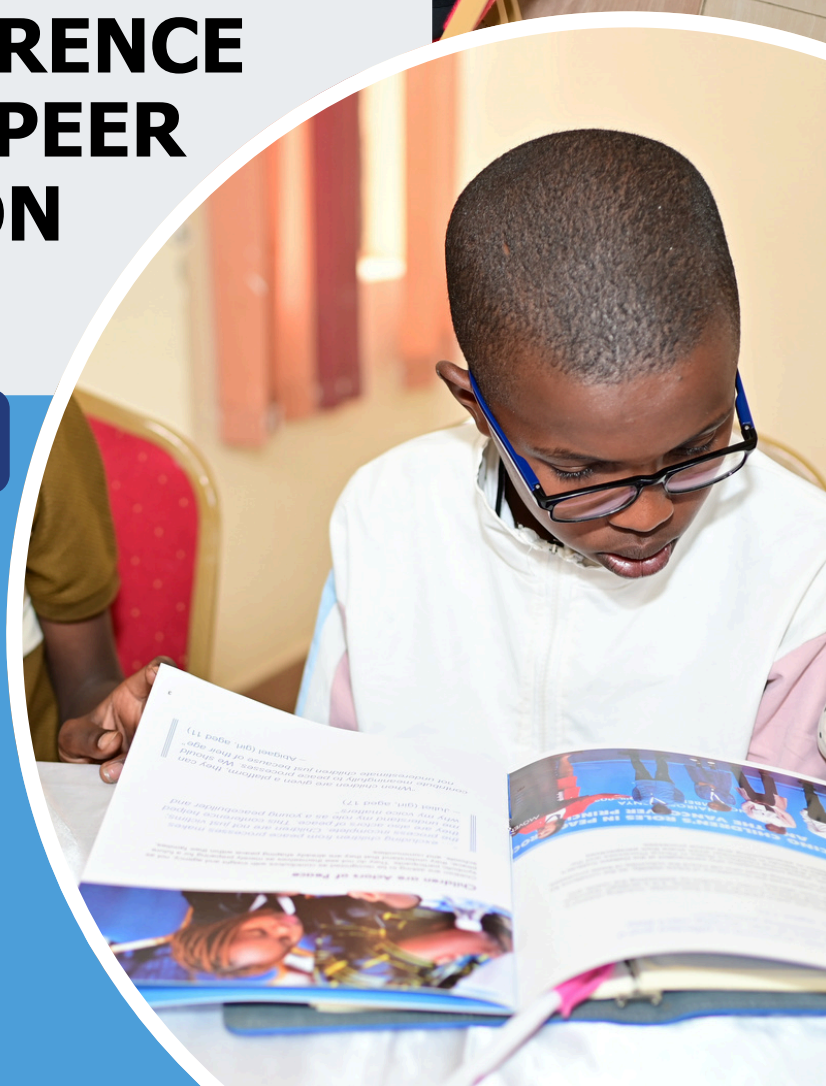




CHILDREN-LED COMMUNITY PEACE LABS POST CONFERENCE REFLECTION AND PEER LEARNING SESSION

Tuesday 14, April 2026



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 14 April 2026, Re-Imagining New Communities convened a one-day Children-Led Community Peace Labs (CLCP-Labs) Reflection and Peer Learning Session as a direct follow-up to the participation of four young peacebuilders at the Dallaire Institute conference on Advancing Children's Role in Peace Processes and the Vancouver Principles. What began as a post-conference sharing forum evolved into a vibrant demonstration of meaningful child participation in practice. Children, teachers, patrons and parents gathered to listen, learn and witness children lead conversations on peace, inclusion, wellbeing and community responsibility.

Background: From Global Conference to Local Action

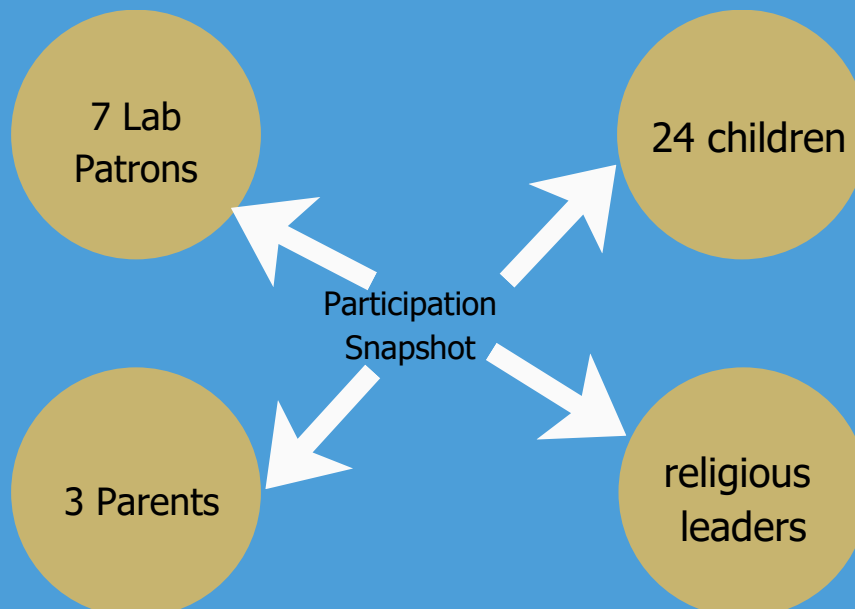
Last year in November 2026, four CLCP-Labs members participated in the Dallaire Institute conference where they engaged with global actors on advancing children's roles in peace processes. Rather than allowing that experience to remain symbolic, Re-Imagining New Communities intentionally transformed global exposure into local impact.

The one-day event created a bridge between international dialogue and community action, ensuring that lessons travelled back to peers, schools and families while also giving an opportunity to other children from the labs to contribute their ideas on what should be prioritized in peace processes and mediation efforts across the globe.

ABOUT THE EVENT

The gathering was fully from conceptualization to execution. Children helped shape the programme, facilitated segments, presented outputs and generated recommendations.

Adults served as listeners, supporters and witnesses. Through storytelling, drawing, role play, guided dialogue and public speaking, participants explored how children can contribute peace process at different levels.



THE CONFERENCE SHARING AND OUTPUT

The four child delegates took the lead in reflecting on their experience at the global conference. They described what it felt like to be part of such a high-level space, expressing a strong sense of being supported, heard, and valued. For them, being among the only children in the room was initially overwhelming, but quickly transformed into a moment of realization that their voices carried weight and meaning.

Juliet reflected on being listened to affirming that she had something important to contribute, emphasizing how the environment encouraged them to step forward with courage.

The children also shared their presentations, bringing their ideas back to their peers: Leshan spoke about personal ways of finding peace during moments of sadness or anger, while Juliet and Meshack reflected on their vision of an ideal community, highlighting the importance of safe and supportive spaces such as consultation areas, children's offices, and accessible police services.

Beyond formal presentations, the children's reflections revealed deep personal learning and growth that extended beyond the conference sessions themselves.

They spoke about friendships formed, lessons in patience, teamwork, and mutual respect.

Leshan shared how he learned patience from Abigail (despite her being four years younger than him) during breakout sessions, while another participant reflected on learning teamwork through new friendships.



INTERACTIVE PEACE LABS

The Interactive Peace Labs provided a structured space for children to collectively reflect, analyze, and articulate their perspectives through practical outputs in guided group work.

Children's Peace Agenda

Key output from this group:

1. The need for inclusivity where children are representing themselves in peace processes especially at the grassroots levels. Participants also discussed the need to include children with disability and other minority groups.
2. Appreciating every child's voice as authentic representation of their needs.
3. Need to urgently prevent child abuse within vulnerable and volatile communities and setting. The need to create environments that nurtures children's growth, safety and wellbeing.



Reflection: Children's voices count and every child matter and that they should be involved in decision-making. The group discussion emphasized that meaningful participation is central to building peaceful communities and modeling positive role modelling like love, respect, and equal opportunities is an essential aspect of supporting children as it reinforces that peace is closely tied to how children are treated within their homes, schools, and communities.

Barriers and Solutions

Children identified the barriers affecting their participation and wellbeing which include

1. Negative attitudes from adults which lead to lack of confidence among especially in areas of decision making.
2. Fear of judgment from adult who already don't believe in their capacity to be part of any mediation process from household, schools to communities.
3. Limited parental presence to provide guidance and mentorship.
4. Cultural beliefs that children have no capacity to think on their own and speak among adult especially on issues such conflict.
5. Negative influence from media demeaning children's ability and urgency.

Importantly, these were not presented as abstract challenges but as lived realities affecting their daily lives.

In response, children proposed practical solutions such as;

1. The need to create more child-friendly programs that they can learn and practice peacebuilding and peer mediation.
2. The need to increase parental engagement.
3. The need to promote understanding and awareness among adults on supporting children participation in peace processes.

These ideas were consolidated into a Children's Declaration, where they collectively called for respectful engagement, opportunities to speak and be heard, and supportive environments that nurture their growth and leadership. The outputs from the break-out sessions demonstrated that children are able to critically assess their environments and provide grounded, actionable insights that are highly relevant to peacebuilding and mediation efforts.

Children Declaration

Drawing from the children's discussions and declarations during the Interactive Peace Labs, several clear priorities emerged that are highly relevant to peacebuilding, mediation, and child participation processes.

1. Children strongly affirmed that they should be meaningfully involved in decisions that affect their lives, whether in families, schools, communities, or wider peace processes. They emphasized that exclusion weakens solutions, while inclusion creates trust, ownership, and more sustainable outcomes. and perspectives adults may overlook.
2. Children highlighted that the words used by adults can either build confidence or cause harm. Respectful communication was identified as central to peaceful relationships, while harsh, humiliating, or dismissive language can create fear, anger, and emotional wounds. In mediation and child engagement processes, language should therefore be child-sensitive, encouraging, and rooted in dignity.
3. Children called for discipline and correction to be approached through peaceful dialogue rather than violence, intimidation, or humiliation. They expressed the importance of being listened to when mistakes are made and of understanding why correction is taking place.
4. Children raised concern about the growing influence of media and online content, noting that exposure to harmful or violent material can normalize aggression. They called for wider conversations on media literacy, guidance, and safe digital spaces.

The above points serve as a call for adults, peace actors, and relevant agencies to move beyond symbolic participation and create real spaces where children are heard, respected, and safeguarded.

SCHOOL SHARING ON THE PROGRESS OF PEACE LABS

Peace Lab patrons and members shared experiences and outcomes from the implementation of CLCP-Labs across their respective schools, highlighting tangible shifts in behavior, relationships, and leadership among participating children.

- **Korogocho Glory School (Nairobi):** Children have developed increased confidence, strengthened conflict resolution skills, and demonstrated the ability to mediate tensions both within school and at home, while also engaging in community-based activities such as tree planting.
- **Vihiga Education City Center (Vihiga):** Learners previously identified with disruptive behavior showed notable transformation, emerging as ambassadors of peace within their school environment.
- **Naromoru Comprehensive School (Kajiado):** Peace Lab members reported improved self-esteem, healthier peer relationships, and growing confidence in taking on leadership roles.
- **Athi River Comprehensive School (Nairobi):** Where many parents work long hours in the Export Processing Zone, the Peace Lab has become a trusted and consistent space providing mentorship, guidance, and emotional support to children.
- **Bukuru Comprehensive School (Kakamega):** Beyond the school setting, the programme has also influenced parenting practices, the lab patron shared how engagement in the Peace Labs has transformed his approach to parenting, enabling him to create a safer and more supportive emotional environment for his children.

The sharing and feedback from the schools demonstrated the broader impact of CLCP-Labs, extending beyond individual participants to influence families, schools, and community dynamics.



“The peace lab has really transformed me by giving me courage and confidence to speak. It has also helped improve the overall discipline in our school.” Peter Mwaura



THE RIVER THAT DIVIDES

The children performed a short skit titled “The River That Divides,” which depicted two neighboring communities in conflict over access to a shared river. One community depended on farming while the other relied on pastoralism, and the growing tensions disrupted daily life, particularly for children. As conflict escalated, learning was interrupted, children remained at home, and some were drawn into child labour. The skit carried important lessons for Peace Lab members and patrons by demonstrating that conflict affects children deeply, even when they are not the direct decision-makers. It also reinforced the central message of CLCP-Labs: that children are capable of contributing meaningfully to conflict resolution when given the opportunity, trust, and guidance. For the wider audience, the skit served as a practical reminder that peacebuilding is not reserved for adults alone, and that children can act as bridge-builders, problem-solvers, and voices of reason within their families, schools, and communities.



(Note: the skit was developed by the Dallaire Institute in consultation with its Youth Advisory Council)

LAUNCH OF 10 PILLARS FOR PRACTICING PEACE GUIDE

The launch of the Peacebuilder's Guide marked a significant milestone at the event, with Abigael Wairimu, Juliet Ayiera, and Sahlim Charles jointly leading the presentation. During the session, it was shared that the guide was inspired by Abigael's drawing on qualities of a good peacebuilder, demonstrating how children's ideas can directly shape practical learning tools.



The development of this guide presents an important step in organizational growth—moving from adaptation of external resources to the creation of home-grown materials rooted in the lived experiences, voices, and aspirations of children within the CLCP-Labs programme.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE FOUR CLCP-LAB'S MEMBERS

Meshack Otieno

Meshack reported that he greatly enjoyed co-hosting the event and facilitating the Children's Peace Agenda session. He said the opportunity helped him grow his leadership skills and appreciate the importance of giving others chances to participate and develop their own abilities.

Through the group discussions, he learned that children hold powerful ideas and that their perspectives should be valued rather than ignored. He highlighted that inclusivity is essential in peacebuilding and that adults should take children's views seriously. Meshack also reflected on the role play performance, noting that it reinforced the importance of allowing children and youth to speak for themselves and represent their communities in dialogue processes.

Abigael Wairimu

Abigael described the event as one of the best days of her life. She reported that she was especially proud to launch her first book, *The Ten Pillars of Practicing Peace*, before fellow children, teachers, and parents. She recounted how the day moved from introductions, music, dancing, and conference sharing to interactive peace labs, creative expression, and a role play performance in which she served as a narrator.

Abigael explained that presenting the ten pillars was a moment of great joy. She said the encouragement she received from others motivated her to continue doing good work and believing in herself.

Leshan Kwanzu

Leshan shared that serving as one of the Masters of Ceremony was both exciting and a major step in building his confidence. He explained that although he initially felt timid, working alongside Meshack helped him overcome fear and speak boldly before the audience.

He reflected that the event showed him every voice matter, regardless of age, and that children are capable of leading important spaces. Leshan also noted that he enjoyed meeting children from other schools and learning to socialize with new people. From the wider conference experience, he said he learned the importance of honesty, respect for all people, and the value of inclusivity and empowerment in peacebuilding. He identified time management as one of the areas where continued growth was needed.

Juliet Ayiera

Juliet shared that the post-conference reflection and peer learning session gave her a deeper understanding of the practical issues affecting children's participation, wellbeing, and peacebuilding.

Through the Children's Declaration discussions, she reflected that children should be involved in decision-making and that the words adults use can either build or damage a child's confidence. Overall, Juliet described the day as highly successful, with no major challenges observed, and one that demonstrated how respect creates peace and how children can lead positive change in their schools and communities.

EMERGING ISSUES REQUIRING FURTHER ATTENTION

The discussions throughout the day also brought forward several emerging issues that warrant deeper reflection and future programming.

First, children and patrons highlighted the growing influence of media and digital spaces on children's behavior, attitudes, and emotional wellbeing. Participants noted that exposure to harmful or violent content can shape how children understand relationships, conflict, and identity. This points to the increasing need for child-centered conversations on media literacy, responsible technology use, and the creation of safer digital environments where children can learn, connect, and thrive positively.

Secondly, participants raised concern over the diminishing participation of boys in peacebuilding spaces and child-focused engagement initiatives. Several patrons observed that boys are often less present or less willing to participate in activities related to dialogue, emotional expression, and peace leadership. This signals the importance of designing more intentional strategies that engage boys as active peace actors, while also addressing harmful stereotypes that may discourage their involvement.

Strengthening inclusive participation of both girls and boys will be essential in building balanced, representative, and sustainable peacebuilding efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the reflections of children, lab patrons, and participating schools, the following recommendations emerged

1. Ensure meaningful child participation in decision-making by including them from the outset in decisions that affect their lives at family, school, community, and policy levels.
2. Prioritize participation over performance by creating safe opportunities for children to contribute authentically, rather than expecting polished adult-style presentations.
3. Create safe and child-friendly spaces by providing environments where children can speak freely, express emotions, and be heard without fear.
4. Use dialogue-based and restorative approaches in correction and conflict resolution involving children and grounded in respectful dialogue, learning, and non-violent communication.
5. Strengthen the role of parents and caregivers where they are supported to listen, encourage, and spend quality time with children as partners in peacebuilding.
6. Integrate psychosocial wellbeing by recognizing children's emotional wellbeing, healing, and resilience as essential components of sustainable peace.
7. Child-focused peacebuilding should include media literacy, safe technology use, and guidance on harmful online content.
8. Promote inclusive participation where all children, including girls, boys, children with disabilities, and those from diverse backgrounds have equal opportunities to participate.
9. Schools should serve as practical spaces where children learn mediation, leadership, dialogue, and social responsibility.
10. Tested community initiatives such as CLCP-Labs should be strengthened and expanded to reach more children and schools.



Re-Imagining New Communities
Suite 4, Ongata Mall, Ongata Rongai, Kenya
hello@rncommunities.org
www.rncommunities.org