



FINAL REPORT  
2020

# Youth Democracy, Human Rights & Governance Cross-Sectoral Initiative



Consortium for Elections and  
Political Party Strengthening  
(CEPPS)



## Executive Background

Young people around the world are at a critical juncture as they inherit an array of complex challenges, including environmental degradation, growing inequality, and insecurity. At the same time, their socio-economic opportunities are increasingly limited and they must contend with entrenched power holders. In response, young people are finding creative ways to express their dissatisfaction with the *status quo* and demanding a more just, equitable, and sustainable future. Although young people are often perceived as more apathetic than older generations, they are taking action on issues they care about and leading efforts to foster positive change. However, the space for their participation in mainstream decision-making remains limited and there are few opportunities or resources for young people to take part in cross-sectoral programs and initiatives. Tapping the potential of young people requires understanding their interests and meeting them on their terms when it comes to their meaningful engagement in formal and informal decision-making. Informed by positive youth development (PYD) principles, there is a compelling need for cross-sectoral programs that position young people as active and organized participants in development processes and the political life of their communities.

The Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) established the Youth Democracy and Governance (DRG) Cross-Sectoral Initiative to examine the intersections between DRG and other youth development sectors, bringing together practitioners, donors and young leaders from across the world. This initiative explored cross-sectoral challenges and opportunities to connect young people's interests and their desire to solve sectoral development problems with their political participation and ability to influence decision-making.

Over the course of the initiative, CEPPS identified four key cross-sectoral challenges, including:

1. Limited examples of youth-specific cross-sectoral approaches;
2. Exclusionary structures that limit young people's access to decision-making;
3. Prohibitory attitudes, beliefs and social norms transcend sectors and have a direct impact on young people's agency and opportunities to participate; and
4. Insufficient understanding of how complex socio-economic problems are shaped by formal and informal power dynamics.

Recognizing these cross-sectoral challenges, CEPPS identified the following seven key recommendations to support the implementation of cross-sectoral youth programs.

1. Leverage existing resources to invest in cross-sectoral programs;
2. Leverage existing relationships to build cross-sectoral partnerships;
3. Co-design cross-sectoral initiatives in partnership with young people using an intersectional PYD framework;
4. Train youth leaders across development sectors and integrate "soft skills";
5. Enact quotas to lower the age of eligibility for participation;
6. Expand non-DRG practitioners' understanding of informal political participation; and
7. Allocate resources to monitor and evaluate cross-sectoral youth programs.

CEPPS will build upon these lessons and recommendations in Phase II of the initiative to develop resources and continue discussions that support youth-focused cross-sectoral programs.

youth  
DEMOCRACY,  
HUMAN RIGHTS,  
& GOVERNANCE  
CROSS-SECTORAL  
Initiative

**youth**  
DEMOCRACY,  
HUMAN RIGHTS,  
& GOVERNANCE  
CROSS-SECTORAL  
Initiative  
WHAT IS IT?

- Discussion & KNOWLEDGE, SHARING PRACTICES
- PRACTITIONERS, DONORS & young leaders
- Fill gaps in learning & COORDINATE EFFORTS

**SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE:**  
 INCREASED YOUTH POWER & PARTICIPATION  
 CITIZENSHIP & POLITICAL SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

#YOUTHday  
#CEPPS youth  
#YOUTH4GLOBALACTION



CROSS-SECTORAL approaches are important because ORGANIZED youth PARTICIPATION & LEADERSHIP are NEEDED ACROSS VARIOUS SEGMENTS of Life...



EXAMPLES OF CROSS-SECTORAL PROGRAMS

**GROUP 9**  
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA  
20 young leaders across parties DRIVING policy SOLUTIONS to EMIGRATION  
business development • education

**IDEATHON**  
Panama  
• COMPETITION MODEL HELPS YOUTH DESIGN, PITCH & PILOT SOLUTIONS to local PROBLEMS  
workforce development • social entrepreneurship

**STUDENTS AGAINST VIOLENCE EVERYWHERE**  
BANGLADESH  
• equips young leaders To PREVENT & MITIGATE CONFLICT  
• 9 UNIVERSITY chapters  
peacebuilding • CONFLICT RESOLUTIONS



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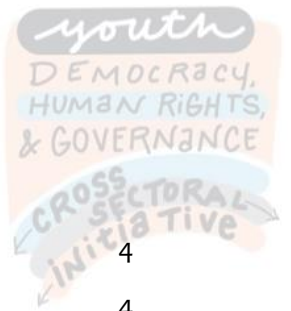
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## About CEPPS

Established in 1995, The Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) pools the expertise of three international organizations dedicated to democratic development: the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). CEPPS has a 25-year track record of collaboration and leadership in DRG support; learning from experience; and adopting new approaches and tools based on the ever-evolving technological landscape.

Through this work, CEPPS:

- Promotes meaningful participation of all citizens in their political systems, including, women; people with disabilities; young people; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) individuals; Indigenous peoples; and ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities;
- Maintains long-term relationships with political parties, election management bodies, parliaments, civil society organizations, and democracy activists;
- Harnesses the comparative advantages of media and technology to promote citizen understanding, engagement, and transparent political competition;
- Supports meaningful transition processes that establish positive precedents for effective democratic governance;
- Promotes the integrity of elections as a sustainable vehicle for peacefully and democratically choosing leaders;
- Facilitates the ability of elected political actors to fulfill their responsibilities to citizens through better governance practices;
- Promotes competitive and representative multi-party political systems; and
- Ensures respect for the application of impartial legal frameworks and compliance by political actors.

### CEPPS Approach to Youth Political Participation and Inclusion

CEPPS' 25-year history of youth participation and inclusion demonstrates that young people want to be involved in decisions that affect their welfare and the public good. CEPPS has also learned that when young people are able to organize and take strategic political actions, they develop the power to influence political processes and outcomes. Likewise, traditional barriers to inclusion, both structural and attitudinal, begin to deteriorate as young people demonstrate their skills, credibility, and leadership. CEPPS empowers young people to organize around their interests and take actions to open, access, and occupy political space. This process involves building the knowledge, skills, and democratic values within young people that support peaceful contestation, human dignity, and justice. Individual and collective actions - including issue advocacy, community organizing, electoral participation - build civic leadership, social networks, and functioning relationships between young people and public officials. More peaceful and equitable outcomes occur when all citizens, particularly traditionally marginalized groups, have access to opportunities for active engagement. Technologies such as SMS, social media, and others provide new methods to aggregate and amplify young people's



voices, empower youth-led movements as powerful sources of change, and enhance their credibility by strengthening connections to the public.

CEPPS recognizes that young people, as a heterogeneous population with intersecting identities, have diverse priorities and experiences and face unique barriers to participation in public life. CEPPS considers young people's diversity when designing both integrated and youth-focused programs, including program design, implementation, and adaptation.

## CEPPS Youth DRG Cross-Sectoral Initiative

Under the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Global Elections and Political Transitions (GEPT) award, CEPPS launched the Youth DRG Cross-Sectoral Initiative to explore how DRG work interrelates with youth development across other sectors and how it can be used to foster increased youth political leadership and participation in decision-making. While the initiative intended to bring stakeholders together through in-person events, CEPPS adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic by coordinating monthly virtual learning events and a Facebook group. CEPPS gathered practitioners, donors, and young leaders from across the world to explore cross-sectoral challenges and opportunities to connect young people's political participation with improved development outcomes.

### Background

Increasing youth political participation has been a longstanding area of DRG support. Traditionally, programming around youth and politics has focused heavily on increasing youth participation in traditional, formal processes and institutions, such as increasing youth voter turnout or strengthening political party youth wings. While this type of programming remains important and requires continued support, prevailing trends and contexts suggest it most likely appeals to a small number of young people who are predisposed to engage in formal processes and institutions. Research suggests that trends in youth participation are evolving and the emphasis on formal avenues of participation are increasingly at odds with the forms of participation that are most likely to appeal to the majority of young people.

At the same time, in the broader youth development community, there is growing evidence and support for PYD<sup>1</sup> and holistic, cross-sectoral approaches that strengthen youth agency and the enabling environment. A PYD-informed, cross-sectoral approach meets young people where they are and engages them on their priorities, while intentionally leveraging resources, networks, and expertise across development sectors. Utilizing a cross-sectoral approach empowers young people to influence decision-making and contribute to an array of initiatives that address complex development challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> Positive youth development is a philosophy and an approach that engages young people along with their families, communities, and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets, and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems.

In response to current trends in youth participation and development, this Initiative was created to:

- Identify and deliberate trends and challenges impacting youth political participation;
- Expand existing knowledge on cross-sectoral programming;
- Identify practices for employing intersectional<sup>2</sup> approaches; and
- Contribute to new and existing efforts to develop PYD-informed programs and practices across sectors.

At the start of the initiative, CEPPS surveyed partners, including young leaders, donor representatives, and program practitioners, to identify priority topic areas for discussion. CEPPS hosted a kickoff event to discuss the importance of cross-sectoral youth participation and used the survey results to guide the focus of monthly meetings around the following themes: Youth, Peace, and Security; Health and Humanitarian Responses; and Engaging Families and Communities through social and behavior change (SBC). To promote a diversity of perspectives, CEPPS invited speakers, including young leaders and practitioners to present on the topics and share first-hand accounts of cross-sectoral programming. Following each event, CEPPS distributed a briefing note and an illustrated graphic capturing key challenges and opportunities to increase youth participation across sectors and youth political participation.

In recognition of Youth Day 2020, CEPPS held a Global Brainstorm for 25 young leaders to discuss strategies for increasing young people’s participation and representation in both formal and informal spaces. During the brainstorm, participants discussed efforts to increase their power and influence



through collective organizing and the power of numbers. Participants also discussed the importance of trust and their ability to establish partnerships with elected officials and political institutions. While participants discussed the promise and power of youth participation, several also expressed frustration and disillusionment with elected officials and young peoples’ opportunities to have influence over political processes.

<sup>2</sup> Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege. Examples include gender, caste, sex, race, class, sexuality, religion, disability, and physical appearance.

## Cross-Sectoral Youth Development

Traditional approaches to youth development are often designed and implemented using narrowly defined objectives and outcomes. Improving youth development outcomes across sectors and addressing systemic inequality and exclusion requires working beyond silos to understand and respond to increasingly complex democratic challenges, both current and emerging. Cross-sectoral youth development better addresses the range of underlying causes and barriers to youth exclusion from decision-making and creates opportunities for young people to collaborate with stakeholders from different sectors to collectively address development challenges.

Young people’s inclusion and participation in decision-making should be a consideration across all sectoral programs. Responding to challenges across youth development starts with addressing young people’s exclusion as a form of structural and psychological marginalization. Youth exclusion leads to the development of policies and programs that are unable to address young people’s priorities or their lived realities. Additionally, many young people face barriers to participation across sectors, such as being thought of as less capable or knowledgeable, which limits their ability to build leadership skills and contributes to their exclusion from decision-making. In order to achieve better development outcomes for young people, both individually and collectively, there is practical value in helping them learn how to organize and take political action, and contribute to developing government policies and programs that are responsive to their diverse needs.

The necessity of working across sectors also aligns with PYD -- an approach that engages young people and their networks, including their families, communities, and/or governments, to support and encourage young people to reach their full potential by building on their strengths. When a PYD approach is applied across sectors, young people are engaged holistically and the benefits of PYD can support and amplify other youth development outcomes. For example, the development of “soft skills” amplifies the development of technical skills, such as carrying out an advocacy strategy or writing a communication plan for a campaign. Cross-sectoral interventions cut across diverse issues and concerns that motivate young people to participate. Rather than setting up youth to work in narrowly constructed silos, a cross-sectoral, PYD informed approach empowers young people to have a broad impact on social, political, and economic priorities. Creating entry points for youth inclusion across sectors and encouraging holistic, cross-sectoral approaches also contributes to the development of empowered adults who are active citizens.



Young people need meaningful opportunities to participate that drive innovation and help them identify practical solutions to a growing and complex array of human development challenges. If young people have opportunities to engage in priority issues in education, health, employment, and electoral politics, they have the potential to accelerate development across all sectors. If young people have opportunities to build political power and to take action, both individually and collectively, they can contribute to shaping an environment that is more responsive and results in more sustained participation. Moreover, when young people are able to demonstrate their value and capacity through democratic processes, collaborate with adult decision-makers, assume leadership roles in response to development challenges, and organize for just and equitable reforms, broad and sustainable development outcomes are more likely.



## Lessons Learned

Designing and implementing effective cross-sectoral programs is integral to achieving better youth outcomes and helps promote positive narratives around the value and capacity of youth. Throughout the initiative, several challenges and recommendations emerged that point to clear areas for improvement for practitioners and donors. Understanding the challenges, and integrating approaches that meet young people where they are, makes it possible to use differing priorities across sectors as an asset.

### Key Challenges

1. Limited examples of youth-specific cross-sectoral approaches;
2. Exclusionary structures that limit young people's access to decision-making;
3. Prohibitory attitudes, beliefs, and social norms transcend sectors and have a direct impact on young people's agency and opportunities to participate; and
4. Insufficient understanding of how complex socio-economic problems are shaped by formal and informal power dynamics.



#### Limited examples of youth-specific cross-sectoral approaches

Often development programs, including youth-focused programs, lack a clear cross-sectoral approach to program design and miss moments for synergy. For example, leveraging strategic partnerships across sectors could create opportunities for meaningful engagement and improved outcomes. When practitioners and stakeholders do not align their efforts, there is a risk of undermining the intended impact of programs. Additionally, monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) tools are often sector-specific in both design and application and cannot easily be applied to another sector. Practitioners and stakeholders that are unable to evaluate the impact and outcomes of programs across sectors may inadvertently cause harm or miss opportunities to scale effective strategies. For example, a governance program that fails to examine health inequities or consult the appropriate experts would have an incomplete understanding of the political environment, especially if a major political concern was government funding for hospitals and treatment facilities.

*“Cross-sectoral approaches are important because political engagement, and disengagement, is shaped in various segments of life including family, schools, civic associations, and the workplace.”*

-Participant from a CEPPS Youth DRG Cross-Sectoral Initiative event

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### Exclusionary structures that limit young people's access to decision-making

The exclusion of young people from decision-making and leadership is not unique to any specific sector. The “violence of exclusion,”<sup>3</sup> a phrase coined by young people during a youth, peace, and security study, is a form of structural and psychological marginalization that is indivisible from their political, social, cultural, and economic disenfranchisement. Political inequalities, manipulation, and exclusion are areas of concern for young people and they may reject inclusion in the political system if it is viewed as corrupt, undemocratic, or oppressive. Government and state repression also undermine legitimate opportunities for young people to engage in politics, peaceful protests, and movements. In Nicaragua, the Government’s corruption and oppression of citizens led directly to the 2018 youth-led protests. In Belarus, young leaders have leveraged existing youth organizations to protest the 2020 elections and resulting crackdown, and continue to play a leading role in using innovative methods and technology to document evidence of torture and beatings.



The creation of intentional spaces for youth participation - such as a youth council or political party youth wings - can be a positive step for ensuring youth inclusion if young people are afforded adequate resources and decision-making power. However, formal spaces for youth participation can also have isolating effects. For instance, in Moldova young people are often tapped by political parties to be the labor force for political campaigns, including door-to-door outreach and get out the vote efforts, however, youth have limited formal responsibility within parties. Additionally, during formal peace processes, young people are often limited from participating even though many youth are actively working to prevent violence and are overrepresented in military and armed groups.<sup>4</sup> Recognizing and including young people as stakeholders at and around the peace negotiation process is critical to ensure the integration of their needs and interests during these processes.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.c-r.org/accord/inclusion-peace-processes/youth-peace-and-security-addressing-violence-exclusion>

<sup>4</sup> <https://bit.ly/36hr7im>



**Prohibitory attitudes, beliefs, and social norms transcend sectors and have a direct impact on young people’s agency and opportunities to participate**

Attitudes, perceptions, and stereotypes shape behaviors and social norms that create barriers to youth participation and limit their access to decision-making. Perceptions that view young people as “perpetrators of violence,” or as lacking knowledge or capacity foster misunderstanding and mistrust of young people by their peers, older people, political elites, and other community members. Both nonpolitical and political actors often associate young people solely with future participation, rather than recognizing the active roles youth are already assuming. These attitudes negate youth agency, pose barriers to young people’s ability to take action now, and fail to acknowledge their current efforts. As a result, young people often internalize these harmful stereotypes and are more likely to stereotype their peers and exclude themselves from opportunities to participate. This can result in a lack of both political will and investment in young people. In Nicaragua, youth are often excluded from decision-making in political coalitions, for example. This exclusion has resulted in constant friction between opposition youth wings and the current government.

*“A Social-Behavioral-Change (SBC) intervention engages people at multiple levels; includes different approaches and channels for communication; creates safe spaces for critical reflection by community members; and roots the issue within the community’s own value system.”*

Presenter from a CEPPS Youth DRG Cross-Sectoral Initiative event

Traditional attitudes, beliefs, and social norms are amplified for marginalized groups who experience intersecting forms of oppression. Notably, girls and young women may be discouraged or restricted from participating in traditional political roles, such as running for political office, because they are not seen as appropriate positions for women. Patriarchal, discriminatory attitudes can also result in violent backlash for young women and young people belonging to marginalized identity groups, such as LGBTI youth and young people with disabilities. In Burma, for example, a persistent attitude among the wider population is that women are not suited to be political leaders. Women candidates experience higher rates of harassment, especially online, and even though the percentage of female candidates rose to 16% in the 2020 elections, it remains below the target of 30%.<sup>5</sup>



**Insufficient understanding of how complex socio-economic problems are shaped by formal and informal power dynamics**

Governmental decision-making processes, and who holds decision-making power within the political system, act to either drive or inhibit change across development sectors. Young people often work at the intersection of two or more development sectors, such as health and governance, however, limited opportunities to meaningfully participate in change processes can result in a lack of knowledge of how and when to influence political systems or change power dynamics. Specifically, young people would benefit from a better understanding of different types of power, how power is used among both elected and appointed officials and civil society actors across sectors to maintain the status quo, and how to influence power dynamics. Young people also require technical skills, such as knowledge of how to structure youth organizations and

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/2020/myanmar-111020.html>

plan campaigns; communicate with civil society offline and online; build consensus; and learn to recognize and take advantage of social and political entry points.

Shying away from the political nature of development also undercuts the impact young people can have on addressing complex socio-economic problems. For instance, international development programs in Serbia frequently ignore the political context and consequences of their work. These programs fail to analyze the interests or motivations of important actors, and instead lecture decision-makers about their roles and responsibilities. As a result, key decision-makers are not convinced of how the inclusion of youth can be beneficial and continue to exclude young people from positions of political power.

## Recommendations

Throughout the initiative, CEPPS facilitated conversations around opportunities and strategies that support the implementation of cross-sectoral youth programs. The recommendations listed below are applicable across youth development sectors and were discussed and reiterated at multiple events.

1. Leverage existing resources to invest in cross-sectoral programs;
2. Leverage existing relationships to build cross-sectoral partnerships;
3. Co-design cross-sectoral initiatives in partnership with young people using an intersectional PYD framework;
4. Train youth leaders across development sectors and integrate “soft skills”;
5. Enact quotas to lower the age of eligibility for participation;
6. Expand non-DRG practitioners’ understanding of informal political participation; and
7. Allocate resources to monitor and evaluate cross-sectoral youth programs.



### **Leverage existing resources to invest in cross-sectoral programs**

Although development programs are rarely funded or designed to be cross-sectoral, young people have a demonstrated history of working across sectors as activists, peacebuilders, and health volunteers. During the learning session on health and humanitarian responses, participants described their experiences working on health programs that facilitated interaction with local decision-makers and elected officials. Participants discussed the need to either collaborate with or advocate to these actors in order to achieve progress on their issue.

*A participant working on a health program in Malawi described their experience as a civil society representative on Malawi’s Global Financing Facility Task Force. Using what they learned at a Health Policy Plus training, funded by USAID, the participants helped the task force identify cost-effective priority health interventions for vulnerable populations.*



Development organizations and practitioners should build on young people's existing initiatives, starting with asking young people what they need to scale and sustain their efforts. Practitioners should train young leaders on critical competencies, such as leadership, public speaking, knowledge of decentralization, citizen-centered governance practices, and campaign management. Moreover, if young people are passionate about responding to health inequalities, practitioners should build their advocacy skills and connect them with health-focused organizations and policymakers to build their understanding of decision-making processes around health. Equipping young people with these skills is an important way to enhance the capacity of emerging leaders so that they can promote themselves and their work to those in power. Programs should also evaluate youth participation in the policy-making process and other decision-making spaces, and identify opportunities for additional investment. Donors and practitioners should invest in the development of new cross-sectoral initiatives, or create mechanisms that incentivize collaboration across sectors.

Initiatives that display youth leadership should be highlighted using media and other communication channels such as social media outlets, radio shows, or blogs. Sharing positive stories about the contribution of young people challenges negative perceptions, demonstrates the value of youth engagement and establishes greater buy-in for follow-on initiatives. One CEPPS Youth DRG Cross Sectoral Initiative participant emphasized that journalism provided young people with an opportunity to find solutions for local problems and that the media is the best tool to close the communication gap between the government and connect young people across the world.



### **Leverage existing relationships to build cross-sectoral partnerships**

Development organizations and practitioners may work at the intersection of two or more sectors and maintain relationships with key stakeholders or decision-makers. For instance, national tax policies impact both DRG and health development efforts, and increasing young people's understanding of how tax dollars are used can inform their advocacy efforts around access to health care and public services. Cross-sectoral collaboration relies on alliances of individuals and organizations from different sectors that use their diverse perspectives and resources as assets. Peace and security sector efforts to bring North Macedonia into NATO are closely tied to a domestic political battle in the country. As a result, peace and security practitioners require informed advocates that understand the political landscape.

At the start of a program or initiative, practitioners should map stakeholders involved in development programs to identify existing relationships. For example, digital literacy programs can consider private sector and civil society partnerships working on cybersecurity, and leverage these for campaigns to raise awareness on disinformation and hate speech. These relationships and linkages can be utilized to identify opportunities for young people to collaborate on mutually beneficial initiatives. Collaboration can take the form of training for select staff or program participants or co-designing initiatives. Strengthened links between political actors, such as elected officials, young parliamentarians, or youth-centered civil society and sector-specific organizations create the foundation for future partnerships. To promote constructive relationships between young people and older generations, these initiatives should integrate intergenerational collaboration.



### Co-design cross-sectoral initiatives in partnership with young people using an intersectional PYD framework

Although young people often work at the intersection of issues, they are regularly excluded from the program design processes that shape program implementation and the selection of key partners and stakeholders. Development organizations and practitioners should integrate an intersectional PYD approach into the program design process and design a participatory process that integrates young people from diverse identity groups at the start. Co-design processes should prioritize relationship-building, challenge power imbalances, create a participatory mechanism, and build participant capabilities. Additionally, conducting a power analysis at the start of a program can improve the understanding of intersectional barriers young people face, particularly among young women and persons with disabilities. This process provides implementers with a better understanding of young people’s realities and priorities and creates strategies to engage youth that “do no harm” and alleviate unique burdens.

Through utilizing an intersectional PYD approach, practitioners can ensure that young people across identity groups and sectors have the skills, knowledge, and resources to participate in a program design process; identify and track specific soft skills that young people will improve throughout the process; create avenues to sustain youth contribution, such as through the creation of a Youth Advisory Council; and ensure that the co-design process can be applied to other initiatives. For instance, working with established platforms such as women’s groups, forums or, disability rights coalitions can facilitate opportunities for young women and young people with disabilities to contribute meaningfully.

Practitioners should also consider partnering with young people who volunteer or work on initiatives across sectors - such as mutual aid networks; academic and research institutions; or crisis response efforts - to create a pool of motivated and engaged participants who are willing to take concrete steps toward political action. Development organizations should consider integrating internship opportunities or reinforcing youth groups to build the civic and leadership skills of young people who are interested in sustained, meaningful engagement.



### Train youth leaders across development sectors and integrate “soft skills”

Non-DRG programs should consider recruiting and training young political actors, such as elected representatives, or civic and political activists, on the local or national level. Working with select young political actors nurtures alliances and increases the likelihood that these actors will understand and defend the priorities of their peers and other practitioners across sectors. Additionally, establishing peer-to-peer training creates a network of young people that will form the foundation for future partnerships. For example, in multiple countries, the establishment of new linkages between youth and parliament, the use of young parliamentarians as mediators, and the promotion of dialogue in divided

*“Training and engaging young people in a direct service role in health and humanitarian response are insufficient. Training and engagement should include an analysis of root causes, community mapping, policy analysis, and guidance on how to work with local and national governments to address these challenges. Health and humanitarian organizations should be encouraged to add these concepts, using a positive youth development framework, into their programming with young people.”*

Participant from a CEPPS Youth DRG Cross-Sectoral Initiative event

societies through young parliamentarians have resulted in positive outcomes that may advance peace and stability over time.<sup>6</sup>



Programs across all sectors should also integrate political leadership training, as well as an introduction to policymaking and advocacy. This practice ensures that youth practitioners, such as peacebuilders or health advocates, have the technical skills to engage in political processes. Improving advocacy skills promotes collective action across sectors and provides young people with strategies to identify shared priorities, share their stories, and advocate for local solutions. Training that incorporates a focus on soft skills such as positive self-concept, self-control, and interpersonal skills, also improves outcomes across sectors. For instance, one CEPPS Youth DRG Cross-Sectoral Initiative participant emphasized the need to build young people’s confidence and implement campaigns targeting youth inclusion in peace processes, particularly in insecure regions of the country.

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**Enact quotas to lower the age of eligibility for participation**

Practitioners advocating for youth inclusion in decision-making spaces should support quotas that prioritize youth engagement, as well as lower the age of eligibility for participation. According to a CEPPS report,<sup>7</sup> electoral quotas increase the number of young people elected. In addition, quotas that acknowledge overlapping marginalized identities, such as creating both a gender quota and a youth quota, can create opportunities for young women when implemented effectively. Research on peace processes also indicates that increased youth participation contributes to inclusive and representative governance structures that build the basis for more democratic, peaceful societies.<sup>8</sup> An exchange of information on best practices for quota implementation will further improve development results across all sectors.

*“It’s important to recognize political divisions among different groups of young people and to use conflict sensitive approaches in outreach, selection, recruitment, and engagement while building in opportunities for dialogue across political divides. This includes recognizing how political quotas may reinforce elitism or lend themselves to co-opting by political parties.”*

Participant from a CEPPS Youth DRG Cross-Sectoral Initiative event

<sup>6</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2017). Youth Participation in Parliaments and Peace and Security. [https://www.ipu.org/sites/default/files/documents/tp\\_youth\\_participation\\_in\\_parliaments\\_and\\_peace\\_and\\_security\\_ipu.pdf](https://www.ipu.org/sites/default/files/documents/tp_youth_participation_in_parliaments_and_peace_and_security_ipu.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Raising their voices: How effective are pro-youth laws and policies? <https://www.ndi.org/publications/raising-their-voices-how-effective-are-pro-youth-laws-and-policies>

<sup>8</sup> Global Policy Paper Youth Participation in Peace Processes <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Global-Policy-Paper-Youth-Participation-in-Peace-Processes.pdf>



### **Expand non-DRG practitioners' understanding of informal youth political participation**

Practitioners should broaden their understanding of political participation beyond formal engagement, such as joining political parties and voting. When direct or overt political action is not an option, practitioners should encourage informal political participation where young people are often the driving force, such as activism, protests, campaigns, social movements, and civil disobedience. Young people can bolster these efforts by using community organizing strategies to identify priority issues, mobilize their communities, and shift power dynamics.

For example, during the learning session on youth, peace, and security a participant discussed the importance of expanding the perception of political participation beyond working with political parties and voting to invest in young people through allyship, intercultural and cross-regional exchanges, and the development of more responsive policies. Within the Western Balkans, for example, young people advocated for the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), which supports initiatives aimed at reconciliation and remembrance, diversity and cultural exchange, regional mobility, participation and closer connections with Europe. Development organizations should also conduct a political economy analysis<sup>14</sup> and a power analysis during program design and throughout implementation to explore the socio-political impact of their program on other development sectors.

*“It’s important for young people to be much more than just fuel for movements, more than just raw energy; young people are actual partners and key carriers of peacebuilding processes.”*

Participant from a CEPPS Youth DRG Cross-Sectoral Initiative event



### **Allocate resources to monitor and evaluate cross-sectoral youth programs**

Development organizations and practitioners need a better understanding of which cross-sectoral initiatives have an impact on development indicators and contribute to system change. While there are promising practices, these initiatives have not received adequate funding which would provide additional resources for inclusive MEL. Prior to program design, practitioners should work with a MEL expert to design and implement an inclusive MEL plan and cross-sectoral indicators. During program evaluation, funders and implementers should identify lessons learned and promising practices that better support youth political participation and cross-sectoral programs. These lessons and practices should be incorporated into program development for future programs.



This Initiative resulted in a robust, diverse learning community of participants from across the globe who shared knowledge, practical guidance, and strategies to help practitioners better understand the necessity of adopting a cross-sectoral approach. CEPPS will use the lessons learned and recommendations to guide the next iteration of the initiative and develop resources that support implementers, bridge divides between sectors, and more effectively engage young people.

CEPPS conducted a post-survey to assess the usefulness of the events and materials produced under this initiative and to better understand what types of events or resources practitioners would prioritize moving forward. All 27 survey respondents, of whom 82% identified as under 35, either agreed or strongly agreed that the CEPPS DRG Youth Initiative offered key insights into the value and practice of working across sectors to increase youth participation and leadership. Almost half of the survey respondents noted that they have used or are currently using the post-event briefing notes in their work and 70% of survey respondents noted that additional cross-sectoral guidance in the form of a toolkit or guidance note would aid their efforts to design cross-sectoral programs.



Under the next phase of this initiative, CEPPS will continue to collaborate with young people to explore:

- The development of guidance on designing cross-sectoral programs and integrating considerations for social and behavior change; and
- The development of cross-sectoral case studies highlighting applicable programs and initiatives.

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## Resources



### Amplifying Youth Leadership and Participation

- [Raising their Voices: CEPPS Resource on Pro-Youth Laws and Policies](#) (CEPPS, 2019)
- [Young People, Family Relationships, and Civic Participation](#) (Journal of Civil Society, 2019)
- [Civic Purpose: An Integrated Construct for Understanding Civic Development in Adolescence](#) (Human Development, 2015)
- [Youth Participation in Electoral Processes – Handbook for Electoral Management Bodies](#) (UNDP, 2017)
- [We Are Here](#) (UN, 2019)
- [Youth4Peace Training Toolkit](#) (United Network of Young, 2019)
- [What works in youth and peacebuilding?](#) (YouthPower)

### Program Design

- [USAID’s Toolkit for Youth Inclusion in Democracy, Human Rights and Governance](#) (USAID)
- [Positive Youth Development \(PYD\) Framework](#) (YouthPower)
- [Shifting Power to Young People – How Young People Can Lead and Drive Solutions in Humanitarian Action](#) (Restless Development, 2020)
- [DRG Integration: Case Study Synthesis Report](#) (USAID, 2016)

### COVID-19 Program Adaptations

- [CEPPS White Paper: Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 through DRG Assistance](#) (CEPPS, 2020)
- [IFES Covid-19 Briefing Series: Inclusion and Meaningful Political Participation](#) (IFES, 2020)
- [YouthLead Response to the Global COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (YouthLead, 2020)

### Health Sector Programming

- [Improving Leadership, Management, and Governance to Strengthen Health Systems](#) (Management Sciences for Health)
- [Improving Health Outcomes through Strengthened Governance](#) (Health Policy Plus, 2020)
- [Engaging Young People for Health and Sustainable Development](#) (WHO, 2018)
- [Advocating for Change for Adolescents! A Practical Toolkit for Young People to Advocate for Improved Adolescent Health and Well-being](#) (WHO, 2018)



## Social Behavior Change

- [Shaping Democratic Norms & Attitudes](#) (NDI, 2017)
- [Improving Development Outcomes Through Social and Behavior Change Communication](#) (USAID)
- [Social Norms Background Reader](#) (The Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change, 2016)
- [Engaging Communities in Exploring Social Norms: Learnings From the Social Norms Exploration Tool](#) (The Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change, 2019)
- [Resources For Measuring Social Norms: A Practical Guide For Program Implementers](#) (The Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change, 2019)
- [Map Of Social Norms-focused Projects And Their Measurement Approaches: Who Is Doing What And Where](#) (The Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change)