



MY BODY, MY LIFE, MY WORLD  
OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE

A young man with a beard and short dark hair is smiling broadly at the camera. He is wearing a white short-sleeved shirt with a blue lanyard around his neck that has 'AFGHANISTAN' written on it. He is holding a stringed instrument, possibly a tabla or a similar traditional instrument, across his lap. In the background, other people are seated at desks in what appears to be a classroom or community center setting.

MODULE 6  
**YOUTH,  
PEACE  
AND SECURITY**

# YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This module was written by Cécile Mazzacurati (UNFPA HQ). The author gratefully acknowledges colleagues from UNFPA regional and country offices for their inputs: Heidrun Fritze (Asia-Pacific Regional Office), Renata Tallarico (East and Southern Africa Regional Office), Rune Brandrup (Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office), Brian Kironde (Pacific Sub-Regional Office), Elida Nuri (Albania Country Office) and Bothaina Qamar (Jordan Country Office), as well as participants in the Validation Workshop held in March 2021 for their feedback and suggestions.

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How to cite this publication: United Nations Population Fund (2022).  
My Body, My Life, My World Operational Guidance.  
Module 6: Youth, Peace and Security.

## PHOTO CREDITS

Cover: UNFPA ASRO  
Page 16: UNFPA Ethiopia  
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# ABBREVIATIONS

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>FBA</b>      | Folke Bernadotte Academy   |
| <b>ICPD</b>     | International Conference on Population and Development   |
| <b>LGBTQ+</b>   | lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/non-cisgender identities (such as gender non-binary/non-conforming and agender) |
| <b>M&amp;E</b>  | monitoring and evaluation  |
| <b>PBF</b>      | UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund  |
| <b>PBSO</b>     | Peacebuilding Support Office   |
| <b>SDG</b>      | Sustainable Development Goal   |
| <b>SRH</b>      | sexual and reproductive health   |
| <b>UN Women</b> | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women   |
| <b>UNDP</b>     | United Nations Development Programme   |
| <b>UNESCO</b>   | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization   |
| <b>UNICEF</b>   | United Nations Children's Fund   |
| <b>Y-PEER</b>   | Youth Peer Education Network   |
| <b>YPS</b>      | youth, peace and security  |

**MY  
BODY**

- 1. ADOLESCENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS
- 2. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

**MY  
LIFE**

- 3. COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION
- 4. HARMFUL PRACTICES

**MY  
WORLD**

- 5. YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION
- 6. YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY
- 7. HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

**CROSS-CUTTING**

- 8. HUMAN RIGHTS
- 9. ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIALOGUE



# INTRODUCTION

Youth, peace and security (YPS) was propelled onto the international scene by the adoption by the United Nations Security Council, in 2015, of resolution 2250, the first resolution fully dedicated to the positive role young people play in the maintenance of peace and security. The Security Council's adoption of two additional resolutions on YPS – resolution 2419 (2018) and resolution 2535 (2020) – expanded the agenda and provided solid ground for its operationalization.



The YPS agenda affirms young people's positive contribution to conflict prevention, peace processes, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It shifts the narrative from young people (young men, in particular) as a threat to peace and security, to young people (including young women) as assets for the peace and development of their societies.

The YPS agenda recognizes young people's capacities, agency and leadership, and the importance of supporting and investing in youth-led and youth-focused organizations and initiatives. Young people and their organizations are essential partners for peace, and must be engaged as equals.

UNFPA has played an instrumental role in shaping the YPS agenda, building both on its programmatic experience of engaging women and young people in conflict and post-conflict contexts, and also on its analysis of the "demographic dividend" (mentioned in resolution 2250). The YPS agenda is integrated in UNFPA's 2018-2021 Strategic Plan, and it is a pillar of the UN Youth Strategy. YPS is also a central component of "My World" under UNFPA's global strategy for adolescents and youth, *My Body, My Life, My World*, which states:



**All adolescents and youth must have opportunities to learn and practice evolving decision-making skills in their families, communities and beyond. This is also true in humanitarian and peacebuilding contexts, where adolescents and youth are critical agents of positive change. Bolstering youth movements and working with youth-led organizations will expand possibilities for them to shape a more equitable, peaceful and just future.**

A YPS Programming Handbook has been developed by UNFPA, UNDP, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA). The handbook includes step-by-step guidance through the programmatic cycle of developing a YPS project. This module aims to complement the handbook by providing further background on the YPS agenda and an overview for UNFPA country offices of how to design, implement, monitor and evaluate YPS projects and initiatives. It identifies specific entry points and approaches for UNFPA.

# → UNPACKING “YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY”

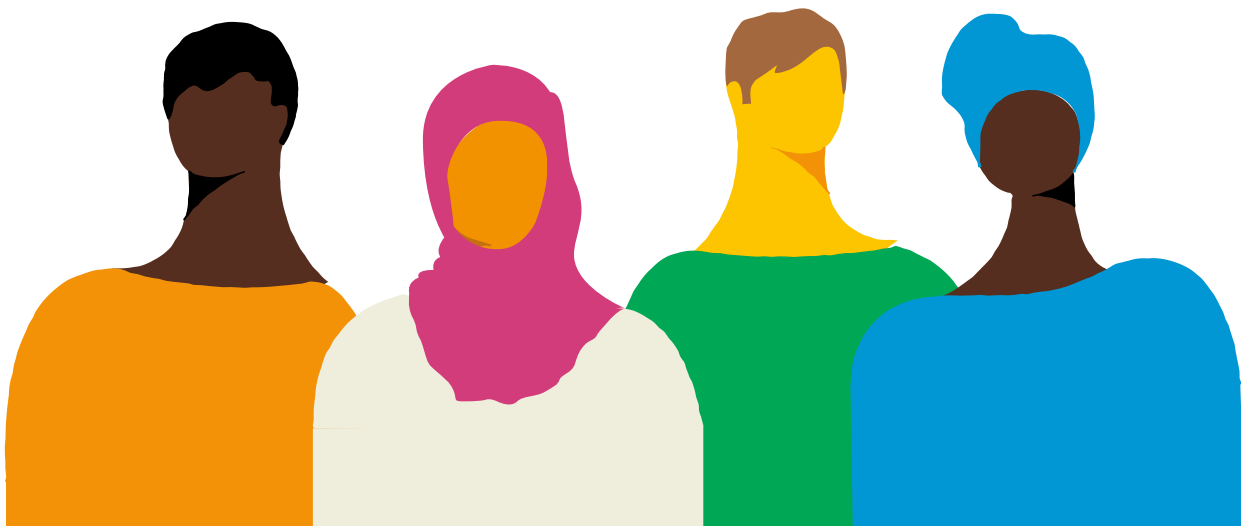
## YOUTH

Resolution 2250 defines youth as people aged 18-29. This is primarily a political definition, because in most countries political participation is only legal when young people turn 18. However, the definition of who young people are is always context-specific. Use the age bracket that makes the most sense to the specific context, and the specific objectives, of your project. Remember that different approaches will be required with adolescents below 18 (who are still children under the law) and older youth, as well as according to gender.



Resolution 2250 requested that the Secretary-General undertake a Progress Study on the contribution of young people to sustaining peace and conflict resolution. The Progress Study is the foundational document for YPS. It argues that perspectives on youth are distorted by contagious stereotypes that associate young people with violence, marginalizing and stigmatizing them as a problem to be solved and a threat to be contained. The shift from viewing youth as “troublemakers” to acknowledging them as essential partners who are already driving social and political change requires:

- investing in young people’s capacities, agency and leadership, and facilitating an enabling environment for youth-led and youth-focused organizations, initiatives and movements
- addressing the structural barriers (political, legal, economic, sociocultural) limiting meaningful youth inclusion and participation in peace and security
- prioritizing partnerships and collaborative action at all levels, with young people viewed as equal and essential partners for peace.





## PEACE

For the YPS agenda, peace is not relevant only to countries with experience of conflict, and it is personal as well as political. The “sustaining peace” agenda, defined by the twin resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly in 2016, advances an understanding of peacebuilding that involves sustaining peace prior to the outbreak of conflict, during conflict, and after conflict has abated. Peace is therefore a long-term process of social change that requires the engagement of every UN entity, particularly those present before, during and after conflict. But sustaining peace is also an issue of universal concern, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 16, which calls for just, peaceful and inclusive societies. This means that peacebuilding, and the YPS agenda, are not limited to countries coming out of conflict, but are relevant for all countries.

Although much of the UN is focused on the political dimensions of peacebuilding and state-building (political dialogue, reconciliation, security, governance reform, rule of law), peace is also very much about interpersonal relationships and transformation. Young people consulted for the Progress Study on YPS defined peace as deeply personal, related to well-being and mental health, happiness and hope, as well as living in harmony and in the absence of fear, and often associated with personal feelings of positive self-esteem and dignity. For young people – and young women in particular – notions of peace and security are often inextricably tied to issues of gender equality and freedom from gender-based violence.

*Young people defined peace as deeply personal, related to well-being and mental health, happiness and hope.*

UNFPA’s mandate can therefore contribute in important ways to people’s experience of peace and peacebuilding at local, community and national levels – through fair and equal access to basic services such as for sexual and reproductive health (SRH), the fulfilment of human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, protection from and response to gender-based violence and structural and cultural violence, gender equality, and the meaningful participation of young women and men.



## SECURITY

Security work is a primary responsibility of peace operations and entities of the Peace and Security Pillar of the UN (the Department of Peace Operations and its Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, the Office of Counter-Terrorism etc.). Their work tends to engage with young people as former combatants, such as in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and community violence reduction (CVR) programmes, or as members of the police, or as young people in conflict with the law (juvenile justice and corrections).

UNFPA can bring its experience in engaging young people as positive actors and partners for peace, for example by setting up participatory platforms and mechanisms to consult young people from the community for civil/military oversight or police reform, or in targeting services to adolescent girls and young women.



## → WHY DOES YPS MATTER TO UNFPA?

UNFPA's mandate includes a commitment to delivering a world where every young person's potential is fulfilled, realized through active support for young women and men's engagement, participation and leadership. This commitment remains a priority for UNFPA in situations of conflict and fragility, and in post-conflict settings. In these contexts, UNFPA has for many years supported young people's active engagement for peace.

The YPS agenda is aligned with the **International Conference on Population Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and its reviews**, which call for meeting the needs and aspirations of youth, ensuring their integration and participation in all spheres of society, their participation in the political process and preparation for leadership roles (ICPD Programme of Action 1994, para 6.13), as well as supporting youth organizations (ICPD+5 para. 21b, 1999) and guaranteeing adolescents and young people a life free from violence and promoting tolerance, conflict resolution and peace (ICPD Beyond 2014, para. 342).

The UN Youth Strategy, **Youth 2030**, identifies "Peace and Resilience Building" as one of its five priority areas, underscoring young people's contribution to peace and humanitarian response. YPS is also being integrated in regional strategies for the UN: there is a YPS pillar in the Regional Inter-Agency Strategic Action Plan on Adolescents and Youth in the Arab States (2019), and a thematic working group on YPS has been established as a subgroup of the Asia Pacific Inter-Agency Network on Youth.

UNFPA and the Peacebuilding Support Office acted as joint Secretariat to support the development of the Progress Study mandated by resolution 2250. All UNFPA regional offices organized regional consultations with young peacebuilders, in partnership with other UN entities, with follow-up at regional and country level, including in partnership with some of the young peacebuilders who attended the consultations.

**UNFPA's Strategic Plan 2022-2025** includes a focus on youth, peace and security through output 5 on Humanitarian Action, which has several indicators capturing facets of the YPS agenda:

- **Inclusion in decision-making in humanitarian action:** Proportion of countries responding to humanitarian, climate, health or other crises that include women, young people and those affected by UNFPA core furthest-behind factors in decision-making mechanisms
- **Youth and peace:** Number of countries that have endorsed a youth, peace and security framework
- **Women and peace:** Number of peacebuilding processes inclusive of young women, supported by UNFPA/UN Women
- **Complementarity between humanitarian, development and peace actions:** Proportion of collective outcomes between humanitarian, development and peace actors at national level that address sexual and reproductive health, reproductive rights, gender-based violence, the needs of adolescents and youth, and population dynamics.

Output 6 of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025, focused on adolescents and youth, also includes a focus on leadership and participation that is directly relevant for the YPS agenda.





# WHAT WORKS IN YPS PROGRAMMING?

Several factors make a YPS project successful.

**A successful YPS project triggers institutional/structural change.**

Ideally it directly impacts a peacebuilding process (for example, young people's priorities are integrated in a peace accord), but at a minimum it creates mechanisms to ensure young people's participation (for example, a diverse youth caucus is established to formally engage in peace negotiations).

**It strengthens young people's networks and organizations** and their

capacities to engage in and influence peacebuilding processes. It goes beyond training individuals and supports organizational strengthening, such as training young people affiliated with a youth organization or movement not only on the basics of peacebuilding, but on project design, developing a results framework, the essentials of accounting, monitoring and evaluation fundamentals and so on.

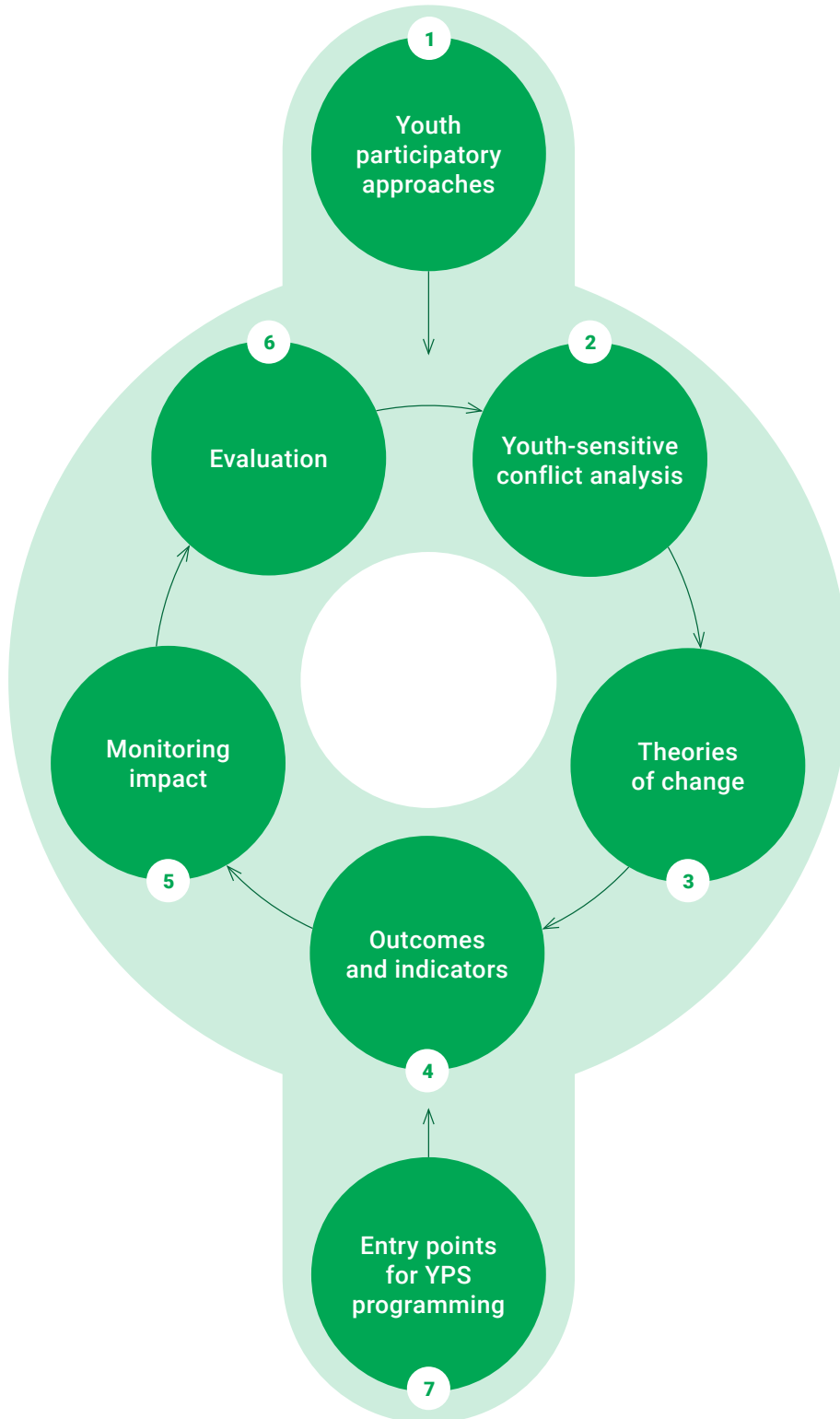
**It systematically engages diverse groups of young people, and promotes and supports the role of young women and adolescent girls in peacebuilding.**

This requires a strong gender- and age conflict analysis, deconstructing gender norms that limit women's and girls' access to and participation in the public space, and creating safe spaces where young women or other marginalized youth can discuss the challenges they face and identify solutions. A focus on young people with disabilities is also particularly important in conflict and post-conflict contexts. Persons with disabilities are historically invisible in peace and security discussions, in spite of being most at risk and disproportionately impacted by conflict.



# → THE YPS PROJECT CYCLE

The YPS Programming Handbook defines the programmatic cycle to develop a YPS project as a series of steps, and proposes minimum requirements for YPS programming.



# 1

## YOUTH PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

### Minimum Requirement

Young people should be consulted throughout the programme cycle.

### Key Points

- Young people have the right to participate.
  - Youth engagement makes projects more efficient.
  - There are different forms and degrees of participation.
  - Do no harm and always be conflict-sensitive.
- 

# 2

## YOUTH-SENSITIVE CONFLICT ANALYSIS

### Minimum Requirement

YPS programmes should be based on a youth- and gender-sensitive conflict analysis and should clearly seek to address a specific conflict and/or security situation that is relevant to youth.

### Key Points

- The process of developing a conflict analysis can facilitate dialogue between youth and decision-makers.
  - A youth-sensitive conflict analysis provides insights into the specific situation of youth, the context, links between age and conflict dynamics, and opportunities for peace.
  - Youth can lead or co-lead the analysis process.
- 

# 3

## THEORIES OF CHANGE

### Minimum Requirement

A YPS theory of change should explain how the proposed actions are meant to positively affect a conflict and/or security situation while contributing to improving the experience of young people.

### Key Points

- Including youth in visioning exercises recognizes their right to have a say in defining their societies and their own lives.
- Youth-sensitive theories of change can help make programming assumptions explicit and increase the effectiveness of a project.
- Collaborating with youth can reduce the risk of making flawed assumptions about their lived experience.

## OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS

### Minimum Requirement

The outcome statements are clear about the kind of change the programme seeks with respect to a conflict and/or security factor. The outcome statements should be related to one or more of the five YPS pillars (p. 17).

### Key Points

- YPS outcomes should be concrete and youth-specific.
- Working with youth to design indicators can help in identifying what needs to be measured.
- Indicators should be disaggregated by age, sex and key social factors.

## MONITORING IMPACT

### Minimum Requirement

Project indicators must be age- and sex-disaggregated.

### Key Points

- Monitoring should include sources of youth-specific information.
- Partnerships with youth will improve the monitoring process.

## EVALUATION

### Minimum Requirement

Evaluations must assess the degree to which the initiative has fostered peace and contributed to youth's improved situation and meaningful participation.

### Key Points

- Working with youth on monitoring and evaluation heightens the organization's transparency and accountability towards youth, and can improve uptake of recommendations.
- Prioritize the ability to work with youth when recruiting the evaluation team.

## ENTRY POINTS FOR YPS PROGRAMMING

### Key Points

- YPS programming cuts across the nexus of humanitarian development and peacebuilding, and the pillars of the UN system: human rights, development, and peace and security.
- Youth peace work takes different forms, and so does YPS programming.



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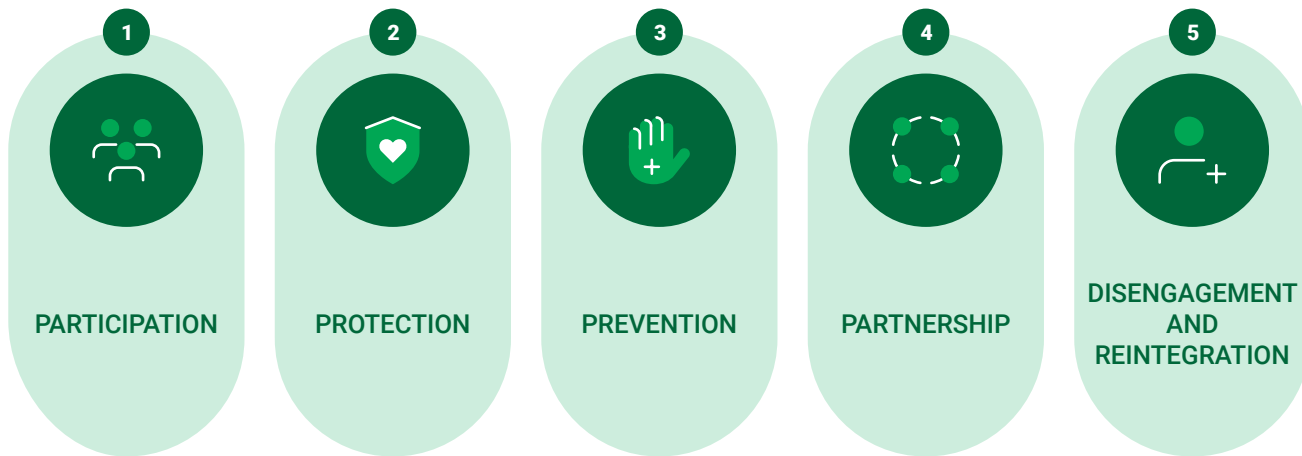
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# HOW TO PLAN AND IMPLEMENT YPS PROGRAMMES

The five pillars of resolution 2250 offer a strategic frame for UNFPA's interventions.



## PARTICIPATION

Any project focused on youth should be developed with the active involvement of young people and youth-led, youth-focused organizations, to ensure that the proposed interventions reflect their priorities and preferred approaches. This process of involvement should be sustained and substantive, with a diverse group of youth organizations involved consistently through the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project.

This can be done by:

- conducting consultations, focus-group discussions, interviews and needs assessments, and forming advisory groups, with youth in the target communities
- involving youth organizations in developing targeting criteria and selecting participants
- building the capacities of youth organizations to implement activities
- engaging young people in the monitoring and evaluation of project activities.

UNFPA should prioritize investments in young people's capacities, agency and leadership, by:

- engaging with and directly supporting youth networks and organizations in their work on sustainable development issues, humanitarian affairs and peace and security issues
- strengthening youth organizations' capacity and structures, so that they are equipped to receive funds, implement well-designed programmes, and monitor and evaluate their work
- training young leaders on peacebuilding, human rights and civic issues.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR YPS PROGRAMMING

### ? Whom do you want to target?

One of the first activities of any YPS project should be a process to clearly identify the young people who will be engaged in the project. This takes time, resources and dedicated personnel. Vague or unrealistic targeting is often a weakness of YPS projects. Good targeting entails:

- a specific geographical scope
- explicit criteria for selecting young people to be involved in the project (e.g. age range, socio-economic background, specific experiences such as engagement with a militia or being a young mother etc.)
- an explanation of how these young people will be identified and accessed (e.g. through community leaders, snowball methodology or an open application process)
- gender balance among the targeted youth.

### ? Are you capitalizing on existing structures?

Start by mapping existing youth-led initiatives and organizations, which exist in all contexts (including situations of active conflict, refugee camps etc.). The project should seek to support, strengthen and expand existing initiatives, rather than creating new structures that may have little chance of outliving the project.

### ? Are you building new partnerships and developing new leaders?

Do not limit yourself to involving the most obvious young people (ones already known by partner organizations, those politically well connected, who live in urban centres, or who speak multiple languages). Try to identify and reach out to non-formal networks of young people that have the potential to be strong partners for peacebuilding, in both rural and urban areas.

? **Are you avoiding replicating harmful power structures?**

Pay attention to how young people are identified and chosen, especially when working with intermediary stakeholders, to ensure that young people's participation is not manipulated or exploited, and that paradigms of control from traditional power-holders are not reproduced in the project.

? **Will the young people want to engage in the project?**

They may be suspicious of international actors, sceptical of the benefits or worried about their safety and protection. Think about what incentives might help engage them, and put in place clear safety protocols that demonstrate that you will do no harm.

? **Will those who are not engaged be resentful?**

When focusing on a specific youth subgroup (such as young ex-combatants), the project should have mitigation measures in place to ensure that other young people from the same community do not feel neglected or even more excluded. It is very important that all youth projects avoid triggering frustration and resentment among the young people who will not be engaged (i.e. practise conflict-sensitivity).

? **Which other stakeholders should you engage?**

While young people themselves should be the primary focus of any YPS project, it's also key to involve other stakeholders, to help create the sociopolitical change that the project aims for. These stakeholders may include:

- ✎ parents
- ✎ teachers
- ✎ community leaders
- ✎ religious leaders
- ✎ other civil society stakeholders
- ✎ politicians and national government decision-makers.

It may be important to involve them from the conception phase, especially by offering sensitization and training to help them partner effectively with young people. UNFPA can act as a broker between young people and decision-makers, for example by helping key parties in a peace process recognize the need to include young people.



## PROTECTION

The protection of young peacebuilders and young human rights defenders has become a growing area of concern since the adoption of resolution 2250, as threats and harassment are increasing in a general context of shrinking civic space. Resolution 2535, the latest YPS resolution, has a strong focus on protection and human rights. For UNFPA, this means:



- prioritizing the protection of young people engaged in human rights defence, peacebuilding work, humanitarian work etc., as well as the protection of young women and men generally in situations of armed conflict
- advocating with government counterparts for an enabling environment for human rights defenders and the protection of young women and men
- facilitating the participation of young people and their organizations in human rights mechanisms (Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, National Human Rights Councils etc.)
- providing human rights and life skills education under comprehensive sexuality education
- adopting an intersectional approach and engaging young people with disabilities meaningfully, by actively seeking their participation and acknowledging their specific capabilities.

For more information on protection, see Module 5, p. 40.



### PROTECTING YOUNG PEOPLE IN SECURITY CONTEXTS

When engaging with security actors, UNFPA should always aim to promote a positive understanding of who young people are and how they can contribute to building peace. **For this reason, UNFPA should avoid engaging in all programming related to counter-terrorism and preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE).** These programmes generally rely on “hard security” approaches that tend to see young people (primarily young men) as a threat to be contained. They have been criticized for curtailing human rights and disrupting positive, long-term investments in education and employment for young people. YPS is a peacebuilding agenda, not a counter-terrorism or P/CVE agenda.



## PREVENTION

- Expand investments in young people, focusing on empowerment, education and employment, to realize the demographic dividend and ensure that young people's positive contribution to sustainable development is recognized and supported.
- Ensure the generation and use of age and sex-disaggregated data pertaining to young people, including in peacebuilding and humanitarian settings.



## PARTNERSHIP

- Help build coalitions on YPS, which should be multisectoral and broad-based, bringing young people, youth-led and youth-focused organizations together with multilateral, government and civil society actors (including the private sector, religious communities, private foundations and educational institutions). These coalitions can be local, national, subregional or regional.
  - UNFPA can help bring together diverse partners and identify youth organizations. Ideally, national coalitions should be co-led by the lead governmental entity on YPS (which can vary from one country to the next, e.g. Minister of Education, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister for Social Affairs) and a youth organization. UNFPA can play the role of the secretariat, or at minimum be an engaged member.
  - UNFPA has been a key partner of the YPS Coalition in Jordan (see p. 24).
- Support governmental counterparts to develop national roadmaps on YPS, as mandated by resolution 2535. These roadmaps (or national action plans, or national frameworks) should spell out priority objectives and interventions for the implementation of the YPS agenda at the national level. They should be developed through a participatory process directly engaging youth-led and youth-focused organizations. UNFPA has an important role to play in this:
  - advocate with the government for the development of a YPS roadmap
  - help facilitate the meaningful engagement of youth organizations, representing a diversity of young people
  - provide technical support for the development of the roadmap, including country-specific indicators to monitor progress and measure the impact of the implementation of the YPS agenda.

} [A guide for public officials to support implementation of the YPS agenda at country level, including guidance on roadmaps, was launched in 2022.](#)

- Coordinate the engagement of UN partners on YPS. The YPS agenda is broad and intersects with many areas of work of the UN – education, governance, employment, gender, police, justice, human rights and so on. It therefore calls for the participation of diverse UN entities, and UNFPA should facilitate their engagement and coordination, for example under the Youth Thematic Group or another existing youth-focused platform, or through a dedicated platform/working group. The collective nature of the YPS agenda is a critical condition of its success, so it is essential to work collaboratively and in a spirit of partnership. Depending on the context and capacities, other UN entities (such as UNDP, in particular) might also want to lead this work, and partnerships to co-lead the YPS agenda could be established.



## DISENGAGEMENT AND REINTEGRATION

The fifth pillar of resolution 2250 is less of a priority for UNFPA, as the core of our YPS work, in line with our mandate, should be on the other four pillars of the resolution. However, UNFPA can also contribute to disengagement and reintegration processes by:

- advocating for the specific needs of demobilized young people, particularly young women (including access to SRH services, information on and response to gender-based violence etc.)
- facilitating the access of demobilized young people to SRH services, civic education, human rights trainings etc.







# YPS IN ACTION

This section offers several examples of effective YPS projects that have involved UNFPA.

## → JORDAN YOUTH PEACE AND SECURITY 2250 NATIONAL COALITION

Jordan's leadership in the adoption of resolution 2250 paved the way for the establishment of the first national-level YPS coalition, the Jordan Youth Peace and Security 2250 National Coalition (Jordan YPS 2250 Coalition), in 2017. Working under the umbrella of the Ministry of Youth, the Coalition has 22 member organizations representing the government, UN agencies, international and domestic non-governmental organizations, and academia, and 24 youth members from all over Jordan. The Coalition facilitates partnerships between government, research institutes, universities, civil society, UN actors, youth groups, and youth to advance the 2250 agenda and achieve SDG 16 in Jordan.



The Coalition has a unique structure which gives young people the decision-making power: the individual youth members form the Voting Body of the Coalition, while member organizations form the Non-Voting Body. The Secretariat consists of two member organizations elected by the youth members. Terms of reference developed in a participatory process among Coalition members serve as the governing document.

The UNFPA Jordan Country Office took on three tasks to support the Coalition:

- **Capitalizing on its convening and coordination role:** UNFPA co-chaired the Coalition's Secretariat, together with the Crown Prince Foundation in the first year and Generations for Peace in the second. UNFPA allocated human resources expertise to support convening meetings, reporting, facilitating joint collaboration, and networking with partners and donors.
- **Mobilizing expertise and resources around youth engagement and participation:** UNFPA supported the capacity-building of youth leadership on YPS and provided the platform and space for young people's active engagement with decision-makers from the government and civil society. UNFPA and Generations for Peace are launching a national module on YPS for youth leaders all over the Kingdom.



- **Producing and managing knowledge:** UNFPA supported work to analyse the Coalition’s assets, potential and challenges, and played a key role in mapping YPS initiatives among Coalition members to improve understanding of the YPS landscape in Jordan.

Since the start of the Coalition, member organizations and youth have worked collectively on activities and initiatives under the YPS agenda. Initiatives such as Peace Week in 2019, Peace Month in 2020 and the YPS Coffee Break Series led by UNFPA included advocacy events and activities involving collaboration between member organizations and youth members. The youth led-initiatives A Safe Workplace and The Community Is My Home were initiated and implemented by the youth members with support from several member organizations, and were based on a community needs assessment by youth members supported by UNFPA and Generations for Peace.

The Coalition’s youth-led model has sought to ensure youth participation by crafting and cementing a youth presence in both the process and the results. Young people were integrally involved in drafting the initial Terms of Reference, and in delegating the voting power to the youth members themselves. The Coalition continues to find its way between process-oriented and results-oriented approaches, while staying true to the youth-led model.

*The Coalition’s youth-led model has sought to ensure youth participation by crafting and cementing a youth presence in both the process and the results.*



# → PARTNERING FOR YPS ACROSS A REGION: THE WESTERN BALKANS 6 REGIONAL YOUTH COOPERATION OFFICE

From 2018 to 2021, UNFPA supported a project to build capacity and momentum for the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), an independent institutional mechanism established by the Western Balkans 6 participants (WB 6) – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. RYCO promotes the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between youth in the region through youth exchange programmes. Headquartered in Tirana, it is financed by the governments of the region and it is supported by the UN, the European Union and other donors.

During the project, UNFPA, partnering with UNDP and UNICEF, with the financial support of the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), supported RYCO in building its institutional capacity and partnerships with civil society, schools, grassroots youth organizations and youth in general.

UNFPA's role had several tracks:

- **Building RYCO's capacity** to be a sustainable and strong intergovernmental mechanism; strengthening its operational structures and departments; strategizing its resources and making the grant facility more accessible to vulnerable and hard-to-reach grassroots youth organisations and groups; improving communications and visibility, and strengthening evidence-based advocacy.
- **Reaching out to and strengthening partnerships with more youth organizations and networks of young people**, especially in-school and out-of-school young people, and hard-to-reach young people, with a special focus on young girls and women, and vulnerable youth coming from remote poorer border areas, Roma communities and LGBTQ+ youth.
- UNFPA helped create a **network of youth peer (Y-PEER) trainers** in the field of peacebuilding, training 300 youth and engaging them in developing and implementing 15 innovative ideas for and with youth in the region, as well as promoting success stories of these young people.
- **Creating more partnerships at community levels**, for example through youth-led networks organizing cross-border exchanges and workshops; producing and sharing online information; surveying more than 5,000 young people to strengthen evidence on youth's perceptions about peace and conflict issues in the region; and conducting a regional youth peace lab for



120 young activists, who developed 12 policy solutions to some of the most pressing regional issues, such as mobility, connectivity and transformation of the legacy of war, mentored by a team of 20 from across the region.

The project faced several challenges, including the short timeframe, the need to coordinate RYCO and UNFPA staff and consultants across six RYCO countries and five UNFPA country offices, the challenge of mentoring participants to ensure that engagement was free of prejudice or hate speech, and the difficulties imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, it gave participants a sense of ownership and confidence in future interventions of this kind. RYCO now has the capacity to generate evidence on its programme effectiveness, and deeper ownership of its peacebuilding programmes. And the youth teams have more skills and tools to use to address other challenges in their communities.

The project represented several accomplishments for UNFPA. First, this was the first time UNFPA had collaborated with the PBF to support an intergovernmental organization within the Western Balkans region, and UNFPA is now taking an increasing role in peacebuilding there. Second, UNFPA capitalized on its longstanding engagement with young people, marginalized populations and Y-PEER to partner with Y-PEER, RYCO and the International Institute for Youth Development, Sofia (PETRI) in developing a peer-to-peer peacebuilding manual to enable youth leadership. Third, from a regional perspective the collaboration with UNDP on the project was important – organizing a workshop on YPS, conceptualizing the survey of young people, leading to the development of a joint proposal on YPS in the Caucasus.

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## → OTHER EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL UNFPA YPS PROJECTS

The following projects were funded by the PBF under its Youth Promotion Initiative.

**Support to youth organizations** rather than to individual youth actors, creating sustainable platforms for their engagement and going beyond training to facilitate their access to a political process

- **Guinea** (UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO) Supporting the participation of young men and women in governance in the 20 most conflict-prone communes of Guinea (2018)
- **Myanmar** (UNFPA and UNICEF) Empowering young women and men as agents in peacebuilding in Myanmar (2017)

### **Innovative projects**

- **Guinea:** project targeting young people working as motor-taxi drivers, as a specific group to engage in view of the elections (Supporting the reduction of instrumentalization and sociopolitical violence among young motor-taxi drivers in the election period (2019))
- **Madagascar:** engaging young people in peace-related discussions through various forms of popular arts in the south of the country Popular art in the service of youth engaged in consolidating peace in southern Madagascar (2019)

### **Projects with a strong focus on gender and youth**

- **Niger:** Engaging young people and women in the peaceful resolution of communal conflict in North Tillabery zone (2018)





# DO'S AND DON'TS



DO

✓ Think about “peace” at different levels – individual, familial, community, national – and try to contribute to it at different levels

✓ Analyse the specific situation, needs and opportunities for adolescent girls and young women in relation to conflict and peace

✓ Strive to tackle some of the root causes of young people’s social and economic exclusion by working with institutions and systems to make them more open to engaging young people, and by facilitating young people’s engagement in employment policy discussions, vocational training etc.

✓ Focus on young people’s agency and leadership and support their meaningful engagement in decision-making processes

✓ Always adopt a “do no harm” and conflict-sensitive approach, and prioritize the protection of the young people engaged in the project.

The principle of “do no harm” means that organizations strive to minimize the harm they may inadvertently cause through providing aid.

To be conflict-sensitive is to understand the context in which we work and the interaction between the context and our intervention, and to act on that understanding to maximize positive impacts and reduce negative impacts.

✓ Engage with youth-led and youth-focused organizations, initiatives and networks, in the capital and outside – in rural or peri-urban areas – as part of the planning and implementation process



DON'T

✗ Exclusively focus on peace at a personal level: *systemic* change is an objective of the YPS agenda

✗ Forget your gender lens and only speak about young people in gender-neutral terms

✗ Focus on recreational activities or short-term income-generating activities, which are often unsustainable and rely on the premise that unemployed youth might otherwise turn to violent groups

✗ Focus exclusively on young people’s access to SRH information and services as a way to build peace

✗ Put young people inadvertently at risk by overlooking the protection issues they might face. For example, do not engage in projects where young people are used as informants for the police about the radicalization of their peers

✗ Be tokenistic and assume that one or two youth will represent the youth population of a given setting



✓ Think of young people as diverse and divided actors, like all other social groups in all societies

✓ Develop specific indicators and evaluation methods looking at both qualitative and quantitative indicators, and focusing on youth perceptions and experiences of peacebuilding

✓ Create incentives for various stakeholders to be engaged

✓ Test your assumptions through consultation and shared decision-making with young people

✓ Create space for young people to have decision-making roles within your project

✓ When developing your budget, balance direct support to young people and their organizations and investment in institutional change



✗ Think of youth as a monolithic or homogeneous group

✗ Limit yourself to counting the number of young people trained

✗ Assume any young person will want to be part of the project, or that partners (e.g. police, military) will want to meaningfully engage with young people

✗ Assume you know what young people want or need, or what types of interventions young people will want to engage with

✗ Be afraid of sharing decision-making power with young people

✗ Only support institutions and stakeholders who are not young people

*Focus on young people's agency and leadership and support their meaningful engagement in decision-making processes.*





# RESOURCES

## UNFPA-SPECIFIC RESOURCES

For a list of UNFPA projects funded under the Gender & Youth Promotion Initiative of the Peacebuilding Fund, see [here](#).

## POLICY AND RESEARCH

- ▶ United Nations Security Council (2015). Resolution 2250 (2015). [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2250\(2015\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2250(2015))
- ▶ United Nations Security Council (2018). Resolution 2419 (2018). [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2419\(2018\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2419(2018))
- ▶ United Nations Security Council (2020). Resolution 2535 (2020). [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2535\(2020\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2535(2020))
- ▶ United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, Sub-Working Group on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding (2014). *Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding*. <https://www.sfcg.org/guidingprinciples/>
- ▶ United Nations Population Fund and Peacebuilding Support Office (2018). *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace & Security*. Full version: <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/youth/youth-web-english.pdf>  
Security Council version: <https://undocs.org/en/S/2018/86>  
Interactive version: <https://www.unfpa.org/youth-peace-security>
- ▶ United Nations Security Council (2020). *Secretary-General's Report on Youth, Peace and Security*. <https://undocs.org/en/S/2020/167>
- ▶ United Nations Development Programme (2019). *Frontlines: Young People at the Forefront of Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism*. <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/frontlines.html>
- ▶ Global Partnership for Children and Youth in Peacebuilding (2015). *Evaluation of Child and Youth Participation in Peacebuilding: Nepal, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia*. [https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/2015July\\_Eval-of-ChildYouth-Peacebuilding-Colombia-Nepal-DRC.pdf](https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/2015July_Eval-of-ChildYouth-Peacebuilding-Colombia-Nepal-DRC.pdf)



## OPERATIONAL AND PROGRAMMATIC GUIDANCE

- United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, Sub-Working Group on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding (2016). *Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding: A Practice Note*. [Provides an overview of key issues and promising practices in different sectors and thematic areas.] <https://unoy.org/downloads/young-peoples-participation-in-peacebuilding-a-practice-note/>
- United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Development Programme, Peacebuilding Support Office, Folke Bernadotte Academy (2021). *Youth, Peace and Security: A Programming Handbook*. <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/youth-peace-and-security-programming-handbook>
- United Network of Young Peacebuilders (2021). *UNSCR 2250 and Beyond: A Youth Toolkit*. <https://unoy.org/en/2250-toolkit/>
- United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (2019). *PBF Guidance Note on Youth and Peacebuilding*. [https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/pbf\\_guidance\\_note\\_on\\_youth\\_and\\_peacebuilding\\_2019.pdf](https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/pbf_guidance_note_on_youth_and_peacebuilding_2019.pdf)
- United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (2019). *UN PBF GYPI Webinar 2: Youth-inclusive Peacebuilding*. Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6jenrUFiAM>. PowerPoint presentation: [https://un-pbf-gypi-2018.cdn.prismic.io/un-pbf-gypi-2018%2Ffc1a737e-6ed0-4819-8fe2-0b20cb008e19\\_webinar2\\_yipi\\_7june2017\\_english.pdf](https://un-pbf-gypi-2018.cdn.prismic.io/un-pbf-gypi-2018%2Ffc1a737e-6ed0-4819-8fe2-0b20cb008e19_webinar2_yipi_7june2017_english.pdf)

