

THE VISION OF YOUTH REGARDING THE UN RESOLUTION YOUTH, PEACE, AND SECURITY AGENDA IN GEORGIA

Research report

Tbilisi
2024

“The research report is published with the support of FLIP, a joint initiative of the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) For Lasting and Inclusive Peace. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the Centre for Cultural Relations – Caucasian House and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of either EU or UNDP.



FLIP
A Joint EU-UNDP Initiative



კულტურულ ურთიერთობათა ცენტრი

კავკასიური
სახლი



THE CENTRE FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS

CAUCASIAN
HOUSE

Authors:

ELEONORA TCHANIA
GIORGI RIZHVADZE

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	5
Methodology	6
Personal Perception of Peace.....	6
Peace, Human Rights, and Social Justice	7
Peace and Interstate Relations	7
Peace and Security	8
Security, the State, and Rights.....	8
Security and Vulnerability	9
Perception of Conflict Among Youth	9
Conflict, History, and Identity	10
The Role of Youth in Ensuring Peace and Security	11
Formal institutions and young people' involvement in peacebuilding projects	12
Barriers and Challenges to Youth Participation.....	12
Youth Awareness of the UN YPS Resolution and Suggestions for Future Work	15
Recommendations	16
For the Non-Governmental Sector	17
For Youth Organizations.....	17
Conculusion.....	18

INTRODUCTION

The “Youth, Peace, and Security” (YPS) agenda was created with the recognition that young people are not only passive recipients of peace efforts, but also important contributors to sustainable peace processes. This paradigm shift became official in 2015 with the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, which recognized the significance of youth empowerment and engagement in peace and security issues globally. In many conflict-affected regions, young people make up a significant portion of the population. They bring new perspectives and innovative approaches with the potential to change traditional narratives and bridge divides in post-conflict communities. However, without structured frameworks such as YPS, this potential often remains untapped. The YPS agenda provides a formal pathway for active youth participation in peacebuilding, emphasizing their protection, violence prevention, and the creation of multi-sectoral partnerships to support them as peacebuilders.

The YPS agenda is particularly important in Georgia. Despite numerous international and local documents, research, and action plans that emphasize the significance of youth in conflict transformation, young people in Georgia are underrepresented in the formal processes of conflict resolution. This lack of representation is coupled with the absence of comprehensive research on the perspectives of Georgian youth regarding the root causes of Georgia’s conflicts and their potential solutions. This leads to ineffective policy decisions that do not reflect the unique needs and views of the younger generation. Furthermore, many young people, due to limited access to information and resources, are insufficiently informed about the origins of these conflicts and the efforts aimed at resolving them. Without proactive measures to understand and engage youth perspectives, policy decisions may fail to address the key challenges facing society, limiting the effectiveness and sustainability of these initiatives.

The implementation of the YPS framework in Georgia enables young people to be empowered and actively engage in reconciliation and regional peace initiatives. More specifically, it could help mitigate the strong sense of alienation resulting from prolonged conflicts. Alienation has had a significant impact on younger generations who have never experienced peaceful coexistence with the Abkhaz and Ossetians. The YPS framework could serve as a bridge, encouraging both sides to create open channels for communication, cooperation, and collective action among young people.

Furthermore, the involvement of young people in discussions and deliberations around conflict-related challenges is essential not only for spreading information and raising awareness about policies but also for strengthening the motivation and vision for peaceful conflict resolution within Georgia’s younger generation. Consistent engagement of youth in conflict resolution processes and the exploration of their perspectives will enable decision-makers to make choices that more accurately reflect the real needs of Georgian society. Since young people often bring new approaches to conflict resolution, the implementation of YPS will support ongoing efforts to build societal resilience and integrate strategies with stronger gender considerations.

METHODOLOGY

The research is based on a qualitative methodology, specifically the focus group approach. This method, which brings in participants for group interviews, aims to facilitate the exchange of ideas and views among respondents. For this study, structured thematic blocks were developed using a pre-prepared, structured questionnaire designed to foster discussion and obtain in-depth responses.

The target group of the research consisted of Georgian citizens aged 18 to 35 who had participated in training organized by the Caucasus House, which focused on the Youth, Peace, and Security Resolution. A total of nine focus group sessions were held across seven university cities, both in physical and online formats. The physical meetings took place in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, and Batumi, while the online sessions were organized via the Zoom platform, with participants from Tbilisi, Akhaltsikhe, Telavi, and Gori. Each focus group included 6 to 10 participants, and the total number of participants in the study was 75.

The approach allowed us to study the participants' views in detail, while also fostering dynamic discussions, enabling us to gain insight into the perspectives of young people and helping to highlight their perceptions of the Youth, Peace, and Security resolution.

PERSONAL PERCEPTION OF PEACE

Peace, as described by the focus group participants, is a multi-layered concept that goes beyond the mere absence of conflict. Respondents emphasized that peace begins with mutual understanding and the harmonious coexistence of people from different backgrounds, races, and ideologies. In a peaceful society, individuals live in solidarity, help and support their fellow citizens, rather than oppose each other. This mutual respect and cooperation form the foundation of a peaceful society, where people are positively engaged in common affairs and contribute to the overall well-being.

Participants often noted that peace is not merely the absence of violence, but also involves the coexistence of different opinions, ideologies, or perspectives in a way that these differences do not lead to hostility or division. Many respondents emphasized that peace encompasses a space for healthy criticism and dialogue, which fosters personal and societal growth. One respondent defined peace as “the absence of violent conflict,” but added that ideological or social conflicts may still exist, provided they do not escalate into violence or cause public harm. Thus, peace is a dynamic space where people can engage constructively in various interactions, even when they do not agree with each other's views.

A central theme that emerged from the focus group discussions was the link between peace and security. Respondents emphasized that peace is closely linked to the perception of safety – whether in one's home, community, or country. Many associated peace with the protection of their rights and freedoms. This perception of security is

tied to the approach in which the state plays a critical role in ensuring peace by upholding laws, guaranteeing human rights, and promoting justice. As one participant put it, “Peace is when you feel safe in your country or space.” This perspective reflects a broad view that peace is deeply connected to both personal and collective security.

While interpreting the concept of peace, focus group participants placed particular emphasis on the issue of freedom. For them, a peaceful society allows individuals to live authentically and make decisions freely, without the fear of intimidation, oppression or instability. Respondents shared the view that peace creates an environment for both personal and collective development, where individuals can achieve their goals and express themselves openly. As one participant explained, “Peace is an environment where a person can live peacefully and be who they truly are,” highlighting the connection between peace and personal freedom.

Respondents reflected on the personal dimension of peace, describing it as an everyday sense of safety and calm. For many, peace means waking up without the fear that something harmful may happen. It is a feeling of security that allows individuals to focus on the future and live without constant anxiety. One participant summarized and expressed this feeling as follows: “Peace is when you feel calm, when you’re not afraid.”

PEACE, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Respondents also emphasized the importance of human rights in defining the concept of peace. Many agreed that a peaceful society is one in which basic rights are protected and human dignity is respected. They noted that peace cannot truly exist without the protection of political and civil freedoms, the right to personal security, and access to justice. As one participant pointed out, “Human rights, especially basic rights, must be protected.” They indicated that peace is built on the foundation of human rights, and it cannot be maintained without a just and democratic society.

In terms of social well-being, many respondents associate peace with stability, both on a personal and societal level. They emphasized that peace involves good relationships within families, neighborhoods, and communities, where equality and justice prevail. The existence of social polarization, corruption, and inequality was often mentioned as conditions that hinder peace. One participant noted, “Peace is stability, whether political or economic,” highlighting the broad and comprehensive nature of the concept. For them, peace means a harmonious society where individuals contribute to the common good, free from the fear of conflict or instability.

PEACE AND INTERSTATE RELATIONS

Respondents also emphasized the importance of peaceful relations between states and clearly stated that global peace contributes to the security of individual countries.

Peace, they argued, involves not only internal tranquility, but also respect for international norms. Cooperation between countries is essential to maintain a peaceful global order and ensure the non-violent, diplomatic resolution of conflicts. As one participant put it, “Peace is also obeying the laws established between states,” highlighting the role of international relations in maintaining global peace.

PEACE AND SECURITY

In response to the question of what security means to them, the participants presented different perspectives that reflected their concerns and hopes. According to one participant, for them, security is the guarantee of protection from discrimination (even based on clothing), rapid involvement of specialized authorities in upholding this guarantee, and holding the aggressor accountable. This concept of security includes not only physical protection but also emotional and psychological safety, encompassing the hope that the state, society, or some other entity will protect and assist a person when a threat arises.

Others also responded to the question and stated that security means living without fear – whether that fear is of physical harm or psychological trauma. One participant noted that although they have not personally experienced violence in their immediate environment, they are still aware of the dangers that citizens face.

Another participant directly linked security to peace and the broader socio-political climate. In the respondent’s view, this perception is particularly relevant for those who grew up during the difficult period of the 1990s. The respondents expressed concern that, recently, the concept of security has become disconnected from personal protection, and in today’s reality, people do not feel secure.

SECURITY, THE STATE, AND RIGHTS

For many, a common theme was the lack of trust in the state and its institutions. Several participants from the civil sector expressed deep concern, as they found it hard to imagine how they could secure the future of their families in a country governed by a party that lacks the ability to adequately protect society.

Another participant emphasized the all-encompassing fear of Russia and the current government. In their view, authoritarianism fosters an environment where rights are not properly protected. They argued that security is closely linked to freedom and its protection; without this guarantee, a person cannot feel safe.

A deeply rooted fear of violence was repeatedly mentioned by the participants. They described feeling vulnerable in their everyday lives. They reported being concerned that expressing their opinions could lead to physical or verbal aggression. They shared specific incidents of discrimination or harassment, particularly in public spaces

or on social media, and emphasized the importance of living without fear of bullying or retaliation for one's views. A clear example of this threat was a story shared by a young woman from Batumi: her friend experienced discrimination due to her sexual orientation. The participant emphasized that the state has a responsibility to protect individuals from such harm.

For the respondents, true security means the state's guarantee that it will ensure peace for its citizens.

When discussing broader political and legal structures, several participants expressed concern about the erosion of democracy. They emphasized the necessity of an independent judiciary, functioning police, and robust law enforcement mechanisms. Without these, they argued, a sense of security cannot be established in the country.

SECURITY AND VULNERABILITY

Another participant highlighted the social aspect of security and stated that discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, or language can also lead to a sense of vulnerability. These groups, due to stigmatization or neglect by the state, often feel unsafe. One participant pointed to a specific case involving ethnic Azerbaijanis living in Georgia and noted that they also face significant challenges in the context of security.

The discussion also touched upon the generational divide in terms of perceptions of security. One participant noted that different age groups often have conflicting views on what protection means. They pointed out that, in the current situation, expressing an opinion can sometimes lead to extreme reactions, and the rise of aggression around differing views has become a particularly concerning trend.

Another key focus was on bullying, both in real life and on social media. One participant reflected on how the fear of bullying can silence people and prevent them from sharing their thoughts or feelings. According to them, recent events have highlighted the issue that public discourse is becoming increasingly hostile.

PERCEPTION OF CONFLICT AMONG YOUTH

One of the key topics of the discussion was the personal and societal nature of conflict. Many participants described conflict not only as an abstract concept but as something that directly impacts their lives and the issues they face in their daily agendas. For example, one respondent said, "Conflict is not just a fight; it is the loss of trust between people who once lived together." Others echoed this sentiment, noting that conflict creates a division that extends beyond political disputes and affects personal relationships and social cohesion within their communities.

Young people also shared their views on the impact of conflict on their lives, especially their future. Many expressed feelings of hopelessness and frustration, with one

respondent stating, “When you grow up in a conflict zone, it feels like your dreams are always on hold.” This reflects the broader social consequences of conflict, as it not only disrupts the present but also limits opportunities for future generations. Participants emphasized that the effects of conflict go beyond immediate violence and affect education, employment, and the overall quality of life.

Moreover, the discussions highlighted the importance of dialogue and communication in conflict situations. Participants expressed a strong desire for open conversations between conflicting parties and emphasized that misunderstandings often exacerbate tensions. As one participant noted, “We need to talk more. ignoring each other only deepens the divide.” This call for dialogue reflects the recognition that conflict can be resolved through communication and mutual understanding, rather than through violence or silence.

CONFLICT, HISTORY, AND IDENTITY

Participants also emphasized the root causes of conflict, which they linked to historical grievances, social injustice, and economic inequality. One participant remarked that “Conflicts often arise from unresolved issues of the past – things we never talk about, but that still bother us.” This perspective reflects the recognition that many conflicts are deeply rooted in historical context, and addressing core issues is crucial for any meaningful transformation. Respondents highlighted the importance of reconciliation processes that acknowledge these historical grievances, rather than turning a blind eye to them.

Another significant issue in the discussions was the role of identity in conflict. Many participants expressed that conflicts are often shaped by ethnic, national, or cultural identities, leading to a sense of “us versus them.” As one participant put it, “Conflict often arises from the feeling that identity is under threat. When people feel like they are being excluded or marginalized, that is when tensions rise.” This understanding reflects the importance of addressing identity issues in efforts to resolve conflict, in order to promote inclusivity and mutual understanding.

Focus group participants also expressed concern about the role of external actors in conflicts, particularly regarding how their interventions can exacerbate existing tensions. Many voiced skepticism towards foreign involvement and shared instances where external powers prioritized their own interests over the needs of local communities. As one respondent noted, “When external actors step in with their decisions, they often forget that we know our problems better than anyone.” This perspective highlights the importance of local ownership and the need for local involvement in conflict resolution processes.

THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN ENSURING PEACE AND SECURITY

From the focus group participants' perspective, youth can play a crucial role in promoting peace and security. According to the respondents, young people have the enthusiasm to make positive change happen. Georgian youth have great potential to contribute to efforts aiming to ensure peace and security. However, their involvement is hindered by structural inequalities, generational attitudes, and social issues.

Young people are often more ready for dialogue, collaboration, and new ideas than older generations. They are powerful agents of change, especially in the fields of peace and security, as they challenge existing norms and bring innovative approaches to address deeply rooted problems.

Respondents argue that the responsibility for promoting peace now rests with young people, as previous generations failed to establish a peaceful society. Nevertheless, some participants in the focus group noted that, on one hand, young people could be a source of change, but there is also the risk of easily manipulating this generation. As one participant put it, *"A lot depends on young people, and they tend to think more freely, but unfortunately, a 'false' government can manipulate some of them and put them on a different path."*

Young people can make a significant contribution to the development of society and promote political change. One respondent recalls a historical example to illustrate this: *"Georgia has many examples where young people's involvement, and even their protests, changed specific issues. For instance, I always remember the Day of the Georgian Language, when there were attempts to change the language and make Russian the official state language."*

According to the respondents, young people do not fully understand their role in peacebuilding, which is attributed to their low level of awareness. They believe that young people are unaware of their rights and the potential positive impact they can have on peace and security building. Additionally, young people often feel that they cannot achieve a breakthrough in the current reality on their own.

Some of the respondents mention that young people's interest in peace and security issues is high, but the existing system is closed, and many young people cannot get involved in the process. Seminars organized by non-governmental organizations give young people the opportunity to learn more about peace and security issues. However, it is mainly the university environment that provides young people with an opportunity to gain more information about peacebuilding.

Young people also emphasize the importance of activism at the local level, especially in areas where the risk of conflict is high. The new generation is more capable of addressing issues at the community level and making a positive impact: *"Conflict really halts development, severely affecting health and psychological well-being. It actually prevents young people from achieving their goals and has a particularly harmful impact on groups affected by these events... Young people are the first to address problems at the local level when it comes to solving them."*

FORMAL INSTITUTIONS AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT IN PEACEBUILDING PROJECTS

The majority of focus group participants note that the state is not active in the areas of peacebuilding and security and rarely organizes various projects. Respondents also point out that youth involvement in the decision-making process at the state level is mostly nominal: *"At the state level, on important issues, I think young people are asked for their opinion formally, well, if they are asked, of course. But even then, our opinion and our attitude are mostly not taken into account."*

Focus group participants highlight the lack of discussions on peacebuilding and security issues in educational spaces, including in schools and universities: *"The first educational space for young people is school, and these topics should be brought to the forefront there."* It is also noteworthy that, according to young people, the work of NGOs contributes to raising awareness on peacebuilding and security issues among the population, but their resources are limited, and they have insufficient capacity to reach a large portion of the population: *"The civil sector, even NGOs, do this on their own from the outside. Of course, it's very welcome and very good, but they still don't have a big impact on the overall situation."*

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES TO YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Young people face numerous barriers and challenges when participating in peace and security initiatives. One such hindering factor is the unequal access to various projects for young people living in different regions and cities.

One respondent mentions: *"There is a very frustrated, very passive youth in the region. Social inequality, chronic unemployment, and constant economic problems are the main factors behind this. Batumi, Kutaisi, Tbilisi, and Zugdidi have much more opportunities and space."* In the focus group, many participants often pointed to the social background of young people, which, despite their interest, may prevent them from engaging in peacebuilding activities: *"Now, we are sitting here, but there are many villages where our peers are in the cranberry plantations picking berries just to have food for one week. That's exactly it, it depends on the circumstances, otherwise, there is a desire to engage."* Furthermore, social inequality and poverty are one of the biggest obstacles. One respondent notes: *"When I think of barriers, it's the tough living conditions, because a person's mind is focused on survival, not on thinking about other issues."*

Young people's involvement in peacebuilding and security initiatives is also hindered by the security issues faced by internally displaced youth: *"A large number of young people are crossing from Abkhazia, and a significant part of the students are displaced from there. For them, participation in these projects is directly related to their security."* Several participants also emphasize gender and cultural barriers to youth engagement: *"There have been instances where family factors have been a*

hindrance. For example, when my friends and I were going to a very important meeting, my friend's family did not allow her to go. These barriers exist for young people. Unfortunately, girls in particular face such barriers – they are not allowed to attend activities even for a few days, not to mention going abroad.”

The focus group revealed that traditional formal meetings on peacebuilding and security issues are less effective and need to be revised. According to the respondents, every project related to peace or security issues should have a long-term character, which will help make these topics more relevant and sustainable: *“After the project ends, creating clubs is a good idea. We will meet again, have conversations, play games, and discussions.”*

NGOs should facilitate reaching young people with messages about peace and security through the use of art. According to the respondents, it is very important to have more peer-education type training sessions because young people are more likely to absorb knowledge in such settings.

According to the respondents, in order to popularize these issues among young people, it is important to organize competitions for blogs, videos, or photographs. Additionally, small-budget projects give young people the opportunity not only to gain knowledge about peacebuilding and security but also to practically implement their own initiatives and ideas. Symbolic gifts, certificates, board games, book vouchers, and other types of low-budget prizes would help deepen young people's interest in these topics. The focus group revealed that young people are more motivated by out-bound trainings, exchange programs, camps, and similar types of events.

In the focus group, the majority of participants emphasized that youth involvement in peacebuilding would lead to significant change, as they are the most inclined toward change: *“Any fundamental change in the history of Georgia or any other country has been made by young people. If we look at the most recent events, such as the protests against the foreign agents law, it was mostly young people who were leading the charge. In reality, it is always clear that young people are the ones who bring about change.”* A large number of respondents also pointed out that young people have the potential to bring transformative changes at both formal and informal political levels: *“Young people have a great deal of power. The wave of youth can change many things. For example, looking at history, such as the events of April 9 or the Gvarilov Night, these are painful moments, but they also show that young people can change what exists. It is exactly young people who are the force, the ones who have the courage and fight for a better future.”*

According to the focus group participants, socio-economic rapprochement with Abkhaz and Ossetians will have a positive impact on future peacebuilding. They also believe that young people should be involved in the decision-making process, but they also recognize challenges in this process: *“The involvement of young people in formal matters is more sensitive, because it requires a lot of experience, practice, and knowledge. If young people were to become decision-makers without the necessary knowledge and practice, it could even be harmful at the state level.”*

According to young people, in order for their peers to become more actively involved in peacebuilding and security issues, it is essential to develop various skills. Focus group participants particularly emphasize the importance of mastering foreign languages. In their opinion, improving communication skills is also crucial, so that young people can send the right messages in conflict-affected regions. Skills in combating disinformation and knowledge of technology will enable young people to engage more effectively in various activities related to peacebuilding and security. In the focus group, students mention that there is a lack of employment opportunities related to peacebuilding and security issues: *“In my opinion, my biggest problem is that I can’t apply the theoretical knowledge I’ve gained in practice. I study diplomacy and international relations, I’m in my third year, and I haven’t yet put my acquired knowledge into practice.”* When working on peacebuilding issues, inclusivity is essential, including the participation of ethnic, religious, or other minorities, as they contribute to creating a more diverse environment.

In analyzing the topics surrounding the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda, focus group participants identified key issues that varied according to gender, region, and urban-peripheral divides. These differences provide important insights into the specific experiences of Georgian youth regarding peace and security issues, shed light on the unique challenges faced by different groups, and lay the foundation for more targeted and inclusive policy recommendations.

Among young women, the primary issue identified was the sense of personal security and the impact of gender stereotypes on their perception of safety. Female participants, especially those living in large cities, described how their sense of security was perceived, particularly when moving around at night. This was closely linked to harassment and societal expectations, which often restrict women’s freedom in public spaces and create additional emotional and psychological burdens. For many young women, the concept of “peace and security” was deeply personal, connected to their ability to navigate safely and without fear within their own communities.

Young Muslim women from the Adjara region who participated in the study highlighted the unique challenges related to religious expression. Focus group discussions brought up issues associated with wearing the hijab and the societal perceptions attached to it. These young women noted that wearing the hijab often leads to stereotypes and stigmatization, which affects their inner peace and personal security. This experience is particularly unique to the Adjara region, where the ethnically Georgian Muslim population resides, and underscores how cultural and religious identities intersect with gender, shaping individual perspectives on peace and security.

It is noteworthy that the timing of the study — conducted after the massive protests against the so-called “agents law” — had an impact on the focus group discussions, particularly in large cities such as Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Batumi. Protests against the ruling party’s policies had a strong influence on young people living in urban areas, who linked the erosion of their sense of peace and security to restrictions on freedom of expression and participation in civil actions. It is important to note that in more peripheral regions, young people were less engaged in these protests and reported feeling

disconnected from these events. This points to a significant urban-peripheral divide in civil engagement. Young people living in peripheral areas often feel excluded from national political discourse and opportunities for activism.

Young people living near the occupied territories expressed clear concerns about their proximity to conflict zones. Here, peace is less about the freedom of protest or civil activism and more about physical security and stability. In these areas, young people described a tense atmosphere that hindered open discussion and limited their willingness to express dissenting viewpoints. This highlights a less visible, but equally significant form of vulnerability, directly linked to regional and geopolitical factors.

In almost every city, young people expressed concern about intergenerational divides that hindered their civic engagement. Many noted that older generations often held more conservative views, creating tension when young people attempted to express progressive ideas or advocate for social change. This generational divide was seen as a barrier to youth activism, as many young people felt that their voices were not as powerful within the context of their communities and families, making it harder for them to participate in peacebuilding activities.

Young people in Georgia show a high level of interest in peace and security issues, but several inhibiting factors prevent their active involvement in these topics. Most peace and security-related initiatives are organized by non-governmental organizations, which provide young people with opportunities to participate in seminars, camps, field events, and international programs. On the other hand, despite their interest, there are barriers such as social issues, ineffective forms of participation, a lack of real tools for involving youth in decision-making processes, and limited resources.

YOUTH AWARENESS OF THE UN YPS RESOLUTION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

The focus group discussions provided valuable insights into young people's perceptions of the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda. The respondents expressed great interest in understanding the outcomes of the agenda and shared their thoughts on creating a national coalition focused on this issue. Their perspectives highlight the importance of local initiatives and the potential for youth mobilization in the peacebuilding process.

The participants emphasized the significant role of local initiatives in promoting youth engagement in peace and security issues at various levels – regional, city, and community. They specifically noted that their participation in university-level training sessions was valuable, as it allowed them to develop much needed insights and practical knowledge.

When discussing the potential of a youth network, the respondents expressed strong support for mobilizing young people around peace and security issues. According to them: *“A national coalition can unite us and amplify our voice.”* From the group's perspective, social networks play a crucial role in this process; in today's

digital landscape, social media platforms are essential for spreading information and keeping young people informed about relevant events and initiatives. They mentioned that without these tools, reaching and engaging their target audience would be much more challenging.

Innovation and new approaches were highlighted as strong supporters in shaping youth engagement. Participants emphasized the creation of initiatives such as debate schools, tailored to address the current issues of peace and security. In their view, these activities could ensure case studies for discussion, encourage participants to engage in healthy debates with their peers, especially when discussing complex topics that involve young people from Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and other affected communities. One respondent specifically noted: *“Debate schools can help us shape our views and develop mutual respect.”*

Concerns were also expressed about the perception of civic engagement in relation to generational divides. One respondent pointed out that older generations often associate civic engagement with partisanship, which may discourage young people from participating. They emphasized the importance of direct involvement from state institutions with young people to ensure that policies reflect their interests and aspirations, rather than top-down imposed norms. *“It is essential for us to be involved in discussions that will impact our future,”* said the participant.

Participants suggested that NGOs adopt a more targeted approach to identifying specific initiatives for young people and involving them in these efforts. They acknowledged the efforts of NGOs focused on empowering youth in the context of peace and security. Young people emphasized the importance of working together to effectively address the multifaceted challenges faced by today’s generation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study highlight the necessity of a collaborative approach to increase youth engagement around the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) resolution. It is important to identify specific recommendations for policymakers, NGOs, youth organizations, and future research directions to address the diverse challenges facing young people and to harness their potential in building a more peaceful society.

Policymakers play a crucial role in integrating youth perspectives into peace and security policies and should prioritize the localization of the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda as a central part of national youth policy. By incorporating the principles of the YPS agenda into state policies, they can ensure a consistent, structured approach to youth participation in peace processes across the country. Moreover, policymakers should support initiatives that empower young people at the local level by allocating resources, providing mentorship, and offering small grants. Such opportunities will allow young people, both in cities and rural areas—especially those living near conflict zones—to design and implement projects that promote peace and sustainability.

Expanding youth participation in formal decision-making processes is yet another

key direction which can be achieved by creating youth councils and platforms within government structures, giving young people a seat at the decision-making table, and establishing a real participatory policy that will have a direct impact on their lives. By promoting mechanisms for active youth participation in peace and security discussions, the government can help overcome generational divides and foster a culture of inclusive policymaking.

In addition, it is crucial to integrate peace education into school and university curricula to promote a deep understanding of peaceful conflict resolution from an early age. Schools and universities can become spaces where young people learn about peace and security issues, gaining knowledge and skills for democratic participation in these areas. This integration will also encourage young people to see themselves as active participants in the peacebuilding process, both within their communities and beyond.

FOR THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR

Actors from non-governmental organizations, civil society, and activist groups play a key role in providing alternative pathways for youth engagement and activism. To strengthen youth participation, NGOs should reconsider traditional methods of engagement and implement interactive, youth-friendly approaches. Instead of organizing standard meetings, they can utilize innovative tools such as role-playing games, digital platforms, and social media campaigns to capture the interest of young audiences. By integrating modern technologies and social media, NGOs can expand their reach, attract diverse youth groups, and engage more effectively in peace and security issues.

In addition, NGOs should work to ensure the sustainability of youth programs beyond the duration of specific interventions. It is important to establish youth clubs, local hubs, and community initiatives that will continue after the project's funding ends, maintaining young people's interest and engagement. Sustainable support for small-budget initiatives can help young people build long-term connections to peacebuilding efforts within their communities. Moreover, incorporating arts and culture into these initiatives can make peace and security issues more tangible for young people, shifting the focus from abstract concepts to their everyday concerns.

FOR YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

Youth organizations themselves bear a unique responsibility to mobilize their peers around the YPS agenda and related issues. These organizations should focus on creating an inclusive space that welcomes young people from diverse backgrounds, interests, and experiences. To achieve this goal, youth organizations can collaborate with schools, universities, and local leaders to reach out to marginalized groups and engage them in discussions about peace, security, and civic responsibility.

Moreover, youth organizations should strive to empower young people who have a strong interest in connecting their professional aspirations to the fields of peace and

security. Many young individuals, who are career-oriented towards peacebuilding or conflict resolution, face barriers such as limited resources, visibility, and support. Youth organizations can help address these gaps by offering mentorship programs, networking opportunities, and training that equip young people with the necessary resources to pursue careers in this field. Recognizing and supporting young leaders within peacebuilding initiatives could foster a new generation of advocates and professionals in the direction of YPS.

To ensure that the YPS agenda continues to evolve in response to emerging issues, future research should delve into the lived experiences of young people in conflict-affected regions and border areas, where unique challenges impact their perceptions of peace and security. Research focused on youth in these areas provides valuable insights into how geopolitical factors shape their engagement and attitudes, which will contribute to more tailored, region-specific approaches to involving young people in peacebuilding efforts.

In addition, future research should explore aspects of gender, cultural identity, and regional differences among Georgian youth. Such research will help clarify how diverse backgrounds influence the priorities and needs of young people, leading to more inclusive strategies for peace and security initiatives. It would also be valuable to examine how digital engagement and virtual platforms can expand access to peace education, especially as online spaces become increasingly important for youth involvement.

Overall, the recommendations for policymakers, NGOs, youth organizations, and researchers emphasize the necessity of a comprehensive, collaborative approach to engaging youth in the field of peace and security. Given the diverse needs and perspectives of young people in Georgia, stakeholders can lay the foundation for a more sustainable, inclusive peacebuilding process that empowers youth as key contributors to a safe and harmonious society.

CONCLUSION

The focus group discussions highlighted several key findings regarding the perspectives of Georgian youth on peace and security. While young people living in Georgia show interest in these issues, they face numerous barriers that hinder their engagement. Social challenges, limited access to effective participation platforms, insufficient tools for involvement in decision-making, and a lack of resources are the most significant obstacles preventing youth from engaging in peace and security initiatives.

The discussions clearly indicate that most peace and security initiatives are led by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which offer opportunities to youth to participate through seminars, camps, field visits, and international programs. However, to achieve a deeper and far-reaching impact, NGOs need a long-term perspective, supporting local initiatives and aiming for sustainability in their projects. This will ensure

that youth who want to get involved are not left out due to the lack of ongoing opportunities. NGO strategies should also include expanding options for digital engagement and utilizing innovative, technology-driven approaches to enhance youth access to voice and feedback.

In addition, the minimal role of the state in promoting youth engagement in peace and security issues highlights another layer of the problem. The critical lack of peace education in school and university curricula limits young people's awareness and understanding of conflicts. Youth representation in public institutions is mostly formal, and they are not able to genuinely participate in decision-making processes. This lack of institutional support hinders the potential for youth-focused decision-making and reduces interest in long-term peace and security issues.

The focus group analysis also revealed that young people in Georgia view conflict as a multifaceted issue that goes beyond open violence and is deeply connected to identity, historical grievances, and social injustice. For them, conflict represents a disruption of relationships and community ties, often rooted in a complex socio-political context. Their perspectives emphasize the need for dialogue, mutual understanding, and empowerment at the local level to foster reconciliation. In their view, overcoming social divisions through these means is essential for achieving sustainable peace.

The perspectives of young people on peace and security varied across gender, region, and urban-rural origin. Young women mostly focused on personal safety and felt restricted by societal stereotypes. In larger cities, youth were more engaged in political movements and, during interviews, emphasized civil liberties, while young people living in peripheral areas felt disconnected from these discussions. Young people living near occupied territories, on the other hand, assessed peace in terms of physical security.

The actualization of the resolution is crucially dependent on the development of inclusive policies and strategies that genuinely engage young people in peace and security initiatives and decision-making processes; increase educational opportunities; encourage long-term initiatives; and employ innovative approaches.

By actively working on these issues, Georgia can contribute to the development of a generation of young leaders who are ready to guide the country toward a more peaceful and sustainable future. With adequate support and opportunities, Georgian youth have the potential to make a significant contribution to long-term peace and overcome the divisions that have long fragmented society.

Eleonora Tchania, Giorgi Rizhvadze

**THE VISION OF YOUTH
REGARDING THE UN RESOLUTION
YOUTH, PEACE, AND SECURITY
AGENDA IN GEORGIA**

Research report

Tbilisi
2024