



ASEAN-IPR Training: Enhancing the Role of Youth in Peacebuilding

Compiled Articles

29 July - 2 August 2024

South Tangerang, Indonesia

DISCLAIMER

These compiled Articles were submitted as one of the deliverables by the participants of the ASEAN-IPR Training: Enhancing the Role of Youth in Peacebuilding which was held on 29 July - 2 August 2024. Based on the materials given during the training, the participants were asked to author Articles about the role of youth in peacebuilding. As such, these Articles were prepared based on the participants' creativity and views alone and did not represent the views of their respective countries.

CONTENTS

Disclaimer	1
Brunei Darussalam	4
Cambodia	6
Lao PDR	8
Malaysia	11
Philippines	14
Singapore	16
Viet Nam	18
Japan	20

Brunei Darussalam

The Role of Youth in Peacebuilding: Bridging Local Insights and Regional Perspectives

by. Mohamad Arif Syazwan bin Bujang

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19, asserts: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." This principle is not merely a legalistic abstraction but a crucial pillar of peacebuilding. It underscores the importance of free expression in fostering understanding and resolving conflicts, a belief central to the mission of PeaceGeneration Indonesia (PeaceGen). This social enterprise is committed to advancing peace education as a means to address community conflicts and dismantle prejudice.

Youth, as pivotal agents of change, play a crucial role in shaping peacebuilding efforts. In ASEAN, where a substantial portion of the population consists of young people, the youth's role belongs not only in the future; they are active drivers of today's progress. The increasing recognition of their contributions to conflict resolution, countering extremism, and fostering peace underscores their potential as dynamic change-makers.

PeaceGeneration Indonesia exemplifies this potential through its innovative use of contact theory. By engaging youth at the grassroots level, PeaceGen promotes the 12 Basic Values of Peace, grounded in spiritual principles that crisscross religions, languages, and age. This approach aligns with Indonesia's national motto, "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity), reflecting a commitment to harmony amidst a rich mosaic of ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity.

During my time in Indonesia, I observed how deeply peacebuilding is interwoven with its societal fabric. Despite its vast diversity, Indonesians display remarkable tolerance and openness to cross-cultural dialogue. PeaceGen's initiatives highlight the transformative power of peace education in reinforcing these values and addressing the root causes of conflict. By nurturing understanding at both individual and community levels, PeaceGen actively contributes to a more cohesive and peaceful society.

In contrast, Brunei Darussalam, known as "The Abode of Peace," offers a different model. While the nation enjoys stability, it often exemplifies "negative peace,"

characterised by the absence of direct violence rather than the presence of an equitable and inclusive society. For Brunei, the challenge is to transition from negative peace to "positive peace." Positive peace involves not just the absence of conflict but also the creation of an environment where differences are celebrated, and conflicts are managed constructively. Healthy conflicts, within the framework of positive peace, can drive progress and innovation.

One notable initiative in Brunei is the Youth Town Halls, which provide valuable platforms for dialogue between young people and senior officials. However, these collaborations often reflect a one-sided dynamic, primarily driven by government interests with limited youth representation. For these initiatives to truly advance positive peace, it is essential that youth are empowered to influence policy and decision-making processes in a way that matters. Moreover, the government must demonstrate a transparent commitment to valuing youth and integrating their contributions into its future direction.

His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei, in his address for the 19th National Youth Day Celebration, aptly noted: "The youth is an invaluable human resource. The progress and decline of a nation are closely linked to the youth's performance." This statement underscores the critical role of youth in shaping national progress. To fully embrace the principles of peacebuilding, Brunei must accelerate efforts to harness the energy and creativity of its young people, ensuring that their voices are genuinely heard and valued.

In the broader context of ASEAN, peacebuilding is a continuous journey that demands sustained commitment from all societal levels. As Brunei continues its development, it can draw valuable lessons from the diverse experiences of its ASEAN neighbours. By embracing diversity, promoting inclusive dialogue, and ensuring that peacebuilding efforts reflect the true essence of "The Abode of Peace," Brunei can align more closely with ASEAN's vision of "one vision, one identity, and one community."

The shift from negative to positive peace is crucial for long-term sustainability. It fosters a people-centred and nature-responsible economic model characterised by voluntary cooperation, collective goods, local action, and democratic governance. This model not only contributes significantly to achieving various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but also fosters resilience, promotes well-being, and reduces inequalities. By learning from regional practices and integrating these insights, Brunei can enhance its peacebuilding efforts and ensure that peace is not merely an absence of conflict but the foundation of a just and equitable society.

Cambodia

ASEAN+ Youth 4 SDGs

by Chao Malin

Nom Villika

Prom Sophamonyoudom

ASEAN's burgeoning youth population, amounting to over 2 million, places it in a unique position to mobilize a dynamic and youthful force to advance sustainable development in the region. It is an ASEAN-wide longstanding commitment to enhance sustainable development cooperation in the region. Such as by promoting the Complementarities Initiative between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. As 2030 is fast approaching, further progress must be made to advance the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

At this critical juncture, ASEAN youth can be a key partner for ASEAN in complementing the region's endeavor to further promote sustainable development cooperation. Their enhanced participation and engagement, as clearly identified in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015), are instrumental in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially with the proactive support and empowerment of ASEAN and its External Partners.

As explicitly laid out in the Post-2020 Vision of ASEAN Youth Cooperation, the institutionalisation of youth engagement mechanisms is fundamental to promoting regional sustainable development. As the primary driving force of regional cooperation, ASEAN can provide an open and inclusive platform that amplifies the voices of the youth for innovation and creativity, concerning the youth's role in fulfilling the SDGs. In particular, the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) can serve as a hub that brings together youth from ASEAN and beyond and foster partnerships among them, aligning with Goal 17 of the SDGs. At ASEC, youth can exchange their ideas and aspirations on practical approaches to reach SDGs. They can also collaborate and incubate projects. Critically, to ensure the sustainability of this youth engagement initiative, ASEAN needs to institutionalize a standalone long term support mechanism.

Enhancing the youth's capacity is a core element of the ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2021- 2025. In addition to providing the youth a platform, we need to equip them with 21st century skills so they can collectively make concrete and impactful changes. For instance, youth should be encouraged to work on projects related to SDGS based on the spirit of volunteerism. They should learn to localize SDGs into their respective

contexts at the community level. They should also be trained in project development and management skills. In this context, youth do not only have opportunities to share their ideas and aspirations, but they can also turn them into practical action plans that can bring about positive changes to their communities. Youth should also be trained in project pitching and fundraising so that their action plans can be implemented.

ASEAN youth has been recognized as an important force in strengthening sustainable development cooperation in the region. Further support and empowerment from ASEAN and its External Partners are significant to ensure that youth can make full use of their vast potential for inclusive and sustainable development. It is with high hope that, as a robust collective, ASEAN youth's collaboration with each other and global counterparts can be agents of positive change in the region for peace and prosperity.

Lao PDR

Promoting Peace Awareness Amongst Youth in Lao PDR: Unveiling Potential and Opportunities for Peacebuilding

by Phoudthasaichay Yokkhanphone
Phothideth Sensathith

Introduction

In today's increasingly interconnected world, the importance of promoting peace awareness among young people cannot be overstated. In Lao PDR, a nation with a rich history and cultural diversity, fostering peace awareness among the youth is vital for ensuring long-term stability and harmony. As the backbone of the country's future, the youth have a unique potential to drive positive change and build a society rooted in mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation.

The Importance of Peace Awareness

Peace awareness goes beyond merely understanding the absence of conflict. It includes the cultivation of attitudes, behaviors, and structures that contribute to peaceful coexistence. For the youth of Lao PDR, this involves learning the values of tolerance, empathy, and dialogue, which are essential for resolving differences without resorting to violence. By instilling these values, we are not only preparing young people to be responsible citizens but also laying the foundation for a society that values peace and unity.

The Role of Youth in Peacebuilding

Youth in Lao PDR represent a significant portion of the population, making them crucial stakeholders in the country's peacebuilding efforts. Their energy, creativity, and innovative thinking can be harnessed to promote peace in various ways. From participating in community dialogues to leading grassroots initiatives, young people have the potential to address the root causes of conflict and build bridges between different communities.

Engaging youth in peacebuilding efforts also helps to ensure that the solutions to conflicts are inclusive and reflective of the diverse needs and aspirations of the population. By involving young people in decision-making processes, we are empowering them to take ownership of their futures and contribute to the creation of a more peaceful and just society.

Opportunities for Peacebuilding in Lao PDR

Lao PDR presents a unique set of opportunities for promoting peace awareness among its youth. The country's strong cultural heritage, characterized by a deep respect for community values and traditions, provides a solid foundation for peacebuilding initiatives. By leveraging these cultural strengths, peace education programs can be designed to resonate with young people and inspire them to take an active role in promoting peace.

Education is a powerful tool in the promotion of peace awareness. Integrating peace education into school curricula can help young people develop the skills and knowledge needed to resolve conflicts peacefully. This includes teaching students about the importance of human rights, gender equality, and social justice, which are all essential components of a peaceful society.

In addition to formal education, extracurricular activities such as sports, arts, and cultural exchanges can also play a significant role in promoting peace awareness among the youth. These activities provide young people with opportunities to interact with peers from different backgrounds, fostering mutual understanding and respect. Furthermore, they offer a platform for youth to express themselves creatively and work collaboratively, which are key elements in the peacebuilding process.

Experiences from the "Youth as Peacebuilders" Training

The "Youth as Peacebuilders" training program in Indonesia is a prime example of how structured initiatives can cultivate peace awareness among the youth. As participants in this training, we witnessed firsthand the transformative impact it had on young people. The program offered a safe space for youth to engage in open discussions about conflict, peace, and reconciliation. Through interactive workshops, participants learned practical skills in mediation, conflict resolution, and leadership.

One of the key takeaways from the training was the emphasis on understanding the root causes of conflict. By analyzing the invented and real-world scenarios, participants gained insights into the complexities of conflicts and the importance of addressing underlying issues such as poverty, inequality, and discrimination. The training also highlighted the role of empathy and active listening in peacebuilding, encouraging youth to develop these essential skills in their daily interactions.

Moreover, the program fostered a sense of community among participants, many of whom came from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This diversity enriched the learning experience, as it provided opportunities for youth to share their unique perspectives and learn from one another. The friendships and networks formed during the training have continued to flourish, serving as a support system for participants as they apply their newfound knowledge in their communities.

Harnessing Technology for Peace

The rapid advancement of technology in recent years has opened up new avenues for promoting peace awareness among youth in Lao PDR. Social media, in particular, has become a powerful tool for spreading messages of peace and unity. By creating online platforms for dialogue and collaboration, young people can connect with others across the country and beyond, sharing their experiences and ideas on how to build a more peaceful world.

Digital storytelling and online campaigns can also be effective in raising awareness about the importance of peace and encouraging youth participation in peacebuilding efforts. These tools allow young people to share their stories and perspectives, thereby fostering a sense of solidarity and collective responsibility for maintaining peace.

Conclusion

Promoting peace awareness among youth in Lao PDR is not only an investment in the future of the nation but also a step towards creating a more harmonious world. By tapping into the potential of young people and providing them with the opportunities and resources needed to engage in peacebuilding efforts, we can build a society that values peace, justice, and equality. The journey towards lasting peace begins with the youth, and by empowering youth today, we are securing a peaceful tomorrow for all.

Malaysia

Youth Involvement in Peacebuilding: Lessons from ASEAN-IPR Training

by Nurin Iman binti Razfan
Mohammad Zulfadhli Zahirudin
Sasikumar Kovalan

In today's rapidly evolving world, youth play a crucial role in peacebuilding. Their energy, creativity, and resilience are powerful assets in fostering sustainable peace. Their involvement in democratic practices and societal participation is essential to address their needs and ensure their rights are upheld (United Nations, 2012). Engaging youth in decision-making allows them to represent their peers effectively (Faulkner, 2009). The World Assembly of Youth (2015) found that youth participation leads to better decisions and outcomes. Hence, youth-led organizations and initiatives are vital for creating inclusive and democratic societies (Berisha, Shtraza, & Hazizaj, 2015).

The recent ASEAN-IPR Training: Enhancing the Role of Youth as Peacebuilders underscored the immense potential of youth in driving peacebuilding efforts. This training, which brought together 30 youth from ASEAN member states, Timor-Leste and Japan, offered a dynamic platform to exchange perspectives and learn from diverse cultural contexts. One key takeaway was understanding conflicts through the lens of positions and interests, which provided deeper insights into underlying disputes and offered strategies for more nuanced and sustainable solutions. The training emphasized the importance of inclusive dialogue, empathy, and collaboration, equipping us with practical skills for facilitating dialogue and building consensus.

For Malaysian youth, such programs are particularly beneficial. They enhance understanding of both regional and local conflicts, providing practical skills like negotiation and conflict analysis that help address local issues and foster social cohesion. The ASEAN-IPR Training exemplifies how international collaboration can deepen local impact, highlighting the critical role of youth in peacebuilding.

In Malaysia, the Parlimen Mahasiswa Kebangsaan (National Student Parliament) stands out as a notable example of youth involvement in peacebuilding. This initiative unites student leaders from across the country, offering a platform for engaging in meaningful dialogue on national issues, including conflict resolution and social cohesion. A key project within the Parlimen Mahasiswa Kebangsaan focused on promoting interethnic harmony among university students. Recognizing the diverse

backgrounds of Malaysian students, the National Student Parliament organized workshops and discussions to address stereotypes and foster mutual respect. These sessions encouraged students to share cultural experiences and engage in open dialogue about common challenges.

The impact was substantial. Participants reported increased empathy towards peers from different ethnic groups, leading to a more inclusive campus environment. The initiative also empowered student leaders to act as mediators and advocates for peace within their institutions and communities. This case illustrates how youth-led projects can effectively contribute to peacebuilding by fostering understanding and collaboration among diverse groups.

However, despite these efforts, youth in Malaysia face challenges in peacebuilding. Limited representation in formal decision-making processes and socio-political barriers hinder their active participation. Platforms like the Malaysian Youth Parliament (PBM) and the Malaysian Youth Consultative Council (MPBN) are available, but they primarily engage youth who are already members of associations, leaving a large segment of unassociated youth underrepresented. Socio-economic disparities and political polarization further complicate their involvement. Nevertheless, Malaysian youth continue to strive for greater inclusion and impact.

Empowering youth through involvement and participation is crucial for their development. Effective youth participation involves creating opportunities for young people to influence and contribute to policies and programs. The Malaysian Youth Consultative Council (MPBN) represents an official medium for youth input, though it only includes association members. With an estimated 2.7 million youth members compared to a total youth population of 13.88 million (Sani & Saad, 2018), this does not fully capture the voice of all youth.

The Malaysian Youth Parliament (PBM), established from the 2010 Youth Transformation Laboratory, acknowledges youth as catalysts for national transformation. It provides opportunities for youth to showcase their potential and engage comprehensively, including those not in associations. This initiative allows youth to voice their views and demonstrate their talents to national leaders (Turmadzi Madun, 2016). Since its inception, PBM has convened six times and debated 40 motions, reflecting its ongoing role in shaping national policies (Sani & Saad, 2018).

In conclusion, the ASEAN-IPR Training and the *Parlimen Mahasiswa Kebangsaan* illustrate the significant role of youth in peacebuilding. By enhancing their understanding and skills, these initiatives enable youth to address local and global conflicts effectively. Investing in youth education, training, and leadership opportunities is essential for creating a more inclusive and effective approach to resolving conflicts. Recognizing and

supporting youth's contributions will be key to building a more peaceful and just world for future generations.

References

Berisha, F., Shtraza, I., & Hazizaj, A. (2015). *Youth participation in politics and decision-making in Albania 2011–2015*. Tirana, Albania: Author.

Faulkner, M. K. (2009). *Presentation and representation: Youth participation in ongoing public decision-making projects*. *Childhood*, 16(1), 89–104. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568208101696>

Sani, M. U. M., & Saad, S. (2018). *Perlaksanaan dan cabaran penglibatan belia dalam Parlimen Belia Malaysia* (The implementation and challenges of youth engagement in Youth Parliament of Malaysia). *e-Bangi*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.5130/e-bangi.v15i1.25215>

United Nations. (2012). *United Nations youth participation*. Retrieved May 1, 2016, from <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-participation.pdf>

Philippines

More Than Demographic Dividends: The Role of Youth in Attaining a Sustainable Peace

By. Jonel Y. Sendaydiego

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is populated by 224.2 million youth (34 percent) aged between 15 to 34, making this age group an important agent and driver of peace. In the Philippines, 28.9 percent (31.40 million) of its population are youth, making them the backbone of the economy, and more importantly, characterizing the country as a vibrant democracy. This huge regional and national population of young people holds a collective power to chart the future and influence policies of their respective nations -even written history has been stirred by the collective actions of the youth in transforming societies.

The youth possess the appropriate mix of vitality, enthusiasm and curiosity to achieve something of great importance, driving them to pull off what is initially deemed as impossible and seeing the results of what was previously believed as unattainable. This notion of the youth being dynamic and vibrant prompts some sectors of society to myopically view them only as a form of economic resource as human capital. Nations with young demographics precede the optimal point in the economic equilibrium which translates into economic progress.

Beyond this ideal demography, the youth plays a crucial role in bridging social divides and generational gaps as they embody the value of inclusivity. Similarly, the youth are immersed in grassroots engagements and diverse identities. They contribute to meaningful social transformation from the ground. These are necessary foundations for a just and lasting peace where conflicts are resolved constructively and peacefully. Where citizens -irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity or religion- live in harmony with one another. Indeed, there can be no economic development without peace and ultimately there can be no sustainable peace without the youth. The missing link that is hiding in plain sight and the invisible hand that shakes the history.

As one-third of ASEAN's population is composed of youth, it is imperative to engage and involve them in decision-making to cultivate a new generation of advocates and leaders who are committed to nation-building. But more than nation-building, the youth must be actively involved in peacebuilding, for economic progress is tasteless without

peace and social harmony. For the ASEAN in general, it must be a community of peacebuilders more than a community of nations.

All seasoned leaders started off as young idealists, dreaming and believing that they can change the world. Some fail where others succeed. Some thrive. And few leave a legacy. Those who shaped the nations within ASEAN are already part of the older generations, and the youth of today are grateful for their legacies. While the former possess vast experience and wider perspectives, the latter brings counterintuitive viewpoints and innovative approaches in solving the challenges of the current zeitgeist.

My personal experience renewed my hope for the future when I met several fellow youth advocates. They came from diverse and intersectional backgrounds across Southeast Asia including Japan and Timor Leste. I met them during this peacebuilding training facilitated by the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) titled, "Enhancing the Role of Youth as Peacebuilders". Learning the stories, ideals and aspirations of my fellows during this week-long training, I ironically did not see vibrant and energetic young people -contrary to the common notion about the youth. Instead, what I saw were the future leaders of their respective nations who are able and willing to accept the challenge of nation-building, and equally important peacebuilding. This training also served as a platform of community of practice where we shared best practices and discussed our shared aspirations for our nations and the ASEAN.

The stories of my fellows inspire me to persist and continue my career in pursuit of peace, reconciliation and unity locally and across the ASEAN, if the future conditions permit. Ultimately, this training made me realize that the current work I have at the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU) in the Philippine government is not a job but a lifelong advocacy for a just and sustainable peace. More than demographic dividends, the youth are indeed the backbone of peace dividends.

Singapore

The Vital Role of Youth in Peacebuilding

by Martyn Chek Yew Chuan

In today's increasingly complex global landscape, youth are emerging as pivotal agents of change, especially in the realm of peacebuilding. This highlights the importance of the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) Training on 'Enhancing the role of Youth in Peacebuilding' in Jakarta, Indonesia; in which I had the privilege of representing Singapore.

The discussions were enriching, emphasizing the vital role that youth play in promoting peace and stability within our region. We explored innovative approaches to conflict resolution, learned from each other's experiences, and built networks that will undoubtedly foster greater collaboration across borders. The training has been an instrumental platform in advancing the agenda of Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), offering youth participants both a space to learn peace education and contribute actively to peacebuilding processes.

The youth of today are not just passive recipients of the world they inherit; they are active participants in shaping it. Their deep connection with technology, access to information, and inherent drive for social justice make them well-suited to identify and address the root causes of conflict. This generation is more interconnected than ever, with the ability to rally global support through social media and digital platforms, amplifying voices that are often marginalized. Youth play an important role as agents of change, promoting peace within their own communities, and rallying their peers to continue the agenda of promoting peace.

The training directly addresses this challenge by creating a platform where young leaders not only learn from experienced peace practitioners but also share their own experiences and ideas. The training emphasizes the importance of non-violent action, peace education, and peace advocacy, ensuring that the insights and aspirations of youth are integrated into broader peace-building strategies. We learned about different conflict styles, role-plays with case scenarios and even learned more about the work of PeaceGeneration Indonesia at Bandung - their creative curriculum and methods of teaching peace for the past 17 years.

One of the key takeaways from the training was the importance of context-specific approaches to peacebuilding. While the underlying principles of peace and

reconciliation are universal, the methods and strategies must be tailored to the unique cultural, social, and political dynamics of each party involved. With the consideration of each actor's position and interests, conversations and dialogues to promote peace would be posited to be more meaningful to achieve better outcomes for everyone involved. Participants from different ASEAN countries shared their experiences of conflict and peacebuilding, offering insights into how youth are already contributing to these efforts in their communities.

A special thank you to the National Youth Council Singapore for providing me with this incredible opportunity to learn and grow. And to ASEAN-IPR and all the amazing participants, thank you for making this experience truly impactful. Let's continue to champion peace, understanding, and collaboration in everything we do! The ASEAN-IPR training underscored the need for continued investment in youth as peacebuilders. Governments, civil society, and international organisations must work together to create more spaces for young people to contribute to peace efforts meaningful. Going beyond providing training and resources, it is imperative that youth are involved and included in the decision-making processes at all levels.

In conclusion, the role of youth in peacebuilding is not just an opportunity—it is a necessity. The future of peace depends on the active engagement and leadership of young people who are ready and willing to shape a more harmonious world. I'm leaving this experience with a renewed sense of purpose and commitment to driving positive change in our communities.

Youth are not just the leaders of tomorrow; we are the peacebuilders of today.

Viet Nam

ASEAN-IPR Training: Enhancing the Role of Youth in Peacebuilding

By Lt. Nguyen Quoc Huy

Peacebuilding is a long-term process that aims to create lasting peace in societies by addressing the root causes of violence. Youth are a potential resource in the peacebuilding process. They have enthusiasm at a young age, the flexibility to adapt to any situation, the ability to see things from a fresh perspective, a strong sense of justice, and they often seek a positive difference. However, not many people can realize and recognize the potential of youth to contribute to the peacebuilding process.

There are many benefits of engaging youth in the peacebuilding process. Youth are typically more engaged and motivated than adults when it comes to social change. They are more likely to see the benefits of peacebuilding and are more likely to be able to mobilize other people to support peacebuilding. There are also many skills that youth bring to the table when it comes to peacebuilding. They are often more creative and innovative than adults, and they are often more open to new ideas. They are also often better at networking than adults and are more likely to be able to build relationships with people from different groups. Of course, engaging youth in the peacebuilding process does not come without challenges. It can be difficult to get youth to participate in peacebuilding activities, and it can be hard to get them to stay involved once they start. But the rewards of engaging youth in the peacebuilding process are worth it.

"ASEAN-IPR Training: Enhancing the Role of Youth in Peacebuilding" - organized by ASEAN Institute for Peace & Reconciliation and supported by the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) – is the training programme aimed to empower and equip the youth with the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill their roles as agents of peace. More than 30 participants from ASEAN Member States, Timor-Leste, and Japan gathered in South Tangerang, Indonesia from 28th July to 2nd August 2024 to attend the training. Aside from the diversity of their gender, nationalities, and religious beliefs, participants came from differing backgrounds of work including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Defense, Universities, NGOs, etc.

The training programme includes practical sessions and case studies to provide participants with real-world insights into peacebuilding. The knowledge and experience in youth and peacebuilding have successfully delivered through the sessions presented by the trainers, youth experts, and also guest speakers of the programme. Youth

participants are encouraged to voice their own opinions on every aspect included in the training; they are also trained to work as one in a group to apply theory into practical situations. During 5 days of training, the future young leaders not only participate in in-door training but also have a chance to visit PeaceGeneration in Bandung to see their efforts in promoting peace to young generations. After the training, young participants can recognize their role in peace processes and the emergence of youth-led peace initiatives. By capitalizing on these opportunities, young people can drive innovative and sustainable peace efforts that address the root causes of conflict and build resilient communities. On the final day of the training, before the Closing Ceremony, participants are required to present their Action Plans, which has been developed in groups according to nationality. The presentations provide an opportunity to share strategies, receive feedback, and foster collaborative efforts towards achieving the objectives discussed during the training.

The role of youth in peacebuilding cannot be overstated. As the leaders of tomorrow, young people possess the passion, creativity, and resilience needed to drive sustainable peace efforts. Programs like the *ASEAN-IPR Training: "Enhancing the Role of Youth in Peacebuilding"* are crucial in equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to make a significant impact. By fostering collaboration, leveraging technology, and promoting peace education, young people can create a more peaceful world for future generations. As they step forward as mediators, advocates, and leaders, their contributions will continue to shape a more harmonious and inclusive society.

In conclusion, investing in youth and supporting their peacebuilding efforts is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for achieving lasting peace. As young people rise to the challenge, their innovative approaches and constant commitment to peace will pave the way for a brighter and more peaceful future for all.

Japan

Youth as peacebuilders - bridging the gaps between people

By. Wako Miyazawa

In contemporary society, we are increasingly faced with unprecedented conflicts, wars, and disasters, placing significant demands on decision-makers to address these challenges effectively. Consequently, there is a growing recognition of the potential of youth, who have previously been deemed powerless, as vital contributors to peacebuilding efforts. This paper will explore how young individuals can leverage their unique strengths to challenge traditional perceptions and drive impactful change in both peacebuilding and disaster response. To contextualize this discussion, it is essential to define two key terms: Conflict and Youth. Conflict is defined as a state of chaos in which individuals lack access to fundamental elements necessary for a peaceful daily life, encompassing various disturbances such as conflicts, wars, and natural disasters including earthquakes, tsunamis, and floods. For the purposes of this paper, Youth refers to individuals aged 35 and under, specifically those from the Millennial and Generation Z cohorts, as defined by the ASEAN-IPR criteria. Through this framework, the paper will investigate how the distinct capabilities of youth can transform traditional views and contribute to effective solutions in these critical areas.

1) Challenging Perceptions: The Role of Youth in Peacebuilding

Historically, young people have often been perceived as lacking the experience necessary for effective peacebuilding, with older generations traditionally seen as more capable. Nonetheless, this perceived inexperience can actually be an asset, enabling youth to approach issues with fresh perspectives and innovative ideas. For instance, during the ASEAN-IPR training, a participant highlighted that "Peacebuilding involves examining less visible aspects of a country—such as its history, culture, and economy—and striving for peace within that context. The viewpoints of external observers, who approach a region with a 'flat' perspective, can be crucial in identifying challenges that even locals might miss." This insight underscores that peacebuilding is a complex process influenced by unique factors in each region. A one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective; instead, solutions require interdisciplinary approaches and flexible thinking. Moreover, young people's adeptness with technology and social media provides them with valuable tools for conflict analysis and information gathering. For

example, during the ASEAN-IPR training, an exercise involved participants representing conflicts through human sculptures, where one group depicted a peace symbol with one hand while holding a weapon with the other. Effective peacebuilding demands thorough conflict analysis and understanding of the positions and interests of various actors. Youth, often referred to as digital natives, may excel in these tasks due to their exposure to diverse perspectives online.

2) Youth-Led Initiatives: Enhancing Disaster Response and Community Integration

Youth, characterized by their relative youthfulness and adaptable thinking, have the potential to effectively reach out to those in need and bridge gaps between different actors. In a world increasingly affected by new types of conflicts and the escalating impact of global warming, traditional approaches may be insufficient. For instance, during the Noto Peninsula earthquake in January 2024, many affected individuals, including the elderly and foreign workers, faced significant challenges. Language barriers prevented many foreign workers from accessing shelters, foods and crucial information. Additionally, there were reports of discrimination against foreign worker communities, which derived from the lack of satisfaction towards the universal human needs. In such contexts, youth can play a crucial role by engaging directly with foreign disaster survivors to understand their needs and working closely with local authorities and embassies. Organizing events that facilitate interactions between foreign survivors and local communities can improve communication and integration, which could be categorized as compromise style in conflict theory. Given that youth are often less constrained by traditional structures, their initiatives may be more effective in fostering participation. Furthermore, by amplifying the voices of affected individuals and taking a leading role in negotiations and policymaking, youth can contribute significantly to the development of effective and inclusive solutions.

As the world continues to grapple with complex and evolving challenges, it is essential to recognize and harness the potential of youth. By re-evaluating their role and empowering them to take proactive steps, it ensures to pave the way for more effective, inclusive, and sustainable solutions. The involvement of youth in peacebuilding and disaster response not only addresses immediate needs but also contributes to the long-term goal of achieving enduring and equitable peace. It is also essential for young people to recognize their potential to influence peacebuilding and to actively work towards creating change. Through proactive engagement and cross-border collaboration, youth can play a pivotal role in advancing towards sustainable peace.

Culturizing YPS in Japan

By. Yuichi Nishikiori

The adoption of YPS (Youth Peace and Security) in 2015 was an evident step to mainstream the participation of youth in peace and security building by empowering the inclusivity of youth in the society and political decision-making process. Based on its 5 pillars of participation, protection, prevention, partnership, and disengagement and reintegration, youth from each country are required to accomplish a concrete role in society with actions based on their unique backgrounds. Under this international outlook, it is undeniable that meaningful inclusion of youth in peace and security has several challenges to face in Japan.

In April 2023, the Basic Act on Children's Rights came into force obligating both national government and local governments to hear the voices from youth and promote their role in the decision-making process. Additionally, it claims to not leave behind any children by guaranteeing children's rights and requiring consideration of their perspectives. However, it is questionable whether the meaningful participation of youth is achieved. In fact, according to the MICA (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications), the voting rate of young people under 30 in the latest House of Representatives election remained 42%.¹ The primary reason for the youth to abstain was the uncertainty on politics, and low expectations of politics to create change. Moreover, while the inclusion of young people is still limited to small meetings, speaking out still risks ridicule and exclusion from the community, which negatively impacts their career prospects. Hence, it is urgent to provide psychological security to youth from risks borne from free expression. Furthermore, providing stronger foundational knowledge on how to actively engage in politics for youth, through the school curriculum must be considered as a permanent goal.

As stated previously, the implementation of general peace education is crucial. It can be considered as a catalyst for better integration of youth in peace and security management, by seeding its concept to the whole society. This peace education must develop nonviolent methods which allows students to have critical thinking, and help them see diverse perspectives and opposing sides. Besides, it could also provide better understanding of the root causes of current conflicts and cultivates a sense of peace keeping to the participants. With this investment to spread YPS, we seek to motivate the

¹ 18-19 43.3%, 20-29 36.5% average of 41.865=42%.

younger generations into active engagement in politics, and liberate ourselves from demotivation.

In summary, it is essential to enhance the meaningful participation of youth in the policy making process, since they will inevitably replace leaders responsible for decision making and peace management. It is also critical to recognize each stage of age, as a member of society who has a concrete role in its management. Considering this ASEAN-IPR training program as part of the process, seeding the ideas of YSP among youth will ultimately lead to a sustainable peaceful society.

Lastly, I would like to conclude by borrowing the phrase from the training that “peace security will be fully achieved by peace keeping, making, building, and “planting” for the future generations”.

Reference:

MICA. (2022).House of general representatives general election voting rate survey by age 31th-49th. Retrieved from https://www.soumu.go.jp/main_content/000255968.pdf

Wibowo.D.(2024) Peace Education. ASEAN-IPR Training articles. P.2

The Role of Youth for Sustainable Peace and Security

By. Chihiro Arima

Introduction

In the context of conflict and violence, youth are often seen as both perpetrators and victims. In 2016, 1 in 4 youth aged 15 to 29 were affected by violence or armed conflict, which highlights their vulnerability specific to the status of “youth”. However, the United Nations Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) marks a significant shift, recognizing youth as “peacebuilders”, not just as perpetrators or victims. This essay explores the role of youth in peacebuilding and how they can contribute to the peacebuilding process, drawing on insights from the YPS training organized by ASEAN-IPR.

What is the role of Youth in Peacebuilding?

Throughout the training, I recognized the specific vulnerabilities and strengths of youth. For example, economic challenges can make the youth vulnerable, potentially leading them to join criminal groups coupled with compounding factors. However, this vulnerability can also become a strength in peacebuilding, as they are acutely aware of their issues and needs, which other generations might not fully grasp, and can empathize with others in similar situations, giving them insight into the underlying causes of violence.

Youth also possess unique strengths, such as technological skills, creativity, momentum, and a genuine willingness to collaborate. These unique characteristics of youth enable them to contribute to peacebuilding in various ways: raising awareness of conflict and human rights issues, exchanging ideas and promoting understanding of different cultures through digital platforms, offering creative perspectives and solutions to conflicts where traditional approaches fall short, and organizing grassroots movements for social change.

As highlighted in the United Nations YPS Agenda, I realized that youth have tremendous potential to preserve negative peace (the absence of direct violence) and promote positive peace (the presence of conditions that create and sustain a peaceful society), which ultimately leads to sustainable and resilient peace.

How can youth contribute to the peacebuilding process meaningfully?

For youth to contribute effectively to peacebuilding, it is crucial to ensure their meaningful participation in decision-making, not merely tokenistic, and maintain spaces where they can freely raise their voices and share perspectives. Learning about the

United Nations YPS Agenda and the national action plan on YPS of the Philippines led me to reflect on the situation in Japan.

In Japan, politics plays a crucial role in decision-making for our society, yet youth voting rates are alarmingly low. This issue is frequently discussed while the insufficient policies addressing social issues affecting youth are often attributed to the sentiment of “you had it coming.” However, discussion on the causes of the low voting rate and measures to improve are not actively done due to the lack of a clear action plan. In a group exercise, therefore, we explored the underlying causes of this issue and found that factors such as a lack of awareness and knowledge about politics, the belief that votes would not bring about change, and distrust in politicians, contribute significantly to low voting rates among youth.

This exercise highlighted the importance of creating an environment that ensures “meaningful” youth participation to enable youth to fully exercise their rights and contribute to peacebuilding. This meaningful participation is critical not only because alienation from political processes and the lack of sense of their influence on the key decision-making that affects their lives can lead to some youth resorting to force as a means of societal change, but also because addressing social issues from a youth perspective allows for comprehensive action and sustainable peace.

Establishing such an environment requires multilateral actions. For example, to promote youth involvement, it is essential to empower them by equipping them with knowledge and skills related to politics, policymaking, and peacebuilding. Additionally, to avoid tokenism and disempowerment, it is vital to ensure formal representation of youth in decision-making processes at all levels, especially on issues affecting them, and to raise awareness about the role of youth in peacebuilding to guarantee their psychological safety. Furthermore, active youth involvement in peacebuilding requires robust support systems, including supportive policies and laws, financial resources for peacebuilding activities, mechanisms for recognizing youth contribution, and ensuring equal participation opportunities for all youth, not just youth representatives. Such comprehensive measures would help sustain meaningful youth engagement in the peacebuilding process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, youth have great potential to drive societal reform and achieve sustainable peace as agents of peace, offering unique insights and innovative solutions to conflict and violence. Their involvement, however, must go beyond tokenism; requiring genuine inclusion in decision-making processes. By supporting and empowering youth, ensuring their meaningful participation, and creating supportive

environments, youth can exert their potential to contribute to both negative and positive peace. As demonstrated by the YPS Agenda, their active and meaningful engagement would break deadlocks and underpin our sustainable peace and security in the future.