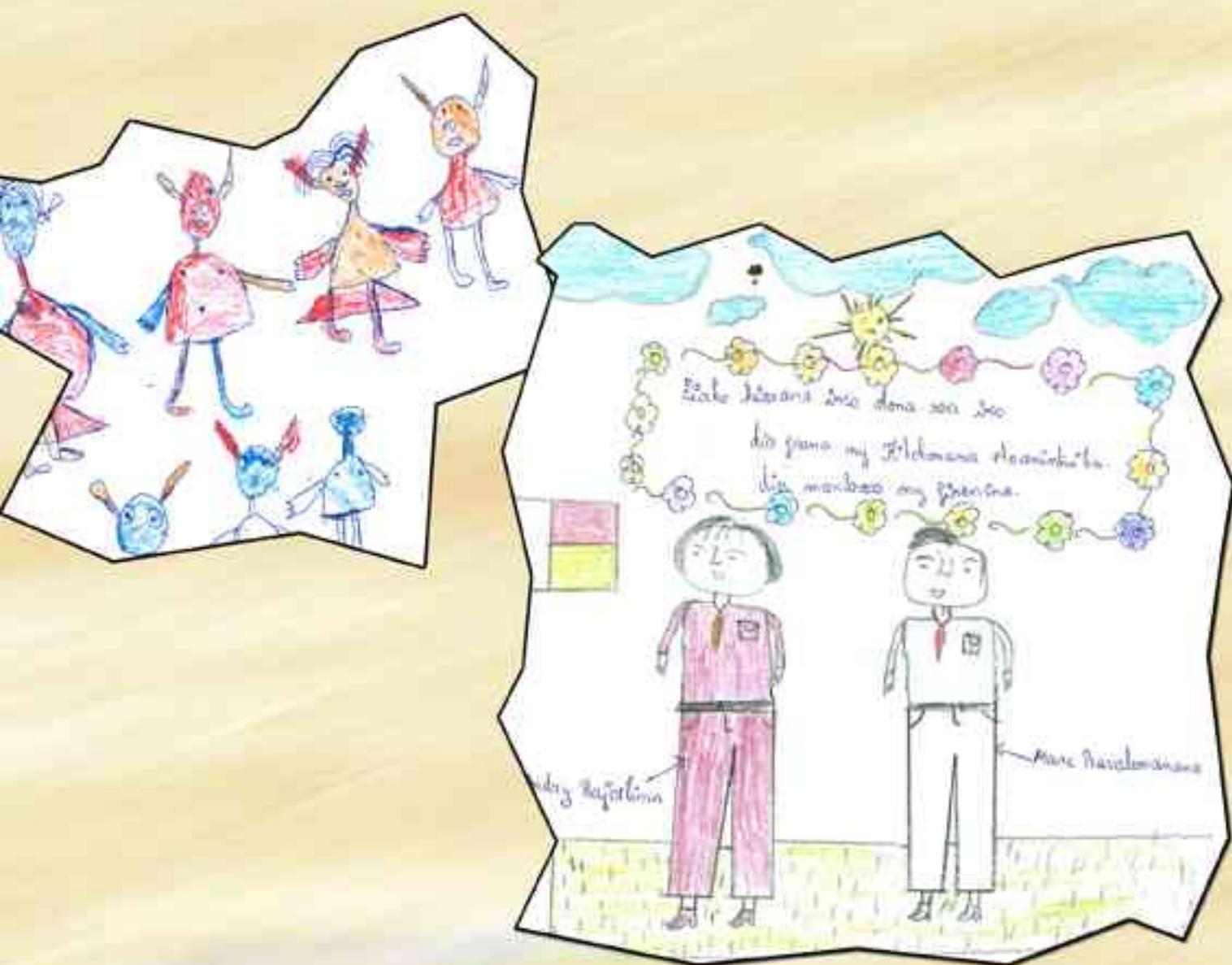


Pandora's Box: Youth at a Crossroad

Emergency Youth Assessment on the Socio-Political Crisis in Madagascar and its Consequences



June 2009

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FOREWORD

Increasingly, Africa's history of political unrest, civil wars and conflicts portrays the face of youth. Yet, in the landscape of humanitarian and development interventions, youth seem to have been largely forgotten. Caught in a limbo of being neither children, nor adults, they are among the first to bear the consequences of violence or aggression.

'Youth have no limits, only excesses,' says an old Malagasy woman sitting in the city's main square mulling over the recent political events that contributed to a situation of unrest, violence and vulnerability. She is, to many extents, right. Youth have held leading roles in the social and political life of Madagascar over recent months: they have taken part in street demonstrations, been involved in the violence, have helped set up roadblocks, they have been victims of violence and crimes and have found their right to education denied etc. Youth and adolescents have clearly been in the front line of change but at the same time, have been extremely vulnerable to violence and crime.

But what are the feelings, perspectives and perceptions of these youth vis-à-vis what happened around them?

International and national communities have been quick to categorise these adolescents as good or bad according to whether they were victims or perpetrators of violence and crime. Yet, very little consideration has been given to try to understand the causes for this sudden up-take of violence as a way of expressing feelings and frustrations. Experience teaches us that the oppressed are likely to become the oppressors once basic needs and fundamental rights are denied; thus substantiating the need to better analyse the predicaments and hopes of youth in these difficult times.

During the conception of this report, various issues arose that quotes, poems and drawings from the youth, presented herein, will help to clarify:

- the effects of the socio-economic situation and political instability on the everyday life of youth,
- the impact of the socio-economic situation and political instability on the youth's emotional, psychological, social and educational status,
- the impact of the socio-economic situation and political instability on the youth's morals and values,
- youth's ways of thinking, interacting and relating to peers and adults around them,
- how youth's experiences can generate systematic interventions that have support value and at the same time can also prevent further violence.

What happened in Madagascar is not dissimilar to trends observed in other countries across Africa. If governments, civil society, families and international aid fail the youth, the chances are that they will express themselves in as many ways possible, including vocal demonstrations, street riots, gang actions, and the like. Throughout Africa a trend of increased vulnerability in terms of young people and adolescents can be observed, and this is particularly evident in urban settings. In Madagascar, poverty levels might be higher in rural areas, yet vulnerability, violence, and protection issues seem to be a prevailing urban phenomenon.

This report was designed to provide a platform for youth involved in the political instability to express themselves in a constructive and non violent way. It allowed young people to use different communication tools including artwork, drawings, poems, music, slang, urban graffiti, photos and letters. It was also an attempt to understand them better and to provide a tool for self-reflection on what went wrong, to find out what could have been prevented and what could have been done better to support young people in their daily endeavours.

More than 12,800 youth and children took part in one of the largest emergency youth participatory assessments conducted in the immediate aftermath of political and civil unrest. Different techniques and approaches were simultaneously adopted, ranging from photo documentaries, focus group discussions, interactive recreational and psychological interventions in primary and secondary schools, one to one interviews and case studies, individual interviews with hospitalised youth injured during the political unrest, focus group discussions with street children and homeless youth in Antananarivo and open ended questions with youth in prison or recently released from police custody.

This report is firmly grounded on one belief: positive youth development is much more than supporting youth only in moments of difficulty. Youth are the protagonists of development interventions mainly when there are problems to fix for example:

- HIV/AIDS strikes prevalently among youth; support is given for the establishment of youth programmes to prevent infection,
- Gangs of youth appear to be behind urban violence; promotion of juvenile justice interventions becomes a top priority,
- High unemployment rates among young people fuel increased street unrest; secondary and tertiary education opportunities are created to develop their skills.

All of these examples show only curative actions that are, *per se*, very limited in nature because they do not go beyond the individual problem that they are meant to address. A paradigm shift is proposed alongside advocacy for the establishment of a broader partnership, which is triggered by political unrest, but is not confined to it. Recommendations have been made to use the current period to maximise the potential to address youth needs *and* hopes at the same time, shifting from a problem solving approach, to a more rights-based philosophy centred on a holistic youth. In doing so, it will be possible to create links between short term youth-in-transition programming to longer term positive-youth programming, led and run by the youth themselves.

Adolescence is already a very sensitive and often difficult time in a young person's life. Lack of attention and un-availability of platforms for constructive expression can make this delicate period almost unbearable. Feelings of frustration and alienation by mainstream society can easily result in a greater vulnerability and possible manipulation by adults. Adults constantly run the risk of seeing youth without looking at them, hearing them without listening and judging them without understanding. This report is a reminder to everyone about how much is still to be learnt from the youth.

This report is an initial step towards empowering the youth to act as positive role models, to seek and generate internal and external policy dialogues and to establish links with adults in a horizontal exchange on potential risks and priorities. If only one recommendation is to be highlighted in this report it is that of pro-actively linking youth groups with adult groups, community leaders and other local actors to facilitate informal and formal channels and networks so that the youth's voices can be heard. It is also necessary to provide greater

opportunities for youth groups to critically reflect on possible roles as communicators of peace and agents of emergency risk reduction.

This report also calls for the identification of influential key actors at the local and national level to raise awareness of ongoing work and emphasise the potential of youth as future peace ambassadors.

If only one concept has to be remembered after having read this report, it is that the youth in Madagascar are at an important crossroad. Choices taken in these months of transition will substantially impact not just their present and future life, but also that of the country. The crisis has opened Pandora's Box: youth have witnessed, or have been involved in, violence; traditional and moral values previously regulating social interactions have been eroded; sentiments of division and anger have been instilled in the younger generation; close allies have been turned against one another. The ideology of national unity has been challenged and this is felt as a serious concern for future youth development. Ignoring these signals would be to turn a blind eye to lessons learned from tragic episodes of African history, where civil conflict could have been prevented.



It is clear, from reading the youth's perceptions of the crisis, that recent events have weakened the law enforcement and justice systems and this has opened the door to many protection concerns. Issues such as the easy availability of drugs, trafficking of children, prostitution, child abuse, the creation of criminal youth gangs, have found an ideal nurturing ground in this volatile situation.

The political unrest and socio-economical crisis, compounded by violence and abuse, has left a mark in the minds of the youth and their psychological development. While it is not the intention of this report to assess the degree and magnitude of the consequences of what youth witnessed, committed, or suffered during the recent political unrest, it is clear that one important long lasting consequence of the crisis will be their capacity to distinguish what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' using values that were radically altered by the recent events. What was previously not acceptable by mainstream society suddenly became a reality; moral values suddenly disappeared in the wave of riots in the streets.

One aspect that stands out from this report is that there is no magical solution to all the possible problems faced by youth at this difficult time. There are different issues that emerge according to age and gender. Looking at the gender/age factors, the vulnerability of girls increases with their age, while the vulnerability of boys decreases with age. Older girls are more at risk of different forms of violence, in particular sexual violence, than younger girls. On the contrary, younger boys are more at risk of child labour and physical violence than older boys. In general, younger adolescents face challenges that are very different to those faced by older adolescents. This is a reminder of the need for gender and age specific interventions, tailor made to the individual target groups.

This report also shows that the youth have an outstanding depth and degree of originality in providing insights into their lives and the perceived reality surrounding them. They present

their views in an articulated manner often expressing themselves without diplomacy or through the use of slang. This is characteristic of their desire to communicate as openly and as honestly as possible.

Youth taking part in this assessment clearly demonstrated the ability to identify and communicate risks from their own perspective. Beyond this, they were also able to identify necessary actions to reduce these risks and to articulate these needs in different local policy arenas to generate concrete actions. This rapid assessment suggests that such concrete actions may be crucial in allowing youth to develop confidence in their own capacity to act as agents of change within and outside their community context. The research exercise itself allowed children and youth to reflect on their abilities and achievements, as well as to consider various possible communication channels and levels of influence in creating change.

The research findings suggest that there is considerable potential for children and young people to act as agents of change.

This report reiterates the link between the promotion of child rights and protection. The attainment of a right is something that can be reversed by life events, therefore protection interventions have to ensure policies and achievements are maintained and up to date. The enjoyment of basic rights and rights protection should complement each other.

Perhaps most importantly, the research highlights a fundamental disconnection underlying discussions between adults and youth. Policy makers conceptualise the role of children as passive participants and recipients across a range of potential policy arenas. Viewed primarily as a vulnerable sector of society, the voices of children and youth are, more often than not, contained and constrained. Their role is therefore one of receiving instructions and adding value to the efforts of externally generated activities; this is in stark contrast to the vision of youth groups themselves.

Allowing youth to express themselves in creative ways is not an end in itself. All the feelings reported herein generate an obligation not only for national policy makers and international partners but also for families and communities. It is an obligation, which requires problems to be solved in a rapid and decisive manner, the provision of support for the establishment of an environment conducive to nurturing youth potential and allowing rights and dreams to be fulfilled. A phrase often repeated is 'children and youth are tomorrow's future', yet they are also the present, and what they make of their future depends on the opportunities that are available for them today. It is no surprise therefore, if the youth decide to take up unconventional means to claim a better future. However, violence cannot be justified; mainstream society must take responsibility to protect, promote, and support them in their choices, while encouraging peaceful dialogue.

It is hoped that this work will not remain on paper but that those who take time to read what the youth have to say will translate it into a personal and institutional commitment. It is hoped that this work is the beginning of something bigger that will place more emphasis on youth within their day-to-day environment. Support for the youth must be aligned with their environment and social interactions, the closest environment being their family.

Youth interventions can be costly, however, the main question to ask is not whether governments can afford such interventions but rather if they can afford not to consider youth programming among their priorities. The cost of pushing youth out of the political agenda is high. Youth interventions must be considered as an investment with returns far greater than the expenditure. Equally challenging remains the fact that youth programming requires simultaneous and coordinated efforts. Multi-sectoral, integrated interventions, based on broader partnerships involving the health, education, social, justice and finance sectors are required. This is clearly reflected in the many quotes presenting the different angles of youth wellbeing in this report.

With the above in mind, this report puts youth thinking to the forefront, leaving the analysis of what adults might say on the sidelines. Youth voices are given the centre stage. Adult analysis is confined to minor observations, aimed at summarising, more than complementing, what the youth have expressed.

This report should be perceived as a journey of discovery. Participatory processes used to produce the presented material helped the young participants to better discover themselves, their mindset, their characters and hopes. In the same way, it is hoped that readers of this report will embark on a journey to better understand the youth of today.

The conscience of each and every reader will act as a guide towards the use of this report. However, initial steps have been taken to allow for a broad dissemination of the report both inside and outside Madagascar. Metaphorically speaking, the youth in Madagascar are not on a high ground; they are and feel very much part of the African continent. They want their voices and lives to be connected to those of the many other African youth going through similarly difficult situations. They know what they want. It is hoped that this report will act as a microphone to reach many more people, to attract the attention of those who have so far not considered or recognised the full potential of the youth. It is also hoped that this report will provide an opportunity for a more holistic understanding of the complexities and richness of the lives of these young agents for peaceful social change.



M, 11 yrs, Ambohipo

METHODOLOGY

The Process

UNICEF, Play Therapy Africa, TAIZA protection networks, certain FIANSO and the Syndicate of Social Workers conducted and facilitated emergency youth assessment interventions during and in the immediate aftermath of the recent political unrest. Support from the UNICEF Regional Office was also sought.

Interventions targeted street youth, youth who participated in the unrest, youth who were victims of the recent events, youth who witnessed violence and disorder, youth in primary and secondary schools and youth who were admitted to hospitals as a consequence of the crisis. In most cases, consultations were carried out together with initial emergency response actions to support vulnerable children and youth, in the spirit of an action-oriented research.

The political unrest and social-economical crisis appeared to be mainly an urban phenomenon; therefore less attention was paid to the rural context. Particular attention was given to Analamanga due to the magnitude of the turmoil taking place throughout the capital.

Different open-ended questionnaires were developed, tested and adopted according to the category of youth being reached. In some cases, pre-testing was not feasible due to the emergency nature of interventions. In these cases, tools were adapted after the first focus group discussion had taken place.

Only a few members of the large team of facilitators had previous experience in emergency rapid deployment and emergency data collection tools. Thus rapid data collection training was organised to facilitate the task. Trainings also included ethical and methodological modules for child friendly data collection techniques. International tools for emergency child protection data collection were also considered however, were felt to be too complex given the basic level of experience of the facilitators.

The choice of sites for research interventions was a challenge. Site choice was guided by common sense and by initial reports of violence generated from the field. Collaboration with community protection networks also helped with site selection. The importance of institutional relationships that UNICEF already had in place before the start of the crisis has to be stressed. These working relationships provided useful entry points to quickly and effectively reach district and community level actors to facilitate the undertaking of the task.

A total of 3,180 youth from 8 primary and secondary schools in Antananarivo were reached (see Table 1 and 2). These youth had access to psychological and counselling programmes provided by the Syndicate of Social Workers and had the opportunity to attend several participatory sessions organised around different themes. While the typical intervention was group work – usually among youth members of the same class, a small number (48 youth) had access to individual, one-to-one work. Special all-girls or all-boys discussions were also organised where necessary. These interventions generated a rich sample of drawings, poems, songs, and writings.

Table 1: Age and Gender Segregation of Youth Reached in Primary and Secondary Schools in Antananariv

		- 5 years		6 -10 years		11 – 15 years		16 – 18 years		18 yrs +		
Individual interview and open ended questionnaires	School	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	Total
	CEG Antanimena											
	EPP Antanimena					11						11
	Notre Dame De Lourdes					3						3
	Lycée Moderne Ampefiloha					7		2				9
	EPP Analakely					8	1					9
	EPP Soanierana											
	Lycée Jules Ferry					5	2	3	6			16
	Total					34	3	5	6			48
	Focus group discussions	CEG Antanimena				2	248	275	7	10		
EPP Antanimena				119	91	45	57					312
Notre Dame De Lourdes		4	4	10	50	300	142	56	67			633
Lycée Moderne Ampefiloha						174	157	257	268	13	15	884
EPP Analakely				29	37	49	57					172
EPP Soanierana				21	29	85	119					254
Lycée Jules Ferry						45	27	32	26			130
CEG Tanjombato				6		90	104	27	26			253
Total		4	4	185	209	1036	938	379	397	13	15	3180

Individual one-to-one work was carried out in 3 hospitals in Antananarivo where victims of violence were admitted. These hospitals (HJRA, HOMI and HJRB) were all equipped with emergency services, which provided immediate relief for victims of street violence.

7 focus group discussions with youth were organised in those communes worst affected by the instability. These focus group discussions were of mixed gender and youth participants had substantially different socio-economic backgrounds. Interviews were carried out using open ended questions and were focused on assessing young people's understanding of the general socio-political context around them, the root causes of participation in looting and violent events and their hopes for the future. These discussions were organised after having obtained permission from Community Leaders to ensure the safety of both facilitators and the youth.

Table 2: Number of Youth in Schools having received Psychological Support and their Role in the Crisis

School	Number of youth who received emergency psychological support		Number of Children Participating into Looting						Number of youth reporting not having participated in looting		Number of youth reporting their families participated in looting
			Voluntarily		Persuaded by friends		Convinced/coerced by family, family members, relatives or other known adults				
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
CEG Antanimena	255	234	36	8	20	27	39	42	160	157	341
EPP Antanimena	164	148	7	17	24	49	18	20	115	62	404
Notre Dame De Lourdes	183	200	15	07	29	28	36	15	103	150	200
Lycée Moderne Ampefiloha	260	269	19	13	25	21	24	13	192	222	113
EPP Analakely	78	94	09	07	24	12	16	33	29	42	90
EPP Soanierana	76	98	13	58	25	18	20	15	18	07	152
Lycée Faravohitra	77	53	02	01	07	07	0	02	68	43	27
	1093	1096	101	111	154	162	153	140	685	683	1327
Total	2189		821						1368		1327

30 focus group discussions were organised in poor neighbourhoods of Antananarivo and involved approximately 150 street youth separated from their families and living in groups or in gangs on the street.

In a second phase, social workers were deployed to all 192 *fokontany* of Antananarivo. Social workers conducted 3 focus group discussions with groups of 8 to 15 youth in each *fokontany*.

A photo workshop was also organised, centred on the theme “Perspective and Hopes”, where youth were asked to document their lives, feelings and perceptions using digital cameras. 18 youth (12 - 18 years old) took part in this exercise and interviewed other young people as part of the exercise. The participants were from various social-economic backgrounds and came from different schools or youth associations.

Constraints

Due to the volatile situation in several neighbourhoods at the onset of the crisis, some focus group discussions could not take place. Adults wanting to ‘clarify’ youth opinions and feelings interrupted some focus group discussions. In some cases youth felt uneasy providing sensitive information especially when related to adults having coerced them into taking part in demonstrations, riots and looting. Similarly, when participants or members of their family committed violence and looting there was an initial reluctance to engage in open discussions out of fear of legal reprisals.

SHORT ANALYSIS:

General perceptions of youth on the situation of political instability and socio-economic crisis

Has Pandora's box been opened?



« No more crisis or shootings in Madagascar! »
R. 10yrs, Ambatovinaky

The political unrest and socio-economical crisis, compounded by violence and abuse, has left a mark in the minds of youth and on their psychological development. It is clear that one important long lasting consequence of the crisis will be the youth's capacity to distinguish between 'right' and 'wrong' using values that were radically altered by recent events. What was previously not acceptable by mainstream society suddenly became a reality; moral values suddenly disappeared in the wave of riots on the streets.

I have nightmares every night about what I saw on the TV. I see blood and people crying in pain. I hear people shouting and I see death coming.

Youth in Madagascar are at an important crossroad. Choices taken in these months of transition will substantially impact not just their present and future life, but also that of the country. The crisis has opened Pandora's Box: youth have witnessed, or have been involved in, violence; traditional and moral values previously regulating social interactions have been eroded; sentiments of division and anger have been instilled in the younger generation; close allies have been turned against one another. The ideology of national unity has been challenged and this is felt as a serious concern for future youth development. Ignoring these signals would be to turn a blind eye to lessons learned from tragic episodes of African history, where civil conflict could have been prevented.

I think I am scared everyday, I fear for my future. Indeed, I wonder if this is a weakness, maybe it is also a strength, I don't know. It is a deep fear that cannot be seen from the outside, it is just something that I feel.

There is a risk that negative experiences will have a long-term impact on the youth combined with an overall fear that youth might become more aggressive. Reversing this trend is possible, but it will require immediate, bold actions.

Youth onThe Causes of the Crisis:

*I feel: VERY SAD
Dad doesn't have any work, as he is a tourist guide; there are no more tourists. He can't go anywhere as there are problems even in the other regions.*

There is a general perception among youth that the political crisis is simply the culmination of months of financial crisis and increased daily hardships. The youth feel that what is happening now in Madagascar, will have an immediate and long-term negative impact on their lives and future options. The impact on household socio-economic status and security has been strongly felt. Youth reveal a decrease in their household's available income, the capacity to access basic needs, loss of employment, a decrease in school attendance and performance, alongside an increased climate of insecurity and a threat of danger for people and their properties.

Various difficulties have surfaced in my life since the start of the political crisis. My family's standard of living went downhill very quickly when both my parents lost their jobs. What is difficult is the lack of food at home; it is this that is forcing me to steal. It is not only me, many other young people are also doing the same. Our life together at home is deteriorating every day, it is clear that no one is happy. All of us are searching for food and when we can't find any, we have to resort to stealing.

Purchasing power and household income have progressively diminished over the last year and the political unrest has led to the breakdown of families' coping mechanisms worsening already fragile living conditions. For many youth, the crisis has been the main reason for job losses and a lack of employment opportunities. Job possibilities in the informal sector have become more and more sporadic, where profit margins have been virtually flattened. Employment in the formal sector has been characterised by numbers of youth being laid off.

The consequences of the unemployment downturn have been felt severely by whole families. Older male bread winners have left their partners/wives and young children to find work elsewhere, leaving family members without regular income and a lack of any form of security or provision for long term planning.



*Tika - 8 Years of Antananarivo, Madagascar
Madagascar is green*

« I would like Madagascar to be green and calm. Let's join hands together. »

D. 8yrs, Ampahibe

This is an important element that comes out of this assessment and that calls for serious discussion on the root causes of the crisis, beyond its immediate political expression. Using youth contributions for a causality analysis could help towards a better understanding of where Madagascar stands nowadays in relation to its development priorities.

Youth on The Breakdown of Community Unity and The Dilution of Traditional Values:

I feel: ANGRY

Everything is changing, the life of the country as well as that of school. Political arguments are breaking out at school and this shouldn't happen. The country is falling apart under moral or physical discriminations. I cannot stand civil war! Even friends are now fighting over politics. I feel SAD also because Madagascar was once a model for other countries to follow. The Malagasy people have become aggressive and all fraternity has gone, along with all the development efforts. 'Fihavanana' has disappeared. Many people have also lost family members, friends and children.

Youth report a general fear of divisions at community level and informed facilitators of a rapid deterioration of traditional protection and coping mechanisms. Traditional wisdom appears to have disappeared; the mediating role of the elderly seems insufficient or incapable of facing the magnitude of the problem. Solutions are now reportedly to be found through violence, riots and the use of force. Differences in political opinions are supporting the break down of traditional community unity. This appears to be a mainly urban phenomenon, compounded by difficulties in accessing basic quality services.

The traditional value system (*Fihavanana*), has also been turned upside down leaving adolescents and young people without reference points. Parents, teachers, government staff and community leaders who once preached values such as *Fihavanana*, for solidarity and respect, are now seen as suddenly rejecting these values and showing new ways of interacting through violence.

The youth also reveal an increased trust in God and an increased demand for help through prayer as they feel that only divine intervention can solve the problems created by the most powerful people in their country.

To survive, I pray, I speak to God. Despite all the mistakes I have made, I believe in him. I tell myself that I will survive and I will rise up again. I will come out of this even stronger.



Youth on Fear and Anger:

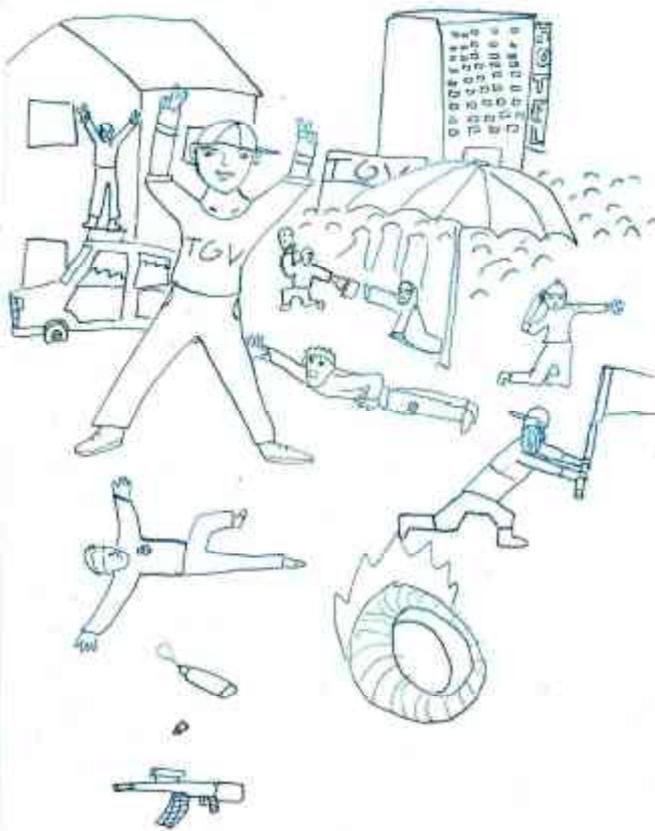
Sadness arises out of friends having disappeared, being put in prison, wounded or killed. Images transmitted by the media have also instilled a sense of fear and anger in seeing the nation fall apart. Faced with this situation, the youth have mixed feelings; those of being powerless versus hopes of contributing towards change. Young people feel sad and in some cases powerless, as they perceive the problems around them as too overwhelming to be solved.

CRISIS

Political crisis! Political crisis!
Our programme is not yet complete, so the fight must go on.
Our professors are arguing while our programme goes nowhere.
Everything is subject to change and this is depressing.

Here we are.
We represent those who want to get out of this struggle, which is going where?
Nowhere.
There is no love.
Life is nothing but darkness.

They feel isolated and unable to seek help because they no longer trust those who are offering assistance. On the other hand, they reveal that recent events 'made them grow up' and are now of the opinion that they can stand up for what they believe in, by any means possible.

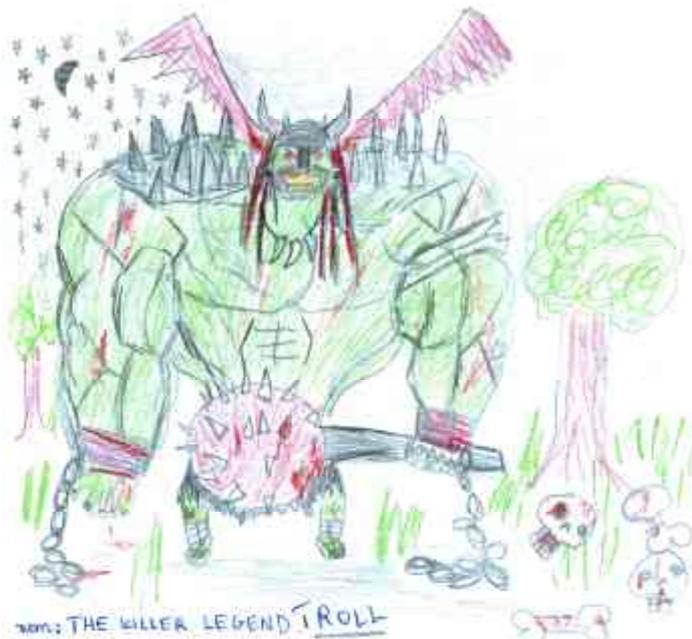


B. 17 yrs, Avaradoha

In some cases this new situation has triggered a growing interest in politics, economics, public opinion and foreign views on Madagascar. Youth who were previously disinterested in reading newspapers, following the news and debates are gradually discovering new world openings. While they sometimes feel upset about what they read and learn, they also have the feeling of becoming more and more engaged in improving the situation and becoming better citizens.

Youth lament limited freedom of movement and reduced spatial interactions with friends, which causes anger, sadness and regret for the situation having gone so far. Roadblocks and curfews limited movements of the youth. Parents and guardians were worried about violence on the street, which lead to limited permission to hang out with friends after school.

Youth on The Increased Use of Violence, Insecurity, and the Emergence of Street Gangs:



T. 15 yrs, Antanety Atsimo

Youth report a progressive increase in the use of violence among young people themselves, and a rise in street gangs to 'regulate' life within and between their neighbourhoods. These street gangs are, in some cases, linked to 'powerful patrons' that provide protection and easy enrolment in organised crime. Young people also report increased pressure from peers to join organised gangs and to 'hang around' with them. They have also noticed an increase of 'natural aggression' towards neighbours. Areas within communities that previously felt safe and secure have become places to be avoided at any time of the day.

A number of street youth presented the crisis as an opportunity for them to quickly boost their personal wealth through stealing, threats and establishing new hierarchies. This is in stark contrast with school-going youth who, after having enjoyed some extra holidays, now feel that their educational gains are seriously at stake. What many adolescents enjoyed was the confusion and destabilising power of the crisis, but only in the short term. There is however, an overall fear for the lack of security in the mid and long term.

Life on the street has always been a life of misery. Now that we can steal without anyone saying anything, it's better. I have new shoes and new clothes. I also have a mobile phone but I don't have money to buy the recharge cards.

I joined a gang of people who think like me; we meet regularly. If we feel like it we go to the political rallies, if we don't, we do something else. People are scared of us; we know how to get things done.

Some of the youth's contributions highlighted concerns about the increased "militarisation" of the city and readily available firearms becoming commonplace. They also noticed an increased use of force and violence for incidents unrelated to political disagreements.

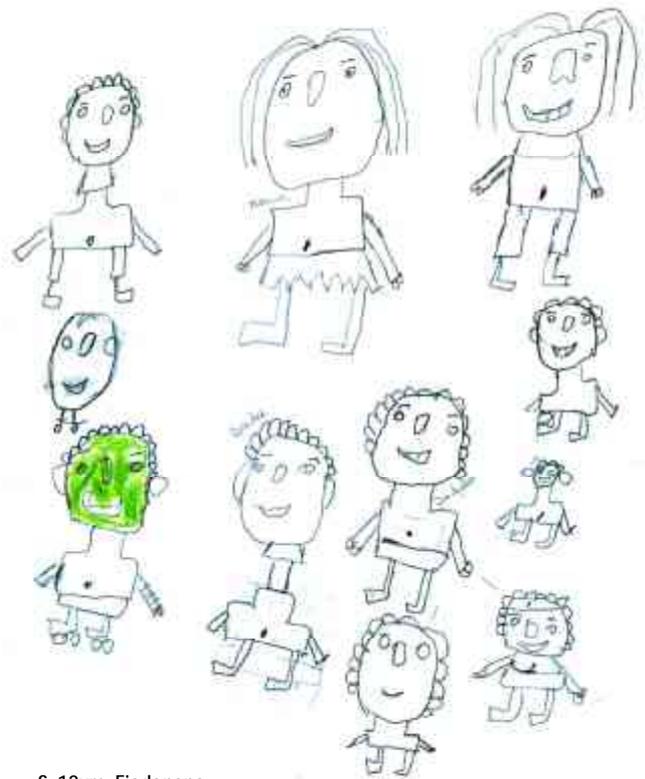
Youth involved at roadblocks admitted to having felt extremely powerful in controlling events in the city and exercising power over other people; they reported that they would do this again if the occasion presented itself.

Basic emergency mapping exercises revealed a clear understanding of the youth on the most vulnerable people and hotspots in their neighbourhoods. They also presented ideas and possible solutions to problems identified.

Don't bother us with all these questions! The truth is right in front of everyone but no one wants to see it. People shoot each other. Drugs are available everywhere, even our friends are encouraging us to try them. Don't stand on the high ground asking us what is wrong.

Youth on Increased Intra-Household Violence:

What I understand is that child abuse is what is done to children by their parents or neighbours. There is a story of a girl who is only 9 years old; her parents force her to work. When she is sick her parents don't give her any care. If she is dirty her parents don't care about her being clean. If she has something to say, her parents don't listen but she will be beaten up as a reply. If by any chance she comes home with some money, this will be the only time she gets any attention or a word of thanks. Her parents take all the money and don't give her anything. She will get into trouble if she asks for her share. She is not allowed to play or to go to school.



S. 12yrs, Fiadanana

Similarly, young people report a trend of increased intra-household violence. This is due to the use of force becoming more and more 'acceptable' as a means to solving problems. At the same time, parents are stressed and worried about not being able to provide for basic household necessities and have increased the use of emotional and physical violence towards their children.

Politics and political beliefs are causing families to fall apart. Some youth report that their parents were ready to turn them over to the police due to differences in political opinions. In some cases, this has resulted in a number of children and youth running away from home and are reportedly still missing.

When we talk about child abuse, it means the violence that children receive from their parents all the time. We see this every day in our neighbourhood. As soon as children do something small wrong, their parents given them big punishments.

Youth on The New Basis for Identity Creation and the Increase in Divisions:

*Is this a political war or a religious one?
Why is religion being used to separate
brothers instead of uniting them in peace?*

For those youth with similar political ideas, this crisis has been perceived as a way to create new friendships, alliances, and strengthen solidarity. However, these new alliances evoke not only political concepts, but also regroup geographic origins and religion as combining factors for identity creation.

A number of youth contributions highlight a call for radical change and a tendency towards radicalism: everything old is bad and should be changed or destroyed. The concept of vengeance also emerges in a number of drawings submitted.



*It's absurd, what happened to us? Where
are our values? Can't we learn to live
together in a different way than this? Can't
we talk to one another instead of killing?*

R. 9yrs, Ambodivona

Youth on Worries About the Weakened Law Enforcement System:

Youth have mixed feelings about their future. They have big dreams and hopes but report their future is at stake and unprotected. They notice an increase in the availability of drugs, prostitution and similar protection challenges. They are aware of an increase in the use of drugs inside school compounds.

Of course I have a project. I dream of becoming like my father and of helping those in need and those who have problems, especially the poor children, so they can become better people and contribute to our nation.

There are moments when I feel lonely and that no one is listening to me. Nobody understands me when I have a problem.

This crisis has allowed me to see how obsessive and cruel human beings are. I was shocked by the crisis. We couldn't go out. I understood that I have nothing to do with politics. I have made the decision now to go abroad to study and hopefully will be able to stay there. This crisis has really changed my life.

Aggressive behaviour and juvenile delinquency have also been reported as having increased. The youth explain that many friends have become involved in hazardous work, including prostitution, to make up for lack of income. They learned during the street riots and looting that the law enforcement system has been weakened; people carrying out illegal activities are not being prosecuted, providing a safe heaven for organised and non-organised crime to flourish. Young people estimate that the volatile situation has resulted in an increased exploitation of children, including sexual exploitation.

Many youth contributions call for peace. The youth wish to see Madagascar once again united, where people go hand in hand towards common goals. This is a call for peace and also a call for dialogue, understanding and forgiveness. They demand justice for those who suffered and died and they request leaders of political parties to find different ways to solve disputes.

There is no solution to the crisis but elections. Yet, if we vote now, we will kill each other. If we vote later, there will be no point. What to do? Please help us.

Youth are extremely articulate when it comes to expressing their dreams for the future, but they seem to have a very basic understanding of the overall political environment. Some of the youth who took part in demonstrations and rioting have no clear idea of the major events or actors that recently shaped the country's political environment.

Idiots! You pushed us into a situation from where there is no return. Do you think the youth that were at the barricades will be quiet in the future? Do you think they will care about voting next time? Why should they?

Some seem to repeat slogans they have heard from others, with no clear understanding of the real causes for the political crisis. A number of youth report having been forced or coerced into participating in rallies by peers and/or adults including teachers, parents, law enforcement agents or political leaders.

Youth on Their Involvement in the Riots and Looting:

Youth report having participated in demonstrations, riots, stone throwing and assaults; Community leaders persuaded them to take part in street riots and in many cases paid them for their participation. Others report that they participated out of curiosity, political convictions, or convenience. TV and radio programmes were also reported as playing an important role in instigating people to take part in demonstrations. Media reports contributed to portraying a climate of fear, which added to the stress of the youth.

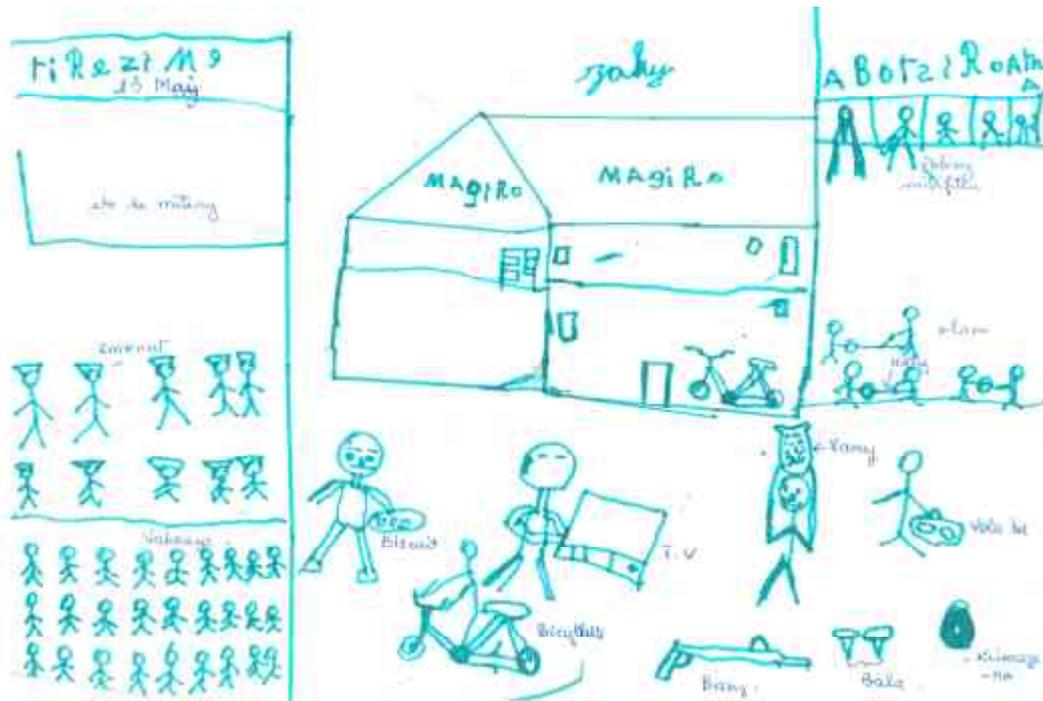
One of the days I enjoyed the most was the day when everything was allowed. I was with my parents not far from one of the big stores, near our house. Even when the store was on fire, we ran inside to take some things. My father took a TV, my mother grabbed some electric kitchen tools, and I took some kitchen utensils. We went back again to take some bags of cement. My parents sold everything the very next day, as they were scared the police would come in search of stolen things. It is thanks to the stolen items, that my parents managed to buy new furniture for our living room.

Youth were persuaded to take part in political rallies and riots with the promise of money to be given to them upon their return. Certain adults have been reported as having paid between 5,000 to 15,000 ariary for participation in each rally. Older youth were more exposed to these bribes most probably as they were seen to be more vocal, potentially violent and difficult to manage. Youth report having a clear understanding of the dangers they were asked to face, yet in some cases they admit they never thought the situation could go so far out of control and they never had the initial intention to take part in abuse or physical violence.

Some youth report they were selected to participate in street riots and instigate violence or looting in pre-determined areas of the city. In exchange for this, they were provided with immunity from any crimes committed, cash or praise from the community. These youth were also promised social transfer benefits such as the enrolment in HIMO or other income generating activities funded by the government. This fuelled resentment from families equally in need that were excluded from these social protection schemes due to their reluctance to participate in the disorder.

I have had enough of my life in Antananarivo. My parents never listen. I don't want to study any more. This crisis is making me fight with everyone. I don't like living here any more.

Some young people participated in the riots out of curiosity or under peer pressure. Others were attracted to volatile neighbourhoods by the promise of famous musicians and free concerts. This mainly applied to the younger youth who had a less developed understanding of the overall political situation.



G. 10yrs, Antsararay

I'm afraid of living in my community now. I didn't accept to go on the street and Fokontany Chiefs know it. I don't think I have a future there now.

This assessment also highlighted the existence of political youth groups that participated in violence out of inner political beliefs. These groups were active in mobilising other youth or reporting young people with different political views to community leaders.

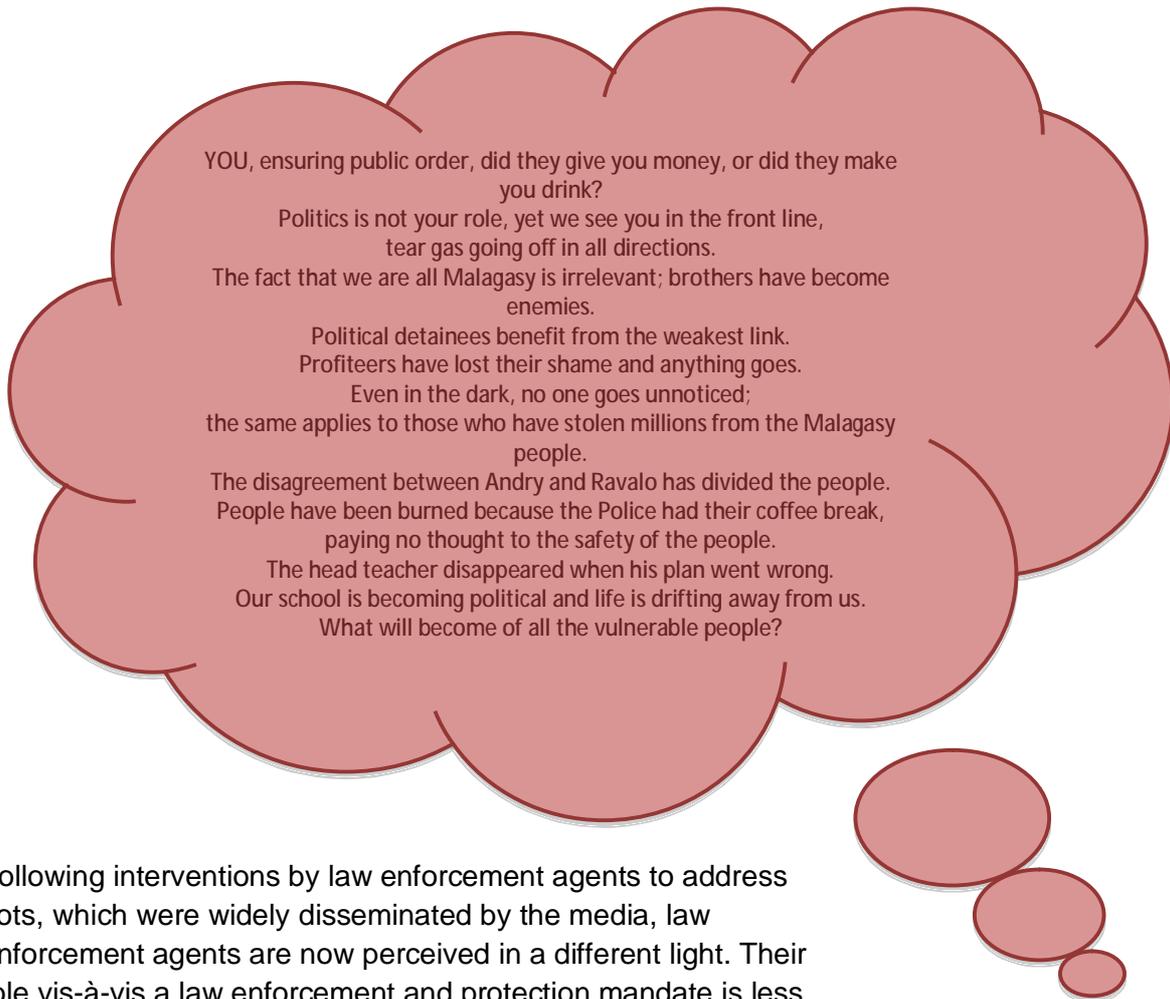
It was also reported that these same groups forcefully took young people out of their homes and sent to man the barricades. These same groups are now terrorizing 'neutral' youth and threatening repercussions in the near future.

My parents force me to watch the political news on the TV.

According to the youth, TV and radio stations played a major role in pushing more and more people into the streets and in inciting the masses to the use of violence. Additionally, the youth report that the 'media made our life easy. They indicated which shops should be looted and when. Many of us simply joined, in knowing where looting was taking place'.

Participation in looting has been defined as a quick way to make up for many months of hardship at home. It was an occasion for youth to take possession of goods they could never afford in normal times.

Youth on The Justice System:



Following interventions by law enforcement agents to address riots, which were widely disseminated by the media, law enforcement agents are now perceived in a different light. Their role vis-à-vis a law enforcement and protection mandate is less credible in the eyes of youth. The use of rifles, tear gas and in some cases arbitrary detention substituted the previously existing rule of law. These agents are now feared but less respected. Youth feel law enforcement agents are potentially dangerous to themselves and their families.

Youth on Exposure to Stress and Trauma:

Youth manifest, through drawings, quotes and poems, a very high level of stress and anxiety, going in some cases, as far as trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder. Possible signs of emotional disorders also emerged from work conducted in schools, where the preferred themes presented by children and youth are representations of people being killed, houses and cars burning, small children lying dead on

Every time I hear shooting, my heart beats out of control and I start to shake. My thoughts go to what might happen and what I would do if members of my family die. It is a really horrible thought. It is awful for children to have to live in this situation.

the street, military tanks, shooting, people gathered in squares, violence shown on the TV, looting and stealing, parents beating their children etc.

Youth also report instinctive reactions to noises that remind them of shootings, being constantly scared and feeling under threat. Youth report radical changes in the way they behave with their peers and places that were previously considered secure have become zones of anxiety. This is partially due to the witnessed attacks on schools and hospitals by armed groups or due to the disappearance of trusted people such as headmasters or family members. The use of words such as sadness, isolation, humiliation, fear, anxiety and abandonment are recurrent in children's narratives, regardless of their age.



A. 15 yrs, Ambatoroka

Youth on The Worsening Nutritional Status:

Youth estimate that family income has decreased, on average, by half or two thirds. This has had a direct impact on the nutritional status, education attendance and the protective environment of younger children. Various small family businesses have collapsed due to the expenditure of all available income and assets.

The quantity of available food and diversification of nutritional requirements has diminished. Before the crisis, families were able to have three meals a day, whilst now they have one or a maximum of two meals, made up of basic staple foodstuffs (mostly vegetables, rice and bread). The situation is still worsening due to increased prices for staple foods.

Life is becoming more and more expensive; all the shopkeepers are putting the price of rice, oil and bread up. I would like to get out of this crisis. For instance, before this "famous" crisis, we had 3 meals per day at home; now we can only afford 2. To go to work you need strength. I feel so lonely.

Youth are aware that the price of oil and rice have been reduced, however, are strongly critical of the way selected food products that were distributed. This programme was perceived as a way for the people in power to compensate those who took part in the street violence.

Since the start of the crisis, my mum has been struggling to provide for our family. I never had the opportunity to know my father. My mum used to sell plastic bags around the Avenue de l'Independence in town, but since the crisis started, everything has changed. Before the crisis we had three meals per day, nowadays we only eat in the evenings and, rarely, in the morning. I had to stop my studies to help my mum; I was in the 5th grade. Now I look after my younger brothers and sisters at home and I wash our neighbours clothes for about 1,500 ariary per day. I would like to find a more stable job, such as a cook or a tailor, but I don't have any experience. I don't want to go back to school any more, I would like to go for technical or vocational training instead.

Young people experienced multiple moments of fear and total panic inside their school compounds, whilst at the same time witnessing friends being wounded or teachers being taken away.

Students also report increased sentiments of division inside schools. They claim that there has been a rapid increase in the availability of drugs inside school compounds, and a rise in the number of their friends becoming drunk. School gangs are also a phenomenon that is reported to be on the rise.

Recent events have led to a change in the education preferences among young people. Many youth now have a preference for enrolling in technical or vocational courses and putting an end to further education. This is due to a new perception that technical and vocational trainings are less exposed to future unemployment, while those with advanced degrees will suffer more from the longer-term consequences of the crisis.

Since some community leaders also participated in the recent events, they are sometimes seen as a threat to the future roles and responsibilities of the youth within the community. Youth fear that those who took part in street demonstrations will be given priority for future professional work in public services. If some youth welcome these radical changes at community level, others regret the loss of the elders' power and are advocating for their return.

Youth on The Lack of Opportunities and Specialised Youth Services:

Youth in Madagascar report feelings of abandonment and isolation. They are disappointed about the unavailability of specific spaces for youth and the inexistence of specialised services adapted to their age. The crisis has accentuated this problem of feeling in between childhood and adulthood and has emphasised the feeling that 'nobody cares about them'.

People say life in urban areas is better because we have jobs, food and water. Why don't they come and see for themselves? This is not life. Look at all the filthy places; there is rubbish and dirt everywhere. Could you live here? I would demonstrate for anyone who proposes change. Who cares if I die? I am not alive anyway.

Youth report that they are having a hard time to find areas for recreational activities, spaces for playing, and places to meet. They express their frustrations of not having youth friendly medical services, or counselling opportunities that would enable them to obtain information not readily available from their parents, friends and teachers. These elements are extremely important because they contribute to the creation of an environment of discontent and rebellion that facilitates the use of youth for political purposes.



I would like there to be a fountain.

I would like more trees to make Madagascar beautiful.

I would like there to be a lot of people in Madagascar.

I would there to be a lot of houses in Madagascar.

I would like the rice to grow.

PROGRAMMATIC IMPLICATIONS

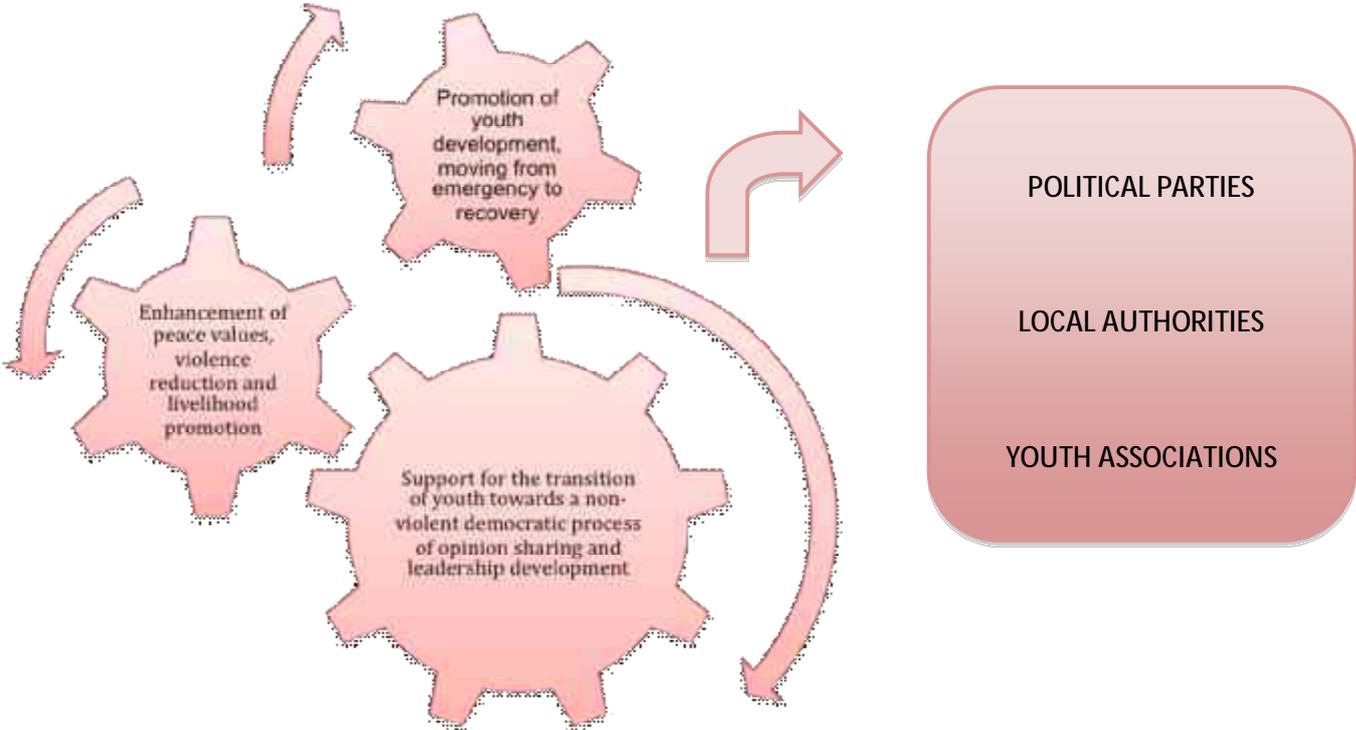
The main recommendations proposed by youth taking part in this rapid assessment can be grouped under a threefold strategy:

- 1. Promotion of positive youth development moving from emergency to recovery.
- 2. Support for the transition of youth towards a non-violent democratic process of opinion formation/ sharing and leadership development.
- 3. Enhancement of peace values, violence reduction and livelihood promotion.

Each one of these overarching goals finds links to different social structures such as political parties, city and *fokontany* administration and youth associations.

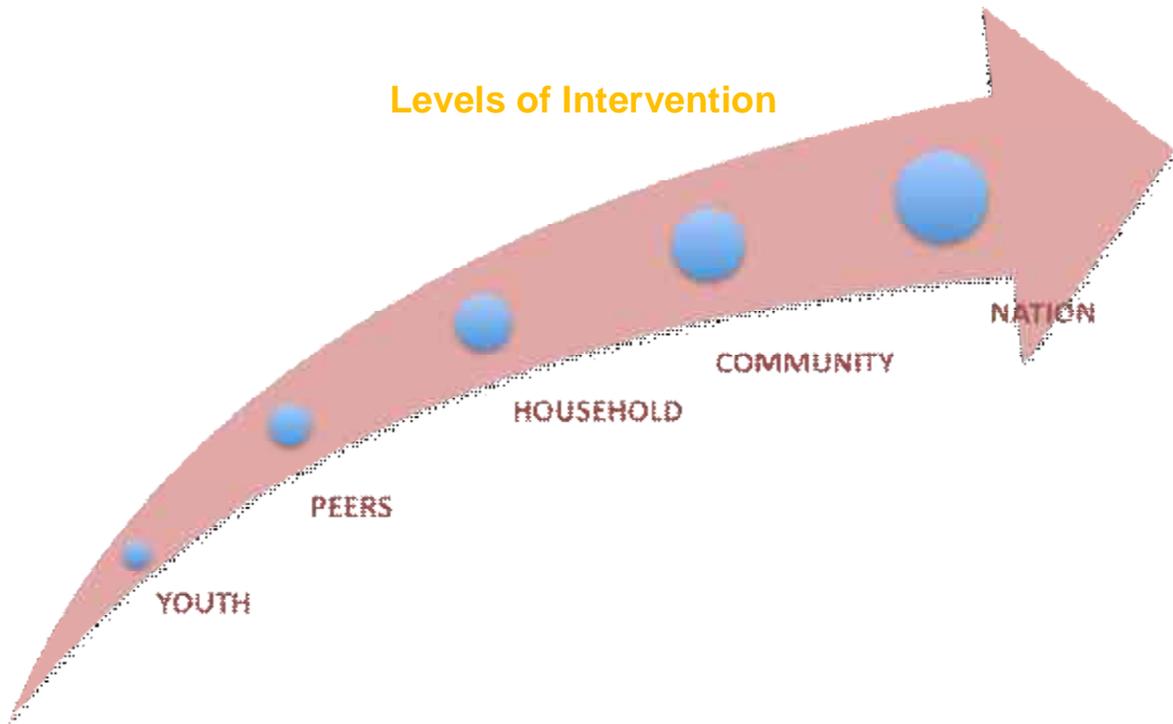
Similarly, these broad objectives find application at different levels of society, starting from individual youths, up to interventions that include the peer groups, the family, community, and the nation at large.

Programme Design



These social environments are interlinked so that interventions at the individual level have a cumulative impact on peer groups, households, communities and the nation at large. This approach also recalls the principles of social change action, where the individual is recognised as part of his social environment. Dynamics of positive change are only sought through simultaneous actions of the many social environments that limit and define personal freedoms.

Levels of Intervention



The five areas of intervention where support from stakeholders is needed are:

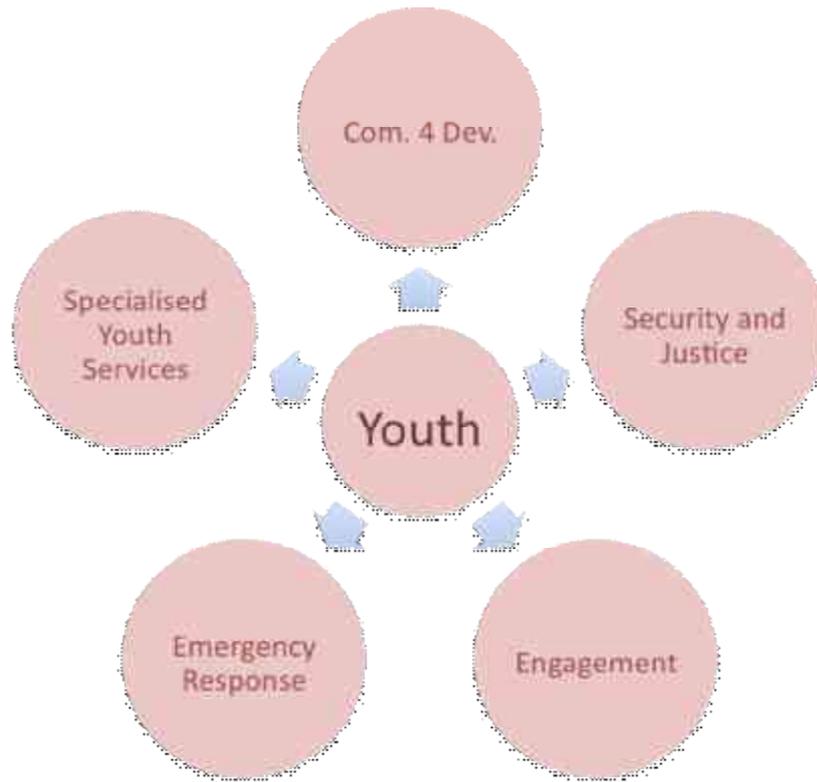
- Security and Justice
- Emergency Response and Recovery
- Specialised Youth Services
- Civic Engagement
- Communication for Development

Within each of these sectors, youth have provided indications of possible activities and interventions according to the main goals previously reported.

Activities Proposed by the Youth



Areas of Intervention



Security and Justice: this set of activities can be designed to reduce youth exposure to violence, and lead to increased enjoyment of the rule of law and security. Activities such as addressing street gangs, provision of life skills, corrective thinking, establishment of complaint mechanisms for reporting abuses or concerns, promoting the establishment of an ombudsperson on child rights, interventions to engage law enforcement agents (i.e. child rights education for military and police), are all examples of immediate and mid-term actions that could effectively reduce young people’s exposure to risk, vulnerability and violence.

Emergency response and recovery: this set of activities can be designed to provide an immediate response to the worries presented by youth and to prepare for a transition and recovery period. Activities under this pillar could include peace building education, sport activities for peace promotion, conflict prevention, mediation and management skills, and emergency simulations for rapid response in future situations of political unrest.

Specialised Youth Services: this set of specialised youth services aims at making available youth friendly and tailor made services in the areas of school education (secondary and tertiary education), professional education and practical skills development, good parenting skills, counselling services, youth friendly health services, employment and job security, cash transfers and microcredit. This pillar recognises that services for children and adults are not attended or suitable for youth.

Communication for development: through this pillar, youth ask to be supported in the promotion of values and themes that require a broad communication strategy. This could include a call to action to political parties for the respect of youth and their rights, a youth peace ambassador programme aimed at promoting peace through peer-to-peer interactions, democracy and human rights education.

Civic Engagement: this set of activities is aimed at increasing young people's positive participation in the social environments meaningful to them, strengthening their role as agents of positive social change. This can include civic education and community based voluntarism, civil and political rights education, youth leadership programmes, the establishment of platforms of structured and systematic dialogue among youth and policy makers, support to youth aggregation forums, empowerment of youth in claiming rights and expressing opinions.

Possible Youth Interventions

