



Peace and youth promotion under conditions of fragile statehood

Dr. Jens Narten, april 2012

Timor-Leste is a country of fragile statehood. Half of the population lives beneath the poverty line and 54% of all Timorese are under the age of 19. Unemployment, lack of ability to help themselves, mistrust and the feeling of neglect as well as a lack of integration in state and social structures lead to frustration and a lack of perspectives among the youth.

Young people thus are exposed to danger of radicalization and being instrumentalized, and often can put little against that. There is little professionalism and expertise in terms of peace and youth promotion, and until now there are little successful approaches to confront the potential of violence of young people in a constructive manner. Under these circumstances two central questions regularly remain unanswered:

- 1) How can circumstances of fragile statehood be translated in a sensible manner for the area of youth promotion?*
- 2) Which measures should be used to protect young people in a specific manner from political instrumentalization and the use of violence and at the same time consolidate the state?*

1. State fragility and promotion of young people in a manner that prevents violence

Classic definitions of state fragility (resp. Fragile statehood) regularly include three elements: state authority, state services as well as state legitimacy. This concept is among others known as ACL (authority / capacity / legitimacy). Literature refers to so called proxies as indicators of these three

elements, which reflect the elements ACL as meaningful as possible (also see DIE 2012). These are e.g. for A the degree and the amount of conflicts, for C child mortality and literacy, and for L the degree of freedom of press as well as the index of corruption.

In the area of promoting young people in a manner that prevents violence this logic can be translated into applicable proxies for the items ACL in the youth sector. The experiences of the Peace Fund Timor-Leste here can refer to the following proxies:

- A) *Degree and intensity of armed youth violence*
- C) *Degree of freely accessible possibilities of education and labour market perspectives*
- L) *Possibilities of participation in society and politics of young people*

These proxies are justified in terms of the youth sector Timor-Leste as follows:

In 2006 the instrumentalization of so called *Martial-Arts*-groups by leading political parties led to a civil war-like unrest, which could only be contained by the armed intervention of international forces and policemen. Since then the potential of martial arts groups and their willingness to use violence are seen as latent danger for the state monopoly on violence in Timor-Leste **(A)**.

Surveys via interview and focus group talks conducted by the Peace Fund with young people in Timor-Leste regularly show the central meaning of possibilities of education and labour market perspectives for young people. Should these conditions of state services vanish, the degree of socio-political frustration and lack of perspectives as perceived by young people will rise substantively. **(C)**.

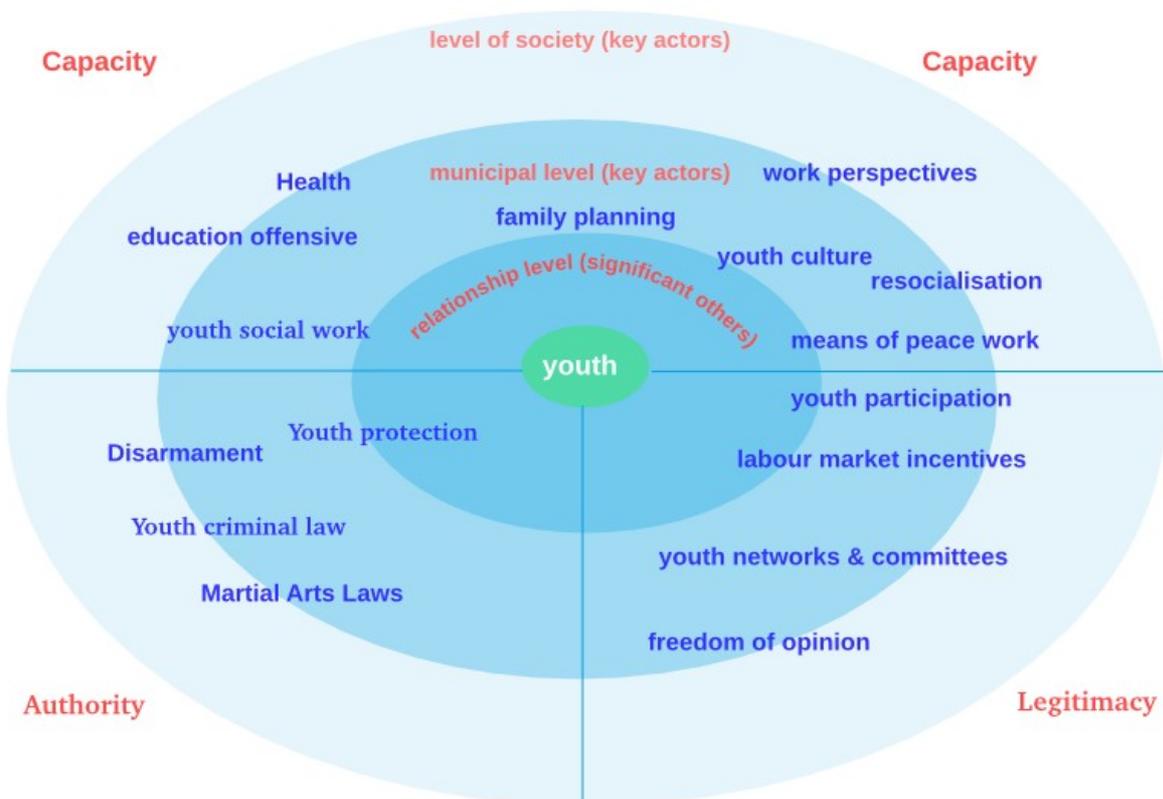
If, on top of that, this age group has the majority among the whole population, without having effective possibilities of shaping and influencing socio-political decisions, the danger of state fragility through phenomena of youth violence up to the loss of control of force by the state consequently will rise. Although the right to vote in Timor-Leste is granted at the age of 17 years and municipal constitutions guarantee the participation of youth representatives patriarchal structures are dominant in rural areas. Consequently the

degree of legitimacy of administrative decisions remains weak for young people (L).

2. Prevention of violence by resp. instrumentalization of young people

When translating ACL elements to the youth sector it leads to the conclusion of measures deemed appropriate to promote both essential youth interests as well as state consolidation. Here a holistic approach should be elaborated on which on the one hand works systemically but addresses basic causes of violence in the youth sector as well. Here a linkage between the approach „systemic prevention of youth violence“ (refer to GIZ 2010) and the ACL approach of fragile statehood and its prevention is possible, as shown in the following model.

Figure 1: Systemic ACL approach „Youth violence & fragile statehood“



Applied on the current situation of young people in countries of fragile statehood like Timor-Leste from such an ACL approach the following measures can be roughly derived. Here all levels should be included effectively, from young individuals, their families / friends, their municipalities / districts up to the society on a state level:

Authority: In order to ensure the state monopoly on force, means to demobilize and disarm youth martial arts groups are accompanied by legislative specifications on legalization and institutionalization of these groups as well as their official registration and control. On top of that a modernization of youth criminal law is envisioned as well as the extension of the law on youth protection including the rights of children and the youth.

Capacity: State resources are invested in a pointed manner in the youth sector. Means to promote families and health (*reproductive health, anti-drug campaign, HIV*), on literacy and common knowledge, on establishment of state-run youth centres, for the education in terms of youth social work, on promotion of vocational training and youth employment, on applied peace work and promotion of peaceful youth culture (*peer group educators, mediators*) as well resocialisation of young criminals (traditional mediation).

Legitimacy: In order to prevent socio-economic and political frustration and to promote youth acceptance of state structures forums for the participation of young people and their representatives on the national as well as on the district level are established (youth council, youth parliament). Youth interests are transferred through joint bodies and networks in the political decision making structures (round tables, petitions). This often leads to the emphasis on training and employment incentives and opening of freedom of expression and communication channels to the ongoing articulation of these youth interests.

3. Conclusion

Peace and youth work under conditions of fragile statehood requires integrated approaches to the promotion of youth and state consolidation. Such an approach provides the connection of the approach of systemic prevention of youth violence with the so called ACL approach which is transferred to the youth sector. Hereof measures relating to state authority, services of state obligations' carriers as well as participative elements of legitimacy between youths and state structures are derived (see fig. 1).