WE ARE HERE:

An integrated approach to youth-inclusive peace processes

CO-AUTHORS & RESEARCHERS: Ali Altiok | Irena Grizelj

Youth, Peace & Security

YOUTH2030
WORKING WITH AND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

CONTENTS

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FOREWORD

Implementing United Nations Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on Youth, Peace and Security involves many tasks, but making progress on youth-inclusive peace processes is arguably where progress is needed most urgently. This paper presents important perspectives on translating our normative commitments into practice.

Young people are often the majority of the population in countries with ongoing peace processes. Their political, social and economic exclusion frequently exacerbates the collective mistrust in governments and multilateral institutions meant to serve and protect them. Emerging evidence shows that youth participation can increase the legitimacy and sustainability of peace processes. But to move from exclusion to meaningful inclusion, we must transform norms, practices, approaches and attitudes, and recognize young people as equal and powerful actors who can positively contribute to all steps and all aspects of peace processes.

This policy paper, "We Are Here: An integrated approach to youth-inclusive peace processes", helps us understand where and how young people engage in peace and mediation processes. It analyses how young people can influence such efforts using diverse and innovative approaches. From monitoring ceasefires to addressing local-level disputes, from drafting and shaping peace deals to using technology and social media to reach broader constituencies, young people's energy and commitment to building and sustaining peace are playing invaluable roles and giving us much to build on.

Around the world, young women and men are striving for justice, inclusion, gender equality and human rights. We must make the most of their power as drivers of a culture of peace. I urge policy makers, mediators, community leaders and peacebuilders to consider this paper's key messages and recommendations as a source of guidance and inspiration in their efforts, as we collectively strive towards youth-inclusive peace processes through an integrated, multi-layered approach.

António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations

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THE CO-AUTHORS

Ali Altiok

Ali Altiok is an independent researcher on youth and peacebuilding. For last two years he has worked as a consultant to the joint Secretariat (United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office and United Nations Population Fund), supporting research, data analysis and narrative development of The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, mandated by the United Nations Security Council under Resolution (UNSCR) 2250. Previously, he worked as a research intern at the Berghof Foundation and Step for Peace Foundation in Germany. Ali holds a master's in Political, Legal and Economic Philosophy from the University of Bern, Switzerland and a master's in Peace and Security Studies from the University of Hamburg, Germany. His main area of interest is youth agency in peacebuilding processes. Ali is a member of the European Youth Advocacy Team of the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY) and has research experience in Turkey and Sri Lanka. Ali is 32 years old and originally from Turkey.

Irena Grizelj

Irena Grizelj is an independent researcher, consultant, and trainer on Youth, Peace & Security. She has over five years expertise in youth engagement in peace and mediation processes, and youth political participation in transitional and fragile states. Irena has worked in Myanmar since 2015, and created trusted relationships with a diverse range of youth actors, networks, and organizations across the country. She has researched and published a series of seminal reports in Myanmar, including on youth spaces of dialogue and mediation, challenges and opportunities for youth in the peace process, and youth engagement in civilian protection and ceasefire monitoring. She has designed and facilitated dozens of trainings and workshops with youth and senior stakeholders focused on dialogue, conflict transformation, peacebuilding, and awareness raising on UNSCR 2250. Originally from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Irena is 29 years old and holds a master's degree in International Relations and Conflict Management from the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University in Washington, DC.

ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CSSR	Civil Society Support Room, Syria
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DPPA	United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
GPH	Government of Philippines
HLRF	South Sudanese High-Level Revitalization Forum
ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
JCC	Galkayo Joint Ceasefire Committee
JGYC	Joint Galkayo Youth Committee
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MPC	Myanmar Peace Centre
NCA	Myanmar Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NDC	Yemeni National Dialogue Conference
OSE-S	UN Office of the Special Envoy on Syria
OSGEY	The Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth
PBSO	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office
PMD	United Nations Policy and Mediation Division
PNLO	Pa-O National Liberation Organization
PYO	Pa-O Youth Organization
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
SSCF	South Sudan Civil Society Forum
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNOY	United Network of Young Peacebuilders
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNYPAD	United Youth for Peace and Development
UPDJC	Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across the world, young people are actively working to build peace and prevent violence. They want their voice to be heard and matter in ongoing peace negotiations. Over 1,000 peace agreements have been signed globally in the last two decades. While broader inclusion has shown to positively impact the sustainability of peace agreements, no comprehensive studies have assessed the role and impact of young people during, and in the lead up to, these peace agreements. Peace negotiations remain central to decision-making in a peace process, yet it is a key phase during which young people continue to be politically marginalized, excluded, and undervalued.

Young people today often constitute the majority population in countries with ongoing peace processes. Engaging with young people is not only a demographic necessity but a democratic imperative and an important avenue for accountability of institutions to their mandates, to legal norms and the people they strive to serve.

Despite the barriers, young people actively influence peace processes through diverse roles and initiatives. This is the first global policy paper to document and analyze where and how young people engage with peace processes, and **begins to highlight why youth inclusion matters for the prevention of violence and achieving sustainable peace agreements**.

The paper assesses youth participation and inclusion in peace processes from **young people's own point of view**, through three integrated but non-hierarchical layers: in the room, around the room and outside the room of formal peace negotiations. Young people's activities and roles in these integrated layers often builds relationships between the formal and informal realms of peace negotiations, which contribute to the legitimacy of peace processes among wider society.

Importantly, **young people's proximity to the peace agreement inside the room does not necessarily correlate with influence over the agreement:** their presence inside the room, as observers or documenters, may not be as powerful as youth-led movements outside the room. Youth power may be best found in mass protests or social media activism for peace – an under explored approach to increase the legitimacy and youth-ownership of peace processes.

Young people furthermore often comprise the majority of military and armed groups. Recognizing and including youth as stakeholders at the peace negotiation table is critical to ensure the integration of their needs and interests during these power sharing processes. Realizing youth inclusion and participation is therefore **a powerful method to improve disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and security sector and criminal justice reform processes**. However, sending the signal that violence is a means to inclusion and political leverage risks further marginalizing young people who support peace processes through dialogue, peacebuilding and violence prevention activities. There must be **equal prioritization in the participation of young people who work on rebuilding peace, trust and reconciliation**.

There are both short and long-term implications for sustaining peace if youth are included and actively participate. By listening to the demands of young people dissident to peace processes, and addressing the immediate post-war needs of young combatants, the short-term stability of negotiations and peace agreements can be achieved.

However, **for sustaining peace, youth involvement must be considered from a positive peace angle**. Young people – as peacebuilders – play a critical role in the implementation of peace agreements due to

their inevitable engagement in (re)building societal trust, social cohesion and leading reconciliation across generations.

Young people's contributions to influence peace negotiations through creative and alternative avenues, often considered informal, need to be recognized as a critical bridge that shapes and supports formal processes. A paradigm shift must be taken in how we design and implement peace negotiations, partnering with young people from the outset: '**youth-inclusive peace processes' advocate for working *with* young people as critical partners for peace, as opposed to inviting youth as an add-on or to tick the box of participation.**

A peace process can furthermore only be youth-inclusive if it recognizes the diversity of youth identities. In realizing youth inclusion, gender, race, religion, caste, social class, culture and political affiliations should be analyzed through conflict and context-sensitive do-no-harm approaches. As young people span across diverse identities and roles in peace processes, their inclusion and participation must be understood and approached as multi-dimensional, integrated and interconnected to other inclusion agendas.

The findings from the paper demand Member States, UN entities, mediators, regional and international organizations, and civil society move from a normative to an operational stage on youth inclusion and participation. It is important to emphasize and understand that young people's inclusion and participation in the room, around the room, and outside the room of peace negotiations equally matters.

Utilizing a multi-layered and integrated engagement approach should therefore be the main strategy for realizing youth inclusion and participation in peace processes. The layers should *not* be treated in isolation: youth inside or around the room should not be the sole metric for successful youth inclusion. It is fundamental to actively develop strategic and synchronized connections between young people inside the room, around the room, and outside the room.

As the field of research and practice on youth-inclusive peace processes develops, this paper hopes to set the trajectory for **further long-term, collective and collaborative investment to systematically document, monitor, assess and support youth-inclusive peace processes.** Young people should no longer be under-represented and marginalized from decisions that will directly impact their present and future prospects for peace.

Summary of Key Messages:

1. The agenda of youth inclusion must be implemented from a conflict-sensitive and do-no-harm approach.

2. The inclusion of young people during all phases of peace processes likely increases the sustainability of the agreements.

3. Youth inclusion and participation in peace processes should not be considered a new agenda in competition with other inclusion agendas.

4. Young people's proximity to the table matters because young people are distinctively impacted by the results of decisions made at the formal peace negotiation table.

5. Ensuring the representation of diverse youth constituencies matters in peace negotiations.

6. Enabling youth political participation during peace negotiations will contribute to more inclusive and representative governance structures that build the basis for more peaceful societies.

1. INTRODUCTION

> **"If you want real engagement, involve young people from the get go: from the idea to implementation. Anything without the youth is not for youth. If young people are given this space, we could have so many solutions."**
>
> Interview, Kenya, young man

> **"Young people should be involved right from the initial stage of peace negotiations, from the very beginning. Where do you catch up if the train already takes off?"**
>
> Interview, senior mediator, female

Across the world, **young people are actively working to build peace and prevent violence**. They are calling for a space to be heard in ongoing peace negotiations. While over 1,000 peace agreements have been signed globally in the last two decades,[1] no comprehensive studies have assessed the role and impact of young people during and in the lead up to these peace agreements. Young people constitute the majority of the population in conflict affected countries.[2] **It is estimated that 408 million youth live in a state or province affected by armed conflict.[3] These young people are an important constituency for the stability of peace and prevention of violence and must be considered as such**.

Young people's contribution to peace processes include monitoring the implementation of ceasefire agreements, mediating intra-ethnic disputes, supplying legal and logistical support for peace negotiations, providing psychosocial support for former combatants, and using mass media and online social platforms to promote peace messages to the broader public constituencies. These positive roles of young people are usually well-known by the negotiating or mediating parties of armed conflicts; however, limited efforts have been invested to systematically map and understand how young people shape and influence the sustainability of peace processes and agreements.

Inclusion has become a key principle for designing and implementing peace processes.[4] Research shows that the inclusion of civil society actors,[5] women[6] and business actors[7] increases the sustainability of peace agreements. **Yet, young women and men continue to be marginalized, undervalued and unrecognized for their capacity to build peace.** The political agency of young people in the context of peace processes is often associated with stereotypes of perpetrators or victims of violence; these are gendered perspectives, where young men are treated as violent actors who can be potential spoilers and destabilizers of peace processes and dissidents to peace agreements,[8] while young women are seen as passive victims of violence.[9]

The vast majority of young people, however, are not involved in violence and many of them

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1 Online databases that store peace agreements vary in their count of signed agreements in the last two decades. For example, the UN Peacemaker cite lists 457 peace agreements; the PA-X from the Political Settlements Program lists 1518 agreements; the Language of Peace lists around 1000 peace agreements.

2 For example, 72% of South Sudan's population is under the age of 30; 81% of Somalia's population is under the age of 35; 63% of the Afghan population are under the age of 25.

3 Hagerty, T. (2017) Data for Youth, Peace and Security. Institute for Economics and Peace.

4 Peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict; Report of the Secretary-General A/67/499*–S/2012/746

5 Nilsson, Desirée. (2012) Anchoring the peace: civil society actors in peace accords and durable peace, International Interactions, vol. 38, pp. 243–66.

6 Jana Krause, Werner Krause & Piia Bränfors. (2018) Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace, International Interactions, 44:6, 985-1016.

7 Molloy, Sean. (2018) Business and Peace Agreements, Economic Series, Edinburgh.

8 McEvoy-Levy, Siobhan. (2001) Youth as Social and Political Agents: Issues in Post-Settlement Peace Building.

9 UN Women. (2018) Young Women in Peace and Security: At the Intersection of YPS and WPS agendas.

take initiatives to support peace processes.[10] These negative perceptions continue to sideline and undermine the positive agency of the majority of young women and men in decision-making during peace processes.

With the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (2015), **there has been a normative shift in the way young people are recognized in the international peace and security platforms**. Over the last three years, this normative shift brought a rapid growth in research and discussions on young people's positive capacities for peaceful and inclusive societies.[11] "*The Missing Peace: Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*"[12] , mandated by the UNSCR 2250, was the first study to comprehensively document peacebuilding and violence prevention activities by young people globally, and their important contribution to sustaining peace. *The Missing Peace* study concluded that realizing the meaningful political inclusion of young people is a key vehicle through which to prevent violence and maintain peace in all phases of peace and conflict cycles. This policy paper builds on this finding by exploring practical entry points to meaningful political inclusion, specifically during peace processes.

The policy paper is **organized into five sections:**

- Section one explains the policy relevance and methodological approach taken to conduct this policy paper.

- Section two describes the conceptual and analytical framework developed to map youth participation and inclusion in peace processes.

- Section three provides examples and discusses where and how young people constructively engage and influence peace negotiations and mediation processes, and critically explores the effectiveness and impact of these engagements, both in formal and informal spaces.

- Section four discusses key messages for

why and how youth inclusion in peace processes matters for sustaining peace.

- Section five provides *draft* recommendations on tools, strategies and mechanisms to facilitate and promote youth inclusion and participation, and mainstream youth across different phases and tracks of peace processes.

1.1 Policy Relevance

The UNSCR 2250 is the first ever resolution recognizing the positive role young people play in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and asks for *"[the establishment of] integrated mechanisms for meaningful participation of youth in peace processes and dispute-resolution"*. The subsequent Youth, Peace and Security resolution, UNSCR 2419 (2018), reiterates the importance of youth participation by asking for *"inclusive representation of youth for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including when negotiating and implementing peace agreements"*. **Despite these normative policy developments for increased youth participation and inclusion in peacemaking efforts, operational guidance on the subject is remarkably limited.**

This paper takes the first step towards providing emerging evidence that youth inclusion in peace processes can yield positive results. Through documenting successful practices on youth inclusion and participation in peace processes, the paper aims to bridge and translate these policy developments into action, as well as guide the monitoring of their implementation.

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10   UNFPA - UN/PBSO. (Simpson, G.) (2018) The Missing Peace: Independent progress study on youth and peace and security.

11   See for example the Youth4Peace.info website.

12   UNFPA - UN/PBSO. (Simpson, G.) (2018) The Missing Peace.

While international and regional organizations and peace practitioners are already engaging young people in political dialogue, mediation and reconciliation processes, the engagement is unstructured.[13] The evidence for why and how to engage young people in peace processes has not been systematically collected, documented and analyzed. This paper takes the first step towards providing emerging evidence that youth inclusion in peace processes can yield positive results. Through documenting successful practices on youth inclusion and participation in peace processes, the paper aims to bridge and translate these policy developments into action, as well as guide the monitoring of their implementation.

The Youth, Peace and Security agenda furthermore rejuvenates and has strong linkages to the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Addressing young women's exclusion is an overlapping concern, as young women are often excluded from peace efforts due to both their age and gender.[14] The Youth, Peace and Security agenda should build upon the two decades of experiences from the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and this policy paper integrates critical lessons learned from research efforts on women's inclusion in peace processes. The paper also recognizes the importance of transforming negative masculine identities as a shared concern between the two policy frameworks.[15] Addressing issues pertaining to masculinity demands building strong alliances between women and youth inclusion agendas. This generates a greater collective momentum to combat exclusionary, elite-driven peace processes, which is a key goal in the implementation of both UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 2250.

> **"We are massaging the problem of violence in Africa only by focusing women's victimhood. We do not look at the young men's complex relationship with the violence"**
>
> Interview, South Sudan, young man

Addressing issues pertaining to masculinity demands building strong alliances between women and youth inclusion agendas. This generates a greater collective momentum to combat exclusionary, elite-driven peace processes, which is a key goal in the implementation of both UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 2250.

1.2 Research Approach

This policy paper provides preliminary evidence on where and how young people have participate(d) in peace processes in the last two decades. Due to limited literature and documentation in this field, this paper is largely based on qualitative key informant interviews with 46 stakeholders, comprised of young women and men who have participated in peace processes in diverse forms, or those who sought inclusion, as well as senior mediators, peace practitioners, and academics who can shed light on the dynamics around youth participation. The interviewees were sourced based on the criteria of their proximity to formal national-level or internationally-mediated peace negotiations, although interviews expanded to include stakeholders engaged with sub-national peace processes.

The interviews and drafting of the paper were conducted over a four-month period, between October 2018 and January 2019. The paper presently includes the mapping and understanding of the role of young people in the following contexts: **Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Colombia, Kenya, Myanmar, Northern Ireland, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Syria,**

13   United Nations Department of Political Affairs. (2017) *Engaging with Youth at DPA*, New York.

14   UN Women. (2018) Young Women in Peace and Security

15   UNFPA - UN/PBSO. (Simpson, G.) (2018) The Missing Peace.

and Yemen. The contexts were selected for their diverse geographic representation and conflict dynamics, presence of a recent or ongoing peace process, and ability to access stakeholders for interviews. Analysis of these interviews provides nuanced and dynamic information about the ways in which young people participate in different forms. Interviews were primarily conducted through online platforms, along with several in-person interviews and one focus group discussion in Northern Ireland. An expert group meeting with 23 key stakeholders[16] was hosted by the State of Qatar in Doha 3-4 February 2019 to review and discuss the draft of this paper. The experts validated the scope of the paper, it's key findings, and helped shape the preliminary set of recommendations.

The paper was launched as a foundation for discussions at the **First International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes,** hosted by the Government of Finland in Helsinki on 5-6 March 2019. The draft recommendations were deliberated and reviewed by over 100 participants, including young people, mediators, international and regional organizations, as well as experts from the United Nations, African Union Commission, European Union and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development.

This research process was not an extractive exercise; it builds upon the participatory and collaborative approach utilized by the Progress Study. The authors worked with the support of the Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY), together with UN agencies, Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs (DPPA (Policy and Mediation Division (PMD), Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO)), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Search for Common Ground (SFCG) as a civil society partner, and youth-led peacebuilding organization United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY). More than half of the young people interviewed for the policy paper attended the first global Symposium in Helsinki in March 2019. This collaborative approach maintains the foundation on which the youth, peace and security agenda was built.

The paper is further supported by relevant literature and research in the peace process domain. Databases[17] on peace agreements have been reviewed for input to this paper, however, they offer limited depth as to the contributions and influence of young people during the negotiations. Many of these databases have not been assessed from a 'youth lens': the mention of 'youth' within an accord is not sufficient to inform what role young people played in the peace process and in shaping the agreement.

Through primary research, the paper documents and assesses the forms of young people's participation, along with lessons learned on practical approaches and mechanisms that have been utilized by policy-makers and peace practitioners to foster youth inclusion in peace process, including youth-led efforts. Documenting the roles that young people encompass and analyzing the positive contributions of young people is a prerequisite to begin understanding the sustainability of peace processes that are inclusive of youth.

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[16]   Participants included Senior Mediation Advisors, youth leaders, academics, government representatives, as well as civil society and institutional representatives from The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), African Union (AU), UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN-DPPA).

[17]   Such as the Political Settlements the United Nations Peacemaker Peace Agreements Database; 'Peace Agreement Database'; and the University of Notre Dame Peace Accords Matrix.

2 FRAMING OF THE PAPER

2.1 Defining Youth and Peace Processes

> **"The only way that young people can participate in the peace process is through being at the front line, with guns. Youth fight for peace but are not given space to talk for peace."** [18]
>
> Interview, Myanmar, young man

Young people today, globally and collectively, comprise the largest demographic, often constituting the majority population in countries with ongoing peace processes. *Youth* as a social construct refers to a transitionary phase of life between childhood and adulthood. The beginning and the end of this period is often defined by rite of passages from childhood to youth and from youth to adulthood, which vary significantly depending on cultures and contexts. Although the notion of youth as a social construct does not suggest any chronologically uniform age-based category, most governments and international organizations employ age-based categories for statistical reasons. The UNSCR 2250 defines the youth age category as 18-29 years but notes that *"variations of definition of the term that may exist on the national and international levels, including the definition of youth in the General Assembly resolutions A/RES/50/81 and A/RES/56/117".*

Youth, in particular, is not a homogenous category. Yet, in peace and security context, young people as a category *"has been customarily used to refer to young men […] and most studies on youth and violence implicitly or explicitly refer to young men".* [19]

This leads to overlooking the diverse roles and experiences of young women in the context of armed conflict and peacemaking. **Gender is one important element to understand youth as a heterogeneous category. This intersects with youth's identity based on race, religion, ethnicity, caste, class, culture, context and political affiliations that also need to be considered.** Each of these factors have a significant impact on the way young people experience armed conflict and their approach to influence and participate in peace processes.

Over the last three decades, the nature of armed conflict has significantly evolved. Armed conflicts are increasingly intra-state spreading across national borders and involves more non-state armed groups and international actors than ever. [20] Armed conflicts are also protracted, and violence in its multiple forms has moved from rural to urban settings which brings higher human and financial costs on Governments and civilians. [21]

Despite these changes highlighting the necessity of including civil society actors in peace negotiations, political and military elites still play an important role: *"While elite pacts will not necessarily deliver peace, peace without them is often impossible".* [22] Mechanisms for peacemaking during armed conflicts have also become more complex: the expansion of multilateral actors and non-state actors have exerted tremendous pressure on the UN's capacity and regional bodies to manage and resolve conflicts. **There is a growing realization that a state-centered approach alone is insufficient to gain political leverage and maintain stability; greater attention and investment is required to synchronize bottom-up and top-down peacebuilding approaches**. [23]

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18   Quoted from Paung Sie Facility (2017) Youth & Everyday Peace: Fostering the Untapped Potential of Myanmar Youth

19   UN Women. (2018) Young Women in Peace and Security

20   United Nations and World Bank. (2017) Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict—Main Messages and Emerging Policy Directions, Washington.

21   IBID

22   Bell, Christine quoted. (2019) Accord 28, Negotiating inclusion in peace processes, Conciliation Resources, London.

23   Richmond, Oliver P. (2014) Failed statebuilding: intervention, the state, and the dynamics of peace formation; Mac Ginty, Roger (2010) Hybrid Peace: The Interaction Between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace.

Correspondingly, **peace processes have become highly complex, multi-dimensional, and interconnected political processes**. There is no single definition of a peace process, which may comprise of high-level negotiations, ceasefires, national dialogues, political settlements, and encompass a "mixture of politics, diplomacy, changing relationships, negotiation, mediation, and dialogue in both official and unofficial arenas."[24] Peace processes span across multiple (nonlinear) phases (from pre-negotiation to implementation) and along formal and informal tracks for different levels of societal engagements.[25]

The temporal, non-linear and cyclical dimensions of peace processes indicates that **youth inclusion in peace negotiations have both short and long-term implications for the sustainability of peace agreements**. Preventing youth involvement in political, criminal or extremist violence, listening to the demands of young people dissident to peace processes, and addressing immediate post-war needs of young combatants are critical short-term concerns for the stability of negotiations and agreements, necessary for building negative peace. The long-term impacts of youth inclusion and participation in peace negotiations need to be considered from a *positive* peace angle:[26] young people play a critical role in the implementation of peace agreements due to their inevitable engagement in (re)building societal trust, social cohesion, and leading reconciliation across generations.

Young people should no longer be unrepresented and excluded from decisions that will directly impact their present and future prospects for peace.

Young people play a critical role in the implementation of peace agreements due to their inevitable engagement in (re)building social cohesion and leading reconciliation across generations.

While cognizant of the multiple dimensions, definitions, and phases of a peace processes, this paper focuses primarily on mediated political processes to end armed conflicts and wars, although includes reference to peace processes at sub-national levels and brings examples from community-level dispute resolution practices. In particular, **this paper explores and analyzes youth participation and inclusion *during* peace negotiations, within formal and informal spheres**. This is based on the reality that peace negotiations continue to be the heart of political decision-making, leading to agreements that may or may not result in lasting peace.[27]

Literature and practice have, until recently, concentrated on young people's engagement in the implementation phase of peace processes,[28] rather than understanding their *present* political agency and value in shaping peace negotiations. **Yet, the before and during negotiation phases of a peace process provides critical moments to further inclusion in broader political decision-making, and greater opportunities for change exist just prior and after the signing of an agreement.**[29] Young people should no longer be unrepresented and excluded from decisions that will directly impact their present and future prospects for peace.

24   Saunders, Harold H. (2001) Pre-negotiation and Circum-negotiation: Arenas of the Multilevel Peace Process. US Institute of Peace, Washington DC (pg 483).
25   Mason, Simon. (2007) Mediation and Facilitation in Peace Processes, International Relations and Security Network .
26   Galtung, Johan. (1967) Theories of Peace: A Synthetic Approach to Peace. Thinking International Peace Research Institute, Oslo.
27   Wanis St. John, Anthony. (2008) *Peace Processes, Secret Negotiations and Civil Society: Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion.*
28   See for example, Schwartz, Stephanie. (2010) Youth and Post-conflict Reconstruction, US Institute of Peace Press, Washington DC.
29   Yousuf, Zahbia. (2018) Navigating inclusion in peace transitions Beyond elite bargains, Conciliation Resources, London.

2.2 Understanding and Analyzing Youth Participation and Inclusion

This paper employs an evidence-led approach to understand, map and analyze youth participation in peace processes. The participation and inclusion of young people in peace processes takes diverse forms in both formal and informal spaces. While current approaches to civil society and women's inclusion offers important insights to understand the participation of young people in peace processes, young people often challenge the ways in which these approaches are applied in practice.[30]

Many young people interviewed for this paper argue for the strategic value of having young people at the peace negotiation table. However, they also **emphasize a seat alone does not constitute effective youth participation. Different forms of participation matter and are meaningful for young people, who seek an equal voice to other actors.** Similar to civil society inclusion,[31] young people define their participation as part of technical committees, formal and informal consultation processes, and engage through mass mobilization platforms. Many young people further view their inclusion and participation through supplying logistical, resource or legal support for negotiation parties inside negotiation rooms, monitoring and reporting ceasefire violations, or

Youth power and influence is not always correlated to proximity to the table.

spreading peace messages and lobbying via social media activism. Participating in political parties and expressing political views additionally mattered for young people's engagement. In particular, safe civic spaces to raise their voices for peace through demonstrations, protests and mass advocacy campaigns was noted as an important foundation for youth inclusion and participation.

Although peace processes are conceptually divided in the literature into three distinct tracks referring to: elite dialogues ("Track I"), dialogue amongst those with influence on these elites ("Track II), and grass-roots dialogue ("Track III"), the dynamic ways in which young people participate in peace processes as a social group has a bridging effect across these three tracks. **Examining *inclusion* and *participation* through a youth lens reveals that young people and youth-led initiatives, networks or organizations regularly traverse across the tracks and organically build relationships between the segregated tracks.**

Although there are fundamental differences in the ways young people participate in formal and informal spheres of peace processes, the lines between these boundaries become blurry through a youth lens. Youth as a cross-cutting social and political constituency naturally build connections and relationships between the formal and informal.[32] Instead of treating youth as a civil society actor and applying track approaches to understand youth participation, this policy paper analyzes where and how young people participate in peace processes from young people's own point of view - conceptualized through layers.

Youth as a cross-cutting social and political constituency naturally build connections and relationships between the formal and informal.[32]

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30   UNFPA - UN/PBSO. (Simpson, G.) (2018) The Missing Peace.

31   The seven modalities of inclusion are listed as a) Direct representation at the negotiation table b) Observer status c) Consultations d) Inclusive commissions e) High-level problem-solving workshops f) Public decision-making and g) Mass action. (Paffenholz, 2014).

32   See also Mubashir and Grizelj. (2018). *The youth space of dialogue and mediation: An exploration.* Berlin: Berghof Foundation for a discussion on young people's agency between formal and informal divides in peace and mediation processes.

Based on case study evidence, the forms of youth participation have been assessed in terms of *proximity* to the formal peace negotiations and peace agreement ('the table'). **The layers should be understood as a mapping tool to understand where and how young people engage in peace processes. While the diagram illustrates this concept, it does not suggest that there is a hierarchical relationship between the layers in terms of youth power and influence over the peace negotiations and agreement.** Youth power and influence is not always correlated to proximity to the table.

Although influencing discussions and actions within the negotiation room[33] is an important concern for young people, young people outside an elite sphere may be highly influential among their community and peers, particularly those who are disillusioned by political leaders and losing trust in political institutions. For example, youth participation in protest and dissent takes place outside the room (layer 3) yet, depending on the context, it can be more influential over the peace process than passive youth observers in the peace negotiation room (layer 1). Similarly, youth consultations organized around the peace negotiations rooms (layer 2) might only have a decorative function, while youth advocacy for peace in social media platforms (layer 3) can greatly contribute to the acceptance and legitimacy of peace negotiations.

Mapping young people's engagement in peace processes:

Peace agreement/ accord

Layer 1
In the room

Layer 2
Around the room

Layer 3
Outside the room
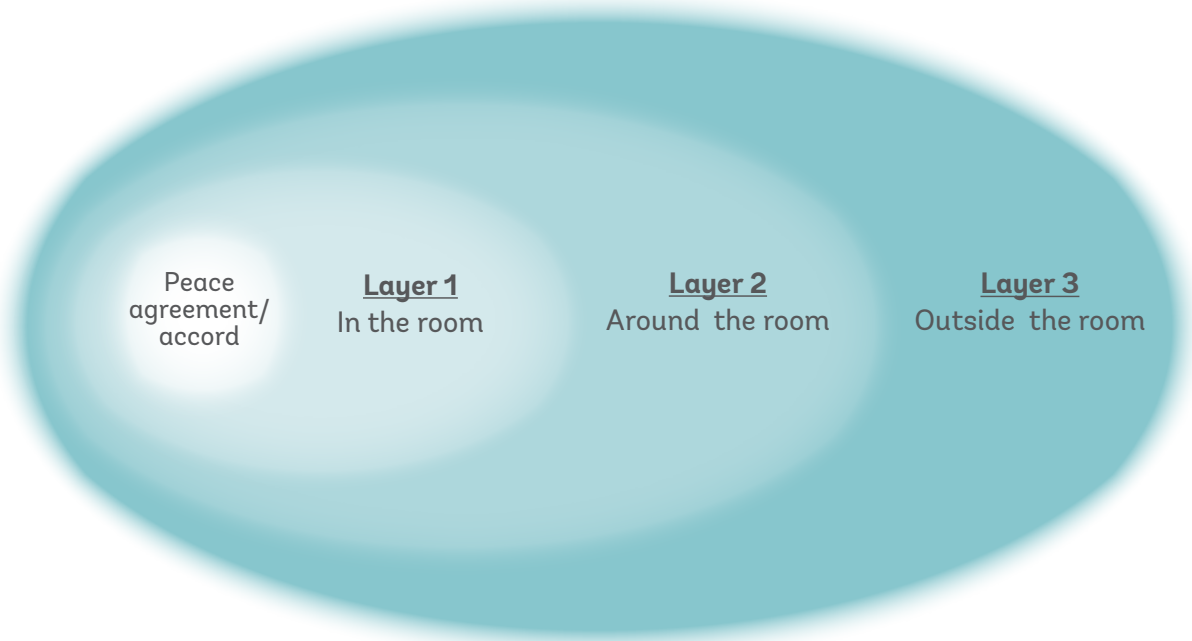
Layer 1 -
In the room:

Youth participation within formal peace architecture and structures, inside the room during negotiations and political dialogues.

Layer 2 -
Around the room:

Young people not directly in the room, but close to the peace agreement and connected (able to get in the room) through formal or informal mechanisms.

Layer 3 -
Outside the room:

Young people who engage and participate through informal and alternative approaches.

33   The 'room', of course, is not necessarily a physical space, but where peace agreements are usually negotiated, shaped, and signed.

3 WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN PEACE PROCESSES?

> "In my country, we have to realize that young people have the power. We are the ones who know what we want to give to the future, but we also know our past. We are the bridge to peace. We have to speak and raise our voices. That is the only way to make change."
>
> Interview, Colombia, young woman

Young people play a multitude of diverse roles – formal and informal – during peace processes, which has been little documented to date. Key informant interviews underscore a richness of participation avenues and engagement of young people in peace negotiations and peace processes, contributing to building longer-term peace in their contexts. The below section presents an overview of where and how young people have contributed to peace processes.

It seeks to answer specifically the following questions:

1. **Where, how and in what forms** have young people participated in peace processes over the last 20 years?

2. What are the preliminary findings about how different forms of youth participation **influence or impact** peace processes?

3. What are the **practical considerations** of different entry points and consequences of the form of participation?

3.1 Layer 1 – In the Room

> "I don't see representation of youth in these peace talks. 90% are elderly people. If they claim they represent voice of youth, they cannot. They cannot be voice of youth, as they are not young. The impact of the decisions will be on 65% of the country that are below 25. This is not just to end the war, but to build sustainable peace."
>
> Interview, Afghanistan, young woman

3.1.1 Negotiating teams/Part of delegations

Young people rarely participate at formal negotiation tables in peace processes. In recent years however, **there have been cases where young people were present at the table in different capacities. This was at times motivated by a recognition of young people's peacebuilding and conflict prevention roles.** Inclusion of youth representatives in South Sudan's High-Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) is a case in point. The HLRF youth representatives shared a position paper with political parties that highlighted that the beneficiaries of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs were mostly youth. This helped to encourage a more youth sensitive approach in the DDR program design. The effective advocacy of young people in the room furthermore secured a place for young people in South Sudan's

broader governance structures, through affirmative quota systems applied within political parties. For example, the Minister of Youth was guaranteed to be a person younger than 40. Young people at the HLRF also collaborated with the representatives of women for the inclusion of refugees in the negotiations. This was critical for bringing in issues around resettlement in collaboration with young refugee representatives. Lastly, youth participation at the HLRF positively influenced the *implementation* phase of the agreement, through the allocation of roles in different technical committees to highly motivated young people.

> *The effective advocacy of young people in the room furthermore secured a place for young people in South Sudan's broader governance structures, through affirmative quota systems applied within political parties*

More often however, **young people are included at peace negotiation tables due to their engagement in violence and conflict,** as for example, in the Central African Republic (see text box one). The political participation of young combatants can at times be vital for the sustainability of the peace agreements. However, sending the signal that violence is a mean to inclusion and political leverage risks further marginalizing youth who support peace processes through dialogue, peacebuilding and violence prevention activities. Failing to acknowledge the power-sharing perceptions of young combatants can drive them to sustain violence and prepare the conditions for relapse into violent conflict after a peace agreement is signed. The process and management of mapping critical youth stakeholders must be a priority for mediation teams and process facilitators (see section 4 for further discussion on young combatants).

Central African Republic - Manipulating youth issues

Armel Ningatoloum Sayo, as the leader of small youth rebel group, "Révolution et justice" participated in the Brazzaville Ceasefire Conference. He signed the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in 2014 and was later appointed Minister of Youth and Sports in the Central African Republic. Sayo, as a relatively young rebel leader, manipulated youth related concerns to mobilize young people for violence in order to influence political deals. While Sayo and his armed group associated themselves with the term youth, their participation and influence at the peace negotiation table should not be taken as the primary reason for youth inclusion.

Young people additionally largely constitute the majority of foot soldiers and may have specific expectations from the peace agreement that are separate and unique from their seniors. In cases such as South Sudan and Mali, mediators have reflected on their experience of negotiating with elder members of armed groups, while younger members demanded their share of power. As a senior mediator highlighted the young combatants have argued for recognition in the peace agreement, saying *"because we are in the field, fighting, you need to take into account our view"* (Interview, senior mediator, male). For example, in the case of Mali, when young Tuareg combatants felt that their concerns and needs were not reflected in formal peace negotiations by the elder leaders of the armed group, they

> *Sending the signal that violence is a means to inclusion and political leverage risks further marginalizing youth who support peace processes through dialogue, peacebuilding and violence prevention activities.*

formed their own armed groups to contest the peace agreement.

How electoral and criminal justice systems and security sectors are reformed, as well as the design of DDR programs have important power sharing implications for political and military parties of conflict. **Youth are not often a stakeholder represented during these power sharing processes, despite the fact that** *"young women and men are key stakeholders in criminal justice and security system reform processes that are instrumental in the (re)building of state–society relations"*,[34] **as well as the main beneficiaries of DRR processes on the ground.** Young people often comprise the majority of military and armed groups. Recognizing and including youth as stakeholders at the peace negotiation table is critical to ensure the integration of their needs and interests during these power-sharing processes. Realizing youth inclusion and participation is a powerful method to improve DDR, security sector and criminal justice reform processes.

> *Realizing youth inclusion and participation is a powerful method to improve DDR, security sector and criminal justice reform processes.*

3.1.2 Technical & Thematic Committees/Teams

Peace negotiations often rely on the support of technical committees to provide research, policy inputs, and thematic advice for different negotiation points within the peace talks, such as constitutional making (or amendment), land-reform, security sector, and economic policy. These committees are often not youth-specific, but **rely on the human resource and technical capacity of educated, committed and proactive experts, with young people included**.

In the Philippines, during the 2010

negotiations between the Government and MILF, most of the legal team members of the Government's peace panel were young people, along with two youth members in the MILF legal team. The legal teams prepared technical papers for the negotiating parties, including drafting of Bangsamoro Organic Law. Young women, in their mid-20s, chosen for their legal acumen, played key roles in the legal teams: during the negotiations, the young women conducted discreet advocacy around bringing a gender lens to the peace agreement by the virtue of their active engagement with informal women's rights networks. Despite pushback and criticism, the young women in the legal teams were able to successfully include stronger provisions against domestic violence in the peace agreement and participation of women, noting that greater socio-political equality and the participation of women inherently relates to equality within the household.

In Myanmar, the ongoing peace negotiations have established a Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC), with representatives from the Government, Ethnic Armed Organizations, and political parties – the key negotiating stakeholders. The UPDJC has established working committees for each of the five key thematic political dialogue sectors: politics, economics, security, social issues and the environment, to coordinate dialogue and input into the peace negotiations. Several thematic working committees, particularly from the Ethnic Armed Organizations' office, include senior policy officers, who are young and educated.

The participation and engagement of young people through thematic committees on issues key to the peace negotiations translates into young people having the opportunity to draft the laws and policies during peace negotiations – shaping the very substance of a peace agreement. By drafting the substance of the agreement, they are able to incorporate their view points in tandem with agreements made during negotiations.

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34   UNFPA - UN/PBSO. (Simpson, G.) (2018) The Missing Peace; pg 69.

The participation and engagement of young people through thematic committees on issues key to the peace negotiations translates into young people having the opportunity to draft the laws and policies during peace negotiations – shaping the very substance of a peace agreement.

3.1.3 Witnesses & Observers to Peace Agreements

Several peace accords have featured young people as witnesses and observers – both in the negotiation phase and as signatory observers to the peace agreement. Kenya's Nakuru County Peace Accord for example, signed in 2012, was an effort to end several cycles of electoral violence that had been experienced during the 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2008 election years. The Peace Accord highlights youth as part of the signatories to the agreement, following recognition by the elders that young people are key

to stability in the region.[35] In Myanmar, a bilateral ceasefire agreement signed between the Government and the Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO) in 2013 references the need to promote youth and women's participation in all levels of political processes.[36] These references relied on inputs from young people working in dual roles: the Chairperson of the Pa-O Youth Organization (PYO), also a member of PNLO's Central Executive Committee, played a key role in advocating for the inclusion of youth issues in the peace agreement.[37] **These examples highlight how direct and meaningful inclusion of young people can enable youth to be recognized as key stakeholders of a peace agreement – increasing the perceived legitimacy of the agreement in the eyes of young people.**

On the other hand, observer and witness status may also exacerbate feelings of marginalization. From 2014-15, during the Myanmar Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) negotiations, several young leaders advocated for their inclusion in the negotiations, but these calls were not heeded. While three male youth representatives attended the NCA signing ceremony as observers,[38] the NCA agreement makes no reference or mention to 'youth' as a key stakeholder.

South Sudan - Self creation of observation roles

There are also cases, where young people are witnesses and observers of peace negotiations in alternative ways. For example, young people under the South Sudan Civil Society Forum (SSCF) used social media platforms to put pressure on parties to the conflict as outside observers. The SSCF launched a social media campaign on the first day of the South Sudan High

#SouthSudanIsWatching

UNITED FOR PEACE IN SOUTH SUDAN

HLRF Addis Ababa, 2018

South Sudan Civil Society Forum

Image Credit: South Sudan Civil Society Forum

Level Revitalization Forum. Young people wore sunglasses, took photos of themselves, and then shared them on social media platforms with the hashtag *#SouthSudanIsWatching*. Although this type of participation did not have a direct impact on the discussions inside the room, it was **symbolically powerful** in sending a message to the conflict parties on the unity among civil society members of South Sudan. Youth, civil society and women representatives who were

35   Limo, Irene (2017). *Mediation in Africa Is there Space for the Youth?* ACCORD.

36   The ceasefire agreement commits to *"promote the participation of youth, women and laborers at each level of the political process"* and *"to permit the Pa-O national conference, youth conference, women conference and labor conference in accordance with the law."*

37   Paung Sie Facility. (2017) *Youth & Everyday Peace: Fostering the Untapped Potential of Myanmar Youth.*

38   IBID.

While the inclusion of young people as observers or witnesses to peace agreements may be a powerful symbol in promoting ownership of the accord, and an easy mechanism through which to include young people, there is little impact if young women and men's voices are not reflected in the agreement itself.

3.1.4   Participation   through Partnerships

Young people participate and influence peace processes through building diverse partnerships with key actors. The collaboration between independent youth and women representatives in the 2013 Yemeni National Dialogue Conference is an example of youth utilizing alliance-building activity. The informal alliance between youth and women had a significant influence over the decision-making process merely due to their high numbers in the negotiation room.[39] A similar alliance-building activity between youth and women's groups took place at the South Sudanese High-Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF). Although there was not a strong collaboration between women and youth representatives in the first round of HLRF, strong communication lines between the member of these two social groups pushed their representatives to build an alliance in the negotiation room.

Alliance building between two groups was possible to the fact that women and youth groups were mingled in their activism for peace in the civic spaces. As a young woman from South Sudan shared with us, *"youth is the engine of civil society. We are the one who protests in Nairobi and marched for women's right"* (Interview, South Sudan, young woman). In the second round of HLRF, there was a strong collaboration between women and youth representatives, and women's groups closely consulted with youth representatives. A very clear impact of the alliance was their ability to convince

parties to create speaking opportunities for refugees in peace talks. Refugee youth representatives were initially passive observers, yet they were later able to make a statement at the HLRF. While a refugee youth representative was sharing the statement of young refugees, youth and women alliance representatives stood behind the refugee representative to demonstrate their support and solidarity.

Building alliances and coalitions between women and youth is an unexplored powerful tool to integrate the perspectives of key stakeholders (victims and perpetrators) in security sector reform processes.

Both of these cases demonstrate that thinking about alliance building activities from a "youth lens" provides unexplored avenues to increase the influence of both women and youth in peace processes. Processes and mechanisms that can support alliance building activities between women's and youth groups may be an effective strategy to foster the inclusion of youth in formal peace processes. In fact, integrating a genuinely intersecting youth and gender lens into peace processes may allow civil society actors to challenge masculine and militaristic characters of exclusive peace negotiations. Building alliances and coalitions between women and youth is an unexplored powerful tool to integrate the perspectives of key stakeholders (victims and perpetrators) in security sector reform processes.

3.1.5 Resource Support Persons

Peace   negotiations   are   often   human

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[39]   Paffenholz, Thania and Nick Ross. (2015) Inclusive peace processes – an introduction, The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation.

resource intensive. The logistics to coordinate meetings, the documentation of formal and informal discussions, the organization of various political and national dialogues all require extensive human resources. **Young people are often found playing these critical supportive roles.** As one young woman in Afghanistan summarized: *"Youth are the machinery of most organizations. They are not necessarily in leadership positions, but they run the place."* Similar sentiments can be found in the current Myanmar peace process and the recent negotiations in the Philippines. **The former Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) provided technical and functional support to the peace negotiations and relied heavily on educated youth to meet its core functions, with approximately 60% of the MPC's workforce under the age of 35 (of this at least 40% were young women).[40] In particular, young people bring specific skill sets that facilitate peace meetings, as a technology-savvy generation.**

The presence and number of young people within formal structures, however, does not equate with substantive participation or the ability to put forward key issues, ideas and concerns related to youth. As one senior technical advisor to the Myanmar process noted, "*Young people were limited to supporting role in the margins of the meetings themselves and between the meetings themselves.*"

3.2 Layer 2 – Around the Room

3.2.1 Youth Committees/Delegates/ Representatives

Several peace processes sought to promote the participation of young people through the inclusion of youth-specific committees,

> ## "Youth are the machinery of most organizations. They are not necessarily in leadership positions, but they run the place."
>
> **Interview, Afghanistan, young woman**

youth delegates or youth representatives during the negotiations, national or political dialogues. The most well-known example is the case of Yemen, which included both a 20% youth quota for all stakeholders attending the National Dialogue Conference, as well as 40 seats reserved for independent youth representatives. Through this inclusion strategy young people were present under multiple committees that were part of the National Dialogue Conference (see text box three). In Somalia's Galkayo peace process, a Joint Galkayo Youth Committee has been established to facilitate a coordinated and unified youth voice for the peace negotiations (see text box four). In the Great Lakes region, a Regional Youth Forum – as part of International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) – provided an institutional mechanism to enable the participation of youth in discussions and coordination for peace, stability and development in the region. Young people were selected representatives, who brought key youth issues to the table in regional summits and peace talks on the Burundi and Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) conflicts.[41] In Afghanistan, a new Peace Advisory Board has been formed towards the end of 2018, comprising of nine committees, including Youth Affairs Committee.

Yemen's independent youth delegates at the National Dialogue Conference[42]

Yemen's youth were key drivers of the grass-roots protests that triggered the transfer of power to a transitional government and establishment of a national dialogue process in 2011. With strong encouragement from the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-

40   Paung Sie Facility. (2017) *Youth & Everyday Peace: Fostering the Untapped Potential of Myanmar Youth.*

41   Limo, Irene. (2017) *Mediation in Africa Is there Space for the Youth?* ACCORD.

42   Note, this case study is largely taken from the Missing Peace, Progress Study; Youth quotas in peace processes – *Yemen's national dialogue conference*; pg 71.

General, the parties accepted a 20% youth quota in the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) to shape the new Yemeni Constitution in 2011.

30% of all participants also had to be women (and 20% of the women's quota were required to be youth).[43] Forty "independent youth" (not party affiliated) out of 10,000 applicants were selected through the quota system, which meant that 7% of the total NDC members were young people who were politically independent.[44] These independent youth representatives quickly started to vote as a bloc, with some exceptions.[45] **As a bloc, they also built alliances with women and other civil society constituencies, which enabled this "non-political party" group to acquire a significant role and power in much of the decision-making process.**[46]

The civil society coalition and alliance-building activities were not sufficient to insulate these youth entirely from claims of co-option by the main political stakeholders in the process. Despite critiques of co-option and even claims of corruption directed at youth participants in a fairly "elitist" political process, the quota system arguably set up new norms for youth political inclusion in Yemen. As one NDC youth representative commented, "*The quota system applied in the National Dialogue Conference demonstrated the positive value of youth participation.*"[47]

Youth representatives also took on leadership roles in facilitating some of the technical working group sessions. Although youth were underrepresented in decision-making committees, **their participation resulted in increased political empowerment, national employment strategies, and investment in education for youth.**[48] They were outspoken about sensitive issues (such as the proposed immunity law) and challenged many entrenched hierarchical political traditions.[49] Their overall impact in the NDC was arguably transformative in shifting the prevailing mindset about youth political agency.

Youth committees and elected youth representatives can provide an effective and meaningful form of youth participation in peace processes. However, several key considerations should be taken forward. A key point of contention is the challenge of representation, not only in age and gender but also in selection: **the process of selection and legitimacy of youth representatives to speak on behalf of young people is a concern for young people, raised throughout this research**. The selection process often runs the risk of including young people who are educated, well-spoken, usually urban-residents and connected online, as well as part of an elite social standing. Conversely, marginalized and excluded young people living in remote areas with less access to quality education often have less chances to take part in such committees. Alternatively, young people may be tokenistically consulted without ensuring their access to capacity development trainings. Consequently, feelings and perceptions of exclusion may be exacerbated for those not included, or the credibility of the youth committee may falter.

The examples in this paper have highlighted two key practices to help youth representatives succeed. The first is **the need for youth representatives to be elected by their peers through a transparent approach**. This ensures that the inclusion is more reflective of and tailored to the reality of the local context. Secondly, **youth representatives should act as a *channel* for the voice of wider youth**. Thus, young people who represent 'youth' in the peace process must develop mechanisms for

43   Berghof Foundation. (2017) *National Dialogue Handbook: A Guide for Practitioners.*

44   Women and Youth Forum. (2014) *Constitutional Guidelines on Youth in Yemen: As per NDC Outcomes,* Republic of Yemen.

45   Alwazir, Atiaf Zaid. (2013) *Yemen's Independent Youth and Their Role in the National Dialogue Conference: Triggering a Change in Political Culture*, Stiftung Wissenschaft Politics.

46   Paffenholz, Thania, and Nick Ross. (2016) *Inclusive political settlements: new insights from Yemen's national dialogue*., Prism: A Journal of the Center for Complex Operations, vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 199–210; pg 205.

47   Anonymous KII. (2018) The Missing Peace, pg 71.

48   Al-Akhali, Rafat. (2014) *What Yemen's Youth Got Out of the National Dialogue Conference*, Atlantic Council.

49   Alwazir, Atiaf Zaid. (2013). *Yemen's Independent Youth and Their Role in the National Dialogue Conference: Triggering a Change in Political Culture*, Stiftung Wissenschaft Politics.

broader inclusion of other young people, to be accountable to their peers, answer their questions, and raise the voices of the community of young people during negotiations. As such, *consultations with broader youth constituencies* can become a mandatory part of their role.

Another key issue relates to the siloed approach of having separate youth committees, as opposed to recognizing the contribution, value and importance of young people across all segments of a peace process. It is a double-edged sword: if young people are political influencers, then a segregated youth committee may undermine the power of young people's political contributions in building lasting peace. However, without the youth committees the issues may not be heard at the negotiation table.

Somalia - Establishing youth-led committees to influence peace (Joint Galkayo Youth Committee)

The city of Galkayo in Somalia lies on the fault lines of two federal states, Galmudug State (formally established in 2015), and Puntland State (formed in 1998), where territorial tensions between the two dominant clans escalated and peaked with an outbreak of violent hostilities in late 2015. The Federal Government of Somalia, with the support of the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General, mediated between the two sides. In November 2016, after negotiations in Abu Dhabi, and mediation from the Somali Prime Minister, the regional presidents of Puntland and Galmudug agreed on the ceasefire to end the violence in the city. A Joint Ceasefire Committee (JCC) was established to oversee the implementation of the agreement.[50] Further to the ceasefire, in January 2017, the Regional Presidents agreed to three main points to end hostilities in Galkayo and build confidence between the two state administrations.

In early 2018, the government-led JCC transitioned into a more community-led peace committee, consisting of 61 elders representing all the different clans and sub-clans living in the city, instead of government officials. However, women and young people still lacked an official channel to meaningfully engage in the peace negotiations. **Local youth organizations, with support from the UN and peacebuilding organizations, lobbied for the establishment of a Joint Galkayo Youth Committee (JGYC) in 2018.** The JGYC is comprised of equal youth representatives from each side of Galkayo (14 young people in total). The members of the JGYC act as interlocutors to the elder-led Peace Committee. A similar structure has since emerged for women, known as the Women's Committee.

The JGYC is recognized as a structured and formal platform for young people to engage with the peace process, channeling the voices and recommendations from wider youth population into the decision-making process. As the JGYC members were elected by young people from North and South Galkayo, it is recognized as legitimate representation by youth across both sides of the divide. The formalized network further enabled the UN and other organizations to better provide young representatives with technical and functional support. However, despite its proximity to the peace process, the JGYC has faced difficulties in being viewed as credible partners and having their youth voices heard by the community elders.

The JGYC, with support from the regional youth organizations, organized a three-day Peace Conference in September 2018 to celebrate the UN International Day of Peace. Over 300 youth from North and South Galkayo attended, bringing together young leaders from across all six of Somalia's Federal Member States, in addition to representatives from the Peace Committee and the Women's Committee. The first of its kind, the conference combined discussions with joint activities like community clean-ups and sports competition. The event was widely attended by Galkayo's leadership and was held in both areas of the divided district.

50   See UN Assistance Mission in Somalia statement.

Many elders and senior Government leaders had not been to the 'other side' of Galkayo in many years. The challenge of jointly organizing the conference was an opportunity to bring together the communities from North and South Galkayo.

The conference resulted in Galkayo being nicknamed "Hoyga Nabadda" (in English: the "Home of Peace") in Somalia, despite being one of the more complex conflicted districts. The joint youth committee has proven that **young people are valuable contributors in building bridges across conflict lines**, using informal channels to create spaces for dialogue and support trust-building among political negotiating parties.

Galkayo's progress highlights the importance of bottom-up peace processes in stabilizing security and ensuring peace, with reconciliation at both local and national levels, rather than short-term, top-down political processes.[51]

3.2.2 Formal Consultative Forums/ Sub-national Dialogues

Consultative forms of participation are a tool that has been used for youth inclusion in peace processes. In some cases, this has been realized through civil society or public consultations. The Civil Society Support Room (CSSR) established by the UN Office of the Special Envoy on Syria (OSE-S) is an example of consultative inclusion strategy employed by UN mediators. The CSSR creates space for the participation of youth organizations and young people who are part of civil society organizations. Young Syrians who have been interviewed for this paper find the CSSR a useful initiative for the inclusion of young people. In their view, the CSSR plays an instrumental role for informing civil society members inside and outside Syria.

Yet, young members of the CSSR also shared that youth specific concerns often get lost within the broad scope of the issues that are being discussed in the room. **While young people play key roles in civil society, merging young people into broader civil society consultations risks youth-specific concerns and issues being marginalized or overlooked.** *"It is essential to have civil society representation. Yet, civil society representation is not always sufficient to bring youth issues to the table"* (Interview, South Sudan, female). In most cases there is little information and data on whether and to what extent young people are included in civil society consultations, partly due to lack of age-segregated data.

Youth consultations should also be considered from a gender lens, as young women and men may bring different experiences and perspectives to key issues. **Allowing space for these gendered perspectives to come forward can add nuance to critical issues being negotiated.** For example, in the Syrian peace talks: "*young men in the civil society room focus on political power-sharing discussions, elections and governance, economic development of the country, while young women focus on education, practical aspect of the distribution of resources, and the inclusion of marginalized voices*" (Interview, Syria, woman). However, when civil society itself is fragmented, mediators face a dilemma as to whether young women or even youth specific consultative mechanism could be a tool for unity or create further divisions among civil society members.

In the Central African Republic, Colombia, Mali, Myanmar, Philippines and South Sudan, young people have also been consulted about their views on their respective peace processes and contributed through sharing

> *"It is essential to have civil society representation. Yet, civil society representation is not always sufficient to bring youth issues to the table"*
>
> **Interview, South Sudan, female**

51   International Crisis Group. (2015) *Galkayo and Somalia's Dangerous Faultlines*.

their views. Youth specific consultations often take place in informal settings and create dialogue opportunities between young people and other stakeholders to the peace process. Youth-specific consultations have a strategic importance, as it creates space for young women and men to share concerns and issues that are specific to their demographic.

Colombia - Youth inclusion in peace process thematic consultations

In 2012, as the peace negotiations began, the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) requested that the UN, together with the National University of Colombia organize public consultations, through thematic forums, to feed into shaping the peace negotiations and agreement. A total of five national and four regional forums were organized from 2012 to 2016, based on the 6 key negotiating points in the peace talks: Comprehensive Rural Development Policy, Political Participation, Illicit drugs, Victims of the Conflict, End of the Conflict, and Implementation and Verification.

Over 7795 people[52] from across Colombia's regions and different stakeholders were engaged, including women, young people, political parties, human rights organizations, academics, indigenous people, private sector, trade unions, farmers, and victims. A detailed methodology was developed for each forum, to ensure facilitators and reporters would capture the key discussion points and proposals, streamline these into a consolidated report, and submit to the negotiating parties for consideration.

The criteria for participation in each forum depended on the theme, although regional representation was a priority, and quota systems were put into place to ensure the inclusion of women and youth across all stakeholders. Participants were then selected based on their ability to speak on the thematic issue and represent social organizations. Of particular relevance is the **victims forum, where young people constituted a large representation and played a key role in shaping several peace agreement provisions**: young people were particularly affected by forced recruitment and gender-based violence.

During the forums, **young participants proposed particular points that focused on promoting a culture of peace and tolerance, influencing other stakeholders' perceptions towards a vision of reconciliation.** For example, they proposed that the sons and daughters of combatants should also be treated as victims, and that the use of child soldiers by both military and FARC forces be addressed. They asked that two young people - former combatants - be invited to the Havana negotiations to share their story, reflecting on their human rights violations and challenges of transitional justice for FARC members, who were recruited as children. Young people furthermore pushed for investment in public education as a tool for (re)building peace, alternative economic avenues for rural areas to minimize dependence on illegal crop growth, and a truth commission for victims of the conflict. [53]

Although key relevant organizations were invited, there appeared to be limited information publicly shared about the selection process and implementation of the consultative forums. The number of participants engaged across the forums was also ultimately small considering the number of people affected by the conflict. Consequently, those not involved in the forums often did not hear about the forums and had limited access to broader public participation. Lessons can be taken forward in ensuring outreach and feedback mechanisms to the public from the selective consultations, as well as accountability to the participants themselves on the outcomes of the forums.

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52   Information based on document synthesized and produced by the United Nations and National University of Colombia.

53   Document synthesised and produced by the United Nations and National University of Colombia on proposals presented by young people in the forum.

> *Siloed youth specific consultations may be an easy method to increase the number of young people participate in peace processes, but if it has little influence over the negotiation processes, it can exacerbate the frustration of politically excluded young people. Youth consultations can also increase the expectations of young people: when these consultations are not connected to the formal processes, it may do more harm than good.*

However, the influence of youth specific consultations can be limited to satisfying young people's desire for political participation. **Without the lack of systematic mechanisms to transmit the outcomes of youth consultations to negotiating parties, youth proposals risk not being included in the peace agreement, as young people themselves are seldom represented at the negotiation table.** Another key consideration is the connection, or lack of, between young people consulted (around the room), and those mobilizing (outside the room), such as in the Colombia case study (see text box five).

Siloed youth specific consultations may be an easy method to increase the number of young people participate in peace processes, but if it has little influence over the negotiation processes, it can exacerbate the frustration of politically excluded young people. Youth consultations can also increase the expectations of young people: when these consultations are not connected to the formal processes, it may do more harm than good.

3.2.3 Ceasefire and Civilian Protection Monitoring

While peace negotiations and political dialogues tend to be held in secure spaces, the discussions are often marred by ongoing armed clashes and tensions at sub-national and community-levels that affect civilian populations. **The monitoring and reporting of ceasefire and civilian protection violations is vital in holding parties accountable during political negotiations. Young people play key but often unrecognized and undervalued roles in these capacities.**

In the Philippines, the ceasefire monitoring teams are mostly composed of young men, who accompany senior negotiators during their visit to the community. The joint coordination and assistance mechanism furthermore relies on young volunteers, who are critical in assisting the formal ceasefire process. For example, the United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD) organization, as part of the Third-Party Monitoring Team, regularly visits communities and reports to formal ceasefire committees, including meetings with the Chairman of the Peace Panel. In Myanmar, within an informal but well-established civilian ceasefire and civilian protection monitoring network, nearly 35% of the 700+ members are young people (aged 18-35).[54] In both Myanmar and the Philippines, young people are noted as being at the forefront of armed conflict, conducting investigative field work and maintaining accountability to the ceasefire by negotiating parties. The

> *Young people are noted as being at the forefront of armed conflict, conducting investigative field work and maintaining accountability to the ceasefire by negotiating parties.*

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54   Grizelj, Irena. (2018) *Protection Needs and Capacities of Youth in Myanmar: A Preliminary Report Exploring Youth Protection in Myanmar*, Nonviolent Peaceforce, Myanmar.

close connection of young people to the community has promoted public acceptance of ceasefire agreements, particularly if peace dividends are noticed.

This role is not without its challenges. Socio-cultural hierarchies impede effective participation of young people, as senior community leaders and authorities may question the maturity of youth to be in leadership positions, failing to recognize the value and contribution of the work of the young monitors. In Myanmar, community-level young monitors banded together and successfully voted for a youth representative within higher state-level committees, testament to the large numbers of youth monitors within the network itself and efforts to counter hierarchy.

3.2.4 Local/Sub-national mediators

> **"We are doing mediation, but we do not realize we are doing this. I didn't even know what I was doing."**
>
> Interview, Kenya, young woman

Tensions and violent conflicts at the grassroots level are usually in a reciprocal relationship with the conflicts at the national or regional levels.[55] Conflicts between the political elite at the national level, in many countries, seek to manipulate small scale, community-level tensions for self-interested agendas. While manipulation by ruling elites can harm peace at the community level, these ground-level, small scale skirmishes can also contribute and spiral into national and regional-levels of violence. Neglecting the interactions of violence that takes place between different geographical scales can undermine ongoing peace processes. **Young people's organic conflict analyses within their environments often anticipates that violence at community-levels can escalate to national or international levels and thereby put peace negotiations at risk or delay conflict parties to reach agreement.** The work of UNYPAD in the Philippines at the grassroots level is an example of how youth-led mediation can be effective to advance peace processes at the national level (see text box six).

55   Autesserre, Séverine. (2016) *The responsibility to protect in Congo: the failure of grassroots prevention*, International Peacekeeping.

As multiple forms of violence can threaten the stability of peace processes, young people have strategically engaged and adapted their approaches to target the most critical forms of violence. Their creative and alternative approaches can contribute to addressing political, extremist, criminal, gender-based, electoral violence, which can endanger peace negotiations and threaten the sustainability of peace agreements.

For example, as extremist violence is a growing problem in the Bangsamoro region of the Philippines, a young woman from the Philippines talked about how youth-led mediation efforts employ peer-to-peer dialogue as a strategy to prevent violent extremism for the stability of the peace process. As sporadic inter religious tensions are also manipulated by political elites in Sri Lanka, a young man from Sri Lanka explained his community level interfaith dialogue platforms contributes to the prevention of escalation of a larger scale violence. When sectarian and ethnic differences are being manipulated in Syria, young peacebuilders from Syria establish neighborhood level dialogue platforms to prevent escalation of violence at the community levels. All these examples demonstrate that youth agency and leadership in mediation activities at the community level has a powerful impact on stabilizing and strengthening formal peace negotiations and agreements, as their activities prevent diverse forms of violence that take place during peace processes.

Youth agency and leadership in mediation activities at the community level has a powerful impact on stabilizing and strengthening formal peace negotiations and agreements.

Although youth agency and leadership in mediation at the community level offers a great opportunity for developing bottom-up

Youth-led mediation activities rely on the creativity and innovation of young people and locally embedded trust-based relationships between young people and community members.

methods to complement top-down formal mediation activities, some caution is needed in professionalizing youth-led mediation efforts. In many peace process contexts, youth-led mediation activities rely on the creativity and innovation of young people and locally embedded trust-based relationships between young people and community members. In this respect, professionalizing youth-led mediation work, through molding into existing programming or funding frameworks, can harm the authenticity of youth-led mediation efforts, and distort the relationships between young people and the community. **Young people across several peace process contexts expressed that their involvement in mediation activities are often questioned and targeted by military and police, and their peers are detained due to their proactive involvement in peace work outside formal institutional spaces. For this reason, many youth-led peacebuilding organizations prefer not to report their activities, hide their identities, or be affiliated with formal institutions. Thus, formalizing youth-led mediation efforts requires the integration of strong conflict-sensitive and do-no-harm methodologies. Investing and harnessing youth-led mediation efforts requires protecting the civic spaces and the rights of young people.**

3.3 Layer 3 – Outside the Room

3.2.5 Mass Mobilization for Peace

With limited structured formal mechanisms for youth within peace processes, **young people take initiatives to influence peace negotiations through informal, often creative, avenues**. Young people can be

advocates in the promotion of human rights, democracy and peace messages, garnering nationwide media attention through peaceful demonstrations and campaigns, the use of online social media platforms to influence public awareness and opinion – including around issues within the peace process negotiations. This is particularly notable through mass mobilizations in the form of protests or street demonstrations, and closely intertwined with social media.

In Colombia, after four years of negotiations, from 2012-2016, a deal was reached between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 2016. The peace agreement was to settle over five decades of civil war within the country and was held to a public referendum on 2 October 2016. The issue of reconciliation and reintegration of the FARC guerrilla fighters was a key contentious and divisive issue for the public's acceptance of the peace process, contributing to the public rejection by a slight majority vote (50.2%).[56] **The rejection of the peace deal, within hours, sparked a large youth pro-peace movement: through social media hashtags (#PazAlaCalle, #RespiraPaz, #LaPazesImparable and #MarchaporlaPaz), networks of university students including public and private universities and both Yes and No campaigners in an act of reconciliation to end the polarization in the country mobilized over 30,000 young people onto the streets of Bogota.[57]** They had one consistent message: calling for the government and the FARC to restart negotiations and not delay a new peace agreement.

Within a week, the youth-led student movement was joined by people from all socioeconomic backgrounds, workers, officials, and civil society leaders, mobilizing over one million people across the country to rally on streets through peace marches. A revised peace agreement was signed by the parties one month later and passed in Congress. A young woman interviewed summarized her experience of the movement: *"We had never had opportunity to participate in the decisions of our country. The peace process was not for us. But, when the referendum happened, we realized the process is for us. Before the referendum we were spectators. When the referendum happened, we put on the shoes and decided "we are responsible to save our country. Social media was the way we could raise our voices. We are using social media to ask for accountability and say to leaders, "this peace process has to be implemented."*

Similarly, in Somalia, the Galkayo conflict escalated and clashes intensified in the region in late 2016. Young people organized large protests to build momentum for a ceasefire, and an all-encompassing school walk out in which a significant majority of students in the District participated. This built pressure on the negotiating parties and contributed to a rapid signing of the Galkayo Ceasefire Agreement in early 2017.

Somalia – Youth coordinating school walk-outs for peace in Galkayo

Although young people were directly impacted by the conflict at its early stages, they were not included in the official efforts to bring peace to Galkayo. **Young people and youth organizations nevertheless self-organized and initiated local campaigns and protests calling for peace.**

In late 2016, the Mudug Youth Peace and Integration Forum was created as an all-inclusive permanent forum for young Somalis from both Puntland and Galmudug states to brainstorm ways to resolve the prolonged clan-

56   Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil (National Registry of Civil Status).
57   Semana. El llamado de los universitarios. 10 August 2016.

based tensions the region.[58] Without a formal mandate to influence the ongoing peace process, on 2 October 2017, youth from both sides of Galkayo organized a large school walk-out to build pressure and demand sustainable peace.[59]

South Sudan - Youth-led digital diplomacy at high-level revitalization forum

In transitioning to a post-war state, young people form the foundations of a democratic and just society. Today, **one in three internet users is a young person**, creating opportunities for people-led movements to significantly influence ongoing peacemaking efforts. This too increases the need for better coordination between actors across the board. This complex and dynamic landscape offers broad range of strategic entry points for third-party mediation support groups to look for creative solutions in negotiating peace.

During the South Sudanese High-Level Revitalization Forum, youth-led peacebuilding organization *#Anataban* created an e-delegate participation platform. **The main function of this platform was to ensure that civil society had accurate information, both within South Sudan and outside South Sudan.** The e-delegates platform was a tool for communicating through 30 minutes long live videos posted via social media. These videos were screened by the members of *#Anataban* in the public spaces where deliberative political practices take place in South Sudanese civil society sphere.

Through these videos *#Anataban* members informed the public about where the talks were, the main discussion and event of the days. The videos triggered discussion outside under the trees. These efforts also deliberately targeted diaspora communities, since diaspora is detached from the daily reality of armed conflict and its effects, they easily start generating hate speech. As a young woman from South Sudan noted, *"if diaspora get accurate information, then they would promote positive messages".* **The virtual connection and flow of information across the social media channels prevented panic among the general public because local communities could receive information from youth, women and other civil society delegates who were hosted on live Facebook round table discussions.**

Despite social media providing a unique opportunity to increase the participation and inclusion of young people, using social media comes with particular challenges, such misinformation and hate speech, which need to be understood and managed (see UNDPPA digital toolkit[60]).

3.2.6. Building Momentum for Reconciliation

> **"We pay so much attention to those who fought, and not enough to those who did not. This complicates reconciliation. Those who did not fight have to be recognized and appreciated, but often they are ignored."**
>
> Interview, senior mediator, woman

Sustaining peace requires rebuilding relationships and trust between people who were affected by the conflict, and also between people and the institutions of the State. **These critical components of societal trust building activities are foundations for positive peace, which are found in young people's engagement in reconciliation efforts.**

Young people play key roles in raising public awareness and understanding of conflict(s) dynamics within their country,

58   United Nations Somalia. (2018) *Integrated Youth Response: Case Study.* UN-FBA Joint Learning Forum on Youth, Peace and Security. December 4-7, 2018.

59   Puntland News Agency. *Ardayda iskuulada Waqooyiga Iyo Koonfurta Gaalkacyo Oo Maanta Socod ku maray Magaalada Gaalkacyo.* 2 Oct, 2017.

60   peacemaker.un.org/digitaltoolkit

promoting the urgency for rebuilding relationships communities marginalized due to harmful impact of violent conflict. Young people's peacebuilding activities provide psychosocial support and aim to breed a societal acceptance for the reintegration of former combatants. In Colombia, the issue of reconciliation and reintegration of the FARC guerrilla fighters has been a key contentious and divisive issue for the public's acceptance of the peace process, contributing to a public rejection of an initial peace deal in 2016. Following the public referendum, a group of creative young people started the *Cartas por la Reconciliation* (Letters for Reconciliation) campaign, which encouraged young people and the broader public to send letters of support to the FARC guerrilla fighters (see text box nine).

Colombia - Love letters to the FARC

"In Colombia, we have naturalized violence because our whole life is filled with war. We are taught revenge from adults. But our culture is full of love and forgiveness. Young people are trying to change this view and promote respect for life. If we don't change this culture of violence, the country will remain the same."

Interview, Colombia, young woman

Following the public referendum, a group of creative young people also started the ***Cartas por la Reconciliación (Letters for Reconciliation)*** campaign, which encouraged young people and the broader public to send welcoming letters to the FARC guerrilla fighters.[61] The emotive movement gained nationwide attention, and over 3,000 letters of hope and support have been sent to the estimated 6,900 ex-combatants, welcoming them back into society. Young people acted as a bridge towards reconciliation and understanding, aiming to show that forgiveness is possible. If civilians can have a conversation with the guerrillas, they can work towards overcoming hatred and recognizing common humanity.

Since 2018, the UN Mission in Colombia has furthermore recognized the leadership roles of youth-led organizations and initiatives that are supporting reintegration and reconciliation efforts. The Mission has, for example, facilitated dialogue and visits of youth leaders, young entrepreneurs and university students with former combatants in seven territorial areas assigned for training and reintegration.[62]

While reconciliation activities of young people target short-term needs for the integration of former combatants through rebuilding trust between former combatants and the wider society, their reconciliation activities also aim to restore the trust between young people and the State. **Deeply rooted injustices such as dealing with corruption, nepotism and tribalism are also being addressed in young people's reconciliation work** (see text box ten) and fostering inclusive and just democratic societies.

61 The Observers. *The letters of reconciliation sent to ex-FARC fighters*. 7 July 2017. El Pais. *Lessons in tolerance: The Colombian letters sent to former FARC fighters*. 2 June 2017.

62 This is part of the Mission's strategy for the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on youth and peace and security, with has a focus on the role of young people in reintegration and security guarantees. See the *Selected Secretary-General's Reports*.

South Sudan – Sweeping corruption away

Once the peace agreement was signed at the High-Level Revitalization Forum, South Sudanese youth took to the streets of Juba with their campaign, titled *#NadafaLeBeledna ('Let us clean our country')*. Hundreds of young people have gathered once a month to – literally and metaphorically – clean their country together. The youth-led campaign asks their peers to follow the motto of "do not just be youthful, be useful", and encourage young people to participate.

Image Credit: Gasim Edward

Yet, the actual intention behind these cleaning campaigns aim to send a political message: 'Youth are demanding increased participation and representation in the country where they are the majority, since young people constitute 72% of the population in South Sudan'. For the organizers of this campaign:

"This is not a cleaning project, it should not be misunderstood, we are actually protesting. Cleaning is a protest, because we are tired of wars, all. If we clean the streets, we can also clean the bushes. We can clean this country out of corruption, nepotism and tribalism." Interview, South Sudan, young man.

This protest movement provides just one example for how young people raise their voices and create alternative engagement opportunities to challenge corruption and build just societies.

These forms of active participation outside formal peace negotiations are important to facilitate the socialization of the peace agreement, and shape public engagement in the peace process. Young people initiate and lead reconciliation with limited resources; they do not ask for permission or commitment from negotiating parties, rather the efforts rely on the energy and commitment of young people in prioritizing peace and stability. Young people need to be recognized for the value of their informal contributions, as a critical bridge to formal peace processes. Having a better understanding of young people's existing efforts in the informal space is central in realizing their (potential) contribution to formal processes.[63]

As such, a shift must be normalized for peace processes, and negotiations, to be forward-thinking and engage youth agency in building peace and preventing conflicts. In creating and harnessing spaces for meaningful youth inclusion and participation in peace processes, the foundations for positive peace and reconciliation can be prioritized in peace agreements. This will effectively empower young people to co-lead the process of rebuilding trust and peace in a post-agreement phase across generations.

Young people need to be recognized for the value of their informal contributions, as a critical bridge to formal peace processes.

63   IBID.

3.2.7. Advocating Humanitarian Concerns

Conflict produces humanitarian crises, and young people are often at the forefront of community-led response to provide help people in urgent need. The frontline engagement in humanitarian crises often drives young people into facilitative roles in managing the tangible impacts of the conflict, further driving their commitment to bringing peace. For example, in Myanmar in late 2018, fighting between government troops and one of the country's biggest non-state armed groups, the Kachin Independence Army, stranded hundreds of villagers in a cross-fire zone. Three youth activists led mass public protests and demonstrations in both the rural city and urban capital. As a result, the State Counsellor, sent a senior minister to the conflict area to oversee the safe release of the villagers.[64] Empowering young people in the management of humanitarian action could be a way to spur engagement of youth in political process, and it connects their realization that there is a need for a political settlement for the solution of the problem.

64   Kachin youth activists launch potent anti-war movement.

4 KEY MESSAGES

> "We are talking about the future of peace in Syria."
>
> Interview, Syria, young woman

> "Young people cut through all the noise and get right to the heart of an issue through a human perspective. We need to invite these challenges and questions that make us remember humanity."
>
> Interview, senior peace practitioner, Northern Ireland

1 **The agenda of youth inclusion must be implemented from a conflict-sensitive and do-no-harm approach.** This means working and engaging with young people as partners, as much as possible, throughout peace processes. In order to prevent elitism and tokenism among youth, efforts should be taken to foster equal participation of marginalized young people with less access to formal political processes. From preparatory stages, including the conduct of a conflict analysis with a youth-lens applied, to the process design and implementation phases, peace and mediation processes must ensure they are sensitive to the views, needs, and concerns of young women and men.

2 **The inclusion of young people during all phases of peace processes likely increases the sustainability of the agreements.** This paper indicates young people's demonstrated capacity to socialize, defend, and protect peace agreements in formal and informal political platforms through innovative and alternative practices. There is, however, urgent need for greater investment and resources to research and document youth participation in peace processes and the impact on sustaining peace.

3 **Youth inclusion and participation in peace processes should not be considered a new agenda in competition with other inclusion agendas.** Greater efforts are needed to understand how women and youth organizations work in collaboration and build alliances to combat exclusion in the context of peace processes. Exploring and analyzing alliance building activities between women, civil society, and youth is a strategic approach to strengthen collaboration between WPS and YPS agendas, and highlights the intersection of victims, perpetrators and peacebuilders across two major social categories. These collaborations are a powerful way to combat broader exclusion in high-level peacemaking efforts.

4 Young people's proximity to the table matters because young people are distinctively impacted by the results of decisions made at the formal peace negotiation table. In particular, critical power-sharing decisions, such as related to disarmament demobilization and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR) and criminal justice reform process, require both youth and gender sensitive lenses. Working with young people as partners in these processes may have significantly improve the efficiency of peace processes.

5 Ensuring the representation of diverse youth constituencies matters in peace negotiations. Accessing and raising the voices of marginalized and excluded young people in peace processes includes creating spaces for young women and men who have been victims and perpetrators of violence. However, this policy paper suggests that the participation and inclusion of young people actively engaged in *peacebuilding and violence prevention* should be equally prioritized. In selecting, inviting and appointing young people to participate in formal segments of peace processes, attention should be given to maintain a diversity of perspectives that can serve to understand the distinct experiences of youth as peacebuilders, victims, and perpetrators.

6 Enabling youth political participation during peace negotiations will contribute to more inclusive and representative governance structures that build the basis for more peaceful societies. Recognizing, protecting and engaging with the civic spaces where the majority of youth participate is furthermore an important avenue to (re)build societal trust and legitimacy of political institutions. Shifting the mindset towards young people will therefore support the realization of a broad socio-political *culture of inclusion.*

5 RECOMMENDATIONS/ ENTRY POINTS

> **"It is not charity to have young people in the room – the whole peace agreement is about young people, if you want it to last. If you want lasting peace, it won't happen without youth. It is not about having youth as a side note but changing the view and attitude towards young people. They are not just a small interest group."**
>
> Interview, Afghanistan, young woman

The findings from the paper demand Member States, UN entities, mediators, regional and international organizations, and civil society to move from normative commitments to operational action on youth inclusion and participation. **Engaging with young people is not only a demographic necessity but a democratic imperative and an important avenue for accountability of institutions to their mandates, to legal norms and the people they strive to serve.** The following recommendations offer a range of tools that the above-mentioned stakeholders can choose from depending on the context, to identify strategic entry points and approaches to realize youth-inclusive peace processes in practice.

In moving these recommendations forward, it is important to emphasize that young people's inclusion and participation in the room, around the room, and outside the room of peace negotiations equally matters. Utilizing a multi-layered and integrated engagement approach should therefore be the main strategy for realizing youth inclusion and participation in peace processes. Youth participation and inclusion in any of these layers should not be treated in isolation, and the recommendations presented below should be implemented in conjunction with one another: youth inside or around the room should not be the sole metric for successful youth inclusion. It is fundamental to actively develop strategic and synchronized connections between young people inside the room, around the room, and outside the room.

Following this approach, the recommendations below are clustered in four categories: 1) Connecting the layers; 2) Inside the room; 3) Around the room; and 4) Outside the room. While the first cluster of recommendations, the connectors, aim to connect the engagement opportunities between layers, the rest of the recommendations provide entry points specific to inside, around, and outside the room.

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Connecting the Layers

- International and regional organizations, supporting institutions and stakeholders must take proactive efforts to **ensure collaboration, coordination and networking across entities as attention, research, investment and practice increases** for the youth inclusion agenda; young people and youth organizations should be engaged as indispensable partners throughout these processes.

- Youth-led organizations and **young peace builders should take greater ownership and leadership roles** to build partnerships, conduct advocacy, and undertake participatory research to strengthen youth inclusivity in peace processes.

- Member States, international organizations, and donors should **promote accessible, flexible and innovative funding opportunities for youth-led and youth-focused organizations** that seek to support peace processes through peacebuilding and violence prevention activities, such as peace education. This would support young people's engagement in bottom-up peacebuilding and community-led resilience, that contributes to stabilizing broader peace processes.

- Member States, international organizations and young people should jointly **establish and lead a documentation, monitoring, and progress tracking mechanism** to increase understanding and measure the influence and impact of young people in peace processes. This should build a long-term, well resourced, evidence base that is able to assess the impact of youth-inclusive peace processes, and to what extent young people enable more sustainable peace agreements. Youth participatory methodologies should be ensured in documenting, monitoring, and evaluating inclusivity in peace processes.

- Member States, international organizations, civil society organizations and youth-led peacebuilding organizations should **establish global – and interconnected to regional and local – young mediation networks** to increase youth participation and inclusion in peace processes. Collaboration and partnerships between actors working at different levels should be considered as a principal in designing and implementing such networks.

Inside the Room

1 Member States, mediation teams, and international organizations **should promote and enable youth participation and inclusion in all phases and tracks of peace processes,** including in decision-making positions, such as signatories to peace agreements, and chairs and members of transition or implementation bodies, for which quotas or other temporary special measures may be required.

2 International organizations, civil society, and youth organizations should collaboratively **raise awareness, training, and advocate to mediators, negotiators and technical support teams** on the positive roles and effectiveness of youth-inclusive and participatory peace processes, and the importance of working with young people as partners in sustaining peace.

3 Member States, international organizations and regional organizations should **review existing mediation guidance tools** to ensure a) mainstreaming of youth inclusivity; b) age and gender-sensitive conflict analysis; and c) promote the inclusion of issues with specific relevance to youth in outcome documents.

4 Member States, international organizations and regional organizations should **deploy and mobilize support for youth and inclusion experts** within technical teams, working with youth networks and organizations to access marginalized and excluded young people, engaging them before, during and after peace and mediation processes.

5 Mediators and supporting organizations should consider **working with young technical support staff within different negotiating parties of a peace process,** and consider establishing conflict- and context-specific young insider mediation networks across conflict parties, who are supported with mediation and preventive diplomacy training.

6 International and regional organizations should invest efforts to **recruit more young technical experts** to support peace negotiations, endorsing the view of youth as credible experts in relevant thematic issues.

7 International organizations and civil society organizations, especially women's rights organizations, should **support coalition building activities between youth representatives and other stakeholders** (women, refugees, victims, etc), and provide technical trainings on coalition-building, diplomacy and formal negotiation techniques in order to amplify their collective influence in shaping peace negotiations.

8 Member States, particularly host governments of peace talks, mediators, and international organizations should **design formal political negotiation processes accessible for the participation of young women and men.** Additional safety and protection measures should be provided for young representatives and delegates who take part in high-level political forums. Young representatives' physical security should be ensured during and in post negotiation phases, and necessary accreditations should be provided for their access into negotiation rooms.

9 Negotiating parties and mediators should **factor youth audiences into their public communication strategies.** To reach these young audiences outside the room, young observers could be positioned in the negotiating room with the task to voice key youth-sensitive progress updates to the wider youth public, harnessing in particular social media and information technology.

Around the Room

10 Mediation teams should **establish 'youth advisory committees' for developing and designing youth-inclusive processes.** The advisory/expert committees should be composed of diverse, peer-elected young leaders with the mandate and resources to channel and transfer the voices of broad youth constituencies, as well as to hold regular dialogue with key negotiating parties to input youth concerns from diverse educational, socio-economic, cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Specific attention should be given to include marginalized and excluded young people, such as young former combatants, veterans, forced migrants, survivors of violence, and people with disabilities.

11 Member States, international and regional organizations, and mediators should **endorse and conduct youth specific civil society consultations** to feed into peace negotiations, in addition to broad civil society consultations. These consultations should create participation opportunities for young people.

12 Member States, international organizations and civil society organizations should **provide financial and technical support for youth organizations and young people** to work with systematic reporting and feedback mechanisms, that bridge youth consultations and representatives in the negotiation rooms.

13 Member States, international organizations and civil society organizations should provide **technical capacity building trainings for youth** organizations, youth representatives and youth committees on specific thematic areas of peace processes (such as ceasefire monitoring and reporting, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), constitutional and electoral reform, legal provisions, crime and violence prevention) to harness the large youth demographic as a resource for supporting mediators and process facilitators. Trainings offered to negotiating parties should also include young people working as resource persons within the peace processes.

14 International organizations should partner with youth-led peacebuilding organizations to design and implement **responsive DDR programs, and establish youth-led ceasefire monitoring networks,** in consultation with young combatants as appropriate. These ceasefire monitoring and civilian protection groups should be set up and institutionalized by the governments and key stakeholders to the conflict to ensure youth's acceptance and legitimacy amongst communities.

15 Member States and international organizations should **consult and work with young people as partners on substantive state-building sectors** during the *implementation* of peace agreements, including security sector and criminal justice reform processes, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, resettlement, electoral reform and elections, education, and employment.

Outside the Room

16 Member States, international organizations and human rights actors should **respect, protect and uphold young people's universal and fundamental rights of freedom of organization, peaceful assembly, association, opinion and expression, and participation in public affairs,** to foster an enabling and safe environment for young people working on peace and security, and ensure that they do not face reprisals for their work." as recommended by *The Missing Peace: Progress Study on YPS*. The civic spaces that are critical for young people's political participation and inclusion should be protected in all phases of peace processes.

17 Member States, international organizations and civil society organizations should **harness the widespread use of social media and other mass media platforms as mobilization tools** for young people's inclusion and participation in political dialogue and peace processes. Mediators, negotiators and technical teams within peace negotiations could utilize **digital diplomacy** tools (see UNDPPA Digital Toolkit for example), such as monitoring social media trends during peace negotiations, to listen to the demands, needs and concerns of youth. Greater research and investment are required to understand how digital technologies can enable youth inclusive processes.