



# The Role of Youth in Nuclear Disarmament: Examining the Project, “The People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition”

*A Thematic Paper for the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*

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## Introduction

Despite the internationally shared understanding that nuclear weapons are inhumane and thus should never be used, they continue to be framed as a key part of international security and, ironically, peace.<sup>1</sup>

Many view nuclear weapons as a necessary evil,

especially in the recent, ever-changing political climate marked by rising tensions in some regions of the world.<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously, young people feel distant from the issue, either from the lack of awareness<sup>3</sup> or because they feel they do not have the ability to make a difference.<sup>4</sup>



*Youth in Hiroshima, Japan conduct a peace awareness survey (2013)*

<sup>1</sup> Examples of references relating to framing nuclear weapons as security necessity include: “Joint Press Statement from the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations of the United States, United Kingdom, and France Following the Adoption of a Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons” (7 July 2017): <https://usun.state.gov/remarks/7892>; North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “NATO’s nuclear deterrence policy and forces” (3 December 2015): [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50068.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50068.htm?selectedLocale=en); Robert Ewers, *Ensuring Strategic Stability in the Second Nuclear Age* (Air War College, 16 February 2016): <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/AD1037271>; and Selvi Bunce, “Stability in South Asia: The Significance of Nuclear Weapons and Non-State Actors,” *Language in India* 17(6): <http://languageinindia.com/june2017/selvisouthasiaconflict.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> For example, recent missile tests conducted by Democratic People’s Republic of Korea have raised concerns among the public, and some support military actions to contain future activities.

<sup>3</sup> See the later section: *Young People’s Perceptions of Nuclear Disarmament* (p. 6).

<sup>4</sup> As an example see: Benoît Pelopidas, “The next generation(s) of Europeans facing nuclear weapons: Forgetful, indifferent, but supportive?,” *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute* (March 2017): <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2017/eu-non-proliferation-papers/next-generations-europeans-facing-nuclear-weapons-forgetful-indifferent-supportive>.



As a global movement of Buddhists dedicated to peace, the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) has worked on the activities for abolishing nuclear weapons issue for more than a half century, often with the engagement and even leadership of youth. In 2007, the SGI launched the “People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition”<sup>5</sup> (herein after referred to as the People’s Decade), a grassroots campaign aimed at rousing international public opinion against nuclear weapons and expanding the network of people who share the common goal of eliminating them from our planet. Largely initiated and led by youth, numerous activities, including workshops, symposia, exhibitions and petition drives, have been conducted over the years around the world under the banner of this campaign. The campaign has been raising awareness among the general public about the dangers of nuclear weapons while also empowering youth as protagonists who can contribute meaningfully to nuclear disarmament.

As this year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the launch of the People’s Decade, it is an opportune time to reflect on findings gleaned through the campaign and contribute them to the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security. The moment is also fortuitous given the fact that on 7 July 2017, 122 countries voted in favour of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, culminating years of efforts and collaboration among States, UN entities and civil society, including youth peacebuilders. The preamble of the Treaty recognizes the important role of disarmament education, which the People’s Decade promotes at the grassroots level. Additionally, Security Council Resolution 2250 underscores “the important and positive contribution of youth in efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security” – a recognition that points to the engagement of young people in the wide arena of peace and security, including nuclear weapons abolition.

Against this backdrop, this paper will highlight youth contributions to promote public awareness on nuclear weapons’ negative impacts, as well as to inspire action, using the People’s Decade campaign as an example. The objectives of the paper are as follows:

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<sup>5</sup> For more information about the project, visit: <http://www.peoplesdecade.org/>.



- To highlight tangible activities conducted by youth to contribute to awareness-raising around the world on nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament processes;
- To advance knowledge of youth understanding and awareness of issues related to nuclear weapons;
- To demonstrate linkages between nuclear disarmament and the Youth, Peace and Security framework, especially around the pillars of Participation, Prevention and Partnership, and offer actionable recommendations for youth contributions in nuclear disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons.

This paper provides several unique contributions to the YPS agenda. First, nuclear weapons pose a significant impact on international peace and security, and their abolition is a goal shared by many Member States of the United Nations.<sup>6</sup> Highlighting youth contributions in this area is critical to understanding the youth contribution to peace and security under the YPS framework. Second, this paper discusses youth engagement in awareness-raising and educational activities, which relate to the UNSCR 2250, in particular three pillars of Participation, Prevention and Partnership. Last, the study includes in-depth information from Japan and Italy, two countries that may be able to offer unique perspectives on the YPS framework, as they are not necessarily affected by prominent issues dealt in the UNSCR 2250 such as armed conflicts or youth radicalization. It is our hope that this study will contribute to bridging gaps in understanding youth contributions to peace and security discussions, in particular to nuclear disarmament.

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<sup>6</sup> As an example, 122 countries adopted on 7 July 2017 the *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, whose preamble recognizes that “a legally binding prohibition of nuclear weapons constitutes an important contribution towards the achievement and maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons” (A/CONF.229/2017/8).



## People’s Decade Overview

Launched in 2007, the aim of the “People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition” campaign is to increase the number of people who reject nuclear weapons at the grassroots level.<sup>7</sup> While discussions surrounding nuclear disarmament can appear to be far removed from daily realities or be left to experts and political leaders, the People’s Decade recognizes the role of citizens in creating a groundswell of demand for nuclear abolition that will influence decision-makers. The project was derived from the 2006 proposal<sup>8</sup> made by the SGI



A panel from the exhibition, “Everything You Treasure – For a World Free from Nuclear Weapons”

President Daisaku Ikeda and was launched to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1957 anti-nuclear declaration<sup>9</sup> made by the second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda. As Toda delivered his speech in front of 50,000 youth members of the Soka Gakkai, it is fitting that many of the SGI’s nuclear disarmament activities today are carried on by its youth members<sup>10</sup> around the world.

The People’s Decade offers a framework to encourage local initiatives and actions, often led by young people, to create spaces where participants can learn about the issue and openly exchange their perspectives. The campaign allows for flexibility and creativity in each participating country, based on what appeals to young people in each location. While most prominent in Japan, youth in several other countries, including Italy, United Kingdom, United

<sup>7</sup> Soka Gakkai International, “Motivation,” *People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition*: <http://www.peoplesdecade.org/decade/motivation/>.

<sup>8</sup> Daisaku Ikeda, “Fulfilling the Mission: Empowering the UN to Live Up to the World’s Expectations” (August 30, 2006): <http://www.sgi.org/about-us/president-ikedas-proposals/un-proposal-2006.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Josei Toda, “Declaration Calling for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons”: <http://www.joseitoda.org/vision/declaration/read/>.

<sup>10</sup> Each of the SGI national organizations determine the age limit for its youth division based on its cultural and other contexts, but often individuals under mid-thirties are considered to be included. As such, many of the youth activities referenced in this report may involve leadership and participation of individuals over the age 29, whereas the UNSCR 2250 defines youth as persons of 18-29 years old.



States, Malaysia and Thailand, have organized activities to raise awareness about nuclear disarmament. Activities include exhibition tours, workshops, symposia, petition drives, youth awareness surveys, and collecting survivor testimonies. These will be discussed in greater detail below.

## Methodology

Largely three categories of “evidence” are analyzed in this paper. First, it surveys various youth-led activities in nuclear disarmament conducted under the umbrella of the People’s Decade around the world. The volume of such activities, their diversity, as well as the extent of their reach demonstrate how actively youth are involved in nuclear disarmament. Among the activities are awareness surveys youth conducted in Japan, asking their peers questions related to nuclear disarmament as well as peace and security in general. Data derived from such surveys are included in the analysis where appropriate.

Second, the paper provides an in-depth qualitative analysis of narratives provided by youth and also those individuals who were impacted by youth activities, such as the *hibakusha* (survivors of the atomic bombings). This analysis draws on texts from activity evaluation forms and personal accounts and stories featured in SGI publications. Such texts were collected by the Soka Gakkai’s Office of Peace and Global Issues in Tokyo through archive search and email correspondence. The texts were then analyzed to understand how the youth contribution to nuclear disarmament is viewed by those organizing educational and awareness-raising activities as well as those observing them, such as event participants.

Last, focus groups on youth contributions in nuclear disarmament have been conducted in two of the countries that are active in the People’s Decade campaign: Japan and Italy. In Japan, focus groups were conducted in Tokyo and Hiroshima in April, with 4 and 6 participants respectively. In Italy, the focus group was conducted in Milan in June, with 9 participants. The focus group participants were chosen based on their organizational responsibilities and experiences leading the People’s Decade activities, which afforded them broader perspectives



on their countries' youth activities around nuclear disarmament. Some participants were above the age of 29, but they had started their involvement much earlier, while in their twenties. The notes from the Japan focus groups were submitted in Japanese and those from Italy were submitted in English. A list of questions asked in the focus groups (see Appendix A) was developed based on the *Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security: Guidance Note for Focus Group Discussions with Young People*.

## Young People's Perceptions of Nuclear Disarmament

Before going into the findings, the following section will provide, as a brief contextual overview, some voices of young people discussing their knowledge of nuclear weapons and how they view the issue.

Two international surveys on youth awareness on nuclear weapons were conducted as part of the People' Decade in 2010 and 2013, with responses from thousands of youth in 8 and 9 countries, respectively.<sup>11</sup> In the 2010 survey, 86.4% of the participants were aware that atomic bombs had been used in World War II, with Japan having the highest degree of awareness at



*Youth in Japan engage in conversation about nuclear weapons (2017)*

91.9 and the Philippines the lowest at 71.8%. More than 1 out of 4 participants in the Philippines (27.7%) were unable to name the country or cities upon which the bombs were dropped. In the 2013 survey, the percentage of people aware of atomic bombs being used during World War II went down slightly to 81.1%, with

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<sup>11</sup> In 2010, a total of 4,475 people in their teens through 30s in Japan, Korea, the Philippines, New Zealand, the US, Brazil, South Africa and the UK participated in the survey. In the second survey, a total of 2,840 responses were collected between December 2012 and February 2013 by youth members of SGI in nine countries (Japan, U.S., U.K., Italy, Australia, South Korea, Brazil, Malaysia and Mexico). Respondents were aged between 15 and 45. For more information, visit:

<http://www.peoplesdecade.org/decade/survey/2010/100130.html> and  
<http://www.peoplesdecade.org/decade/survey/2013/130424.html>.



Italy having the highest degree at 96.3%, and the Republic of Korea the lowest at 70.2%.

During the focus groups conducted in Japan and Italy in April and June 2017, youth discussed the following question: *“How does the issue of nuclear weapons impact your life? Do you consider it to be a main security challenge facing your country or community? (If not, what are they?)”* Below are quotes from some respondents:

- “I am unsure if this is a main security challenge facing Japan.” (Tokyo, 31 years old, female)
- “I am more scared of earthquakes.” (Tokyo, 33 years old, female)
- “The recent North Korean nuclear testing has intensified the sense of urgency. Our region is within the range, and I’ve seen TV shows reporting how to escape in case of attack.” (Hiroshima, 35 years old, male)
- “The recent news on North Korea has made me see it as a major security threat. Some people around me have expressed that they, too, are worried. But before that, I did not think much about the issue.” (Hiroshima, 32 years old, female)
- “From the concrete standpoint of security, in Italy there are some 40 warheads. Italy does not own them, but they are stored in our country. This clearly has an impact on my life, making the issue a critical one. Not many people are aware of this fact.” (Italy, 27 years old, male)

Similarly, at a peace event in August 2017 in Kanagawa one participant noted:

We do not really have opportunities to discuss such an issue seriously. Japanese students do not care about it unless it appears in an exam. So when we [Soka Gakkai youth] introduce peace-related issues at school events, other students seem to be surprised. I, myself, was very inspired when I first saw other students involved in the issue seriously. (Tokyo, 21 years old, female)

Over the years, youth involved in the People’s Decade have discovered that their peers may be aware of some facts related to nuclear weapons, mainly as historical information, but they are generally disconnected from the issue. As some of the above quotes show, it generally stays in the background and does not surface as a main concern facing youth unless they see it on the



news. Raising awareness among the public, and particularly youth, will thus be a critical component of sustainable nuclear disarmament advocacy.

## Evidence of Youth Contributions to Nuclear Disarmament through the YPS Lens

The three categories of “evidence” described in the Methodology section are analyzed in the current section of the paper. The results are categorized into three of the five pillars of YPS, namely Participation, Prevention and Partnership. While understanding the context of each pillar described in the Resolution, these labels are used rather broadly to organize our findings.

### 1. Participation

Focusing particularly on elements that would encourage youth participation in nuclear disarmament, this subsection explores the following questions: (a) What are the forms through which youth participate in nuclear disarmament? and (b) How does the participation of youth impact nuclear disarmament? How does participation impact youth?

Through the People’s Decade, youth around the world have spearheaded a wide range of activities to raise awareness on the issue, including but not limited to:

- Showing of exhibitions such as “Everything You Treasure—For a World Free from Nuclear Weapons” and “Toward a World Free from Nuclear Weapons: From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace”<sup>12</sup> at international conferences, university campuses and other public spaces. Along with the exhibition, youth often design and lead workshops and discussions to facilitate interactive learning.
- In Japan, youth have organized more than 50 peace forums where *hibakusha* are invited to share their experiences with young audiences, totaling over 6,000 youth participants. The forums particularly target youth in their 20s and 30s who rarely have such opportunities after graduating from high school.

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<sup>12</sup> For more information on the exhibitions, see: <http://www.sgi.org/in-focus/2012/eyt-world-free-nuclear-weapons.html> and <http://www.sgi.org/resources/ngo-resources/peace-disarmament/transforming-the-human-spirit.html>.





- Japanese youth also interviewed the *hibakusha* and survivors of war and recorded their testimonies. As part of such efforts, a book entitled *Families Look at August 6, 1945 – Ten Accounts to Pass Forward*, was published in 2015.
- In 2014, youth in Japan collected over 5 million signatures in support of the Nuclear Zero campaign, a global petition drive calling for a world free of nuclear weapons. This campaign aimed to support the Marshall Islands, a small island nation that courageously called upon the nuclear-armed nations to fulfill their legal obligations to complete nuclear disarmament as required in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).
- In Italy, a group of youth met in 2009 to discuss how to create a wave of public opinion against nuclear weapons in their country. This led to the launch of the *Senzatomica* campaign. Using the “Toward a World Free from Nuclear Weapons: From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace” exhibition as a core component, the ongoing campaign also organizes events such as conferences, flash mobs, book readings, concerts and film screenings. Since 2011, the exhibition has been viewed by more than 320,000 people.
- “Run for Peace” is a non-competitive event organized by the youth of Soka Gakkai Malaysia to create awareness of peace and a healthy lifestyle in society. Held every other year since 2005, the events attract tens of thousands of participants at multiple locations throughout Malaysia.



Youth participate in an activity in Italy's *Senzatomica* campaign



- In Thailand, the student-organized Young Plants of Peace aims to foster global citizens who can understand others, build trust and harmony in society, and cultivate a culture of peace in Thailand and the Southeast Asian region. Through this initiative, youth members of SGI



*Thai youth organize a showing of the “Everything You Treasure” exhibition in Bangkok (2016)*

Thailand have organized seminars, workshops and a peace festival. Their most recent activities included hosting the “Everything You Treasure” exhibition on university campuses in various parts of the country.

- In 2011, the SGI-USA Student Division launched Our New Clear Future, a grassroots campaign aimed at creating a groundswell of public consensus to serve as a foundation for the abolition of nuclear weapons by 2030. Their network of university campus clubs across the nation host a variety of activities including: exhibitions, performances and panel discussions as well as collaborating with other groups on campus to bring awareness and start discussion in the community.

In terms of the impacts of youth participation in nuclear disarmament, three themes emerged through the analysis. First, by engaging youth, campaigns and activities can reach other youth, as well as their family members, who may not otherwise have opportunities to learn about the issue. Many youth who participate in peace and nuclear disarmament events note as one of the action items that they would share the information with families and friends. One focus group participant in Hiroshima also stated:

We conduct “peace walks” with elementary school students, where we walk around the Peace Memorial Park and discuss nuclear weapon issues. I’ve observed family members and parents being impressed and feeling hopeful when hearing their children’s reports upon return. (Female, 29 years old)

The large numbers of participants in the examples of events listed above also demonstrate this power of outreach. Through May and June 2017, university students of the Chugoku and Kyushu regions<sup>13</sup> in Japan conducted a peace awareness survey that targeted individuals in their thirties and younger, collecting 1,198 and 1,163 responses in total. In the survey, respondents were asked if they were taking any action for peace. A great majority (70% in Chugoku and 66% in Kyushu) stated that they would like to take some action but are currently not doing anything in particular. When asked what would encourage their engagement, more than a third of the group of youth chose “activities of other people in my generation” (38% in Chugoku and 32% in Kyushu), followed by “information and tools related to peace” (31% in Chugoku and 34% in Kyushu) and “someone to do it with” (28% in both regions).<sup>14</sup>

Second, particularly in Japan, involving youth has energized older generations, particularly the *hibakusha*. For instance, Katsuhiko Ueno, a Hiroshima survivor currently living in Kochi Prefecture, recalled that in 2012 he attended a People’s Decade event in Hiroshima, where his friend was the speaker: “It was inspiring to meet many young people at the event... I reflected how I, despite being a survivor, have not taken any action toward peace till then.”<sup>15</sup> This point will also be explored in the following sections.



*An a-bomb survivor demonstrates a traditional Okinawan folk dance to youth after his lecture*

Third, by participating in nuclear disarmament activities through the People’s Decade, youth start to see themselves as active agents for peacemaking. For those youth, nuclear weapons were not just an issue of the past or a problem of the *hibakusha*; they internalized the narrative and felt accountable to take action. Questionnaires from exhibitions, lectures and workshops reveal that participants were inspired to learn more about nuclear weapons and their impacts,

<sup>13</sup> The Chugoku region consists of the prefectures of Hiroshima, Okayama, Shimane, Tottori and Yamaguchi, and the Kyushu region has the prefectures of Fukuoka, Kagoshima, Kumamoto, Miyazaki, Nagasaki, Oita, and Saga.

<sup>14</sup> Unpublished data. See appendix B.

<sup>15</sup> *Soka Shimpō*, June 4, 2014.



feel closer to the issue, and explore what actions they can take. As an example of the campaign's broad inclusivity, two sisters in Hiroshima, both of them in wheelchairs due to a congenital condition, took the Nuclear Zero petition campaign to speak about nuclear weapons to their friends and colleagues; some even volunteered to help spread the word, and as a result they were able to collect 338 signatures.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. Prevention

As the SCR 2250 clearly indicates, engaging youth in peacebuilding is an integral aspect of preventing future conflicts and violence. In the words of a focus group participant,

When it comes to nuclear disarmament, we cannot wait for humanity to learn from another horrific experience. We should never repeat the same mistake. For that reason, learning and sharing what we have learned is something youth can do to contribute.

(Tokyo, 33 years old, female.)

The same participant also stated that providing opportunities for youth to listen to stories of *hibakusha* has been the most effective activity under the People's Decade. She said:

There is nothing more powerful than listening to testimonies of *hibakusha*, because it stirs your emotions. Facts do not move your heart. And without that, you would not be driven to take action.

This point has also emerged in many questionnaires collected at various People's Decade activities. Youth were extremely receptive to survivor testimonies, and many shared that having such opportunities instilled a sense of urgency that such atrocities should never be repeated. Likewise, the *hibakusha* are also driven to share their stories – in spite of the pain and sadness that may accompany such acts of storytelling – out of the desire to help prevent future tragedies. Given the advanced ages of the *hibakusha*, it is critical that youth – both in Japan and beyond – are given opportunities to hear their testimonies firsthand.

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<sup>16</sup> *Seikyo Shimbun*, January 20, 2015.



More generally, storytelling is a useful technique to cultivate a culture of peace, applicable to settings outside of nuclear disarmament. Shuichi Minami, one of the youth supporting People's Decade activities in Japan, participated in the Youth, Peace and Security Asia and the Pacific Regional Consultation held in Bangkok in May 2017. He recalls meeting a Cambodian youth who spoke about a project of collecting stories of genocide survivors. They saw parallels between the peace activities conducted in their countries, where youth take the responsibility to record memories of a past tragedy so as to ensure it will never be repeated. Youth are thus not only passively receiving stories but also taking action to record and share them for future generations.

### **3. Partnerships**

While SCR 2250 emphasizes the importance of partnerships, particularly in countering the violent extremist narrative, its scope can be understood in the wider context of various potential partnerships for building a culture of peace. The data we examined yielded information on partnerships that were cited as effective ways to promote the narratives of nuclear disarmament, including the following:

- **Partnerships among youth:** When asked what would help enhance their contribution and leadership in building sustainable peace and nuclear disarmament, youth shared that to sustain their incentives to keep engaging in the issue, it is crucial to connect with peers who share similar interests and aspirations. Through forming such networks, youth are able to think innovatively, encourage each other, and remind each other of their goals. This is all the more important in peace building, including nuclear disarmament activities, where participants may not be able to see any immediate impact of their actions.
- **Intergenerational partnerships:** As described above, youth learn a great deal from older generations, especially those who survived the war or experienced atomic bombings. They also appreciate opportunities to record and share survivors' stories, so that their messages for peace will continue to be passed on to future generations. Conversely, interacting with youth often serves as an inspiration for survivors to



continue sharing their stories and provides assurance that their stories are in fact having an impact.

- **Partnerships with schools:** Many of the People’s Decade activities have taken place at schools, or involved school-aged children. For example, Italy’s *Senzatomica*<sup>17</sup> has conducted activities at schools and its exhibition has been viewed by more than 120,000 students. One focus group participant who at the time of the launch event of *Senzatomica* was a high school student is now taking an active role in the campaign. Once exposed to the issue, students may develop further interests; many even go on to conduct research on nuclear weapons for their classes or theses. Additionally, some youth in Hiroshima who are actively involved in the People’s Decade recalled learning about the atomic bombing of their city in schools when they were younger, and mentioned the strong impression this made on them.
- **Partnerships with faith organizations:** A great majority of youth participating in People’s Decade activities are members of the SGI and thus practitioners of Buddhism. Many shared that they were driven by their faith, which provided the inner-motivated fuel to take actions and raise awareness about nuclear weapons in their local communities. Faith is likely the reason the People’s Decade was able to sustain activities involving thousands of youth globally over the last 10 years. As has been recognized,<sup>18</sup> when the context is appropriate, working with faith groups could provide a sustainable way to ensure youth engagement in peace activities in local communities.

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<sup>17</sup> More details about this campaign can be found in the *Evidence of Youth Contributions to Nuclear Disarmament through the YPS Lens* section (p. 9).

<sup>18</sup> See for instance UNHCR’s *Partnership Note on Faith-based Organizations, Local Faith-Communities and Faith Leaders*, <http://www.unhcr.org/539ef28b9.pdf>. See also the reports from the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Actors for Sustainable Development. In addition, this point is highlighted in the recent USIP report, *Implementing UNSCR 2250 Youth and Religious Actors Engaging for Peace* (United States Institute of Peace Special Report 406, June 2017).



## Recommendations

Based on the above findings, this section will provide actionable recommendations related to youth and nuclear disarmament. They can be applied in a wide range of settings to ensure youth can make a meaningful contribution to peace and security:

### 1. Participation:

- **Provide opportunities for youth to participate in nuclear disarmament processes:** As the data indicates young people feel unable to affect nuclear disarmament, with one hurdle being the lack of opportunities for youth to participate in national and multilateral disarmament fora. Even when such opportunities are available, youth may not be aware of them or may feel too intimidated to participate. Thus publicizing, amplifying and making more accessible such opportunities would expand the contributions of young people to nuclear disarmament.
- **Encourage tangible actions:** In addition, participation is also critical at the grassroots level. Youth expressed the view that educational and awareness-raising activities for peace should be followed by a call to action. Presenting opportunities for taking clear, tangible actions is critical in involving and engaging youth. Better yet, youth should be given opportunities to ponder and discuss what concrete actions they can take in their own capacity. One participant at a People's Decade event said he developed a short video on nuclear weapons and shared it with friends, who also shared with their peers. Many young people today use social media as a platform for information sharing and communication. In supporting the People's Decade, many youth participate in conducting youth awareness surveys, through which they collect valuable data on young people's perceptions about nuclear weapons and disarmament processes. Providing opportunities for such initiatives and outcomes to be brought to the attention of the UN entities and Member States in disarmament fora would be one tangible way to encourage youth contributions.



## 2. Prevention:

- **Provide peace and disarmament education opportunities for youth, in particular to learn from the survivors of violence and armed conflicts:** As seen in the examples of youth hearing the stories of the *hibakusha*, such opportunities will help foster a culture of peace and contribute to preventing any future occurrence of violence and conflict. While it is most effective to hear the stories directly, there are numerous videos, books, websites and other tools through which youth can gain an appreciation of survivor perspectives. Additionally, youth-focused disarmament events (including cultural events, lectures, workshops, and Q&A with youth leaders and experts) have proven value in advancing common aims.
- **Promote dialogue:** Through engaging in the People's Decade, youth felt that the most fundamental and powerful change happens at the levels of individuals' outlooks on peace and security. During the course of their activities, they have encountered individuals who are perhaps dismissive, pessimistic or feel that nuclear weapons are necessary. Through engaging in open dialogue, these individuals came to deepen mutual understanding and appreciate others' perspectives. Youth-friendly information and tools related to nuclear disarmament – and peace and security in general – would help facilitate such discussions.

## 3. Partnerships:

- **Support youth networks:** To encourage youth participation, youth need to sustain their motivation and momentum. Focus groups participants emphasized the importance of having engaged peers and establishing networks of young people dedicated to the issue. Youth should also be provided with opportunities to learn about the issue and discuss it with their peers. There are existing national, regional, and global networks of youth working on nuclear disarmament, such as Amplify.<sup>19</sup> At the multilateral level, invitations for such networks to participate and speak at

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<sup>19</sup> See: <http://amplifyyouth.org/>.





disarmament conferences as well as to have meaningful dialogue with States and UN personnel would enhance youth contributions in the area.

## Conclusion

This paper explored the youth contribution to peace and security by using the People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition project as a case study. It reveals that when given opportunities, youth creatively take actions toward nuclear disarmament, though the issue may not be in their consciousness on a day-to-day basis. In fact, involving youth seems to have the ripple effect of reaching those who are not aware of the issue, and further energizing those who are already engaged.

When engaging youth in peace activities, above any information or structural support, forging a human connection seems to be the key. This theme appears through elements such as the importance of storytelling, dialogue and youth networks mentioned in this paper. Although youth are often seen as digital natives who are social-media dependent, when it comes to peace and security, our real-life connections with others play a key role in inspiring action, engaging communities and sustaining the momentum. Their voices should also be heard directly by the decision-makers at both domestic and international levels. ■



## Appendices

### Appendix A: List of Questions for the Focus Groups

1. How does the issue of nuclear weapons impact your life? Do you consider it to be a main security challenge facing your country or community? (If not, what are they?)
2. What activities for nuclear disarmament have been the most successful, and why? Please provide concrete examples based on your experience.
  - a. Describe how you contribute to nuclear disarmament? What are some of the interesting and new ways you are working?
  - b. What are the most important things that you do to contribute to peace / nuclear disarmament? Why are these things viewed as important? Please give concrete examples.
  - c. How do you know when you are making a difference/contributing to peace?
  - d. How do you mobilize other young people to become involved in nuclear disarmament? How do you bridge difference and division?
3. What do you think are the unique contributions that youth can make for nuclear disarmament? Please provide concrete examples based on your experience.
4. How has participating in activities for nuclear disarmament impacted you, or other youth engaged in activities?
5. What would help enhance your contribution and leadership in building sustainable peace / nuclear disarmament?
6. How do you think your activities for nuclear disarmament can be improved?



## Appendix B: Excerpts from the 2017 Student Survey on Peace Awareness

Total number of respondents:

Chugoku Region: 1,198      Kyushu Region: 1,163

Q: Are you taking any action toward peace?

	<b>Chugoku</b>	<b>Kyushu</b>
<b>Yes</b>	14.0%	16.5%
<b>No, but I would like to</b>	70.1%	66.0%
<b>No, I do not want to</b>	7.5%	6.6%
<b>No, it wouldn't make any difference</b>	8.4%	10.8%

Q: If your response was "No, but I would like to," what would encourage your action?

	<b>Chugoku</b>	<b>Kyushu</b>
<b>Activities of others in my generation</b>	37.9%	32.2%
<b>Information and tools related to peace</b>	31.1%	34.2%
<b>Someone to do it with</b>	27.7%	28.1%
<b>Other</b>	3.3%	5.5%