

POLICY BRIEF

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



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Dialogue

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

### ❖ Key Findings

- ◆ In Cameroon, young people are faced with enormous challenges and barriers within their communities that make it difficult for them to engage in conversation around peace and security.
- ◆ Young people are not very actively in peace-building practice; participating in peace-building processes.
- ◆ 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 violent in their communities
- ◆ Creating a space for discussion among young people and adults is important in building trust and understanding.

### ❖ Recommendations

- ◆ From the side of the government, it is necessary to support young people with knowledge and capacity on peace building for their operations. This will advance young people’s meaningful engagement in peace processes.
- ◆ There is a need to increase the awareness for young people through their education on thematic around conflict analysis, mitigation, and transformation to

influence discussions and decisions starting from the grassroots 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.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ We have to strengthen youth leadership and mutual capacity development, by recognizing youth civil society as a partner with agency and expertise, while also improving financial management, follow-up, and youth-led programming in capacity building programmes.

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- ◆ Increase the accessibility and quality of funding available to young people, by increasing overall funding, simplifying application and reporting requirements, diversifying funding models, and developing funding priorities in consultation with young people.
- 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.

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

## Introduction

The current generation of young people in Cameroon has increased tremendously over time. This growth indicates the space young people should occupy in igniting social and political change. The global agenda on sustainable development goals and the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 recognize young people as key drivers for meaningful and impactful social movements. It's undeniable that young people's commitment and diverse course of action in Cameroon over the years have greatly contributed to promoting sustainable development as well as social cohesion. Interestingly, being a youth is a transitory state where the young people of today will be the adults of tomorrow, while the adults of today were the youths of yesterday.

To this end, the views, perspectives, and engagement of adults are instrumental in shaping and enhancing policies and practices that can influence the empowerment of young people in socio-economic and political change. Unfortunately, in Cameroon, there is mistrust and limited space for young people to engage with adults on development issues. Sources hold that there is still mistrust and stereotypes between the young and the old, with young people being seen as

troublemakers. During the opening ceremony of the first Intergenerational dialogue on Youth Peace and Security, the Cameroonian Minister of Youth Affairs and Civic Education insisted on the need for collaboration between adults and youths to work together to achieve sustainable peace.

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 build peace through youth participation, young Cameroonians have shown huge interest in working with adults from different walks of life towards promoting sustainable peace. This youth commitment is enshrined in the national youth policy and further strengthened by the United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 2250 (2015), 2419, and 2535 and the AU continental framework on Youth, Peace, and security.

The objective of this brief is to capture perspectives on ways in which intergenerational dialogue can be used as a tool for enhancing YPS. Unlike conventional dialogue processes, intergenerational dialogue seeks to build trust and understanding amongst different generations in tackling and

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facilitating the rehabilitation of individuals in society.

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

Intergenerational dialogues are 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 decrease the level of violence among young people by using their knowledge and experiences with the aid of previous generations to create awareness and promote long-term solutions to existing problems in society. Within the context of this policy brief, Intergenerational dialogue can be defined 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 around 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?**

The YPS agenda, established by UNSCR 2250 (2015) and subsequent resolutions, recognises young people's inclusion and participation as a key dimension of building and sustaining peace and security for all. 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. This resolution presents five pillars for action, including youth engagement in decision-making processes, protecting civilian lives and human rights, investigating and prosecuting perpetrators, supporting youth in preventing violence, promoting tolerance and intercultural dialogue, engaging them in

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peacebuilding strategies, and investing in youth affected by armed conflict through employment opportunities, inclusive labor policies, and education. These pillars aim to promote a culture of peace and ensure the protection of young civilians.

In the context of Cameroon, with attention to socio-political upheavals, young people's inclusion and participation in peace and security turn out to be a vector for inclusion in sustainable and effective peace. Over the years, there has been growing evidence of Cameroon's youth's positive impacts when engaging in peace processes as well as the prevention of all forms of violence. This is made evident through the efforts of youth-led organizations on the ground to combat youth radicalization, misinformation, and hate speech, strengthen youth-led coalitions, and build partnerships for collective rehabilitation and recovery.

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 will 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 youth engage in building peace, they learn to value it, they learn civic skills, and often they keep working to sustain peace throughout their lives.

### ❖ **Creating an enabling environment for the implementation of YPS through intergenerational dialogue in Cameroon.**

By intergeneration we see a cut across three generations including the younger generation, the adult generation, and the old generation. Some critics will go to the point of adding the older generation for a more inclusive approach. Over time, the younger generation in Cameroon has become trapped within community violence, conflict, rape, lack of education, radicalization, hate speech, and domestic violence. Because of these, most young people have been groomed out of such a hideous environment, which has become the birthmark of most uncivil actions by young people. In this regard, there is a need to include the concerns of the younger generation in dialogue processes in order to reshape the path to growth for the young generation. This will establish a firm society characterized by not just physical growth but also mental growth, which is instrumental to



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the socio-political development of every society.

In Cameroon, one can likely say the old generation sits on the throne of leadership and, 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 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. This will enhance a well-measured operational scale for young people to be drivers of peacebuilding processes in their different communities. Through intergenerational dialogue, areas where young people's operational scale is high are identified, which

can help the old generation create sustainable spaces in society for young people to showcase their operational skills. This is a strategic peacebuilding process with a high-quality, inclusive approach.

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. They, however, may provide resources with and for young people (CSOs and associations) on the YPS to ease their implementation. These well-established organizations, like the United Nations (UN), for example, should reward youth-led organizations and associations, government institutions, and stakeholders working on YPS in their different areas of concern.

### **Conclusion**

There are many instances in which the Government, United Nations entities, civil society actors, and others are stepping up to meet the requirements of Resolution 2250 (2015) in Cameroon, even though the challenges are still very recurrent. Intergenerational dialogue, therefore, comes as a platform to address the challenges young

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people still face, including structural barriers, a lack of capacity to influence decision-making, violations of their human rights, and insufficient investment in facilitating their inclusion, particularly through education. A sincere and constructive dialogue between adults and young people will possibly lay the groundwork for an effective implementation of YPS in Cameroon.

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.

Intergenerational dialogue within the context of this policy brief will, therefore, set out clear expectations to avoid misunderstandings and disappointments; communicate openly and respectfully, having a listening and appreciative attitude and avoiding unnecessary formalities and patronizing attitudes; find common issues of concern across generations and respect all perspectives; provide each other with mutual mentorship and support where both young people and adults can learn; and avoid clichés or stereotypes.

### Notes

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