

Helen Berents, Ingrid Valladares,
Yulia Nesterova, & Katrina Leclerc

April 2026

BEYOND CONSULTATIONS: INTERGENERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY

LESSONS FROM NATIONAL ACTION PLAN PROCESSES
IN FINLAND, PHILIPPINES, NIGERIA, AND
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is funded by a Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) research grant, (July 2024-December 2025), and co-led by A/Prof Helen Berents (Griffith), Dr Yulia Nesterova (Glasgow), Dr Ingrid Valladares (Griffith), and Dr Katrina Leclerc (Saint Paul/Winnipeg).

We are very grateful to all those who participated in this research. Your insights and honesty were invaluable. Special thanks to Erika Yague and Emilia Hannuksela.

Many thanks to the support from our
Youth Expert Advisory Team:

Democratic Republic of Congo: Lydie Mungala and Marie-Rose Tshite

Finland: Camilla Ojala and Paula Pättikangas

Nigeria: Stephanie E. Effevottu and Rafiu Adeniran Lawal

Philippines: Brian Delos Santos and Rodolfo M. Matucan Jr

Recommended citation: Berents, Helen., Valladares, Ingrid., Nesterova, Yulia., and Leclerc, Katrina.. 2026. *Beyond Consultations: Intergenerational Engagement in Youth, Peace and Security: Lessons from National Action Plan Processes In Finland, Philippines, Nigeria, and Democratic Republic of Congo.* Research Report. Griffith University: Brisbane Australia
<https://doi.org/10.25904/1912/5914>



SCHOOL OF CONFLICT STUDIES
SAINT PAUL UNIVERSITY



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1. INTRODUCTION



Over the decade since the YPS agenda was established, attention to intergenerational engagement as a means of advancing the agenda and as a core value has grown. However, there is no agreed understanding of what intergenerational engagement is, or how it might be systematically recognised and supported.

In practical terms, there is little understanding of how intergenerational dialogue and engagement are practiced more broadly. What is known is that generational divides can be complex to overcome due to intergenerational suspicion, conflict, and animosity^[1], especially as youth continue to be viewed as either perpetrators of violence or victims and their engagement is tokenised, instrumental, and symbolic.

Concerns persist about the meaningful engagement of youth in peace and security. Youth can be included in tokenistic ways, only invited to participate in processes where non-youth^[2] have already set the agenda, and offered little long-term commitment.^[3] All these concerns reflect persistent power imbalances between youth peacebuilders and institutional processes. While many actors are working carefully to

address these issues, they present a challenge to genuine intergenerational engagement, and simultaneously demonstrates why such engagement across generations is so vital for progress for the YPS agenda.

This lack of clear definitions or understandings does not mean genuine intergenerational engagement is not happening within YPS related activities. But it does mean that practitioners and scholars often rely on the fact they will 'know it when they see it', rather than being able to proactively support meaningful intergenerational engagement.

As practitioners, governments, and institutions attempt to institutionalise and embed YPS into policy and practice, National Action Plans (NAPs) on YPS have emerged as an increasingly common policy framework. NAPs are national policy documents which outline specific aims and actions to advance relevant governance agendas.^[4] These are key sites to consider what intergenerational engagement looks like as NAPYPS development requires multiple actors to collaborate on creating a concrete government document.

The first NAPYPS was launched by Finland in August 2021,^[5] followed by Nigeria in November 2021,^[6] and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)^[7] and then the Philippines both in August 2022^[8]. Recent years have seen an acceleration of NAPYPS development with more than ten NAPYPS and many more in progress.

Given the growing use of NAPs as a policy mechanism for YPS advancement, this project examined the first four processes – Finland, Nigeria, Philippines, and DRC – to

understand how actors involved in these processes understand ‘intergenerational engagement’ and if and how it characterised the NAPYPS development process.

By doing this, the report shows

- How intergenerational engagement has been practiced within YPS coalitions and efforts towards national action plans on YPS,
- The successes and challenges of intergenerational engagement in these spaces, and
- Strategies to establish meaningful and effective intergenerational engagement based on this evidence.

This study presents key findings organised around themes that emerged from participants’ reflections and illustrates conceptualisations, practices and challenges present during the four NAPYPS development processes. It concludes with lessons and recommendations for strengthening intergenerational engagement in future NAPYPS processes.



DEFINING INTERGENERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

This report draws on practitioner and scholarly work that refuse simplification and develops more nuanced definitions. Not all participants in this project share this definition in totality, and we explore the way in which intergenerational engagement is understood by participants below.

We understand intergenerational engagement as a “learning and knowledge-sharing process that entails critical reflection among different generations aimed at achieving social change”.^[9] Generations here are not fixed age categories but are relational: ‘older’ and ‘younger’ generations hold different experiences and expertise that can be shared.

In YPS spaces, the more specific term ‘intergenerational dialogue’ has increasingly been used. Tanghøj^[10] identifies detailed goals of intergenerational dialogue: “mutual understanding of generational perspectives and differences, breaking stereotypes and discrimination structures based on age” and building trust and bridging inequalities. However, in practice, its use is often limited and superficial. It often appears more as a consultation with youth rather than true dialogue and exchange. Simply invoking the importance of ‘adults’ and ‘youth’ interacting in unspecified ways is not a sufficient approach.

Intergenerational engagement is not just formal, but occurs in everyday, mundane knowledge exchanges, skill sharing and facilitation. It is a key aspect for ensuring peace and security efforts are inclusive, equitable and sustainable.

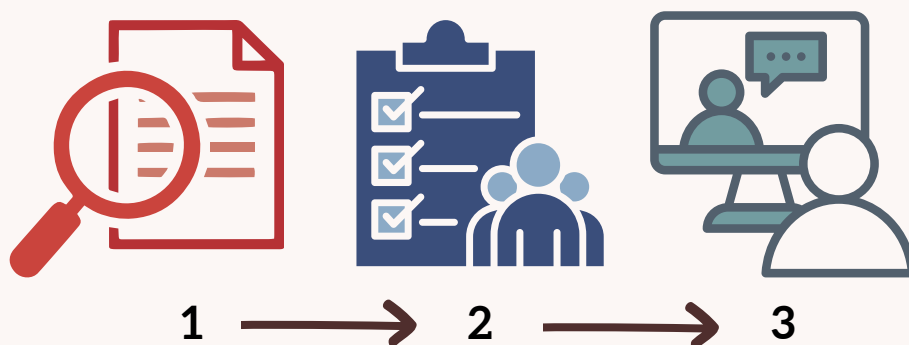


2. METHODS

The project was supported by a Youth Expert Advisory Team (YEAT), to ensure relevance, build shared understanding, and facilitate connections. The YEAT included eight peacebuilders, two from each participating country who were actively involved in their relevant NAPYPS process.

The project involved three phases:

1. The YPS database (www.ypsdb.org) was used to identify relevant YPS related documents referencing the term 'intergenerational' and related terms such as engagement, partnerships, dialogue. A total of 167 documents were analysed to examine how intergenerationality was conceptualised and enacted.
2. In collaboration with the YEAT, a survey was developed and shared with youth and non-youth actors who had been involved in the NAPYPS processes in each country to describe their experience and the occurrence of intergenerational engagements. It gained 41 responses.
3. Online interviews were conducted with 25 key stakeholders: 7 from the Philippines, 5 from Nigeria, 6 from the DRC and 7 from Finland. The interviews enabled participants to elaborate and offer new insights of intergenerational engagement in the NAPYPS process. Participants chose to be named or anonymous in this report, and views expressed are of the individual themselves and do not represent their organisation as a whole.



3. WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF INTERGENERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT?

Across the relevant documents, variations of intergenerational engagement appear in 116 different ways. When analysed, these fall into two groups: it is used as a value, something those working on the agenda aspire to ensure is included, or more commonly as a practice or tool, something that is done to improve the process, for example by facilitating discussion, holding workshops, or formalising young people's voices.

Among interviewees understandings of intergenerational engagement emphasised both the value and the practice/tool approach. For YEAT member, Marie Rose Tshite (DRC):

thinking and practicing intergenerationality means subverting structures so that peace and security are co-constructed, fair and sustainable. This requires institutional courage, active listening and immediate, sustainable financial commitments. By extension, it also means creating spaces where listening becomes a shared responsibility and co-construction becomes an institutional requirement, especially during the development of national action plans.

Other YEAT members emphasised the importance of diversity “of opinions, structures, groups” (Rafiu Lawal, Nigeria), to the need for genuine co-ownership (Camila Ojala, Finland).

Participants also highlighted the importance of recognising differences in knowledge across generations. Joel Linnainmäki (Finland) explained

we were very aware that we were not operating in a vacuum. You know, there were a lot of people who came before us who helped us, who guided us, who gave us very good suggestions and tips and even training and how to do things. And we could reflect with.

A youth leader in the Philippines, describes it as a “shared space” where “theory meets experience”, which is useful as it

help[s] young people temper our expectations of... how peace and security matters roll out. But also... a lot of older people are in decision-making positions, so also understanding the priorities of the young people would benefit them.

Joseph Akilimali (DRC) saw intergenerational engagement as helping the young people who were leading the process “access legitimacy and spaces that would otherwise have remained closed to us”



4. NAPYPS COUNTRY PROCESSES



FINLAND

In August 2021 Finland was the first country in the world to launch and implement a NAPYPS. Finland has a long history of formalised youth activism, with Youth Councils in cities across the country, and an active and respected national youth network, Allianssi (renamed Nuorisola since 2023), which was key in developing the Finnish NAPYPS. The government agreed to develop a NAPYPS after persistent advocacy from Allianssi and the youth-led 2250 Network, and with the support of senior government officials in the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

In 2019-2020, despite the pandemic, the Finnish MFA, working with Allianssi and its members, ran an online survey of Finnish youth and held in-person and virtual consultations. The Finnish NAPYPS is organised around the five pillars, and consultations focused on their relevance in the Finnish context as well as foreign policy objectives. Experts on the themes of each pillar were invited to brief, and MFA wrote a 'zero draft' before feedback was solicited from youth, academics, policymakers, and other government ministries.

Those involved describe a constructive, engaged and collaborative process that reflected the low hierarchy characteristic of Finnish social norms. As the first NAPYPS in the world, Finland drew on its established WPS NAP to help inform the structure and process. Many of the aims in the NAPYPS compile existing targets of other policies across the government, which was seen as a way to make it more feasible to implement and more integrated with existing priorities. A monitoring committee composed of government, Allianssi members, and other stakeholders meets periodically to check in on progress and strategise. Finland launched their second NAPYPS in December 2025.



NIGERIA

Youth-led efforts to develop Nigeria's NAP began already in 2015, with formal work starting in 2016. Initially, the government questioned the need for a NAP and provided no resources for consultations and drafting. Despite this, the NAP was developed through regional in-person consultations across six geopolitical zones, complemented by surveys, literature reviews, focus groups, and key informant interviews (e.g., with at-risk youth such as former combatants, religious and traditional leaders). A 16-member steering committee of representatives from youth groups and civil society organisations oversaw the process.

Consultations brought together youth, security sector representatives (including the military and the police), women peace groups, media, academia, local government officials, and civil society organisations. The government was represented through the Ministries of Youth Development, Foreign Affairs, Interior, and others. About 1,000 young people from diverse backgrounds participated, though most were already engaged in peace and security work. Each consultation was facilitated by a coalition member.

The consultations aimed to: (1) inform stakeholders about the YPS agenda and its five pillars, and explore how it could be adapted to Nigeria's context and assess existing efforts; (2) discuss the realities faced by youth, identify their needs, and consider what support should look like from different actors (these ranged from causes of insecurity to intolerance to barriers to youth participation); and (3) build trust foster collaboration among diverse actors and stakeholders. Despite security challenges requiring relocation of consultations to safe places, the process raised awareness and secured greater support. The draft NAP was validated by key stakeholders and officially launched on 6 November 2021 at an event attended by the vice president and other senior officials.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The DRC launched its NAP YPS in August 2022, following a largely youth-led and coalition-driven process shaped by ongoing conflict, decentralised governance, and limited institutional trust. The process emerged from sustained advocacy by youth organisations and the establishment of a National Technical Secretariat (STN-220), inspired in part by earlier coordination mechanisms developed under the WPS agenda. Youth organisations, members of the YPS coalition, played a central role in mobilising participation, conducting nationwide data collection across provinces, and translating UNSCR 2250 into contextually grounded priorities.

Intergenerational engagement was present but uneven. Youth leaders consistently described how they themselves initiated outreach to women's organisations, WPS actors, and experienced peacebuilders in order to access institutional knowledge, political legitimacy, and drafting expertise. This engagement was rarely reciprocal: established actors were seldom proactive in seeking collaboration with youth, resulting in an asymmetrical dynamic in which young people carried the burden of relationship-building. While experienced women peacebuilders played a critical bridging role – particularly in navigating state institutions and linking WPS and YPS frameworks – this support depended largely on youth initiative rather than institutionalised mechanisms.

The DRC experience highlights both the strategic value and the limits of intergenerational engagement in contexts where youth leadership is strong, but authority, resources, and political ownership remain concentrated elsewhere.



THE PHILIPPINES

Following the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2250, youth development and empowerment initiatives were included in the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 which led to the creation of the Philippine Youth Development Plan 2023-2028. These policies laid the groundwork for the NAPYPS. Building on this momentum, in 2017, the Office of the Presidential Advisor on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU), initiated the development of a comprehensive peace agenda for youth. This process which culminated in 2022 was supported by the National Youth Commission, the Generation Peace Youth Network (GenPeace) and other civil society organisations. It involved capacity building initiatives to raise awareness about the UNSCR 2250 and YPS agenda, Youth Peace Tables, multi-stakeholders' consultations, an Inter-Agency workshop; a national YPS Survey; and regional, provincial and virtual youth consultations.

In 2022, youth from every region including youth representing local governments were invited to a three-day writing workshop for the NAPYPS. An independent consultant, who was a former young peacebuilder and current youth advocate, facilitated the process, while youth led the drafting. The workshop focused on analysing and discussing the insights from consultations, refining the wording and format of the NAPYPS and an intergenerational dialogue on the draft. This draft was submitted to the government for review and publication.

While a Primer was released at a hybrid launch in August 2022, the full NAPYPS has not yet been made publicly available or incorporated into policy. Despite this, young people continue to leverage insights from the process and Primer to advance peacebuilding in the Philippines.

5. FINDINGS

1. RELATIONSHIPS ARE CRITICAL



Across all four countries, participants of all ages emphasised the importance of trust throughout the process. Trust must be built and maintained actively. Existing networks and partnerships are incredibly valuable to the success of the process, as a foundation for the relationships required. Participants also explained the importance of feedback loops that ensured that the process was transparent and accountable.

In Finland, there is a long tradition of citizen participation and engagement (Joel Linnainmäki), which was a “firm base to build on” (Anu Apo), and smoothed the way for there to be an expectation of providing information back to those who participated. There was an iterative cycle of consultation

and drafting which ensured buy-in and trust, and in a document that was feasible and representative (Laura Kaltainen, Finland). A monitoring group was set up to meet regularly during drafting and to ensure implementation. Described as “outsider watchdogs” it enabled information sharing, updates, cooperation, and accountability.

In contrast, in the Philippines, effective communication channels were missing in the process. As youth were involved at different times and parts of the process, some of them were not aware of their role, the process and the outcomes of the consultation which created distrust in the process.

This was further exacerbated with the NAPYPS never being publicly available and the absence of mechanisms to ensure its implementation. A youth leader in the Philippines noted that at the end of the highly engaged process of developing the YPSNAP document the government did not follow through on commitments: “What we received was... just a brief outcome document, but not even the actual text of the NAP, which was very frustrating for a lot of people.” Despite a highly engaged process, the outcome was broken trust and lack of accountability.

Mutual distrust was a significant stumbling block to overcome in Nigeria also. Negative perceptions of youth by the government, and perceptions of the government by youth had to be confronted in the process of writing the NAPYPS. Consultations in Nigeria, while not always true ‘exchanges’ provided important spaces for youth to express how they felt and what was needed, with the key institutional actors present to listen to them. One youth participant saw these consultations as opportunities to understand each other and co-create across generations with different knowledge and skills.

In the DRC, existing strong networks of youth actors ensured the success of the process. Intergenerational engagement in the DRC NAPYPS process functioned primarily as a mechanism to confer institutional legitimacy on a youth-led process, rather than as a reciprocal or jointly initiated collaboration. Several interviewees (Justus Tshikona, Lydie Mungala, Marie-Rose Tshite) highlighted that youth actors were already mobilised, organised, and leading advocacy for a NAPYPS before intergenerational engagement occurred.

Joseph Akilimali, a youth coalition leader involved in the development of the NAP, explained that intergenerational engagement entered the process primarily when institutional validation became necessary: “Young people were there, leading the process, but other generations were present and in support of young people.”

“FACILITATING DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN YOUNG ACTIVISTS AND DECISION-MAKERS, WHILE ENSURING THAT YOUNG PEOPLE WERE RECOGNISED AS EXPERTS OF THEIR OWN REALITIES”

Annie Matundu Mbambi, who supported the NAP drafting process as a consultant based on her experience as a member of the National Technical Secretariat on WPS, was identified by participants as a key ally. Annie described her role explicitly as a bridging one, “facilitating discussions between young activists and decision-makers, while ensuring that young people were recognised as experts of their own realities.”

These NAP processes were sometimes characterised by lack of trust between youth and non-youth as the result of ineffective communication channels and negative perceptions of youth. In other cases, intergenerational engagements were based in structured collaboration and involvement of older generations at certain stages. In all cases, trust and mechanisms that strengthen this trust are key to strong relationships between actors.



2. INTERGENERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT MUST BE CONTEXT-SPECIFIC

NAPYPS development processes were highly context dependent. Countries have different social and political norms that affect engagement. How youth are seen, how politics is 'done', the accessibility of decision makers, and the strength of civil society all impacted the processes in different ways across the four countries. Despite this, there are shared challenges around persistent negative stereotypes, and similar stories of opportunities for engaging across generations.

Frictions Between Generations

Intergenerational engagement in the DRC NAPYPS process was widely experienced as asymmetrical, with youth actors bearing primary responsibility for initiating, sustaining, and legitimising relationships with older generations and established institutions. Here, intergenerational engagement is not a productive pathway, but the legacy of deeply embedded social norms. Youth coalition members (Esther Atosha, Justus Tshikona, Lydie Mungala) repeatedly emphasised that intergenerational engagement was not reciprocal, but largely initiated by young people seeking access, recognition, and institutional credibility. Joseph Akilimali described how youth participation was welcomed in principle but constrained in practice: “We always see young people consulted, asked to contribute, asked to validate — but never given final authority.”

This dynamic was echoed by Marie-Rose Tshite, who reflected more broadly on the political implications of such one-sided

engagement: “Young people carry the effort alone, while established generations withdraw or leave the responsibility entirely on the shoulders of youth.” She further stressed that this asymmetry is structural rather than individual, noting that without explicit mechanisms to rebalance power, intergenerational engagement risks reinforcing existing hierarchies rather than transforming them.

“WE ALWAYS SEE YOUNG PEOPLE CONSULTED, ASKED TO CONTRIBUTE, ASKED TO VALIDATE – BUT NEVER GIVEN FINAL AUTHORITY”

While a culture of seniority is relevant globally, in certain local contexts elder leaders play a formalised, key role in their communities and thus in peacebuilding processes. In the Philippines, this demarcated culture of seniority and gender norms led to deferrals to elders and hierarchical participation of young men first and then young women. While relationships have improved over time, a former government official notes that:

there are also parts of the country that rely on the insights of the traditional leaders, the elders, for example, so... even though there are a lot of youth who want to be more proactive in participating in the political processes, or in the civic arena, the enabling environment is not present for them.

The impacts of enduring limited stereotypes about youth and perceived social hierarchies connected to age and roles limited the

extent to which intergenerational engagement was possible. In Nigeria, a youth leader explained that often while politicians attended the consultations they didn't participate, but just "gave messages and left".

Collaborations Between Generations

Recognising the complexities of each context, participants highlighted the importance of working alongside leaders in the community to create opportunities and spaces where youth are brought in these conversations without disrespecting cultural norms and hierarchies.

In the Philippines it was mentioned by some participants that it would have been beneficial and "effective" to have the voices of older generations who have worked in peacebuilding or were involved in conflict, as they have knowledge that can also guide younger generations in addressing issues. The absence of these key actors was noted: 'It would be nice if, for example, there was an older peacebuilder who could have shared... how peace policies are implemented in the Philippines' (youth leader). This call was also echoed by participants in Finland such as Paula Pättikangas who noted "So not only one adult, a lot of young people, but we should have people from different generations. And usually we forget about the older generation at the end of their lives how to kind of involve them also in these discussions."

Anu Apo from the Finnish MFA described the feedback from Alliansii as an example of learning from younger generations who offer "fresh language" because they have been involved throughout the process as

collaborators: "I think this is quite important in fact. Now I mentioned it because it creates the new reality, it creates the way we think. So, the way you write matters a lot in that sense." Youth perspectives can bring something new to the "quite straightforward" way of writing "that kind of recreates old ways of thinking" (Anu Apo).

Capitalising on the experience of previous generations was identified by youth actors across all countries. In Nigeria, youth created intergenerational spaces to meet with national 'icons' to learn from them about the process of organising a movement—they referred to them as capacity building workshops but there were also people from older generations who offered mentorship on leadership to youth. These icons shared their experiences from the 1960s and 70s about how they mobilised, how they used various methods to raise awareness and strengthen the movement. As one young man explained

we learned lessons there: that as young people, we need to learn to organise ourselves and work together. So that was a product of intergenerational conversations. Not just amongst ourselves — we needed someone who had been there, someone who knew what happened.

In Finland, Alliansii was described as having a "very strong alumni network"; people who used to be involved are now members of parliament, or other more senior roles who were "acting like mentors for the kind of work that we wanted to do" and ensuring that the youth "weren't operating without knowledge or awareness of history of what people had worked on before" (Joel Linnainmäki).



3. THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH-ONLY SPACES

While collaborative, intergenerational spaces and opportunities are crucial, youth-only spaces are also essential for ensuring strong foundations, confidence, safety and equal participation in peacebuilding for young actors.

Esther Atosha and Justus Tshikona from the DRC suggest that not all stages of the NAPYPS process benefited from intergenerational engagement, particularly where youth-led data collection, mobilisation, and agenda-setting were concerned. Justus stressed that the early phases of the DRC NAPYPS process were intentionally youth-led, and that involving older generations at every stage was neither necessary nor always desirable. Joseph Akilimali and Esther Atosha in South Kivu both explained that data collection and mobilisation were carried out primarily by young people, reflecting trust considerations and contextual knowledge: “We did not involve older groups... Young people were the ones gathering data across the provinces, because they knew the realities on the ground” (Esther Atosha).

Similarly, Lydie Mungala, who served as a focal point during data collection in Haut-Katanga, highlighted that youth leadership was essential to ensuring relevance and credibility among young respondents: “Many young people did not even know what YPS was at first, so we had to explain, discuss,

and listen before anything else.” At the same time, interviewees emphasised that intergenerational engagement became more relevant at later stages—such as drafting, institutional negotiation, and validation.

In the Philippines, youth-only spaces were seen as critical as they offered more opportunities for open and honest dialogue. A government official and youth advocate noted: “For me, it should be a youth-focused dialogue. Because sometimes... because of our culture sometimes we just say yes”.

FOR ME, IT SHOULD BE A YOUTH-FOCUSED DIALOGUE, BECAUSE SOMETIMES... BECAUSE OF OUR CULTURE SOMETIMES WE JUST SAY YES

Similarly, an independent consultant involved in the NAPYPS development explained that workshops in the Philippines were designed to be youth-only initially and then “on the third day of the workshop, we will always do this intergenerational dialogue to make sure that young people also feel confident that what they are talking about among themselves as young people is something that they feel confident to share with adults.” In response to previous experiences in other spaces where youth are often criticized or attacked, youth spaces become safe platforms to share and discuss more freely.

It is important to note that often in these discussions ‘youth-only’ really only means younger peacebuilders and youth civil society. However, in both Finland and Philippines the government representative or consultant for the process was themselves a young person. Laura Kaltainen, who worked for the Finnish government on the NAPYPS process explained that youth participants didn’t always see her as a ‘youth’: “I think the youth mostly saw me as being older because I was part of the ministry, but also because my boss, who is older in her 50s, was part of it”. But then in meetings within the MFA, Laura was often the youngest there, giving her unique insights into both ‘sides’ of the discussion. This dynamic meant that sometimes it helped build trust and shared understanding, despite the difference in formal roles.

While youth-only spaces are crucial, it is also important to determine when, how and where to include other diverse sectors in the process. Limiting participation to certain groups in specific contexts will ensure the safety of the people involved. In Nigeria, spaces were established for separate focus groups with overlooked youth groups in the northeast of the country and in the Niger Delta, such as youth combatants and survivors of gender-based violence among others. Across all countries, participants talked about the importance of such unique spaces and argued to expand this model to other groups such as incarcerated youth or youth with disabilities in future NAP development.

4. DISTINGUISH BETWEEN CONSULTATIONS AND INTERGENERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT



A persistent tension in these discussions is whether the interactions in the various NAPYPS processes could be understood as substantive and reciprocal intergenerational engagement. As these processes were not designed explicitly to be ‘intergenerational,’ the forms of interaction were often more formulaic, or constrained within expectations and budgets. Often when participants discussed a ‘consultation’ that occurred, the research team prompted them to reflect on what it entailed and whether it was ‘intergenerational’. These insights reveal a wide variety of understandings and the influence of dynamics from the thematic findings identified above.

Interviews from the DRC indicate that while intergenerational engagement helped youth actors access institutional and political

spaces, it did not translate into shared decision-making authority or control over outcomes. Esther Atosha, based in South Kivu, reflecting on her experience engaging with formal structures during the NAPYPS process, noted that youth participation was welcomed, but largely confined to consultation rather than decision-making: “Young people are involved and invited to contribute, but the decisions are still taken elsewhere. Our role is often to give input, not to decide.”

Similarly, Justus Tshikona, then vice-chair of the National Technical Secretariat, highlighted that institutional openness did not necessarily mean a willingness to share power, particularly within state-led processes: “There is space for young people to speak, but that space does not always come with influence. Youth are listened to, but not always taken seriously when decisions are made.” Together, these accounts underscore the distinction between access and authority, suggesting that intergenerational engagement alone is insufficient to alter entrenched decision-making hierarchies.

When asked what made the Finnish ‘discussions’ between the MFA and the representatives of youth-led civil society intergenerational and not just ‘a conversation between people of different ages’, Laura Kaltainen offered the following reflection:

...We didn't come to present the idea... We didn't come to the meeting saying this is what we have planned and you can now say if you agree, but we actually had a discussion and listened to each other and changed our views based on that.

This insight, where the power imbalance is consciously noted and where other participants are willing to change their mind points to how interactions might be more equal.

A youth leader highlighted that in the Philippines the dynamic depends on the role taken by the older actors in the room, saying that it depends

because, there is a tendency for a lot of the older peacebuilders to... take much of the space because of the knowledge that they have. So, it would turn into young people listening to the older person instead of conversing with the older person.

In Nigeria, the participants believed that the development of NAPYPS included clear elements of intergenerational engagement, namely that they involved mixed-age, multi-stakeholder workshops. Oyekan Adedoyin highlighted that in the development workshops “the interaction was cordial and built on trust” and “we all negotiated and reasoned together; at the end we reached a consensus on the choices we made.” The complexities of these interactions and the varying success and compromise evident from the four countries demonstrates the challenges of meaningful intergenerational engagement, and the way in which the language of intergenerationality can be co-opted or applied without changing the way things are done.



6. RECOMMENDATIONS

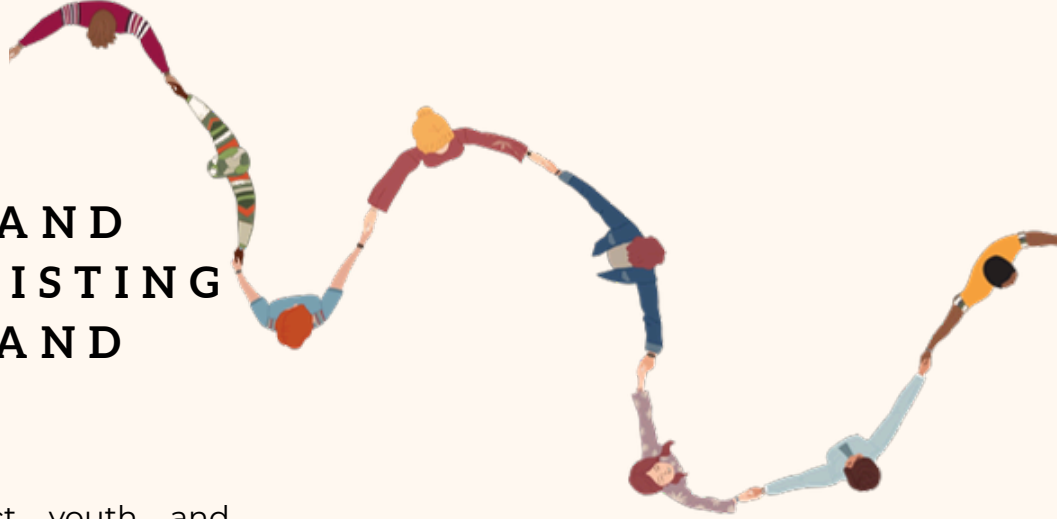
Participants were asked how future NAPYPS development processes could be improved considering intergenerational engagement. Key themes emerged from this specific question and from their broader reflections during interviews, and the wider survey responses.

1. BUILD CAPACITY FOR INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION AND PARTNERSHIP

1. Governments and stakeholders should ensure the creation of both youth-only spaces alongside intergenerational spaces throughout the process. Youth-only spaces are essential for providing safe, relatable and legitimate platforms where diverse young people can confidently discuss their priorities and challenges before entering intergenerational spaces.
2. Ensure intergenerational encounters are representative of diverse identities so meaningful engagements can take place throughout development processes. Take intersectionality seriously in these spaces to ensure youth from diverse gender, class, race, ethnicity, geography are not only included but also meaningfully listened to and play a key role in processes.
3. Set a time for power-sharing or reflective activities amongst generations at early stages of any process to ensure youth are not overshadowed and can be recognised and given the space to participate as equal partners. Younger and older generations can learn and support each other in different ways and at different stages complementing each other for the successful development, implementation and monitoring of NAPYPS.
4. Intergenerational engagements in informal or formal processes must involve activities that go beyond traditional consultations/meetings which create ways of addressing power imbalances, and the challenges of participating in formal, hierarchical settings. This includes creating opportunities for non-verbal and creative forms of expression such as drawing, storytelling and informal conversations to promote safer spaces.



2. RECOGNISE AND SUPPORT EXISTING NETWORKS AND ACTIVITY



1. Strengthen and connect youth and cross-sector networks to enable meaningful intergenerational engagement. Networks with experience and legitimacy in holding institutions accountable, such as WPS actors, can play a crucial role in supporting youth to build collective strength, reinforce accountability and sustain intergenerational dialogue.

2. Engage existing networks of youth actors. Recognising existing expertise avoids duplication, and ensures actors who are embedded in their contexts and communities are central. This requires careful outreach and engagement, and for institutions to avoid the 'easy' option of already-known youth or manufactured youth bodies for NAPYPS processes.

3. ENSURE SUSTAINED COMMITMENTS OF TIME AND RESOURCES



1. Allocate adequate time for planning and communication. Spaces for intergenerational engagements should not be rushed or organised at short notice. When facilitators and participants have enough time to prepare, the process is more purposeful, inclusive, and fit for context. Lack of preparation risks disengagement and can undermine continuity and stakeholder trust.

2. Fair and equal funding is essential to ensure equitable and sustainable intergenerational engagement. Differentiated remuneration, where older stakeholders are compensated for their time and expertise, while young people contribute voluntarily can create an imbalance that results in barriers for engagement. Equitable funding ensures younger and older stakeholders are recognised as equals, reinforcing mutual respect and legitimacy in the process.

3. Continuous funding is critical for maintaining momentum, achieving long term outcomes and enabling young people to remain actively engaged throughout the process. Importantly, this commitment should extend beyond the development of NAPs to include implementation and monitoring phases, ensuring NAPs are translated into action rather than left as static documents.
4. Take the time to train more youth and non-youth facilitators to support and facilitate meaningful intergenerational dialogues where power is shared amongst different generations.
5. Intergenerational engagements should extend beyond short and one-off meetings. Longer-term and in-person interactions offer sustained learning opportunities that foster deeper understanding, knowledge exchange and stronger relationships that can lead to more context-appropriate outcomes. They also enable easier management of differing expectations, pace and constraints of policy and peacebuilding processes and realistic avenues and entry points of change.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Intergenerational engagement prompts stakeholders to adopt more meaningful knowledge sharing practices that recognise both younger and older generations as key peacebuilding actors.

Findings from this project demonstrate that intergenerational engagement requires respectful and equitable participation of both younger and older generations in the development of NAPs. While some participants noted that intergenerationality is important for the YPS agenda, they also stressed the importance of youth-only spaces. This need arises from the persistent experience of marginalisation, exclusion, tokenisation and minimisation that younger generations encounter in various formal and informal decision-making spaces.



Addressing these power imbalances is at the core of creating meaningful and inclusive intergenerational interactions for successful and sustainable NAPYPS.

Intergenerational engagements for NAPYPS processes shouldn't be perceived as a 'one-size-fits-all'. Instead, recognition of spaces and opportunities for fostering equal engagement based on cultural and social practices which are context-specific are required. This does not mean disregarding cultural practices and knowledge, such as Indigenous customs and traditions, but rather finding avenues where youth are equally recognised and listened to in these spaces to create meaningful intergenerational interactions and exchanges. It is also necessary to acknowledge that cultural and social norms may be shaped by ageism, and persistent negative stereotypes about youth.

Furthermore, while intergenerational dialogue and consultations mean different things, participants emphasised that meaningful intergenerational engagements can still happen within consultations. For this, there needs to be an intentional commitment to listening to and engaging

with youth rather than gathering their views to advance older adult-led institutional agendas. There also needs to be a clear recognition that institutions ultimately are the ones who make final decisions as implementers, but youth can also be a part of the implementation processes.

Intergenerational engagement is vital to ensuring responsive and engaged policy development in NAPYPS processes. Specific attention to pre-existing intergenerational dynamics, intentional creation of respectful and reciprocal intergenerational spaces, and commitment to sustained engagement and mutual trust throughout the process can contribute to successful NAPYPS creation and implementation. The YPS agenda depends on intergenerational engagement, but such interactions cannot be taken for granted. This report offers a starting point for YPS practitioners and scholars to think more deliberately and explicitly about what intergenerational engagement means and how it might be fostered in enduring ways for more youth-inclusive, sustainable peace.



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- [8] It is important to note that while the Philippines government publicly launched their NAPYPS the policy itself was never published and has not been implemented.
- [9] Valladares, 'Exploring Intergenerational Dialogue'
- [10] Tanhøj, 'Connecting Generations'

