



YOUTH-LED RESEARCH | GUIDANCE NOTE

# SUPPORTING the DESIGN and IMPLEMENTATION of **YOUTH-LED RESEARCH** Projects

A Resource from **THE  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH**  
Division of **SEARCH FOR  
COMMON GROUND**

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## Purpose of the Guidance Note

There is growing momentum to involve young people in building peace following the unanimous passage of the United Nations Security Council Resolution for Youth, Peace and Security (Resolution 2250) in December 2015. However, many peacebuilding programs are designed by adult researchers who diagnose the problem and then design programs involving youth – often with little or no engagement by young people. By excluding young people from the research and design processes, peace practitioners risk developing programs that do not effectively empower young people as the agents of change that they are, but instead perpetuate their dependency as beneficiaries.

At Search for Common Ground (Search), we have pioneered projects which put the power of research, design, and advocacy in the hands of young people. This means engaging young people from the very beginning of a program idea and equipping them with skills in ethical research such as data collection, interviewing techniques, and results analysis. In the process, as they reach out to a diverse range of stakeholders in their communities, youth gain meaningful leadership experience, and often contribute to positively shifting perceptions of young people in their communities. We've learned that when young people are able to understand and analyze a problem, they are better equipped to propose and bring to life peacebuilding solutions.

This guidance note presents some of the lessons learned by youth-led research projects in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Burundi, and Tanzania. The intention of this document is to assist practitioners in recognizing the multiple values of youth-led research as a program approach, and to identify key considerations to help guide the design and implementation of new projects.

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For further guidances and resources on Youth Led Research and Search's youth programming, please visit <https://www.sfcg.org/children-and-youth>

# What is Youth-Led Research?

*The act of conducting research, regardless of the topic, can have positive impacts on youth and their relationships in the community.*

At its core, **youth-led research is a youth engagement strategy**. It is a programmatic approach that can engage young people, typically 15 - 29 years old<sup>1</sup>, in peacebuilding, teach them leadership skills, and help them build relationships with members of their community. The results and findings generated by youth-led research can help answer questions and build knowledge on the research topic, and can provide valuable insight and access otherwise unavailable to researchers from outside a community. Equally important, the act of conducting research itself has a positive impact on youth and their relationships in the community, by offering young people a practical opportunity to carve out their space as leaders.

A topic for youth-led research does not need to have a direct focus on young people, the key factor that makes a research project youth-led is that young people play a leadership role in all stages of design, data collection, data analysis, and results sharing.

Youth-led research is a powerful tool for youth empowerment and engagement, and high-quality youth-led research requires adult supervision and guidance throughout the process. This support should not diminish or infringe upon young people's leadership throughout the project, but should instead monitor and support the quality of research efforts.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, in many communities affected by conflict, young people represent a majority of the population and their engagement is a demographic as well as democratic imperative. By excluding young people from research, practitioners risk perpetuating young people's dependency as beneficiaries, overlooking their perspectives on critical issues, and missing the opportunity to empower young people as the agents of change that they are.

For more in-depth information on the quantitative research and interview methodology Search employs for youth-led research, explore the Listening and Learning Toolkit<sup>3</sup>. Created by Search's Children and Youth Division and the West Africa research team, the toolkit is specifically designed for research on youth issues. The methodology relies on natural conversations instead of a structured survey, and an exchange of information between both parties instead of sharing only from the interviewee.

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1 The understanding of who is a "youth" may differ across different communities and cultures, the majority of Search's youth-led research projects were 18 years old and above for reasons discussed in the Key Considerations section.

2 Youth-led research as defined in this document does not demand approval from an institutional review board, though it does demand attention to ethics in research and to the potential for secondary trauma of youth in conflict research.

3 <https://www.sfcg.org/tag/children-youth-toolkits/>



# When is Youth-Led Research the Right Approach?

Youth-led research offers value in several ways;

- It shifts the role of youth in the community by giving them better access to leadership roles, empowering them with new skills and knowledge, improving relationships with elders and others, and creating opportunities for them to engage in addressing problems and conflicts.
- It can produce new and useful information that provides a more nuanced understanding of community issues and can lead to more effective and relevant programming.
- It is a flexible approach that can be designed to achieve a variety of different outcomes: from challenging assumptions and misconceptions in the community, to increasing interaction between divided groups, to generating recommendations for solutions to community problems.

Like any approach, there are times when youth-led research is more appropriate than others. If you answer YES to any of the following questions, your project could be a potential good match for youth-led research.

- Is your goal to empower youth by building new relationships and skills?
- Do you want to access marginalized and youth groups who are outside your existing project participants?
- Are you interested in creating a foundation for young people to act on issues in their community based on understanding and relationships developed through inquiry and information sharing?
- Do you have resources to support their action or advocacy efforts after the inquiry process?
- Do you want to shift or improve the perception of youth participation and leadership in a community?
- Do you have resources to commit to train, support, review, and coach youth in ethical research?

Youth-led research and traditional research both have their benefits, and it is important to consider the goals of the project before selecting one approach over the other. YLR is adaptable to multiple needs, but is **not appropriate** for advanced research needs such as baselines, in-depth conflict assessments, or evaluations. If the goal is to increase youth engagement, build better relationships, and activate locally-owned community peacebuilding, then a well-designed youth-led research project can serve those functions in a way that traditional research could not. Youth-led research may provide opportunities for deeper learning through avenues of community engagement unavailable to traditional outside researchers, provided youth researchers are well supported throughout their process.

# What are the Benefits of Youth-Led Research?

## Improved Skills and Confidence

### Youth-Led Research in Action: South Sudan

*As part of a program to promote social cohesion and peaceful conflict resolution, and build individual and community resilience in South Sudan, Search facilitated youth-led participatory action research in Equatoria's Budi County. The project brought together 23 local young people from different ethnic groups and backgrounds to research conflict in their communities. After training on participatory action research, various data collection methods, data analysis, and conflict resolution, the youth researchers interviewed a total of 685 respondents. They then compiled and analyzed the data before presenting and discussing their research findings with the local community. The project not only increased young people's knowledge of research and conflict resolution, it also improved their ability to approach and communicate with community members, increased their confidence and critical thinking skills, and thus contributed to their general resilience. These skills are transferrable and applicable to other parts of the youth researchers' lives, and will help them to adapt to stress and adversities in the future.*

The technical skills young people gain through participation in a youth-led research project are cross-cutting and can benefit them in the future. Skills such as data collection, survey design, interviews, data analysis, critical thinking, report writing, and public speaking can help young people perform better in school, at work, or in community-based leadership activities.

For example, young people in Burundi, Tanzania, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone had opportunities to present their research findings to community elders, local government, and donor agencies, and they trained to improve their public speaking skills in order to communicate their message more effectively. The combination of increased skills and opportunities to showcase the hard work they had done led to an increase in youth researchers' confidence.

## ***Improved Relationships between Youth and Elders***

In many communities, young people’s opinions are dismissed as unimportant, or worse, young people are seen as troublemakers who cause conflicts. Youth-led research projects give young people an opportunity to carve out a space for participation in community conflict resolution and peacebuilding in a way that establishes youth as partners to adults, rather than as threats to adult leadership. When youth researchers are able to discuss their research topic backed by data they have collected, their contributions may be seen as more credible, and can spark a shift in community attitudes.

## ***Improved Relationships among Youth***

### ***Youth-Led Research in Action: Burundi***

*In Burundi, Search intentionally composed the research teams of a mix of youth from the ruling party, opposition parties, and local civil society for a project in 2016. More than 220 young leaders participated in the research, gathering input from their peers on their use of violence or conflict management techniques, their participation in community life, and their available livelihoods. Through their participation in the research, the youth leaders built relationships across political parties, a first for many of them. They also challenged their own assumptions about other youth—they had always heard that youth are violent and cause problems in society, but through their research they learned that most youth use peaceful approaches to resolve conflicts, not violence.*

Youth-led research projects can also improve relationships amongst youth. By bringing together youth who reflect a community’s diversity, with special attention to gender balance and inclusion of marginalized groups, the research team itself presents an opportunity for increasing interaction and tolerance between different groups. Training and orientation for the researchers often includes exercises to diffuse any tensions or power imbalances between team members, establish an inclusive process, and maintain positive group dynamics. Through these mixed-team exercises and by spending time with each other, youth-led research enables young people to learn about each other and understand their commonalities.

## ***Foundation for Youth Leadership and Advocacy***

Youth-led research projects can serve as an effective “foot in the door” for getting young people engaged in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The hands-on experiential aspect of conducting research challenges young people to show they can act as leaders and creates an opportunity for young people to stand as active members of the community. These relationships between youth and adult leaders can be building blocks for continued work together in new constructive and collaborative ways.

By conducting research and actively building their knowledge on an issue, youth researchers also become better equipped for advocacy around the research findings and their implications for communities.



Youth leaders in Burundi who conducted research on young people's use of violence and their community participation in 2016 are now working with Search and its partners to advocate about youth's role in peaceful conflict resolution. They are requesting trainings and other support to develop youth capabilities for social cohesion, conflict resolution, resistance to manipulation, and more. In West Africa youth researchers on the worst forms of violence against children met with donor agencies, policy makers, and other stakeholders to present their findings and make recommendations for how the results could inform better programming for vulnerable children.

## ***Access to Community and Marginalized Populations***

### **Youth-Led Research in Action: Tanzania**

Search Tanzania created a pilot youth-led research project to identify the drivers that cause children to drop out of school and start working in the local gold mine. The children in the mines were not willing to speak with adults, but young people from local secondary schools were able to approach the children as peers and conduct interviews. Through this process the youth researchers were able to determine children were leaving school primarily because of economic limitations. The youth researchers then presented their findings through community meetings, radio broadcasts, and newspaper articles. They led the community in a discussion of the issue and encouraged adults in the community to take action to support children's education. Due to the youth researchers' efforts, seven children were able to leave the mines and return to school, the community is taking further action to address the problem and the youth researchers gained respect and support from their elders.

Youth researchers may have particular leverage over traditional research when speaking to vulnerable populations and other youths.<sup>4</sup> As a staff member in Tanzania noted,

Having young people conduct the research can, in some cases, help children and vulnerable participants feel safer and more comfortable to speak freely. This increased knowledge can help inform future pro-

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4 It is important to note that discussions on sensitive issues may expose youth researchers to trauma, and the potential harms must be considered when designing the project. See the following section on "Key Considerations" for more information.

gramming by identifying needs, trends, beliefs, and other important factors. The youth-led research can become a well-informed and locally-relevant starting point for action.

There are three important caveats to the access and insight youth researchers offer;

- Most youth researchers will not have prior research experience, and they will require substantial adult support throughout the process to collect and analyze information at an advanced level.
- As already noted, in some communities there may be adults and leaders with rigid ideas on the role of youth in society. Adults supervising the youth-led research should be sensitive to tensions that youth researchers may be exposed to in their communities and at home for taking part in the research, and resources should be allocated to get community buy-in to support youth researchers as they take on new roles.
- Conducting research on sensitive topics, such as domestic or sexual violence, exposes researchers and participants – whether youth or adult – to potential trauma. For safety and ethical reasons, youth-led research should be considered when it can foster open and positive communication, and be supported by people who have expertise on trauma issues. These risks must be addressed in the program design and training for youth researchers.

See the “Key Considerations” section for more information.

# Key Considerations for Youth-Led Research

Youth-led research is an empowering and valuable participatory approach, but it also requires a special set of considerations. Young people have capacities and lived experiences that are different than professionally trained researchers and adults. Participation must be balanced against protection for young people, in accordance with their age and competencies. These considerations are described in more detail below. For further tools and guidance on engaging with youth, Search’s Children and Youth Team recommend Search’s “Guiding Principles on Young People’s Participation in Peacebuilding”<sup>5</sup>.

## Conflict Sensitivity and “Do No Harm”

### *Conflict Sensitivity in Action: South Sudan*

*South Sudan is involved in bitter conflict, and having young people conduct research can be dangerous. Conflict sensitivity was essential to ensure the safety of the researchers and the impact of the project. For example, when one community leader accused two researchers of being spies, Search paused the research to address the issue. The team members discussed the project in-depth with the leader, so that he understood the purpose of the research and allowed the researchers to continue their work.*

Conflict sensitivity and “do no harm” are integral to both the design and implementation of any intervention. Conflict sensitivity is a process that helps us understand the interaction between an intervention (a research project, in this case) and the context in which it operates, including both the positive and negative impacts, in terms of conflict or peace dynamics. It is critical to ensure that youth-led research will “do no harm” to the communities or youth researchers involved.

For youth researchers, analyzing dividers and tensions, understanding power-relations, pre-existing conflicts, and the position of children and youth

within the community researched are very important in order to protect all research participants. Particularly in volatile areas, community members may have misconceptions about the true role of the research teams which could potentially exacerbate existing tensions or conflict.

For the communities and research participants, it is important to consider the harm that can occur as a result of the youth researchers’ relative inexperience. For example, harm can occur if youth researchers receive sensitive or traumatic information from interviewees without first becoming prepared to handle such information. In addition to becoming exposed to trauma themselves (see Trauma Exposure section below), youth researchers risk mishandling data or trying to report safety concerns improperly. There is also the

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5 <https://www.sfcg.org/tag/children-youth-toolkits>

risk of creating expectations among participants for benefits that may not materialize. Training on ethical research, on the Common Ground Principles<sup>6</sup>, and a clear procedure for handling sensitive information or safety concerns can help minimize these risks.

Finally, security risks must be communicated to researchers before they go into the field, particularly in conflict or post-conflict situations. These concerns are particularly relevant to youth-led research, but risks and benefits should be assessed for every project, taking into account the local context, culture, expectations, norms, and legal conditions.

Additional guidance on conflict sensitivity and the “do no harm” approach is available [DME for Peace](#) on and its [Peace Exchange](#)<sup>7</sup> community.

## ***Adult Supported and Technically Advised***

In addition to providing capacity building in research and soft skills, adults should accompany youth researchers throughout data collection, analysis and presentations of findings. Adult support and technical advice is necessary to ensure the quality of the research produced, and to protect the youth researchers from potential harm. Note, “adult” is meant as someone who is experienced in research and in working with youth on issues relevant to the research topic. An adult then may be someone in the same age bracket as the youth researchers, but with a different set of skills.

To ensure projects uphold ethical research standards and balance youth participation and protection, teams should also consider appointing a steering committee made up of professional researchers, child protection experts, and trauma specialists for each youth-led research project.

## ***Age***

Young people have very different life experiences in different environments and cultures, and the skills and competencies they develop at different ages vary widely. The definition of “youth” itself can also differ across countries and cultures. For this reason, we do not limit the age range for youth leading research beyond defining eligibility as “people who fall under the local or national definition of youth in a specific context” (the general range is 15 to 29 years). However, youth researchers in the majority of Search’s youth-led research projects were 18 years old and above.<sup>8</sup> This is because the capabilities that young people need to

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6 Common Ground Principles encourage the shift of interactions between different parties away from adversarial approaches that pitch one side against the “other,” to cooperative approaches. Cooperative approaches allow the parties to focus on the issue rather than each other, and work together to resolve the issue.

7 [www.dmeformpeace.org](http://www.dmeformpeace.org)

8 In the projects mentioned in this document, the ages of youth researchers were: 18 to 28 in Burundi, 17 to 34 in Liberia, 18 to 30 in Sierra Leone, 18 to 24 in South Sudan, and 14 to 19 in Tanzania.

conduct the research as well as the responsibilities and risks they undertake are less suitable for younger ages. There are also additional restrictions and protection policies when working with youth under the age of 18.<sup>9</sup>

## **Trauma Exposure**

Traumatic events can happen to all people in all communities at all ages. Traumatic events can cause terror, fear, helplessness, and physical stress reactions that may not be felt until weeks or even years later.<sup>10</sup> youth researchers working in contexts that are experiencing or recovering from violent conflict will likely encounter people who have experienced significant trauma. This exposure may lead to changes in their own wellbeing, known as “vicarious trauma”, “second-hand trauma,” or “trauma exposure response”. These changes are manageable with robust team and social supports<sup>11</sup> but require additional preparation and planning in the project design. It is strongly recommended to budget and plan for a trauma specialist to be available to youth researchers throughout the project, particularly when research will deal with sensitive topics, such as cases of sexual abuse among children.

## **SUPPORTING YOUTH RESEARCHERS**

youth researchers’ training should include education on the responses they may experience from exposure to trauma, and ways to cope with these responses. This session could be facilitated by a mental health professional to provide an opportunity for youth to build trust and speak to the professional one-on-one if they prefer. It may also be useful to organize debriefing sessions and designate focal points for those who need ongoing support during the project.

It is also important to establish a clear procedure for the youth researchers on how to respond when their interviewees ask for help or report violent crimes or safety concerns during interviews. Having a clear procedure in place will help youth researchers to feel prepared when they hear of abuse or other safety concerns, will reduce the risk of researchers becoming affected by trauma exposure and will also help protect the confidentiality of interviewees (who may be stigmatized if their reports are disclosed irresponsibly)<sup>12</sup>.

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9 For example, in some countries youth under 18 are considered children/minors. Search for Common Ground requires permission from a parent or guardian when involving anyone under 18 years of age.

10 “Trauma Informed: A resource for service organizations and providers to deliver services that are trauma-informed,” Clinic Community Health Centre, Second Edition, 2013. < [http://trauma-informed.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Trauma-informed\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://trauma-informed.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Trauma-informed_Toolkit.pdf)>

11 Ibid.

12 Connecting with local service providers and appropriate local authorities for potential referrals, incorporating a training module on Psychological First Aid, and providing child protection training (if relevant) are some useful steps to equipping the youth researchers and establishing a procedure.



## Ethical Standards

There are specific ethical standards for research involving children and youth. These standards apply to youth-led research projects. [The Ethical Research Involving Children \(ERIC\)<sup>13</sup>](#) project and the [Ethical Approaches to Gathering Information from Children and Adolescents in International Settings<sup>14</sup>](#) outline the ethical standards to follow when designing and implementing research involving children and youth. Some of the specific ethical considerations for youth-led research are summarized below. The project team should reflect, discuss, and find proper solutions to these ethical standards before starting a new youth-led research project. Youth researchers should also receive training on ethical standards before conducting the research.

### BENEFITS AND POTENTIAL HARM

Conflict sensitivity and do no harm are discussed in depth in the above section. Additionally, youth-led research demands the consideration of the following questions.

#### *Managing Risks: Burundi*

*A youth-led research project in Burundi took place in a tense security climate. Although the crisis in Burundi had stabilized to a degree, the threat of violence was still very real. Young researchers received training on research risks, ethics and constraints to ensure young researchers would not risk their own security and were aware of the “do no harm” approach. Research teams intentionally included youth from the ruling party (as well as the opposition party) so that the teams would have more freedom to work. In a few locations, Search also had to intervene with local authorities to permit the researchers to work freely.*

- Will the research project benefit youth researchers, participants, and the wider community?
- Is there a sound and informed reason for having youth lead the research instead of participating in another way (as interviewees, for example)?
- What are the potential harms that the research could bring to youth researchers, participants, or the wider community, and are there sound and informed reasons for excluding children or youth from the research?
- Does the project team have the competence, expertise, resources, and capacity needed to adequately support youth-led research and minimize potential risks?

13 Powell, Mary Ann; Taylor, Nicola; Fitzgerald, Robyn; Graham, Ann; Anderson, Donnah (2013). Ethical Research Involving Children, Innocenti Publications. UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti, Florence. <<https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/706/>>

14 Schenk, Katie and Jan Williamson. 2005. Ethical Approaches to Gathering Information from Children and Adolescents in International Settings: Guidelines and Resources. Washington, DC: Population Council. <<http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/horizons/childrenethics.pdf>>

## INFORMED CONSENT

Each young researcher must give her/his informed consent to participate in the project. means:

- The youth give **explicit** consent (i.e. verbal or written agreement). Particularly if youth are below the age of 18, the project team should check whether the consent of a guardian or caregiver is required by law or according to local culture or custom. It may be necessary to seek consent from other adults as well, for example school administrators or community leaders, depending on the context. However, seeking adult consent should be balanced against the researcher's autonomy to be able to freely choose to participate.
- The youth (and others who are consenting) are **fully informed** as to the purpose of the research, what their involvement will be, the potential risks and benefits of participation, and the time commitment required. Youth must be aware of the risk of trauma exposure if the research will deal with sensitive topics such as child abuse or violence.
- The youth give their consent **freely and without coercion**, recognizing that they have the option not to participate.
- The youth (and others) understand that their consent is **negotiable** and that they can withdraw from the project at any point.

## PAYMENT AND COMPENSATION

Young people engaged in the research (interviewers and interviewees) should be appropriately reimbursed for any expenses, compensated for their efforts, time, or lost income, and acknowledged for their contribution. However, payment should be avoided if it potentially pressures, coerces, bribes, persuades, controls, or causes economic or social disadvantage to the youth involved. As such, the project team should apply the following standards:

- Ensure that any payment is not used to unduly bribe, coerce or pressure youth and parents to participate as researchers, or influence their neutrality as a researcher.
- Take social and cultural contexts into account and consult locally about payment and other forms of reciprocity in research (in some contexts, forms of compensation other than money may be more appropriate).
- Work to ensure that payment does not directly raise unrealistic expectations or cause disappointment.

# Lessons Learned in Designing and Implementing Youth-Led Research Projects

Our colleagues who have implemented youth-led research projects have learned many lessons from their experience. Here are some tips, tricks, and advice to keep in mind when designing or implementing a youth-led research project based on lessons learned by staff who have completed similar projects.

## Planning and Budgeting:

- Budget and plan for adult support and technical supervision proportional to the size and capacities of the youth team. It is challenging to ensure that all youth understand training and have a chance to participate in analysis, conversations, and presentations (whether there are 25 researchers as was the case in Sierra Leone and Liberia, or there are 220 youth researchers, as was the case in Burundi). Scaling the number of adults supporting the project and dividing trainings into more than one group by location can help mitigate these challenges.
- Ensure the project timeframe allows sufficient time for properly training youth researchers (including a field test to practice their new skills before collecting data), conducting thorough data analysis, and providing the chance for youth to present and then transfer research findings into action. This may not be realistic, however, in active conflict zones given the level and frequency of displacement and violence.
- Align your budget to the target objectives and activities to ensure that youth researchers have enough financial means and equipment to work effectively. Youth-led research is hard work and requires many hours of dedication. In West Africa, the youth researchers often worked 12 to 14 hours per day. Student researchers in Tanzania also worked long hours. As such, ensure that there is a budget that can support meals and transportation costs. It is also important to ensure there are enough recorders, cameras, and other equipment for multiple research members to use in the field at the same time.

## Establishing Community Buy-In

- Establish contact with adult stakeholders and community leaders during the early stages of the research so they gain a sense of ownership. This also supports conflict sensitivity. Early engagement between youth researchers and other stakeholders will make the project more sustainable.
- Involve youth researchers in traditional cultural practices (e.g. traditional dance) so their parents, community leaders, and elders will not see them as troublemakers, but as members of the com-

munity. There are often tensions between youth and adults, and the research project may deepen these tensions if it is not designed in a conflict sensitive manner to “do no harm.” Show that young people are still part of the community, even though they are doing something unconventional.

### **Building Research Teams**

- Support local partners involved in selecting youth researchers to balance gender and ethnicity to ensure research teams are inclusive and representative.
- Recruit your team of youth researchers based on their interest in the research topic. This will help ensure their dedication to the research and to any follow-up activities or advocacy. The “[Mapping Youth Leaders for Peacebuilding](#)”<sup>15</sup> toolkit may be useful for identifying youth researchers.
- When determining the size of youth-led research teams, consider the technically-qualified adults available to provide support, the type and level of support needed (based on the youth researchers’ capacities and needs), and the geographical scope of the project. It may be necessary to recruit project-specific technical consultants to ensure adequate adult supervision and accompaniment, in addition to project staff. In Search’s experiences with youth-led research it has been necessary to hire external, dedicated consultants for several months to support the projects and complete the research. This was in addition to support provided from Search’s country offices and Institutional Learning Team.
- Promote youth ownership of the research, and help the youth feel that they are responsible for the research and its results throughout the process. To encourage this, make sure that researchers have an opportunity to test the tools and modify them to make them more effective. They also need to feel responsible and accountable for the research findings. Since it is their work, they should be the ones presenting findings to an external audience.
- Do not assume that young people know how to use any research equipment. Training on how to conduct the research should also include training on how to use computers, cameras, audio recorders, or any other equipment.

### **Managing the Research Process**

- Apply the Common Ground Principles to the research process. Common Ground Principles encourage the shift of interactions between different parties away from adversarial approaches that pitch one side against the “other,” to cooperative approaches. Cooperative approaches allow

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15 <https://www.sfcg.org/tag/children-youth-toolkits>

the parties to focus on the issue rather than each other, and work together to resolve the issue. youth researchers must be trained in this approach both as a part of framing the research topics, and as a part of training on ethics and Do No Harm. The integration of the Common Ground Principles into youth-led research may include group discussion on how information should only be used to seek mutual solutions as opposed to gain advantage. Furthermore adult supervisors and facilitators must ensure that the youth researchers design questions and community outreach in a way that encourages tolerance, respects multiple viewpoints, and leads to collaborative problem solving.

- Combine and adapt qualitative and quantitative methods to strengthen research quality, taking into account youth researchers' strengths and comfort levels. youth researchers are usually more comfortable with qualitative research since they often have not had extensive training on research and analysis. Combining qualitative research with question guides that allow youth to look at trends and quantify some of the information gathered creates a more robust methodology that is still accessible for youth researchers. Quantitative surveys can also be used, depending on the setting, to build skills and encourage teams to collect data in a variety of ways and strengthen analysis through triangulation.

### **Providing Continued Support and Avenues for Action**

- Youth-led research should not be a stand alone endeavor. youth researchers should be included in other, complementary peacebuilding programs that continue to build their skills, provide support, and provide avenues for action as peacebuilders.
- Youth researchers should be provided opportunities to present their findings to the community and to relevant decision makers (local government, programs funders, etc). This serves multiple purposes as it closes the loop on the participatory research for communities, helps to establish the youth researchers' credibility in their communities, and builds the foundation for continued work and advocacy between youth researchers and other actors.