Bridging or Breaking the Silos

Young Women's Leadership in Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Action
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06. CONTEXT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. METHODOLOGY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. THE STATE OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE YPS AGENDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. GAPS IN THE YPS RESOLUTIONS THAT INHIBIT EFFECTIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN PEACEBUILDING AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. CONCLUSION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Authors: Lynrose Jane Genon¹
Researcher(s): Mallika Iyer, Jenaina Irani and Wevyn Muganda
Case Study Researchers:
  Bangladesh: Mohammad Rezwanur Rahman
  Myanmar: Khin Thet San
  Democratic Republic of Congo: Nicole Musimbi
Case Study Coordinator: Jenaina Irani
Editors: Katrina Leclerc and Panthea Pourmalek
Publication Coordinator: Arlyssa Bianca Pabotoy
Layout: Caroline Allman

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¹ Lynrose Jane D. Genon is currently a faculty member of Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology and member of the Young Women+Leaders for Peace-Philippines
Over the years, strong youth leadership in peacebuilding has contributed to the creation of a global consensus that acknowledges and supports the crucial and positive role of youth in building and sustaining peace. This concept was formalized with the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) in 2015, which ushered a normative shift toward recognizing young people, their roles and meaningful contributions to peace and security. This landmark resolution urges Member States to ensure the participation of young people in decision-making at the local, national, regional, and international levels and to create mechanisms for youth to engage meaningfully in peace processes. Since then, important steps have been taken to include young people in global policymaking processes related to peace and security.

The adoption of subsequent YPS resolutions – Resolutions 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) – has further strengthened the agenda in terms of introducing a progressive language for greater inclusion of youth in peacebuilding processes and expanded the scope of implementation to include youth leadership in humanitarian action. More specifically, UNSCR 2535 recognizes the agency of youth in leading and contributing to humanitarian responses, during the COVID-19 global pandemic, and beyond. However, the operationalization of the policy framework and the degree and commitment of their implementation is confronted with systemic challenges that continue to hinder the meaningful inclusion of young people in Youth, Peace and Security. This research argues that the meaningful inclusion and participation of youth must extend beyond global policy to the design, implementation, and evaluation of the progress of the YPS agenda. This ensures that youth goals for peace and security are taken into account, and gives them the opportunity to work in equal partnership with other stakeholders.

This participatory action research sets out to analyze how the adoption of the YPS resolutions has enabled the strengthening of youth leadership, especially that of young women, in peacebuilding and humanitarian action. It asserts that the full and effective implementation of the YPS resolutions intersects with, and reinforces, humanitarian action frameworks. Furthermore, this research argues that the YPS agenda should not be considered in silos, but fully mainstreamed across policies at both domestic and foreign policy levels, following the principles of policy coherence and complementarity.
This report is divided into four sections. The first section introduces the development of the YPS agenda. The second section discusses the state of implementation of the YPS resolutions at the global, regional and national levels, and illustrates the diversity of young people’s contributions to peace and humanitarian action within local communities. The third section identifies gaps within the implementation of the YPS resolutions that inhibit effective recognition of the leadership of young people in peacebuilding and humanitarian action. The final section provides a set of recommendations on ways to accelerate the implementation of the YPS agenda at the global, national, regional, and local levels.

Placing the experiences of young people at the center of moving the YPS agenda from paper to practice helps establish the groundwork for a future that is better, more resilient, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable. Listening to the voices of youth in the decisions made today and recognizing the agency of young people in the design, implementation of peacebuilding programs and humanitarian response and holding governments accountable for their decisions and actions—or lack thereof, can help bridge the gap between policy and implementation of the YPS resolutions.

In this context, the regions refer to groups of countries linked together by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence.
CONTEXT

The inclusion and participation of young people in peace and security are key to building more inclusive, sustainable and effective peace. Resolution 2250 defines meaningful participation of young people in peace processes and dispute resolution at all levels. This covers formal or institutional political processes as well as non-institutional ones, including participation in physical and digital spaces. In the implementation and operationalization of the YPS resolutions, youth participation levels vary across different structures and processes. For instance, in crafting National Action Plans (NAPs) on YPS, some countries include young people as the leaders and architects. Other countries have government-led processes that either do not involve young people at all or, at best, only involve them through what is generally regarded as insufficient consultation methods. In other nations, youth continue to urge relevant parties—including State governments, the UN, and civil society organizations (CSOs)—to recognize the necessity of working constructively with youth-led coalitions and accept their support for implementation efforts.

There have been various efforts made to implement the YPS agenda, including coalition-building efforts and roadmaps. At a regional level, the African Union’s Peace and Security Council, through its Continental Framework for Youth, Peace and Security, sets a 25 per cent target of Member States developing “youth-led and centered NAPs on YPS by 2024, and 50 per cent by 2029." At the national level, a small number of countries have started to develop dedicated roadmaps and NAPs. Others have integrated YPS objectives into other strategic policies, such as NAPs on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). For example, Ireland’s NAP on WPS recognizes the intersections and synergies between the WPS and YPS agendas, highlighting the need for greater investments in the capacity, agency and leadership of young people. Another illustration is the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where the NAP on WPS significantly emphasizes the inclusion of young women in peace processes, conflict or security decision-making and leadership positions, addressing

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violations of fundamental human rights, combating sexual violence and including young women living with disabilities.\(^9\)

Initiatives for the implementation of the YPS resolutions are rapidly increasing, and policymakers are becoming more interested in youth participation in peacebuilding processes. This rapid movement also raises concerns about the extent and dedication of UN entities and Member States to its implementation. Since prior YPS resolutions continue to face the same systemic problems—youth exclusion from decision-making, particularly for young women and LGBTQI+ youth; the shrinking civic space; and inadequate resources, to name a few—there are still concerns about how to operationalize this policy framework.

There are also challenges in measuring progress at the global, regional, national, and local levels, due to limited documentation of the efforts to implement the YPS resolutions in specific regions, and a lack of data and defined indicators to track progress. For instance, the absence of age, gender and sex-disaggregated data makes assessing the inclusivity of YPS implementation efforts, and the extent to which age or gender barriers to participation are addressed, difficult. At the local level, a large component of YPS implementation is led by local youth peacebuilders and youth-led organizations, which are underfunded, with a large number of youth organizations operating on annual budgets of less than five thousand U.S. dollars.

The exclusion of youth, as a form of structural and psychological violence that is indivisible from political, social, cultural and economic disempowerment, continues to be a major challenge for young women, particularly for young women in peacebuilding and humanitarian action. A lack of an intersectional lens, which takes gender norms, identities, and age into account, contributes to the exclusion of young women from peacebuilding spaces. The 2018 UN Women report, developed in collaboration with the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), on Young Women in Peace and Security: at the Intersection of the YPS and WPS Agendas\(^11\) highlighted the importance of applying a youth lens in efforts to actualize the WPS resolutions, and a gender lens within the YPS agenda. This guarantees to uphold the rights of

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\(^10\) The intended use of the terminology ‘LGBTQI+’ is inclusive of all members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex community, including individuals who may identify across the diverse gender and sexuality spectrums.

young women, young men and LGBTQI+ youth by ensuring that their unique roles and capacities in conflict prevention are not sidestepped or subsumed under programs for children or older adults.

The Independent Progress Study on YPS, entitled the Missing Peace, further highlights six areas as contributors to the violence of exclusion, which refers to the structural and psychological violence that is deeply rooted in the reciprocal mistrust between young people, their governments and the multilateral system. The six areas include political exclusion, economic exclusion, lack of education, gender inequality, injustice, human rights violations, disengagement and reintegration. Addressing the structural and collective dimensions of young people’s victimization, vulnerabilities, and grievances sits at the epicenter of the approach to tackling the violence of exclusion.

Additionally, the distrust between policymakers and youth peacebuilders in some country contexts remains a huge obstacle to the implementation of the YPS agenda. It will take a stronger commitment paired with true accountability, to bridge the trust deficit between youth and policymakers. Young people’s economic, political, and social exclusion frequently exacerbates communities’ collective mistrust in the governments and multilateral institutions meant to serve and protect them. To move from exclusion to meaningful inclusion, there is a need to transform norms, and practices, address siloed approaches and attitudes, and recognize young people as equal and powerful actors who can positively contribute to all phases and aspects of peace processes.

**YPS AND THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE NEXUS**

The approach at the intersection of humanitarian, development and peace (dubbed “The Triple Nexus”) puts the people at the center, tackling exclusion and promoting gender equality. It prioritizes supporting, empowering, and strengthening the capacities of national and local actors. The Triple Nexus is understood in this research as an approach or framework that takes into account both the immediate and long-term needs of affected populations and enhances opportunities for peace.

The Youth, Peace and Security agenda addresses all areas of the Triple Nexus.

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YPS programming extends across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus and the pillars of the UN system: human rights, development, and peace and security.\textsuperscript{16} YPS recognizes that there is neither a hierarchy nor a chronology to humanitarian relief, peace efforts, and development aid, moving beyond the conflict and peace dichotomy that was at the base of the distinction between peace, development and humanitarian action. The agenda is also centered on situations young people can find themselves in during conflict and in working for peace, and calls on all actors for inclusion of youth in the entire process of YPS programming. The YPS agenda focuses not only on the State-level but emphasizes the importance of local and regional actors. It addresses States as well as UN bodies, but also other levels of government, as well as local communities. The YPS agenda illustrates an awareness that situations can differ within a country, and that people may have different experiences in diverse communities even within the same local, national and regional context. While there is no default implementing actor, all relevant actors are responsible for including youth – young people’s views, perspectives and realities – into their decision-making. Lack of accountability, however, is a significant drawback of the YPS resolutions as a common obligation, making it simple to avoid implementing it at all with minimal to no political repercussions.

In practice, the humanitarian-development-peace approach remains detached from the realities of young people. Youth are often perceived as beneficiaries of humanitarian action and development projects. Young people, as well as adolescents, continue to be a neglected group in humanitarian settings. During crises, the barriers they face in receiving adequate healthcare, including an increased risk of poor sexual and reproductive health, are also exacerbated.\textsuperscript{17}

Despite these areas of weakness, the YPS agenda, thus far, has served as a tool for UN entities, Member States, regional organizations, and civil society to invest in youth. It also serves as an important instrument in recognizing and supporting young people’s agency and leadership in peacebuilding and humanitarian action around the world.


This research is a youth-led participatory action research designed and conducted by youth leaders who are actively engaged in implementing the Youth, Peace and Security agenda. The findings presented in this research are based primarily on an in-depth literature review on global legal and policy frameworks on the YPS agenda and humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The research then utilized a participatory data gathering process, engaging a diverse group of youth through a global call for entries of photos, videos, and storytelling of young people's experiences with peacebuilding and humanitarian action, including challenges and achievements in advancing and implementing the YPS agenda in their local communities. The research has garnered participation from 11 countries, notably: Bangladesh, Burundi, Cameroon, DRC, Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, Philippines, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Responses were submitted in the youth's preferred language of communication and non-English entries were then translated into English for thematic analysis. The findings of this research are then complemented by three case studies featuring experiences from Bangladesh, DRC, and Myanmar.

Bangladesh and Myanmar were chosen as case studies for this research since they have recently witnessed significant increases in the number of Rohingya refugees dispersing throughout the South Asian region. As national and international conflicts, including complex refugee-host community relations in Bangladesh and DRC, and political instability in Myanmar continue to foster social, political, and economic tensions, there is a prime opportunity to expand efforts to promote young people's, and particularly young women's, meaningful participation in local, national, and regional peace and security matters. The GNWP Young Women+ Leaders for Peace (YWL) networks, and efforts to implement the Localization of the WPS resolutions strategy in Bangladesh, DRC, and Myanmar address the unique local needs of Rohingya and other marginalized communities through consultations, dialogues, capacity-building workshops, and other peacebuilding initiatives, amidst ongoing regional tensions, conflicts and humanitarian crisis. These programs target the limited participation of women, youth, marginalized groups, and refugees, especially women and young women refugees, in peacebuilding and political processes. The context and experience of the youth in Bangladesh, DRC, and Myanmar best illustrate the gap that the research aims to address.

18 More information on the Young Women+ Leaders for Peace, initiated by GNWP, is available at: https://gnwp.org/what-we-do/young-women-leaders-for-peace-program/
19 More information on the Localization of WPS resolutions strategy, pioneered by GNWP, is available at: https://gnwp.org/localization-toolkit/
How far can the National Action Plans (NAPs) go? The institutionalization of the YPS agenda

“The adoption of the NAP [on YPS] strengthened the implementation of the YPS agenda that we were already doing on the ground with a much more specific and concrete approaches, in the sense that the NAP takes up in detail the specific needs of young people in our community.”

– Esther Atosha, young woman from DRC

The YPS agenda has made modest progress toward institutionalization. In August 2021, Finland became the first country to launch a NAP on YPS. The NAP was formulated through inclusive consultations. It recognizes, targets, and prioritizes a dual implementation – in both domestic and foreign contexts. It also includes a cross-cutting theme on intersectionality, although there are no specific measures for young women. As of August 2022, Finland, DRC, Nigeria and the Philippines have launched NAPs on YPS, while Colombia, Gambia and Zimbabwe, among others, are in the process of doing so. Other countries like Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, El Salvador, Italy, Jordan, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Uganda, the United States and Sri Lanka have institutionalized the agenda through national coalitions on YPS. At the regional level, there are also increasing number of regional YPS Coalitions. For instance, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Coalition on YPS was launched in 2022, which aims to bridge the gap between the global and regional efforts in implementing the YPS agenda. In Asia and the Pacific, there is a thematic Working Group on Youth Peace and Security (WG on YPS). The WG on YPS is part of the Asia-Pacific Interagency Network on Youth (APINY), which serves as a coordinating and supporting mechanism to UN Agencies working on agenda. In addition, the African Union developed a Continental Framework on YPS. Another regional initiative in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that recognized the role of young people as agents of change is the annual Southeast Asian Youth Meeting on Peace and Security. The initiative provides a platform for  

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22 MENA4YPS (2022). MENA Coalition for Youth Peace and Security. Available at: https://mena4yps.org/#:~:text=We%20are%20a%20community%20of%20more%20peaceful%20and%20inclusive%20society.
knowledge sharing, conversation, and the development of capacities, particularly on topics related to WPS, human rights, and the prevention of violent extremism (PVE). In addition, the UN continues to work with youth-led civil society in the region under the #Youth4Peace in Southeast Asia initiative. This serves as a platform for youth-led civil society. Moreover, in August 2021, the Arab League announced preparations for a Regional Strategy on Youth, Peace and Security, to be launched at the outset of 2023. The Young Women+ Leaders for Peace in Lebanon, among other young people in the Arab States, have been involved in the ongoing consultations for the Regional Strategy.

In the African continent, Nigeria became the first country to adopt a NAP on YPS in 2021, which operates through the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution. Nigeria’s NAP on YPS is designed to complement existing national, regional, and international policy initiatives, and to reflect Nigeria’s commitment to ensuring the meaningful engagement of youth in conflict prevention, post-conflict, and peacebuilding efforts. It serves as a useful guide to federal, state, and local governments, as well as other non-governmental stakeholders, to ensure that their various programs address youth needs in all the pillars of UNSCR 2250.

Developing NAPs on YPS may be one of the accessible and straightforward tools to accelerate the implementation of the agenda. However, due to the limited time in which the NAPs have been adopted to date, there is insufficient evidence of their effectiveness. NAPs are also reliant on the political will of Member States and often put the burden of implementation on civil society. Issues on the inclusivity of the diversity of youth in the crafting of NAPs raise issues on the extent to which such a plan captures the local peacebuilding realities of youth. Young people are often seen as passive actors, and their inclusion is a box-ticking exercise. Despite their limitations, NAPs remain important policy and advocacy tools.

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mechanisms, as they help encourage and sustain institutional efforts.\textsuperscript{29}

The Missing Peace (2018)\textsuperscript{30} states that a NAP may be the optimal entry point for the implementation of the YPS agenda and sustaining governments’ commitments to implementing it. In other instances, countries institutionalize YPS through alternative methods—often a combination of—such as YPS national coalitions, integration of the YPS agenda in existing youth policies, establishment of YPS focal points, and adopt a strategic partnership approach.\textsuperscript{31}

One example is the Jordan YPS 2250 Coalition established in December 2017, which is the world’s first coalition of governments, CSOs, and UN agencies or organizations to work together to implement the agenda.

POLICY COHERENCE AND COALITIONS IN YPS IMPLEMENTATION

Adhering to the principles of policy coherence and complementarity, the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace, and Security (GCYPS) asserts that the YPS agenda should be mainstreamed across policies at both the local and international levels. This implies that policy initiatives at various levels and areas should complement and strengthen one another. In this framework, policy coherence pertains to assessing all peace and security policies and programs from the perspective of youth and, more specifically, considering the YPS agenda’s five main pillars. It also entails considering youth policies from the standpoint of peace and security.

The Women, Peace and Security agenda has a linguistic legacy in YPS, as the language (referring to the text of the resolutions themselves) of the first YPS resolution, number 2250, echoes much of the first WPS resolution, number 1325. More broadly, both WPS and YPS resolutions work to address inequalities and structural causes of conflict.\textsuperscript{32} Although there is progress in promoting the synergies between the WPS and YPS agendas, most of these efforts have been at the local level - through the work of local women and youth peacebuilders. At the country level, most National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325 do not respond to YPS concerns.\textsuperscript{33} The synergy between the


agendas is their mutual strength, as both focus on the important role that women and young women can play in the prevention and resolution of conflict.\textsuperscript{34}

Gendered social expectations and norms are highlighted as a barrier to the effective implementation of the YPS agenda. In many contexts, the word youth is used synonymously to ‘young men’, while gender is used to refer to ‘women’. Young women are consistently subsumed into “women” and “girls” in the WPS-related UN Security Council resolutions and “youth” and “young people” in the YPS resolutions. This leaves young women vulnerable to exclusion, especially if recommendations from Security Council resolutions and other policy instruments are implemented subjectively and without precise definitions of who belongs in which category.

In a background paper prepared for the YPS progress study,\textsuperscript{35} UN Women noted that the main challenge in understanding young women’s role in peacebuilding and humanitarian action is the lack of available data and analysis specifically on young women’s experiences in peace and security contexts and processes. There is still relatively limited age-disaggregated data and research on aged-based concerns within the WPS framework, and even less so, YPS research that incorporates a gender lens. Despite the significant efforts by young women peacebuilders, their contributions are often overlooked and undocumented. Reports on progress made in the implementation of the YPS agenda often report on youth as a general population, neglecting gender dimensions altogether.

To date, coalitions have been key drivers of YPS implementation efforts, promoting a collaborative approach. YPS coalitions have served as spaces for coordination and information-sharing about ongoing initiatives, intersectoral and intergenerational dialogue, and trust-building. With diverse representation and membership, coalitions serve as a space to collaborate on joint priorities. It also serves as a space for youth empowerment, and for consensus-building on key policy priorities. Several YPS national-level coalitions that now exist are youth-led and CSO/youth-only.

In the global governance infrastructure, there are two primary spaces to accelerate the implementation of the YPS resolutions: the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security (GCYPS) and the Civil Society Working Group on

\textsuperscript{34} Berents, H., Yague, E., & Rouhshahbaz, S. (2018, April 16). Young Feminist Leadership is the future of peacebuilding. Lowy Institute. Available at: https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/young-feminist-leadership-futurepeacebuilding#text=Feminist%20leadership%20can%20strengthen%20progress%20in%20the%20region%20and%20beyond

YOUNG WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN PEACEBUILDING AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Youth, Peace and Security (CSO WG on YPS). The GCYPS brings together youth-led and youth-focused organizations, UN entities, donors, academia, and inter-governmental bodies to serve as a platform to integrate YPS at national, regional, and global levels of policy. It is co-chaired by the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders), Search for Common Ground (SFCG) and the United Nations (Joint UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) Secretariat on YPS). The GCYPS is composed of task forces. For example, members of the GCYPS participate in advancing specific areas of YPS concerns, including on protection of youth peacebuilders, youth in politics, or at the intersection of climate change.

On the other hand, the CSO WG on YPS gathers civil society and youth-led organizations and networks to advance and advocate for the implementation of the YPS agenda within the United Nations system, particularly the Security Council. It seeks to ensure that civil society and youth perspectives are meaningfully and intentionally integrated into UN decision-making processes and spaces. GNWP and UNOY are the initiators and inaugural co-chairs of the steering committee of the CSO WG on YPS.

The participation of young elected officials, young public servants, representatives of youth-led networks, youth-focused groups, and youth-led organizations in any coordination mechanisms, including coalitions, is also vital. National and local youth councils, commissions, assemblies, and parliaments can contribute significantly to coordination and implementation efforts toward institutionalizing the YPS resolutions. For instance, in the Philippines, the Sangguniang Kabataan, the locally elected youth council in every village, has played a significant role in the crafting of the NAP on YPS. Their format and way of functioning vary across countries, yet these councils can be spaces for young people to express their views, coordinate actions, identify common priorities and engage in dialogue with policymakers to strengthen policy coherence.

BEYOND INSTITUTIONALIZATION, INVESTING IN LOCAL ACTION

Youth-led peacebuilding and humanitarian initiatives are what make the YPS agenda tangible and real in communities. This is despite the argument that the implementation of the YPS agenda cannot be left to individual stakeholders, as individual programs within organizations will not be enough to attain the goals of the YPS resolutions. In Southeast Asia, like in most regions, young people are the driving force for

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advancing the YPS agenda. For instance, the Asian Youth Peace Network (AYPN) has developed YPS e-modules to increase awareness of institutions and youth-led organizations on the agenda. The ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO) has also facilitated peacebuilding dialogues with youth across the region on peace and security, gender equality, and participation in political processes and decision-making, including developing a process to finance youth-led and youth-focused peacebuilding initiatives. The Coalition4Democracy organization in Myanmar, which has been at the forefront of the civil disobedience campaign, participated in the consultations for the development of a national youth policy in Myanmar.\(^37\) The Young Women+ Leaders for Peace in the Philippines, supported by GNWP, brings together young women, LGBTQI+ youth, and male gender equality allies to increase their understanding of the YPS and WPS agendas.

While there are many examples of youth-led organizations and networks working on issues of peace and sustainable development at the grassroots level, they are often disconnected from national and international discussions. For instance, the securitized frameworks that draws causal links between demographic imbalances – youth bulges – and rising conflict are one-sided images of youth still persists.\(^38\) The literature on youth contains a fundamental contradiction. Youth are most commonly depicted as either passive victims of trauma or active security threats. Although empirical stories of young people as victims or perpetrators in conflict situations are abound in the literature on peace studies, there is a scarcity of research on youth participation in peacebuilding. Youth are typically sidelined or excluded from initiatives aimed at promoting peace and community restoration.\(^39\) In portrayals of youth during and after conflicts, a significant sense of social distance is a common motif. The main paradox of youth is that, in many parts of the world, they are a demographic majority that feels like an excluded minority.\(^40\) A youth leader in Cameroon affirms the need to put the narratives of youth at the center of the discourse on peace and security:

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"For far too long, young people have been considered as trouble-givers and -makers. Young people are seen as the ones easily manipulated and brainwashed into taking up arms. Despite this, young people are on the frontline demanding an end to violence, the first responders during conflict and the ones working daily to build back the pieces of peace in their communities."

– Caryn Oyo Dasah, young woman from Cameroon

Young peacebuilders mostly rely on experience-based techniques to do peacebuilding work, in the absence of suitable training and formal institutions to hone their peacebuilding skills.\textsuperscript{41} Despite this, existing youth initiatives demonstrate young people’s expertise in the issues that concern them and their communities, as well as innovative and creative approaches to addressing them. In Burundi, women’s participation, including young women, in conflict settlement as observers and active members of the civil society contributed to the integration of gender equality into democratic governance and the foundation for building peace. Youth in Mali and South Sudan are spearheading leadership development and capacity-building training and organizing youth peacebuilding activities in local communities. Youth in the Philippines are utilizing social media to promote awareness about gender equality.

The YPS agenda, to some extent, has formalized and increased recognition of local youth efforts in peacebuilding. This is echoed by a youth leader in Burundi, who shared that the agenda has helped in shifting the discourse about youth from being victims to agents of peacebuilding.

“Something is relevant in our lives if it is acceptable, helpful, pertinent, or related to the current situation of the international community. That is precisely why the YPS agenda is important, especially to me as a researcher in International Humanitarian Law, who hails from a region or part of the world where there has been a lot of turmoil and instability. This agenda changed the role of youth from being the most vulnerable parties to conflict and victims to one where they are now in charge of bringing peace and peacebuilding.”

– Youth leader, Burundi

This sentiment is also expressed in Youth and Everyday Peace in Myanmar,\textsuperscript{42} which is a foundational report on YPS in the country, as it highlights the shifting perception of youth from a security threat to capable peacebuilders.

**YPS AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN PEACEBUILDING AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION**

Humanitarian crises have differentiated impacts on individuals based on their gender, socioeconomic status, physical ability, and various other intersecting factors. This reality is illustrated in the experiences of young women in Bangladesh, DRC and Myanmar, who participated in this research. A systemic review of sexual and reproductive health interventions for young people in humanitarian settings found that young people, including adolescents, continue to be a neglected group in these contexts.\textsuperscript{43} During crises, the barriers to receiving adequate healthcare, including an increased risk of poor sexual and reproductive health, are exacerbated. The following examples showcase the impact of the humanitarian crises in young women in Bangladesh, Eastern DRC and Myanmar.

**Young Women in the DRC and Humanitarian Crisis**

The humanitarian crisis in the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo caused by various rebel groups has had a devastating impact on young women. The region has been plagued by conflict for decades, with multiple armed groups vying for control and committing widespread violence and human rights abuses.

One of the most significant ways in which the crisis has affected young women is through sexual violence. The rebel groups have been known to use rape as a weapon of war, targeting young women and girls with brutal and systematic attacks. These attacks have left many women and girls with physical and psychological trauma, as well as an increased risk of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, many young women who are survivors of sexual violence are stigmatized and rejected by their communities, making it harder for them to access the care and support they need.

Another major impact of the crisis on young women is displacement. The March 23 (M-23) rebel group, among others, have forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes, leaving young women and girls at risk of exploitation, abuse, and neglect. Many of these women and girls are forced to


Young Women’s Leadership in Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Action

Young women leave their families and communities behind, leaving them vulnerable to traffickers and other predators.

The crisis has also had a negative impact on the education and economic opportunities of young women. Schools and other educational institutions have been closed or destroyed, leaving young women and girls without access to education. This can have a long-term impact on their future prospects, as education is a key factor in breaking the cycle of poverty and vulnerability.

The humanitarian crisis caused by the M-23 and other rebel groups has also had negative impacts on young women's economic opportunities. Many young women have been forced to leave behind their livelihoods, including their farms and small businesses, leaving them without an income. This has made it difficult for many young women to support themselves and their families.

The recent 2022 humanitarian crisis in the Eastern part of DRC caused by various rebel groups has had a devastating impact on young women. The crisis has led to widespread sexual violence, displacement, and reduced access to education and economic opportunities. It is crucial that the international community takes action to end the violence and support gender- and age-sensitive recovery in the region. Furthermore, there should be additional efforts to address the root causes of the conflict and long-term solutions to the ongoing humanitarian disaster.

Young Women in Bangladesh and the Myanmar Humanitarian Crisis

In Bangladesh and Myanmar, young women face challenges in the legitimacy needed to engage in peacebuilding and humanitarian work due to deeply-rooted gender stereotypes that dictate the expected roles and contributions of women in society. In Bangladesh, even when young women receive appropriate training and have enhanced capacities to engage in peace and security matters, women peacebuilders forcibly stop when they are asked to get married. Reshmi, a member of the Young Women+ Leaders for Peace in Bangladesh, shares, “after receiving the training from different organizations, some young women cannot continue further as they get married. Sometimes they drop out for no obvious reason. That’s why we are putting more focus on training for women.” Young women and women in Myanmar also live under the pressure to remain in a “supporting role” in society. Interviewees emphasized that women are often “questioned as to why they need to take a leadership role.” This expectation of women as second-class citizens in Myanmar is partnered with the rising cases of domestic abuse since the February 2021 coup. Another participant underscored that women cannot access justice, allowing for a culture of impunity in several communities. The woman participant reported that
they were sexually harassed in court, with senior officers and police always trying to touch them, and they could not complain as it is not seen as a problem. Society permits it as these individuals are in positions of authority.

The Rohingya Refugee Crisis represents the fourth-largest migrated population from a single country, the majority which are sheltered in Bangladesh.\textsuperscript{44} While the Government of Bangladesh has granted sanctuary to the Rohingya on humanitarian grounds, the continued influx of the Rohingya since 2017 poses a threat to Bangladesh’s peace, conflict, and security compounding the country’s current development issues. Poverty, inequality, and abysmal educational performance are the key development concerns for Bangladesh.\textsuperscript{45} Young women and youth peacebuilders remain proactive in leading and organizing efforts to cope with this protracted humanitarian crisis. However, the lack of endorsement by influential organizations or the government reduces the legitimacy of young people’s initiatives. One young woman leader emphasized, “the general people do not value our work if we are not accompanied by government officials, like police and other law enforcement agencies. But we want to be valued for our work even if we are working alone. We can work more if we get support from the general people.”

In Myanmar, the volatile security situation poses an immense threat to young people to even continue safely participating and engaging in peace and security efforts in the country. The UN Office for the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs reports that one in three people in Myanmar is estimated to require humanitarian assistance due to food insecurity and limited or no access to health care.\textsuperscript{46} The restrictions on the freedom of movement have resulted in restrictions to access to basic needs and the loss of education opportunities. There is also close monitoring being done of online activities, making online educational programs insecure.

The experiences of Bangladesh and Myanmar showcase the intersectional layers of peace and humanitarian efforts in contexts that are undergoing real-time crises. Access and involvement in humanitarian action contribute to not only addressing immediate basic needs but also support with long-term impacts such as education and community participation.

The YPS agenda has proven to be relevant in humanitarian crises by enabling opportunities for youth by


way of making changes and instilling leadership skills within them to carry forward activism and peacebuilding initiatives. Youth-led organizations deliver humanitarian assistance where national infrastructures are inadequate, even when it is not necessarily in their organizational mandate. This emphasizes the importance of collaborating with youth-led organizations on an equal footing with other practitioners working on peace and security, as well as in the larger domains of development and humanitarian assistance.  

Major international actors and organizations are increasingly acknowledging these youth efforts. Global approaches related to peace, security, development, and humanitarian action are becoming increasingly interrelated and youth-inclusive, at least in the discourse. Young people have been recognized as a critical part of humanitarian response, as early as the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. UNFPA called for youth participation and leadership to be the rule, rather than the exception, for it to be institutionalized in humanitarian processes and policies, and explicitly stipulated in operational plans and budgets.

In addition, the synergistic implementation of the WPS and YPS agendas can and does amplify young women’s leadership in peacebuilding and humanitarian action. One working example that echoes this statement is the Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS-HA) Compact, which has been designed with intergenerational co-creation in mind. The Compact framework has several actions for advancing the leadership and the meaningful inclusion, resourcing and protection of young people, especially young women. The aim is for signatories to contribute toward intergenerational feminist peacebuilding through concrete actions and commitments.

The WPS agenda is a critical instrument that brings both a gender and a conflict lens to humanitarian action. Grassroots women and youth peacebuilders from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, South Sudan and Venezuela – countries amid the world’s most severe refugee crises and armed conflicts – highlighted their critical contributions to humanitarian action and peacebuilding. They advocated for increased recognition of and investment in their work.

The African Union commissioned an

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49 ActionAid (2019). Shifting Power to Young People – How young people can lead and drive solutions in humanitarian action. Available at: https://actionaid.org/

independent study in 2020 on the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security in Africa. This study gives a continental and regional view of the efforts by young peacebuilders toward implementing the YPS resolutions. It looks at youth experiences, their roles, and contributions to peace and security, the challenges they face, resilience adapted to overcome hindrances as well as recommendations to enable policymakers to make contextual responses that are relevant toward youth participation in building sustainable peace in the continent. The report mentions several youth-led organizations addressing humanitarian issues and crises in the different regions of Africa. It also notes that “although the region has a large presence of international humanitarian actors, youth groups remain the least supported and involved in addressing festering peace and security challenges.”

This finding is resonated by research carried out by ActionAid in 2019, which reviewed the experiences of 400 young people in humanitarian action across 54 countries. Results of the research show that young people, particularly young women, are disproportionately affected by emergencies, and protracted crises, where young women’s voices are often the most excluded. Despite this, young people are the first responders in crises and emergency settings.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, young people had to adjust their varied activities and balance the impacts of the pandemic on themselves and their communities. For instance, Mutual Aid Kenya, a youth-led organization, advocates for the most vulnerable communities before the Kenyan government. They gather data when distributing aid and relief, and they have presented to the Senate a memorandum with suggestions on how to address people’s needs and goals, based on interviews with 200 individuals. In the Philippines, Young Women+ Leaders for Peace were also leading the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first phases of the pandemic, young women distributed face masks, disinfectants, and dignity kits to guarantee that the special needs of women and girls were met. These kits are prepared by YWL members and distributed to internally displaced women and youth in the Sagonsongan Transitional Temporary Shelter in Marawi, a city greatly affected by armed conflict between extremist groups.

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These cases demonstrate that youth continue to be agents of positive change during the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the crisis’ disproportionate impacts on them. Youth have demonstrated the important role that young women and men play in creating inclusive responses to crisis situations. This emphasizes the necessity of meaningfully including young people’s perspectives in decision-making and leadership in humanitarian action. The pandemic has made pre-existing inequality worse. More specifically, young women experience greater impacts from the coronavirus pandemic in all areas of their daily life, including safety, well-being, education, economic stability, health, nutrition, and access to technology. The exacerbated impact of the pandemic on young women, who have particular vulnerabilities, needs to be recognized and addressed, thus their voices must be prioritized because they are crucial to “building back better.”

GAPS IN THE YPS RESOLUTIONS THAT INHIBIT EFFECTIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN PEACEBUILDING AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Despite the adoption of a strong normative framework and support to youth leadership, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus often falls short in ensuring meaningful inclusion of young people. The global call for submissions, interviews with young peacebuilders, and the case studies identified the following gaps in the implementation of the YPS resolutions at the local, regional, national and global levels.

LACK OF AWARENESS

At the regional, national and local levels, understanding of the YPS agenda remains limited. Young people with low English proficiency have limited access to information on the YPS agenda. Furthermore, the jargon around the YPS agenda is reported to hinder youth of diverse backgrounds from being meaningfully included. To bridge the linguistic, cultural, and educational differences and divides between and among diverse population of youth, a youth leader shared the need to utilize traditional channels of communication in advocating for the application of the YPS resolutions, contending:

“The agenda must be translated and relayed in traditional communication given that our province of South Kivu is a province with low access to technology. This strategy will make it possible to take all the layers of young people and circumvent linguistic, cultural, and educational biases.”
– Youth Leader, DRC

Investing in mainstreaming YPS and increasing awareness of the agenda among young people in local communities is essential in increasing young people’s ownership of the YPS resolutions. It is also necessary to further strengthen the capacity of youth in advocating for the YPS agenda, as resonated by a youth leader in North Kivu:

“What is missing in the implementation of the YPS agenda is the ownership of this agenda by the youth. Another challenge is that the NAP 2250 has not yet enabled the disbursement of funds for the effective implementation of this agenda.”
– Youth Leader, DRC
Moreover, the results of an evaluation of the early stages of national implementation of NAPs on YPS in six different countries demonstrates that the lack of awareness about the YPS agenda is related to a lack of trust between young people and the governments in those countries. Such lack of trust is one of the roadblocks that exclude youth from higher decision-making processes.55

LACK OF TRUST BETWEEN STATE ACTORS AND YOUTH
The lack of awareness about the YPS agenda and lack of trust in government institutions are the two biggest challenges in the implementation of the YPS resolutions. The lack of trust between young people and the State hinders increased awareness of YPS amongst national stakeholders and in the community. This makes working with national and local authorities difficult for youth community-based organizations. Misunderstandings about the purposes of youth-led initiatives are frequent since peace and security are very sensitive concerns. Sometimes collaboration among CSOs can be looked upon with suspicion and create tensions. This challenge is more common in countries such as Myanmar where young peacebuilders are under threat for their participation in the civil disobedience movement.56

This mistrust is caused by issues of tokenism or exploitation related to the perceived insincerity of decision-makers’ desire to engage with youth. Youth peace activists explained how past experiences with bureaucrats at various levels of government have left young people feeling exploited by political elites who claim to care about youth issues while campaigning but abandon such concerns once in power.57 Tokenism is both stifling and belittling to young people. It does not only fail to develop true leadership capacities among youth but causes frustration and may lead to future disengagement.

Moreover, the exclusion of youth from decision-making processes creates a significant gap in governance, aggravates tensions, and threatens young people’s ability to build sustainable peace and become partners for development. Their absence as political actors means that youth will continue to lack the opportunity and avenue to engage in peacebuilding activities at the national level. Notwithstanding policy commitments and government assurances, youth and government interactions are based on

mistrust since young people are still excluded from the implementation of the YPS agenda. Youth, in particular, have lost faith in governments and representational democracies as democratic governance has regressed in many parts of the world. Across the MENA region surveyed in 2021 by the Arab Barometer, only 28 per cent of young people aged 18-29 expressed trust in their government and public institutions. Despite the inclusion of youth quotas in certain nations’ electoral policies, the proportion of young people in public institutions is still disproportionately low when compared to their demographic weight. Young women and men in the MENA countries are still disproportionately underrepresented in public institutions, and frequently excluded from political processes. Traditional stereotypes continue to shape the perception of many young candidates or office holders to be “too young to run and govern.”

Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust, a youth network in Zimbabwe also shared that the lack of alignment of policies further contributes to a lack of protection for youth. In Zimbabwe, despite clear constitutional provisions on liberties and youth participation, there are laws that limit youth rights such as the Zimbabwe Youth Council Act, which imposes additional restrictions on youth CSOs forbidding them from accepting foreign funding. Young people’s ability to exercise their right to political engagement is also restricted by the current age restrictions of 40 years for president and a minimum age of 21 to run for parliament.

**LACK OF PROTECTION**

Addressing the structural and collective dimensions of young people’s victimization, vulnerabilities, and grievances sits at the epicenter of the approach to tackling the violence of exclusion. This includes addressing young people’s needs for protection, their engagement with the State through criminal justice and security institutions, and their potential for unique roles in transitional justice. A safe and enabling environment for youth-led peacebuilding must be guaranteed to address the protection of young people and their experiences of injustice. The criminalization of youth activists hampers participation of young human rights advocates and peacebuilders. For instance, in Honduras, young people who engage in political activity are targeted by State security forces because of their political involvement. It also

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includes youth who are looked at, broadly, as criminals, potential criminals, vandals, and delinquents.61

Hate crimes against young people based on sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, as well as the threat of forced recruitment has become one of the main causes of displacement within Latin America and the Caribbean region.62 Young people are also the target of prejudice and physical abuse because of their sexuality and activism. For instance, young LGBTQI+ activists in Jamaica had to choose between enduring violence and harassment, going unnoticed, or escaping.63

UN Women research conducted in 2018 highlights that women, including young women, in conflict and post-conflict settings tend to experience heightened levels of other forms of violence, such as intimate partner and domestic violence, forced and/or coerced prostitution, child and/or forced marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, female infanticide, and/or forced/domestic labor. This assault on the safety of women and young women is also observed in cases of non-armed conflict and natural disasters.64 Implementing peacebuilding and humanitarian programs may pose threats to the lives of young peacebuilders, especially young women, as they are at risk of gender-based violence during armed conflict or in post-conflict situations. Hence, the implementation of the protection pillar is critical in relation to not only protection from the trauma of violent conflict but also protection of their rights, as well as the creation of an enabling environment for young women to implement their peacebuilding initiatives.

Due to the perception that young people pose a threat to the government, the issue of the targeted execution of youth activists dominates civic space. Extremist groups are targeting many young activists and peacebuilders and the government intervention regarding these killings is not visible.65 Similarly, youth in Myanmar continue to face extreme security risks including, murder, arrest, rape, torture,

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arbitrary detention, restrictions on the freedom of movement, loss of education, loss of employment, loss of digital security, internet restrictions, mental health trauma, sexual harassment, and social punishment.

**LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

Poor transparency and accountability in the implementation of the YPS agenda at national, regional and international levels continue to undermine the efforts of youth peacebuilders. According to consultations conducted by Peace Direct in 2019, there are no indicators to measure the progress of the implementation of the YPS agenda at the regional or national levels.66 This is resonated in the claims that the early versions of the NAPs created by the governments of Finland and Nigeria lacked sufficient indicators to monitor the development of the entirety of their NAPs and their various components.67 Without such indicators, it is difficult to measure the progress made by young peacebuilders. Monitoring of progress of the YPS agenda through a defined set of indicators will be instrumental in accelerating its implementation and enhancing accountability.

For example, in the context of Myanmar, one of the significant outcomes of the YPS implementation is a National Youth Policy that covers several pillars, including the pillars of participation, protection, and gender equality.68 However, the policy lacks concrete implementation steps, does not identify the actors who will facilitate its implementation, does not outline specific budgetary allotments, and does not include a mechanism for inclusion that will increase youth participation. Research participants pointed out the role of the United Nations in demanding accountability from countries in implementing YPS at the institutional level.

At the global level, it is challenging to demand accountability from governments and the United Nations on the implementation of YPS as no UN agency to date has the sole or primary mandate for implementing the agenda, and there are no global monitoring mechanisms. What we have currently, to report on young women specifically, is the scant link between WPS, YPS, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Governments can include YPS monitoring in their CEDAW compliance reports, and the UN and other multilateral organizations can utilize CEDAW to track their YPS commitments.69

LACK OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The effective implementation of the YPS resolutions requires an investment in youth-led peacebuilding. However, funding for youth organizations remains insufficient, with most operating on annual budgets of less than five thousand U.S. dollars. A complete transformation of the way in which peacebuilding and gender equality programming is financed is needed. Some encouraging measures are the UN Secretary General’s Peacebuilding Fund, which invested a total of USD 57.2 million through the Youth Promotion Initiative between 2016 and 2019. A global YPS Fund was also launched in 2021, incubated by SFCG and UNOY – another promising model of a pooled fund designed to support local peacebuilding by reducing bureaucratic requirements and improving accessibility.

Accessing and securing funds is even more challenging in conflict-affected areas due to ongoing crises, violence, and poor governance. In these environments, women are the most vulnerable. Youth peacebuilders, activists and human rights defenders, and LGBTQI+ youth, including those who face threats due to their work or identity, emphasized the need for flexible funding for immediate protection needs. These funds can also be utilized to increase resilience and support self-protection mechanisms of local women and youth peacebuilders.

Global discussions on how peace and security are achieved have changed as some Member States recognize that youth play significant leadership roles in peace processes. This acceptance, however, remains mostly conceptual and rhetoric, as most are reluctant to publicly invest long-term in young people’s capacity to contribute to peace. Youth-led activities that are sustainably funded give young people the chance to set their own priorities. However, providing accessible and focused funding for youth-led peacebuilding initiatives continues to be a major obstacle for both global and local communities. Although youth are actively spearheading peacebuilding activities, their scope and sustainability are limited by long-term underfunding, fragmented resource capacity, and difficult grant processes. Young peacebuilders are particularly impacted by the existing grant-making system due to its stringent qualifying standards and extensive eligibility criteria. The donor community rarely consults

70 United Nations. (n.d.). Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative UN Peacebuilding. Available at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/gypi-en
71 Search for Common Ground (2021, December 1). The youth, peace and security fund. Available at: https://www.sfcg.org/the-youth-peace-and-security-fund/
with young peacebuilders about the barriers they face in accessing funding, perpetuating the lack of informed financial strategies and limiting further local ownership. Additionally, the trust gap between young people and their governments, multilateral organizations, and even international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has further limited the capacity of youth to engage in peacebuilding.\(^74\)

Limited financial resources available to youth organizations is a major barrier to their active participation in peacebuilding, peacemaking, and conflict resolution.\(^75\) Most youth activists work on a voluntary basis in their communities, limiting their effectiveness in the implementation of the YPS agenda. Without resources, youth peacebuilders are limited in their reach and the type of programs to be implemented, thereby lowering the expected impact of their YPS interventions. The lack of adequate financing and recommendations to address the same has been echoed by reports from UN agencies like UNICEF.\(^76\)

\(^{74}\) Huits, A. & Whit, T. (2021). For Youth and By Youth: Re-Imagining Financing for Peacebuilding. The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). Available at: https://gppac.net/files/2021-12/For%20Youth%20and%20By%20Youth%20Re-Imagining%20Financing%20For%20Peacebuilding.pdf


\(^{77}\) Huits, A., & White, T. (2021). For youth and by youth: Re-imagining financing for peacebuilding. GPPAC. Available at: https://gppac.net/resources/youth-and-youth-re-imagining-financing-peacebuilding
CONCLUSION

The research shows that the adoption of the YPS resolutions has inspired youth mobilization in peacebuilding and humanitarian action, and the synergistic implementation of the WPS and YPS agendas can and does amplify young women’s leadership in peacebuilding and humanitarian action. However, despite the various efforts made to implement the YPS agenda, lack of awareness, mistrust between State actors and youth, lack of protection, and lack of financial support, are realities faced by young peacebuilders in these spaces. Poor transparency and accountability in the implementation of the YPS agenda at national, regional and international levels continue to undermine the efforts of youth peacebuilders locally.

Measuring progress at the global, national, regional, and local levels remains challenging due to limited documentation of the efforts to implement the YPS resolutions in specific regions, and a lack of data and defined indicators to track progress.

Though in policy YPS addresses all areas of the Triple Nexus, in practice, there remains a tokenistic inclusion of youth in humanitarian action and development programs. Young people, especially young women, continue to be a neglected group in humanitarian settings as evidenced in the cases of Bangladesh, DRC, and Myanmar. During crises, the barriers young women face in receiving adequate healthcare, including an increased risk of poor sexual and reproductive health, are also exacerbated.

Therefore, it is critically important to create dedicated local, national, regional, and international mechanisms, structures, and institutions, which will pay special attention to increasing meaningful inclusion of youth, and increased investment in youth in peacebuilding and humanitarian action. There is also a need to increase youth representation in leadership in higher decision-making positions where youth can represent their interests and concerns to formal power structures at the local, national, regional, and international level. Most importantly, there is a need to transform norms, and practices, address siloed approaches and attitudes, and recognize young people as equal and powerful actors who can positively contribute to all phases and aspects of peace processes and humanitarian action.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Both the global call for submissions and the case studies which were collected for this study offered thoughtful recommendations from youth peacebuilders on ways to accelerate the implementation of the YPS agenda. While relatively general and thus requiring nuance at the national and local levels, the ensuing recommendations aim to provide a springboard for further dialogue and, more importantly, action.

ON MEANINGFUL INCLUSION AND INCREASED INVESTMENT IN YOUTH

1. **Involve** young people meaningfully in peacebuilding efforts. Young people must be included at every stage of YPS programming to ensure that their expertise and visions for peace are integrated into the development of regional and national action plans and roadmaps. This allows for equal partnership between youth and other stakeholders. UN entities, Member States, regional organizations, and civil society must involve young people, particularly young women, in peacebuilding efforts in their respective regions, including through youth-led peace initiatives and dialogues.

2. **Invest** in youth leadership development and capacity-building. Provide training and skills development opportunities for young people, particularly young women, in areas such as conflict resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and leadership.

3. **Raise** awareness, build and strengthen ownership among young people of the need to lead and support humanitarian interventions, to build community resilience, and long-term peace and stability.

4. **Provide** support to young people, particularly young women, who are victims of violence and exploitation by rebel groups, such as through access to medical and psychological care, as well as legal assistance.

5. **Invest** in local youth peacebuilding efforts. Make consistent funding mechanisms more accessible to youth-led organizations to accelerate the implementation of the YPS resolutions. Multilateral and bilateral donors should create youth-friendly funding mechanisms that are less focused on reporting and more focused on delivering and strengthening recipients' financial management capacity. Funders should make grant application criteria easier for small, youth-led organizations with limited resources.

6. **Recognize, coordinate with and invest** in local youth leaders, youth-led organizations and non-formal networks as key actors in humanitarian response, by providing accessible, direct, sustainable, reliable and flexible funding.
7. **Ensure and expand** young women’s access to gender-sensitive and age-appropriate education that incorporates modules on peace, gender equality and women’s rights. Create alternative education pathways for young people, especially the most marginalized and hard to reach, to bridge divides among them and create a foundation for strengthening their agency.

8. **Translate** documents into local and other languages in order for youth who may not have been able to learn English or official national languages, do not miss out on important services, opportunities, and knowledge of their rights.

9. **Address** the digital divide and the gender gap within this divide, which hinders young peacebuilders, especially young women, from participating in critical online meetings with national and global policymakers on humanitarian action and peacebuilding. This can be done by guaranteeing reliable, safe and affordable access to the internet.

**ON YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS AND INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE**

1. **Increase** youth representation and participation in higher decision-making positions. Promote the active and equal participation of young people, particularly young women, in decision-making processes at all levels on the design and implementation of humanitarian interventions, where their diverse experiences are recognized, they have the power to shape decisions and design of humanitarian strategies, and that their contributions are not commodified.

2. **Build** trust between youth and governments to help strengthen institutional spaces for youth participation by creating accessible platforms for sustained interaction and dialogue to build mutual trust and understanding and dispel negative perceptions and promote social cohesion.

3. **Establish and reinforce** the linkages between youth and parliaments, as well as the use of young parliamentarians as mediators and as promoters of dialogue in divided societies.

4. **Promote** intergenerational exchanges. Intergenerational dialogue, partnership, and co-leadership are crucial to ensure the meaningful participation of youth. Young people’s participation should not be limited to youth-led or youth-focused groups and organizations.

5. **Increase and sustain** the participation of youth in coordination mechanisms of humanitarian action chaired by the United Nations and INGOs, ensuring that their participation moves beyond ad hoc consultations.
ON POLICY INTEGRATION, COHERENCE, AND STRENGTHENED COORDINATION

1. **Accelerate** the implementation of the YPS agenda by integrating and reinforcing it in the work of regional and multilateral organizations such as the African Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Commonwealth, the European Union, the League of Arab States, Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

2. **Localize and promote** the synergy between the implementation of WPS and YPS resolutions, with local young women leaders at the core of peacebuilding and humanitarian initiatives.

3. **Strengthen** coordination mechanisms at the local, national, and global levels considering that multiple policy domains are related to the YPS agenda. This can help ensure inclusive decision-making, leadership, and effective implementation of the YPS agenda.

4. **Ensure** that all stakeholders integrate an intersectional perspective when considering gender norms, identities, and age, and how it affects young women’s participation in peacebuilding and humanitarian action. Recognize age, gender, and diversity within the category of youth when addressing specific needs.

5. **Strengthen** monitoring and evaluation mechanisms on YPS and humanitarian action. The YPS resolutions can be leveraged to monitor and report on human rights abuses in the regions, particularly those that affect young people, and advocate for accountability for those responsible.

6. **Guarantee** that humanitarian interventions implemented by the United Nations and international non-governmental actors are equitable and meet the urgent, intersecting needs of the community, including young women and other vulnerable groups.

7. **Prioritize** the development of sustainable, gender-responsive, inclusive and transformative humanitarian interventions, which build community resilience and foster social cohesion.

8. **Build on and invest in** the existing efforts by youth-led organizations to strengthen initiatives and mechanisms for the systematic and meaningful engagement of young people in building and sustaining peace across regions.

9. **Develop** regional cooperation and implementation mechanisms, by strengthening synergies, coherence, and coordination between local,
national, and regional actors working on implementing the YPS resolutions. There is a need to strengthen platforms for regional collaboration between youth and governments, within and across regions.