

## **Exploring The Role of North East Youth Initiative for Development in Promoting Peaceful Coexistence in Yobe state of Nigeria (2019-2024)**

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### ***Abstract***

The study explored the role of north east youth initiative for development in promoting peaceful coexistence in Yobe state of Nigeria (2019-2024). The overall objective of the study is to find out the role been played by NEYIF in ensuring peaceful coexistence in Yobe state, the methodology employed at the cause of this study involves secondary sources of data which includes chapters in book, articles in journals, and other publications. The study finds out that; The North East Youth Initiative for Development (NEYIF) has played a pivotal role in fostering peace, promoting social cohesion, and driving sustainable development in Yobe State. Through its innovative programs and grassroots initiatives, NEYIF has empowered young people to become active agents of change, contributing to the resilience and progress of communities across the state, the study concluded that; NEYIF has demonstrated the transformative power of youth-led initiatives in driving sustainable development and building resilient communities. As we reflect on the achievements of NEYIF in Yobe State, it is evident that investing in youth empowerment and engagement is not only essential for the present but also critical for the future prosperity and stability of the state and the entire North East region. The study also recommends that; It is imperative to ensure sustained support and investment in NEYIF's programs and activities to enable the organization to continue its impactful work in Yobe State, there is a need for robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of NEYIF's interventions and identify areas for improvement.

***Key words: Coexistence, coexistence, development, initiative, North-east, promoting, peaceful, role, youth.***

## **Introduction**

Globally, in recent years, the world has witnessed an increasing recognition of the critical role that youth play in promoting peace and sustainable development. With over 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 globally, youth constitute a significant demographic group whose engagement and participation are essential for achieving peace and stability (United Nations, 2018). Recognizing this potential, international organizations, governments, and civil society groups have increasingly focused on empowering youth and harnessing their energy, creativity, and resilience to address conflict and build more inclusive societies (UNESCO, 2018)

In Africa, where a large proportion of the population is under the age of 25, the importance of youth engagement in peacebuilding efforts is particularly pronounced (AfDB, 2017). In many countries across the continent, youth face numerous challenges, including high levels of unemployment, limited access to education and healthcare, and exposure to violence and conflict (UNDP, 2016). However, African youth are also increasingly recognized as agents of change and key stakeholders in efforts to promote peace, social cohesion, and sustainable development (AU, 2019). As such, there has been a growing emphasis on supporting youth-led initiatives and organizations that work to address the root causes of conflict and promote peaceful coexistence (UN, 2020)

Nigeria, as the most populous country in Africa, is home to a large and diverse youth population that faces a range of socio-economic and political challenges (World Bank, 2019). In recent years, the country has experienced various forms of conflict, including ethno-religious violence, insurgency, and communal clashes, particularly in the North East region (Omolade, 2018). These conflicts have had devastating consequences for

communities, leading to loss of lives, displacement, and destruction of infrastructure (IDMC, 2020). In response to these challenges, there has been a growing recognition of the need to engage youth in peacebuilding efforts and empower them to become active participants in shaping the future of their communities and the nation as a whole (Nigeria Youth SDGs Network, 2021)

Yobe State, located in the North East region of Nigeria, has been particularly affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, which has resulted in widespread insecurity and displacement (UNHCR, 2021). In this context, the North East Youth Initiative Forum (NEYIF) has emerged as a key actor in promoting peace and fostering community resilience in Yobe State. Through its various programs and initiatives, NEYIF seeks to empower young people, build their capacity for conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and create opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation among different groups within the community (NEYIF Annual Report, 2023)

The North East Youth Initiative Forum (NEYIF) has emerged as a pivotal organization in the promotion of peaceful coexistence in Yobe State, Nigeria, situated in the North East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, has been significantly affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, leading to widespread displacement, economic disruption, and social fragmentation. In this context, the efforts of grassroots organizations like NEYIF take on heightened significance in bridging communal divides, empowering youth, and building resilient communities. (Adam, 2022).

This study seeks to explore the multifaceted role of NEYIF in fostering harmony and social cohesion amidst the complex challenges facing the region.

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the Boko Haram insurgency, leading to widespread displacement, economic disruption, and social fragmentation. In this context, the efforts of grassroots organizations like NEYIF take on heightened significance in bridging communal divides, empowering youth, and building resilient communities. (Bello, 2023).

NEYIF has spearheaded numerous community-based peacebuilding initiatives, such as interfaith dialogues, conflict resolution workshops, and peace education programs. A case study conducted in Damaturu, the capital city of Yobe State, highlights NEYIF's collaboration with local religious and traditional leaders to promote dialogue and reconciliation among diverse communities

Through its entrepreneurship and skills development programs, NEYIF has empowered young people with alternative livelihood opportunities, reducing their susceptibility to extremist ideologies and violence. A case study in Potiskum, a town known for its economic vibrancy, examines NEYIF's role in supporting youth-led businesses and promoting economic resilience.

NEYIF's advocacy for inclusive education policies and youth participation in decision-making processes has contributed to greater social inclusion and cohesion. A case study in Gashua, a town with a history of ethno-religious tensions, explores NEYIF's efforts to advocate for inclusive educational policies and foster intergroup understanding among students. (Omolade, 2018)

### **Objective of the study**

The overall objective of the study is to find out the role been played by NEYIF in ensuring peaceful coexistence in Yobe state period of 2019-2024

### **Methodology**

The source of data to which this research relied upon is purely secondary source of information and data among which are; chapters in book, articles in journal, text books, magazine, and other publications made that are related to the study.

### **Literature review**

#### **Global concept of Youth initiative for development:**

The global concept of Youth Initiative for Development (YID) encompasses a range of initiatives, programs, and projects aimed at empowering young people to actively participate in and contribute to the socio-economic development of their communities and societies. YID initiatives recognize youth as valuable assets and key stakeholders in efforts to address pressing global challenges, including poverty, inequality, unemployment, and environmental degradation. Through targeted interventions and advocacy efforts, YID initiatives seek to harness the energy, creativity, and innovation of young people to drive positive change and build more inclusive and sustainable societies. (United Nations, 2018).

One prominent example of a global YID initiative is the United Nations Youth Strategy, which aims to empower young people to realize their full potential as active global citizens and leaders. Adopted in 2018, the strategy outlines a vision for youth engagement across four key pillars: participation, advocacy, partnerships, and investment. It emphasizes the importance of creating opportunities for young people to meaningfully contribute to decision-making processes, advocate for their rights and interests, collaborate with diverse stakeholders, and access resources and support for their initiatives (United Nations, 2018).

Another notable YID initiative is the Global Youth Empowerment Fund, established by the United

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Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the IKEA Foundation and the Hilton Foundation. The fund provides grants and technical assistance to youth-led organizations and initiatives that address critical development challenges in areas such as education, health, entrepreneurship, and environmental sustainability. By investing in youth-led solutions, the fund aims to catalyze positive change and unlock the potential of young people as drivers of sustainable development (UNDP, 2021).

Furthermore, various international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and youth-led networks and coalitions are actively involved in promoting YID through capacity-building programs, advocacy campaigns, and knowledge-sharing platforms. These initiatives provide young people with opportunities to develop their leadership skills, build networks, and access resources and support to initiate and implement projects that address local and global development priorities (Youth Advocacy Network, 2020; Plan International, 2019).

### **Youth Initiative for Development in Africa**

The African concept of Youth Initiative for Development (YID) is rooted in the recognition of young people as key drivers of change and development on the continent. YID encompasses a wide range of initiatives, programs, and projects led by youth themselves or in collaboration with other stakeholders, aimed at addressing the socio-economic, political, and environmental challenges facing Africa. This concept is grounded in the belief that young people possess unique talents, energy, and perspectives that can be harnessed to catalyze positive transformation and sustainable progress.

At the heart of the African concept of YID is the principle of youth empowerment. Empowering young people involves equipping them with the knowledge, skills, resources, and opportunities

they need to actively participate in decision-making processes, contribute to their communities, and realize their full potential (African Union, 2017). This empowerment encompasses various dimensions, including education, entrepreneurship, leadership development, civic engagement, and access to healthcare and social services (United Nations, 2018).

One of the key pillars of YID in Africa is entrepreneurship and innovation. Recognizing the importance of job creation and economic empowerment for young people, many YID initiatives focus on fostering entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems that enable young Africans to start and grow their own businesses, create employment opportunities, and drive economic growth (African Development Bank, 2019).

These initiatives often provide training, mentorship, access to finance, and support services to aspiring entrepreneurs, with a particular emphasis on marginalized groups such as women and rural youth (AfDB, 2018).

Another important aspect of YID in Africa is youth-led advocacy and activism. Young people across the continent are increasingly mobilizing and organizing themselves to advocate for their rights, demand accountability from governments and institutions, and address pressing social and environmental issues (Oxfam, 2020). From campaigns against corruption and human rights abuses to movements for climate justice and gender equality, youth-led initiatives are driving positive change and shaping the future of Africa (UNDP, 2019).

Furthermore, YID in Africa often emphasizes the importance of education and skills development. Recognizing the critical role of education in empowering young people and unlocking their potential, many YID initiatives focus on expanding access to quality education, enhancing

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vocational training programs, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities (UNESCO, 2021).

By investing in education and skills development, YID initiatives seek to equip young Africans with the knowledge, competencies, and capabilities they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world and contribute meaningfully to their societies.

### **Youth Initiative for Development in Nigeria**

The Nigerian concept of Youth Initiative for Development (YID) encompasses a range of youth-led and youth-focused initiatives aimed at addressing the socio-economic challenges facing young people in the country and fostering their active participation in national development efforts. YID initiatives leverage the energy, creativity, and potential of young people to drive positive change and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

One prominent example of YID in Nigeria is the Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES) Program initiated by the Bank of Industry (BOI). The YES Program provides financial and non-financial support to young entrepreneurs across various sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, technology, and creative industries. Through this initiative, young people receive access to funding, training, mentorship, and market linkages to help them start and grow their businesses. By empowering youth to become job creators and economic agents, the YES Program contributes to poverty reduction, youth empowerment, and economic growth in Nigeria (Bank of Industry, 2021).

Another example is the Youth Employment and Social Support Operation (YESSO) implemented by the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning in collaboration with the World Bank. YESSO aims to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable youth by providing them with skills training, job placement support, and social

assistance. The program targets young people from poor households, including those affected by conflict and displacement, and helps them access opportunities for economic empowerment and social inclusion. Through YESSO, thousands of young Nigerians have received training in various trades and secured employment or started their own businesses, thereby enhancing their socio-economic well-being and resilience (World Bank, 2020).

Furthermore, grassroots youth-led organizations such as the Nigerian Youth SDGs Network (NG Youth SDGs) play a crucial role in promoting YID at the community level. NG Youth SDGs mobilizes young people across Nigeria to advocate for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and engage in projects and campaigns that address local development challenges. Through its network of youth volunteers and partners, NG Youth SDGs promotes initiatives related to education, health, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and peacebuilding. By harnessing the collective efforts of young people, NG Youth SDGs contributes to positive social change and community development nationwide (Nigerian Youth SDGs Network, 2021).

### **North East Youth Initiative for Development in Yobe State**

The North East Youth Initiative for Development (NEYIF) is a regional organization dedicated to empowering youth and promoting sustainable development in the North East region of Nigeria, with a specific focus on Yobe State. NEYIF operates as a non-profit organization, collaborating with various stakeholders including government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local communities to implement programs and projects aimed at addressing the needs of young people in the region.

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One of the key objectives of NEYIF is to provide economic opportunities for youth in Yobe State. To achieve this, NEYIF implements various initiatives such as skills development training, entrepreneurship programs, and vocational training workshops. For example, NEYIF may organize training sessions on agricultural techniques, business management, or vocational skills such as carpentry, tailoring, and welding. By equipping young people with practical skills and knowledge, NEYIF empowers them to pursue sustainable livelihoods and become self-reliant members of their communities.

In addition to economic empowerment, NEYIF also plays a crucial role in promoting peace and social cohesion in Yobe State. Recognizing the importance of youth engagement in peacebuilding efforts, NEYIF organizes peace education workshops, interfaith dialogue sessions, and community-based initiatives aimed at mitigating conflict and promoting reconciliation. For instance, NEYIF may facilitate dialogue between different ethnic or religious groups, organize community service projects, or host cultural exchange programs to foster understanding and tolerance among youth from diverse backgrounds.

Furthermore, NEYIF actively advocates for the rights and interests of young people in Yobe State. Through advocacy campaigns, policy dialogues, and community mobilization efforts, NEYIF works to amplify the voices of youth and ensure their concerns are heard by policymakers and decision-makers at the local, state, and national levels. By advocating for youth-friendly policies and programs, NEYIF seeks to create an enabling environment for young people to thrive and contribute positively to the development of Yobe State.

One example of NEYIF's impact in Yobe State is its "Youth Entrepreneurship Development Program" (YEDP), which provides training,

mentorship, and financial support to young entrepreneurs in the region. Through the YEDP, NEYIF has helped hundreds of young people in Yobe State to start and grow their businesses, thereby creating employment opportunities and contributing to economic growth and development in the region. Additionally, NEYIF's peacebuilding initiatives have helped to reduce tensions and build trust among different communities in Yobe State, fostering a more peaceful and inclusive society.

### **Findings**

The study finds out that NEYIF plays a crucial role in empowering young people in Yobe State by providing them with access to education, vocational training, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Through skills development programs and capacity-building initiatives, NEYIF equips youth with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to become self-reliant and productive members of society (NEYIF Annual Report, 2023).

**Promotion of Peace and Social Cohesion:** NEYIF is actively involved in promoting peace and social cohesion in Yobe State through community-based initiatives, dialogue forums, and peacebuilding activities. By engaging youth as agents of change, NEYIF works to address the root causes of conflict and violence, foster understanding and reconciliation among different ethnic and religious groups, and promote a culture of tolerance and mutual respect (NEYIF Strategic Plan, 2021).

**Advocacy and Youth Participation:** NEYIF advocates for the rights and interests of young people in Yobe State and seeks to amplify their voices in decision-making processes at the local, state, and national levels. Through advocacy campaigns, policy dialogue sessions, and youth-led initiatives, NEYIF works to raise awareness about the challenges facing youth and mobilize support for policies and programs that address

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their needs and aspirations (NEYIF Annual Report, 2023).

**Economic Empowerment:** NEYIF has successfully empowered thousands of young people in Yobe State through skills training programs, entrepreneurship support initiatives, and access to financial services. Many youth beneficiaries have been able to start their own businesses, generate income, and improve their livelihoods, thereby reducing poverty and unemployment in the region (NEYIF Impact Assessment, 2022).

**Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion:** NEYIF's efforts to promote peace and social cohesion in Yobe State have led to tangible improvements in community relations, reduced levels of violence and conflict, and increased cooperation and collaboration among different ethnic and religious groups. By providing platforms for dialogue, mediation, and conflict resolution, NEYIF has helped to build trust and understanding among communities and fostered a sense of unity and solidarity (NEYIF Annual Report, 2023).

**Youth Participation and Advocacy:** NEYIF's advocacy efforts have resulted in significant policy changes and improvements in the legal and institutional framework for youth development in Yobe State. By mobilizing young people to participate in advocacy campaigns, engage with policymakers, and voice their concerns and priorities, NEYIF has helped to ensure that youth issues are given greater attention and consideration in decision-making processes (NEYIF Policy Brief, 2023).

## **Conclusion**

The North East Youth Initiative for Development (NEYIF) has played a pivotal role in fostering peace, promoting social cohesion, and driving sustainable development in Yobe State. Through its innovative programs and grassroots initiatives,

NEYIF has empowered young people to become active agents of change, contributing to the resilience and progress of communities across the state. NEYIF's efforts have been particularly impactful in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by youth in Yobe State, including unemployment, poverty, and the effects of conflict and insurgency. By providing skills training, entrepreneurship opportunities, and platforms for civic engagement, NEYIF has enabled young people to overcome barriers, unlock their potential, and create positive change in their lives and communities.

NEYIF has demonstrated the transformative power of youth-led initiatives in driving sustainable development and building resilient communities. As we reflect on the achievements of NEYIF in Yobe State, it is evident that investing in youth empowerment and engagement is not only essential for the present but also critical for the future prosperity and stability of the state and the entire North East region.

## **Recommendations**

It is imperative to ensure sustained support and investment in NEYIF's programs and activities to enable the organization to continue its impactful work in Yobe State. This includes financial support, capacity building, and collaboration with government agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders.

NEYIF should consider expanding its programs to reach more young people in underserved communities across Yobe State. This could involve the establishment of satellite offices or partnerships with local organizations to facilitate outreach and service delivery.

There is a need for robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of NEYIF's interventions and identify areas for improvement. Regular assessments and feedback

from beneficiaries can help ensure the effectiveness and relevance of NEYIF's programs.

NEYIF should engage in advocacy efforts to influence policy decisions and institutionalize youth-focused initiatives within government programs and policies. This could involve participation in policy dialogues, lobbying policymakers, and raising awareness about the importance of youth empowerment and inclusion.

Collaboration with other youth-led organizations, academic institutions, and private sector partners can enhance NEYIF's reach and effectiveness. By leveraging collective expertise and resources, NEYIF can amplify its impact and address complex challenges more effectively.

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