of the trainer, they helped solve a specific, real-time challenge. This experiential learning not only gave the participants an opportunity to explore innovative social enterprises through a project-based task, but it also opened their eyes to the realities of creating and managing a social enterprise as well as improving their skills in problem solving and community services.

By the end of the training, the young leaders were able to understand social entrepreneurship and its components and presented complete ideas for their future project.

### **Creation of space for debate and exchange: Book Lovers Event**

July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019

The DerbGhalef Association took the initiative and invited readers to a meeting to read, exchange, and debate about the situation of book readers in Casablanca, especially youth readers. The event, “A Meeting of Book Lovers”, was held in Dar Chabab (Youth Centre).

The idea of the event was to invite avid readers to bring their books to a meeting to read and exchange in an open space via Facebook and social media platforms. The first step was to give one hour for everyone to read their books after a session of introductions. Then the participants were invited to share their ideas and summarize the book they were reading and debate about it. The event was attended by 32 participants who shared their thoughts for four and a half hours that sunny Saturday morning.

### **Producing a Promotional Video to encourage youth to register in national electoral lists.**

July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Since the project is also about encouraging and sensitising other young people to engage in local governance, the participants decided to make a promotional video for the upcoming elections. The video is part of a national campaign led by the Ministry of the Interior to encourage people to register for the next elections, either online or through the registration offices. The members decided to produce a video targeted at young people to increase their awareness of the difference they can make through voting and choosing their representatives. The video aimed to motivate young people to engage in the process of social change by taking part in elections.

The video reached 3,126 Facebook users, and the top viewers were between 18 and 24 years old.

### **Creation of a real space for debate and exchange: Roundtable on “The crisis of reading among youth in Casablanca: Causes and Possible Solutions”**

July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019

The participants succeeded in organising a roundtable to discuss the crisis of reading among youth in Casablanca, which was attended by around 40 participants.

The harmful side effects of social media and modern technology on the culture of reading among youth drew the participants’ attention to this topic.

The roundtable discussed three main axes: the benefit behind the culture of reading, the current situation of reading among youth in Casablanca, and the factors causing low rates of reading among youth. In addition, many recommendations were given by panellists and participants.

In the first axis, each panellist confirmed that their passion for reading, starting with wanting to fuel their ideas and nourish their minds, and noted that reading is the apex of human civilization and knowledge is the axis of human life. Moreover, books in general are the result of the accumulation of civilisations and we cannot speak of a developed nation if it does not produce thoughts. A panellist quoted that “the man who do not read would never build a positive idea about himself”.

Regarding the diagnosis of the crisis and characterisation of the current situation, panellists acknowledged the existence of the crisis, even without a national official or non-official study within Morocco. However, figures show a quarter of Moroccan society is illiterate as previously noted.

### **Creation of a real space for debate and exchange: a roundtable “The Engagement of Youth in Managing Local Affairs”**

August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019

The roundtable entitled: “The Engagement of Youth in Managing Local Affairs: The Old Medina as a Model” was supposed to be held on the 19th of August, but due to parliamentary elections, it was banned by the local authorities. After weeks of preparation by DerbGhaled Association and the team for the project, the local authorities put numerous obstacles in place and ordered the manager of the Youth Center to stop the event only ten minutes before its start time. Therefore, the team could not hold this activity and postponed it until after the Moroccan elections the first week of October.



### **Monitoring & Evaluation: research team met the Youth Leaders for Peace members**

September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019

In order to engage the YLP project members in preparation for their next step and their sustainability, we decided to meet everyone who was involved in this project and gather their opinions and ideas. We invited representatives of the participating CSOs and stakeholders. This activity was a chance to meet the board and executive members and supporters of the Derbghalef Association and the research team.

It was also an opportunity for us to have a deeper view of the impact of the Youth Leaders for Peace project and how the lives of its beneficiaries are transformed through its activities. Meanwhile, the representatives of the council provided the visitors with an outline of the activities and trainings they benefitted from, as well as how those activities have changed their negative perspectives towards engaging in local governance. They also shared their views regarding the positive impact that the project is making on the lives of youth in Sidi Moumen neighbourhood and how they would keep this initiative alive. A few members suggested opening new chapters in different cities and involving law makers and government officials in this movement. On the whole, the event was an internal sphere to exchange ideas and experiences regarding the engagement of youth in local governance through the support of these kinds of projects.

#### **5.4 Challenges and lessons learned**

The evaluation was done based on observation as well as the responses obtained from the participants. A major challenge that the team constantly faced was the planning of all the activities with the CSOs and participants. The full and diverging agendas of the beneficiary CSOs always presented a challenge for our team. Many are understaffed and they organise many of their own activities. It is therefore difficult to attend all of our activities. The consensus which was reached during the planning of workshops took some time but with more effort and good spirits, the associations could arrive at an agreement on the definite dates of the common campaigns and the presence of the representatives of all the CSOs.

In our reflection on our experience creating and executing these training sessions, we realized that there were several areas which needed improvement or a different strategy. Our first difficulty was timing. The time allocated for the activities was far longer than the time it took to complete them. We had to decide how this extra time ought to be used and because of this, our focus changed from the intention of the activities to the timing of the activities. This caused further confusion, as the extra time was given to the World Cafe activity and the discussion afterwards, which had been short in our plans. Within the resulting conversation, participants became deeply engaged, but once we were ready to move into the role play, participants felt that the situation we presented them with was not challenging or realistic

enough compared to the ideas already discussed. Because of this, some participants re-froze and were less engaged in the main discussion we had planned post-role play.

In retrospect, we could have allocated the extra time to the more extensive discussion after the role play so that there could be room for deeper probing of thoughts, feelings, and assumptions during this time. If this had been our strategy, there may have been less of a chance of participants re-freezing too early in the trainings. Our intention was to offer a situation which had relevance to the school environment, and which was also not too contentious. We were struggling with the balance of challenging our participants while maintaining the sense of safety in the room. Looking back at this issue, we realized we ought to have taken the risk of providing the option of a more challenging scenario in the interest of keeping our participants engaged.

We made false assumptions about our roles as trainers and facilitators. On more than one occasion, all the trainers felt a strong desire to put forth their own experience and opinions; however, it was our assumption that we as trainers must remain neutral in order to maintain the trust and safe space which were our duty to cultivate. We did not give our own insights, and we feel some regret about this, since it was our experience and insight into the issue of religious sensitivity. In reality, there was nothing which said that this was an inherent part of being a trainer, and had we taken time to discuss amongst ourselves how we could contribute to the conversation, our contributions could have added to the richness of the conversation without threatening the security of the training space.

We also assumed that the presentation of data from our conflict assessment would be clear and that participants would not need the graph, table, and pie chart we used to be exact or specific in order for its general implications to be understood. As it turned out, many of the participants had difficulty understanding these depictions of our data since we had not labeled them thoroughly enough, nor made a special effort for this part of our training. We assumed that participants would understand the general idea these charts depicted. In retrospect, we would have made these charts crystal clear with labels for each color used and made a more comprehensible table to convey the information showing the diversity of responses we got from the people in the room.

Some other things that we could have been more mindful of in during the trainings would have been catching latecomers up on the training, encouraging more quiet participants to share more and asking deeper questions to follow-up on statements participants made. For example, one participant said that because she had come late, she did not know what the main goal of the social entrepreneurship training were and felt lost. We also had a handful of participants who rarely spoke or did not speak at all. Their insights are as important as every other participant's, and as trainers/observers we have some responsibility towards encouraging them to speak. Asking deeper questions was difficult under the



circumstances in which we were operating. Conditions were such that some of us felt uncertain of our intention and how much participation we were allowed. Also, if we had given ourselves more freedom to diverge from our plan, we could have granted the time needed to probe deeper into the issues being discussed.

A major lesson learned during the implementation of these activities is the realization that the active participation of local youth who are researching their own community and their willingness to listen and learn has been the key to the success of the whole project. The result of this active participatory approach of youth was the successful formation of a mutual trust, which infused the beneficiaries with more enthusiasm and gave the project a more credible image. The uniqueness of this project is certainly its unity around a cause that brings people together, but also the nature of the subject it is advocating for, as it is the first time a coalition consisting of CSOs and local youth in Sidi Moumen are working together on promoting youth participation.

## **CHAPTER SIX:**

### **EVALUATION & ANALYSIS**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

The main goal for the implementation of the “Youth Leaders for Peace” project was to defuse the extremist discourse leading to violence and encourage youth to become active participants in their community. A training programme, workshops, and diverse activities with institutional partners in Casablanca were conducted for youth who were targeted by extremist movements that seek new recruits. The “Youth Leaders for Peace” project adopted a participative approach, paying heed to the need to dispense an alternative discourse of tolerance, peace and peaceful conflict resolution to counteract the hostile discourses that drive individuals toward radicalisation and encourage them to join violent extremist groups. The latter have begun increasingly to use social media to widen their target net and to increase the number of women and youth among new recruits. Web and social media channels have proven indispensable in creating a counterweight to extremist discourses. In order to counteract the adverse effects of extremist group strategies, it is sound to adopt an approach that takes into account preventive measures that target the underlying causes that lead individuals to become radicalised and to join violent extremist groups.

Among the key objectives that were set for this project are: sensitising at-risk marginalized populations through principles and mechanisms of tolerance, peaceful co-existence, constructive resolution of conflict and participation in local governance to reinforce community integration, and amplifying youth resistance to violent extremist messaging.

The evaluation of the project proceeded through meetings with local partners, focus groups and questionnaires, and a methodology that relies on quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches. The participants’ responses to the questionnaires revealed that the training and workshops, which were organised under the premises of the project “Youth Leaders for Peace,” have improved the practices of the youth as well as their environment and have influenced their use of social media and the platforms that were employed throughout the training programme.

#### **6.1 Project framework and main objective**

The messages of religious, cultural, and social intolerance that are spread by violent extremists prolong conflicts, leaving them unresolved and more difficult to manage, resulting in humanitarian crises.

It is, therefore, essential to strengthen efforts to render violent extremist messaging less resonant and impactful on vulnerable youth. It is in this framework that this project has evolved. Its main objective is to sensitise marginalized population groups that are at risk, based on the principles and mechanisms of tolerance, peaceful co-existence, and constructive resolution of the conflict in an effort to strengthen societal integration, and reinforce youth resistance to violent extremist messaging through integration into social and political life.

### **6.1.1 Specific objectives of the project:**

Among the key objectives that were set for this project are: sensitising at-risk marginalized populations through principles and mechanisms of tolerance, peaceful co-existence, constructive resolution of conflict and participation in local governance to reinforce community integration, and amplifying youth resistance to violent extremist messaging.

### **6.1.2 Evaluation criteria:**

- 1- *Effectiveness*: Evaluate the measure by which the expected results of the programme have been attained. What are the principal factors which influence the achievement, or non-achievement of the objectives?
- 2- *Sustainability*: What are the main factors that affect the success or failure of the project's sustainability?
- 3- *Impact*: Did the activities attain the expected results and impact? What is the project's impact on the cross-sectional questions related to gender equality, and good governance?

## **6.2 Evaluation Methodology**

The UN defines evaluation as:

“an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance... An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders. The purposes of evaluation are to promote accountability and learning”.(UN 2021:02)

In this sense and following the cycle of the PAR, I conducted an evaluation with the aim to systematically and objectively determine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of all activities in light of their objectives. There are several approaches to evaluation models, which depend on one hand on the type of project to be evaluated, and on the other on the theoretical-academic training of the person responsible for carrying out the evaluation.

This evaluation combined explorative interviews along with quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis with the tendencies of change before and after the project to determine results and recommendations. The choice of mixed methodology has been very useful as different tools are used to answer the same questions to draw accurate and valid conclusions.

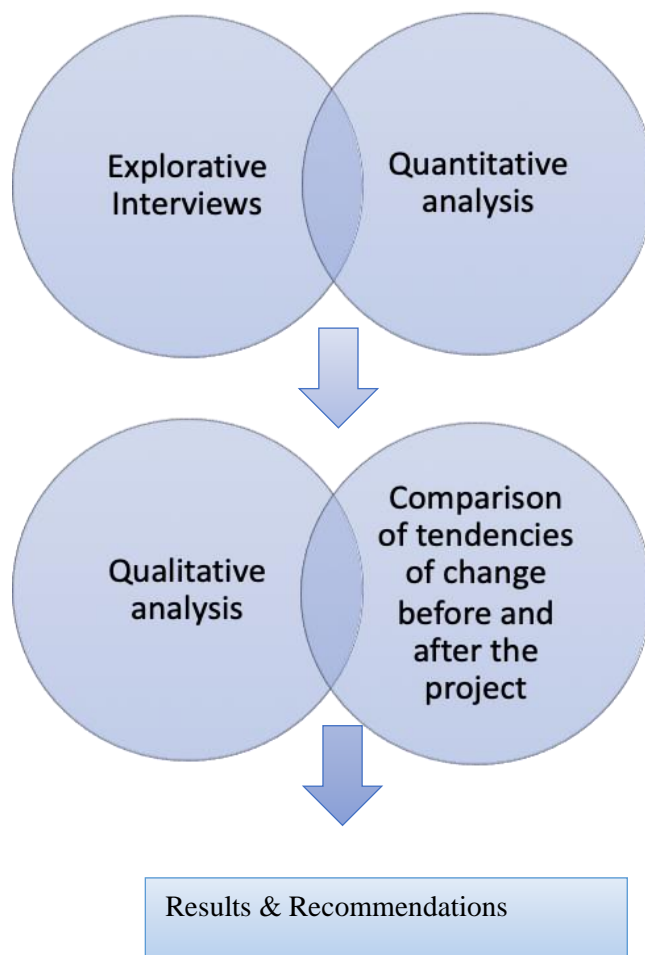


Figure 6.1 Evaluation Methodology. (Source: Lohr 2020.)

### 6.2.1 Data collection for the evaluation

Focus Group:

The focus group discussions were useful to break the ice with participants and they were very helpful to pave the way to the main discussion. Certain beneficiaries were able to express themselves better through a group dynamic activity that was part of this process. The focus groups that were conducted, in addition to the proposed activities, met the participants' expectations and interests. Their interaction

with the workshops, the training, and the proposed diverse activities in the programme has left a significant impact that has been extended to affect their daily lives.

### **Survey through Questionnaire**

A survey using a questionnaire was conducted on the basis of evaluation criteria that were articulated through three fundamental axes: *sustainability, impact, and effectiveness*. A coach was designated to facilitate the questionnaire-filling for people who could not write or had difficulties in responding to the evaluation questions through the questionnaire. This approach permitted a sense of relief among the interviewees who could not express themselves freely or confidently.

### **Impact analysis**

This tool was used to measure the quality of the impact that project activities have had on the beneficiary's personal development. This analysis targeted the change in behaviour, attitude, adherence to teachings, values, and the integration of these learned skills in the participants' private and communal lives.

#### **6.2.2 Fieldwork Plan:**

The evaluation was based on the data that was collected through the following techniques:

- Questionnaire
- Focus Groups
- Individual Meetings

These meetings were conducted in collaboration with association officials, facilitators, and staff of different partner institutions:

- Associations
- Support line
- Youth centre
- Youth leader centres

The gender perspective was taken into consideration to the greatest extent possible in these encounters, interviews, and the questionnaire survey.

- Women
- Young girls

- Students
- Teachers
- Other profiles

The beneficiaries were involved according to the different categories of age, social, professional, and cultural groups. The need for an alternative discourse and the arguments for developing a discourse based on peace and tolerance relate to the public that is targeted by extremist messaging.

## **6.3 Evaluation Analysis**

### **6.3.1 Results related to objective 1:**

Raise awareness among young people and other marginalised and at-risk target populations about the principles and mechanisms of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and constructive conflict resolution in order to strengthen community integration and to increase youth resistance to messages of violent extremism.

#### *Impact*

The first conclusion that arises from the survey and the focus group discussions with beneficiaries of the Youth Leaders for Peace was a clear evolution in their views of the concepts of “tolerance”, “diversity”, “violence”, “freedom of thought”, and “women’s rights”. In the focus group discussions, youth confirmed seeking out opportunities and spaces to deepen the discussions at the communal level that were initiated during the conflict transformation workshop. Discussions on violent extremist messaging have become an integral part of the daily lives of youth and other beneficiaries of the programme. They have gained a deep knowledge of necessary tools that they can pass on to their immediate environments.

The majority explained that *D’aesh* is no longer a taboo word. Where they had previously feared to talk about it, they are now able to discuss the subject amongst themselves and their families to strengthen dialogue and sensitise their loved ones and people in their communities.

The participants (young men, young girls, women, men, and students) confirmed expecting a religious discourse on the status of youth, and the role of religious leaders in the dissemination of an alternative discourse on youth rights. The diverse beneficiaries of the group agreed on the role that training in peace and conflict transformation can play in changing views. They would like to see religious leaders participate in this training to initiate dialogue and clarify misunderstandings.

The beneficiaries are furthermore not entirely satisfied by the role played by religious leaders in mosques. Their discourse on youth participation is largely obsolete today. The beneficiaries unanimously demand this discourse to be changed to be more compatible with new concepts. They declared that the religious discourse in mosques must be more coherent and adapted to new developments on the status of youth in Morocco. They stated the fact that imams of mosques do not play this role sufficiently.

The project also allowed for greater self-expression as participants explained having developed a new status for themselves in their community. We requested their points of view and one of these stated that they had created solid links with certain institutions in their community.

The women at youth centres have affirmed that people around them have witnessed the changes and are impatiently waiting to be invited to benefit from the next opportunity to be involved in a training about peace and conflict transformation.

The projected films of the group were greatly appreciated. The beneficiaries explained having been touched by the positive personalities and also expressed compassion for people who “fell off the tracks” and partook in violent extremism. Many people consider that sensitisation should also touch at-risk people, who have been manipulated but are part of the community and should not be left alone. The goal of the project is also to transmit good messages and attempt to recuperate affected individuals.

Beneficiaries explained that the projected films were encouraging and believe that they can benefit others who can watch them on the Internet. They hope to write and share films on tolerance and peace with young people.

The initiation of dialogues on the concepts of the status of women was well received by the diverse beneficiaries. This could have been optimised through the participation of young religious leaders, who are active in at-risk neighbourhoods. A boost to self-esteem can show real leaders within the group. These are qualities that need to be cultivated in the next projects to benefit the reputation of the “Social and Opinion Leader” that was acquired through the project.

Self-esteem is another impact that was underlined by the beneficiaries. They felt valued and needed in the framework of the programme and the evaluation. This good feeling has positively impacted the sustainability aspect of the project.

### Sustainability

A large number of the interviewees shared that they will continue in their daily lives to transmit the lessons acquired in the workshops and trainings to their families and their community (associations, neighbours, schools and through social networks...). Some of the numerous activities that were conducted and organized to spread these messages included theatre and other artistic actions; however, the lack of means and favourable structures to develop such actions impedes this momentum. Social media, such as Whatsapp, has revealed itself to be a good tool for beneficiaries to relate to each other. It is also used widely by youth to express their viewpoints on equality, violence, tolerance, and the status of youth in Morocco. This is a new use of this social media tool, which had previously remained limited to exchanging funny videos and maintaining relationships within the family.

*The need to create sustainable action is desired greatly by the beneficiaries.*

The partners (associations, socio-cultural centres, youth centres, women's associations, and youth leader centres) explained that they have now been convinced of the importance of tolerance to prevent violent extremism. They further expressed their gratitude having discussed, created dialogue in their community, and obtained language and tools through the programme. They predict that there is little to no cooperation between the different parties that are affected by the problem. A network that synchronises efforts and builds on the outcomes of the YLP should be strengthened.

*Effectiveness/ Efficiency*

The level of effectiveness and efficiency of a project play an important but not definitive role in the total success of a project. There is a considerable variety of authors who propose different factors that influence the total success of a project, these elements are attributed the name of "Critical Success Factors"; however, most authors raise elements that could be included in elements of human perception such as satisfaction during and after its development, as well as the perception of the general success of those involved. Within in this research, the results were derived from observation and post-program surveys. This stage provided the chance to evaluate the project, based on the perception of the success of a project, the total satisfaction of those involved and the lesson learnt. In general, the following results can be deduced:

- The research team was able to target associations and structures that are well-established in the social tissue of disadvantaged populations which are prey to violent extremist discourse. The programme, workshops, and training proposed revealed the needs of a population that is targeted by extremist movements. The tools of an alternative discourse should be provided to these populations, which has been achieved today and should be sustained in the future.



- YLP has raised interest in the importance of trainings and workshops about peace, tolerance, and conflict transformation;
- CSOs were dynamic partners in carrying out the actions, training, workshops, and programme activities. Youth, tolerance, violence, and diversity are considered among their primary interests and have increased after their participation in YLP project.
- The work on the film front was a success: The beneficiaries showed great interest in this component, which had a double impact:
- The beneficiaries who created their short films, as well as those that dropped out, expressed their strong desire to benefit from new opportunities, and allow more time for the completion of the films in the future. Most importantly, they wish to profit from the training to refine their projects.
- It is very important to stress the fact that many beneficiaries are convinced of the values and lessons discussed in the workshops. The at-risk populations that live in difficult neighbourhoods are primary targets of violent extremism but remain barely touched. Many of these population groups need mentoring and an alternative discourse.

A network of different partners in this project was established to work together on future projects related to peace, tolerance, and conflict transformation.

- Visibility in social media of constructive messages about peace, social coexistence, and tolerance have shown great effectiveness.
- The beneficiaries highlighted that the activities, their involvement, the workshops, and the immense ventures put in place in relation to the victims of violent extremist recruitment are not echoed sufficiently in the media. Weak media coverage was, however, recognised and foreseen in the project objectives.

### **6.3.2 Results related to objectives 2 and 3:**

The beneficiaries of the “Youth Leaders for Peace” project confirm that the training, workshops, and other activities have proven to be effective and pertinent in ameliorating the perception of religious extremism, and promoting tolerance, peaceful co-existence, and the peaceful resolution of conflict among youth. The ideas of tolerance and peaceful resolution of conflict seem to have been the most impactful on the beneficiaries. Beneficiaries explain that these ideas have been useful in managing their communal lives and dealing with their community today. Within the focus group, young beneficiaries and women highlighted that now they have at their disposal alternative discourses, messaging, and arguments to counter violent extremist discourses. Where previously a single predominant discourse was threatening their environment, they now see that an alternative discourse and messages of peace and tolerance are possible. These need to be optimised; however, most participants appreciated the technical training and education. The evaluation further revealed that peaceful communication between

marginalized youth and religious youth is a condition for peace and tolerance. Certain respondents underlined that extremism and violence were rendered more complex by the absence of dialogue and sensitising action between these two communities. The youth stressed the dominant role they count on playing in the sensitisation of a generation of peaceful co-existence, diversity and tolerance. They feel personally committed to continuing to support of the training's objectives and ensuring their effectiveness. One participant said:

“The technical training, and the peer-to-peer education have had a positive influence on allowing me to get personally involved, permitting me to have more techniques at my disposal to confront and resolve problematic situations, and supporting me to diffuse the culture of peace.” (Kaoutar, female, 24.)

The beneficiaries highlighted that these activities, in addition to their involvement in the workshops, and the huge venture put in place in relationship to the victims of violent extremist recruiters, have found little traction in the media. They explained that they want their actions to contribute more to the visibility of the platform “chabab.ma”, which is the first site that has brought greater awareness to the actions undertaken and is a result of the project and training.

Focus group participants expressed a need for greater recognition and sustainability of project results. The participants indicated further in focus group discussions and questionnaires a desire to see the training continued and activities sustained. They further noted that they themselves can be effective channels in strengthening the discourse of tolerance, which is currently in the process of institutionalisation, through their engagement on social media and through their involvement in diverse structures such as associations and young leader movements.

## **Impact**

The participants' responses revealed that the training has significantly ameliorated the practices of youth towards their environment. The youth explained that they have discussed the subject of violent extremism with their immediate circles. The “Espace Associatif” (associative forum) serves as an important tool to broach these subjects with a soft and unifying angle through its diverse activities, including theatre.

The participants experienced a shift in attitude, positively influencing the use of social media and the platforms that were set up by the training, particularly the Whatsapp group introduced after the training. More than thirty beneficiaries are members of this Whatsapp group, indicating that it has become a real platform for sharing and reacting on the themes discussed in the framework of the “Youth Leaders for Peace” project. The young beneficiaries of Sidi Moumen took the initiative to create a Whatsapp group according to their own needs. We were able to verify first-hand the impact of these platforms that allow

maintenance of dialogue, exchanges and debates, and particularly a steady flow of constructive exchange on subjects of conflict transformation, peace, and tolerance. The participants confirmed furthermore that the techniques for mediation have positively impacted their personal and professional lives. They frequently made use of them to deal with situations to resolve conflicts that they faced. The respondents strongly underlined the importance of social media in the debate against extremism. Participants insisted on the fact that women and youth are the main target for extremist groups on the web. They provided testimonies of university students who are influenced and recruited. Women of all ages use the web to develop their networks, but they could also be recruited by extremists or could at least have extremist convictions.

The significant role played by “web influencers” who operate on the principle of getting followers on the web, became clear. The latter group is very active in the manipulation of youth. The respondents felt that the trainings of “Youth leaders for Peace” have revealed the possibility of constructing an alternative discourse, to diffuse the messages and to favour a culture of conflict transformation and peace, and to form a generation based on peaceful co-existence, diversity and tolerance who refuse violent extremism.

The exchanges between youth and religious leaders remain rare and have proven themselves to be ineffective on the basis of the religious discourse that remains largely inaccessible to youth.

The beneficiaries also explained that marginalised youth view these young religious leaders as manipulators and refuse to establish exchanges with them. The young beneficiaries and peer-to-peer educators find that it is a very interesting technique to establish bridges with the marginalised youth. They are lacking religious arguments that only religious leaders master.

The at-risk youth, a large minority, have more familiarity with the advantages, the principles, and the mechanisms of peaceful co-existence, tolerance, and constructive resolution of conflict. They represented a minority of the population that benefited from the training.

An alternative was made available based on the peer-to-peer training, which was greatly appreciated. The mediation techniques acquired through the training proved very useful where the greatest need for new methodologies and alternative methods to resolve conflict exists:

“The mediation is based on a logic of “Win-Win”. It is also based on the satisfaction of the two protagonist parties. The mediation techniques are henceforth the most effective today.” (Ibrahim, male, 23).

The participants unanimously underlined the visible impact on an improved understanding of advantages, principles, and mechanisms of peaceful co-existence, tolerance, and the constructive

resolution of conflict. Project activities produced pertinent definitions and an adequate terminology of tolerance and religious extremism. The respondents explained furthermore that the trainings, workshops, and other activities have helped to develop their competencies in debate and argument and have significantly changed their relationship with their environment.

The youth show a great interest in developing critical thinking, which remains one of the goals of the training to give the youth the tools to be even more active in civil society.

“It is indispensable to create favourable conditions to initiate dialogue and build positive communication bridges between the victims of extremism, and the youth engaged in the fight to counter extremism.” (Walid, male, 19).

The participants were thus warned against radicalisation that leads to terrorism and violent extremism. They can also impact their environment, while improving their religious arguments.

The beneficiaries are convinced that they are the primary targets of recruitment strategies into extremist groups and become victims to their violence. They are particularly conscious of their role in the consolidation of peace:

“Youth are the future and if supported and guided properly we can have a brighter future full of peace, tolerance and coexistence.” (Miriam, female, 21).

Participants feel invested in a mission to impact more individuals through training and sensitization they have experienced. “YLP will not stop!” individuals within the focus group asserted. They further underlined continuing their support in difficult circumstances and despite the professionalism of the opposing party, which has technological mastery to diffuse its extremist message, and manipulators on the web who are “pros” as they produce videos that attract attention and invite views and shares. The youth explained attempting to react through dialogue with their immediate environment.

A sensitive spot is the means and the mastery of techniques that are still in favour of obscurantist messages. The respondents explained that they used Facebook to continue the debate after the conclusion of the training, using more photos and videos.

### Sustainability

The sustainability of teaching, techniques, and practices acquired in the framework of the project “Youth Leaders for Peace” was a repeated theme in the focus group and also in the beneficiaries’ responses to the questionnaires. It is important to underline that many participants consider themselves as real channels of messages of peace, tolerance, and conflict resolution in their communities and their own families.

“Promoting these practices and refusing violent extremism is everyone’s duty. It is something that should not stop. It should become a ritual, a daily habit, to diffuse...”  
(Tarik, male, 21).

The sustainability of the project was furthermore ensured via other activities of beneficiaries and their immediate entourage: family, neighbourhood, student milieu, and associations. The participants explained that they led and opened debates to understand what those around them thought of the subject, and furthermore tried to find solutions to fight violent extremism.

They further underlined the following actions that were undertaken: animating and assisting in the workshops to fight extremism online; and exchanging experiences with their environment and acting in the spirit of conflict resolution between diverging opinions and using different forms of artistic expression to support marginalized youth using theatre and plastic arts, which offer themselves as activities conducive for dialogue and sharing.

In spite of their negative perception of their socio-economic conditions, current political situation, and difficulties in overcoming obstacles, the beneficiaries expressed their desire to strengthen the dialogue between marginalised youth and young religious leaders. Facebook can be widely employed to strengthen dialogue and exchanges with the different communities:

“The comments on Facebook allow us to continue the benefits of the training and to react with ideas, and arguments with other people...” (Hassana, female, 25)

In the context of sustainability, social media offers itself as a tool with great potential to strengthen messages of tolerance and peace against the extremist discourse. The respondents also explained that many of the messages and false, erroneous, and deceiving ideas continue to easily reach a large sector of society, principally youth and children. The beneficiaries insist on the fact that social media should be prioritised in the search for a solution to counter the push of violent extremism. They further affirmed measures to ramp up their actions in countering intolerance and violent extremist discourse through the techniques of peer-to-peer education, mediation, and sensitisation. These techniques also impacted the personal and professional lives of certain participants positively.

### Chababe.ma

The respondents unanimously found that the platform chababe.ma plays a fundamental role and is described as an efficient tool in countering violent and religious extremism. They regret not having been able to access it regularly. The concept of “Chababe.ma” is set apart by its editorial positioning. It takes up the challenge of creating a platform for the youth to create a counterweight on the web, which is typically dominated by extremist discourses. The site aspires, among other things, to influence marginal and problematic behaviour through the principle of peer-to-peer education, and a focus on dialogue,

debate, discussion, exchange, and sharing. This positioning on social media networks is insightful and beneficial.

The new version of the site has been positively received by participants who were able to connect to it:

“The site Chababe.ma created a new look and a new interface. This is positive. These rubrics are varied and suggestive. It evoked extremism in different configurations; I am able to find resources and share trusted content with friends and family easily ” (Mohamed, male, 22)

The participants appreciate the fact that the site chababe.ma deals more with practical themes through web radio and web TV, and has the option of accessing cybercast opinions, which offer a space for exchange and sharing.

Nevertheless, other respondents estimate that the parties that drive a discourse of hate and violence have better mastery over social media and propaganda on the net. According to the respondents, the site should invest more in techniques to ensure its validity and viability:

“The site’s technicians should be experts. The enemies of tolerance and peace discourses are great hackers. They are a real threat for the sustainability of the site. (Abdullah, male, 25)

The site tries to privilege the tool of peer-to-peer education but, in reality, it presents a moralising discourse by an expert team, who adopt a scholarly and academic tone, making access and interaction difficult for the public, and particularly for marginalised populations. A confirmed finding through discussions, focus groups, and surveys is that the respondents point the finger at the discourse of religious leaders, which is hard to understand. These shortcomings need to be corrected in an attempt to fit the logic of marginalised young people.

The new version of the site “chababe.ma” offers a more attractive and innovative format. The search for new themes should be better served by the tools and the formats chosen, which is a condition that is necessary to raise interest among youth that are already solicited by more attractive and suggestive offers on social media.

The non-functioning links cause an upgrade problem and the technical contingencies persist in the new version. The respondents note that the means for online meetings that were promised initially are not available. They strongly believe that the video shooting techniques do not cohere to the audio-visual formats to which youth are used today. The shoots are considered to be often amateur, technical breakdowns are not encouraging, and plans are too far removed from the spirit of action and dynamism that motivates youth today, which ultimately could leave youth indifferent and minimise the chances of attracting at-risk youth.

The first version of the site “chababe.ma” reveals certain deficiencies. These gaps are related to its design and content. They strongly hamper the garnering of loyalty of young navigators on the web, where youth are sought after by sites that glorify violent discourse.

## **6.4 Summary**

The aim of this PAR was to help design and implement activities to encourage marginalized urban youth to participate constructively in local and public governance in order to effect positive change in their own neighbourhoods. Specifically, identify and train local youth leaders in deprived urban and peri-urban areas, creating Youth Councils (YC). Throughout the project, targeted young people developed a sense of civic responsibility and community belonging, acquired the skills to bring the real concerns of marginalized youth to local Communes (local government), and inspired other youth through local competitions, online social media, and radio and television programming. Participants held and facilitated roundtable debates among local and national elected officials, candidates for elected office, and community youth. This project created a space for debate among urban youth regarding citizenship, advocacy, participation in local governance, and national policies which indirectly counter violent extremism. These activities equipped participants, YCs and local Communes with the skills to identify common interests and to develop collaborative, win-win solutions.

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion and recommendations**

### **7.0 Introduction**

This research study relies on a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, a mixed method approach is followed, and data was collected through a literature review, focus groups, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and surveys. The reason for selecting this approach was to include all the required information on the study topic and increase the quality of the research. Following the research objectives, raw data was collected and coded from focus groups and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and concluded with the triangulation of data through quantitative surveys and questionnaires. A conflict assessment was conducted to determine the best and most suitable intervention. the conflict assessment focuses not on economic drivers of discontent, but rather on the socio-cultural drivers of youth frustration and disengagement. An intervention was conducted based on data from the conflict assessment. Youth Leaders for Peace; a series of workshops on preventing and countering violent extremism and conflict transformation (CT), social entrepreneurship, conflict resolution, multimedia management and community engagement skills.

### **7.1 Synopsis of the study**

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. In Chapter One I provided an introduction to the main topic by shedding light on different components that are relate to the context and background of the study. Chapter Two deals with literature review and the theoretical framework. Discussing the main research pieces related to youth, media, participation, peace and conflict transformation. Chapter Three introduces the research design and the methodology that has been considered to lead this researcher forward. Chapter Four is a description of the conflict assessment that was implemented to guide the intervention. Chapter Five goes deeper into the prevention that was tailored to the needs of the population in question - “Youth Leaders for Peace Project’. Finally, Chapter Six deals with evaluation and analysis of the project and the main data that has been extracted in order to draw conclusions and recommendations for future programs. Chapter Seven provides a summary of the study and recommendations.

### **7.2 Major findings**

This study addressed the problem of violent extremism among youth in Morocco and specifically within Sidi Moumen neighbourhood in Casablanca. The focus was to shed light on radicalization process and



its relationship to media. The reason for choosing this topic was to resolve the problem of poor youth representation in political activities. The purpose of this study was to promote youth in peacebuilding programmes and allow them to share their perspectives on civic engagement and political participation.

The theory of change for this initiative is that ***IF*** youth and community leaders have the tools, understanding, and capacity to design and implement local level programs aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism, ***AND*** they have the skills to analyse lessons learned and the platforms to share these lessons at local, national, and international levels, ***THEN*** local communities in Morocco will benefit from high-impact, sustainable initiatives that result in the long-term rejection of violent extremist rhetoric and activity.

The study aimed at providing a chance for young people to become agents of change and advocate for social change in their community. Moreover, the study was based on three main objectives designed to raise awareness among young people about peaceful coexistence, mechanisms of tolerance, and conflict resolution to let them avoid violent extremism. The objectives were designed to provide an opportunity for them to debate their vision and make contributions to local public governance. In addition, the study was designed to determine the impact of youth contribution in media interventions and local public governance to reduce youth radicalisation.

**Objective 1:** Raise awareness among young people and other marginalised and at-risk target populations about the principles and mechanisms of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and constructive conflict resolution in order to strengthen community integration and increase youth resistance to messages of violent extremism.

**Objective 2:** To conduct a conflict assessment and offer marginalised urban youth the opportunity to contribute to local public governance and to constructively debate their vision of good governance and local priorities with local officials.

**Objective 3:** To create real and virtual spaces for debate, inspiration, and exchange of information among Moroccan youth regarding citizenship, participation in local public and civic governance, local initiative-taking, and national policies on youth concerns.

Through a conflict assessment, data was collected from youth to address the study question and explore possible interventions. This conflict assessment helped to gain a better understanding of the state of youth civic engagement and the concerns of young people living in marginalized neighbourhoods in Sidi Moumen. This was done to achieve the objectives of the study regarding promoting good governance and civic participation among marginalized urban youth. Therefore, the findings of the

conflict assessment helped in informing programming decisions to ensure that the intervention is tailored to empower young leaders and address their specific grievances at the local level. This conflict assessment was intended to supplement the literature review findings on the economic grievances of young people living in marginalized areas and its relationship to violent extremism.

The main goal for the implementation of the “Youth Leaders for Peace” project was to defuse the extremist discourse leading to violence and encourage youth to become active participants in their community. A training programme, workshops, and diverse activities with institutional partners in Casablanca were conducted for youth who were targeted by extremist movements that seek new recruits. The “Youth Leaders for Peace” project adopted a participative approach, paying heed to the need to dispense an alternative discourse of tolerance, peace and peaceful conflict resolution to counteract the hostile discourses that drive individuals toward radicalisation and encourage them to join violent extremist groups. The latter have begun increasingly to use social media to widen their target net and to increase the number of women and youth among new recruits. Web and social media channels have proven indispensable in creating a counterweight to extremist discourses. In order to counteract the adverse effects of extremist group strategies, it is sound to adopt an approach that takes into account preventive measures that target the underlying causes that lead individuals to become radicalised and to join violent extremist groups.

Among the key objectives that were set for this project are: sensitising at-risk marginalized populations through principles and mechanisms of tolerance, peaceful co-existence, constructive resolution of conflict and participation in local governance to reinforce community integration, and amplifying youth resistance to violent extremist messaging.

The evaluation of the project proceeded through meetings with local partners, focus groups and questionnaires, and a methodology that relies on quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches. The participants’ responses to the questionnaires revealed that the training and workshops, which were organised under the premises of the project “Youth Leaders for Peace,” have improved the practices of the youth as well as their environment and have influenced their use of social media and the platforms that were employed throughout the training programme.

The project aimed strategically for youth to advocate effectively for their causes. It was aimed to strengthen their capacity for advocacy and to engage in collaborative and non-adversarial campaigning for legislative reforms. It was intended to build a civic culture which supports democratic values and the active participation of all individuals in social and political life by increasing the cooperation of key society stakeholders in calls for reducing economic constraints for youth. The type of discourse and dialogue used during the project was multidimensional, free from speech of hate and discrimination.

Through “Youth Leaders for Peace” project, participating CSOs were able to review their practices so they do not tolerate discriminations based on religion, social classes or economic differences. Among the basic principles that were set included that no gender, economic nor political distinctions would be used to cause harm or disunity.

In order for DAD and other CSOs to be able to help and endeavour the sustainable development process and help national organizations counter violent extremism and foster the empowerment of disadvantaged youth, they should adopt a methodology and a strategy which can provide these organizations with the tools for answering important questions such as:

1. How change can take place and how **CSOs** can strengthen the advocacy of youth and therefore their empowerment?
2. How the NGO can overcome the social, economic, cultural and political constraints that impede youth’s empowerment?
3. What are the tools that the NGO should implement for change to take place?
4. Which pattern should be adopted? And
5. Why the change should be undertaken?

The data collected and the results analysis revealed that though the tremendous efforts undertaken by the DAD and other CSOs in countering violent extremism and supporting the enhancement of youth status the outcomes remain insufficient. Thus, on the basis of the data analysis I suggest the following recommendations:

- Providing participants from CSOs with relevant training programs and information that can help them strengthen their capacities and enhance their skills and their status (example: the how to do in the working experience, literacy programs, communication, raising awareness, etc...);
- The participants should be trained to lead, manage and take over their project after its end;
- The project should take into account the needs of women as well as those of men of the community in designing the trainings also,
- Need to spread out the concept of women’s empowerment by DAD in parallel with the trainings to pave the way for any advocacy campaign led by younger generations,
- To be successful the project should involve at least an official belonging to the community from the beginning of project implementation,
- Need for continuous involvement of the media ( including radio, TV, internet, newspaper and Imams in the mosque, caravan, campaign for rising awareness about youth’s advocacy etc..) with the purpose of enhancing the status of youth and women in the community, during the whole project lifetime
- To reduce the social, economic and cultural constraints, youth programs need to be boosted by more participation and commitment of the high personalities such as the leaders of

human rights organizations, or elected officials, member of parliament or political personalities.

- To be sustainable stakeholders should support the initiatives coming from the outcomes of the project itself such as the associative coalition for youth's empowerment.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

This project has successfully achieved its intended goals, however, within this conclusion I would like to suggest some recommendations that will help support future programming in the field of peacebuilding and youth empowerment:

- Ensure the follow-up and regularity of such an initiative that sparks debate and creates change in perceptions.
- •Think of ways to create follow up techniques within the local structures that can act in the long-term.
- Create a network of partners on the subject of peacebuilding and conflict transformation to improve the discourse on tolerance, violence, and women's rights.
- Reproduce the experience of film production for beneficiaries. The beneficiaries desire training on script writing, filming and post-production to improve their skills.
- Build on the emergence of opinion leaders, who are already sensitised on the subjects of the interventions and who have demonstrated good interaction, to improve the results of future projects.
- Target at-risk populations better to widen the scope of the training for those who face the threat of "Daeshisation" today, e.g. marginalised youth.
- The film tool was deeply appreciated and recommended. More importance should be given to this tool through adequate time and planning.
- The already-produced films should be put together and used as pedagogical support on social media platforms.
- Reinforce the mastery of new technologies and social media among youth
- Involve youth more in web content production
- Support associative spaces in artistic activities. Theatre allows broaching this subject with a soft and unifying angle
- Recruit more at-risk youth to become beneficiaries of training programmes
- Reinforce the understanding of religious themes among youth to allow them to engage in more conscious dialogue
- Offer a particular attention to students in higher education, who are increasingly targeted by violent extremist discourse

- Reinforce the highly valued “Film Production” component. The youth seek to always have new opportunities to express themselves on the issue of tolerance, to counteract violent discourse, and to get involved in the peaceful resolution of conflict through visual and video narration
- Focus more on “at-risk youth” who are considered easy prey and primary targets for extremist messaging on social media
- Equip leaders and religious mediators with a discourse that is accessible and allows a real debate with marginalised youth
- Reinforce positive engagement of religious leaders by involving them increasingly in project activities
- Reflect on ways to empower youth as producers of content on social media in line with a culture of peace, tolerance, and peaceful resolution of conflict
- Capitalise on people who can hold the keys to an alternative discourse today
- Reflect on the implementation of sustainable structures for peer-to-peer mediation and sensitisation
- Involve more youth impacted by “Youth Leaders for Peace” in the formulation of content for chababe.ma to create a communal platform
- Put in place a systematic and intermittent evaluation of the site’s actions
- Define key performance indicators for chababe.ma.

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## Appendix 1: Consulted Stakeholders

### 1. Teacher and Directors:

3 Directors and 8 Teachers from Al Farabi Middle School, Allal Al Fassi Middle School, and Al Khawarizmi High School

Number	Stakeholder	Gender	School	City/neighborhood
9 (FGD)	8 Teachers 1 Director	9 Males	Al Farabi Middle School	Bni Makada, El Mers
1 (KII)	Director	1 Male	Al Khawarizmi High School	Bni Makada
1 (KII)	Teacher	1 Male	Allal El Fassi High School	El Ouama, Bni Makada

### 2. CSOs:

7 Civil Society Organizations from El Mers and Bni Makada

9 Civil Society Organizations from El Ouama, Mechlaoua, and Benkirane

CSO (1 FGDs and 9 interviews and surveys)	Focus	Neighborhood	Gender of Participants	Data Collection Method
Atae Association for Development and Communication (FGD)	Children, youth, woman	El Mers	1 Female	Focus Group discussion of 7 associations from BNI MAKADA and EL-Mers
Jiwar Association for Development Initiatives (FGD)	Education, women, youth	Bni Makada	1 Male	
Annahda Association for Social Works (FGD)	Training and education	Bni Makada	1 Male	

Jossour Achifae Association (FGD)	Youth and development	Bni Makada	1 Male	
Mers El Khayr Association (FGD)	Youth and women	El Mers	1 Male	
El Ouifak Association for Social Works (FGD)	Social work	Bni makada	1 Male	
BireChifa - El Mers Coordination (FGD)	Social development	El Mers , Bni Makada	1 Male	
Arrissala Association for Education, and Camping - Branch Benkirane	Education and doing good	Benkirane	2 Males	KII with 2 people
Ajyal Center	Moroccan citizen awareness development	Benkirane	1 Female	KII with 1 person
Al-Manar Association for Social Development	Development of the neighbourhood	Mechlaoua	1 Male	KII with 1 person
Mechlaoua Athletic Club Association	Sportive education	Mechlaoua	1 Male	KII with 1 person
Association Western Ouama for Social Development	Social development	El Ouama	1 Male	KII with 1 person
El Ouama Association for Development and Communication	Social development	El Ouama	1 Male	KII with 1 person
Al-Mustakbal Association for Development	Social development	Mechlaoua	1 Male	KII with 1 person

Association of Development and Protection of Benkirane Neighborhood	Social development and protection of the neighbourhood	Benkirane	1 Male	KII with 1 person
El-Ghiwan Kids Association	Musical education for youth	Bni Makada	1 Male	KII with 1 person

### 3. Representatives of Government KII:

Regional Coordinator of National Cooperation

Delegate of Ministry of Education and Professional Training

Delegate of Ministry of Youth and Sports

Number	Title	Gender
1	Regional Coordinator of National Cooperation	1 Female
1	Delegate of Ministry of Education and Professional Training	1 Male
1	Delegate of Ministry of Youth and Sports	1 Male

### 4. Local Officials KII:

2 Commune representatives

1 Local Official from BniMakada

1 Local Official from El Mers - Birechifa

1 Local Official from Cherf Mghogha

1 Local Official from Bni Makada

Number	Stakeholder	Neighborhood/Commune	Gender
2	Representative of the Communes	Sidi Moumen	2 Male
1	Local official	Bni Makada	1 Male
1	Local official	El Mers - Birechifa	1 Male
1	Local official	Cherf Mghogha Commune (El Ouama – Benkirane)	1 Male
1	Local official	Bni Makada	1 Male

#### 5. Youth Council FGD:

Informal youth council of Casablanca

Number	Gender
3	1 Male 2 Female

#### 6. Youth FGD (5 FGDs, 50 participants)

Number of Participants per FGD	Neighborhood	Gender
17	Bni Makada	11 Male, 6 Female
13	El Mers	12 Male, 1 Female
7	El Ouama	4 Male, 3 Female
8	Benkirane	4 Male, 4 Female
5	Mechlaouna	5 Male

### 7. Youth Surveys (57 surveys)

Number	Stakeholder	Gender
20	Youth in school surveys	10 Male, 10 Female
17	Youth in vocational training surveys	10 Male, 7 Female
20	Unemployed youth - out of school surveys	16 Male, 4 Female

### 8. Business Questionnaires (25)

Number	Stakeholder/SECTOR	Neighborhood	Gender
5	Business	El Ouama	3 Male, 2 Female
5	Business	Benkirane	4 Male, 1 Female
9	Business	Bni Makada	9 Male
4	Business	El Mers	3 Male, 1 Female
2	Business	Mechlaoua	1 Male, 1 Female

### 9. CSO Questionnaires (16)

Number	Stakeholder	Neighborhood	Gender
3	CSOs	Benkirane	3 Male, 1 Female
5	CSOs	Bni Makada	5 Male
2	CSOs	El Ouama	2 Male
3	CSOs	El Mers	2 Male, 1 Female
3	CSOs	Mechlaoua	3 Male





## Appendix 2: FGD & KII Forms

### Focus Group Discussion Questions

#### Members of Existing YC in Casablanca

Conducting the FGD: Please read carefully

- Read all the questions prior to the FGD

Below are the instructions to carefully to be followed by the interviewer

When introducing the interview to the participants, please explain the following:

- The purpose of this group discussion is to help form an understanding of youth participation
- It is important that the participants respond honestly, and that they take the time to think through the answer to each question. The person facilitating the interview should not influence or change the meaning of the questions or answers.

When sitting down for the interview:

- Introduce yourself and your role
- Thank the group for taking the time to conduct this discussion
- Ask permission to take notes using your paper or computer
- Ask if they have any questions before you begin

Please read the following sentence to the participants: “Thank you for taking your time to discuss some aspects about youth in your neighbourhood(s). Your honest views and opinions are very important to us. Do you all agree to participate?”

Date:	
Name of interviewer:	
Name of note-taker:	
City:	
Number of participants in FGD:	

1. When was the YC created?
2. How were the YC members selected? (timeframe, criteria, areas)
3. Who initiated this YC? (Where does the idea of the YC come from?)
4. Who facilitates the running of the YC?
5. Where does the YCs financial support come from?
6. Who decides on the activity and program of the YC?
7. What kind of activities does the YC focus on?
8. Who participates in the YCs activities?
9. How is the YC's cooperation with local CSOs? (Names & their focus)
  - With which CSOs has it been easy to cooperate with? Why?
  - With which CSOs has it been difficult to cooperate with? Why?
10. How is the YC's cooperation with local authorities/officials/elected? Why is it such?
11. How important is gender equality for the YC in general and in their activities in particular?
  - What are concrete examples on how the YC incorporates gender equality?
12. How important is the inclusion of people with disabilities to the YC?
  - How is this importance manifested?
13. Are there any aspects/things that the YC has difficulties with? (engaging youth, partnering with CSOs/NGOs/local authorities)
14. Are there any aspects/things that have been very easy for the YC since its creation?
15. Are there any other existing youth structures in certain neighbourhoods that you know of?
16. Are there any other existing youth structures in your city that you know of?
17. Can the upcoming national elections have an impact on the YCs activities and implementation?  
If so, how?
18. Who are influential actors in the city engaged in/working on youth issues?
19. What impact/change in the city/neighbourhoods has the YC been able to achieve due to their work?

## Focus Group Discussion Questions

### Mixed Youth

(Unemployed, out of school, in school, in vocational/non-formal education training)

Conducting the FGD: Please read carefully

- Read all the questions prior to the FGD
- Fill out the box about the youth on the second page before conducting the FGD
- Start by discussing the “introductory questions”. These will most likely lead to the sub-questions. Be very observant to make sure to refer to sub-questions if the participants discuss any of these themes

Below are the instructions to carefully be followed by the interviewer

When introducing the FGD to the participants, please explain the following:

- The purpose of this group discussion is to get more information about the situation of youth in different neighbourhoods in Casablanca
- It is important that the participants respond honestly, and that they take the time to think through the answer to each question. The person facilitating the interview should not influence or change the meaning of the questions or answers.

When sitting down for the interview:

- Introduce yourself and your role
- Thank the group for taking the time to conduct this discussion
- Ask permission to take notes using your paper or computer
- Ask if they have any questions before you begin

Please read the following sentence to the participants: “Thank you for taking your time to discuss some aspects about youth in your neighbourhood(s). Your honest views and opinions are very important to us. Do you all agree to participate?”

About the youth: Please fill out separately and before the FGD

Number of participants in FGD:		
Name of the neighbourhood(s) where youth are from (should be predefined)		
<b>Age</b> (how many youth per age group)		
18-20:	21-25:	
<b>Gender</b> (how many youth per gender)		
Male:	Female:	
<b>Education (level)</b> (how many youth per category)		
No formal education:	Elementary:	Middle school:
Uncompleted middle school:	High school:	Uncompleted high school:
University degree:	Uncompleted university studies:	Higher education (master's degree):
Vocational school:	Professional certificate:	Completed training (specify):
Other:		
<b>Disabilities</b>		
No:	Yes:	If yes, specify:

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### Introductory questions

1. Brainstorm: Which different actors do you engage with in your neighbourhood/community?
2. Are you in conflict with any of these actors/groups?
3. What reasons drive these conflicts?
4. Do you have incompatible goals with any of these groups? (such as their families, government/authorities, police, CSOs, business owners, religious groups/figures/Imam etc.)
  - What do you disagree on or are in conflict about with these groups/actors?
5. Do you have incompatible goals with other youth?
  - What do you disagree on or are in conflict about with these groups/actors?
6. Are there any specific considerations for youth with disabilities or young women?

### Sub-questions: Employment/unemployment

1. For those of you who have been applying for jobs, was it difficult or easy? (Economic, social, political, cultural, other factors)
  - If it was easy, why?
  - If it was difficult, why?
  - Are there any specific considerations for youth with disabilities or young women?
2. For those of you who have been applying for vocational and/or non-formal education, was the process easy or difficult? (Economic, social, political, cultural, other factors)
  - If it was easy, why?
  - If it was difficult, why?
  - Are there any specific considerations for youth with disabilities or young women?
3. How can unemployment affect your personal and social life?
4. For those that dropped out of school before obtaining a diploma, what impact did this early school drop-out have on your personal and social life?

### Sub-questions: Bullying/violence in school (for this previously/currently in school)

5. Have you ever seen bullying and/or violence at a/your school?
6. Have you ever personally experienced bullying and/or violence at your school?
  - If so, what forms of bullying and/or violence did you experience at school?

- What impact does/did bullying/violence in school have on your personal and social life? (young men/young women/youth with disabilities)
7. Why do you think that bullying and/or violence at schools happen?
  8. What do you think are the most common causes of bullying at school?
  9. What do you think are the most common causes of violence in schools?
  10. What are the consequences of bullying and violence at schools?

Sub-questions: Civic participation

11. How many times in your life did you attend, speak at or help to organize local (political) activities in your city or neighbourhood?
12. If you did not attend, speak at or help to organize local (political) activities in your city/neighbourhood, why?
13. What do you think about local governance in your neighbourhood and/or city?
14. What do you think about the following authority figures:
  - Police?
  - Commune (personnel)?
  - School director? (if in school)
  - Teachers? (if in school)
  - Imam?
  - Local politicians/officials/elected?
  - Head of your household?
15. With national elections coming up in September, how important is it for you to participate and/or attend in local activities/initiatives in your city or neighbourhood?
16. Mention 3 things that would make you more active/involved in your neighbourhood/city?
17. What do you think about the role of businesses to make it easier for youth to become involved in the local political process? (Does it exist (funding initiatives/projects)? How effective is it? What is the youth's perception on this in general?)

Sub-questions: Aspirations

18. What do you wish/desire to do in 5-10 years from now?
  - What is necessary for you to achieve this?
19. What do you think you will most likely do in 5-10 years from now?
  - Is this affected by your gender/disability? If so, how?

20. When you think about your likely life in the next 5-10 years, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about the future?
21. Are there any actors/institutions which are not contributing to achieve your desired future?
  - If yes, which actors and/or institutions do not contribute as you think they should?
  - Why do these actors and/or institutions not contribute as you think they should?

Sub-questions: Youth free time:

22. What do you spend most of your time doing? (And where?)
  - Why do you spend your time doing this?
23. What impact do these activities have on your personal and social life?
24. With who to you spend most of your time?
  - Why do you spend most of your time with this person/group?
25. Is there anything you would change in how you spend this time?
26. With what and where would you prefer to spend your time?

In school youth

Bullying/violence in school

1. Have you ever experienced bullying and/or violence at your school?
  - If so, what forms of bullying and/or violence did you experience at school?
2. Why do you think that bullying and/or violence happen at schools?
  - What are the most common causes of bullying at school?
  - What are the most common causes of violence in schools?
3. What impact does/did bullying/violence in school have on your personal and social life? (OBS Men VS Women, VS people with disabilities)
4. How are people with disabilities integrated into the school environment?

Civic participation

5. How many times in your life did you actively participate in local (political) activities in your city or neighbourhood?
  - If you did not participate in local (political) activities in your city/neighbourhood, why?
6. What do you think about local politics in your neighbourhood and/or city?
7. What do you think about the following authority figures:
  - Police?



- Commune (services)?
  - School director? (if in school)
  - Teachers? (if in school)
  - Imam?
  - Local politicians/officials/elected?
  - Head of your household?
8. With national elections coming up, how important is participation in local activities/initiatives in your city or neighbourhood to you?
  9. Mention 3 things that would make you more active/involved in your neighbourhood/city?
  10. What do you think about the role of businesses to make it easier for youth to become involved in the local political process? (Does it exist (funding initiatives/projects)? How effective is it? What is the youth's perception on this in general?)

#### CSO engagement

11. Are you working for/engaged in a CSO in your city or neighbourhood?
  - If yes, why?
  - If no, why not?
12. Do you know of CSO events/activities in your city or neighbourhood?
13. Do you think that CSOs in your neighbourhood or city can make an impact with their work?
  - If yes, how?
  - If no, why not?
14. Do CSOs in your neighbourhood/city contribute to including people with disabilities into society?
15. Do CSOs in your neighbourhood/city contribute to strengthening the integration of women into society?
16. Mention 3 things that would make you more active/involved in a local CSO?

#### Aspirations

17. What do you wish/desire to do in 5-10 years from now?
  - What is necessary for you to achieve this?
18. What do you think you will most likely do in 5-10 years from now?
  - Is this affected by your gender/disability? If so, how?

19. When you think about your likely life in the next 5-10 years, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about the future?
20. Are there any actors/institutions which are not contributing to achieve your desired future?
  - If yes, which actors and/or institutions do not contribute as you think they should?
  - Why do these actors and/or institutions not contribute as you think they should?

#### Youth free time

21. What do you spend most of your time doing? (and where?)
  - Why do you spend your time doing this?
22. With who to you spend most of your time?
  - Why do you spend most of your time with this person/group?
23. What impact do these activities have on your personal and social life?
24. Is there anything you would change in how you spend this time?
25. With what and where would you prefer to spend your time?

#### Youth in vocational training/Non-formal education:

#### Employment/unemployment

1. For those of you who have been looking and applying for jobs, was it difficult or easy? Please explain (try to make them speak about economic, social, political, cultural, other factors)
  - If it was easy, why?
  - If it was difficult, why?
  - How easy/difficult is it for people with disabilities to apply and get jobs?
  - How easy/difficult is it for women to apply and get jobs?
2. For those of you who have been looking for and applying for vocational and/or non-formal education, was the process easy or difficult? Please explain (try to make them speak about economic, social, political, cultural, other factors)
  - If it was easy, why?
  - If it was difficult, why?
  - How easy/difficult is it for people with disabilities to apply and get into vocational and/or non-formal education trainings? Why?
  - How easy/difficult is it for women to apply and get into vocational and/or non-formal education trainings? Why?
3. How are people with disabilities integrated into the training environment?

4. How are women integrated into the training environment?
5. How can unemployment affect your personal and social life? (focus on difference between Men VS Women VS people with disabilities)
6. What impact can an early school drop-out have on your personal and social life? (focus on difference between Men VS Women VS people with disabilities)

#### Civic participation

7. How many times in your life did you actively participate in local (political) activities in your city or neighbourhood?
  - If you did not participate in local (political) activities in your city/neighbourhood, why?
8. What do you think about local politics in your neighbourhood and/or city?
9. What do you think about the following authority figures:
  - Police?
  - Commune (services)?
  - School director? (if in school)
  - Teachers? (if in school)
  - Imam?
  - Local politicians/officials/elected?
  - Head of your household?
10. With national elections coming up, how important is participation in local activities/initiatives in your city or neighbourhood to you?
11. Mention 3 things that would make you more active/involved in your neighbourhood/city?
12. What do you think about the role of businesses to make it easier for youth to become involved in the local political process? (Does it exist (funding initiatives/projects)? How effective is it? What is the youth's perception on this in general?)

#### CSO engagement

13. Are you working for/engaged in a CSO in your city or neighbourhood?
  - If yes, why?
  - If no, why not?
14. Do you know of CSO events/activities in your city or neighbourhood?
15. Do you think that CSOs in your neighbourhood or city can make an impact with their work?
  - If yes, how?

- If no, why not?
16. Do CSOs in your neighbourhood/city contribute to including people with disabilities into society?
  17. Do CSOs in your neighbourhood/city contribute to strengthening the integration of women into society?
  18. Mention 3 things that would make you more active/involved in a local CSO?

#### Aspirations

19. What do you wish/desire to do in 5-10 years from now?
  - What is necessary for you to achieve this?
20. What do you think you will most likely do in 5-10 years from now?
  - Is this affected by your gender/disability? If so, how?
21. When you think about your likely life in the next 5-10 years, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about the future?
22. Are there any actors/institutions which are not contributing to achieve your desired future?
  - If yes, which actors and/or institutions do not contribute as you think they should?
  - Why do these actors and/or institutions not contribute as you think they should?

#### Youth free time

23. What do you spend most of your time doing? (and where?)
  - Why do you spend your time doing this?
24. With who do you spend most of your time?
  - Why do you spend most of your time with this person/group?
25. What impact do these activities have on your personal and social life?
26. Is there anything you would change in how you spend this time?
27. With what and where would you prefer to spend your time?

## Focus Group Discussion Questions

### Civil Society Organizations

Conducting the FGD: Please read carefully

- Read all the questions prior to the FGD
- Distribute the short survey with questions about the CSO before the FGD. Make sure to take the filled-out forms with you before leaving
- Fill out the box about the CSOs on the second page before conducting the FGD
- Start by discussing the “introductory questions”. These will most likely lead to the sub-questions. Be very observant to make sure to refer to sub-questions when the participants discuss any of these themes

Below are the instructions to carefully follow by the interviewer

When introducing the interview to the participants, please explain the following:

- The purpose of this group discussion is to get more information about youth in different neighbourhoods in Casablanca
- It is important that the participants respond honestly, and that they take the time to think through the answer to each question. The person facilitating the interview should not influence or change the meaning of the questions or answers.

When sitting down for the interview:

- Introduce yourself and your role
- Thank the group for taking the time to conduct this discussion
- Ask permission to take notes using your paper or computer
- Ask if they have any questions before you begin

Please read the following sentence to the participants: “Thank you for taking your time to discuss some aspects about youth in your neighbourhood(s). Your honest views and opinions are very important to us. Do you all agree to participate?”

**Please be aware and explain that** when referring to “youth” in this survey, we refer to young men and women between 18 and 25 years old.

About the CSOs:

Date:

Name of interviewer:				
Name of note-taker:				
City (Please circle)				
Name of the CSOs	Number of members	Focus	Gender (M/F) of participant	Neighborhood where CSO operates
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				

### Introductory questions

1. Brainstorm: Which are different actors that youth engage with in the community?
2. Are youth in conflict with any of these groups?
3. What reasons drive these conflicts?

4. Do youth in your community seem to have incompatible goals with any of these groups? (such as their families, government/authorities, police, CSOs, business owners, religious groups/figures/Imam etc.)
  - What do they disagree on or are in conflict about?
5. Do youth in your community seem to have incompatible goals among each other, i.e. with other youth?
  - What do they disagree on or are in conflict about?
6. Are there any specific considerations for youth with disabilities or young women?

Sub-questions: Employment/unemployment

7. Which, if any, are factors that make employment of youth difficult? (Economic, social, political, cultural, other factors)
  - Are there any specific considerations for youth with disabilities or young women?
  - Who is most affected by unemployment? Why? (gender, disabilities, neighbourhoods etc.)
8. Which factors, if any, hinder youth when getting into vocational trainings and/or non-formal education? (Economic, social, political, cultural, other factors)
  - Are there any specific considerations for youth with disabilities or young women?
  - Who is most affected by not getting into vocational/non-formal education trainings? Why? (gender, disabilities, neighbourhoods etc.)
9. Which effects does unemployment have on the personal and social life of youth with no employment? (young men VS young women, youth with disabilities)
  - 9.1. What dynamics are there between unemployed youth and other societal actors as a result of unemployment? ((latent) conflicts with any actors?)
10. Which effects does being without a job (idleness) currently have on the personal and social life of youth?
11. Which effects can the possession of a job have on the personal and social life of youth?

Sub-questions: Civic participation

12. How engaged/involved/active are youth in local governance in general?
13. What keeps youth away from engaging/participating in local governance?
  - Are there any actors that might hinder youth engagement in local governance? If so, which ones?
14. What do you think can make youth become more interested and involved in local governance?

Sub-questions: Aspirations

15. What do youth see as their desired future?

16. What does the youth need to achieve their desired future?
17. Are there any actors/institutions which are not contributing to achieving youth's desired future?
  - If so, which? Why?
18. What are the main frustrations of youth?
19. What are key assumptions that youth have that clash with the reality of their immediate environment?
20. What should be done to decrease these frustrations?

#### Sub-questions: Spare-time

21. What does the youth spend most of their time doing?
  - Why do they spend most of their time doing this?
22. With who does the youth spend most of their time?
  - Why do they spend most of their time with this person/group?
23. What impact do these activities have on their personal and social life?

#### Interview Questions

Directors/teachers at schools

Conducting the interview: Please read carefully

- Read all the questions prior to the interview

Below are the instructions to carefully to be follow by the interviewer

When introducing the interview to the participants, please explain the following:

- The purpose of this interview is to get more information about youth in schools in Casablanca
- It is important that the participants respond honestly, and that they take the time to think through the answer to each question. The person facilitating the interview should not influence or change the meaning of the questions or answers.

When sitting down for the interview:

- Introduce yourself and your role
- Thank interviewee for taking the time to conduct this interview
- Ask permission to take notes using your paper or computer
- Ask if they have any questions before you begin



Please read the following sentence to the participants: “Thank you for taking your time to discuss some aspects about youth in your neighbourhood(s). Your honest views and opinions are very important to us. Do you all agree to participate?”

**Please be aware and explain that** when referring to “youth” in this survey, we refer to young men and women between 18 and 25 years old.

Name of interviewer:	
Name of note-taker:	
City (Please circle)	
Name of the neighbourhood (should be predefined)	
Number of pupils in school:	
Gender	
Male:	Female:

School drop-out/bullying & fighting (violence) in school:

1. Who is most likely to drop out of school (by gender, age, disability, neighbourhood)?
  - Which life conditions might result in school drop-out?
  - Is school drop-out linked to any conflicts that those most likely to drop-out have? What are these conflicts?
  - With whom might those most likely to drop-out have conflicts?
2. What impact can early school drop-out have on the personal and social life of youth? (young men, young women, people with disabilities)
3. What needs to be done to decrease school drop-out?

4. What can be done to decrease school drop-out?
5. Is there bullying in your school?
  - If so, what kind of bullying takes mainly place?
  - If so, who generally bullies who?
  - What are the most common causes of bullying?
  - What impact does bullying in schools have on the personal and social life of youth? (men/women, different age groups, ppl with disabilities, youth from diff neighbourhoods)
6. Is there fighting (violence) in your school?
  - If so, what kind of fighting (violence) occurs mostly?
  - If so, who is fighting (violent) against who?
  - What are the most common causes of fighting (violence) in schools?
  - What impact does fighting (violence) in schools have on the personal and social life of youth? (men/women, different age groups, ppl with disabilities, youth from diff neighbourhoods)
7. What needs to be done to decrease fighting (violence) and bullying at schools?
8. What can be done to decrease fighting (violence) and bullying at schools?
9. Are there any specific considerations for youth with disabilities or young women?
10. What needs to be done to improve the integration of youth with disabilities in schools?
11. What can be done to improve the integration of youth with disabilities in schools?

Aspirations:

12. What do youth see as their desired future?
13. What does the youth need to achieve their desired future?
14. Are there any actors/institutions which are not contributing to achieving their desired future?
  - If so, which ones? Why?
15. What are the main frustrations of youth?
16. What are key assumptions that youth have that clash with the reality of their immediate environment?
17. What should be done to decrease these frustrations?

## Interview questions

### Local elected officials

Conducting the interview: Please read carefully

- Read all the questions prior to the interview
- Start by discussing the “introductory questions”. These will most likely lead to the sub-questions. Be very observant to make sure to refer to sub-questions if the participants discuss any of these themes
- Please make sure to ask the questions on civic participation since they will provide data on one indicator (in bold)

Below are the instructions to carefully follow by the interviewer

When introducing the interview to the participants, please explain the following:

- The purpose of this interview is to get more information about youth in different neighbourhoods in Casablanca
- It is important that the participants respond honestly, and that they take the time to think through the answer to each question. The person facilitating the interview should not influence or change the meaning of the questions or answers.

When sitting down for the interview:

- Introduce yourself and your role
- Thank interviewee for taking the time to conduct this interview
- Ask permission to take notes using your paper or computer
- Ask if they have any questions before you begin

Please read the following sentence to the participants: “Thank you for taking your time to discuss some aspects about youth in your neighbourhood(s). Your honest views and opinions are very important to us. Do you all agree to participate?”

<p><b>Please be aware and explain that</b> when referring to “youth” in this survey, we refer to young men and women between 18 and 25 years old.</p>
---

Date:
Name of interviewer:

Name of note-taker:	
City (Please circle)	
Gender	
Male	Female

#### Introductory questions

1. Which are different actors that youth engage with in the community?
2. Are youth in conflict with any of these groups?
3. What reasons drive these conflicts?
4. Do youth in your community seem to have incompatible goals with any of these groups? (such as their families, government/authorities, police, CSOs, business owners, religious groups/figures/Imam etc.)
  - What do they disagree on or are in conflict about?
5. Do youth in your community seem to have incompatible goals among each other, i.e. with other youth?
  - What do they disagree on or are in conflict about?
6. Are there any specific considerations for youth with disabilities or young women?

#### Sub-questions: Employment/unemployment:

7. How easy or difficult is it for youth to get a job?
  - Which are factors that make employment of youth difficult? (try to make them speak about economic, social, political, cultural, other factors)
  - Are there any specific considerations for youth with disabilities or young women?
  - Who is most affected by unemployment? Why? (gender, disabilities, neighbourhoods etc.)
8. How easy or difficult is it for youth to get into vocational trainings and/or non-formal education?
  - Which factors, if any, hinder the youth to get into vocational trainings and/or non-formal education? (try to make them speak about economic, social, political, cultural, other factors)
  - Are there any specific considerations for youth with disabilities or young women?

- Who is most affected by not getting into vocational/non-formal education trainings? Why? (gender, disabilities, neighbourhoods etc.)
9. Which effects does unemployment have on the personal and social life of youth with no employment? (men VS women, people with disabilities)
    - What dynamics are there between unemployed youth and other societal actors as a result of unemployment? ((latent) conflicts with any actors?)
  10. Which effects can being without a job (idleness) have on the personal and social life of inactive youth?
  11. How are government institutions addressing youth without a job (idleness)?
  12. How is the commune addressing youth without a job (idleness)?

Sub-questions: Youth with disabilities

13. What does your institution do to integrate youth with disabilities into society?
14. What needs to be done to improve the integration of youth with disabilities into society?
15. What does your institution do to integrate youth with disabilities into the job market?
16. How are youth with disabilities represented in the job market?
17. What needs to be done to increase the chances of youth with disabilities on the job market?

Sub-questions: Civic participation

18. How engaged/involved/active are youth in local governance in general?
19. What keeps youth away from engaging/participating in local governance?
  - Are there any actors that might hinder youth engagement in local governance? If so, which ones?
20. How important to your Commune is youth participation in local governance? (Select from: Extremely, Very, Moderately, Slightly, Not at all)
21. How important to decision-making is youth participation in local governance? (Select from: Extremely, Very, Moderately, Slightly, Not at all)
22. What do you think can make youth become more interested and involved in local governance?

Sub-questions: CSOs in neighbourhood/city

23. How active are CSOs in the neighbourhoods/city?
24. Which factors are behind the functioning of neighbourhood/city CSOs? (economic, personal, ideological etc.)
25. What are potential issues/challenges with regard to CSOs engagement in the neighbourhoods/city?

26. What are the needs of CSOs to engage in a neighbourhood/the city?

27. Do local CSOs have an impact with their work?

28. If yes, how?

29. If no, why not?

Sub-questions: Aspirations/frustrations

30. What are the main frustrations of youth?

31. What are key assumptions that youth have that clash with the reality of their immediate environment?

32. What should be done to decrease these frustrations?

## Interview Questions

Representatives of Commune/‘Responsables’ at the local level/local elected

Conducting the interview: Please read carefully

- Read all the questions prior to the interview
- Start by discussion the “introductory questions”. These will most likely lead to the sub-questions. Be very observant to make sure to refer to sub-questions if the participants discuss any of these themes
- Please make sure to ask the questions on civic participation since they will provide data on one indicator (in bold)

Below are the instructions to carefully be followed by the interviewer

When introducing the interview to the participants, please explain the following:

- The purpose of this interview is to get more information about youth in different neighbourhoods in Sidi Moumen Casablanca
- It is important that the participants respond honestly, and that they take the time to think through the answer to each question. The person facilitating the interview should not influence or change the meaning of the questions or answers.

When sitting down for the interview:

- Introduce yourself and your role
- Thank interviewee for taking the time to conduct this interview
- Ask permission to take notes using your paper or computer
- Ask if they have any questions before you begin

Please read the following sentence to the participants: “Thank you for taking your time to discuss some aspects about youth in your neighbourhood(s). Your honest views and opinions are very important to us. Do you all agree to participate?”

<p><b>Please be aware and explain that</b> when referring to “youth” in this survey, we refer to young men and women between 18 and 25 years old.</p>
---

Date:
Name of interviewer:

Name of note-taker:	
<b>City</b> (Please circle)	
Gender	
Male	Female



## Introductory questions

1. Which are different actors that youth engage with in the community?
2. Are youth in conflict with any of these groups?
3. What reasons drive these conflicts?
4. Do youth in your community seem to have incompatible goals with any of these groups? (such as their families, government/authorities, police, CSOs, business owners, religious groups/figures/Imam etc.)
  - What do they disagree on or are in conflict about?
5. Do youth in your community seem to have incompatible goals among each other, i.e. with other youth?
  - What do they disagree on or are in conflict about?
6. Are there any specific considerations for youth with disabilities or young women?

## Sub-questions: Employment/unemployment

7. How easy or difficult is it for youth to get a job?
  - Which are factors that make employment of youth difficult? (Economic, social, political, cultural, other factors)
  - Are there any specific considerations for youth with disabilities or young women?
  - Who is most affected by unemployment? Why? (gender, disabilities, neighbourhoods etc.)
8. How easy or difficult is it for youth to get into vocational trainings and/or non-formal education?
  - Which factors, if any, hinder youth when getting into vocational trainings and/or non-formal education? (Economic, social, political, cultural, other factors)
  - Are there any specific considerations for youth with disabilities or young women?
  - Who is most affected by not getting into vocational/non-formal education trainings? Why? (gender, disabilities, neighbourhoods etc.)
9. Which effects does unemployment have on the personal and social life of youth with no employment? (men VS women, people with disabilities)
  - What dynamics are there between unemployed youth and other societal actors as a result of unemployment? ((latent) conflicts with any actors?)
10. Which effects can being without a job (idleness) have on the personal and social life of inactive youth?
11. How are government institutions addressing youth without a job (idleness)?
12. How is the commune addressing youth without a job (idleness)?

#### Sub-questions: Civic participation

13. How engaged/involved/active are youth in local governance in general?
14. What keeps youth away from engaging/participating in local governance?
  - Are there any actors that might hinder youth engagement in local governance? If so, which ones?
15. How important to your Commune is youth participation in local governance? (Replies have to be from the following options: Extremely, Very, Moderately, Slightly, Not at all)
16. How important to decision-making is youth participation in local governance? (Replies have to be from the following options: Extremely, Very, Moderately, Slightly, Not at all)
17. What do you think can make youth become more interested and involved in local governance?

#### Sub-questions: CSOs in neighbourhood/city

18. How active are CSOs in the neighbourhoods/city?
19. Which factors are behind the functioning of neighbourhood/city CSOs? (economic, personal, ideological etc.)
20. What are potential issues/challenges with regard to CSO engagement in the neighbourhoods/city?
21. What are the needs of CSOs to engage in a neighbourhood/the city?
22. Do local CSOs have an impact with their work?
  - If yes, how?
  - If no, why not?

#### School drop-out/bullying & violence at schools (if possible)

23. Who is most likely to drop out of school (by gender, age, disability, neighbourhood)? Why?
24. What impact can early school drop-out have on the personal and social life of youth (focus on difference between men, women, people with disabilities)
25. What needs to be done to decrease school drop-out?
26. What can be done to decrease school drop-out?
27. What impact can bullying and/or fighting in schools have on the personal and social life of youth? (men/women, different age groups, ppl with disabilities, youth from diff neighbourhoods)
  - What are the most common causes of bullying in schools?
  - What are the most common causes of fighting in schools?
28. What needs to be done to decrease violence and bullying at schools?

29. What can be done to decrease violence and bullying in schools?

Aspirations/frustrations

30. What are the main frustrations of youth?

31. What are key assumptions that youth have that clash with the reality of their immediate environment?

32. What should be done to decrease these frustrations?

### Appendix 3: Questionnaire Forms

#### Private Sector Businesses

Please answer the following questions to provide data on employment/unemployment, youth with disabilities, civic participation and aspirations/frustrations of youth. Your answers are confidential and you do not need to write your name. Please make sure to answer all questions. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey carefully, it should take you about 30 minutes. It will help us to get a better understanding of the situation of youth in your neighbourhood. Instructions are underlined.

**Please be aware** that when referring to “youth” in this survey, we refer to young men and women between 18 and 25 years old.

Date				
<b>City</b> (Please circle one option)				
Casablanca				
Name of the neighbourhood where your business operates				
Number of employees in your business ( <u>Please circle one option</u> )				
1-3	4-10	11-15	More than 15	
<b>Sector</b> (Please circle one option)				
Textile factories	Food processing	Automotive construction	Hotels	Food services and retail

Other retail activities (clothing, furniture, hardware etc.)	Traditional crafts	Construction & other crafts (carpentry, ironsmith, etc.)	Mechanics	Hair Salons & Barbers
Other, please specify:				
<b>Gender</b> (Please circle one option)				
Male			Female	

Employment/unemployment				
<b>1.</b> How easy or difficult is it for youth in your community to get a job? ( <u>Please circle one option</u> )				
Very easy	Easy	Average	Difficult	Very difficult
<b>1.1.</b> Which factors make it difficult for youth in your community to get a job? ( <u>Please describe with a few words</u> )				
<b>1.2.</b> What are consequences of youth unemployment in general? ( <u>Please circle 2 options that apply the most</u> )				
Risk of poverty	Social exclusion	Loss of motivation	Mental health problems (ex.: depression)	Decrease in skills
Reduced level of happiness	Increase in drug use	Higher levels of crime	Turn towards religious extremism	Other, please specify:
<b>1.3.</b> What impact does unemployment have on young women? ( <u>Please circle 2 options that apply the most</u> )				

Risk of poverty	Social exclusion	Loss of motivation	Mental health problems (ex.: depression)	Decrease in skills
Reduced level of happiness	Increase in drug use	Higher levels of crime	Turn towards religious extremism	Other, please specify:
<b>1.4.</b> What impact does unemployment have on young men? ( <u>Please circle 2 options that apply the most</u> )				
Risk of poverty	Social exclusion	Loss of motivation	Mental health problems (ex.: depression)	Decrease in skills
Reduced level of happiness	Increase in drug use	Higher levels of crime	Turn towards religious extremism	Other, please specify:
<b>2.</b> What impact does unemployment have on the families of youth? ( <u>Please describe with a few words</u> )				
<b>3.</b> What dynamics are there between unemployed youth and other societal actors as a result of unemployment?				
<b>4.</b> How easy or difficult is it for youth with disabilities to get a job? ( <u>Please circle one option</u> )				
Very easy	Easy	Average	Difficult	Very difficult
<b>4.2.</b> Which factors make it difficult for youth with disabilities to get a job? ( <u>Please describe with a few words</u> )				

<b>4.3.</b> What impact does unemployment have on youth with disabilities? ( <u>Please circle 2 options that apply the most</u> )				
Risk of poverty	Social exclusion	Loss of motivation	Mental health problems (ex.: depression)	Decrease in skills
Reduced level of happiness	Increase in drug use	Higher levels of crime	Turn towards religious extremism	Other, please specify:
<b>5.</b> How easy or difficult is it for young women to get a job? ( <u>Please circle one option</u> )				
Very easy	Easy	Average	Difficult	Very difficult
<b>5.2.</b> Which factors make it difficult for young women in your community to get a job? ( <u>Please describe with a few words</u> )				
<b>6.</b> Who is most affected by unemployment? ( <u>Please circle one option</u> )				
Male youth	Female youth	Youth with disabilities	Youth from certain neighbourhoods	Other, please specify:
Civic participation				
<b>7.</b> Does your business engage in local governance in any kind of way? ( <u>Please circle one option</u> )				
Yes		No		
<b>7.2.</b> If yes, how is your business engaged in local governance? ( <u>Please describe with a few words</u> )				

<b>8. Does your business work with youth on local governance initiatives/activities? (<u>Please circle one option</u>)</b>				
Yes		No		
Aspirations/frustrations				
<b>9. What do youth in your community see as their desired future? (<u>Please circle one option</u>)</b>				
Only be with my family	Have a job	Have an internship	Study	Own a house/apartment
Live abroad	Other, please specify:			
<b>10. What does the youth need to achieve their desired future? (<u>Please describe with a few words</u>)</b>				
<b>11. Are there any actors/institutions which are not contributing to achieving their desired future? (<u>Please circle one option</u>)</b>				
Yes		No		
<b>11.2. If yes, which ones? (Please circle 2 options that apply the most)</b>				
Teachers	Local elected/officials	Imam	International organizations	CSOs
Schools/university	Commune	Local authorities (city level)	Government institutions	Religious institutions
Business sector	Family	Other, please specify:		
<b>12. What are the main frustrations of youth? (<u>Please describe with a few words</u>)</b>				



<b>13.</b> What are key assumptions that youth have that clash with the reality of their immediate environment? ( <u>Please describe with a few words</u> )
<b>14.</b> What should be done to decrease these frustrations? ( <u>Please describe with a few words</u> )

Thank you for your participation!

## Appendix 4: Survey Questions

### Civil Society Organization

Please answer the following questions to provide data on employment/unemployment, youth with disabilities, civic participation and aspirations/frustrations of youth. Your answers are confidential and you do not need to write your name. Please make sure to answer all questions. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey carefully, it should take you about 30 minutes. It will help us to get a better understanding of the situation of youth in your neighbourhood. Instructions are underlined.

**Please be aware** that when referring to “youth” in this survey, we refer to young men and women between 18 and 25 years old.

Name of the neighbourhood where CSO operates	
Number of members per CSO	
Focus of the CSOs	
Gender of person surveyed:	
Male:	Female:

About the CSO:

1. How many youth participate in your activities/events or support the preparation of activities/events in general?

No youth	1-5	6-10	More than 10
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2. How does your CSO engage in the neighbourhood(s)?

Trainings/workshops	Public discussions	Closed discussions	Awareness raising campaigns (street stands, flyers etc.)	Field visits
Other, please specify:				

3. What is the objective of your work in the neighbourhood(s)?

--

4. Which difficulties/challenges do you encounter when working in neighbourhood(s)?

Financial	Citizen's engagement and support	Internal issues/challenges	Relationships with other CSOs	Relationships with authorities
Other, please specify:				

5. What are, if any, specific needs of your CSO to engage in the neighbourhood and/or the city?

Financial support	Citizen's engagement and support	Overcoming internal issues/challenges	Better relationships with other CSOs	Better relationships with authorities
Other, please specify:				

6. Please respond to the following sentences and to what extent you agree/disagree:

The youth in the neighbourhood knows about our work	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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The youth in the neighbourhood has a positive attitude towards our work	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The youth in the neighbourhood is very supportive of our work	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The youth in the neighbourhood are very active in our work	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree

7. Does your CSO cooperate with other CSOs in the neighbourhood(s)?

Yes	No
-----	----

8. Who are other influential actors in the neighbourhood(s) where you are working?

Commune members	Police	Imam	School teachers/directors	Other CSOs
International organizations	Businesses	Other, please specify:		

9. To what extent does your CSO integrate people with disabilities into society?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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10. To what extent does your CSO strengthen gender equality in the society?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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11. What impact/change in the city/neighbourhoods have you been able to achieve due to your work?

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12. What do you think can make youth become more interested and involved in local/neighbourhood CSOs? (Select ONE)

Increased awareness/knowledge about CSOs	Family support	Support of friends	See change/the impact of activities	Increased self-confidence
More public activities	Other, please specify:			

Employment/unemployment:

13. How easy is it for youth to apply and get a job?

Extremely	Moderately	Not at all
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13.1. Which factors make employment of youth difficult?

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13.2. How easy or difficult is it for people with disabilities to apply and get jobs?

Very easy	Easy	Average	Difficult	Very difficult
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13.3. How easy or difficult is it for women to apply and get jobs?

Very easy	Easy	Average	Difficult	Very difficult
-----------	------	---------	-----------	----------------

13.4. Who is most affected by unemployment?

Men	Women	Youth with disabilities	Youth from certain neighbourhoods	Other, please specify:
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14. How easy is it for youth to search and apply for vocational trainings and/or non-formal education?

Extremely	Moderately	Not at all
-----------	------------	------------

14.1. Which factors hinder youth when searching and applying for vocational trainings and/or non-formal education?

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14.2. How easy or difficult is it for people with disabilities to apply and get into vocational training and/or non-formal education trainings?

Very easy	Easy	Average	Difficult	Very difficult
-----------	------	---------	-----------	----------------

14.3. How easy or difficult is it for women to apply get into vocational and/or non-formal education trainings?

Very easy	Easy	Average	Difficult	Very difficult
-----------	------	---------	-----------	----------------

14.4. Who is most affected by not getting into vocational/non-formal education trainings?

Men	Women	Youth with disabilities	Youth from certain neighbourhoods	Other, please specify:

15. How much, do you think, does unemployment affect the personal and social life of youth?

Extremely	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not at all
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15.1. What dynamics are there between unemployed youth and other societal actors as a result of unemployment?

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16. To what extent can being without a job (idleness) have an effect on the personal and social life of inactive youth?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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Civic participation:

17. How engaged/involved/active are youth in local politics in general?

Extremely	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not at all
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18. What keeps youth away from engaging/participating in local governance? Select ONE

Lack of trust	Lack of knowledge	Lack of interest	Lack of self-confidence	Other, please specify:
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19. Are there any actors that might hinder youth engagement in local governance?

Yes	No
-----	----

19.1. If yes, which ones? (Please select no more than 2)

Family	Friends	Imam	School teachers	Police
Commune members	Business owners	Commune members	Other, please specify:	

20. What do you think can make youth become more interested and involved in local governance?

--

Aspirations:

21. What do youth see as their desired future? Select ONE

Only be with my family	Have a job	Study	Own a house/apartment	Live abroad
Other, please specify:				

22. What does the youth need to achieve their desired future?

--

23. Are there any actors/institutions which are not contributing to achieving their desired future?

Yes	No
-----	----

24. If yes, which ones? (Please select no more than 2)

Teachers	Local elected/officials	Imam	International organizations	CSOs
Schools/university	Commune	Local authorities (city level)	Government institutions	Religious institutions
Business sector	Family	Other, please specify:		

25. What are the main frustrations of youth?

--

26. What are key assumptions that youth have that clash with the reality of their immediate environment?

--

27. What should be done to decrease these frustrations?

--

Youth spending their time:

28. What does the youth spend most of their time doing?

Watch TV	Sit in a café	Sports	Other recreational activities	Hang out on the streets
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Studying/in school	Working	Other, please specify:	
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28.1. To what extent do these activities have an impact on your personal and social life?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
--------------	-----------------	------------

29. With who to you spend most of your time?

Wider family	Close family	Friends	People I don't know very well	Fellow classmates
Colleagues	Other: please specify			

## In-school youth

Please answer the following questions to provide data on employment/unemployment, civic participation and your aspirations/frustrations. Your answers are confidential and you do not need to write your name. Please make sure to answer all questions. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey carefully, it should take you about 30 minutes. It will help us to get a better understanding of the situation of youth in your neighbourhood. Instructions are underlined.

About you:

Name of neighbourhood		
Age:		
18-20	21-25	
Gender:		
Male	Female	
What is your education (level)?		
No formal education	Elementary	Middle school
Uncompleted middle school	High school	Uncompleted high school:
University degree	Uncompleted university studies	Higher education (master's degree)
Vocational school	Professional certificate	Completed training (specify)
Other:		
Do you have any disabilities?		
No	Yes	If yes, specify:

<b>Membership in civil society organizations:</b> How many times per week do you work with a CSO or spend time in its office?			
Not a member	0 times but a member	1-3 times	More than 3 times
Are you a member in a political party?			
No	Active member	Inactive member	

### Bullying/violence in school

1. Have you ever personally experienced bullying and/or violence at your school?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.1. If yes, which forms of bullying did you experience at school?

Physical bullying	Verbal bullying
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1.2. If yes, which forms of violence did you experience at school?

Physical violence	Verbal violence
-------------------	-----------------

1.3. What were/are the consequences of bullying and violence at your school?

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1.4. To what extent does bullying in school have an impact on your personal and social life?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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1.5. To what extent does violence in school have an impact on your personal and social life?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
--------------	-----------------	------------

2. What are the 3 most common causes of bullying at school?

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3. What are the 3 most common causes for violence in schools?

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#### Civic participation

4. How many times in your life did you attend, speak at or help to organize local (political) activities in your city or neighbourhood?

More than 10 times	6-10 times	1-5 times	Never
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5. To what extent do you agree/disagree to the following statements:

"I like and am interested in local governance"	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
"I have confidence in the police"	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
"I have confidence in the commune (personnel and its services)"	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
"I have confidence in the Imam"	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree

“I have confidence in politicians/officials/elected”	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
“I have confidence in the head of our household”	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
“I have confidence in school directors”	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
“I have confidence in school teachers”	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree

6. With national elections coming up in September, how important is it for you to participate in and/or attend local activities/initiatives in your city or neighbourhood?

Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not important at all
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#### CSO engagement

7. Are you a member of a CSO in your city or neighbourhood?

Yes	No
-----	----

8. Do you know of CSO events/activities in your city or neighbourhood?

Yes	No
-----	----

9. To what extent do you think that CSOs in your neighbourhood or city can make an impact with their work?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
--------------	-----------------	------------

10. To what extent do you think that CSOs in your neighbourhood/city contribute to including people with disabilities into society?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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11. To what extent do you think that CSOs in your neighbourhood/city contribute to strengthening the integration of women into society?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
--------------	-----------------	------------

12. Mention 3 things that would make you (more) active/involved in local CSOs:

- A) .....
- B) .....
- C) .....

### Aspirations

13. What do you wish/desire to do in 5-10 years from now? (indicate ONE option)

Only be with my family	Have a job	Study	Own a house/apartment	Live abroad
Other, please specify:				

14. What do you think you will most likely do in 5-10 years from now? (indicate ONE option)

Only be with my family	Have a job	Be unemployed	Study	Live abroad
Nothing specific	Other, please specify:			

14.1. To what extent do you think that this (what you think you will most likely do in 5-10 years) is affected by your gender?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
--------------	-----------------	------------

14.2. To what extent is this (what you think you will most likely do in 5-10 years) affected by your disability

I have no disability	Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
----------------------	--------------	-----------------	------------

15. When you think about your likely life in the next 5-10 years, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about the future?

Very optimistic	Optimistic	Undecided	Pessimistic	Very pessimistic
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16. Are there any actors and/or institutions which are not contributing to achieve your desired future?

Yes	No
-----	----

16.1. If yes, which ones? (Please select 3)

Teachers	Local elected/officials	Imam	International organizations	CSOs
Schools/university	Commune	Local authorities (city level)	Government institutions	Religious institutions
Business sector	Family	Other, please specify:		

Spare-time

17. What do you spend most of your time doing?

Watch TV	Sit in a café	Sports	Other recreational activities	Hang out on the streets
Studying/in school	Working	Other, please specify:		

17.1. To what extent do these activities have an impact on your personal and social life?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
--------------	-----------------	------------

18. With who to you spend most of your time?

Wider family	Close family	Friends	People I don't know very well	Fellow classmates
Colleagues	Other: please specify			

19. Is there anything you would change in how you spend this time?

Yes	No	I don't know
-----	----	--------------

20. With what would you prefer to spend your time?

Watch TV	Sit in a café	Sports	Other recreational activities	Hang out on the streets
Studying/in school	Working	Other, please specify:		

Thank you for your participation!



## Survey, Youth in vocational training/Non-formal education

Please answer the following questions to provide data on employment/unemployment, civic participation and your aspirations/frustrations. Your answers are confidential and you do not need to write your name. Please make sure to answer all questions. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey carefully, it should take you about 30 minutes. It will help us to get a better understanding of the situation of youth in your neighbourhood. Instructions are underlined.

About you:

Name of neighbourhood		
Age:		
18-20	21-25	
Gender:		
Male	Female	
What is your education (level)?		
No formal education	Elementary	Middle school
Uncompleted middle school	High school	Uncompleted high school:
University degree	Uncompleted university studies	Higher education (master's degree)
Vocational school	Professional certificate	Completed training (specify)
Other:		
Do you have any disabilities?		
No	Yes	If yes, specify:

<b>Membership in civil society organizations:</b> How many times per week do you work with the CSO or spend time in its office?			
Not a member	0 times but a member	1-3 times	More than 3 times
Are you a member in a political party?			
No	Active member	Inactive member	

#### Employment/unemployment

1. Have you applied for jobs in the past?

Yes	No
-----	----

1.1. If yes, how easy or difficult was it?

Very easy	Easy	Average	Difficult	Very difficult
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2. Did you apply for vocational training and/or non-formal education trainings in the past?

Yes	No
-----	----

2.1. If yes, how easy or difficult was it?

Very easy	Easy	Average	Difficult	Very difficult
-----------	------	---------	-----------	----------------

3. How well are people with disabilities integrated into the training environment?

Extremely well	Moderately well	Not at all
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4. How well are women integrated into the training environment?

Extremely well	Moderately well	Not at all
----------------	-----------------	------------

5. Did you drop out of school before obtaining a degree?

Yes	No	I never attended school
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5.1. If yes, to what extent does an early school drop-out impact your personal and social life?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
--------------	-----------------	------------

#### Civic participation

6. How many times in your life did you attend, speak at or help to organize local (political) activities in your city or neighbourhood?

More than 10 times	6-10 times	1-5 times	Never
--------------------	------------	-----------	-------

7. To what extent do you agree/disagree to the following statements:

“I like and am interested in local governance”	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
“I have confidence in the police”	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
“I have confidence in the commune (personnel and its services)”	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
“I have confidence in the Imam”	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
“I have confidence in politicians/officials/elected”	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
“I have confidence in the head of our household”	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
“I have confidence in school directors”	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
“I have confidence in school teachers”	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree

8. With national elections coming up in September, how important is it for you to participate in and/or attend local activities/initiatives in your city or neighbourhood?

Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not important at all
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## CSO engagement

9. Are you a member of a CSO in your city or neighbourhood?

Yes	No
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10. Do you know of CSO events/activities in your city or neighbourhood?

Yes	No
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11. To what extent do you think that CSOs in your neighbourhood or city can make an impact with their work?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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12. To what extent do you think that CSOs in your neighbourhood/city contribute to including people with disabilities into society?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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13. To what extent do you think that CSOs in your neighbourhood/city contribute to strengthening the integration of women into society?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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14. Mention 3 things that would make you (more) active/involved in local CSOs:

- A) .....
- B) .....
- C) .....

## Aspirations

15. What do you wish/desire to do in 5-10 years from now? (indicate ONE option)

Only be with my family	Have a job	Study	Own a house/apartment	Live abroad
Other, please specify:				

16. What do you think you will most likely do in 5-10 years from now? (indicate ONE option)

Only be with my family	Have a job	Be unemployed	Study	Live abroad
Nothing specific	Other, please specify:			

16.1. To what extent do you think that this (what you think you will most likely do in 5-10 years) is affected by your gender?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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16.2. To what extent is this (what you think you will most likely do in 5-10 years) affected by your disability

I have no disability	Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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17. When you think about your likely life in the next 5-10 years, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about the future?

Very optimistic	Optimistic	Undecided	Pessimistic	Very pessimistic
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18. Are there any actors and/or institutions which are not contributing to achieve your desired future?

Yes	No
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18.1. If yes, which ones? (Please select 3)

Teachers	Local elected/officials	Imam	International organizations	CSOs
Schools/university	Commune	Local authorities (city level)	Government institutions	Religious institutions
Business sector	Family	Other, please specify:		

Spare-time:

19. What do you spend most of your time doing?

Watch TV	Sit in a café	Sports	Other recreational activities	Hang out on the streets
Studying/in school	Working	Other, please specify:		

19.1. To what extent do these activities have an impact on your personal and social life?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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20. With who to you spend most of your time?

Wider family	Close family	Friends	People I don't know very well	Fellow classmates
Colleagues	Other: please specify			

21. Is there anything you would change in how you spend this time?

Yes	No	I don't know
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22. With what would you prefer to spend your time?

Watch TV	Sit in a café	Sports	Other recreational activities	Hang out on the streets
Studying/in school	Working	Other, please specify:		

Thank you for your participation!

## Survey, Unemployed/out of school youth

Please answer the following questions to provide data on employment/unemployment, civic participation and your aspirations/frustrations. Your answers are confidential and you do not need to write your name. Please make sure to answer all questions. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey carefully, it should take you about 30 minutes. It will help us to get a better understanding of the situation of youth in your neighbourhood. Instructions are underlined.

About you:

Name of your neighbourhood		
Age:		
18-20	21-25	
Gender:		
Male	Female	
What is your education (level)?		
No formal education	Elementary	Middle school
Uncompleted middle school	High school	Uncompleted high school:
University degree	Uncompleted university studies	Higher education (master's degree)
Vocational school	Professional certificate	Completed training (specify)
Other:		
Do you have any disabilities?		
No	Yes	If yes, specify:

<b>Membership in civil society organizations:</b> How many times per week do you work with a CSO or spend time in its office?			
Not a member	0 times but a member	1-3 times	More than 3 times
Are you a member in a political party?			
No	Active member	Inactive member	

### Employment/unemployment

1. Have you applied for jobs in the past?

Yes	No
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1.1. If yes, how easy or difficult was it?

Very easy	Easy	Average	Difficult	Very difficult
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2. Did you apply for vocational training and/or non-formal education trainings in the past?

Yes	No
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2.1. If yes, how easy or difficult was it?

Very easy	Easy	Average	Difficult	Very difficult
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3. To what extent does unemployment affect your personal and social life?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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4. To what extent does being out of school affect your personal and social life?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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5. Did you finish school before obtaining a diploma?

Yes	No	I never attended school
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5.1. If yes, to what extent does an early school drop-out impact your personal and social life?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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### Civic participation



6. How many times in your life did you attend, speak at or help to organize local (political) activities in your city or neighbourhood?

More than 10 times	6-10 times	1-5 times	Never
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7. To what extent do you agree/disagree to the following statements:

"I like and am interested in local governance"	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
"I have confidence in the police"	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
"I have confidence in the commune (personnel and its services)"	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
"I have confidence in the Imam"	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
"I have confidence in politicians/officials/elected"	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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"I have confidence in school directors"	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
"I have confidence in school teachers"	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree

8. With national elections coming up in September, how important is it for you to participate in and/or attend local activities/initiatives in your city or neighbourhood?

Extremely important	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not important at all
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## CSO engagement

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Yes	No
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10. Do you know of CSO events/activities in your city or neighbourhood?

Yes	No
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11. To what extent do you think that CSOs in your neighbourhood or city can make an impact with their work?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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12. To what extent do you think that CSOs in your neighbourhood/city contribute to including people with disabilities into society?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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13. To what extent do you think that CSOs in your neighbourhood/city contribute to strengthening the integration of women into society?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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14. Mention 3 things that would make you (more) active/involved in local CSOs:

D) .....

E) .....

F) .....

## Aspirations

15. What do you wish/desire to do in 5-10 years from now? (indicate ONE option)

Only be with my family	Have a job	Study	Own a house/apartment	Live abroad
Other, please specify:				

16. What do you think you will most likely do in 5-10 years from now? (indicate ONE option)

Only be with my family	Have a job	Be unemployed	Study	Live abroad
Nothing specific	Other, please specify:			

16.1. To what extent do you think that this (what you think you will most likely do in 5-10 years) is affected by your gender?

Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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16.2. To what extent is this (what you think you will most likely do in 5-10 years) affected by your disability

I have no disability	Great extent	Moderate extent	Not at all
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17. When you think about your likely life in the next 5-10 years, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about the future?

Very optimistic	Optimistic	Undecided	Pessimistic	Very pessimistic
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18. Are there any actors and/or institutions which are not contributing to achieve your desired future?

Yes	No
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18.1. If yes, which ones? (Please select 3)

Teachers	Local elected/officials	Imam	International organizations	CSOs
Schools/university	Commune	Local authorities (city level)	Government institutions	Religious institutions
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Spare-time:

19. What do you spend most of your time doing?

Watch TV	Sit in a café	Sports	Other recreational activities	Hang out on the streets
Studying/in school	Working	Other, please specify:		

19.1. To what extent do these activities have an impact on your personal and social life?

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Colleagues	Other: please specify			

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22. With what would you prefer to spend your time?

Watch TV	Sit in a café	Sports	Other recreational activities	Hang out on the streets
Studying/in school	Working	Other, please specify:		