

YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY STRATEGY (2024-2026)

Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs



DPPA

Preventing Conflict. **Sustaining Peace**

Purpose

The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs' (DPPA) Youth, Peace and Security Strategy (hereafter the Strategy) outlines the Department's approach and commitment to the implementation of Security Council resolution 2250 (2015), the two subsequent resolutions on youth, peace and security (YPS) and other relevant General Assembly resolutions on mediation, conflict prevention, financing for peacebuilding and the twin Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on sustaining peace. The Strategy seeks to ensure that relevant issues and perspectives of young women and men are integrated into all the Department's activities to promote inclusive conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding.

The Strategy is rooted in DPPA's Strategic Plan 2023-2026 (hereafter the Plan), which outlines the overarching goals and priorities of the Department. The Plan highlights the need for more holistic and integrated strategies to address peace and security challenges, amidst increasing polarization at the national and international levels, and increasingly multifaceted conflicts.

Against this background, the Plan emphasizes that inclusion of young people in promoting and maintaining peace and security processes is a growing priority for DPPA. To this end DPPA, as a global co-lead on the YPS agenda together with the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), will work to better integrate the roles of youth, and young women in particular, in conflict prevention and sustaining peace into its analyses and recommendations, and also to integrate young women and men in formal and informal peace processes. Under the Plan's second Strategic Objective "Crisis response and support to 'good offices'", specifically, the Department emphasized it would seek to "systematically enhance the participation of youth in peace and security dialogue and processes, including through support and engagement with youth associations and groups". In doing so, the Department will also seek to understand and respond to crosscutting linkages with other thematic priorities including the women, peace and security agenda, as appropriate.

The Strategy identifies priorities for the implementation of the YPS agenda aimed at inclusivity of youth perspectives. It aims to take a national, regional and global approach, noting the importance of all these aspects in the promotion of the YPS agenda. Its implementation will be applicable to Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Special Envoys, management and staff, including those within the joint Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs – Department of Peace Operations (DPO) regional structure working on or within special political missions (SPMs) or non-mission settings, Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs) as well as liaison presences.

Background

DPPA has been instrumental in the development and implementation of the YPS agenda, which marks a shift in the understanding of who young people are and their role in peace and security. Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) became the first international policy framework that recognized the positive role young people play in preventing and resolving conflict, countering violent extremism and building peace. The resolution was followed by the Independent Progress Study on youth, peace and security: the Missing Peace, and Security Council resolutions 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020). In 2021, DPPA participated in developing the first programming handbook on YPS.

Working closely with the UN Youth Office, the Department plays a key role in advancing the implementation of the agenda through support to Member States and regional organizations in their efforts to institutionalize the YPS agenda by adopting relevant strategies and policies. The Department provides expertise and other forms of assistance and maintains partnerships with civil society, the private sector and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) on the matter. The Department provides support to the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), including towards implementation of the PBC's Strategic Action Plan on youth and peacebuilding, its YPS Strategy through the preparation of its annual meeting on YPS, regional and country-specific meetings and country visits, as well as through integration of YPS-sensitive analysis in PBC's key deliverables such as engagement strategies and outcome documents. The Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) remains a key instrument in promoting the positive role of young people as agents of peace. Since its establishment in 2016, the PBF Youth Promotion Initiative has invested more than \$105 million in 83 youth projects.

By adopting its first YPS strategy for 2024-2026, the Department will continue cooperating with all the relevant entities within the UN system, including the recently established UN Youth Office. As the co-leads of the Joint YPS Secretariat and in collaboration with the UN Youth Office, DPPA and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) will provide system-wide support and coordination on the implementation of the YPS agenda. They will also act as a reference point for Member States, youth groups and civil society organizations. This partnership allows YPS to be integrated into the UN peace and security pillar, while leveraging UNFPA's programmatic expertise and networks in both mission and non-mission contexts and the coordination and advocacy role of the UN Youth Office.

YPS Priority areas for DPPA

There is a broad and increasing agreement on the need to further engage and partner with young people in a meaningful way to understand, address and promote their priorities in the peace and security context. Inclusion is not only one of the five pillars in the YPS agenda but is also a means to achieve the remaining four pillars, thus it should be at the center of DPPA's efforts to sustain peace. The Secretary-General's report on Our Common Agenda called for an increase in the political representation of youth and their meaningful engagement in decision-making processes and underscored the importance of ensuring that youth engagement is rights-based and safe for young people. The range of barriers and threats impacting youth and their civic engagement – including digital, legal, and physical threats – were further elaborated in the Global Report on Protecting Young People in Civic Space. This is particularly relevant in the context of the increase in misinformation and hate speech, which this strategy hopes to address. Further, the Secretary-General's policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace highlighted the importance of ensuring that young people have a say in their future. It underscored their essential role in identifying global, breakthrough solutions and enhancing the legitimacy of peace and security initiatives. Calling for young people's effective and meaningful participation in decision-making processes, the Secretary-General declared that the youth, peace, and security agenda must be institutionalized and funded. Responding to the Secretary-General's call, DPPA, will establish three overall priorities in the Strategy. These priorities will contribute to the theory of change and to the goals and objectives of the DPPA Strategic Plan (2023-2026).

- 1. Contribute towards increased awareness of key UN entities, civil society stakeholders and Member States on YPS through enhanced advocacy.**
- 2. Strengthen the capacities of staff to implement the YPS agenda through targeted training and mentorship.**
- 3. Design, test and implement the YPS Impact Pilot Initiative (YPS-IPI) aimed at bolstering the institutionalization of the YPS agenda in line with Security Council resolutions on youth, peace and security.**

In these endeavors, DPPA refers to the definitions of meaningful youth engagement highlighted in the Secretary-General's policy brief on Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policy and Decision-making Processes published in April 2023. The following sections outline how DPPA aims to advance these three priorities over the course of the four-year timeframe.

Priority 1 - Contribute towards increased awareness of key UN entities, civil society stakeholders and Member States on YPS through enhanced advocacy.

Objective: to increase the awareness of key internal and external stakeholders of the YPS agenda through enhanced advocacy.

As the YPS agenda is relatively young, key stakeholders, including different UN entities, Member States and civil society, often lack relevant knowledge on the agenda, its principles structured around five pillars (Protection, Prevention, Participation, Partnership, and Disengagement and Reintegration) and the added value of investing in YPS. DPPA will aim to advance knowledge on YPS through systematic advocacy efforts, targeting both strategic stakeholders as well as the broader peace and security community of practice.

DPPA is one of the three penholders of the Secretary-General's report on YPS, together with UNFPA and the UN Youth Office (UNYO). DPPA will strengthen its engagement with Member States, including through bilateral advocacy, to ensure that the messages of this report are widely disseminated and are the lynchpin of discussions aimed at advancing YPS in relevant fora such as the Security Council.

DPPA will also capitalize on existing global networks such as internal UN YPS focal points and YPS focal points in SPMs, as well as the Global Coalition on Youth Peace and Security (GCYPS) comprising 100 UN entities, civil society and youth-led organizations working on YPS worldwide. These networks will be further leveraged as platforms for the systematic exchange of lessons learned on the implementation of the YPS agenda.

DPPA, together with the UN Youth Office and Search for Common Ground, also led the development of the Five-Year Strategic Action Plan for Youth Inclusive Peace Processes. The document is critical for moving from youth-inclusive norms towards youth-inclusive practices in designing and implementing peace processes and notes the need to mainstream the following cross-cutting issues throughout the implementation of the action plan: protection and security, gender and identity, communication and norm-shaping, digital technology and innovation, and

resources and funding. The strategy was a key output of the High-Level Global Conference on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes held in January 2022, co-hosted by the Governments of the State of Qatar, Finland and Colombia. DPPA coordinates the organization and support of the International Steering Group (ISG) composed of civil society representatives, mediation support units of regional and international organizations, youth representatives from youth-led and youth-focused CSOs, UN agencies, experts and academia. The ISG provides a platform to support the implementation of the Strategy through, inter alia, the exchange of best practices.

DPPA will also support the PBC to provide a platform for mobilizing political commitments and financial and technical support for the work on YPS at the international, regional, national and local levels and facilitating exchanges of experiences and lessons learned among a wide array of peacebuilding actors, including in the context of South-South and triangular cooperation, on implementing the YPS agenda. The PBC will also be leveraged as a platform to share experiences on the implementation of projects funded through the PBF.

DPPA will systematically advocate for YPS-sensitive approaches in its policy and programmatic initiatives to strengthen partnerships with International Financial Institutions and regional development banks in conflict-affected and fragile settings.

DPPA will highlight the contributions of youth in decision-making processes, leveraging DPPA dissemination channels, including publications, websites, and social media platforms to showcase stories of young peacebuilders, women and men, serving as catalysts of peace.

Finally, advocacy efforts will also target the mainstreaming of YPS into key milestone initiatives relevant to peace and security, such as the 2024 Summit of the Future and the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture review.

INDICATORS	TARGET
# of meetings per year of existing YPS networks focused on advocacy and awareness raising on YPS targeted at YPS practitioners in UN and in civil society	6 intra-UN YPS focal points meetings 10 UN-CSO meetings
# of annual engagements with IFIs and regional banks where YPS advocacy is mainstreamed	2
# of information exchanges and/or capacity-building initiatives facilitated by DPPA	1
# of annual meetings of the PBC focused on the implementation of YPS and efforts to support the PBC to implement its YPS strategy (focus to be determined by the chair of the PBC)	1 per year
# of annual social media campaigns focused on YPS in partnership with other UN entities and/or CSOs.	2 per year

# of stories published on the UN news website	2
# of articles featured in DPPA's Politically Speaking	1 per year
# Of joint op-eds/blogs with UN and non-UN partners published in international media	2
# Of XB projects or YPS-related initiatives/meetings spearheaded by DPPA regional divisions aimed at enhancing awareness of YPS engagement and interaction with young people	2
# Of meetings of the international steering group supporting the five-year strategic action plan for youth-inclusive peace processes	3 per year

Contribution to DPPA's results framework

- Outcome 4.2: Effective and efficient support to the Peacebuilding Commission enhancing Member States peacebuilding efforts.
- Outcome 5.1: Strengthened networks and strategic relationships among and between DPPA and multilateral actors.
- Outcome 5.2: Enhanced thematic and normative inputs into UN-wide policy processes.
- Outcome 7.3: Strengthened internal and external communication.

Reporting tools

- Reports of the meetings of existing YPS focal point platform.
- Chair's summary of relevant PBC meetings and the PBC's outcome documents.
- Reports of the meetings of the ISG supporting the Five-Year Strategic Action Plan for Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes.
- Media and social media products as indicated.

Priority 2 - Strengthen the capacities of staff to implement the YPS agenda through targeted training and mentorship.

Objective: to strengthen the capacities of key stakeholders to implement YPS

The availability of relevant and updated guidance material is key in supporting efforts to advance YPS. As part of the DPPA-UNFPA Joint YPS Secretariat, DPPA has supported the development of several YPS guidance documents, including the Five-Year Strategic Action Plan for Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes and the Guide for Public Officials on Implementing the YPS Agenda at Country Level. DPPA, in collaboration with relevant partners, maintains a publicly available database of YPS resources (at <https://youth4peace.info/>).

In 2022, DPPA commissioned a Thematic Review of PBF programmes on Local Peacebuilding, which highlighted the importance and positive impact of youth in local peacebuilding. The Thematic Review encouraged the UN to better incorporate youth perspectives throughout local peacebuilding initiatives, from the design to the implementation phases.

During the period 2024-26, DPPA will continue to produce relevant guidance documents on YPS. DPPA will commission a PBF Thematic Review focusing on YPS, which will provide new knowledge on the advancement of YPS through programmatic interventions. DPPA will also continue to mainstream the principles of the YPS agenda into relevant policy and guidance documents, including through the review of existing materials and the development of new ones.

DPPA systematically ensures youth-sensitive political and conflict analysis, it supports intergenerational dialogue and partnership in peace and political processes, and it integrates youth priorities and voices in initiatives to prevent conflicts and advance peace, alongside its efforts to ensure gender responsiveness of the Department’s work. Special political missions and other offices play a key role to this end through their work on conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding around the world.

Through the UNDP-DPPA Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs) support national initiatives towards conflict prevention and assist UN country teams in helping national authorities address root causes of conflict. Their capacity to integrate YPS into their analysis is key to ensuring the political aspects of the YPS agenda inform UN country team programming.

To enhance YPS capacities across the system, DPPA, through PBSO, will support the socialization of the new and existing guidance material through its capacity building initiatives. Regular meetings of YPS focal points at HQ and in the field will be organized to develop an intra-DPPA network of YPS practitioners to strengthen the Department’s own capacity in this area.

In addition, training packages will be developed for YPS focal points in mission settings, YPS focal points at DPPA HQ, among others. The training packages will be rolled out on a periodic basis to ensure that the relevant staff are adequately equipped to contribute to the implementation of DPPA’s mandate. This will be done in partnership with UN and civil society institutions with expertise on YPS and capacity building.

INDICATORS

TARGET

# of YPS training modules developed	3 (on for YPS focal points in UN missions, one for YPS focal points at DPPA HQ and one for PDAs)
# of in-person training for YPS focal points in UN missions rolled out together with relevant partners	1
# of in-person training for YPS focal points at DPPA HQ	1
# of PBF Thematic Reviews on YPS	1
# of new or updated guidance documents on YPS	2

Contribution to DPPA's results framework

- Outcome 2.1: Substantive and operational backstopping support provided to SPMs to Implement SC and GA mandates.
- Outcome 6.1: Strengthened departmental knowledge management.
- Outcome 6.2: Enhanced opportunities for formal and informal learning, and skills development.

Reporting tools

- Training reports.
- Guidance material uploaded on the Youth4Peace portal.

Annexes (internal)

- Terms of reference of the DPPA-UNFPA Joint Secretariat on YPS

Priority 3 - Design, test and implement the YPS Impact Pilot Initiative and strengthen institutionalization of YPS

Objective: Increase country-level impact by mobilizing a whole of peacebuilding approach in two pilot countries aimed at strengthening the uptake and impact of the YPS-agenda in-country. and advance the institutionalization of the YPS agenda at the national and/or regional level(s).

As of today, only four Member States have developed National Action Plans on YPS: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Finland, Nigeria and the Philippines. These plans are government-led, voluntary and practical documents detailing the actions a government intends to take to meet its obligations under the Security Council resolutions on YPS, to ensure these commitments are translated into concrete policies and programmes. They outline objectives and activities that countries will take on, both at the domestic and international levels, to secure the protection and meaningful participation of young women and men in efforts to prevent armed conflict and violence and to build and sustain peace.

In order to encourage further progress in this direction, DPPA will roll out a pilot initiative to advance the implementation of YPS at the national level. The YPS Impact Pilot Initiative (YPS-IPI) will allow a ‘whole-of-peacebuilding’ approach through its programmatic and political support, with a focus on prevention, to assist at least two interested Member States to develop and kickstart the implementation of their own National Action Plans on YPS.

The pilot countries will be selected based on criteria that include national buy-in, relevance of potential support to youth-led efforts to advance peacebuilding initiatives, as well as PBF eligibility and existing or possible PBC engagement.

The YPS-IPI will support each Member State over the course of a three-year period. This includes a one-year intergenerational and participatory process to develop the National Action Plan on YPS, fostering partnership and collaboration between government authorities, women's groups, youth

networks and organizations and other relevant stakeholders. This will be followed by a two-year period focused on supporting the initial phases of the National Action Plan’s implementation. Where relevant, this process will be informed by lessons learned from the country’s experience in developing and implementing National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security. The YPS-IPI will be rolled out in the first pilot country starting in 2024, with pilot initiatives in the following country starting in 2025.

DPPA’s added value lies in its capacity to provide several services in support of nationally- owned and -led processes to institutionalize YPS. This includes in-house thematic and political expertise, technical and programmatic support through the PBF, as well as the support of special political missions, liaison presences and PDAs, to accompany the implementation of the National Action Plans. In the management of this pilot initiative, the Department, through its Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), will systematically coordinate with the relevant divisions in DPPA, particularly the Policy and Mediation Division (PMD) and regional divisions. DPPA will also leverage its engagement with IFIs, regional development banks and the private sector to strengthen partnerships aimed at supporting the sustainability of the National Action Plans. In this process, DPPA will also work closely with regional and sub-regional organizations, building on existing good practices when available.

If agreed to by the country engaged and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, the PBC can also function as a platform to provide political accompaniment in support of the process and share good practices and lessons learned with the aim of informing other countries planning to embark on the process of developing YPS frameworks.

Finally, DPPA will work in close partnership with other UN agencies, funds and programmes including UNFPA, UNDP and UN Women, who have developed common indicators on the development and implementation of National Action Plans on YPS. Systematic collaboration with UN country teams in the relevant countries will also be key to enhancing the sustainability of the National Action Plans through ongoing follow up support. Lessons learned from these pilot initiatives will be curated in an easy-to-access repository, including in the Peacebuilding Impact Hub.

INDICATORS

TARGET

# of Member States that develop and start implementing their National Action Plan on YPS, through an intergenerational and inclusive process in partnership with national youth civil society	2
# of PBF funded projects supporting the YPS-IPI Initiative	4
# of PBC meetings supporting the YPS-IPI Initiative	2

Contribution to DPPA’s Results framework

- Outcome 2.3: Increased inclusion of diverse voices including women, youth as well as vulnerable and marginalized people in political, prevention and peacemaking processes.
- Outcome 3.1: Enhanced DPPA support/political advice for conflict prevention, dialogue, institutional strengthening, social cohesion, and implementation of peacebuilding strategies
- Outcome 3.3: Increased capacities of women, youth and civil society to participate in prevention and peacebuilding processes.

Reporting tools

- Final report of the YPS-IPI initiative.
- Reports of PBF projects supporting the YPS-IPI initiative.
- Chair's summary of the PBC meetings supporting YPS-IPI initiative.