POLICY BRIEF

¡TALKING ACROSS GENERATIONS ON EDUCATIONS COLOMBIA
According to data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, by 2020 Colombia has a population of approximately 51 million people. The population between 15 and 34 years old corresponds to a percentage of 33.7% or around 17,187,000 people. Despite having a high percentage of young people as a vital force for economic, social and cultural development, Colombia has not adopted or implemented efficient public policies to benefit from their potential.

The Independent Study on Progress in Youth, Peace and Security by The United Nations affirms that young people must be transformed from a demographic dividend to a peace dividend: “If the right investments in youth are made, and their peacebuilding work is recognized and nurtured, societies may reap a peace dividend. Building and sustaining peace through the transformative potential of young people demands a seismic shift and bold reorientation from governments.”

Young people have played a transcendental role in influencing decision-making, strengthening in recent decades the recognition and effective enjoyment of their fundamental rights. They have done so by resorting to the legitimate right of social protest, but also by using participation mechanisms established in internal regulations.

The Colombian legal framework that establishes and promotes youth participation includes the Youth Law of 1997, and the Youth Citizenship Statue of 2013, which was reformed in 2018. The Youth Citizenship Statute is the regulatory framework for the prevention, promotion, protection and guarantee of the rights of young people. The participation mechanisms established in this framework include: Youth Councils, Youth Platforms and Youth Assemblies.
Young people, whether they live in rural or urban areas, are trying to generate impacts from political and citizen participation "making their own concerns visible, but also those of their communities and territories, and trying to bring their concerns to spaces of participation where they can be heard as actors with voice and vote in decision-making "(Garzón, 2018).

The social protests that took place between November 2019 and June 2021 throughout Colombia, show the social discontent of young people at a lack of application of existing policies and the lack of opportunities for the full development of their ambitions with regards to their lives and their communities.

It is therefore necessary for young people to have a greater role in each of the political, social, environmental, cultural and economic sectors in order to strengthen public policies and development plans, without fear of being stigmatized or even losing their lives for their social activism.

From August to November 2021, Fundación Escuelas de Paz organized the first Latin American independent Talking Across Generations on Education (iTAGe) in Colombia. This iTAGe explored the role of education in promoting youth participation and a culture of peace in Colombia, as well as implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security.

UNSCR 2250 and its follow-up resolutions UNSCR 2419/2018 and UNSCR 2535/2020, recognize the important and positive roles of young people in peacebuilding. The resolutions emphasize the need to invest in education to promote a culture of peace, the elimination of inequality and discrimination, the promotion of tolerance and the empowerment of youth.

The campaign was supported and promoted by the following partners:

- National Democratic Institute - Colombia
- Red Cross Colombia
- The University of Tolima
- Fundación COMPAZ

2° Talking Across Generations on Education (TAG) is a youth-driven intergenerational dialogue on education designed by UNESCO’s category I institute, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace, Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (MGIEP). This platform brings together selected and highly qualified youth representatives in a face-to-face flat dialogue on education with senior decision-makers on issues of common concern.
The campaign was implemented through the following phases:

1. **Online campaign and survey (12 August until 11 October 2021).** During this phase, 98 Colombian youth from 20 different departments (out of the 32 departments in Colombia) responded to a survey about the role of education, youth participation mechanisms and UNSCR 2250. Of these respondents, 55 were women and 43 were men. The majority of responses came from university students, amounting to 43% of the total responses. The respondents represent 44 different youth organizations in the country. The social media publications of the campaign received 1145 likes, 169 shares and 42 comments.

2. **Focus groups (28 September, 5 and 14 October).** 3 focus groups took place with 23 preselected youth. The participants were selected based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the responses to the surveys. They represented different regions of the country as well as different ethnical groups and occupations. Care was taken to ensure equitable gender participation in the focus groups. During these focus groups, 3 youth speakers were selected for the iTAGe Live.

3. **iTAGe Live (21 October).** The three youth speakers and a youth representative of Fundación Escuelas de Paz participated in the final dialogue: Yulieth Dayana López Bravo, Gustavo Adolfo Vásquez Reveño, Fabián Andrés Rolón Riobo and Anamaria Quintero Arcia. The invited senior decision makers were Julián Sastoque, César Sánchez, Juan Carlos Reyes, Andrés Cotes Robayo.

3° A full profile of all participants can be found at the end of this summary.
Number of surveys answered 98
Representing youth from 20 out of the 32
departments in Colombia
Number online comments 42
Number of views of iTAGe Live: 606
Number of likes: 1,145
Number of mentions of campaign in
media: 2 radio programmes: NDI -
Universidad del Tolima
**1- Inclusion of rural areas.** There is a large gap between rural and urban areas. The inequality that exists in the areas furthest from urban areas is evident, since the particular needs and problems of the rural areas are not taken into account. It is important to contextualize education, because at present it does not take into account the needs coming from the context and history of the communities. Curricula must be more flexible and take into account the local realities and experiences of young people.

**2- Meaningful and inclusive youth participation is crucial.** It is important to recognize where and for whom youth participation processes are designed. There are exclusionary contexts and discourses that legitimize violence and discourage diverse expression. Often, rural youth are not given the opportunity to vote in the participation mechanisms established in the Youth Citizenship Statue. In policymaking, young people are often seen as subjects to validate policies, instead of active agents of change that involve local communities in a transversal way.

**3- The importance of local actions.** Local actions are the first step to promote participation and implementation of both the Youth Citizenship Statute and UNSC Resolution 2250. It is necessary to map the different regions in the country and for young people to assume a more active role within institutional frameworks and the government.
**National government**

* The Government should prioritize resources for the education of young people. This not only includes learning spaces in the classroom, but also providing and promoting other learning spaces where the rights of children and adolescents are guaranteed.

* Translate Resolution 2250 and the entire agenda into a language more suitable for young people. In this way, the Resolution will be more understandable and can be easily disseminated.

* Guide the concept of peacebuilding, recognizing the contributions from collective and community actions.

* Carry out a mapping of the different regions with regards to their diversity and present issues. Hereby showing the plurality of actors as well as the importance of a critical look at the context.

* Establish a Permanent National Committee to guide the recommendations regarding the different youth policies and regulations in terms of education, so that they are in accordance with the differential needs of young people.

* Guide the concept of peacebuilding, recognizing the contributions from collective and community actions.
YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

* Promote and participate in dialogues that are organized by the government and other organizations for advocacy.

* Build alliances to hold permanent dialogues on the strategies implemented for peace education.

* Support the dissemination and implementation of Resolution 2250 and its agenda in the rural areas.

* Assess and promote the fulfillment of the objective of peace education within the organization's internal processes.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

* Advocate for the mayors and the registry offices of different municipalities to assume a more active, informed and timely role to inform the population of the objectives, schedule and requirements for participation in the Municipal Youth Councils.

* Design strategies that allow the integration of the remote populations that are the furthest from urban centers, in such a way that the community is included in the participation processes as part of the fulfillment of their civil and political rights.

EDUCATIONAL SECTOR

* Consolidate the curricula and Institutional Educational Projects (PEI) to demonstrate the need for action learning in processes of peacebuilding, democracy, respect for diversity and the Chair of Peace (Cátedra de la Paz).

* Generate a strategy that allows dialogue between educational institutions (public and private), encouraging students and teachers to create diverse spaces for reflection on education.

4° The Chair of Peace (Cátedra de la Paz) is a mandatory academic space for all educational institutions in Colombia, which aims to promote citizenship skills for a democratic and peaceful coexistence, respectful of Human Rights.
The policy brief will be presented during an (online) event on December 15, featuring the 3 youth speakers. Relevant government departments and partner organizations will be invited. During the event, the findings and recommendations of the iTAGe will be presented.

After this event, on December 16, the policy brief and underlying analysis of the survey responses will be shared with relevant government entities such as the Presidential Council for Youth (Colombia Joven), The Ministry of Education, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Colombian Institute for Family and Welfare (ICBF) and the Ombudsman office.

At the same time, the policy brief will be sent to partner organizations and other relevant organizations at the national and international level, accompanied by the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the survey, the reports of the focus groups and iTAGe Live.

The goal of this promotion is to increase the awareness of decision makers about improving the impact of programs that promote youth participation, as well as for decision makers to understand the first-hand perception of young people about the relationship between education and participation. Finally, the policy brief aims to improve the recognition of UNSCR 2250 by decision makers and advocate for its implementation in Colombia.

Fundación Escuelas de Paz, together with the senior decision makers that participated in the dialogue, will continue to enable network spaces for young people to continue to make proposals and influence these issues.
Yulieth Dayana López Bravo is a social leader and entrepreneur from Boyacá. She is a member of the Truth Commission, judicial researcher and candidate of the Youth Council in Duitama. She creates tools to promote peace and reconciliation, volunteers for RADSCOL (Network of action for the sustainable development of Colombia) where she helps prevent tons of organic waste from reaching landfills and for the Fundación Cañaveral Camino al Cielo, where she strengthens and promotes the mental health of 120 families in vulnerable conditions. She has a master degree in neuropsychology and is a doctorate candidate in education.

Gustavo Adolfo Vasquez Revelo is 26 years old and lives in Cali. He is the leader of the Young Peacebuilders Network Colombia for three years and a member of Global Shapers. He dreams of a country in which there are opportunities for all people, regardless of their origin, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation and gender identity, or any other human condition. In particular, a country where young people can live in peace, can develop their life projects and where they can live in a society without adult-centeredness.
Fabián Andres Rolon is 18 years old and comes from Arenal, Sur de Bolívar. He is the leader of the organization ‘Youth of Sur de Bolívar’, a social, political and cultural organization for young people from 11 municipalities in the region. They work on economic autonomy, political participation of youth and peacebuilding in the region. He is an international business student, is a candidate for the Local Youth Council and has led youth participation processes in his municipality from a very young age. And one of his dreams is to see an inclusive Colombia, without social barriers and to make the South of Bolivar visible as a strong potential for youth affairs and peacebuilding.

Anamaria Quintero Arcia is 21 years old and a student in Psychology and Literary studies at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá. She is a candidate for a master's degree in educational neuropsychology in Spain. She has worked with neurodivergent students to listen to her voice and with active feminist groups.
Julián Rodríguez Sastoque is 24 years old and is a Councilor of Bogotá D.C. for the Alianza Verde (Green Alliance) party. He was elected as the youngest councilor for the period 2020-2023, is an economist from the National University of Colombia and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Territorial Planning and Environmental Management at the University of Barcelona. He was the first young Colombian to be invited by the UN to give a speech of peace and reconciliation at its General Assembly in New York, USA.

Andrés Cotés is the National Technical Reference for Recruitment Prevention of ICBF (the Colombian Institute for Family and Welfare). Bachelor of Social Sciences and Master’s candidate in Peace Education, consultant with 12 years of experience in issues of human rights, victims, reincorporation, poverty alleviation, private sector cooperation and prevention of recruitment of children and adolescents.

Juan Carlos Reyes is information incidence manager at Mutante.org. He has served as regional advisor to the Families in Action Program, was Head of the Directorate for the National Youth System at Colombia Joven, Presidential Council for Youth, Counselor for economic affairs of the Embassy of Colombia in Washington, and as advisor to the Delegate Attorney for the Defense of the Rights of Children, Adolescents, the Family and Women.

Cesar Augusto Sanchez Mojica is the coordinator for the Prevention and Migration of Violence in Urban Contexts of the Colombian Red Cross. He has a Bachelor of Basic Education with an emphasis in Social Sciences from the Francisco José de Caldas District University, and a Master in Educational and Social Development National Pedagogical University of Colombia. He is a social researcher and popular educator, with emphasis on interdisciplinary work, conflict resolution with differential attention approaches with children and adolescents who are victims of conflict, migrants and in vulnerable situations.
Amada Benavides de Pérez is the founder and president of la Fundación Escuelas de Paz. She has a degree in Education with a Specialization in Social Sciences and a Master in International Relations. She was a member of the United Nations Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries as a means of violating Human rights at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland, between April 2004 and July 2011. She was the president of the group between April 2004 and February 2006. Consultative Member of the Global Campaign for Peace Education, International Institute for Peace Education and the Hague Call for Peace, International Peace Office and the Latin American Peace Research Council.

Paula Forero is a psychologist, specialized in cultures of peace at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and candidate for a Master's degree in Human Rights, Democracy and Globalization at the Open University of Catalonia. She currently works as a pedagogical coordinator in projects of Fundación Escuelas de Paz and as a youth liaison with the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY).

Technical team Fundación Escuelas de Paz

Anna Gorter: Coordination with MGIEP – UNESCO
Paula Forero, Ana María Salamanca y Anamaría Quintero: Coordination with youth teams, analysis and systematization of the campaign
Fabio Pérez: Communications coordinator
Amada Benavides: Director Fundación Escuelas de Paz
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE EVENT

TAGe live
October 21, 2021 in the city of Bogota - Colombia - 9am to 11am
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