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Programme questions: evaluation

Thematic evaluation of the youth, peace and security agenda: youth participation

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) evaluated the efforts of the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and peacekeeping operations and special political missions in expanding meaningful youth participation in line with the youth, peace and security agenda.

The thematic evaluation found that since the adoption of the youth, peace and security agenda in 2015, progress towards increasing youth participation had been slow owing to limited and inconsistent resources, limited awareness and capacities in respect of the agenda, and the lack of a road map for its implementation. Further, United Nations coordination mechanisms were characterized by a variety of voluntary arrangements that often lacked clear roles and responsibilities.

The Youth Promotion Initiative launched by the Peacebuilding Fund in 2016 had been a key source of dedicated funding to support initiatives addressing the needs of young people. Civil society organizations provided positive feedback in relation to the Initiative, highlighting the alignment of projects with their priorities, including the integration of youth perspectives into decision-making processes. The Initiative had also effectively addressed the intersectional gender dimension in youth-led peacebuilding through its focus on engagement with diverse groups of young women.

In field missions, there had been progress towards establishing mechanisms for assessing and responding to the needs of young people in relation to the youth, peace and security agenda. However, clear strategies to increase youth participation had not been consistently articulated, limiting broad and common understanding of what meaningful youth participation entailed. Only 7 of 37 field missions had developed youth, peace and security-specific strategies or included youth, peace and security in

* E/AC.51/2023/1.



their policy and planning frameworks. Most missions lacked a formal strategy or basis to consistently plan, monitor and report on activities and results for youth participation. To that end, while the present evaluation found some evidence of increased youth participation enabled by missions, there was a lack of comprehensive data on activities, outcomes and impact.

The engagement of civil society organizations had been central to the agenda, and the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security had enabled partnerships between youth, multilateral, governmental and civil society actors and generated collective knowledge on youth, peace and security. However, at the national level, systematic engagements with local civil society organizations and youth-led organizations were limited.

OIOS made three important recommendations:

(a) To the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs: to prioritize dedicated capacities and expertise for the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda;

(b) To the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs: to hold consultations with the United Nations Youth Office and other relevant United Nations entities with a view to formalizing coordination mechanisms and develop a strategy and results framework for operationalizing and financing the youth, peace and security agenda;

(c) To the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs: to enhance access to Peacebuilding Fund funds and the capacity of youth-led peacebuilding organizations at the local and national levels and leverage the capacities and deep field presence of field missions.

I. Introduction and objective

1. The overall objective of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) thematic evaluation was to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, coherence, effectiveness and sustainability of the efforts of the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and peacekeeping operations and special political missions to expand meaningful youth participation in relation to the youth, peace and security agenda since 2018. The evaluation topic emerged from a programme-level risk assessment described in the evaluation inception paper produced at the outset of the evaluation.¹ Based on the inception paper, the youth, peace and security pillar of participation was selected to be the focus of the present evaluation. It was determined that participation was the broadest and most inclusive of the youth, peace and security pillars and that supporting that pillar was both a goal of the agenda and an enabler of other pillars of the agenda.

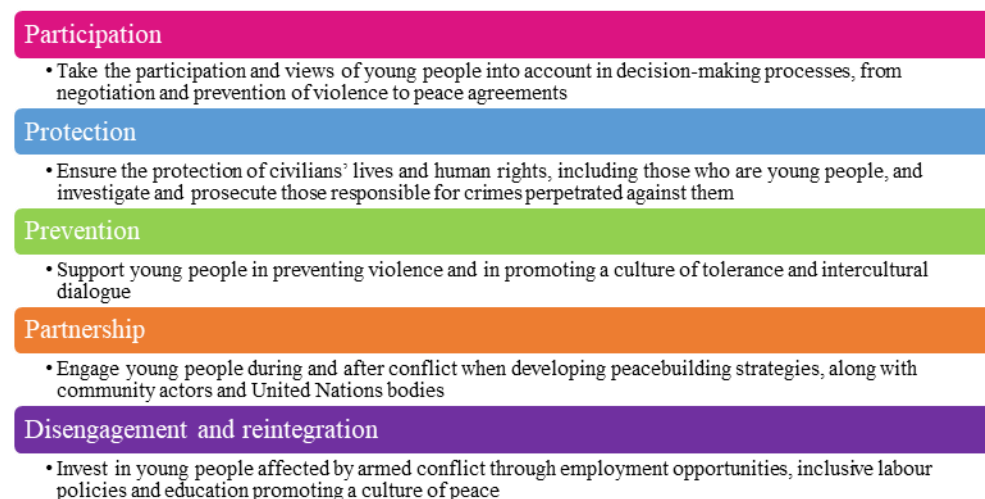
2. The evaluation conforms with the norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations system. Management comments were sought on the draft report and have been included in the annex.

II. Background

3. The youth, peace and security agenda refers to a normative framework based on a set of three Security Council resolutions in which the Council recognized the essential role that young people play in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security (resolutions [2250 \(2015\)](#), [2419 \(2018\)](#) and [2535 \(2020\)](#)). In the resolutions, the Council defined youth as persons between the ages of 18 and 29 years and identified five key pillars for action: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships and disengagement and reintegration. Figure I provides a brief description of each of the five pillars.

Figure I

Youth, peace and security pillars



¹ Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), "Thematic Evaluation of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda: Youth Participation", inception paper, document IED-22-006 (2022).

4. The global normative frameworks for sustainable, comprehensive and inclusive peace have expanded significantly since the year 2000. The women and peace and security agenda set forth in Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and subsequent resolutions, the youth, peace and security agenda, and the concept of sustaining peace outlined in Council resolution [2282 \(2016\)](#) and General Assembly resolution [70/262](#) have all called for expanding inclusion across the spectrum of peace and security processes and activities to traditionally excluded demographics. The resolutions affirm the fundamental right of a person to participate in public life and contribute to the peace, development and prosperity of one's society regardless of nationality, ethnicity, caste, class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation or other status. Of relevance has been the intersection of youth, peace and security and women and peace and security, namely, the importance of addressing gendered experiences and challenges in youth, peace and security and considering and addressing age-specific concerns of young women through the women and peace and security agenda.² The youth, peace and security agenda also acts as an accelerator of key commitments of the Secretary-General set forth in his report "Our Common Agenda" ([A/75/982](#)) on promoting peace and preventing conflicts and on listening to and working with young people.

5. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs has been the lead entity for the development and implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda in the Secretariat. Through its Peacebuilding Support Office, the Department assists and supports the Peacebuilding Commission and manages the Peacebuilding Fund on behalf of the Secretary-General. The Department also works to enhance system-wide coherence and partnerships with United Nations and external actors in support of building and sustaining peace in relevant countries. The Peacebuilding Fund has to date been the largest source of dedicated funding for the agenda across the United Nations. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs is part of a joint secretariat on youth, peace and security established together with the United Nations Population Fund, which has been critical in facilitating the coordination of the youth, peace and security agenda throughout the United Nations system.

6. The Department of Peace Operations plays a key role in the implementation of the agenda. Its Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions and the Policy, Evaluation and Training Division have been at the forefront of the engagement on the agenda and supporting its mainstreaming across peacekeeping operations.

7. Peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as the field entities most directly engaged in ensuring the engagement of young people on peace and security issues in conflict settings, play an important role in the implementation of the agenda at the field level. These field entities had been working with young people, promoting their participation, before the establishment of the youth, peace and security agenda, including through programmatic funding in peacekeeping operations for community violence reduction and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

8. The United Nations country teams, under the overall leadership of the resident coordinators and the Development Cooperation Office, are present in countries in which there are United Nations programmes. As such, they are a critical piece for the coordination of activities at the country level. All Peacebuilding Fund projects are closely coordinated with the resident coordinators, and their implementation is carried out by the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes present in the recipient countries.

² Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, "Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS): Complementarities of the two agendas" (2021).

III. Scope and methodology

9. The scope of the evaluation covered activities in support of youth participation at the national and global levels implemented by the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (including the Peacebuilding Fund) and field entities (peacekeeping operations and special political missions). The time frame considered was from January 2018 to September 2022, to account for progress made since the publication of the independent progress study on youth and peace and security in 2018.³

10. The evaluation employed a mixed-method approach incorporating the following qualitative and quantitative methods:

(a) Five case studies (Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kosovo,⁴ Mali and Somalia) were selected with the purpose of identifying outcomes at the level of beneficiaries, trends, good practices and gaps. Selection criteria considered included previous coverage by other OIOS exercises, the presence of a United Nations mission and the existence of projects funded through the Youth Promotion Initiative. Case studies assessed the relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability of youth, peace and security activities in mission settings as well as through the Youth Promotion Initiative;

(b) A systematic desk review of key documents was undertaken, including Security Council resolutions on youth, peace and security, the progress report, reports of the Secretary-General on youth, peace and security and their inputs, guidance documents on youth, peace and security, Peacebuilding Fund project documents, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, United Nations youth strategies, and government youth strategies when available in case-study countries and territories;

(c) Individual and group interviews (119) were conducted in case-study countries and territories (19 in Colombia, 17 in Kosovo, 24 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 24 in Mali and 25 in Somalia) as well as through videoconferences in New York (10). The interviews were used to obtain qualitative data on the perspectives of relevant actors and their experiences with activities related to the youth, peace and security agenda. The following actors were interviewed: young people and beneficiaries in case-study countries and territories, youth organizations and civil society organizations; Member States; respective Governments; other partners; and the United Nations staff;

(d) An online survey was launched to the United Nations youth, peace and security focal point network to gather the focal points' opinions on how effectively current arrangements were meeting the needs of young people and to learn what priority areas they had identified for the development of the agenda. The response rate was 54 per cent;

(e) Structured observation of the High-Level Global Conference on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes co-organized in January 2022 by the Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth and Search for Common Ground in collaboration with several other United Nations partners, including the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and civil society organizations.

³ "The missing peace: independent progress study on youth and peace and security" ([A/72/761-S/2018/86](#)).

⁴ References to Kosovo throughout the present document shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution [1244 \(1999\)](#).

Limitations

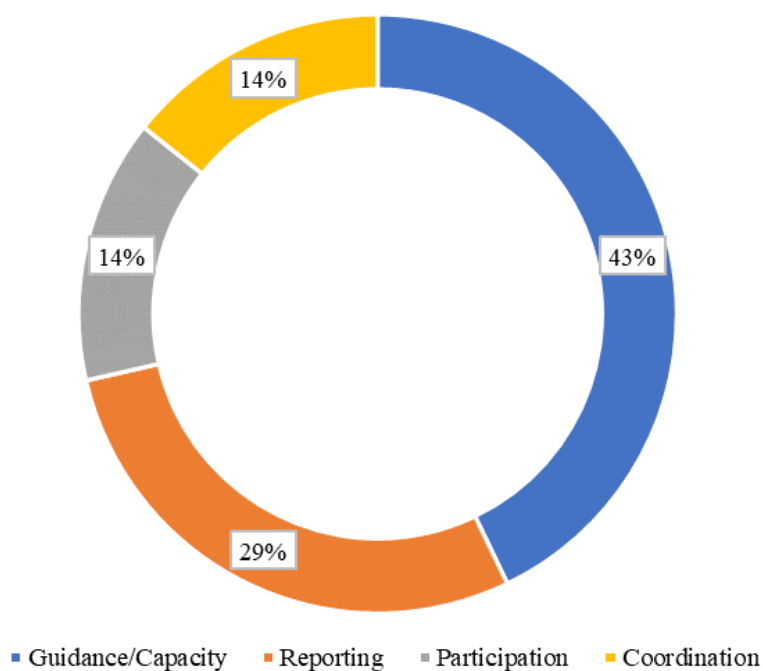
11. Given the formative stage of the agenda, there was a lack of data, structures and strategies to drive efforts related to the youth, peace and security agenda, especially in mission settings. That, in turn, limited the ability of the evaluation to assess the achievement of expected outcomes as described in the theory of change developed as part of the evaluation inception paper.⁵ Furthermore, the focus of the evaluation on the pillar of participation as both a goal of the agenda and an enabler of other pillars of the agenda did not allow for an exhaustive assessment of efforts to support those other pillars.

IV. Results

12. An analysis of the expressed priorities in the three Security Council resolutions on the youth, peace and security agenda reflected its early stage of implementation. Operative language addressed to the Secretary-General and United Nations entities was coded and analysed. The analysis included 21 references to requests from the Security Council, spanning four categories: reporting, participation, coordination, and guidance and capacity. As shown in figure II, most requests called for the provision of guidance and ensuring capacity for the implementation of the agenda (43 per cent). That was followed by mandates on reporting (29 per cent), specific calls for improving participation initiatives, and coordination on the agenda (14 per cent each). Summaries of the requests are presented at the beginning of each result section below along with the status of their implementation.

Figure II

Categories of operative language of Security Council resolutions addressed to the Secretary-General and United Nations entities



Note: N=21.

⁵ OIOS, inception paper IED-22-006.

A. Relevance: There has been progress towards establishing mechanisms for assessing and responding to the needs of young people in relation to the youth, peace and security agenda; however, clear strategies to increase youth participation have not been consistently articulated

<i>Security Council resolution and paragraph No.</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Evidence of implementation (limited, some, considerable)</i>
Resolution 2535 (2020), para. 19	Improve coordination and interaction regarding the role and the needs of youth during armed conflicts and post-conflict situations	Some
Resolution 2419 (2018), para. 21; resolution 2535 (2020), para. 23	Develop internal mechanisms to broaden the participation of youth, within the work of the United Nations	Some
Resolution 2535 (2020), para. 23	Integrate the youth, peace and security agenda in strategic and planning documents, conflict analyses, frameworks, initiatives and guidance tools, at the global, regional and national levels	Some
Resolution 2535 (2020), para. 21	All peacekeeping and other relevant United Nations missions to develop and implement context-specific strategies on youth, peace and security, bearing in mind their respective mandates	Limited

While the Peacebuilding Fund systematically assessed and responded to youth needs, few field missions assessed or reflected those needs through dedicated strategies for the implementation of the agenda

13. The Peacebuilding Fund developed youth-responsive guidelines, which have been mainstreamed throughout its project cycle. The Fund launched its first Youth Promotion Initiative in 2016 in response to Security Council resolution 2250 (2015), in which the Council called for targeted peacebuilding projects on youth inclusion and participation. The Initiative was created as a direct mechanism to support young people's contributions to peacebuilding. In 2019, the Peacebuilding Fund developed youth-responsive guidelines for its projects based on its experience with the Youth Promotion Initiative and the inclusion of young people in the broader Peacebuilding Fund portfolio.⁶ The guidelines have been mainstreamed throughout the project cycle and call for:

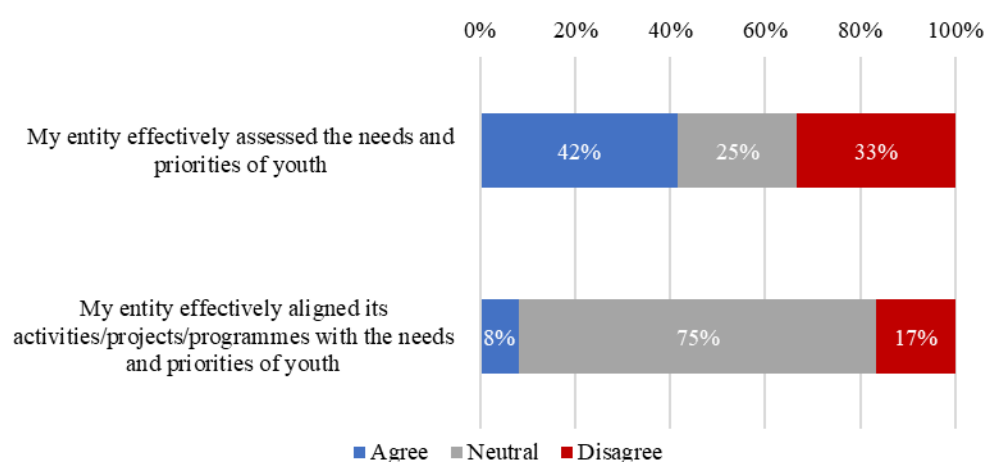
- Including young people in the initiation, planning, implementation and evaluation of the programme
- Gender- and age-sensitive conflict analyses grounded in the local context
- Identifying which young people will be engaged for what reasons and how they will be identified
- Linking youth empowerment and participation to positive peacebuilding outcomes

⁶ Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs – Peacebuilding Support Office, “PBF Guidance Note on Youth and Peacebuilding” (2019).

14. Young people and civil society organizations provided positive feedback on the prioritization of their needs in relation to the Youth Promotion Initiative, highlighting the alignment of projects with their priorities, which were anchored in the community. An analysis of a sample of Youth Promotion Initiative project evaluations reviewed as part of the case studies attests to the relevance of those projects to young people and to government stakeholders such as in Somalia, where a project's platform for youth dialogue was aligned with the goals of the current national development plan, which advocated for youth empowerment,⁷ or in Mali, where the inclusiveness of a youth peacebuilding project was reported as "good" to "excellent" by its youth participants.⁸ In Colombia, a Youth Promotion Initiative project evaluation highlighted that activities responded to the needs of young people, who had been consulted in the design and implementation of the project.⁹

15. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2250 (2015), the youth, peace and security agenda has increasingly been mainstreamed in mission settings; however, few missions have formalized commitments to respond to youth needs in their planning. That was illustrated by the growing number of missions whose mandate references youth, peace and security or the engagement of young people. A total of 7 out of 12 peacekeeping missions and 11 out of 25 special political missions had references to the agenda or to youth engagement in their mandate or mandate renewal. Despite that positive trend, fewer (seven) reported having youth, peace and security-specific strategies or included youth, peace and security in their policy and planning frameworks.¹⁰ Missions therefore mostly lacked a formal strategy to consistently plan activities for youth participation and few missions formulated explicit activities related to youth participation in their planning and budgets. That was reflected in the survey of youth, peace and security focal points, with 42 per cent of mission respondents indicating that their entity effectively assessed the needs of young people, but only 8 per cent agreeing that activities were aligned with those needs (see figure III).

Figure III
Needs assessment and alignment in mission settings



Source: Survey of youth, peace and security focal points.

Note: N=12.

⁷ See <https://mptf.undp.org/project/00119317>.

⁸ See <https://mptf.undp.org/project/00108389>.

⁹ See <https://mptf.undp.org/project/00119341>.

¹⁰ See the OIOS analysis of inputs to the 2022 report of the Secretary-General on youth and peace and security (S/2022/220).

16. Among the missions whose policies and planning frameworks featured youth, peace and security, promising approaches were noted in respect of consulting young people about their needs. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia had put in place a youth advisory board through the Resident Coordinator Office to advise senior leadership and provide input into United Nations programming in the country. Since 2017, the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) had organized four sessions of its United Nations Youth Assembly in Kosovo, which had brought together young men and women to exchange ideas, share concerns and develop joint solutions and recommendations shared with international organizations and local decision-makers. The event also served as a platform to showcase youth-led projects that eventually received financial support from UNMIK.

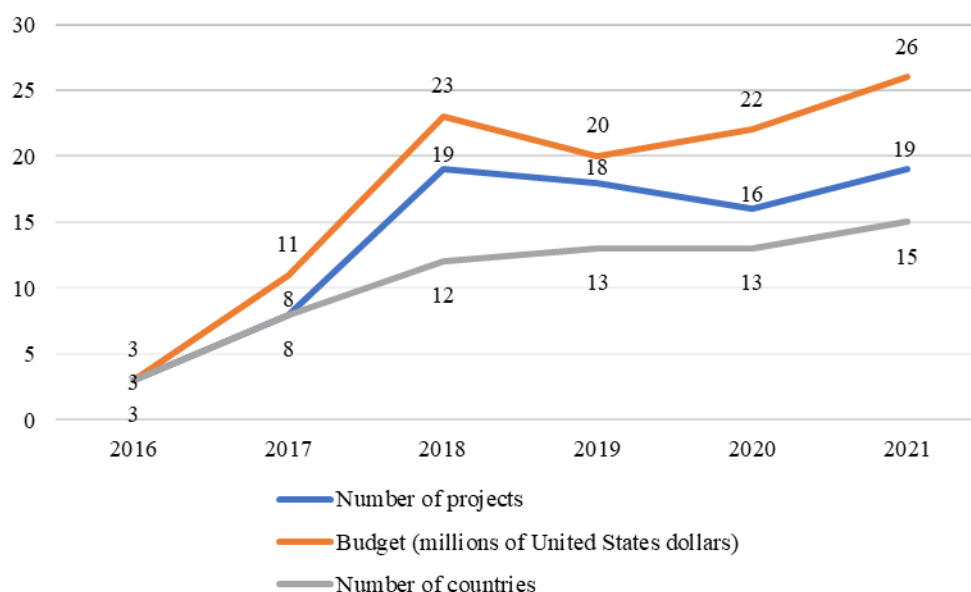
B. Effectiveness: The youth, peace and security agenda has driven an increase in youth participation initiatives, although there was a lack of comprehensive data on activities and outcomes

<i>Security Council resolution and paragraph No.</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Evidence of implementation (limited, some, considerable)</i>
Resolution 2535 (2020) , para. 20	Include the views of youth in relevant discussions, and facilitate their full, effective and meaningful participation at all decision-making levels, paying particular attention to the inclusion of young women and without distinction or discrimination of any kind	Some
Resolution 2535 (2020) , para. 24	Include, in reports and briefings to the Security Council, information and related recommendations on issues of relevance to young people, as well as pertinent disaggregated data related to youth within existing mandates	Limited

The Peacebuilding Fund has increased youth participation through its Youth Promotion Initiative portfolio

17. The Peacebuilding Fund has increased youth participation through the growth in funding of the Youth Promotion Initiative from \$2.7 million in 2016 to \$25.7 million in 2021. Since 2016, the Fund has invested over \$105 million in 83 Youth Promotion Initiative projects in more than 20 countries (see figure IV).

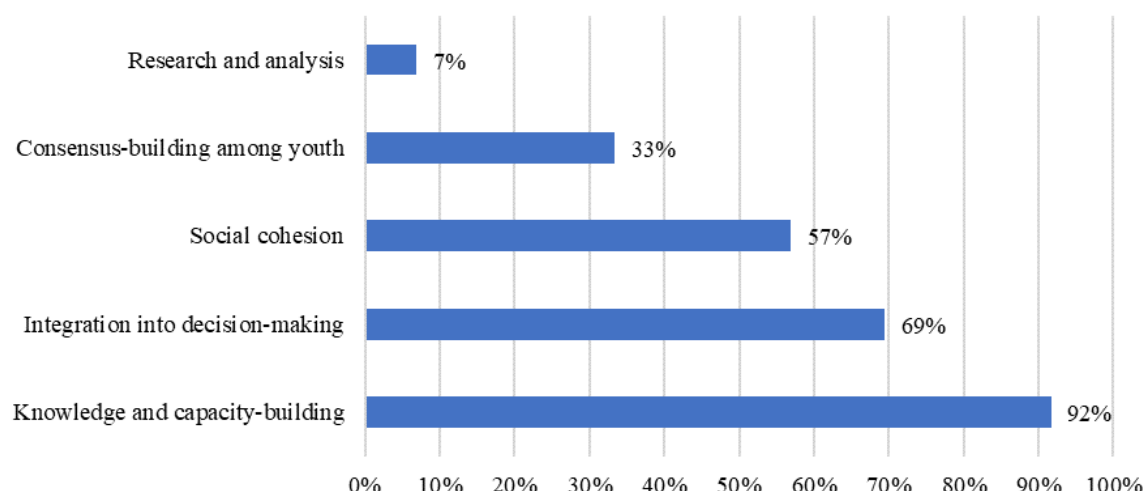
Figure IV
Youth Promotion Initiative funding trends, 2016–2021



18. Youth Promotion Initiative projects were formulated with the overarching objective of increasing the contribution of young people to peacebuilding. The projects effectively responded to the challenges and gaps relating to young people in peacebuilding identified in the 2020 and 2022 reports of the Secretary-General on youth and peace and security ([S/2020/167](#) and [S/2022/220](#)) and the report “Our Common Agenda”, which call for the increased mobilization of young people for participation in peace and security processes. An OIOS analysis of the 72 Youth Promotion Initiative projects from 2018 to 2021 indicated that nearly all (67 out of 72) interventions formulated were multifaceted, covering a range of thematic areas and containing multiple project components, activities and expected outcomes. The outcome areas (186) of the 72 projects were analysed and coded (see figure V) under the following categories:

- Increasing knowledge and building the capacity of young people through advocacy and by bolstering their capacity to engage in civic spaces, promote resilience and participate in peacebuilding initiatives
- Building consensus among youth through dialogue platforms and various youth networks intended to strengthen and consolidate the voices of youth in peacebuilding
- Promoting social cohesion through activities that brought together groups of young people with the broader community to address ethnic, cultural and social differences
- Integrating youth into decision-making processes by involving them in public policy and peace and security decision-making processes
- Research and analysis work to further promote youth participation in peace and security

Figure V
Youth Promotion Initiative expected project outcomes, 2018–2021



Note: N=72.

19. In its resolution [2535 \(2020\)](#), the Security Council called for the inclusion of the views of youth in relevant discussions and for the facilitation of their meaningful participation in peace and security processes (para. 20). “Meaningful participation” has been defined as a rights-based approach to inclusive youth programming whereby young people are informed, consulted and have their voices considered in decision-making processes.¹¹ The Peacebuilding Fund adopted a multidimensional approach to engaging youth in peacebuilding projects by including young people across the spectrum of the youth demographic through formal and informal needs assessments, focus groups and projects created for and designed in consultation with its target populations. There were examples of inclusive approaches employed by the Fund throughout the five case studies, including in Colombia, through the co-development of a Youth Promotion Initiative project based on ancestral practices of the target population; in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where projects worked with indigenous groups at the local levels; in Mali, where projects worked with internally displaced youth; and in Somalia, where regions for Youth Promotion Initiative projects were selected based on diversity to ensure the inclusion of clan perspectives. In Kosovo, there was a project that targeted non-majority and majority youth to bring them together to foster life skills and promote trust-building. Interviews of project partners and direct beneficiaries of Youth Promotion Initiative projects (over 85 per cent) indicated that activities had effectively considered the diversity of youth in programming by taking into account gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and other statuses.¹²

20. The Peacebuilding Fund effectively addressed the gender dimension in youth peacebuilding by drawing upon important policy intersections with the women and peace and security, including by focusing on the experience and engagement of diverse groups of young women. For example, in Colombia, the Youth Promotion Initiative implemented initiatives that worked with young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex women in the Cauca valley to increase their leadership

¹¹ United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Development Programme, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs/Peacebuilding Support Office and Folke Bernadotte Academy, *Youth, Peace and Security: A Programming Handbook* (2021).

¹² Youth Promotion Initiative 2022 case-study selected projects for Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Somalia – 15 projects in total.

skills for political participation and, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, young women joined together to strengthen social cohesion. Many interview respondents also highlighted the complementarity and intentional integration of gender in the planning, design and implementation of Youth Promotion Initiative projects as well as the utilization of quotas to ensure adequate gender inclusion.

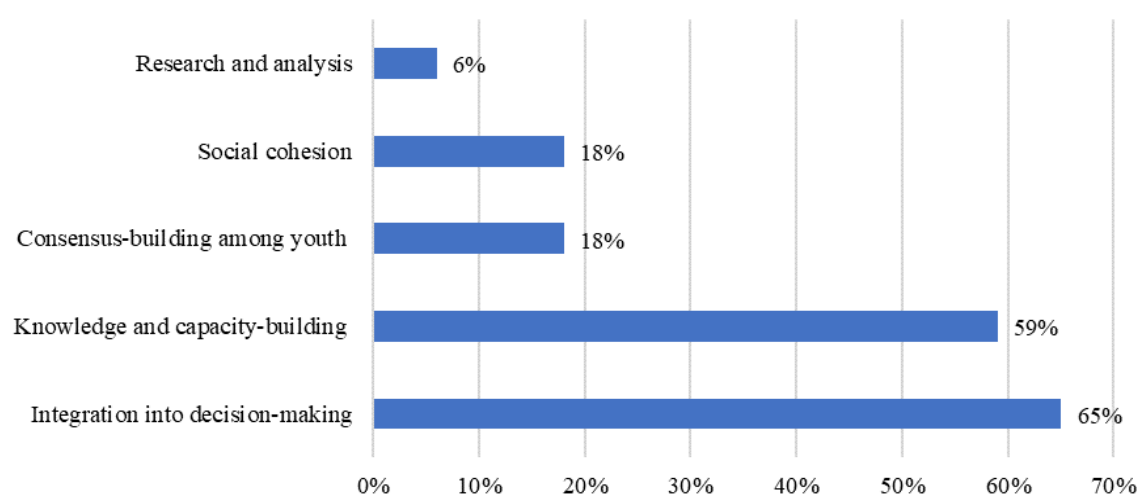
21. In addition to its inclusive approach, which took into account the diverse voices of young people, the Youth Promotion Initiative further demonstrated the integration of youth perspectives into decision-making processes in 69 per cent of projects (see figure V) covering more than 20 countries. Interview data from Initiative beneficiaries confirmed that participation and influence of young people in decision-making processes contributed to their engagement.

There have been positive examples of increased youth participation in missions

22. Youth participation initiatives reported by missions (see [S/2020/167](#) and [S/2022/220](#)) were analysed and coded under the same categories as the Youth Promotion Initiative projects (see para. 18 above). Figure VI provides detailed information on the percentage of missions that reported on youth participation initiatives, by respective category.

Figure VI

Youth participation activities reported by missions



Note: N=17.

23. The largest number of missions (65 per cent) reported on activities related to the integration of young people into decision-making processes. In addition to the reported activities in the Secretary-General's reports on youth, peace and security, there was notable evidence from each of the case-study countries of processes at different stages of implementation to increase youth participation in decision-making (see the table below). In Colombia, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia had engaged in multiple aspects of the peace process, including supporting the integration of youth priorities and voices in the municipal youth councils and the Truth Commission. In Kosovo, UNMIK had supported youth participation in the national road map for youth, peace and security. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had provided logistic and in-kind support to the work of the country's 2250 national technical secretariat in charge of developing a national framework for the implementation of the agenda. In Mali, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

had supported the Platform for Youth Engagement in Security Sector Reform and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, which engaged youth associations in discussing and implementing the peace agreement provisions on security sector reform. In Somalia, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia had provided technical and financial support to the revision of the national youth policy and action plan.

Examples of positive results of youth participation

<i>Pillar entity</i>	<i>Selected case-study examples of results of youth integration into decision-making</i>
United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia	Municipal youth councils and Truth Commission
United Nations Mission in Kosovo	National road map for youth, peace and security
United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo	2250 technical secretariat
United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali	Platform for Youth Engagement in Security Sector Reform and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia	National youth policy and action plan

24. There were also positive examples of effective integration of gender in the missions. UNMIK acknowledged that although age discrimination affected all young people, young women faced additional challenges, such as less access to political processes. UNMIK purposefully integrated women and youth and used strategic differentiation to give gender and youth equitable weight; it also channelled the most effective types of activities to advance gender equality as well as to bolster young women's political participation. For example, the United Nations Youth Assembly in Kosovo targeted and supported young women from different communities to participate in national-level dialogue. Through their review of mission-wide programme proposals, the youth and gender advisers collaborated and identified programmatic activities that meaningfully integrated youth and gender, which were supported by joint funds. In addition, UNMIK launched a mentorship programme for young women to work alongside senior United Nations staff members, provided hands-on experience in leadership and decision-making and imparted knowledge on how to access job opportunities.

However, there were insufficient data for monitoring and reporting on youth participation activities

25. Overall, the approaches to collecting and monitoring data on youth participation activities were fragmented, resulting in the absence of comprehensive information within and across entities. Despite the requests from the Security Council for disaggregated data on youth (resolution 2535 (2020), para. 24) reporting on youth participation activities was limited to individual inputs from entities compiled for the biennial report of the Secretary-General on youth and peace and security, which provided narrative information on youth participation, often without a direct reportable linkage to measurable outcomes. Peacebuilding Fund project-level interventions provided end-of-project reports and, in some cases, project evaluations,

but they were specific to individual project-level results of activities implemented by agencies, funds and programmes. Furthermore, the contributions of other Peacebuilding Fund projects to the agenda beyond the Youth Promotion Initiative were not systematically captured. Owing to the substantial limitations of the monitoring and reporting data related to youth participation activities, there was insufficient information to draw conclusions on overall outcomes or results for youth engaged across the entities. That was particularly true in peace operations whose engagement with young people predated the youth, peace and security agenda, especially in the areas of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and community violence reduction.

C. Coherence: United Nations coordination and collaboration mechanisms for the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda have provided platforms for engagement with a range of stakeholders that have delivered mixed results

<i>Security Council resolution and paragraph No.</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Evidence of implementation (limited, some, considerable)</i>
Resolution 2535 (2020), para. 16	Coordinate and increase engagement in the implementation of youth, peace and security resolutions	Some
Resolution 2535 (2020), para. 16	Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth to promote the coordination and coherence of youth, peace and security activities across the United Nations system	Limited
Resolution 2535 (2020), para. 23	Appoint youth focal points, building on existing human resources, for the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda	Considerable
Resolution 2535 (2020), para. 25	Ensure that, within existing resources, capacities and expertise to engage young people and youth organizations are in place for the accelerated implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda	Some

United Nations coordination mechanisms were characterized by a variety of arrangements that lacked clear roles and responsibilities

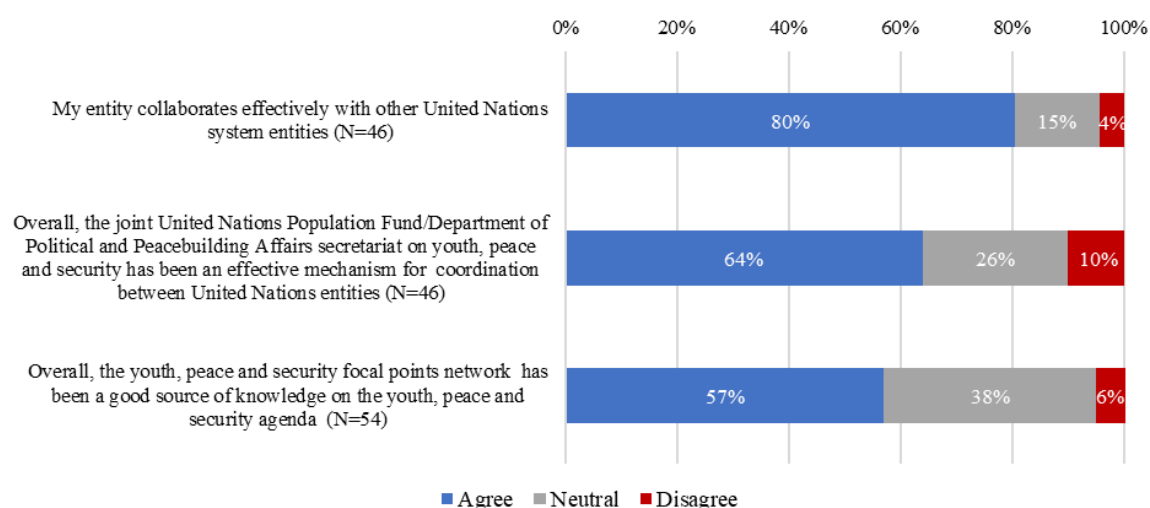
26. A global coordination structure for the advancement of the youth, peace and security agenda within the United Nations had started to take shape; however, mechanisms had yet to be formalized. A joint secretariat consisting of the United Nations Population Fund and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs had taken the lead on coordination for the agenda. The joint secretariat, which was also co-chairing the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, had previously been tasked to jointly support the development of the independent progress study on youth, peace and security published in 2018. However, since that exercise, the role of the joint secretariat and its responsibilities had not been formalized and the secretariat was being operated by staff who voluntarily took on the added responsibilities.

27. Following the request of the Security Council to the Secretary-General and relevant United Nations entities to appoint youth focal points for the implementation of the agenda within their respective mandates (Council resolution [2535 \(2020\)](#), para. 23), a focal point system was created under the joint secretariat in 2021. At the time of writing, there were 124 youth, peace and security focal points from 48 different entities. No terms of reference or clear guidance on the expected role and responsibilities of that focal point network had been developed.

28. In addition, in its resolution [2535 \(2020\)](#), the Security Council encouraged the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth to promote the coordination of youth, peace and security activities in the United Nations as well as to track the implementation of the associated resolutions (*ibid.*, para. 16). Despite the Office having performed some advocacy actions, it was faced with several limitations with respect to staffing and resources. The recently approved United Nations Youth Office had yet to clearly define its role in advancing the youth, peace and security agenda and could play a key role in strengthening this coordination landscape (see General Assembly resolution [76/306](#)). Notwithstanding the lack of clear roles and responsibilities for global coordination mechanisms within the United Nations, they were viewed positively by staff (see figure VII). Interview data further indicated that staff appreciated the complementarity of the joint secretariat structure, with the United Nations Population Fund and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs being able to engage and put forth the perspective of the agencies, funds and programmes, and the peace and security pillar, respectively.

Figure VII

Views on global coordination mechanisms within the United Nations



Source: Survey of youth, peace and security focal points.

29. At the country level, the Peacebuilding Fund has been successful in systematically promoting the collaboration of United Nations system entities with its joint projects through the Youth Promotion Initiative. The Initiative accepts three types of proposals (in countries eligible for Peacebuilding Fund funding):

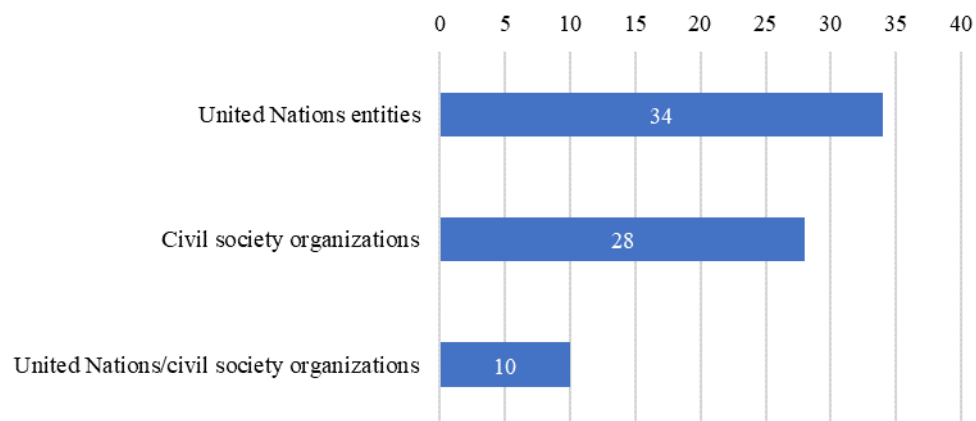
- Joint United Nations proposals (up to three direct funding recipients)
- Joint United Nations–civil society organization proposals (one to two United Nations direct funding recipients and one civil society organization direct funding recipient);

- Civil society organization proposals (one civil society organization direct funding recipient)

30. An analysis of Youth Promotion Initiative projects from 2018 to 2021 shows that 34 projects (47 per cent) consisted of joint United Nations projects (see figure VIII). Those projects also accounted for a majority (55 per cent) of funding by type of direct recipient (see figure IX).

Figure VIII

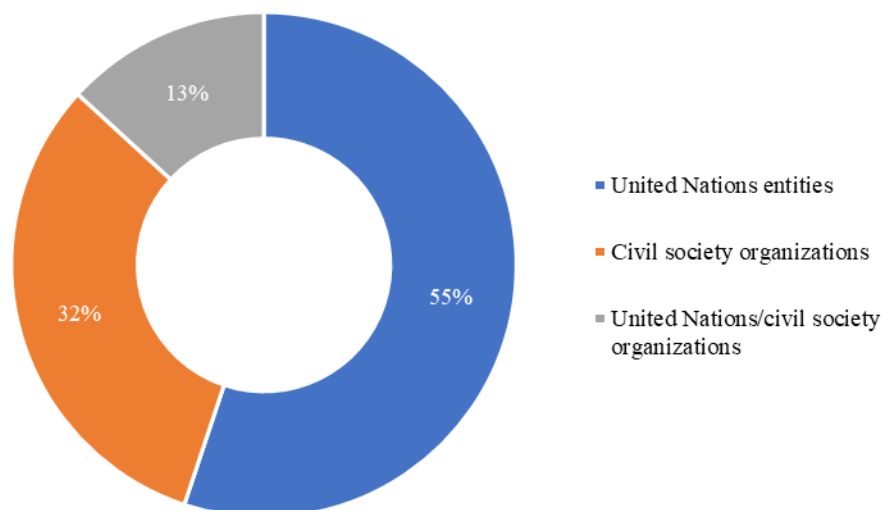
Number of Youth Promotion Initiative projects by type of direct recipient, 2018–2021



Note: N=72.

Figure IX

Proportion of Youth Promotion Initiative funding by direct recipient, 2018–2021



31. The coherence of Youth Promotion Initiative projects was further strengthened by the important role played by the resident coordinator in ensuring that projects were the most appropriate for contributing to the peacebuilding priorities agreed between the Government and the United Nations. That included endorsing concept notes and signing off on full project proposals for shortlisted projects. Interviews with United Nations country team members revealed that that approach was effective in bringing together agencies, funds and programmes to work together on proposals and discuss which proposals to submit and how to partner. Although missions are not eligible to

receive funding from the Peacebuilding Fund, they are encouraged to support projects as implementing partners, which some missions had effectively done. However, it was noted by some staff that the capacities and presence of missions were not systematically leveraged.

32. Beyond the Peacebuilding Fund, varying approaches to coordination were noted in missions. The establishment of the youth, peace and security focal point network in 2021 had provided the impetus for coordination and the implementation of the agenda in missions. The number of focal points in missions had increased from 17 focal points¹³ to 23 focal points across the 37 peacekeeping operations and special political missions between 2020 and 2022. Despite that progress, coordination mechanisms and reporting lines within missions varied greatly. Three of the missions visited as part of the evaluation were integrated missions. As a result, those focal points were better engaged in the work of the United Nations country teams. For example, in Mali and Somalia, mission focal points were contributing to the inter-agency group on youth and to the implementation of associated United Nations youth strategies developed with the United Nations country teams. Youth, peace and security focal points were placed under the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator in two of the integrated missions visited. In the other missions, youth, peace and security focal points were placed either in the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General or in the office of the Chief of Staff. Some missions also had entity-wide youth, peace and security focal point networks in place to further mainstream the agenda and ensure integration in activities across mandate areas and regions.

Civil society organization engagement has been central to the development and implementation of the agenda; however, the engagement of local civil society organization and youth-led organizations was lagging

33. Young people and youth-led organizations have been at the forefront of mobilization for peace and security in their communities. Those organizations, whose strength is their understanding of local conditions and the trust that they have cultivated with diverse youth and other stakeholders, primarily rely on volunteers and operate with limited budgets (see [A/72/761-S/2018/86](#)). They also face numerous barriers in accessing funding, limiting their reach and impact. These include the following:

- A lack of trust by funders and decision-makers
- Eligibility requirements that are too onerous for most local civil society organizations and youth-led organizations to qualify
- Insufficient capacity to execute large grants
- Longer-term capacity-building needs
- A lack of coordination between civil society organizations and visibility at the national level

34. The Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security has been a unique platform for shaping policy and practice on the youth, peace and security agenda. The Coalition is co-chaired by the joint secretariat on youth, peace and security, a civil society organization and a global network of youth peace organizations.¹⁴ Its membership includes United Nations entities, international non-governmental organizations, youth-led organizations, academia, multilateral and intergovernmental organizations,

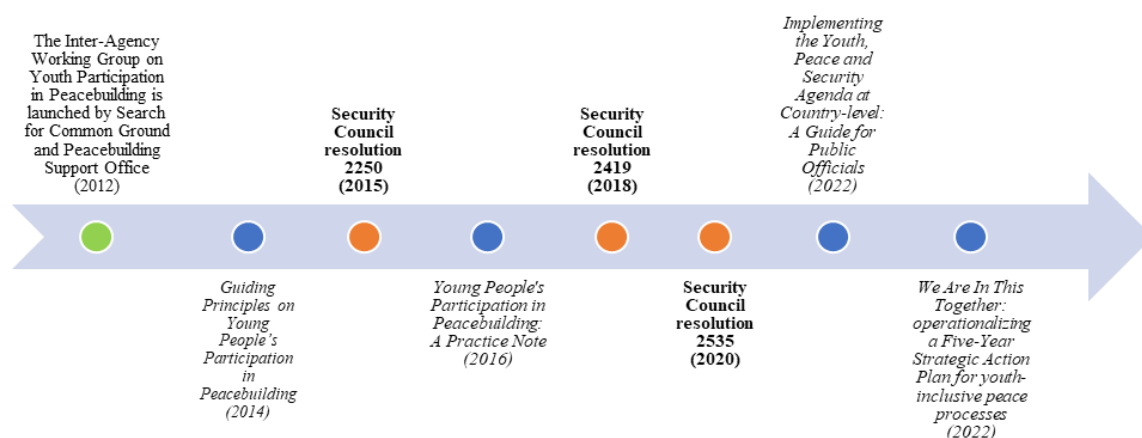
¹³ [S/2020/167](#), para. 65.

¹⁴ See Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding, *Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding: A Practice Note* (2016).

and donors. The creation of the agenda and the adoption of Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) were a direct result of involvement and advocacy by young people and youth-led civil society organizations for a global policy framework that could engage Member States and the United Nations in supporting young people's peacebuilding efforts.¹⁵ Initially launched in 2012 as the Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding of the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security has been central in enabling partnerships and generating collective knowledge on youth, peace and security (see figure X).

Figure X

Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security: timeline of contributions to collective knowledge on youth, peace and security



35. There has been increased engagement with civil society organizations and youth organizations through the Peacebuilding Fund, but progress has been limited to the short-term participation of primarily international civil society organizations. Just as it has facilitated better engagement between United Nations entities, the Youth Promotion Initiative has facilitated increased engagement with civil society organization and youth organizations, as illustrated in figure VIII; 52 per cent of projects (38 out of 72) funded between 2018 and 2021 included at least one civil society organization as a direct funding recipient. However, further analysis revealed that local civil society organizations or youth organizations accounted for only 16 per cent of civil society organization direct funding recipients (6 out of 38) and only 3 per cent of funding to direct recipients under the overall initiative. The Youth Promotion Initiative had a stated requirement that all projects, regardless of the direct funding recipient, allocate at least 40 per cent of the requested grant to national or subnational civil society partners, in particular youth-led organizations. However, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs indicated that that was not being tracked. Similarly, as part of their work, the substantive sections of missions often engaged with local civil society and youth-led organizations; however, those engagements were seldom tracked or systematically reported.

¹⁵ Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, *Story of 2250* (2020).

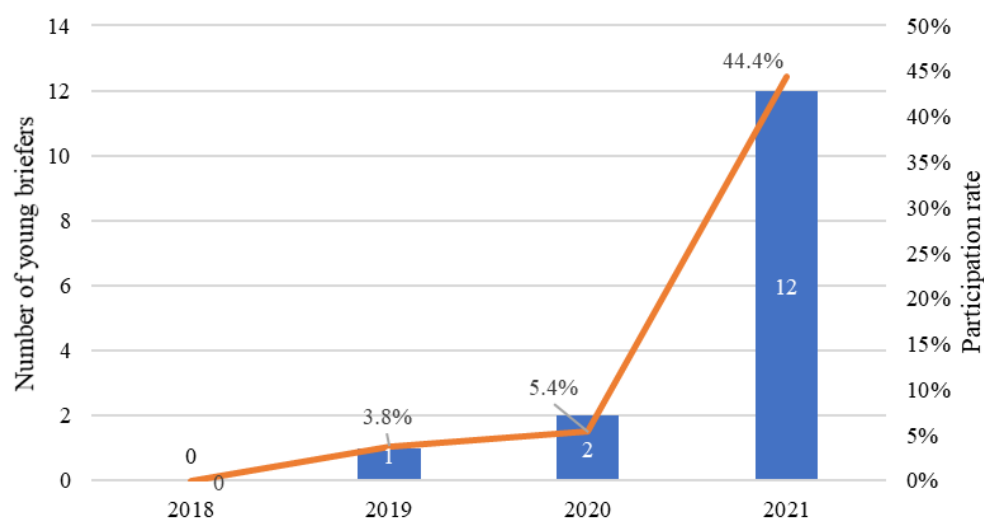
D. Sustainability: Despite some progress, the agenda faces an uncertain future owing to inconsistent resources and the lack of a road map for its implementation

<i>Security Council resolution and paragraph No.</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Evidence of implementation (limited, some, considerable)</i>
Resolution 2250 (2015), para. 21; resolution 2419 (2018), para. 20; resolution 2535 (2020), para. 26	Report to the Security Council on the implementation of youth, peace and security resolutions	Considerable
Resolution 2535 (2020), para. 16	Ensure dedicated capacities with regard to youth, peace and security	Limited
Resolution 2535 (2020), para. 21	Provide guidance for all missions on the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda	Some
Resolution 2535 (2020), para. 23	Redouble efforts to improve capacity-building and technical guidance	Some
Resolution 2535 (2020), para. 16	Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth to track the implementation of youth, peace and security resolutions	Limited

Progress in securing global commitments for youth participation through the youth, peace and security agenda had yet to be translated at the national level

36. The Security Council has unanimously adopted three resolutions in support of the youth, peace and security agenda and has ensured that it is integrated into its work. In addition, in response to a recommendation from the Council, in February 2021, the Peacebuilding Commission approved the Strategic Action Plan on Youth and Peacebuilding with five focus areas to guide and monitor progress. The implementation of the Strategic Action Plan has resulted in an increase in the number of young peacebuilders who have briefed the Commission (see figure XI).

Figure XI
Participation of young briefers in the Peacebuilding Commission¹⁶



37. Few countries had formalized their commitment to the agenda, despite the recognition that national governments and authorities bore the primary responsibility for ensuring the full and effective participation of youth in peace and security processes (see Security Council resolutions 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020)). In countries in which the Youth Promotion Initiative was implemented, a Peacebuilding Fund steering committee co-chaired by the Government and the United Nations was tasked with the overall strategic direction for Peacebuilding Fund investments in the country. Government entities interviewed as part of the case studies provided positive feedback on the relevance of the Fund to their needs in relation to youth, peace and security. However, interviews with civil society members and young people pointed to the need for the United Nations to increase advocacy to expand the participation of young people at the country level. Case-study interviews further highlighted the importance of expanding engagement with governments on the agenda beyond youth ministries, which were often not as involved in peace and security issues, to ensure a whole-of-government approach to the agenda.

38. The national action plans are a legacy of the women and peace and security agenda that has also been adopted for the youth, peace and security agenda and could address some of the above-mentioned challenges. National action plans are national-level policy frameworks that outline a country's domestic and international obligations in respect of the agenda and have been identified as a critical tool for moving forward Member States' commitments when they are successful. At the time of writing, four countries had developed national action plans for the youth, peace and security agenda. Based on the experience of the women and peace and security agenda, common elements for successful plans include:¹⁷

- Strong leadership and effective coordination

¹⁶ See the written assessment of the implementation of the Peacebuilding Commission Strategic Action Plan on Youth and Peacebuilding (2022), available at https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/written_assessment_on_implementation_of_pbc_strategic_action_plan_on_youth_and_peacebuilding.pdf.

¹⁷ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325* (2015).

- Inclusive design processes
- Costing and allocated budgets for implementation
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Flexibility to adapt to emerging situations

Sustainable progress of Secretariat-driven youth, peace and security initiatives is at risk owing to the lack of an operationalization strategy and insufficient and unpredictable resources for implementation

39. There were few resources dedicated to the agenda beyond the Youth Promotion Initiative. The establishment of the youth, peace and security focal point system was an important step for the implementation of the agenda; however, there were few staff dedicated to the agenda.¹⁸ Youth, peace and security focal points in the entities assessed, including missions, were not operating in dedicated youth, peace and security roles and some of those roles were being filled by United Nations volunteers or were dependent on extrabudgetary support and secondments from other entities. Only one mission, UNMIK, reported having dedicated programmatic funding for the implementation of the agenda. Core substantive expertise on the agenda resided within the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations and core tasks relating to the agenda, including reporting and coordination, were handled by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, which had no dedicated staff for the implementation of the agenda.

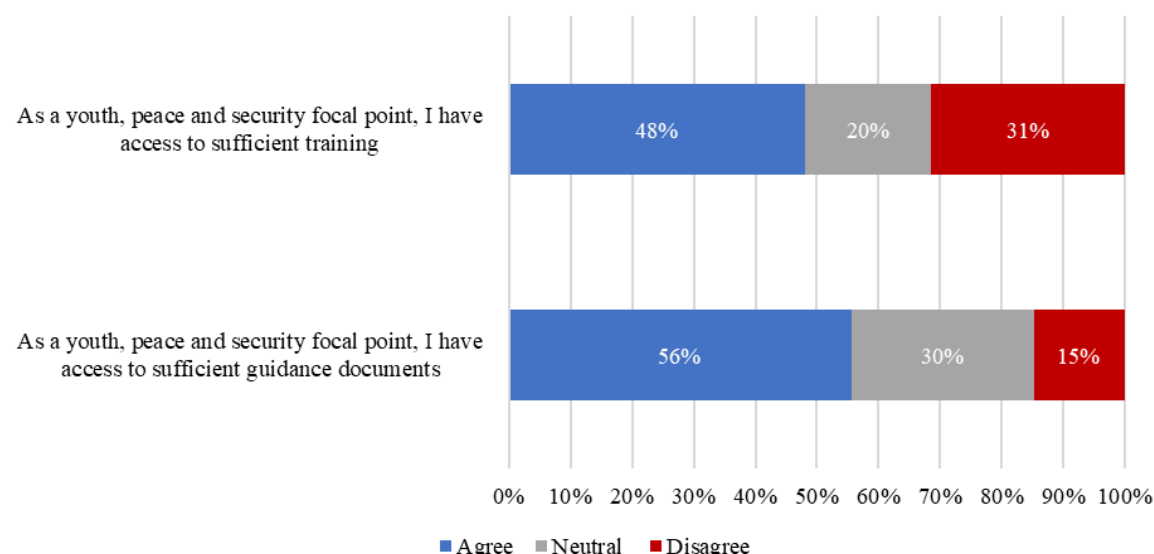
40. Better access to training and guidance was identified by focal points as a priority for the agenda. A minority of youth, peace and security focal points (48 per cent) agreed that they had access to sufficient training on the agenda, with slightly more (56 per cent) agreeing that they had access to sufficient guidance documents (see figure XII). While guidance material was increasingly available, there was a need to promote awareness and utilization of such material at country levels. That was further hampered by the lack of resources and expertise dedicated to the agenda.

41. Foundational products and resources under the agenda had been enabled by significant direct contributions from Sweden, through its Folke Bernadotte Academy. Since 2018, the Academy had funded strategic meetings of the United Nations and other stakeholders, as well as the development of numerous resources, including but not limited to *Youth, Peace and Security: A Programming Handbook* (2021),¹⁹ which provided concrete guidance for United Nations practitioners to implement the youth, peace and security agenda; training courses on youth, peace and security through the United Nations System Staff College (2021); and a guide to support national implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda by Member States (2022). The Academy had also funded a youth, peace and security adviser in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia between 2021 and 2022, which had been critical in the development and integration of the agenda in the country, according to interviewees in Somalia. While stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation provided positive feedback on the critical support received, there are inherent risks associated with a lack of wider extrabudgetary support and with the agenda being perceived as driven by one country.

¹⁸ Two missions had staff in youth, peace and security dedicated roles, namely, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo.

¹⁹ United Nations and Folke Bernadotte Academy, *Youth, Peace and Security: A Programming Handbook* (2021).

Figure XII
Views of focal points on access to training and guidance



Note: N=54.

42. No strategic framework to guide or track the implementation of the agenda was in place. The women and peace and security agenda provided some important lessons in that regard. Ten years after its adoption, the assessment of progress on the women and peace and security agenda was constrained by a lack of data and specific, measurable, relevant and time-bound indicators. Following a call for enhanced accountability and action, three interrelated accountability frameworks were established: the Secretary-General's Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding; the set of indicators to track the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000); and the United Nations Strategic Results Framework on Women, Peace and Security: 2011–2020. An assessment of the frameworks found that they contributed to better-quality information on progress, implementation trends and good practices across a range of areas.²⁰ However, the frameworks provided limited utility for accountability given that they were not harmonized, and several of the targets and indicators were too complex and immeasurable. The experience of the women and peace and security agenda further stressed the importance of senior leadership support and of integrating system-wide commitments into frameworks and tools at the entity level. For progress on the agenda to be sustainable, it should be well defined and measurable, with clear roles and responsibilities and accountability among United Nations stakeholders.

V. Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (results A, B and D) – to the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

43. To support wider and improved understanding and implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda, the Department of Peace Operations and the Department

²⁰ See UN-Women, *A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*.

of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs should prioritize dedicated capacities and expertise for the implementation of the agenda:

- (a) Ensure dedicated technical capacities and expertise to ensure backstopping at Headquarters and to advance youth, peace and security at the field level;
- (b) Ensure integration of the youth, peace and security agenda into policy and practice documents of the peace and security pillar, including guidance to missions on the development of key performance indicators to assess performance and improve monitoring and accountability;
- (c) Improve knowledge management and communication on guidance and training available to youth, peace and security focal points.

Indicators of achievement: evidence of dedicated capacities and expertise to support the implementation of the agenda; evidence of updated policies and practice documents that integrate youth, peace and security; documentary evidence of increased communications and outreach to youth, peace and security focal points

Recommendation 2 (result C) – to the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

44. To strengthen the coordination and coherence of the implementation of the agenda, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, as part of the youth, peace and security joint secretariat, should hold consultations with the United Nations Youth Office and other relevant United Nations entities with a view to:

- (a) Formalizing the roles of coordination mechanisms, including through agreed terms of reference for those mechanisms;
- (b) Developing a strategy and results framework for operationalizing and financing the youth, peace and security agenda, taking into account the United Nations Youth Strategy.

Indicators of achievement: evidence of consultations to formalize the terms of reference of the youth, peace and security joint secretariat and focal point system; evidence of consultations to develop a strategy and results framework operationalizing the youth, peace and security agenda

Recommendation 3 (result C) – to the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

45. To enhance the impact, reach and coherence of projects, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs should review Youth Promotion Initiative guidelines with a view to increasing resources allocated to support and build the capacity of civil society organizations and youth-led organizations operating in conflict and post-conflict settings and consider ways to better leverage the capacities and deep field presence of special political missions and peacekeeping operations:

- (a) Improve the monitoring of the requirement that 40 per cent of requested Youth Promotion Initiative project budgets be allocated to national and local civil society organizations as implementing partners;
- (b) Introduce a requirement for capacity-building to such organizations aimed at strengthening their ability to access additional funds;
- (c) Consider facilitating access to Youth Promotion Initiative opportunities for national and local civil society organizations through missions, particularly in remote and difficult-to-access areas.

Indicators of achievement: documentary evidence of capacity-building initiatives for youth-led peacebuilding organizations at the local and national levels; documentary evidence of an increased number of youth-led peacebuilding organizations at the local and national levels accessing Peacebuilding Fund funds; documentary evidence of Youth Promotion Initiative projects implemented by national and local civil society organizations in partnership with the United Nations system.

Annex*

Comments received from the Under-Secretaries-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and for Peace Operations

We refer to your memorandum (OIOS-2023-00302) of 22 February 2023, transmitting the draft report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the *Thematic Evaluation of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda: Youth Participation*. Thank you for undertaking a consultative process inclusive of staff working on youth, peace and security agenda at the Headquarters and in field-based missions, and for incorporating many of the initial comments that our offices submitted on the earlier draft of the report.

Promoting the participation of youth in political and peacebuilding processes is among the key priorities of the whole United Nations system, and of the peace and security pillar. In this regard, as also noted in the report, positive steps have been taken to expand meaningful youth participation in line with the youth, peace and security agenda since the adoption of UN Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#). As the report noted, there is room for improvement, particularly to tackle the main challenges, such as limited and inconsistent resources, limited awareness and capacities on the agenda and the lack of a roadmap for its implementation.

After reviewing the evaluation and its related recommendations, we are pleased to inform you that the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and Department of Peace Operations (DPO) will be accepting the recommendations of the OIOS set forth in the draft report with an important caveat on recommendation 1. You will find attached concrete action plans from DPPA and DPO to implement the recommendations of the report.**

Noting that work is already ongoing in several of the areas identified in the first recommendation (sections b, c) DPPA and DPO are willing to reprioritize, as possible, in order to better follow upon them. DPPA and DPO accept the recommendation while highlighting the current context of zero-growth budgets and note that the prioritization of dedicated capacities and expertise will need to be balanced against such constraints. DPPA and DPO also note that adequate capacities to fulfill such priorities remains dependent on the Departments as well as decisions from Member States.

In response to the need to enhance coordination and coherence of the implementation of the agenda, DPPA will closely consult, and work with, the relevant stakeholders to formalize the relevant terms of references and strategies.

The evaluation highlights how The Youth Promotion Initiative (YPI) launched by the Peacebuilding Fund in 2016 is a key source of dedicated funding to support initiatives addressing the needs of young people. Nonetheless, DPPA will work to advance the allocation of resources to support and build the capacities of civil society organizations and youth-led organizations, particularly at field level. This will be done by considering ways to better leverage the capacities and deep field presence of special political missions and peacekeeping operation.

Our offices stand ready to provide any clarification or additional information that may be required. Thank you for your continued cooperation.

* In the present annex, the Office of Internal Oversight Services sets out the full text of comments received from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. The practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution [64/263](#), following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee. The comments have been reproduced as received.

** On file with the Office of Internal Oversight Services.