Launch of the Guiding Principles on Young People’s Participation in Peacebuilding

Dili, 4 June 2014

The Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding were officially launched on April 26th, 2014, in New York, alongside the UN General Assembly Thematic Debate on Ensuring Stable and Peaceful Societies. In Timor Leste, the launch was held on May 30th, 2014, focusing on the current context and featuring results of discussion on the guiding principles and listening to youth perspective on their involvement in youth related activities inline with the guiding principles.

The launch, cohosted by SFCG, USAID, the UN Residence, UNICEF, GIZ and CNJTL and attended by more than 100 youth, began at 9:00 AM on May 30th and took place at São Paolo – Jacinto. After opening ceremony remarks from USAID Representative Lisa Whitley on behalf of USAID Chief of Mission Timor-Leste, John Seong, and UNESCO Chief Sérgio Muchanga on behalf of UN Residence Coordinator Timor-Leste, Knut Østby, Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI) Mrs. Idelta Rodrigues, on behalf of Vice Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, His Excellency Fernando Lasama Araujo delivered further opening remarks and officially launched the Guiding Principles.

SEPI Rodrigues lauded the launch and offered a direct appeal for their inclusion at the national level, stating, "I call upon the Security of State of Youth and Sport to review and include these guiding principles during the current revision process of the National Youth Policy."

“These Guiding Principles recognize that youth can and do play a vital role in preventing and resolving conflict in their own communities and in their countries.”

USAID Representative Whitley
Following the opening remarks, four youth representatives shared testimonies of their involvement in peacebuilding at the community, district and national level. A panel discussion, consisting of government, police, and UN representatives, reflected on the Guiding Principles and answered questions from the youth. A task force has been set up to prepare recommendations to be shared with the government, security sector, UN, donors, CSOs and youth.

The release of these Guiding Principles marked a concerted effort by the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to promote youth as active stakeholders, participants, leaders and partners in peace processes.

Today’s generation of young people, at 1.2 billion, is the largest the world has ever known. The growing youth demographic is particularly prominent in developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and in the Middle East and North Africa. One of the most critical challenges faced by this generation of young people is armed conflict. Many young people live amidst violent conflict and see their chances for a healthy and productive development compromised.

Yet the largest youth cohort the world has ever seen offers an unprecedented opportunity for innovation, development and peacebuilding. Young people can be active agents of a peaceful transition toward socially inclusive societies, for example, when young women and men are successfully integrated into decision-making and given a chance to meaningfully contribute to political, social and economic activities.

Timor-Leste is at a pivotal place in the development and democratization process where enhanced effectiveness of engagement between youth, state actors and their constituencies is crucial. Youth, in particular, must be involved politically, economically, and socially, to become drivers of the country’s future. Almost half (46%) of the total population in Timor-Leste is below the age of 18, and the population that falls within the ‘youth cohort’ (15-29 age bracket) accounts for roughly 30% of the Timorese people.1 Every year, some 15-20,000 Timorese youth enter the job market but only 13 percent of men and 9 percent of women are wage earners and compete for scarce formal sector positions. With risk factors such as high unemployment, alcohol abuse, involvement in gangs, and marginalization from politics and state institutions, some youth are highly prone to conflict and violence.

"Youth of today need to work hard to seek information, as information can expand our knowledge and therefore help us to avoid conflict. Youth face many conflicts, because they have no daily activities to keep them busy, so it is easy for them to enter into conflict." – Filomena Da Costa (Mimi), from Same/Manufahi, after delivering her testimonial to the panel

The Guiding Principles provide guidance to Governments, UN entities, donors, national and international non-governmental organizations and civil society on meaningful youth engagement and participation, especially in conflict or transition settings. They are designed to inform peacebuilding strategies and programmes that are participative,
inclusive and intergenerational. They aim at systematically promoting the participation of young people in challenging contexts where violence has become the norm.

Over 1,000 people contributed to the development of these Guiding Principles. The UN Peacebuilding Support Office and Search for Common Ground led the process, as co-chairs of a dedicated working group on these issues. This group is part of the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, and includes UN entities, non-governmental organizations, donors, academics and youth-led organizations.

SFCG is an international non-profit organization that promotes peaceful resolution of conflict. Its mission is to transform how individuals, organizations and governments deal with conflict - away from adversarial approaches and toward cooperative solutions. YEPS is an extension of a two-year ‘Youth Radio for Peace Building’ Project, also implemented by SFCG and its partners CNJTL, TLMDC and BELUN, with the support of USAID.

“USAID has worked in Timor-Leste since 1999, providing support for sustainable development from the American people. As part of a comprehensive partnership between Timor-Leste and the United States, USAID currently provides assistance in the areas of democratic governance, economic growth, and health.”

The Peace Fund, managed by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for economic cooperation and development (BMZ), authorized by and jointly implemented with the State Secretariat of Youth and Sports (SSYS) of Timor-Leste, focuses on strengthening institutions and capacities of young people in non-violent conflict resolution.

Conflict management is an essential part of youth promotion thus educational and youth promoting institutions like youth centers offer points of entry, as well as the programs of NGOs and Youth initiatives. Another important contribution to conflict management is political participation of youth. New fora and communication channels have the potential to support these efforts tremendously. Here the SSYS-run Youth Parliament of Timor-Leste is a good example.

**Website:**
https://www.sfcg.org/guidingprinciples/

**For information, contact:**
Jose F de Sousa
jdesousa@sfcg.org