

## WEAVING WISDOM AND WILL: INTERGENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS, RIGHTS, AND RESILIENCE IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

SUSAN SAPKOTA  
in conversation with

AMRIT RIJAL

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### [A] INTRODUCTION

This is a transcript of a conversation between Susan Sapkota and Amrit Rijal. An [audio recording](#) is also available.



*Amrit Rijal*



*Susan Sapkota*

### [B] CONVERSATION

#### Amrit

Hi, everybody. Namaste. My name is Amrit Rijal. And I'm working as guest editor for a special section of the academic open access journal, *Amicus Curiae*, entitled "Pushing the Boundaries of Intergenerational Activism in an Era of Polycrisis". This special section is set for publication in autumn 2025. As a part of this today I'm interviewing Mr Susan Sapotka from Nepal.

Hi, Susan. Could you please briefly introduce yourself?

## Susan

Yes. Hi, Amrit. Thank you so much. So, hi, everybody, I am Susan Sapkota, a youth leader and activist from Nepal, working at the intersection of human rights, youth empowerment, and environmental justice.

I focus on breaking harmful taboos, promoting children's and sexual and recreational health and rights, and building intergenerational partnerships to create inclusive, sustainable chains.

And I've also recently been titled as a Global Teen Leader in 2025 for the "We Are Family Foundation", and I collaborate globally to amplify youth voices and drive transformative action.

## Amrit

So, that was wonderful, and thank you so much for that.

Let's start the interview. So my first question for you would be—what makes a successful intergenerational partnership, particularly when you think about multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination that children and young people in the so-called Global South can experience?

## Susan

Thank you for the question, Amrit. For me, successful intergenerational partnership is rooted in authentic relationships, trust, and shared accountability.

It goes far beyond older people simply supporting young people. It's about co-creating spaces where both generations can bring their lived experience, pain, hope, and ideas and shape solutions together. In the so-called Global South, I think young people often face intersecting barriers, including gender inequality, caste-based discrimination, harmful cultural norms, and economic hardship. Many, especially girls, are silenced by taboos and excluded from discussions about their own lives.

Meanwhile, adults hold valuable experience and social influence, but may underestimate young people's leadership. When these realities meet in a space of mutual respect, powerful things happen.

I remember a session in Sinja on sexual and reproductive rights to health where elders and youth came together. It was a session I led and included an open Q&A discussion about menstruation and sexuality which are deeply stigmatized topics there. But through honest dialogue, the participants collaboratively questioned harmful myths and found practical, culturally sensitive solutions.

This is what success looks like—true partnership, power shared, everyone seen and heard. Solidarity transforms barriers into bridges. It takes empathy and courage to challenge our biases, but it's worth it because no generation can do its work alone.

## Amrit

So, thank you for that critical reflection of yours, and I love the way you have your own experience regarding this topic and how you connected your example of Sinja, working out there.

So, thank you for all the work you have been doing around child rights, activism, and, in particular, human rights. So, my next question for you would be—what are your hopes for the future of intergenerational activism to protect and promote children's rights in the face of multiple and compounding crises?

## Susan

So, in a world where crises—like climate disaster, conflicts, pandemics, economic shocks—are overlapping, the rights of children and young people are under constant threat.

My hope is that intergenerational activism will keep growing as a movement rooted in shared leadership, empathy, and courage with compassion. I envision a future where adults see young people as equal partners in social change, not just the future's, but active architects of the present.

Adults have networks, influence, and historical knowledge. Young people bring innovation, lived experience, and fearless determination.

And, as I said, together, they can build more resilient and just systems. My dream is for an intergenerational model to become the norm. Where youth voices share decisions, discussions on policies, budgets and accountability structures, not just in

a tokenistic way. I hope every child, no matter their identity, where they come from, where they belong, can see themselves as a rights holder and changemaker, supported by elders who believe in them.

Intergenerational solidarity—something very important—is our greatest hope in these compounding crises, because it weaves together wisdom from the past with possibilities for the future.

And, I really love this line: I have noticed that with empathy and humility, we can protect and advance children's rights, even in the hardest times.

## Amrit

Thank you so much. That was again a great answer and again a critical one, the way you have analysed and the way you want to connect how children, young people should be connected with adults out there. So that's actually a great example you are trying to set out, and I hope that really happens out there, that really works.

Let's again jump to another question. So, this would be our last formal question from my side to you.

What lessons have you learned from young people and children that have changed your own view about what meaningful activism and human rights work should look like?

## Susan

Working alongside children and young people has profoundly changed me. I am who I am because of my experience working with children and young people in the rural part of Nepal and many more places in the world.

And one of the biggest lessons is that meaningful activism is not about speaking for others, but about creating spaces where they can speak and act for themselves. It's all about providing a safe space where everyone can talk and share.

Young people are already powerful. They just need an environment to realize their own agency. I've been humbled by the courage of young people who challenge injustice and

imagine a fairer system. Even when it feels impossible. This has shown me that meaningful activism must be rooted in hope.

In Karnali, the province I come from, during our intergenerational dialogues on menstrual taboos and all the related programmes, I saw girls and boys challenge harmful practice together while elders showed openness to the change. Sometimes it's not the case, but mostly they're open to understanding and supporting young people.

That reminded me that activism must be collective and intergenerational to protect human dignity.

And recently, at the Just Peace Summit in Sweden. I met 19 other Global Teen Leaders whose work, and stories of vigilance and triumph inspired me deeply. They reminded me that young people everywhere have lost the capacity to innovate, heal and build peace. They taught me that empathy and solidarity must sit at the heart of human rights work.

And most of all young people have taught me to lead with my heart as much as with my mind because real change grows from compassion, trust, and partnership. And that lesson will stay with me for the rest of my life.

## Amrit

Thank you so much again and congratulations for representing Nepal at the Just Peace Summit. And for all the wonderful work happening around activism and advocacy. Your thoughts are truly inspiring.

So, that's all about the formal interview from my side. At the very end of this conversation, would you like to say anything or would you like to share anything before we wrap up?

## Susan

Yes, about activism and being a child and representing them, representing a community, something that always comes to my mind when sharing is that I see a lot of young minds, children, trying to do activism, trying to bring change. But I think there are a lot of things that limit them. They start looking for big funding, they start looking for big networks at the very

beginning, and I think that might not actually be the right way to start it because, I think, when you are truly honest in your cause and truly determined about the change you want to bring, it doesn't matter what you have. Even though you have some scarcities, limitedness, and all, you can start. And when you start, it actually grows if you are honest about your cause.

And I suggest young people who want to bring change: just start, believe in yourself, believe in your cause, be true to yourself.

And that's how we start, and that's how we bring teams together.

That's it.

## Amrit

Thank you so much, Susan, for your time and contribution, in such a short conversation.

It was great talking to you, and you are such an inspiring person, and you are such a great fuel for our future generations, and thank you for all the efforts you have been putting in around advocacy to change this world, to make this world a better place for all the children and young people out there. Thank you for all the work you have been doing.

So, let's keep in touch, and let's keep on talking.

And I hope you continue to work for families and communities for positive change.

Bye bye.

## Susan

Yes, just to add, I'm really thankful that you provided me this opportunity and recognition. Thank you so much for that.

## Amrit

It's my pleasure, thank you so much.

**About the authors**

**Amrit Rijal:** *please see page 347 for Amrit's author bio.*

**Susan Sapkota** *is a youth leader and activist from Nepal working at the intersection of human rights, youth empowerment, and environmental justice. His work focuses on challenging harmful norms, advancing children's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and fostering intergenerational partnerships to build inclusive, sustainable change. In 2025 he was named a Global Teen Leader by the We Are Family Foundation, where he collaborates with partners worldwide to amplify youth voices and drive transformative action.*

*Email:* [sapkotasusan123@gmail.com](mailto:sapkotasusan123@gmail.com)