

# Youth Impact in Shaping Policy & Social Cohesion in Myanmar

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18<sup>th</sup> December 2018

*Final External Report:  
Participatory Youth Workshop on the National Youth Policy*



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## Youth, Peace & Security Trends

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### Global Shifts

With one in six persons aged between 15 and 24, the world is currently home to the largest ever youth population.<sup>1</sup> Studies estimate over **400 million young people (1 in 4 youth) globally are affected by armed conflict or organized violence** – although the majority of youth are not engaged in the perpetuation of violence and conflict.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, a set of persistent and counterproductive policy myths have hindered young people’s efforts to prevent violence and create the conditions necessary for sustaining peace in their communities. Decision-makers around the world frequently perceive large youth populations as representing an increased risk of violence and instability (the “youth bulge” theory<sup>3</sup>). Policies designed on the basis of these myths have created barriers making it more difficult for young people to make meaningful, positive contributions to their societies. This, in turn, has led to a crisis of leadership and declining trust among young people in their Governments and the very institutions that are meant to uphold the social contract.

On December 9th 2015, after several years of advocacy by thousands of young people worldwide, the United Nations Security Council adopted its first ever resolution on Youth, Peace and Security ([UNSCR 2250](#)). This important global development highlights young people’s role in building peace and social cohesion within their communities, and urges Member States to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels and to offer mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict in partnership with young people. It also notes the important role young women and men can play in peace processes and in preventing and countering violence. As a member state of the UN, the Myanmar government has a direct obligation to implement the considerations within this resolution. The Myanmar government therefore has an opportunity to be an example for the world in how it is engaging and investing in its nation's youth population as partners in sustaining peace in the country.

As part of the UNSCR 2250 implementation, a recent Independent Progress Study, [The Missing Peace](#), underscored that these policy myths are false: instead of being a risk factor for violence, many young people actively contribute to peace and social cohesion within their communities. Young people have long been at the forefront of political and social change, challenging the status quo through peaceful protest, political participation, artistic expression and online mobilization.<sup>4</sup> This work has largely gone unrecognised and thus also underutilised in the peacebuilding sector.

### Myanmar Status

Myanmar’s youth, similarly, have contributed to political change and continue to be drivers of social cohesion and peacebuilding in their communities, with varied lived experiences between states and regions, and rural and urban areas. A **Myanmar National Youth Policy** was passed by the national parliament in November 2017 and launched by the State Counsellor in January 2018. The youth

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<sup>1</sup> More information available at: <http://www.unfpa.org/es/node/9174>

<sup>2</sup> Hagerty, T. (2017) [Data for Youth, Peace and Security: A Summary of Research Findings from the Institute for Economics and Peace](#), Institute for Economics and Peace

<sup>3</sup> Urdal, Henrik. 2006. A Clash of Generations: Youth Bulges and Political Violence. *International Studies Quarterly* Volume 50, Issue 3, pages 607–629

<sup>4</sup> See Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security: Simpson, Graeme. (2018) [The Missing Peace: Independent progress study on youth and peace and security](#).

policy legally **defines youth as aged 16-35 years old**. Under this definition, Myanmar's youth currently comprise over a quarter of the population, with 55% of the overall population being under the age of 30, and 33% are aged 15-35 years old. The national median age in Myanmar is 27 years old. The opening of the economy, increased access to information and media, and greater transportation infrastructure are creating new opportunities for young people's development – but also pose challenges for social harmony and peacebuilding. Only recently have studies and reports begun to shine a light on youth dynamics as it relates to peace and conflict in Myanmar.

The Berghof Foundation paper on the '[Youth Space of Dialogue and Mediation in Myanmar](#)' (Grizelj, 2017) explored how young women and men self-mobilize to form groups and networks in order to build peace across conflict lines: young people often take initiative to create spaces for dialogue among their peers, through building networks based on friendship within and across ethnic and religious lines. Young people have shown to then use this space in attempts to influence decision-making in their communities, state, and national levels, to promote peacebuilding and intergenerational trust.

Although young people face unemployment challenges and lack of access to quality education, often migrating for better opportunities, a '[Study on Urban Volunteerism](#)' (CUSO International, 2015) in Yangon and Mandalay found that young people have particularly high participation rates in volunteering, irrespective of age, gender, and ethnicity. Many young people are driven by a strong sense of altruism, to spend their time constructively, and give back to their communities, with health and education being the two most popular sectors in which young people volunteered.

The Paung Sie Facility '[Youth and Everyday Peace: Fostering the untapped potential of Myanmar's youth](#)' (Paung Sie Facility, 2017) research further highlighted several important barriers and challenges for youth participation in politics and peacebuilding. The social and cultural intergenerational hierarchy that pervades Myanmar, compounded by the absence of structural and institutional mechanisms to include young people in decision-making, limits intergenerational partnerships that could contribute to sustainable peace. The findings recommended that engaging decision-makers to transform their views towards youth as *partners in building peace, rather than threats* to political stability, as well as investing in the capacity of young people to be active agents for positive change, would significantly transform the peacebuilding landscape in Myanmar.

With limited critical thinking skills developed during formal education, young people are particularly vulnerable to political exploitation that can be utilized to trigger violence. **Social media** in particular has played a powerful role in exasperating xenophobic narratives and hate-speech across the country, resulting in several instances of direct violence. An estimated 9.7 million people in Myanmar are registered on Facebook, doubling in number since 2015, of which 54% are between 19-34 years old. The proliferation of social media access and usage among young people in Myanmar presents opportunities and threats to promote and engage young people in fostering inter communal harmony and peace. The [Asia and the Pacific Regional Consultation on UNSCR 2250](#) (UN, 2017) highlighted social media as a key influence on youth and social cohesion. It further noted challenges related to mistrust of Governments towards youth peace networks, and the need for greater partnerships between youth and political institutions, leaders, civil society, and schools to promote peacebuilding.

## *Background to the Myanmar National Youth Policy<sup>5</sup>*

As the NLD-led Government came into power, they committed to developing the country's first-ever National Youth Policy, as part of their 100-day plan. The advocacy and movement for the youth policy, however, was **youth-led and started in 2008** when young people attended ASEAN Youth Forum. These young leaders were inspired by other ASEAN countries' strategies for youth policies and young people's engagement in decision-making, and therefore sought to develop a National Youth Policy for Myanmar and advocated to Government for a youth policy. They convened, with other young leaders, the first Myanmar Youth Forum in 2012, which was the largest youth-led nationwide gathering since the democratic transition was initiated in 2011. It brought together over 150 young female and male participants from 13 States and Regions. The following year the MYF established a network called the National Youth Congress (NYC). The NYC coordinated the second MYF and ASEAN Youth Forum in Yangon in 2014<sup>6</sup>, and a third MYF in 2016. The third MYF supported the development of the National Youth Policy by identifying existing State and Region youth networks that would lead local-level consultations as part of the policy development process. The Department of Social Welfare (DSW), under the Ministry of Social Welfare Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR), has been coordinating the policy development process since 2016, with technical and financial support from UNFPA.

The **National Youth Policy sets strategic national commitments** across a host of sectors, including peace and conflict, politics, education, health, gender equality, and employment, among others. The youth policy in addition refers to UNSCR 2250 as part of its mandate. Collaboration and consultation with youth leaders was included in designing the process: the youth policy design process was composed of three committees – Drafting, Working, and Central – with youth representatives elected by youth networks and groups from across the country within each committee.

The consultation process, however, was not without its **challenges**: funding shortfalls and time pressures limited opportunities for a comprehensive, inclusive process, and sustained partnerships between youth and decision-makers. National and state-level youth representatives have felt under-resourced (by time and funding), as well as lacking support in understanding best practice on developing youth policies, intergenerational partnership, and advocacy. There have further been grievances and perceptions among ethnic youth leaders that the youth policy is not sufficiently inclusive nor representing Myanmar ethnic youth voices.

Critically, there is a residual **lagging trust** among youth towards the Government, and vice versa. Young people have limited opportunities to meaningfully engage with the Government, in order to understand perspectives, contributing to young people not trusting Government-led actions. The youth policy is therefore a momentous opportunity for the Government and DSW to engage youth authentically in order to help young people understand their views and challenges, and increase trust in how young people perceive the Government and the youth policy. The Government and DSW furthermore can partner with youth organisations and leaders as partners and a resource for development and peace building.

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<sup>5</sup> See *Youth and Everyday Peace: Fostering the Untapped Potential of Myanmar's Youth* (Paung See Facility) for more information and background on the Youth Policy process: <http://www.paungsiefacility.org/publications.html>

<sup>6</sup> See the Yangon Youth Declaration ASEAN Youth Statement 2014: <https://humanrightsinasean.info/campaign/yangon-youth-declaration-asean-youth-statement-2014.html>

The youth policy process has now established **Youth Affairs Committees (YAC)** – with 40% government and 60% youth representatives – at each of the state and regional levels, with the impetus to translate the policy into practice. **The YAC are the first youth representative legislative body recognised by the Government.** The YAC were tasked with developing a strategic implementation mechanism within 6 months of the launch, although this extended to 9 months due to limited resources. The YAC members will remain in their positions with five-year rotating terms, and will surpass the 2020 election in this capacity. There is now an opportunity to support the effective implementation of the national youth policy, with further recommendations listed below.

## About Search for Common Ground-Myanmar

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[Search for Common Ground Myanmar](#), established in April 2014, is driven by an overarching mission to support social cohesion and reconciliation efforts to support 1) an inclusive peace process 2) resilience to triggers of violence and 3) strengthened state/public relationships. Search has reach in all states and three regions and engaging with young people is at the core of our theory of change. As the largest population segment in the developing world, we recognize that youth must be seriously and meaningfully included and prioritized to drive sustainable peace, development, and inclusive security.

Search has worked on Social Cohesion with the Union level government (Ministry of Social Welfare, Ethnic Affairs, Border Affairs) and trained Myanmar Radio and Television Staff in Social Cohesion. Together with an independent Myanmar production company, Search produced *The Team Myanmar* television drama, which aired on national television focusing on a team of ethnically and religiously diverse youth football players, supporting positive messaging on transforming conflicts, inclusion and leadership. To complement media products, Search Myanmar has produced facilitator guides for community dialogues and trained youth facilitators throughout the country to facilitate dialogue on youth identified issues in their communities. Search has also worked with youth to support social cohesion through cultural activities, participatory theatre, international award winning documentaries, research, supporting and facilitating television dramas and radio shows, and through service delivery efforts.

Youth are a key target demographic as part of the ***Let's think, Let's Change: Promoting Diversity through Popular Culture Initiative*** program funded by the Paung Sie Facility. Through the youth-led research, key findings helped to inform and shape the messaging and content of the television and radio drama broadcast on Myanmar Radio and Television, the Democratic Voice of Burma and Mizzima. Both shows tackled the key conflict driver of drugs and harnessed positive narratives and characters, providing moral leadership for youth (an identified need from the research), highlighting how youth can contribute positively to their communities and societies. Youth facilitators, from youth led and institutional organisations led community dialogues on key issues of the community.

## Motive for the Participatory Youth Workshop

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Recognising the critical importance of engaging government and youth on shared issues of concern to support participatory processes that both influence policy and ensure operationalisation of new



policies that contributes to social cohesion. Search for Common Ground hosted a consultative and participatory workshop with 46 young women and men. These youth leaders comprised of the national representatives and secretaries (from each state and region) of the National Youth Policy, and youth researchers from the *Let's Think, Let's Change* who come from different youth networks in Lashio and Yangon. The aim of the workshop was

to support youth stakeholders to reflect on their experiences and lessons learned in collaboration to achieve impactful change. In particular, the workshop sought to identify key messages, based on lessons learned from youth, for decision-makers that can facilitate the effective implementation of the youth policy. This workshop sought to connect SFCG-Myanmar research findings as part of its *Let's Think, Let's Change* program, with supporting the implementation of the national youth policy. By bringing together youth from across different networks, the two-day workshop sought to create a space to amplify messages around the positive involvement of youth in Myanmar society.

### **Objectives:**

1. **Raise the profile of young people's voices** and leadership capacity in Myanmar with Department of Social Welfare, and support the roll out of the new youth policy
2. Explore how **Myanmar's youth policy process could be further strengthened** and supported through the youth policy affairs committees
3. Explore **collaborative entry points for more impactful investments** in youth and social cohesion and youth, peace and security in Myanmar

The key questions for the workshop were as follows:

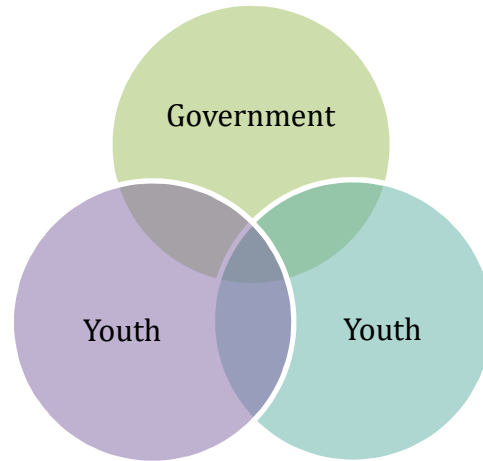
- What has been **successful and worked well** in terms of collaborative relationships in developing the youth policy?
- How can **Government and young people collaborate** more constructively/with impact?
- What is the **youth message** for DSW around youth policy moving forward?
- What **support do young people need** to more effectively deliver key messages and recommendations to high-level decision-makers?
- Discussion and examples of translating policy into practice

### **Outcomes of the workshop**

The theme within the two-day workshop was around *collaboration*: what are the factors that contribute to successful collaboration between young people (peer-to-peer), and between the Government and young people? What are the factors that hinder successful and meaningful collaboration to achieve goals? The first day was spent on reflection of lessons learned from experiences, challenges faced during the youth policy drafting process, and examples of best practice from other case studies, notably Sri Lanka – presented by Saji Preli, Director of Children and Youth Programming, Search for Common Ground. The second day was tailored towards future

thinking: based on lessons learned for successful collaboration, moving forward, how can the Government and young people work effectively to implement an impactful and inclusive youth policy?

The workshop was an opportunity for the national youth representatives from across the states and regions to informally meet and have the time and space to share their experiences, feelings, needs, hopes and concerns – meetings between the youth committees and government have to date been limited and remained in formal capacities. It was also an opportunity for Youth Policy representatives to further connect with active young leaders who have not been involved in the youth policy process, but are in a position to have influence among youth within their communities.



The workshop utilised participatory theatre to explore the dynamics of collaboration between youth and the government, along with debrief teamwork games, group discussion work and plenary presentations. The final day included planning for action points per state and region. Several key challenges and successes around collaboration for impact were presented by youth groups, including the following:

Successes	Challenges/Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Youth were able to mobilise effectively</b> amongst one another, and build representation of youth to Union-level</li> <li>● Youth now have a <b>recognised path to have their voice heard</b> (through the Youth Affairs Committees); these channels should be known and utilized by broader youth constituencies</li> <li>● Young people are able to <b>hear and accept diverse views</b>, have open discussions, and negotiate for inclusion</li> <li>● The <b>youth policy is a legitimate, formal, and official entry point</b> for young people to engage in government and political decision-making</li> <li>● As a result of the youth policy, there is <b>increased collaboration between youth</b> from different states and regions; should build on this momentum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Varying relationships between youth representative and state/regional-level government across the different states and regions.</li> <li>● <b>Need for increased capacity</b> within the Youth Affairs Committees on understanding best practices for youth policy implementation and collaboration</li> <li>● <b>Perception of lagging trust</b> from government towards young people, and young people not understanding/not trusting the government</li> <li>● <b>Competing priority of youth policy</b> against other government priorities, leading to weak commitment and limited time investment - potential issue for 2020</li> <li>● <b>Varying levels of awareness and understanding</b> of the importance and contents of the national youth policy by state and regional-level governments</li> </ul>

- **Limited budget and resources** available for youth policy development and implementation, including for the Youth Affairs Committees to meet and collaborate
- Youth policy representatives recognise that **greater inclusion is needed** for successful youth policy implementation - state/regional Youth Policy representatives are not able to represent *all* constituencies, thus need continued engagement with diverse young people in their respective areas
- **Greater communication** needed around youth policy to raise awareness to wider youth constituency, political parties, other government bodies, and civil society

**Below are the key joint action points prioritised across state and regions from youth policy representatives and young leaders:**

- Increase awareness of the youth policy and youth rights across Myanmar
- State/regional-level Youth Affairs Committees to host regular dialogue with wider youth constituency to update on the youth policy process and support the successful implementation of the policy
- Use Facebook as a platform through which to increase access, awareness, and engagement of more young people
- Engage with institutions that target young people, particularly schools and universities to promote awareness and understanding of the youth policy and its importance
- Form district and township-level Youth Affairs Committees to further promote youth participation and engagement in policy making. Establish a National Youth Parliament within 5 years of youth policy launch

## Key Messages & Recommendations

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The following key messages and recommendations stem from the discussions in the workshop, and build upon the shared experience and challenges of developing the youth policy. They also draw upon the research findings from the youth-led SFCG Let's Think, Let's Change report. The recommendations are intended to promote the importance of youth engagement in social cohesion and policy development and implementation in Myanmar.

### Supporting the Youth Policy

- **Encourage a long-term vision and approach:** The aim of the national youth policy is providing the younger generation with greater opportunities to develop, lead and shape their future – it is intended to support current and future generations of youth in Myanmar. The implementation of the policy therefore requires a long-term strategy, recognising that change takes time and dedicated effort. In understanding the importance of the youth policy and engaging young people, key stakeholders should consistently bear in mind the question: *Who will be leading in 20 years?* Young people need to be engaged as partners.
- **Mainstream youth across different policies and sectors:** The youth policy is relevant across all sectors in Myanmar, including health, education, security, employment and others. The youth policy should be socialised to other ministries and to parliament, with the intent to make laws/policies in Myanmar more 'youth-friendly'. Contingency plans should also be put into place for the upcoming 2020 elections, to manage and ensure the youth policy doesn't get side-lined post 2020; the Youth Affairs Committees are mandated for 5 years, beyond 2020, and should be supported in developing future plans.
- **Strengthen the foundation for collaboration between Government and Youth Policy representatives:** The workshop underscored several gaps in support that can be filled to strengthen positive working relationships. The main gap was around facilitating spaces, particularly informal, between the youth policy representatives and relative government bodies. There have been limited opportunities for youth from different networks and states to meet, and limited opportunity for the Government and young people to discuss lessons learned and build trust. There needs to be more time, and more frequent, discussions to share experiences on developing the youth policy, brainstorming how to overcome challenges, reflect on strengths and weaknesses, and build relationships and trust.
  - **Support informal spaces for dialogue and meeting** between 1) Government & young people 2) youth policy representatives involved in different phases of the youth policy 3) broader youth to consistently reflect on experiences, challenges, creative ideas for solutions, and actions to move forward collectively with greater impact. These dialogue spaces should take place in different states and regions to ensure inclusivity.
  - **Strengthen intergenerational partnership:** in order to *change the narrative and perception towards young people as docile or lacking capacity*, the DSW can identify senior *champions for youth* to showcase that political and social participation is important for young people. Young people need role models and legacies to build upon.
  - **Facilitate exchange of perspectives:** In order to overcome the challenge of lack of understanding between Government and youth perspectives, a workshop/training with

Government/DSW staff can be facilitated around positive collaboration with young people. Youth representatives can then join for a “*step into my shoes*” exchange, to facilitate an exchange of viewpoints.

- **Increase connection between Union- and State/Regional Govt to increase recognition of youth policy implementation:** There appears to be a disconnect between Union-level and state/regional level DSW and government regarding the youth policy. Particularly at the state and regional, there is inconsistent understanding and awareness of the national youth policy among government authorities and ministries, compared to the Union-level which is more informed. The DSW should be supported in disseminating and building awareness of the youth policy to state and regional counterparts.
  - **Youth Policy as an achievement:** the entry point for the DSW when socialising with other ministries could be showcasing the youth policy as an achievement, highlighting the fact that there has never been a process and policy like this before: it’s an opportunity for the whole country to build a next generation of peace.
  - **Union level Government can request state/regional levels to meet with youth policy representatives:** noting the inequality among states/regions in terms of how DSW and Government are responding to the youth policy, some youth have closer relationships than others to state/regional DSW. This means that there is inequality in terms of the access and reach to Government between youth across states/regions and their ability to advocate for action for youth. This is one key grievance; as young people are not on an equal playing field among one another. The Union-level DSW can facilitate the prioritisation of youth policy meetings at the state/regional level. This will also help strengthen trust and collaboration between youth representatives.
    - **Many of the DSW staff at state and regional level are young people** – make them see/realise that this policy is for them too; and they should own it as youth.
- **Promote exchange, understanding and collaboration between youth across states and regions:** due to limited resources, there has been limited connection between youth policy youth and broader youth constituencies, hence a need to increase youth-youth collaboration. Myanmar’s transportation and communication system are also a nascent development for the country; young people from different states and regions still do not have enough opportunities to learn about the similarities and differences in one another’s lived realities. Funding in particular is a barrier for young people across the country to travel and meet.
  - Donors can support **intra-country exchanges**, particularly of the Youth Affairs Committees, to travel and meet with one another and broader youth communities across the states and regions.
  - Funding should also be invested in facilitating more **frequent informal dialogue** and workshop exchanges between the Youth Affairs Committees at the Union/National level.
- **Building capacity on cohesion, common ground, and collaboration for Youth Affairs Committees:** Noting the success of the approach and methods used in the workshop, there is an opportunity to increase capacity within Youth Affairs Committees, and government on a common ground approach, conflict transformation, non-adversarial advocacy, leadership etc to facilitate collaboration and positive working relationships.

- **Importance of inclusion of diverse voices & equality among voices:** Some vulnerable voices still feel excluded from the youth policy, such as rural ethnic youth, or those who have disabilities, are in LGBTIQ+ spectrum, sex workers and others (e.g. one disabled youth participant raised issue that disabled youth do not trust/agree with the policy so strongly because they do not see their voices sufficiently represented). *The inclusion of diverse voices will strengthen credibility of the youth policy; exclusion diminishes trust and ownership.*

### Broader Recommendations

- **Recognise and invest in the importance of engaging and building the capacity of young leaders:** Myanmar is at opportune momentum to meaningfully support the engagement of young people through the youth policy, as well as through raising youth voices and participation of young people in building peace and democracy nationally. Young people in particular consistently raised key principles that they value and consider important for meaningful collaboration:
  - Trust and loyalty are important for young people in Myanmar. Experience has shown that when international donors or organizations work with a self-interested agenda in engaging youth groups, it impedes an effective working relationship, decreases trust, and can lead to a lack of desire from youth to work with international donors. Youth organizations should be supported, listened to, and engaged with as equal partners, rather than approached within a pre-established agenda.
  - Active commitment from government and decision-makers in engaging young people in political and development policies
  - Authentic partnership built on transparency, openness, and genuine dialogue
  - Ownership through a youth-led, adult supported approach
- **Explore the possibility to establish a Youth, Peace & Security (YPS) National Coalition:** Many international organisations, and senior decision-makers within government and national organisations are unaware of UNSCR 2250, the National Youth Policy, the arguments around the importance of youth engagement in peacebuilding, along with the obligations of the Myanmar government to support this agenda. Further noting the influx of funding that is coming into this sector, it would be important to coordinate and collaborate in a conflict sensitive approach, in order to minimize doing harm and maximise the positive impact on young people holistically.
  - Consider the *joint establishment and coordination of a Youth, Peace & Security coalition in Myanmar*. The coalition would be composed of Myanmar youth leaders, including representatives from the national youth policy, youth-led organisations and youth networks; donors; relevant international organisations; and relevant Government authorities.
  - The YPS Coalition would meet on a frequent (quarterly) basis to discuss updates on youth, peace and security, prioritise actions, and coordinate planning to build a momentum rather than work in a siloed approach, which may do more harm than good in the long term.



## Annexes:

### *About Search Children and Youth Division and Search Strategy*

Founded in 1982, Search for Common Ground (Search) is the world's largest and oldest peacebuilding non-governmental organization, working in 48 countries across four continents with staff and offices in 59 cities around the world. Search works to transform the way the world deals with conflict - away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative problem solving. We use a multi-faceted approach, employing media initiatives and working with local partners in government and civil society, to find culturally appropriate means to strengthen societies' capacity to deal with conflicts constructively: to understand the differences and act on the commonalities.

In one year, Search directly engages over 1.16 million children and youth all over the world. We work with more than 90 youth peace organizations and over 200 other youth-led organizations. Our media programming reaches 86 million through TV and radio outlets, and 415,000 people via social media and email. Building upon young people's capacities and recognizing their agency, our programs help young people find their voice and provide them with skills to become changemakers and leaders for peace.

Search has established a dedicated Children & Youth division to support our programming and influence policy and practice around young people's participation in peacebuilding. Since 2012, we co-founded and co-lead an interagency working group focused on youth participation in peacebuilding. It is comprised of UN agencies, international NGOs, youth-led organizations, scholars, donors and multilateral and intergovernmental organizations. Our collaborative leadership and collective advocacy, alongside many partners in this group, contributed to the passage of the first UN Security Council Resolution to recognize the important and positive role

young women and men play in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security: [Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security](#).

Search has also pioneered methods for engaging with young people as partners for peace. We have developed field-shaping guidance on working in partnership with young women and young men, often on the front lines of conflict, on topics such as [mapping youth leaders](#), [engaging in youth-led research](#), [engaging and recruiting girls into peacebuilding programs](#) and engaging hard-to-reach youth through a [Listening & Learning](#) methodology.

### *Further readings & resources*

#### **PRINCIPLES & POLICY**

- [UN Security Council Resolution 2250, Youth, Peace & Security](#)
- [UN Security Council Resolution 2419 on Youth, Peace and Security](#)
- [Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding](#)
- [Amman Youth Declaration](#): Outcome document of the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security, this declaration is a roadmap towards a strengthened policy framework on Youth, Peace and Security. Link will provide the Declaration in multiple local languages and country level efforts.
- [Youth Action Agenda to Prevent Violent Extremism and Promote Peace](#): Outcome document of the Global Youth Summit against Violent Extremism.

#### **PROGRAMMING & PRACTICE**

- [The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security](#) This independent study is the most comprehensive and latest study on the state youth, peace and security. The full version of the study contains an executive summary that is very useful.
- [Practice Note on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding](#)
- [Translating youth, peace and security policy into practice](#)
- [Transforming Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilders Guide](#).

#### **MYANMAR REPORTS and RESOURCES**

- [Myanmar National Youth Policy](#) (2018); Government of Myanmar
- [Youth-Led Participatory Research on Social Cohesion in Urban Areas in Myanmar](#) The youth-led report for SFCG. The research findings helped shape content for Search Myanmar's 's *Let's Think, Let's Change: Promoting Diversity through Popular Culture initiative* program.
- [Youth and Everyday Peace: Fostering the Untapped Potential of Myanmar's Youth](#) Myanmar's first comprehensive youth & peacebuilding report
- [The Youth Space of Dialogue and Mediation: Myanmar](#); The Berghof Foundation (2017)
- [Protection Needs and Capacities of Youth in Myanmar: A Preliminary Report Exploring Youth Protection in Myanmar](#); Nonviolent Peaceforce (2018)
- [Realizing youth inclusion in peace processes: Lessons from Myanmar](#); United Network of Young Peacebuilders Blog (2018)
- [Youth Led Mapping Toolkit Kit \(English\)](#) Myanmar language version also available
- [Youth Listening and Learning Toolkit \(English\)](#) Myanmar language version also available

## Technical Support

### **Irena Grizelj - Independent Expert - Youth and Social Cohesion**

[Irena](#) offers expertise on sustainable and inclusive peacebuilding, focused on youth engagement in peace processes, political participation, and social cohesion in transitional states. Irena has been working in Myanmar since June 2015, and has created trusted relationships with a diverse range of youth actors, networks, and organisations from across the different states and regions of Myanmar. Presently, she is researching and co-authoring the **first global policy paper on youth participation in peace processes**, in the lead up to the first International Symposium on the same topic, as a consultant for United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

She was recently the lead research consultant for the **United States Institute of Peace** (USIP) meta-evaluation of interfaith peacebuilding work in Myanmar, to assess the effectiveness of current interfaith work in stabilising conflict. She has also worked as Youth Program Advisor with [Nonviolent Peaceforce](#), to providing trainings, research and analysis for Myanmar's first report assessing youth engagement in civilian protection and ceasefire monitoring, '*Protection Needs and Capacities of Youth*'. With [Search for Common Ground](#), Irena led the design and implementation of a youth-led participatory action research project that assessed social cohesion in urban areas. In 2017, Irena built on her existing relationships to co-lead and develop the [Paung Sie Facility](#) (PSF) seminal *Youth, Peace and Security* report, assessing the state of youth participation in peacebuilding and the peace process in Myanmar, identifying key challenges, and developing policy and programming recommendations for national and international stakeholders. Irena additionally produced the formative case study analysis of '*The Youth Space of Dialogue and Mediation*' in Myanmar on behalf of the [Berghof Foundation](#), which features as a Thematic Paper in Global Progress Study on UNSCR 2250, *The Missing Peace*. Originally from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Irena holds a Master's degree in International Relations and Conflict Management from the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University.

Irena provided support with the design and facilitation of the activities, and engaging youth involved in the National Youth policy.

### **Saji Prelis - Director, Children and Youth Department**

Saji Prelis has over twenty years' experience working with youth movements and youth focused organizations in conflict and transition environments in over 35 countries throughout the world. Six years ago he co-founded and has been co-chairing the first UN-CSO-Donor working group on Youth and Peacebuilding that helped successfully advocate for the historic UN Security Council [Resolution 2250](#) (in 2015) on Youth, Peace and Security. As a result of the Working Group's advocacy, a second Security Council Resolution ([Res 2419](#)) was unanimously adopted in June 2018. Prior to joining SFCG, Mr. Prelis was the founding director of the Peacebuilding & Development Institute at American University. Over eleven years at the university resulted in him co-developing over 100 training curricula exploring the nexus of peace building with development.

Saji Prelis has served as an adviser to governments and governmental agencies in over a dozen countries. He has also played an advisory role to the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Ministers on youth and peacebuilding. In June 2017, Mr. Prelis received the distinguished Luxembourg Peace Prize for his Outstanding Achievements in Peace Support. Saji Prelis obtained his Master's Degree in International Peace & Conflict Resolution with a Concentration in International Law from American University in Washington, DC.