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Between Heat and Hardship: Climate Change, Youth Unemployment, And Peacebuilding Pathways in Africa

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Abstract

This paper examines the policy implications of the converging crises of climate change, youth unemployment, and recurrent armed conflict in Africa. It interrogates the paradox in which the continent's demographic dividend is increasingly converted into a driver of fragility. Drawing on a desk-based review of peer-reviewed literature, African Union policy instruments, United Nations frameworks, and Sustainable Development Goal indicators, the paper synthesizes evidence on the mechanisms through which climate variability erodes agricultural livelihoods, accelerates rural-urban migration, weakens labour market absorption, and heightens the vulnerability of unemployed youth to recruitment by violent extremist and criminal actors. The analysis adopts a qualitative interpretive approach grounded in human security, political ecology, and peacebuilding scholarship, and is organised around three policy domains: green technical and vocational education and training; climate-resilient youth entrepreneurship; and adaptive multi-level governance. The literature indicates that current interventions remain fragmented across climate, employment, and security portfolios, that financing instruments for youth-centred climate action are thinly distributed, and that monitoring frameworks under Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals insufficiently capture the youth-climate-peace nexus. The paper argues for an integrated policy architecture that aligns the African Union, regional economic communities, and national instruments and concludes with concrete recommendations for green skills investment, youth-inclusive climate finance, conflict-sensitive employment programming, and indicator reform to advance Sustainable Development Goals 8, 13, and 16.

Keywords: Africa; climate change; governance; peacebuilding; youth unemployment