SUPPORTING DIVERSE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PEACEBUILDING

Practice paper
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DISCLAIMERS

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This publication has been funded by UK aid from the UK government; however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government’s official policies.

The lessons in this publication have been drawn together as part of the Peace Research Partnership, and are based on youth peacebuilding programmes funded by donors, in particular the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), over the last few years.

Peace Research Partnership

Saferworld, Conciliation Resources and International Alert are collaborating on a four-year research programme which generates evidence and lessons for policymakers and practitioners on how to support peaceful, inclusive change in conflict-affected areas.

Funded by UK aid from the UK Government, the research focuses on economic development, peace processes, institutions and gender drivers of conflict.
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INTRODUCTION

The unanimous adoption in 2015 of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security marked a step-change in, and opportunity for, international efforts to increase the meaningful participation of youth in peace processes and conflict resolution. The 2018 Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security acknowledged the important and positive contribution of youth in efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The recognition of youth as the ‘missing peace’ is part of a growing policy consensus that inclusion matters for peace; the consequent challenge being to determine what this means in practice.

In this paper we draw out six practical lessons for the design and support of peacebuilding programmes that cater to the inclusion of diverse youth, drawing on examples from Conciliation Resources’ practice over recent years.

Conciliation Resources and its partners have worked for many years on peacebuilding with diverse youth across multiple contexts. We combine our commitment to youth inclusion with our longstanding work supporting the practical implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) by working intergenerationally through a gender, peace and security approach.

In 2018-19 we deepened our focus on youth, peace and security in several contexts, including South Asia, north-east Nigeria, the South Caucasus, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan and Central African Republic (CAR). We shared lessons with other non-government organisations (NGOs) working with youth; in particular the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders), Peace Direct, Saferworld, Dawlaty and International Alert.

Our experiences have emphasised the need to understand the significant diversity within the youth demographic and tailor peacebuilding efforts to avoid creating further or different forms of exclusion for young people. In collaboration with our partners, we adopted a contextual understanding of ‘youth’ in each location. We used an intersectional approach to gender-sensitive conflict analysis to understand the differences in experiences, perspectives and needs among young people. This information helped us interrogate societal power imbalances that hamper youth inclusion.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY INCLUSION AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Inclusion means creating opportunities for people with a stake in lasting peace to shape that peace. It means ensuring the views and needs of elites do not drown out those of the wider population. The UN has defined ‘inclusivity’ as “the extent and manner in which the views and needs of parties to conflict and other stakeholders are represented, heard and integrated into a peace process”.

Conciliation Resources highlights the importance of a multi-path approach to sustaining peace, incorporating both formal and informal processes for resolving conflict and building peace.

To strengthen a society’s ability to avoid a relapse into armed violence, groups in society beyond those immediately involved in the conflict also need to be included in the peace process. Broad-based inclusion leads to more public support and greater legitimacy for any process and resulting agreement. It can also help address the root causes of violence and conflict.

To learn more, see Accord 28, Navigating inclusion in peace processes (2019).
PRACTITIONER LESSONS

1. TAKE AN INTERGENERATIONAL APPROACH:
work with people of different generations, backgrounds and identities
to avoid reinforcing existing barriers and divisions for young people.
What does this look like in practice? See page 7.

2. USE GENDER-SENSITIVE CONFLICT ANALYSIS
   to avoid assumptions about why different young people engage or not,
   uncover varied needs and perspectives, and design targeted activities
   with and for young people.
   What does this look like in practice? See page 8.

3. PLAN THE PRACTICALITIES:
think through the practical and logistical arrangements that can help
or hinder the participation of diverse groups of young people.
What does this look like in practice? See page 9.

4. BUILD PRACTICAL SKILLS:
provide young people with skills that they can deploy immediately in
their everyday lives, and that can have a transformative effect on them
and societal attitudes towards them.
What does this look like in practice? See page 11.

5. PLOT A PATH TO POWER-HOLDERS:
explore youth participation in spaces beyond those assigned for ‘youth’,
and incrementally build young people’s confidence to engage with senior
power-holders.
What does this look like in practice? See page 13.

DONOR LESSON

6. ADOPT FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING AND FUNDING:
peacebuilding programmes which release the energy and creativity
of young people and which build their sense of self-worth need to be
adaptive, and so do the funding instruments that support that.
What does this look like in practice? See page 15.
A NOTE ON THE DIVERSITY OF YOUTH

Youth are not a homogenous group: the definition of youth is contextually and culturally specific and does not fit with formal, international policy definitions.

In many contexts the shift to adulthood is determined not by age, but by reaching certain societal or cultural milestones such as achieving an independent income, having children or completing military service. The youth age bracket can span from 16 to 35 years of age; in our workshops for young people in DRC, people of up to 50 years old self-identified as ‘youth’.

Imposing external classifications of youth in peace programming can therefore create confusion, exclusion or harm in a local context. The risk of excluding older ‘youth’ needs to be balanced against the risk of depriving younger people of their own space for expression. This can potentially be achieved by tailoring specific activities for younger groups, integrating intergenerational activities, or avoiding labelling some spaces as ‘youth’ activities.

The notion of youth is gendered: in many contexts young women, girls and sexual and gender minorities are not always included in the ‘youth’ category, which can be used exclusively to refer to young men. Young men are often associated with the potential for violence, as perpetrators or protectors, given men make up the majority of military forces or armed groups.

As with adults, youth vary enormously in terms of their level of education and income, place of residence (rural or urban), gender, marital status, abilities, ethnicity, language, religion and other aspects of identity. These factors can determine the differing opportunities and access that young people have to participate in peace and security efforts, and their power to influence change. They also mean that young people’s perspectives and needs can vary enormously.

In some places, regardless of gender identity, young people are seen by wider society as a problem. While they may seem to have power in numbers, often they lack recognition and authority in community, religious leadership or societal structures. In some places societies see young people as needing protection and guidance, and criticism is levelled at their parents if they are considered to be badly behaved.

Finally, youth are a transitory group; as people enter and exit this stage of their lives. This fluidity and diversity demands tailored programmes that meet different needs and interests, and requires flexibility when deciding who participates in certain activities. Peacebuilding practice needs to engage with and respond to this complexity.
PRACTITIONER AND DONOR
LESSONS IN DETAIL

TAKE AN INTERGENERATIONAL APPROACH:
work with people of different generations, backgrounds and identities to avoid reinforcing existing barriers and divisions for young people.

Conciliation Resources works with a range of civil society partners on both sides of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict divide. In 2018-19, we addressed issues raised by youth during focus groups on youth, peace and security which were conducted in 2017 to inform the UN Progress Study. These issues included a lack of information about, and contact with, young people from other regions and across the conflict divide, and a lack of spaces to discuss common concerns together. Another problem was the poor understanding of, and access to, ongoing peace processes and peacebuilding initiatives, which are often run by older generations.

Working intergenerationally in this context meant designing a programme which ran alongside broader peacebuilding work and identifying and responding to the specific ideas and needs expressed by young people. By giving equal priority to their perspectives and experiences, this initiative broke down the division between them and others already involved in peacebuilding initiatives. For instance, at workshops and discussions younger experts and practitioners presented alongside ‘veteran’ peacebuilders, demonstrating that the younger generation has its own perspective and an active role to play. From a pragmatic perspective, this intergenerational approach supported sustainable peacebuilding, facilitating the transfer of knowledge, strengthening of networks and mitigation of risks by engaging more age-diverse groups of people in conflict transformation.

On the Georgian side, we supported the development of a diverse network of younger peacebuilders through an open call for participation in a ‘Youth Initiative for Peace’. The call received 300 applicants, a surprising result as the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict does not receive much public attention. The selected group included 23 young women and men of different ethnicities, internally displaced people, from different regions and young persons with disabilities. Activities included workshops to build relationships and skills in conflict analysis and peacebuilding, as well as public discussions organised by the youth members in their own communities. There were also opportunities for this emerging network to exchange insights and experiences with networks of displaced communities who have been active for over two decades.

In Abkhazia, where space to engage is more limited, partners organised a series of discussions and seminars – some accessible online – reaching diverse groups of young women and men. This was a concrete way to foster dialogue within the community around issues that concern young people, including women’s rights and ecological issues. These events took place in the capital as well as in the more marginalised Gal/i region, building links between the two communities.

In the Georgian context, the initiative resulted in a cohort of young peacebuilders passionate about gaining a better understanding of the history and dynamics of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, the perspectives of youth in Abkhazia, and initiating different peace initiatives in their respective communities. A participant with disabilities from the Georgian youth network was elected UN Youth Representative for Georgia and highlighted peacebuilding in her inaugural speech.

In Abkhazia, the overall profile of civil society was raised by bringing together a range of actors from different generations and regions to address environmental issues. Spaces opened up for discussion on women and minority rights; issues seldom discussed in the public domain.

In both contexts, the activities increased the confidence, skills and agency among youth to participate constructively in broader civil society debate and conflict transformation initiatives.
Participatory gender-sensitive conflict analysis helps ensure the design and implementation of peacebuilding programmes better meet the different needs, perspectives and priorities of young people in conflict contexts. Young people need opportunities to talk about a range of issues, including but not only those that affect them directly. Peacebuilding practitioners need to be open to what they hear and ready for their assumptions to be challenged.

The process of gender-sensitive conflict analysis uncovers the drivers of violent conflict and the norms, including gender norms, which may perpetuate conflict. By taking an intersectional approach to the analysis it is possible to examine how a conflict impacts diverse groups of young people and identify the systems and institutions that perpetuate their exclusion. It also helps to identify entry points for diverse young people’s engagement in peacebuilding.

In north-east Nigeria, Conciliation Resources supports the engagement and empowerment of marginalised young women and men from 12 of the communities most affected by the Boko Haram insurgency. Our wider programme has helped establish Youth Peace Platforms (YPPs) in 17 communities in Borno and Yobe states.

Using gender-sensitive conflict analysis in 2018, first with our partners and then with the YPPs, we identified that a focus on cultural norms around masculinity offered an entry point to discussions around gender and violence. There is considerable resistance to the concept of gender in the context due to the overwhelming focus by external actors on gender-based violence. Yet there was a clear need for young people and communities to discuss how gender cultural norms are used to drive many young men to engage in violence through vigilantism (community protection), and why they experience stigma for not using violence to defend their communities against Boko Haram.

Due to the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of society and decision-making structures in the region, young people require permission from families and communities to participate in community structures. As a way to manage this, the programme activities were initially designed to engage with community elders, with a focus on issues that youth identified as significant.

Our partners, the University of Maiduguri Muslim Women Association (UMMWA) in Borno State, and Hope Interactive in Yobe State, held community meetings to introduce older power-holders to the project and explore the role of masculinities in driving conflict. They looked at the violent connotations and traditional stereotypes associated with masculinities. The meetings explored how these can be challenged and constructive masculinities can be used for peacebuilding. This was followed by a series of youth-led community discussions, some men-only, others women-only, to discuss their perspectives on masculinities as well as community expectations of young men and women. Joint discussions were then held to share the learning and identify actions for change.

The discussions enabled young men and women to break down simplistic perceptions of young men, critically analyse some of the drivers of conflict and identify ways that their individual actions can challenge perceptions of masculinities and contribute to peace and social transformation.

In addition, the programme created separate, safe spaces for young men and women respectively to share their stories of conflict, heal from the trauma of their experiences and create support networks. Young people were encouraged to explore creative storytelling: we partnered with a theatre producer, a painter and a musician, and young people chose which approach inspired them the most. Through a series of workshops supported by counsellors with a trauma and psycho-social background facilitating discussion of what they were portraying, young people created their own artistic pieces and then presented and explained them to the rest of the group.

As a result of the programme, elders and community leaders are now more responsive to gender equality and are integrating masculinities into gender and peacebuilding work. They have started to engage more with young people and to support youth work. Separate men-only and women-only spaces to share their stories of conflict more openly, including through artistic expression, enabled a healing process for victims of trauma.
The way peacebuilding programme activities are organised and resourced have a significant bearing on the degree to which different young people are able to participate in peace and security efforts. Not all youth are equally excluded – socio-economic status and other factors such as health can be determining factors. It is important that programmes are tailored to support the participation of the most marginalised and vulnerable youth in society, if they are to harness the full peacebuilding potential of young people.

Below are some of those considerations:

1. **LOCATION**
   Organising activities in urban centres may exclude young people living in rural locations or those with caring responsibilities: consider arranging transport for them to attend activities and build in those costs. For young women (or men) with household or caring duties, the proximity of activities to the home will affect whether and how long they can participate. Factor this into the choice of location, and/or look into supervised childcare on site for participants in workshops for pre-school children. Where possible, meet marginalised young people in their own locations to reduce power imbalances.

2. **TIMING**
   For young women, engaging in peacebuilding work can be an additional chore on top of a heavy domestic workload. Likewise activities during weekdays could exclude young people in full-time education, carers or those pursuing livelihoods. The loss of income from forgoing work in order to attend peacebuilding activities can act as a disincentive to some youth. In designing activities, find out which days and times of day might preclude or facilitate young people’s engagement. Travelling at night can be more risky, and should be limited.

3. **LANGUAGE**
   To avoid privileging the participation of elite, English-speaking youth over youth who have less access to education, and to cater to different languages and dialects, anticipate and build in simultaneous interpretation costs and the translation of materials. Seek agreement with translators for terminology on gender, conflict, violence and peace so terms can be clearly understood in local languages, adopting alternative terms to aid comprehension and/or acceptance. Cater to illiteracy among young people by working with local partners and facilitators who can communicate ideas and concepts in other forms. Use accessible communication formats to support the participation of youth with disabilities.

4. **FACILITATION**
   The make-up of a facilitation team and identity of a facilitator play a significant role in enabling or hindering inclusion. The approach needs to be tailored to context and group and considered in advance: in some cases an outsider is helpful, but in others being local is critical; a young facilitator can produce a more informal and open discussion, while an older person can give rise to traditional power dynamics; equally an older woman facilitator can in some cases manage anti-social behaviours of young male participants and lead to more genuine interactions.
FORMAT

**In person:** The facilitation, space and design of meeting spaces and processes can determine the level of participation by different young people. In several contexts, young women felt that it was neither safe nor their place to speak up, reflecting negative attitudes to women’s participation outside the home or in community life. Creating men- and women-only formats, or break-out spaces can help to provide a greater level of safety and comfort. Separate spaces may also be needed for groups within a wider group, such as older and younger women or men. Consider also using more informal spaces for meetings where young people may feel more comfortable to engage.

See also *Facilitation Guide Gender-sensitive Conflict Analysis* p.8-10 for further guidance on workshop design.

**Online:** Online formats create opportunities and risks for young people’s participation, which need to be assessed in design phases. New technology can allow both more and a wider range of young people to take part in peacebuilding activities and discussions, where the communication infrastructure exists. However, access to mobile phones can be a male privilege or conflict with traditional beliefs. Some young people may lack money to pay for data, so this should be factored into budgets. Young people’s ability to use new technology quickly may also create intergenerational conflict.

In online spaces, it is important to create an informal and inclusive environment and aid clear communication through techniques such as break-out groups. As online formats reduce visibility of safeguarding risks, including gender-based violence, organisers should monitor behaviours on calls, send information to participants ahead of, not during meetings in case it is sensitive and their location not private, use secure communication channels as far as possible, agree follow-up protocols in advance should someone drop off a call, and provide trauma-informed support to facilitators and participants. It is also useful to form partnerships with local specialists who can provide this support.

**SAFETY**

The participation of youth in peace and security efforts may expose them to risks to their own safety and may deter their engagement. Their vulnerability will vary according to gender and individual situation. Safeguarding and security assessments and plans are essential in the design and implementation of activities, including online activities.
BUILD PRACTICAL SKILLS: provide young people with skills that they can deploy immediately in their everyday lives, and that can have a transformative effect on them and societal attitudes towards them.

Alongside activities that build trust and understanding in the longer-term, we found that initiatives which give young people practical skills to address immediate needs in their everyday lives also proved a powerful way to transform societal attitudes to youth, and young people themselves.

SHIFT IN PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

In DRC youth participation is particularly important; young people make up 65% of the population but are excluded from political processes and are often viewed as agitators of conflict. Conciliation Resources and our partner Commission diocésaine Justice, Paix et Réconciliation (CDJPR) have worked with young people in Haut-Uélé and Ituri provinces since 2017. The engagement is part of our support to Local Peace Committees set up in response to the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) conflict.

Young people in these areas lack sustainable livelihoods and are excluded from decision-making and peacebuilding leadership roles due to the hierarchical nature of society. In addition, young people who return from the LRA face stigma within the community. In response, our programme activities focused on developing young people’s skills in conflict analysis and peacebuilding, advocacy to articulate their ideas, and in employment and entrepreneurship. Our programme also sought to build relationships between LRA returnees and the community.

An initial series of training workshops for LRA returnees and young members of Local Peace Committees took place in existing community-based training centres. This encouraged dialogue and collaboration between LRA returnees and other young people who had not been associated with armed groups. After seeing the success of this approach, we supported those who had received training to create their own entrepreneurial centre ‘Boboto’ (‘Peace Centre’ in Lingala) in Faradje in 2019.

As young LRA returnees started to provide community services, community perceptions of them shifted, as did the young returnees’ self-confidence and self-worth. An indication of the value local leaders assigned to the young people’s initiative was reflected in the consent given by land owners, the customary chief of the area and the local territorial administration in 2019 to allocate land for the installation of a new electricity generator for income-generating projects developed by young people at the Boboto centre.

To overcome the confrontational relationship between young people and local authorities at the local level, which was preventing dialogue and collaboration, CDJPR also organised joint conflict analysis and dialogue activities with young people and authorities, which provided opportunities for them to talk to each other about sensitive topics in a way that had been previously impossible.

This in turn enabled successful advocacy engagement by young people at the local, provincial and national levels. In October 2018, after a consultation with other young people from the community, a small youth delegation travelled to Bunia to meet with provincial authorities. The meetings led to an order from the Provincial Minister to dismantle illegal selling points for alcohol and drugs. These were issues which young people had identified in a position paper as one of the causes for youth criminality in Aru territory. Conciliation Resources also accompanied some of the young people to Kinshasa to talk to national government ministers and senators about their experience and role in peacebuilding.

Following engagement with local and territorial authorities, young people are now regularly invited to local decision-making fora, such as weekly security council meetings. The Boboto centre now hosts more than 56 young people (21 female and 35 male), including 29 young LRA returnees (11 female and 18 male) who work there and earn money based on the goods they produce.

Offering youth skills that they could deploy immediately had multiple benefits for youth engagement. It increased their interest in peacebuilding, built trust between young people and authorities and it opened up the space for young people to influence decisions that affect them and their communities. Importantly, it also positively changed community perceptions towards LRA returnees.
ATTITUDE SHIFTS THROUGH ENTREPRENEURIAL SCHEMES IN NORTH-EAST NIGERIA

In north-east Nigeria we adopted a similar approach, which also saw positive results. Here we sought to challenge community perceptions of youth as perpetrators of violence and show their capacity to lead peace efforts. We provided 12 small grants (each approximately USD 450) to groups of young people in 17 YPPs (of which around 40% were female) to develop small-scale businesses.

Funded projects included a certificated peer-to-peer mentoring initiative, enabling a young person skilled in a technical area, such as tailoring or barber skills, to train another; a community-owned microfinance scheme, in which seed funding given to one young person, when repaid, is passed on to the next; and repairs to a community grinding machine, enabling it to be used for free by all. The positive contribution made by young people to their communities resulted in a shift in the behaviour and attitudes of elders, as well as community leaders’ perception of youth as inherently violent and non-productive. Elders now consult the youth regularly, and have become more responsive to their needs and suggestions.

YOUTH CONTRIBUTION TO LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN THE PHILIPPINES

Finally, in the Philippines we trained youth in video monitoring and collecting stories to create a video documentary that highlighted issues young people perceived as impacting security within their communities in Mindanao. Through the production process, young people engaged with community leaders and local government officers to secure their input and support for the work. This process demonstrated to local leadership the potential value of youth contribution to community issues, resulting in an invitation to youth leaders and representatives to attend and film the Pagalungan Barangay General Assembly as a way to increase transparency and accountability of local governance.
For young people to not only participate but to have influence in peace and security efforts, they need to be in the spaces where decisions are made. Ultimately it is incumbent on those with power in decision-making spaces to open them up to youth, not on young people to fight for access. However, peacebuilding programmes can actively seek opportunities for participation beyond dedicated ‘youth’ fora and in decision-making processes at local, regional, national and international levels.

It is important to remember the diversity amongst young people and the differences in terms of opportunity for access and influence, including but not limited to education, income, place of residence, gender, marital status, abilities, ethnicity and religion.

**YOUNG PEOPLE’S CONSTRUCTIVE CONTRIBUTION IN THE SOMALI REGION OF ETHIOPIA**

Youth in the diaspora played an integral role in bringing key issues to light during the repressive regime in the Somali Region. In the weeks after the signing of the Asmara Declaration between the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the Government of Ethiopia in October 2018, we brought together over 25 young people (10 women and 15 men) from the diaspora in Europe to discuss priorities and youth inclusion in the peace and transition process with the ONLF’s secretary-general at the time.

The opening up of the Somali Region at the end of 2018 provided the opportunity for youth in the diaspora to return to the region. At the same time, youth who had remained in the region were now able to express their views and take part in the region’s transition. Conciliation Resources held a youth, peace and security workshop in February 2019 involving 32 youth (10 women and 22 men); the first such forum to take place after the region opened up.

Drawn from various diaspora and local youth organisations, the young people discussed their perspectives and role in the political transition after the peace deal, and shared their unique experiences. The session was met with optimism and elation, with many of the youth remarking that such a meeting would have been impossible only months earlier due to the extreme limitations placed on public dialogue. The youth also shared ideas on how they could prioritise and participate in rebuilding civil society, with education, health, and victims’ reintegration and rehabilitation identified as key areas. To ensure that the experiences and views of youth from hard-to-reach areas were included, a smaller group travelled from the capital city of the Somali Region to two remote areas and exchanged experiences on how youth peacebuilding campaigns were conducted in the diaspora and in the Somali Region under the previous regime.

A sub-committee of ten representatives (five women and five men), the Somali Region Youth Committee, was established by the young people to represent their priorities for the peace process to decision-makers. Conciliation Resources then supported them to arrange briefings to a number of diplomatic missions, who had previously little insight into the Somali Region, and to senior policymakers. These meetings were well received and led to further meetings with senior Ethiopian politicians, where they discussed future conflict prevention and implications for remote communities, and the young people offered support to these processes.

The young people’s constructive approach, offering help rather than only making demands, shifted policymakers’ views of young people, and the Youth Committee are now regularly consulted by policymakers.
YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH ASIA

Over the past ten years, Conciliation Resources has been working in South Asia, with partners in Indian-administered Kashmir and Pakistan-administered Kashmir, on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC). The existing political sensitivities faced by Conciliation Resources working in the region are heightened when engaging with youth groups and leaders, who tend to be associated with ‘activism’, ‘protest’ and ‘anger’. One way to engage constructively with young people is to focus on issues affecting their daily lives including education, economic opportunities and developing leadership opportunities and skills. As these activities tend to attract mainly male participants from privileged backgrounds, efforts are needed to widen participation and reach out to under-represented youth.

Conciliation Resources’ work with our partners to help ensure that voices of diverse youth are included in processes of building peace has involved building a cadre of young people who can articulate the issues affecting them to policymakers. We have done this by equipping them with relevant skills and knowledge, focusing on dialogue, leadership training and engagement with policymakers.

A starting point to building consensus among the many competing visions young people have for the future of Kashmir included visioning exercises carried out on both sides to map out the differences and common perspectives in terms of the challenges facing young Kashmiris and their needs. As part of a long-term initiative known as Vision 2020, we developed dialogue spaces for almost 4,000 young people on both sides of the LoC to share common concerns and aspirations, building a set of core common values to underpin the future of the region. Young people were also trained through an ‘adaptive leadership’ framework, which helped them understand how to strategise, coordinate and lead in an unstable and divisive environment.

Another avenue has been the work of our partners in supporting networks of young leaders from across political party backgrounds to advocate for increased youth representation at policy level. On the Pakistan-administered side of Kashmir, this work led to the selection of a female network member to the Prime Minister’s Youth Council of Pakistan, a platform for young people to directly liaise with government officials and policymakers. She is the only representative from Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

This also contributed to Conciliation Resources’ partners’ achievements in getting agreement among the leadership of local political parties to a 25% quota for young people promised for future local government elections. In India-administered Kashmir, research and outreach among young people on their needs and aspirations informed the design of leadership training curriculums and the setting up of regional platforms for dialogue and engagement across the Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Ladakh.

A key lesson from the work has been that building consensus and working towards joint values between youth on both sides happens gradually and should not be done in isolation, but as part of broader peacebuilding analysis and programming.
ADOPT FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING AND FUNDING:
peacebuilding programmes which release the energy and creativity of young people and which build their sense of self-worth need to be adaptive, and so do the funding instruments that support that.

Across all our work we observed that programmes that equip and allow young people to design and lead their own initiatives, gain respect within, and contribute to their communities, were the most effective in furthering youth inclusion in peace and security efforts. These targeted approaches gave young people a sense of self-worth and released their creativity, energy and inventiveness.

Enabling factors for this kind of work include:

- **A flexible and adaptable approach**: Scoping and listening phases to ascertain needs and interests which inform programme design, as well as participatory gender-sensitive conflict analysis, need to be integrated into peacebuilding activities, realistically costed and funded. Flexibility is needed in project design to allow youth to design, lead and adapt their own initiatives, and these should cater to their diversity.

- **Programmes, not projects**: Donor agreements which support a programme focused around thematic areas of work and clusters of anticipated outcomes, rather than a predefined set of activities, can provide the flexibility needed to support youth roles in peacebuilding. Civil society partners can deploy resources according to identified needs, and adapt when these change and as new initiatives emerge.

- **Time**: Processes to support inclusion are usually more time-consuming because of the additional preparation necessary to ensure meaningful inclusion is achieved and to allow active listening to others’ perspectives in participatory processes. It can also take a long time for youth initiatives to take hold and attitudes to shift. Timelines for this programming need to be proportionate: one year projects will not produce desired change.

- **Realistic budgeting for inclusive processes**: Youth-inclusive peacebuilding will incur additional costs, which donors should expect to be built into realistic budgets. As per Section 3, childcare provision, transport, translation and safeguarding provision are things to be scoped and costed. NGO staff time for youth accompaniment and taking on the administrative responsibility for managing donor finances should also be anticipated.

- **Simple administrative arrangements**: The administration of peacebuilding activities needs to be as unburdensome as possible to allow maximum space for young people’s creativity and energy, while ensuring adequate compliance and accountability. This can be done, for example, by a formal organisation, like a NGO or network ‘hub’ taking on administration of or accountability for funds and reporting.

**SMALL GRANT ADMINISTRATION IN NORTH-EAST NIGERIA**

To manage the funds for youth entrepreneurship activities in Nigeria, Conciliation Resources budgeted USD 450 for each of the 17 Youth Peace Platforms (YPPs). Each YPP was trained in small-scale business development and management and then identified and developed a project within the set budget. They presented their project in a plenary session for feedback to other members of the YPP. Once agreed, each YPP set up a management committee to administer the fund and account to the partner organisation and other YPP members. Conciliation Resources and our partner staff conducted periodic project inspections, and each YPP had to report on project performance to partner staff in quarterly meetings.

**Investment in youth led organisations and movements at local and international levels**: Donors and NGOs need to be ready to explore ways to back a greater variety of youth groups, networks and movements, including those which are not formally registered.
Members of a Youth Peace Platform in north-east Nigeria
CONCLUSION

Through our work with partners, we learned that both anticipating and asking diverse groups of young women and men about their different needs and priorities can create important entry points for their positive engagement with peacebuilding. We found that we need to be ready for what we hear: in many cases employment and education remain more pressing priorities for young people than preventing or resolving conflict, but there are ways to work on both. Supporting youth initiatives across conflict divides on issues they identify of common concern, like employment or the environment, also offers a way to build relationships.

In addition, opening up new spaces for young people to speak challenges existing hierarchies and may reveal hidden issues such as abuse of power, corruption and gender-based violence. We learned to work closely with our partners to pace and sequence our work, taking particular care to maintain safe spaces to raise sensitive issues, and to think through how to respond strategically to emerging challenges.

Our experience highlighted the importance of intergenerational work, both to shift attitudes among older generations toward youth, and to empower young people in places where they are not usually heard. In many contexts young women pointed to patriarchal attitudes, including from their peers, and conservative or repressive gender norms as an obstacle to their involvement.

We learned that it is important to diversify the young people we work with, deliberately expanding beyond engagement with elite youth from English-speaking, educated, higher class or caste backgrounds.

Finally, we observed that securing support for youth participation from local power-holders is important, as they can be gatekeepers to inclusive decision-making processes. Local realities and entrenched power dynamics often determine the nature of any initial work with young people. These must be addressed before, and on an ongoing basis in order for young people to meaningfully participate in peacebuilding.
REFERENCES AND FURTHER RESOURCES

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Conciliation Resources is an international organisation committed to stopping violent conflict and creating more peaceful societies. We work with people impacted by war and violence, bringing diverse voices together to make change that lasts.