Project Title: Building Peace: Youth facilitating the Peace process in Cameroon

1. Introduction

“Building Peace with Young People” is a youth led initiative that seeks to use a period of six months to strengthen the capacity of 600 young people, advocate for communities, government and other development stakeholders to engage and participate in the peace process to end the current rise of violence and insecurity in Cameroon. The peace process which constitute; mediation, dialogue, negotiation, peace agreement, DDR, cease fire, compensation and host of others has been the major ingredient which is missing in the current efforts to end violence in Cameroon. This assertion was echoed by a US Spokesperson who highlighted that; “We continue to appeal to all sides to enter into meaningful, broad based dialogue. Dialogue is the only path towards a resolution of legitimate grievances.”

Unfortunately, this national and international call for dialogue and implementation of steps of peace process has failed as several attempts to engage in this process have demonstrated lack of Public- buy, professionalism and condemnation from the conflicting parties. Nevertheless, in an effort to find out why this has failed in the conflict affected regions of the country, the social, political and economic exclusion of young people and lack of community based and inclusive participation in designing these initiative was identified as a main challenge as well as the lack of capacity of stakeholders to support national action toward ensuring a violent free community.

2. Contextual Background

Since 2013, Cameroon has witnessed consistent civil unrest triggered primarily by the Boko Haram insurgency in the Far Northern region of Cameroon and more recently, by the Anglophone crisis. The Anglophone crisis was initially characterized by nonviolent protest demanding social and political reforms. Within couple of months into these nonviolent protests

1 African News (January 2018)
turned into violent clashes between protesters and state security forces, which is leading the
country into the brink of a civil war. Instigation and escalation of violence is gradually stifling
socio-economic activities in these regions, with a particular impact on livelihood of young
people. This crisis poses a big challenge to Cameroon’s peace, security, territorial integrity, its
constitutional form, and vision of becoming an emerging country by 2035.

Considering the fact that young people make up over 70% of the Cameroonian population,
developing youth centric solutions appears to one of the most effective way to prevention of
further escalation and continuation of violence. Local Youth Corner Cameroon (LOYOC) is
experienced in capacity building trainings for violent criminal offenders, and works with large
numbers of young people across the work for the prevention of extremist form of violence.
Yet, current violent clashes in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon demands to LOYOC to
establish dialogue platforms and provide mediation and capacity for young people. There is a
strong need for the establishment of mediation and dialogue mechanisms for the cessation of
hostilities between protestors and state security actors. LOYOC aims to empowers influential
youth leaders through capacity building trainings to establish bottom-up peace mediations and
dialogue processes.

The initiative will build and benefit from the past and ongoing work on the development
process of the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security. At the global scene, the important
role of young people and strengthening collaboration with other stakeholders in building peace
has been greatly influenced by the recently adopted United Nations Security Council
Resolution 2250 and 2419. Our organization’s involvement in shaping these global policies
and working with multi-stakeholders globally to advocate for the involvement of youth and
coloration with other stakeholders in peace process greatly inspire this project. Our work and
participation in the Symposium in Qatar and Finland on Youth participation in Peace process
has also been a push factor for this project (Watch video clip of pre symposium in Qatar which
featured our National Coordinator
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8TB1hsmtys&feature=youtu.be )

3. Rationale of the project

Unfortunately, the main actors of violence and conflict are young women and men. From the
security forces to the armed non-state actors and the victim are all young people. Since youth is
the demographic majority in Cameroon, achieving peace will be difficult, maybe impossible,
without the active participation of young women and men. Although young people are the main
victims and perpetrators of violence, youth also provide hope and solution to transform the violent
conflicts in Cameroon. This project suggests that partnering with young people is a veritable winning strategy to end the crisis and build sustainable peace.

At this period of war, the need for strategic and inclusive mechanism has been a major clarion call from all the parties affected by the war, including young men and women and the international community. Nevertheless, in working with these parties and speaking to local communities, we realized there is a burning need for dialogue, negotiation, ceasefire and other peace process; but who to start, how and when remains the major challenge.

The situation is more complex most especially as Cameroon is witnessing such violent and terror after many years of peace. Thus there is a need for perfect conflict assessment and stakeholders mapping to design a road map with key recommendations for an effective peace process.

Similarly, this initiative comes at a strategic period and is designed to build the capacity of young people from the conflict affected regions with young experts from other countries who had witnessed violence and insecurity; while capturing the role of young people in the peace process through and evidence based research which will inform future interventions and policies by government and other stakeholders.

4.1 Main Objective

The Building Peace with Young People project provides training 600 young people from 4 regions of Cameroon and build a network of youth peace meditators across the country. These trainings will empower young people with essential dispute resolution, peace mediation and political dialogue skills to initiate a bottom-top of peace process that is owned by the communities. Trainings will provide safe spaces for sharing conflict grievances, prioritize listening to marginalized and excluded, and will build a network of youth-led mediation teams. Government officers (including security sector staff), local and international NGOs, key community leaders, and other development stakeholders will be regularly invited in these trainings and network to elevate the youth voices for peace.

4.2 Specific Objectives

- Conduct a conflict assessment and analysis to understand best strategies in implementing peace process in affected regions
- Organise a training of trainers for 30 young leaders (peer educators) from these conflict affected regions in participating, designing and implementing peace process initiatives in communities.
● Carry out a stakeholders mapping to promote collaborative space between young professionals in peace building, UN agencies, Civil societies and INGOs, and the government,

● Build on experiences of Young people from conflict and post conflict countries (Rwanda, CAR, Serra lone, Congo, South Sudan and others) who have been part of resolving and facilitating peace process to share their stories and positive practices.

● Create a young mediators network in Cameroon who will serves s youth expert and work within communities for dispute resolution and building peace.

● To conduct an evidence based research to identify the priorities/needs/issues of the youth participation in peace process in Cameroon

● To do a scale up of the training into local communities where each participant will organize a restitution and pass on knowledge and skills acquired during the training to their peers. Each of the participant will be mandated to train 20 young people in their community.