

Book Review: *Youth-Led Social Movements and Peacebuilding in Africa* edited by Ibrahim Bangura

Author: Deanna Pittman

Source: *Journal on Education in Emergencies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (December 2023), pp. 266-268

Published by: Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies

Stable URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/2451/69907>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33682/1e3q-rcxd>

REFERENCES:

This is an open-source publication. Distribution is free of charge. All credit must be given to authors as follows:

Pittman, Deanna. 2023. "Book Review: *Youth-Led Social Movements and Peacebuilding in Africa* edited by Ibrahim Bangura." *Journal on Education in Emergencies* 9 (1): 266-68.
<https://doi.org/10.33682/1e3q-rcxd>.

The *Journal on Education in Emergencies (JEiE)* publishes groundbreaking and outstanding scholarly and practitioner work on education in emergencies (EiE), defined broadly as quality learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis, including early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocation, higher and adult education.

Copyright © 2023, Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies.



The *Journal on Education in Emergencies*, published by the [Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies \(INEE\)](#), is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

BOOK REVIEW

YOUTH-LED SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND PEACEBUILDING IN AFRICA

EDITED BY IBRAHIM BANGURA

ROUTLEDGE, 2022. XVI + 260 PAGES

NO-COST OPEN ACCESS (PDF AND EPUB),¹ \$136.00 (HARDCOVER)

ISBN 978-1-03-218237-7

Sub-Saharan African countries have the youngest and fastest-growing populations in the world. In 2022, the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimated that the population of sub-Saharan Africa will double by 2050, accounting for half of global population growth. The future truly belongs to Africa's youth. And yet, local, national, and supranational politics rarely pay attention to the voices and experiences of these youth, while academic scholarship—African Studies, the social sciences, and our own field of education in emergencies (EiE)—pays too little attention to the voices of Africa's young activists.

Youth-Led Social Movements and Peacebuilding in Africa, Ibrahim Bangura's edited volume, shines a much-needed light on the youth-led struggles for social, economic, and political transformation, from South Africa to Tunisia, and from Guinea to Sudan. Moreover, the volume makes an important contribution to EiE by highlighting research conducted by African scholars whose knowledge remains underrepresented in the EiE field. Bangura's introduction sets the stage well by taking up the idea of youthhood and what it means in African contexts, and critically situating youth-led social movements in Africa within the new social movements literature. Bangura points out that, in addition to youth in Africa having the fastest growing demographic globewide, youth-led movements in Africa differ from those commonly studied in the United States, Europe, and Latin America, which illustrates the need for this volume.

Several themes emerge throughout this edited volume. Many of the chapters deal with the role of social media as a common feature of 21st-century youth movements. For some of the contributing authors, such as Edmore Chitukutuku in chapter 4, social media have made youth-led movements possible, even in the face of brutal state crackdowns on public protest. For others, including Festus Kofi Aubyn and Osei Baffour Frimpong in chapter 5 and Philip Bob Jusu and Saatchi Sen in chapter 6, "hashtag activism" often fails to remain relevant long enough

¹ Available at <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003253532>.

to bring about lasting transformation. In chapter 12, Simbarashe Gukurme and Godfrey Maringira demonstrate the use of social media and public protest in South Africa to challenge racism, patriarchy, and colonialism in higher education and in society more broadly.

“Gerontocracy”—the exclusion of youth from decisionmaking at most levels of society—is another common theme with parallels to gender-based exclusion. Arguably, gerontocracy and patriarchy are two faces of the same coin. Mohamed Gibril Sesay, Mohamed Bakhit, and Justin Crowell explore some of these parallels in chapter 9. Nevertheless, the contributors to this volume could have taken a more intersectional approach to youth activism and to the different types of violence used by governments against youth protesters. Feminist scholars have generated a vast field of research related to the gender, peace, and security agenda that provides opportunities for cross-fertilization with the new UN Security Council Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda.

In the conclusion, Bangura discusses several key takeaways from this volume. One is the power and profusion of youth-led social movements in the 21st century, especially since the 2011 Arab Spring. Another is the heavy-handed, often violent way the state suppresses youth activism, which breeds mistrust between youth and the state. A third is the tendency for changes in state leadership to revert to elitist, autocratic governance that continues to exclude youth from positions of power.

This volume might have benefitted from better organization of some of the themes discussed above. As it stands, the book consists of an introduction, 13 contributed chapters, and a conclusion. Each chapter touches on several of the themes and key takeaways mentioned above, which clearly made it challenging to organize the volume. Nevertheless, I would have preferred the volume to be organized around the themes to make them more explicit for the reader.

Bangura asks the reader to ponder how the success of youth-led movements can be measured, and what it would take to make the political, social, and economic realities in today’s African nations reflect the aspirations of youth-led social movements. The youth-led social movements discussed in this volume illustrate the need for the international community to support democracy and equality on the African continent, starting with its youth. They further highlight the educational role social movements play in raising the consciousness of Africa’s youth. Research on EiE should pay more attention to the formal, informal, and

nonformal learning that occurs in and through youth-led social movements, particularly in Africa. The findings presented in this volume also suggest that EiE practitioners should include youth as essential stakeholders and participants in their communities, and in the coordination of EiE.

DEANNA R. PITTMAN

California Institute of Integral Studies

*The views expressed here are the author's,
and do not represent the California Institute of Integral Studies.*

For permission to reuse, please contact journal@inee.org.