



EMPOWERING YOUTH IN PEACEBUILDING

With over half the global population under 30, youth wield immense capacity to shape the future of their communities. At Counterpart International, our programs unlock this potential by empowering youth to become key stakeholders in fostering community cohesion, building resilience, preventing violence, and supporting the development of policies that promote stability and prosperity.

In recognition of International Youth Day, we are sharing five guiding principles that have shaped our youth empowerment approach:

1. PRIORITIZE INCLUSION IN COMMUNITY-ORIENTED SOLUTIONS

Often marginalized from decision-making platforms, we recognize that youth need leadership development, access to participation in the social sector, and opportunities to build long-term relationships with key stakeholders. In Niger, where youth account for more than 60% of the population, we engage youth in power mapping exercises to rapidly identify local government officials and partners to improve service delivery for the most critical community needs. These programs are designed for participants to cultivate a sense of purpose and ownership of their community's well-being.

2. PROVIDE YOUTH CHANNELS TO EXPRESS ASPIRATIONS, IDEAS, AND GRIEVANCES

In conflict affected regions, feeling voiceless can fuel frustration and radicalization to violence. Partnering with media organizations, we are providing youth with nonviolent opportunities to affect change. In Cameroon, Counterpart amplified the voices of young stakeholders who felt underrepresented and marginalized in political processes to promote civic engagement through radio and television programs and community-based dialogues. Elsewhere, in countries like Azerbaijan, Counterpart is increasing technical skills and direct networking capabilities of young civic leaders by leveraging digital communications and social media platforms.

3. EMPOWER YOUTH TO BECOME UPSTANDERS

Adapting positive youth development principles, we inform youth about their rights and responsibilities within their immediate social network and more broadly in their global community. In Honduras, we developed Community Revitalization Committees and Youth Violence Prevention Networks through which participants conducted crime and security assessments and developed strategic action plans to reduce violence. Youth leaders were able to model confidence, become upstanders to take positive action during a crisis, and help reduce helplessness amongst their peer networks.

4. INCREASE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Through approaches like our Youth Learn, Engage, Advocate Develop (LEAD) framework, we encourage young people to lead debates on policy issues, engage candidates for public office, and assume leadership of civil society organizations. In Uzbekistan, for example, we developed Youth Charters through which youth engaged local government to improve education, employment, and public safety. This process enabled youth to represent their community needs, practice negotiation, and cultivate compromise and consensus building to increase peaceful outcomes to community grievances.

5. ELEVATE YOUTH IN CONFLICT PREVENTION, MEDIATION, AND RECONCILIATION

Counterpart supports youth conflict mitigation efforts at the community, provincial, and state levels by organizing youth dialogues and regional exchanges, establishing youth centers, offering in-kind grants, and supporting individual and organizational exchanges. We have also developed facilitation guides and leadership trainings for youth so that they can lead people-to-people peacebuilding. In Ethiopia, we held a youth conflict resolution workshop to identify drivers of violence and opportunities for youth to invest their time and energy in constructive activities that reinforce cooperation, mutual respect, and other key values relevant to conflict mitigation.