



Photo by Sam Phelps/CRS

Social Cohesion Programming

HARNESSING THE POWER OF YOUNG PEOPLE FOR PEACE

CRS' Commitment: How Youth Programming Can Foster Peace, Justice and Cohesion

CRS is mission-driven to build a world in which all people can reach their full potential in peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Peacebuilding, strengthening just relationships and promoting social cohesion are at the core of all that we do and are fundamental to who we are as an organization.

CRS defines social cohesion as the strength, quality and diversity of relationships between and among individuals, groups and communities, coupled with connections between society and the state as well as other institutions and markets. These relationships must be based on trust, respect, mutuality and equal opportunity, for the dignity and wellbeing of every person and the common good of all. We are inspired by Catholic social teaching to promote right relationships and advocate for equitable and inclusive societies. The biggest problems facing our world will not be solved by individuals or opposing factions.

Rather, they will be solved by entire communities and societies working together toward sustainable solutions. Young people play an integral role in this transformational change process that is achieved through peace and justice. CRS believes that all young people, including the most marginalized and those living surrounded by violence and conflict, have the capacity to effect positive changes in their lives and in their communities.

CRS' Approach

CRS has extensive experience mobilizing young people to lead peaceful change in their communities. A key approach is to equip and support Youth Peace Ambassadors to work through peer networks to plan and implement peace activities based on the identified needs of their communities. YPAs are trained to carry out activities in line with CRS' 3Bs—**binding**, **bonding** and **bridging**—approach for community-level social cohesion and peacebuilding, drawing on the principles of positive youth development. Throughout their training, YPAs strengthen personal resilience and

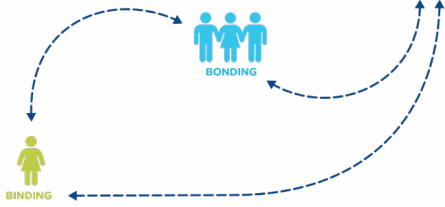


Fig 1. CRS' 3B Methodology

agency through self-reflection and healing activities (**Binding**), connect with each other to foster strong ties with other young people through dreaming for a better future and relationship building activities (**Bonding**), and communicate and collaborate with other groups across lines of difference (**Bridging**). Once formed as a cohesive unit, YPAs reach out to peers and community leaders to identify community priorities and work to address them. In countries across the globe, YPAs have been deployed to promote civic action, peaceful elections, crisis recovery, and interreligious and intergenerational cooperation.

Additionally, CRS' **Peaceful Masculinities** approach aims to transform social norms of what it means to “be a man,” thus supporting social cohesion by building positive models of relationships. Peaceful Masculinities workshops bring participants through the process of binding, bonding and bridging while discovering, dreaming, designing and delivering a new version of masculinity.

Key Considerations

CONSIDERATION	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
Adapt Programming to Diverse Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apply evidence-based approaches to address trauma, using gender-specific groups as appropriate. ■ Diversify participation in early warning systems to include young men and women. ■ Generate intergenerational dialogue and action. ■ Promote models of peaceful masculinity.
Do No Harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Plan for security and protection, including conducting thorough analyses and building support systems. ■ Understand power dynamics, including risk of co-optation of youth organizations.
Ensure Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Connect bottom-up youth-inclusive peacebuilding to top-down policy reform initiatives. ■ Strengthen the capacity of government, civil society and private sector to work with young people through dialogue and bridging activities. ■ Facilitate network-building and opportunities to apply new skills.

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PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Youth Peace Ambassadors Promote Peaceful Elections

The Promoting Peace in Northern Ghana project was implemented in the Damongo, Navrongo-Bolgatanga and Tamale dioceses in northern Ghana in the lead-up to presidential elections. Northern Ghana borders the southern fringe of the Sahel and Ghana's Upper East, Upper West and Northern regions, which are among the country's least developed regions, and most prone to elections violence. To become YPAs, young people were trained in election observation, monitoring and mediation. They also learned how to communicate peace messages via radio, cultural and sporting events.

In all, 90 young people—30 from each diocese—joined the program. In addition, the project provided a one-day training to 926 young community peace volunteers to implement community-based “positive peace” activities and to use Interactive voice-response technology to promote peaceful elections. Local partners supported the YPA selection process by identifying, interviewing and recommending young people from their communities.

“You have to be able to control yourself before you can speak about peace to the other party... So we are there to transform ourselves to transform the society... That is why you never recorded violence anywhere. It was peaceful and successful.”

—YPA from Damongo, Ghana



For more information on this program and CRS, please scan this code

