



POLICY BRIEF

Achieving Youth Peace and Security (YPS) in Cameroon: The Role of Intergenerational Dialogue

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About us:

Local Youth Corner Cameroon (LOYOC) is a youth-led civil society organization created in 2002. The organization currently applies research and capacity building among its methodologies to support youth and community development, peace building, conflict transformation, and countering/preventing violent extremism (P/CVE). Over the past years, LOYOC Cameroon has focused special attention on peacebuilding activities, facilitating dialogues and building social cohesion between communities, supporting livelihood programs as peacebuilding tools and putting young people at the forefront of processes.

Note: This paper draws from field opinions and exchanges captured during the series of Intergenerational dialogue sessions organised by LOYOC in collaboration with the Cameroon National Commission on Youth, Peace and Security, the Ministry of youth and civic education (MINJEC) and international development Organisations. The paper brings forth solid recommendations on how this form of dialogue can be used in unlocking the potentials of Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) in Cameroon. Our brief provides concise analysis to inform current debates and decision making. Key findings or recommendations are listed on the first and second page to allow busy readers to quickly grasp the main points.

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❖ Key Findings

- The younger generation in Cameroon is still considered as “troublemakers” by the older generation. Here, there is a general view of young people being perpetrators of violence in their communities.
- In Cameroon, young people are faced with enormous challenges and barriers within their communities that make it difficult for them to engage in conversations about peace and security.
- As a result of the exclusion of young people from formal and informal peace processes, young people are losing confidence in the older generation who are meant to facilitate the peace process in Cameroon.
- Young people are of the opinion that, if the adults create time to listen to them and understand their perspectives, there is a greater possibility to secure their buy-in and support for their work.
- Creating a space for discussion among young people and adults is essential in building trust and understanding.
- Both generations are yearning to have a safe space to meet and share perspectives but are unable to find the perfect host for such engagements.

❖ Recommendations

- The need to incorporate intergenerational opportunities for experience sharing of best practices in youth movements and peacebuilding.
- There is a necessity to increase the awareness of both generations on the need for experience sharing and collaboration starting from grassroots to the national level.
- All organizations, governmental and non-governmental, should adopt policies and practices that support young people's leadership and participation in peace-building processes in Cameroon. By doing so, they can better enable young people to choose the form of engagement that they feel best fits their needs and goals and, at the same time, improve young people's access to decision-making opportunities.
- Government and stakeholders should create platforms for evidence-based sensitisation of adults on the important contributions of young people in promoting peace in Cameroon.
- There is the need to improve outreach and youth inclusion, by seeking the participation of a diverse set of young voices, from different regions of the country, different socio-economic backgrounds, religious backgrounds and different genders and sexual orientations, while also addressing structural and cultural barriers to participation faced by those groups.
- Develop regional and intergenerational cooperation and implementation mechanisms, by strengthening synergies, coherence, and coordination between local, national, and regional actors working on YPS, growing their institutional capacities to engage youth, and developing more intergenerational platforms.

Introduction

Cameroon in recent years has experienced an increase in its youth population. Being a youth in Cameroon means an individual should be between 15 to 35 years old. This implies that, while there is this increase in the youth population, there is an increase in young people transitioning into older adults. Interestingly, these two groups usually hold their divergent perspectives about life and how to relate with one another. As noted by Gadsden and Dixon-Roma, these diverging perspectives often trigger stereotypes and assumptions about the other group.¹

This growth in the youth population shows how important it is to create more spaces for young people to take part in social and political change. The global agenda on Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 recognises young people as key drivers for meaningful and impactful social change.

It's undeniable that young people's commitment and diverse course of action in Cameroon over the years have greatly contributed to ensuring a safe, secure and prosperous nation. Being a youth in the last decades in Cameroon has been very transformational. Young Cameroon through social movement has become a key partner in implementing global instruments for the peace and development of the country. According to a youth civil society leader, the adoption of global instruments to promote youth participation in peacebuilding has greatly inspired his actions.² Nevertheless, many young people hold that in order to effectively lead in this process, there is the need to interact, learn and share their perspective with the older generation in order to attain sustainable peace in Cameroon. In line with this perspective, the Cameroon government, through the Ministry of Youth and Civic Education (MINJEC), established a National Commission on Youth Peace and Security (YPS) to accompany and provide

¹ Gadsden, Vivian L. and Dixon-Román, Ezekiel J. (2016, June 27), "Urban" schooling and "urban" families: The role of context and place', Urban Education.

² Interview with a youth leader during YPS inter-generational dialogue, Yaoundé 9th February 2023

intergenerational mentorship to young peace builders across Cameroon.

To this end, the views, perspectives, and engagement of adults are instrumental in shaping and enhancing youth participation in Cameroon. Considering that being a youth is a transitory state, the young people of today will be the adults of tomorrow, while the adults of today were the youths of yesterday. Intergenerational partnership, learning, and mentorship remains important in advancing the youth agenda.

During the opening ceremony of the first Intergenerational Dialogue on Youth Peace and Security, the Cameroonian Minister of Youth Affairs and Civic Education reaffirmed the need for collaboration between adults and youths to work together to achieve sustainable peace in his opening remarks. As noted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, it is critical to promote dialogue between young people and adults from different walks of life towards implementing youth peace and security. With a strengthened commitment to building peace through youth participation, young Cameroonians have shown huge interest in

working with adults from different works of life towards promoting sustainable peace. This youth commitment is enshrined in the Cameroon National Youth Policy.

The objective of this brief is thus to reflect on the primacy of intergenerational dialogue towards enhancing the YPS Agenda in Cameroon. Unlike conventional dialogue processes, intergenerational dialogue seeks to build trust and understanding amongst different generations in tackling and facilitating the rehabilitation of individuals in society.

❖ **Intergenerational Dialogue within the context of Cameroon**

Interestingly, while communities perceive young people as troublemakers, there is a growing narrative where young people are also misconceiving the older generation for taking away their opportunities and not creating spaces for them. These misconceptions are indeed the bedrock for the lack of collaboration between both generations and the shrinking space for young people to participate in peace and security.

For this reason, bridging these misconceptions warrants opportunities for Intergenerational dialogues. Intergenerational dialogues are thus interactive, participatory forums that bring together older and younger generations and are intended to create shared knowledge, meaning, and a collective experience. The goal is to gain a better understanding of each other and ultimately address challenges or barriers that youth face in their communities. The objective of an intergenerational dialogue is to respond to the misconception between the young and the old by creating a safe space to tap from their knowledge and experiences to create awareness and promote long-term solutions to existing problems in society. Within the context of this policy brief, we can define Intergenerational dialogue as a discussion between young and old generations about the inclusive participation of young people in peacebuilding processes in Cameroon.

We can look at intergenerational dialogue as a way of creating an enabling ground for the effective implementation of YPS in Cameroon, which will create a mutual understanding between the old and young. It is a crucial method

to bring about social healing in Cameroonian communities, particularly those affected by socio-political upheavals. Therefore, providing a platform for truth-telling will bridge the relationship between the old and the young and can contribute to building trust and understanding. The use of this kind of dialogue process as a tool to open discussions about YPS will, therefore, bring the old and the young together to learn from and share with each other.

❖ **What is the youth, peace and security agenda?**

Youth participation in peacebuilding has been amplified with the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolutions; 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018), 2535 (2020) and the AU Continental Framework for Youth Peace and Security (CFYPS) and its accompanying 10-Year Implementation Plan (2020). These instruments are what is popularly referred to as the Youth Peace and Security Agendas. The first Resolution, UNSCR 2250 (2015) and subsequent resolutions, laid the foundation by identifying five key pillars towards advancing youth participation in peace and security. Resolution

2250 looks at today's generation of youth as the largest the world has ever known, with young women and men often forming the majority of the population in countries affected by violent and armed conflicts. These five pillars include; Participation, Protection, Prevention, Partnership and Disengagement and Reintegration.

In Cameroon, youth participation in peacebuilding has been greatly amplified by youth-led movements and the efforts of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education. With the increasing socio-political upheavals in the country, young people's inclusion and participation in peace and security have become a clarion call. Young people in Cameroon have leveraged on the YPS Agenda to call for government actions toward improving youth participation in peacebuilding. In response to this clarion call, the government through the Ministry of Youth Affairs has participated and co-organised several national and international engagements on YPS to build the capacity of young people and stakeholders. A major move by the government was the establishment of a

National Commission on YPS in Cameroon to serve as a multi-stakeholder platform for the coordination of YPS activities in Cameroon.

Supporting the constructive efforts of young people in peace efforts will allow Cameroon to harness her contributions in the present and in the future. It would be unfair to turn blind to these efforts and to acknowledge the fact that Cameroon youth-led organizations make special contributions to peacebuilding, such as engaging their peers, working at the community level, sustaining dialogue when others have lost hope, and bridging divides in polarized contexts. Additionally, when youths engage in building peace, they learn to value it, they learn civic skills, and often they keep working to sustain peace throughout their lives.

❖ **Why is an Inter-generational perspective important in the implementation of YPS in Cameroon?**

Unfortunately, being a youth as opposed to a woman is transitional. This means while a woman is a woman forever, a young person will only be considered young according to

Cameroon's context up to the age of 35. This makes it very difficult to reflect on youth issues without reflecting on the age groups above 35. For the mere fact that individuals above 35 years had been a youth at some point in their lives, it is only natural to consider their perspectives while reflecting on youth issues. The Minister of Youth Affairs in Cameroon in his opening reflection at an intergenerational dialogue noted that, "Intergenerational dialogue on youth issues will help young people not to make some mistakes which they made in their past and will help young people learn how to navigate some realities in the future."³ Young people who participated in intergenerational dialogues affirmed the shared experiences of the older generations and how it served as a source of inspiration and provided valuable insights into addressing contemporary issues.

In order to ensure an effective implementation of YPS in Cameroon, there is a need to take the specificity of the context. In Cameroon, though there exist misconceptions

between both generations, the older generation sits at the helm of decision-making. In order for young people to secure the buying and support for their efforts, there is a need to draw closer to the adults, while using evidence of their efforts to sustain the intergenerational relationship.

It is common to hear young people say "We master the internet age which the older generation does not. They need to learn from us." Conversely, the older generation may assert their wisdom and claim the ability to perceive what young people cannot even, if it requires climbing a metaphorically taller tree

This reality thus warrants the need for opportunities for dialogue, exchange of ideas and joint actions between both generations. This will establish a firm society characterized by not just physical growth but also mental growth, which is instrumental to the socio-political development of every society.

In Cameroon, one can likely say the old generation sits on the throne of leadership and,

³ Opening remarks by H.E Mounouna Foutsou, Minister of Youth Affairs and Civic Education at the first

Intergenerational dialogue on YPS in Cameroon, February 2023.

therefore, manages policies and concerns. Intergenerational dialogue, therefore, is an opportunity for the old generation to listen to the concerns of young people, understand the different areas that require policy revision and adoption, and look for the possibility of implementing them. It is beneficial to encourage the processes of intergenerational dialogue to address certain grumbling issues plaguing the Cameroonian society. With the implementation of YPS in Cameroon, a stringent discussion between the government and young people could set the pace for a genuine peacebuilding process.

In a society like Cameroon with a tripling growth in the population of young people, an increase in the appointment of young people to key positions in the government of the country will be a tactical approach towards the implementation of YPS. Nevertheless, this can only happen if young people are able to sustain their relationship and prove to the old that they are credible enough to lead processes.

From the concept of intergenerational dialogue, one can understand that bringing the old and young together is likened to the

combination of different issues towards peacebuilding. This means that the government has an important role to play in creating spaces for Intergenerational dialogue.

Conclusion

Young people are continuously making efforts toward collaborating with government and other development partners to advance the YPS Agenda, even though the challenges are still very recurrent. Among the challenges is the timid buying from decision-makers and other stakeholders towards supporting youth participation in peace and security. Intergenerational dialogue, therefore, comes as a platform to secure the buying of the adult and facilitate the understanding of policymakers and stakeholders on the importance of supporting young peace in peacebuilding. Youth can engage meaningfully if they feel they are truly listened to, trusted, and supported, and if they themselves trust their counterparts. An intergenerational approach is key to finding common ground for action, developing mutual respect, and bridging trust gaps among generations in Cameroon.



Apart from intergenerational challenges, an effort to implement the YPS Agenda is still faced with other issues including; structural barriers, lack of capacity to influence decision-making, violations of their human rights, and insufficient investment in facilitating their inclusion.

A sincere and constructive dialogue between adults and young people will possibly lay the groundwork to effectively respond to some of these issues while facilitating the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda in Cameroon.

LOYOC publication

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