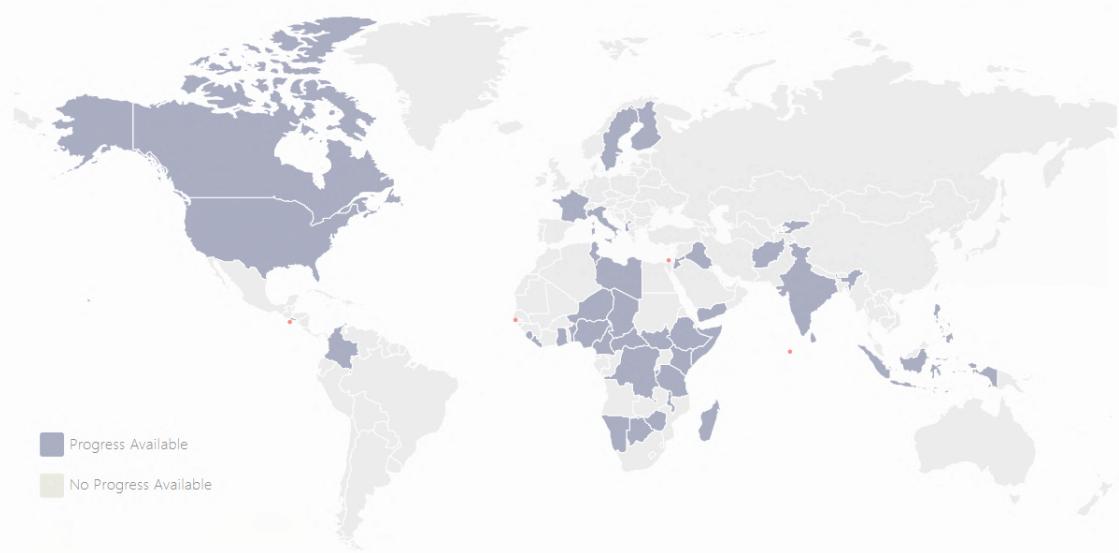


# YPS Regionalisation: Mapping Existing Constellations



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# Background

The Youth, Peace and Security agenda (YPS) is an agenda spearheaded by a youth-driven, institutionally-supported movement that gained traction at the global level through the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 in December 2015. This is the first resolution that recognises "the important and positive contribution of youth in efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security", such as "prevention and resolution of conflicts... and success of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts" that "can contribute to lasting peace and economic prosperity if inclusive policies are in place".

Since then, there have been parallel efforts at different geographical levels. At the global level, the UN recognised two other UNSCRs, 2419 and 2535. While the former focuses on the meaningful participation of youth in peace processes, the latter one stresses:

*"Member States, regional and subregional organizations to develop and implement policies and programs for youth and to facilitate their constructive engagement, including through dedicated local, national and regional roadmaps on youth, peace and security, with sufficient resources, through a participatory process, in particular with young people and youth organizations and to pursue its implementation, including through the monitoring, evaluation and coordination with young people."*

At the national level, many youth-led and youth-focused organisations have organised themselves in national YPS coalitions. Together with INGOs, UN agencies and governments, they have developed roadmaps in the form of National Action Plans (NAPs) and strategies. Regional processes on YPS implementation work as a parallel effort at a meso-geographical level -between national and global - that consolidates and monitors contextual realities across diverse regional landscapes.

This study aims to examine and compare the regionalisation of the YPS agenda across different regions. It is a collaborative effort that delves deeper into the intricate tapestry of YPS regionalisation, exploring its progress, challenges, and pathways for advancement by assessing the actors, factors, and dynamics that have led to YPS regional movements. The relevance of the regional level processes lies in their potential to illuminate the diverse motivations, methods, and practices that shape YPS efforts, enabling practitioners to more effectively influence policy and programming at both regional and national levels.

'Regionalisation', in this study, refers to the political and institutional process by which states within a geographic region pursue common policy approaches and establish regional entities and frameworks for economic, political, and security cooperation (e.g., AU, EU, ASEAN). It does not refer to decentralisation within a single country. In the context of the YPS agenda, regionalisation means adapting and embedding YPS principles into these regional structures through shared norms, coordinated strategies, and mechanisms that promote youth participation in peace and security across member states.

YPS regional implementation remains relevant because regional multilateral mechanisms tend to share purposes, norms, procedures and institutional mechanisms (Aron 1966, Cruz 2021) based on geographic, demographic, economic, and political commonalities as well as juridic-political preconditions allowing the incorporation of agreements and legal frameworks concerning specific aspects (Torrent 2006). Regional implementation can additionally enable and complement the implementation of national processes.

The 10th Anniversary of the YPS Agenda provides the perfect space for reflection on the milestones different regions have achieved in its implementation, as well as the challenges, and how they envision their work in the coming years. We offer an analysis for practitioners and young people to revisit YPS regional journeys and discover potential partnerships, approaches and entry points for YPS implementation in their contexts.

## Methodology

This study focuses on understanding the YPS pathway in five regions: Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The delimited regions were selected based on how YPS has regionally developed and the information that is available to track such data; the regions do not necessarily match multilateral bodies or global notions of specific world regions.

The study was led by Lani Anaya Jiménez and Mridul Upadhyay (\*also a contributor from Asia-Pacific), members of the Regionalisation Working Group of the Global Coalition of Youth, Peace and Security (GCYPS), who worked voluntarily between October 2023 and November 2025. They were supported by Lea Boehling, Alejandra Gutiérrez, and Alexa Silva, three research assistants with experience in YPS. Other experts and members of the GCYPS Regionalisation group supported methodological aspects of this work.

The data collection involved semi-structured interviews of key actors involved with the YPS regional implementation at and since the initial stages (See Annex). They belong to different sectors: UN agencies, INGOs, regional organisations, or civil society movements, and in some cases, their positionalities have transitioned among sectors and organisations during the last 10 years.

Africa	<b>Dr. Rhuks Temitope Ako Fatuma Kuno Muhumed</b>
Americas	<b>Andrés Allán Sánchez Osorio Matías Lara</b>
Asia Pacific	<b>Erika Isabel Bulan Yague Mridul Upadhyay*</b>
Europe	<b>Sölv Karlsson Eoin O'Leary</b>
Middle East & Northern Africa	<b>Ma'in Alshamayle</b>

The interviews related to **1) the origins of the YPS regional movements, 2) the dynamics among different stakeholders, 3) the implementation of YPS at the regional level, and 4) their perspectives or visions for the future of YPS, regionally.** Interviews were triangulated with documentation (desk reviews, observations and analysis) to better comprehend the phenomenon. The questions can be consulted in the Annexe.

There are clear limitations on the elaboration of this paper. The interviews and documentation may not fully represent all facts, which could introduce selection biases. The interpretation of interviews may be understood differently depending on the regional context.

The document is organised into different key chapters, each one focusing on a specific region. The structure of each regional chapter follows the following structure:

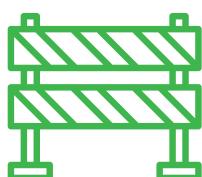


#### **Origins, Momentum and Stakeholders Involved:**

An introduction to the first glimpses of YPS implementations in the region, traction and actors involved.



#### **Regional Dynamics:** Distinctive regional features of YPS advocacy and programming.



#### **Barriers to Regionalisation:** Main hindrances to YPS implementation at the regional level



#### **The Way Forward:** Potential continuation for the YPS regional pathway and actionable steps. The study continues with a comparative analysis of YPS implementation across regions and concludes with actionable steps to implement the recommendations for YPS implementation regionally.

# Regionalisation of YPS in Africa

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## 1. Origins, Momentum, and Stakeholders Involved



### 1.1 How YPS Entered the African Region (before 2015 to 2018)

Africa occupies a leading position in the regionalisation of the YPS agenda. Long before the adoption of UNSCR 2250 in 2015, African institutions had already begun advancing early frameworks for youth engagement in governance, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding. Dr. Rhuks Ako (Senior Analyst, African Union) highlighted that the implementation of the YPS agenda in Africa was not the first framework incorporating youth engagement in peace and security. The 2006 **African Youth Charter** (AYC) frames youth as active contributors to social change, embedding provisions for their participation in political processes and affirming their rights and responsibilities. Its Article 17 explicitly represents an early formal recognition of youth as agents of peace and development.

While the AYC laid a legal and normative foundation for youth inclusion, it prioritised youth empowerment and volunteerism but did not explicitly address or operationalise some of the core YPS pillars, such as structured participation in peace and security decision-making. Nonetheless, these early initiatives already signalled an emerging political will to include youth as actors, creating a general foundation upon which later YPS-specific work could potentially build on. The period following the adoption of the AYC, however, was relatively slow, with limited regional initiatives directly targeting youth involvement in peace and security. It was only after 2015, with the adoption of UNSCR 2250, that momentum significantly increased.

In March 2017, the 665th Communique of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) called for an intergenerational meeting between the Panel of the Wise and PanAfrican Network of the Wise (PanWise) with youth to develop tools and best practices for mainstreaming youth in all mediation and conflict prevention efforts in Africa. In September 2018, the Youth for Peace (Y4P) Africa Programme was launched by the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Department (PSD). The Programme engages and collaborates with youth in peace and security work, challenging harmful stereotypes for youth and promoting their positive role in conflict prevention. The inaugural Y4P initiative localised the YPS agenda by engaging grassroots and development partners to identify context-specific priorities, leading to a youth participation framework later used to advocate with the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC).

In November 2018, the AU appointed its first [Chairperson's Youth Envoy](#), Ms. Aya Chebbi, creating a permanent channel between youth constituencies and AU decision-making bodies. The [Office of the African Union Chairperson's Youth Envoy \(AUCYE\)](#), with its networks and multiple initiatives over the years, has become a Pan-African collaborative mechanism for African youth.

In the same month, AU PSC convened its first open session on YPS and adopted a [Communiqué](#) that, among other decisions, called for mobilizing necessary resources and developing long-term national action plans for the involvement and effective participation of the youth in the promotion of peace and security, decided for the institutionalization of annual open sessions on YPS, commissioned a study on youth contributions to peace and security, and requested the appointment of the African Youth Ambassadors for Peace (AYAPs) to work with the AU's Youth Envoy.

## **1.2 Institutionalisation through Frameworks and Implementation Pathways (2019–2022)**

In 2019, the AU started translating these linked institutional and political actions into regional policy instruments. The PSC and its Y4P Programme initiated an extensive, continent-wide consultation process that informed the drafting of the [Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security](#) (CFYPS) and the associated [10-Year Implementation Plan](#) (2020–2029), adopted in June 2020.

The CFYPS synthesises the international YPS pillars with continental priorities (including explicit links to Agenda 2063) [\[1\]](#), sets time-bound targets for national uptake, and identifies roles for the AU Commission, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and Member States in driving implementation. The 10-Year Plan adds measurable outputs and responsibilities so that the regional framework can be tracked and supported. In this process, [A Study on the Roles and Contributions of Youth to Peace and Security in Africa](#) was also developed and endorsed.

Meanwhile, at its 33rd Ordinary Session in February 2020, the AU Assembly institutionalised the Youth4Peace Africa Programme within the PSD, established a dedicated coordination desk, and endorsed five [African Youth Ambassadors for Peace](#) (one from each subregion) to champion youth engagement in peace and security. Youth Ambassadors are elected for a two-year non-renewable term. Alongside, the [Y4P Africa Program](#) continued to advance the YPS agenda through other activities related to advocacy, awareness-raising, mobilisation, and monitoring and reporting.

A major milestone in Africa's YPS journey was the adoption of the continent's first National Action Plan (NAP) on YPS by [Nigeria](#) in November 2021, making it the second globally after Finland. This was followed by the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#) (the first francophone country), which launched its NAP in August 2022.

[1. Agenda 2063](#) is the AU's 50-year strategic framework for Africa's development, emphasizing inclusive governance, peace, and security. Adopted before UNSCR 2250, it already mentioned youth as drivers of change and highlighted youth empowerment in various contexts.

Another pivotal moment in the regionalisation process was the [\*\*Continental Dialogue on Youth, Peace and Security\*\*](#), held on 23 April 2022 in Bujumbura, Burundi. Organised by the Government of Burundi, in its capacity as Chair of the PSC, supported by the UNDP. Co-facilitated by AU Youth Ambassadors for Peace and the AU Youth Envoy, the dialogue brought together over 350 young people from across Africa. The dialogue culminated in the adoption of the [\*\*Bujumbura Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security\*\*](#), which was subsequently endorsed by the AU PSC in April 2022 and institutionalised as an annual event to follow up on the implementation of decisions on this theme. [2]

### **1.3 Continued Efforts for Sub-regional and Inclusive Implementations (2023-2025)**

Subsequently, efforts were made to establish a continental Youth, Peace, and Security group, with each Regional Economic Community (REC) [3] appointing 2–3 representatives to serve as focal points and ensure broader regional representation. Although the initiative did not fully achieve its intended outcomes, it successfully created strong communication and collaboration channels with REC leaders, facilitating their participation in other YPS activities. The engagement of the African Union and the RECs in YPS also sparked greater interest among Member States, leading to increased involvement and enabling the development of National Action Plans in some countries. At the sub-regional level, for an increased role of the RECs and regional mechanisms (RMs), four high-level ministerial conferences on YPS have been held. [4] One interviewee noted that initial budget constraints limited REC collaboration, but with AU funding and joint EU-AU support, engagement with RECs expanded, and resources became available to develop NAPs.

In July 2023, the AU's Office of the Youth Envoy formed the [\*\*Youth Reference Committee\*\*](#), selecting 25 African and 15 European youth representatives. The initiative sought to serve as an advisory board that provides strategic guidance, enhances accountability in YPS efforts within the AU, and strengthens African-European collaboration in this field. The AU Assembly had endorsed the creation of the Network of African Youth in Conflict Prevention and Mediation ([\*\*WiseYouth Network\*\*](#)) in 2022 and it was established in 2024, with over twenty members on a three-year term, to empower youth in preventive diplomacy, mediation, and dialogue, and operates under the Panel of the Wise as part of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).



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2. The Second YPS Continental Dialogue was organised in Bujumbura, Burundi in December 2023 and the Third one in December 2024.

3. The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are regional groupings of African states. AU recognises eight RECs: Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Community of Sahel-Saharan Initiatives (CEN-SAD), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and Southern African Development Community (SADC).

4. Focused on East and Horn of Africa (November 2021), Southern Africa (July 2022), East Africa (May 2023), and Island States in Eastern and Southern Africa (December 2024).

As part of efforts to elevate the YPS agenda at the highest political level (with the heads of States), the AU launched the ‘AU Champions for YPS’ initiative in 2023, appointing H.E. President Évariste Ndayishimiye of Burundi as the first AU Champion to advocate for youth inclusion in peace and security across the continent. While no NAP was launched in 2023, momentum accelerated in 2024 and 2025 with five more countries ([Burundi](#), [Malawi](#), [Gambia](#), [Liberia](#), and [Cameroon](#)) launching their respective NAPs. [South Sudan](#) developed and launched its National Strategy on Youth, Peace, and Security in 2024. A few other countries in the region are currently developing or consulting on their own national plans and strategies.

## 2. Regional Dynamics

### 2.1 African Union's Role and Institutional Responses



The AU has been instrumental in promoting youth engagement in peace and security, even before 2015 and after 2015. The AU's approach demonstrates a deliberate effort to combine normative frameworks, institutional platforms, and participatory structures to ensure that youth engagement is both meaningful and sustainable at the continental level. Through mechanisms such as the Chairperson's Youth Envoy and African Youth Ambassadors for Peace, the AU has sought to integrate youth perspectives into governance and conflict prevention strategies. Complementary initiatives like the Youth4Peace Africa Programme provide diverse channels for young people to engage in peace and security work.

### 2.2 Youth Participation and Inclusivity in AU Processes

The African continent continues to grapple with political instability, conflict, and displacement, often exacerbated by coup d'états and electoral violence. With a median age of just 19, **Africa is home to one of the youngest populations globally**, yet its youth face persistent challenges such as high unemployment, poverty, and limited access to essential services. Despite these obstacles, young people have emerged as vital contributors to peacebuilding efforts across local, national, and regional levels, demonstrating resilience and leadership in addressing conflict and promoting stability. [\[5\]](#)

Recognising this potential, the AU prioritised meaningful youth participation in both policy and programmatic processes, while also ensuring regional, gender, and thematic diversity. As one interviewee noted, “*At the very early stage we were looking for youth working on their own and at the subregional level, because a lot of work was supposed to happen, including advocacy, passing the message to a wider audience of young people.*” This strategy laid the foundation for broader advocacy and the development of YPS initiatives, while also fostering a robust network of young peacebuilders across the continent.

[5.](#) As a general context on the regional dynamics, the [Youth Leading Change Emerging Sites of Knowledge in Peace and Conflict publication](#) gives a useful overview.

## 2.3 The Development of National Action Plans (NAPs) and a Sense of National Ownership

Africa has emerged as a global leader in advancing the YPS agenda through national frameworks, with eight NAPs adopted and several more in development. This momentum reflects a strong regional commitment driven by the 10-Year Implementation Plan of the Continental Framework on YPS, which sets clear targets for NAP adoption by 2024 and 2029.

Interview insights highlight that national ownership and government leadership are critical for the successful implementation of the YPS agenda. According to Fatuma Kumo Muhumed (YPS Programme Specialist for the UNFPA regional office for West Africa), AU's efforts to advance YPS got the most push when governments were actively involved from the outset and when regional advocacy was aligned with national priorities. This approach helped several countries, including Cameroon and the Gambia, to establish dedicated YPS commissions within governmental structures, embedding the agenda in formal policy frameworks and lending it greater legitimacy at the national level.

## 2.4 The Role of the United Nations

The United Nations, and particularly UNDP and UNFPA, have played a key role in advancing the YPS agenda through YPS initiatives, consultations, and support to national governments across Africa, as highlighted by the interviews. One of the most important funding mechanisms supporting these efforts is the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), which has financed several dozen projects in the region.<sup>[6]</sup> The Fund's model encourages young people to take part in project oversight and decision-making, thereby ensuring their meaningful participation in peacebuilding initiatives.

West and Central Africa (sub)region has pioneered the establishment of a UN interagency working group on YPS for the past three years. This group coordinates and supports UN efforts in the region and has led to several joint initiatives. It also supported four countries (Benin, Gambia, Guinea, and Liberia) to establish multi-sectoral national coalitions on YPS.

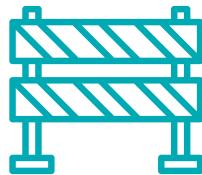


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UNFPA has been enhancing the capacity-building of youth-led organisations, CSOs, and governments across the subregion by providing YPS training and training them to develop national action plans. According to Ms. Muhumed, UNFPA's work in West and Central Africa had long been grounded in gender equality, and incorporating peace and security dimensions required time and internal adjustments. Over time, however, YPS became one of the agency's core areas of focus, supported by stronger institutional capacity and coordination.

<sup>6.</sup> PBF has invested more than \$311 million towards YPS programming through 167 projects across 48 countries and territories all over the world between 2018-2024, most of which are in Africa. Currently, overall 105 PBF-funded initiatives are being implemented in Africa as per <https://mptf.undp.org/fund/pb000>

### 3. Barriers to Regionalisation



#### 3.1 Funding and Partnerships

Across the African region, partnerships and targeted funding have been fundamental to advancing the YPS agenda. Collaboration among institutions, Member States, youth organisations, and development partners has enabled significant milestones, from regional policy formulation to NAP development. Funding mechanisms, such as UN PBF and EU-AU collaborations, have enabled regional and national actors to advance the YPS agenda. However, funding gaps remain pervasive.

As Ms. Muhumed noted, "YPS is still regarded as a relatively 'new' agenda and has not yet attracted the level of international donor interest enjoyed by more established frameworks. In many countries, the absence of dedicated and sustained funding has delayed the design, adoption, and rollout of National Action Plans." Further, while Member States still continue to receive support in developing NAPs and advancing the AU's 10-Year Implementation Plan targets, youth-led initiatives, coalitions, and councils continue to face significant financial constraints that hinder effective implementation.

#### 3.2 Interlinkages Between the WPS and YPS Agendas

The relationship between the Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security agendas has emerged as both an opportunity and a challenge. While both frameworks share the goal of ensuring inclusion and participation in peacebuilding and security processes, they focus on different constituencies. As Rhuks highlighted, the conceptual proximity of the two agendas has led to confusion among some stakeholders, who often view YPS as a "younger sibling" to WPS. This perception has raised expectations for YPS to replicate the trajectory of WPS, sometimes without acknowledging their distinct contexts, dynamics, and agendas. Nevertheless, the relationship between the two agendas also offers space for mutual reinforcement when treated as complementary rather than overlapping.

#### 3.3 Political Sensitivities and Perceptions of the YPS Agenda

Another persistent barrier lies in the sensed political sensitivity surrounding the YPS agenda. While embedding YPS commissions within government structures in some countries has helped legitimise the YPS agenda at the national level, in some contexts, top-down approaches lacking domestic ownership and government buy-in have hindered the adoption and implementation of YPS policies. Further, some governments in the region remain hesitant to associate with YPS, perceiving it as linked to protest movements, political opposition, or even criminal activity.

This perception has made some Member States reluctant to engage, particularly in contexts of fragile governance or civic space restrictions. Rhuks emphasises that “opening conversations about it has been part of the solution”. In other words, changing these perceptions is critical to reframing youth not as sources of instability but as partners and collaborators in peacebuilding and governance. AU’s recent effort to work with heads of States, through ‘AU Champions for YPS’, is notable for advocating for youth inclusion in peace and security across the continent

### 3.4 The Role of Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms

Despite their strategic position and potential to localise the YPS agenda, (sub)Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and (sub)Regional Mechanisms (RMs) in Africa have been slow to fully assume their roles in advancing YPS.

While four high-level ministerial conferences between 2021 and 2024 have been organised, focusing primarily on East and Southern Africa, their limited institutional capacity continues to hinder effective subregional implementation influence. Strengthening their institutional capacities and formalising their coordination roles would help bridge the gap and accelerate the implementation of YPS priorities throughout Africa.



## 4. The Way Forward

The YPS regionalisation in Africa has been a transformative effort to reshape narratives and recognise and support youth role in peace and security, particularly in a region where young people face several challenges. Africa has emerged as a global frontrunner in advancing the YPS agenda, demonstrating meaningful youth engagement mechanisms and leadership in translating global commitments into regional and national action.



© YPS Monitor

With AU's Regional Study, Continental Framework, and 10-Year Implementation Plan and eight NAPs already adopted and several more in development, the continent has made significant strides in institutionalising youth participation in peacebuilding. Appointments of Regional Youth Envoy and Youth Ambassadors for Peace reflect a growing institutional commitment to youth inclusion.

Now, the next phase of regionalisation must go beyond policy adoption to focus on implementation, sustainability, and impact. Another key priority moving forward is to translate political will into operational capacity. While the African Union and its member states have laid a strong foundation, the real test lies in ensuring that YPS frameworks are not only adopted but also resourced and owned by the communities they aim to serve. This means investing in youth-led initiatives, strengthening the institutional capacities of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs), and ensuring that YPS efforts are tailored to the diverse realities across the continent.



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## Conclusion

Africa's leadership in the YPS agenda is both commendable and instructive. The continent has demonstrated that with political will, youth engagement, and regional collaboration, it is possible to build inclusive peace processes that reflect the realities of its young population. However, sustaining this momentum requires continued investment in youth-led solutions, capacity building, and protection mechanisms for young peacebuilders operating in fragile contexts. By deepening institutional support, ensuring financial sustainability, and centering youth voices, Africa can continue to lead the global YPS movement and inspire other regions to follow suit.

# Regionalisation of YPS in the Americas

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## 1. Origins, Momentum, and Stakeholders Involved

### 1.1 How YPS Entered the Americas (2015 to 2020)



Following the adoption of UNSCR 2250 in 2015, the YPS agenda gained global visibility. In the Americas, the development of YPS initiatives appears to have progressed at a more gradual pace, with countries implementing activities at different times and often independently, rather than through a clearly coordinated regional framework.

Allán Sánchez, a former UNFPA Youth Officer for the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Regional Office, notes that early (sub)regional YPS efforts began as early as 2017, when UN agencies and other partners facilitated the LAC regional consultation for the Progress Study on YPS. This consultation, held in Panama City in May 2017, brought together youth from across the region to share experiences, provide input to the global Progress Study, and begin building networks for youth participation in peace and security. Before the consultation, preparatory processes included the formation of a youth advisory committee that contributed guidance and recommendations.

In April 2018, UNFPA and PBSO, with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), published the report "**Youth, Peace and Security in the Northern Triangle of Central America**". This study contributed to the Global Progress Study, capturing the youth perspectives on peacebuilding in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Other efforts, such as the UN Peacebuilding Fund's **Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative**, provided funding for youth-led peacebuilding projects in Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, and El Salvador.

At the national level, several initiatives illustrate early adoption of the YPS agenda. Ecuador conducted a national youth consultation on peace and security in 2017, as part of the first Progress Study. Youth and CSOs from El Salvador established the **Grupo Impulsor 2250** to promote the YPS agenda. Two distinct youth-led Participatory Action Research initiatives were conducted in Colombia, one led by **Search for Common Ground in 2017** and the other by the **US Institute of Peace in 2018**.

The US YPS Coalition was established in 2019 by the Alliance for Peacebuilding and Search for Common Ground. It is now co-led by STAND, a student-led movement to end mass atrocities. The coalition unites over 70 youth-led and youth-serving organisations and supports legislative efforts such as the [\*\*US YPS Act\*\*](#), and actively engages with Congress and international partners to institutionalise youth leadership in peacebuilding.

The first major regional youth-led initiative was in July 2019 as the [\*\*Young Peacebuilders Forum\*\*](#). UNOY convened approximately 60 youth from across the globe (mostly from the Americas) in Bogotá. The event consolidated regional networks and also highlighted systemic barriers, as many applicants were denied visas, illustrating structural challenges to mobility and participation that remain relevant in the regional YPS context.

Matias Lara from Argentina recalls that his engagement with YPS began during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 through an online community. There, he connected with Leonardo Párraga, a young peacebuilder from Colombia, and recognised that almost no key materials, regular programs or networking spaces on YPS existed in Spanish, underscoring a significant language barrier for youth from Spanish-speaking countries. Consequently, early regional youth-led efforts after the Young Peacebuilders Forum focused on raising awareness and translating YPS resources in Spanish. Once the pandemic subsided, these efforts lost momentum, with in-person and hybrid activities emerging more recently.

## **1.2 Steps Towards a Regional Approach (2021 to 2025)**

From 2021 onwards, the (sub)regionalisation of the YPS agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean entered a more visible and structured phase. A key milestone came in 2021 when UNOY Americas published the report [\*\*"Hacia una Agenda Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Juventudes, Paz y Seguridad"\*\*](#), developed in consultation across eight countries and with support from UNFPA LAC-RO, signalling the first region-specific framing of YPS narratives in the Americas.

Also in 2021, the Working Group on Youth of the United Nations Regional Collaborative Platform for Latin America and the Caribbean published a [\*\*regional analysis\*\*](#) that captured youth voices and pandemic impacts across LAC. While it does not reference YPS directly, it includes certain core principles, mentioning the role of youth in building peaceful, just and inclusive participatory societies. These initiatives signified a shift from scattered country-level efforts to more structured (sub)regional coordination in LAC, while youth-led networks remained the primary drivers of implementation.

In 2022, Colombia co-hosted the virtual High-Level Conference on YPS together with Finland and Qatar. Additionally, the Department of Protection of the Organisation of American States prepared a [\*\*report\*\*](#) to the Office of the Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on the inclusion of youth in peace processes. This aimed to reflect the regional reality of the Americas in the [\*\*global 5-year Strategic Action Plan on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes\*\*](#).



© UNAOC

In parallel to these efforts, the United Nations Alliance of Civilization (UNAOC) brought its [\*\*Young Peacebuilders Programme\*\*](#) (YPB) to Latin America and the Caribbean. YPB had previously been implemented in other regions, and the fifth edition in 2022 specifically targeted youth from the Americas.

This inaugural regional edition, launched in collaboration with UNOY Americas, offered 20 youth a four-phase experiential learning process, including online modules, a face-to-face workshop, mentoring, and a final symposium. Subsequently, the sixth and seventh editions in 2023 and 2024 also continued to strengthen regional youth organisations and their capacities.

UNFPA LAC-RO also conducted regional YPS seminars for youth, academia, and UN country offices in late 2022. Allán highlights, 'In 2022, we (UNFPA) were invited to the Second [\*\*UN-FBA joint Learning Forum on YPS\*\*](#), to foster joint learning and capacity development on YPS for UN entities in the region. [7] The main highlight was the development of an interagency roadmap, and this ultimately resulted in the Bogotá forum in 2023. But after 2022, UNFPA LAC-RO became less involved in YPS processes due to a change in institutional priorities.' As a result, an important stakeholder that drove the regionalisation of the YPS framework was lost.

For the LAC region, the Intergenerational Meeting held in Bogotá in November 2023, convened by the UN Youth Working Group of the RCP LAC, played a key role in advancing the YPS agenda through inclusive dialogue between government representatives and youth leaders from the region. It consolidated a [\*\*roadmap\*\*](#) for operationalising YPS in LAC, including sub-regional strategies. Around the same time, the [\*\*Caribbean Youth Summit\*\*](#), convened by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat and UN Agencies, focused on 'Securing Our Future: Youth Co-Creating a Peaceful and Sustainable Caribbean Community' and created a space for Caribbean youth to discuss peacebuilding in the region.

In 2022-23, UNESCO Caribbean began to show growing engagement with the YPS agenda in the Caribbean, establishing a regional working group and supporting the launch of a (sub)Regional YPS Coalition in 2023. In 2024, UNESCO published [\*\*"Youth, Peace & Security, case studies in action: youth empowerment for a peaceful Caribbean"\*\*](#), which highlights practical examples of youth-led initiatives and provides guidance for strengthening young people's participation in peace and security processes across the region. That same year, the UN Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC) launched the first edition of the [\*\*GenerAcción Paz program\*\*](#) to empower youth to create a region free of armed violence.

**7.** Only UNDP LAC participated in the first forum in 2018. This led to the joint proposal for the UNFPA-UNDP YPS pilot project.



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In 2024, UNOY's [\*\*American Youth Advocacy Team \(Am-YAT\)\*\*](#) brought together youth leaders from across the Americas in Buenos Aires in July for the [\*\*Americas Youth Peace Summit\*\*](#), fostering collaboration and strategic discussions.

In 2025, Am-YAT published the report "[\*\*Catalyst for Change: Youth Leadership in Rights, Diversity and Social Cohesion Across the Americas\*\*](#)", developed by 25 young peacebuilders from across the region and mapping youth-led action on peace, inclusion, human rights, environmental injustices and social cohesion while explicitly linking to the YPS agenda. The publication aimed to address critical gaps in existing research on YPS, foster connections among young peacebuilders across the region, strengthen youth-led advocacy, and support the implementation of both international and regional YPS frameworks.

National-level efforts in the Americas continue to advance the YPS agenda at their own pace. The [\*\*Canadian Coalition for YPS \(CCYPS\)\*\*](#) was founded in 2021 as a youth-led network to champion the YPS agenda both within Canada and globally. CCYPS's advocacy resulted in YPS principles being integrated into Canada's third WPS National Action Plan (2023–2029), promoting intergenerational collaboration and shared goals of participation, protection, and prevention. Alongside, the US YPS Coalition's advocacy resulted in the [\*\*US Youth, Peace and Security Act \(H.R. 5024\)\*\*](#) being introduced in 2023 by Representative Grace Meng with bipartisan support, aiming to institutionalise youth participation in US foreign policy through an action plan, grant program, and congressional oversight.

One of the outcomes from the 2023 Intergenerational regional meeting was a mirror consultation in Colombia. The consultation was the first of many processes that began moving towards a NAP in Colombia. Since then, UNFPA and UNDP, with funding from the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), have worked together to lay the groundwork for the plan. Meanwhile, young peacebuilders have organised themselves as the [\*\*Colombian Coalition of Youth Peace and Security\*\*](#) (CCJPS), which has been designated as the coordinator of the youth committee of the NAP. The relevance of this NAP is that it can become the first one in Latin America and the Caribbean. Reflecting this growing momentum of youth leadership, young people in Chile, Honduras, and Mexico are also advancing national YPS efforts through coalition-building, police collaboration, and capacity-sharing.

## 2. Regional Dynamics

### 2.1 Fragmented Entry Points and Missing Regional Strategy



The YPS agenda in the Americas entered through multiple, largely independent channels rather than a coordinated regional strategy. The only regional organisation that engaged was CARICOM, and no other regional body acknowledged the agenda, leaving most efforts driven by the UN and civil society. This fragmented entry resulted in uneven momentum: while Canada, Colombia, and parts of Central America advanced toward institutionalised programs and national planning, much of the region remained limited to awareness campaigns, pilot projects, or small-scale youth initiatives. The absence of dedicated regional mechanisms makes it difficult to align priorities, share best practices, and coordinate efforts, leaving the agenda largely dependent on local youth initiatives and informal networks.

### 2.2 Country-Specific Drivers and the Influence of Violence

Certain countries stand out, potentially due to their historical and institutional contexts. Colombia, for example, has a context shaped by post-conflict dynamics, which might have created institutional attention (with strong peace processes undergoing), social dynamics and funding opportunities that allow for clearer pathways toward national-level YPS programming and the development of a National Action Plan. Similarly, countries such as El Salvador and Guatemala have demonstrated notable achievements where local youth ownership and targeted donor support intersect, illustrating how context-specific drivers can shape YPS adoption.

At the same time, the pervasive presence of violence and threat across the region shapes the capacity and priorities of youth organisations. [8] As Mati powerfully observes, "We have this issue that the organisations fighting for peacebuilding are fighting for their lives, so they do not have time for global exposure." This highlights the acute risks faced by activists and peacebuilders, as well as the constraints that violence imposes on participation, visibility, and engagement with broader international frameworks.

### 2.3 Civil Society and Youth Networks as Important Drivers

Youth-led organisations and informal networks were central in sustaining the agenda. These actors have translated materials into Spanish, organised trainings, and produced regionally relevant reports, keeping YPS visible across LAC despite limited resources and systemic backing. Networks such as [UNOY Americas](#), [Juventudes por la Paz](#), [Cartas por la Sanación](#), the [Ibero-American Youth Organization](#), and other organisations have played pivotal roles in advocacy, capacity-building, and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange. Their work underscores the critical function of civil society in maintaining momentum when formal mechanisms are absent or under-resourced.

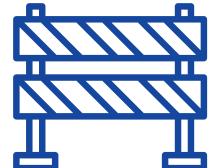
8. Link: <https://globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/land-and-environmental-defenders/missing-voices/>

## 2.4 Limited Appropriation and Shifts in Momentum

Discussing regional dynamics is complex, as the YPS agenda is not yet widely recognised or institutionally adopted across the Americas. There appears to be a limited connection between countries on this topic, partly due to a lack of local appropriation and region-specific frameworks. Although discussions on regional collaboration have emerged more recently, tangible progress remains limited.

The pandemic, together with ongoing conflicts, further shifted government priorities from advancing international agendas to addressing more immediate concerns such as economic recovery and national security. UN engagement, which had previously supported YPS efforts at the national level, also seems to have declined, potentially due to reduced institutional capacity and the number of dedicated staff. As governments shifted focus, donor interest in YPS decreased, leaving initiatives with even more limited financial and political support.

However, from 2024 onward, momentum has resurfaced: the Americas Youth Peace Summit brought together youth leaders from across the region, Colombia advanced its preparation for a National Action Plan, and UNOY published the Catalyst for Change report. These developments indicate that, although challenges in appropriation and coordination persist, the YPS agenda is regaining visibility and traction, demonstrating renewed potential for regional consolidation and youth-led action.



## 3. Barriers to Regionalisation

### 3.1 Diverging Political Realities Across the Americas

The differing political and institutional realities in the US and Canada, compared to Latin America and the Caribbean, present challenges for regional YPS coordination, often limiting shared strategies and cross-regional collaboration. The contrasting contexts in North, Latin America, and the Caribbean, shaped by shifting political climates and uneven diplomatic relations, further complicate efforts to build a unified regional YPS agenda.

### 3.2 A Narrative That Does Not Resonate

Another fundamental challenge to advancing the YPS agenda across the Americas lies in its alignment with the region's lived realities. LAC distinguishes itself as a region where youth experience different forms of violence, such as juvenicides, feminicides, limited civic spaces, indigenous discrimination, socioeconomic exclusion, and climate-related displacement, among others.

Matías shared his perspective for the LAC region that the majority in the region perceive the YPS agenda as related to armed conflict, while the region is not considered an armed conflict region. "It makes the communities feel a bit hesitant to adopt the YPS narrative in practice. The only real programs that get young people involved in peace and security are in Colombia because they have a peacekeeping mission." He further notes, "While LAC is the most dangerous region to be an activist and a Human Rights defender, the YPS Agenda does not adequately capture these matters, for the communities to associate fully with it."

Moreover, age-based exclusion remains a pervasive barrier in general. "Young people are not allowed to participate in political processes, involved in security issues or policy issues... the whole establishment is around adults", Mati states. When youth participation is symbolic rather than substantive, the agenda loses its transformative potential and struggles to root itself in sustained institutional practice.

Given the particular context in LAC, there are opportunities to contextualise YPS in connection with indigenous perspectives on peace and security, the YPS nexus with climate issues, small weapons disarmament and demobilisation. These elements are connected to the 5 YPS key pillars, and therefore have strong potential to provide effective solutions for building a youth-centred peacebuilding narrative that can be implemented in the coming years.

### **3.3 Limited Localisation Efforts**

Building on that, YPS efforts in the region often lack enough localisation efforts, including from young leaders. Mati notes, "the people who should be involved are not focusing on grassroots activities enough... Yes, in the international spaces they are, but not in the place where they are coming from." With few national and regional mechanisms to support YPS in LAC, young leaders often turn to global platforms, but without channelling that momentum back home, the transformative potential of their advocacy remains underutilised for creating meaningful changes in their communities.

### **3.4 Funding and Institutional Support Deficits**

A recurring barrier to the regionalisation of YPS in LAC is the limited institutional and financial support. UN agencies and other international actors supporting YPS, such as UNFPA and UNDP, have reported a lack of dedicated staff and long-term resources, which often results in fragmented pilot projects rather than coherent systems across the region. At the same time, youth-led organisations face difficulties in accessing funding. Many operate informally or as an informal collective, without the registration, multi-year track record, or administrative capacity required by most donors. This mismatch excludes several grassroots actors from existing funding streams, despite their significant potential to advance the YPS agenda when other institutional efforts are limited.

## 3.5 Language and Accessibility

Language remains a structural barrier to regional YPS progress. The dominance of English in foundational YPS documents, platforms and programmes has excluded many youth-led groups in LAC from early conversations and capacity-building opportunities. Spanish-language gaps, combined with the multiplicity of languages spoken across the Caribbean, have made it difficult to spread YPS knowledge and build shared understanding and momentum. Without deliberate efforts to translate, adapt, and localise YPS resources, regional engagement risks remaining uneven and inaccessible.

## 3.6 Competition of Priorities

Finally, the broader geopolitical and institutional environment has shifted in ways that complicate the YPS agenda's regionalisation. One of the barriers to advancing the agenda in the Americas is the competition for priorities within national governments. The onset of ongoing security challenges shifted governmental focus toward urgent issues such as economic recovery, national security, and humanitarian responses. These shifts often deprioritise youth-focused peace initiatives, leaving them underfunded and under-resourced. As a result, even where there is interest and civil society capacity, youth peace efforts can struggle to gain traction or integrate into broader policy agendas.

Despite these changes, civil society and youth actors continue to play an active role and have contributed to important advances in the YPS agenda across the region. Moreover, recent national and regional initiatives, such as the anticipated development of Colombia's National Action Plan and emerging regional collaborations, are bringing new momentum and may support renewed coordination, stronger networks, and more structured implementation of YPS principles across the Americas and the LAC.

## 4. The Way Forward



The regionalisation of the YPS agenda in the Americas has unfolded slowly and unevenly, driven more by scattered national initiatives, YPS networks and some regional coordination efforts than by a coordinated regional push. While recent developments, such as the preparation of Colombia's National Action Plan and the growing YPS coalitions in Canada, the US, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, and the Caribbean, mark important progress, the region still lacks a shared framework to guide implementation.

Advancing YPS across the Americas, therefore, requires a pragmatic and regionally coordinated approach that builds on re-emerging momentum while addressing the barriers identified in this study. The YPS agenda has the potential to transform everyday realities in a region widely recognised as one of the most violent and most dangerous for activists and human rights defenders. The lived experiences and dangers faced by peacebuilders, activists and human rights defenders highlight the need for tangible support and recognition of grassroots actors as central drivers of the agenda. To realise that potential, collective and unified efforts are essential, in which all actors working toward common goals align priorities and strengthen the impact of their initiatives. [\[9\]](#)

Consequently, a long-term objective should be the development of a regional YPS strategy or coordination mechanism. In the absence of a formal multilateral framework beyond existing institutions such as the OAS or MERCOSUR, a region-wide multistakeholder platform could coordinate efforts, share best practices and amplify the reach of initiatives. Such a platform can promote intersectional narratives that reflect the lived realities of youth in diverse contexts and utilise the institutional capacity within both UN agencies and youth organisations.

At the same time, the YPS movement in the region must deepen its territorial engagement and support grassroots initiatives, ensuring that interventions are adapted to local needs and realities. Allán highlighted that peacebuilding efforts often lack the tools and capacities that would allow youth to translate awareness into concrete action, while Mati stressed that engagement still tends to occur in international spaces rather than in the communities most affected by violence. Building meaningful links between local, national and regional actors is essential to make YPS both more visible and to enable knowledge, funding, and advocacy to circulate more effectively. Furthermore, while doing all this, treating young people as full partners rather than token participants is essential to ensure that the implementation of the agenda is inclusive and meaningful.

9. Link: [YPS Agenda: An agenda to connect the vision with the reality of a region at peace](#)

# Regionalisation of YPS in Asia-Pacific

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## 1. Origins, Momentum, and Stakeholders Involved

### 1.1 The Slow but Steady Regionalisation of YPS in Asia-Pacific (2015–2017)



The YPS agenda in Asia-Pacific has been evolving slowly, shaped by scattered national initiatives, regional youth peacebuilding initiatives, intermittent regional gatherings, and the gradual engagement of subregional multilateral bodies like ASEAN. Both Erika Yague and Mridul Upadhyay recall that the earliest sparks of YPS regionalisation date back to mid-2010s policy discussions, such as the [\*\*Asia Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting in New Delhi\*\*](#) in 2015, which signalled a growing recognition of youth as peace actors. This was followed by youth from the region participating in the High-Level [\*\*Global YPS Forum in Jordan\*\*](#) later that year.

A key regionalisation event was the [\*\*Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation for the Missing Peace Progress Study\*\*](#) held in May 2017, organised by UN agencies. The consultation highlighted both the potential for regional engagement and the initial scoping of the YPS within the region. This initiative also demonstrated strong youth leadership, as the consultation process was led by young UN staff members, fellows, interns, and consultants, working in close collaboration with their supervisors and senior staff. After the consultation, the UN, together with youth civil society organisations, established the Thematic Working Group on Youth, Peace and Security (TWG-YPS), under APINY. <sup>[10]</sup> The TWG-YPS provided a regional platform for coordination and knowledge exchange across the region. Meanwhile, nationally, countries like Sri Lanka began [\*\*formalising YPS commitments\*\*](#) through forming a national YPS Coalition in early 2016 (believed to be the first-ever YPS coalition in the world), and the Philippines initiated the development of the National Action Plan (NAP) in 2017.

<sup>10</sup>. The Asia-Pacific Interagency Network on Youth (APINY), was established by UN Agencies as an informal interagency network, to facilitate communication and coordination on youth issues.

In 2017, the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY) appointed Mridul Upadhyay, who had participated in both the 2015 Commonwealth Asia Youth Ministers Meeting and the 2017 Regional Consultation, as its first-ever Regional Coordinator for Asia-Pacific. Through UNOY, he initiated targeted YPS programmatic work, connecting a network of youth-led organisations across borders. This is when the momentum of the consultation led to the first major joint youth-led peacebuilding initiative in the region, which was the Training of Trainers (ToT) on Youth Peacebuilding, organised in India in October 2017, to strengthen regional capacity by creating a cohort of young practitioners who could act as multipliers in the field. UNFPA Asia Pacific Regional Office provided seed funding to UNOY, ranging from USD 10,000 to 25,000 per year, enabling small-scale YPS activities over the years. While these resources were modest, they helped create the first sustained regional connections. However, much of the early work relied heavily on volunteer contributions, reflecting both dedication and the challenges of uneven funding.

## 1.2 Institutional Anchoring and Subregional Engagement (2018–2020)

By 2018–2019, momentum for a more connected regional approach began to gain traction. In 2018, UNFPA assumed chairmanship of the Thematic Working Group on YPS (TWG-YPS)<sup>[11]</sup>, with UNOY co-leading as the civil society representative. While its trajectory has seen ups and downs, the intention has been consistent: the TWG-YPS should not become a UN space solely, but instead provide a forum for regional CSOs and youth-led peacebuilding organisations.

That same year, ActOn2250 online training was organised by UNOY, together with UNFPA Asia Pacific, to build the capacity of young peacebuilders to implement the YPS agenda. To strengthen youth-led peacebuilding organisations' efforts, a multi-phased Organisational Development training was held in 2019 in the region, covering elements like knowledge management, organisational policies, fundraising, monitoring and evaluation, etc.



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To test innovative approaches in the YPS field, such as Participatory Grant-making and Mentorship for youth organisations, UNOY piloted the [Youth360 approach in 2020.](#)

The [ASEAN-IPR Youth Conference on Peace and Tolerance](#) in 2018 focused on 'building unity and common understanding in countering intolerance and violent extremism'. In 2019, the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect launched the [Youth Core Group on Atrocity Prevention \(YCGAP\)](#) at its Youth Forum in Jakarta, empowering young peacebuilders to lead grassroots advocacy on atrocity prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

<sup>11.</sup> TWG-YPS was not designed for national organisations or individual youth actors, but for regional youth peacebuilding organisations.

Subregional engagement also gained momentum. In 2019, the Ulaanbaatar Conference in Mongolia marked the [\*\*first-ever YPS discussion in Northeast Asia\*\*](#), led by the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN DPPA) with support from UNOY. Parallel initiatives included strategic visioning workshops in Sri Lanka under a UN Peacebuilding Fund project, which sought to discuss regional YPS strategies. However, sustainability remained limited due to inconsistent funding and a lack of institutional follow-up after that.

### **1.3 ASEAN Engagement and Knowledge Consolidation (2020–2022)**

The growing engagement of the DPPA in YPS around 2019–2020 injected “*more energy and political engagement*” into the region (*Mridul*). DPPA, with its mandate rooted in global political analysis, initially approached the YPS agenda through a formal lens, but constructive collaboration with youth actors gradually fostered a more flexible and youth-responsive approach to this work. DPPA’s engagement brought significant acceleration of regionalisation by leveraging ASEAN mechanisms and fostering collaboration between UN agencies. In October 2020, the [\*\*ASEAN–UN Partnership Action Plan 2021–2025\*\*](#) formally incorporated YPS, marking a milestone in linking youth-led advocacy with formal policymaking channels. Within a year, in August 2021, the ASEAN Regional Forum issued its first [\*\*Joint Statement\*\*](#) explicitly advancing youth participation in peace and security, demonstrating growing recognition of youth voices at the intergovernmental level.

These subregional efforts were supported with youth-focused YPS programming. A 3-month-long [\*\*#Youth4Peace in Southeast Asia virtual forum\*\*](#) was convened in 2020 by the UNOY and the Asia Youth Peace Network (AYPN), in partnership with DPPA and UNFPA. Another version of this virtual forum was organised in 2021 by DPPA. Other initiatives were the ASEAN+ Youth Meeting on Peace and Security 2020 and 2021 – 2-hour interactive dialogues, organised by the Committee for ASEAN Youth Cooperation (CAYC) with other youth organisations. In 2021, ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (IPR), Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), AYPN, UNOY, and United States Institute of Peace (USIP) also organised three focus group discussions and consultations on the YPS Agenda.



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Meanwhile, at the broader regional level, the [\*\*Asia Youth Advocacy Team\*\*](#) was established by the UNOY in 2021 to foster sustained, strategic, and well-prepared advocacy and lobbying efforts by young peacebuilders at the national and regional levels. This initiative has played a pivotal role in the emergence and strengthening of YPS networks and coalitions across several countries in the region, including Pakistan, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

In 2022, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Symposium on Inclusive Processes (YPS-WPS linkages) for Preventive Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution was co-hosted by Singapore, the EU, and the US State Department, focusing on evidence-based advocacy and promoting cross-regional exchange of best practices and lessons learned. Interviewees noted that while YPS was included in discussions, the emphasis remained largely on WPS, as YPS was still a relatively new topic for many ASEAN member states.

A major push for advancing the YPS agenda at the subregional level in ASEAN came when a long-overdue (due to COVID-19) [\*\*ASEAN-UN Workshop on YPS\*\*](#) was held in Laos in December 2022 (track 1.5 diplomacy). This joint UN-UNOY-ASEAN effort recommended advancing the YPS agenda through a regional baseline study, laying the groundwork for subsequent regional coordination.

Additional efforts at the national level included the Philippines' launch of the YPS National Action Plan Primer in August 2022 (the official NAP YPS is yet to be released). Along with this, as another development for regional coordination, UNDP assumed the co-chair role of the Thematic Working Group on YPS in 2022, taking over from UNFPA, while UNOY continued as the civil society co-chair.



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## 1.4 Pathways Toward a Regional Action Plan (2023–2025)

The [\*\*ASEAN-IPR YPS Study\*\*](#), launched in August 2025, was developed through a long collective effort of young people, academia, ASEAN Member States, the UN, and partners. It provides policy and programme recommendations for ASEAN and national governments, international partners, and youth. Findings from the study also fed into the drafting of [\*\*ASEAN Vision 2045\*\*](#), launched in May 2025, signalling a shift from ad hoc activities toward sustained regional frameworks.

However, since late 2023, YPS regionalisation progress has slowed. The TWG-YPS, which had previously exemplified active involvement by supporting the YPS regionalisation through regular meetings and collaborative efforts, transitioned its bimonthly meetings to a need-based format after five years of consistent engagement. This shift was primarily driven by reduced member participation, highlighting the ongoing challenge of sustaining regional collaboration in the absence of stable resources and active programming. The situation further intensified in 2024 and 2025 with the discontinuation of the funding partnership between UNFPA and UNOY, due to a lack of strategic alignment.

Looking ahead, interviewees described that having an ASEAN Regional Action Plan (RAP) on YPS could be another important milestone in the (sub)regionalisation trajectory. The Philippines' chairship in 2026 is expected to provide sequential momentum toward drafting and launching the RAP.

These developments demonstrate the interplay between bottom-up, youth-led advocacy and top-down institutional adoption, showing how regionalisation has evolved from informal networks and scattered workshops toward structured mechanisms and policy frameworks. At the same time, the slowdown in progress since 2023 (e.g., with the TWG-YPS) underscores that optimism and opportunity alone are insufficient; sustained advocacy, dedicated resources, and institutional commitment remain critical to translating potential into tangible outcomes.

## 2. Regional Dynamics

### 2.1 Subregional Silos and Inconsistent Regional Definitions



The Asia-Pacific region poses particular challenges for YPS coordination. Unlike other regions, it lacks a single overarching multilateral coordinating space. Instead, cooperation is divided across subregional blocs with uneven levels of effectiveness: the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which has often been paralyzed by tensions between India and Pakistan; the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which is comparatively strong but highly formalized; the Pacific Islands Forum, where states often prioritize climate change over peacebuilding efforts; and the Northeast Asia, which has seen limited coordination engagement, though the annual Ulaanbaatar Conference bringing together China, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, and South Korea.

Additionally, regional collaboration is further complicated by fragmented geographic definitions within international institutions. Subregions such as Central Asia are often excluded from UN agencies' definitions of "Asia" and instead grouped with Europe, while Iran is typically included in the Asia-Pacific region rather than in the Arab/MENA grouping. This broad and inconsistent mapping creates logistical and funding challenges for cross-regional coordination and makes it more difficult to design inclusive regional initiatives.

## 2.2 Peace and Security in a Stable Context

This fragmentation is further compounded by the region's relative orientation toward economic rather than peace and security agendas. Unlike in the Middle East or Africa, where active violent conflicts drive multilateral investment in peace processes, Southeast Asia and other subregions are comparatively stable. As Erika highlighted, this creates an "interesting perspective on how peace and security are understood in contexts where violent conflict is not widespread". Yet it also means that at the regional level, the UN, member states and donors allocate few financial or human resources to peace and security work. For instance, the UNDPPA office in ASEAN initially had only two dedicated staff, and most UN agencies lack peace and security focal points. Engagement in YPS, therefore, depends heavily on whether individual staff take up the agenda alongside their broader mandates.

## 2.3 Balance between National Diversity and the Need for Regional Collaboration

Youth peacebuilding across the Asia-Pacific reflects the region's highly diverse political, social, and historical landscapes. Contextual and local needs shape the focus and framing of initiatives, with approaches often tailored to specific national realities. As Erika noted, there is "no common history (no common colonisation) and a lot of diversity. Countries reached independence, independently." This absence of a shared colonial past might have contributed to distinct national trajectories and priorities.

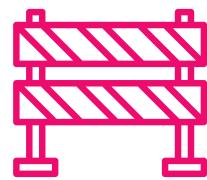
Further, as noted in the interviews, even before the adoption of UNSCR 2250, youth were engaged in peace discussions and movements, but these efforts were often "packaged differently", operating under alternative terms and frameworks rather than explicitly identifying as YPS work. In many cases, youth themselves do not describe their work as "peacebuilding," instead use terms such as social cohesion or resilience. In some contexts, this is a way to navigate the political sensitivities surrounding the word "peace" in militarised or restrictive environments. In others, it reflects a lack of awareness that their activities constitute peacebuilding. Funding patterns reinforce this tendency, as most resources available to youth are channelled through education, entrepreneurship, climate change, or humanitarian aid, rather than dedicated peacebuilding budgets.



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Conclusively, the variety of youth peacebuilding approaches in Asia and the Pacific is an asset in reflecting local realities, but it also poses challenges for building coherent regional collaboration amongst youth groups. The balance between national diversity and regional cooperation, therefore, hinges on addressing structural barriers that limit the potential for meaningful youth engagement in peacebuilding in almost all national and local contexts.

### 3. Barriers to Regionalisation



#### 3.1 Funding and Resource Constraints

Youth-led peacebuilding initiatives face a complex web of structural and systemic challenges that hinder their effectiveness and sustainability. One of the most pressing and recurring issues is limited funding and resources. Most regional YPS initiatives operate on a volunteer basis or rely on small grants, which constrain their ability to sustain programmes or build regional structures and collaboration. According to Mridul's experience, even when there is a willingness to act, limited funding expectations hamper commitment to long-term plans and strategies.

This challenge is illustrated by the absence of major YPS implementation efforts in the region during 2024 and 2025, when there was a discontinuation of the funding partnership between UNFPA and UNOY due to a lack of strategic alignment. Furthermore, access to dedicated funding mechanisms such as the UN Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF) is also highly restricted. Only a small number (14%) [12] of countries in the region have been eligible for UNPBF support over the years, making regional cooperation and progress difficult.

#### 3.2 Institutional Constraints and Limited Youth Representation

Institutional capacity was another constraint raised in the interviews, particularly regarding the ability of regional and international bodies to support youth peacebuilding initiatives effectively. Both ASEAN IPR and the UN peacebuilding teams were described as understaffed, limiting the extent to which they can dedicate sustained attention and resources to youth-related priorities. Importantly, YPS is often just one portfolio among many for UN agency representatives (e.g. in the TWG-YPS), meaning their time and focus are divided across multiple responsibilities. In addition, UN agencies generally lack peace and security focal points in the region. Consequently, agencies are only able to engage meaningfully on YPS when there is a dedicated staff member responsible for it. Otherwise, the agenda risks being sidelined in favour of other institutional priorities.

The lack of youth representation among decision-makers compounds these structural limitations. Those working on youth-relevant peacebuilding topics within the UN are rarely young people themselves, which can reduce the depth of understanding and sensitivity to youth perspectives in the process, if there is no proper mechanism for youth advisory. Research outputs also often fail to directly credit youth involvement, instead publishing findings under the names of large organisations or umbrella initiatives, thereby obscuring the contributions of young researchers and practitioners.

12. Report(s) of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (2015-2024). United Nations. <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/results>

### 3.3 Language as a Barrier to Regional Reach

Language barriers further limit the visibility of youth-led initiatives beyond their immediate contexts. Many grassroots groups operate in local or national languages, which means their work often goes unnoticed in regional or international arenas where English dominates. This invisibility reduces opportunities for collaboration, peer learning, and donor engagement, making it harder for promising local initiatives to connect with wider networks or scale their impact.

## 4. The Way Forward

### 4.1 ASEAN as a (Sub)Regional Anchor

Among Asia-Pacific's many subregions, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) occupies a unique position in advancing YPS initiatives. Unlike other sub-regions, where dialogues on peace are fragmented or hampered by geopolitical tensions, ASEAN provides a formal, consistent space for regional engagement. Through its integration into larger networks, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, it can also mobilise key global stakeholders around this topic. ASEAN's role in YPS is materialising through concrete initiatives such as the ASEAN-UN YPS workshop in December 2022 and the recently launched ASEAN regional study on YPS. There is optimism that the outcomes of these initiatives could inform a regional action plan for YPS within ASEAN, and further build on its existing architecture for Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) to formalise and expand YPS implementation. Thus, the association can potentially serve as a model for other subregions in the broader Asia-Pacific region.



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### 4.2 Conclusion

The Youth, Peace, and Security agenda in the Asia-Pacific region faces significant resource and coordination challenges, which have slowed progress over the past years. Unlike other regions, much of the Asia-Pacific has not received consistent funding support from mechanisms such as the UN Peacebuilding Fund or other major donors, leaving much of the region reliant on voluntary or other extremely limited efforts.

While dedicated actors continue to work on YPS, limited resources constrain the pace and scale of implementation. The regional Thematic Working Group, which for five years provided a bimonthly forum for knowledge sharing and coordination among roughly 20 organisations, has been largely inactive for the past two years. With only a handful of consistent participants remaining, the group struggles to define a clear regional direction, leaving YPS initiatives to develop at an uneven pace through small programming coordination subgroups, unless substantial funding support emerges.

Interestingly, the interviews indicated that, unlike in other global regions, COVID-19 seemed to have minimal impact on YPS progress in the Asia-Pacific region. Apart from delaying the planned ASEAN-UN YPS workshop from 2020/2021 to December 2022, the pandemic did not significantly alter implementation. Stakeholders, such as UNOY, in the region had already adopted online and hybrid approaches early on in 2018, which might have helped maintain continuity. This observation underscores that the slow pace of YPS progress between 2023 and 2025 is less attributable to the pandemic and more to persistent structural, resource and institutional challenges.

Moving forward, the ASEAN YPS regional study and proactive engagement with ASEAN chairs and member states will be essential to secure political commitment, consolidate civil society advocacy, and catalyse a coordinated, well-resourced approach to YPS in the Asia-Pacific region.



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# Regionalisation of YPS in Europe

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## 1. Origins, Momentum, and Stakeholders Involved

### 1.1 Civil Society Leadership and Early Advocacy (2016–2017)



The early European engagement in YPS was largely driven by civil society actors, including United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY), Search for Common Ground, Save the Children and World Vision International. These CSOs were leading the push for the YPS agenda at the UN level and also had a strong European presence. One of the first collaborative regional initiatives was the **European Partnership for Children & Youth in Peacebuilding (EYPB)**, established by these four organisations in March 2016, building on their prior collaboration under the umbrella of the Global Partnership for Children & Youth in Peacebuilding. The Partnership was intended as a civil society collaboration platform advocating for an EU-wide approach to supporting youth in peacebuilding and the adoption of a policy framework on YPS at the European level, drawing on UNSCR 2250. Concurrently, UNOY launched the European Youth Advocacy Team (E-YAT) with similar youth-led advocacy aims. Sölvi Karlsson (UNOY's Leading Coordinator, 2014–17) mentioned that *"Europe had several pre-existing funding mechanisms for multi-country youth-led initiatives, when we got UNSCR 2250, which enabled us to access resources for Europe-oriented YPS advocacy efforts."* For this reason, Europe was an important target of early regionalisation efforts.

In November 2016, UNOY's first **E-YAT mission to Strasbourg** focused on raising awareness about YPS and laying the groundwork for future collaborations. [13] In January 2017, UNOY gave a briefing on YPS to the EU's informal Task Force on UNSCR 1325, helping to inform policymakers. In March, Federica Mogherini (High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Vice-President of the European Commission) launched the **Young Med Voices Plus Initiative**, a network of young people from Europe and the MENA region promoting dialogue between youth and public institutions and operating as a youth-led "think and do tank". While not designed as a YPS-specific programme, it created indirect openings for youth peacebuilders by framing young people as partners in dialogue and civic engagement.

13. The mission coincided with the autumn session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, giving team members the opportunity to meet with national parliamentarians and permanent representatives of countries including Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, and Ukraine.



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In September, the EU held a [youth consultation](#) as a contribution to the first YPS Progress Study, followed by the adoption of the [EU-AU Youth Agenda](#) and the [Abidjan Youth Declaration](#) in October and November, which further institutionalised cooperation between African and European youth networks and emphasised youth-led engagement. Although peace and security were only one of several thematic priorities, the process nonetheless strengthened the political visibility of YPS and provided funding options.

## 1.2 Growing Momentum and EU-Level Initiatives (2018–2021)

In 2018, the YPS agenda gained unprecedented traction within the EU. In January, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and UNOY briefed the EU's Youth Working Party on the importance of adopting Council Conclusions on YPS, helping to build momentum among member states. Soon, the EEAS representatives engaged in the [UN Security Council Open Debate on YPS](#), reinforcing the EU's support for the YPS agenda.

In May 2018, the [EU Conference on Youth, Peace and Security](#) was held in Brussels, co-hosted by the European Parliament and the EEAS, and co-organised with the European Commission, the UN and civil society. Shortly afterwards, in June, the Council of the European Union adopted [conclusions](#) on the role of young people in building a secure, cohesive and harmonious society in Europe, signalling political recognition of youth contributions to peacebuilding.

In November, the EU adopted its new [EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027](#) and the [EU Youth Goals](#), embedding youth engagement more broadly across policy areas. While not including YPS as a thematic area in any of these, this strategy strengthens the overall policy infrastructure for youth participation in the EU, potentially creating opportunities for YPS to gain further traction. Also in November, the Council of Europe and its North-South Centre [14] organised the [Lisbon Forum](#) on Youth, Peace and Security in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

By early 2019, this trajectory culminated in additional milestones, such as the [First International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes in Helsinki](#), in March, co-organised by Finland, the UN, and other partners. While this forum had more of a global focus, it took place in Europe and included participation from the EEAS. At around the same time, the EU-AU Youth Cooperation Hub issued calls for proposals supporting youth-led projects, including in peace and security. Additionally, in November 2019, the [Euro-Arab Youth Forum](#), co-organised by the Council of Europe in cooperation with the League of Arab States and the European Youth Forum, addressed the YPS agenda. The efforts were followed by the [Council Conclusions on youth in external action \(2020\)](#).

14. The Council of Europe explicitly champions YPS through its [North-South Centre](#) and Youth Department. The North-South Centre's youth programme has developed a 'Youth, Peace and Security' agenda aligned with UNSCR 2250. This programme stresses democratic participation and human rights as pillars of peace.

Another important initiative in the regionalisation of YPS in Europe is the [Youth Peace Camp](#) (YPC), a flagship activity of the Council of Europe's youth sector. <sup>[15]</sup> Soon after getting UNSCR 2250, references to the YPS agenda regularly appeared in YPC documents and have been explicitly integrated into the Camp's goals and communications, positioning it as a concrete expression of the Council's commitment to advancing the global YPS agenda. With roots in youth peace work long before UNSCR 2250, the Council of Europe had also established the [Youth Peace Ambassadors Network](#), which now operates independently and continues to advance youth-led peacebuilding across Europe.

Institutionalisation further advanced in 2021 with the launch of the EU Coalition for Youth, Peace and Security, a joint initiative connecting young people, EU institutions, civil society, and Member States. Building on the momentum of the European Partnership for Children & Youth in Peacebuilding (EYPB), the coalition emerged with renewed energy and broader engagement. The Coalition's value lies in its ability to bridge the EU's institutional complexity, enhancing internal coordination, coherence, and collaboration on YPS across EU institutions. It established a co-chairing structure shared between a Member of the European Parliament and a civil society representative. On the other hand, in August 2021, Finland became the first country to adopt a YPS [National Action Plan](#).

### **1.3 The Development of a Youth Action Plan and Year of Geopolitical Challenges (2022)**

In 2021, the EU launched the [Youth Sounding Board \(YSB\)](#) to advise on EU external actions and co-create the Youth Action Plan. In 2022, the European Union adopted the [Youth Action Plan](#) (YAP 2022–2027) for EU external action. Developed collaboratively with civil society, including via the EU YPS Coalition, it represents the first-ever structured EU policy framework specifically designed to engage young people in strategic partnerships around the world. It included multiple actions to implement the YPS agenda, such as '*integrat[ing] the YPS agenda into the EU's political dialogues*' and to '*build[ing] capacity of EU staff on the YPS agenda*'. YAP also established an EU Youth Dialogue Platform, whose recommendations helped shape the [monitoring framework](#) to assist in evaluating the plan. In November 2022, the accompanying [EU Council Conclusions](#) on the Youth Action Plan in EU external action further reinforced the objective of the YPS agenda and increasing meaningful and active youth participation in EU external action.

The same year, Europe's geopolitical landscape shifted dramatically with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, leading to a re-emphasis on traditional security and defence priorities. In response to the war, the European Youth Forum passed a [Resolution](#) in May 2022, "*in support of youth of Ukraine*," explicitly linking the war to the need for a regional YPS implementation. The resolution calls on investing heavily in the European YPS agenda, as well as on advocacy for the implementation of the European integration roadmap for Ukraine.

<sup>15.</sup> The Youth Peace Camp was initiated in 2003 as part of the Council's confidence-building measures to bring young people from conflict-affected regions together for dialogue, conflict transformation and human-rights learning. Over the years the Camp has grown into an annual event held at the Council's European Youth Centre in Strasbourg (since 2011) and convenes dozens of participants from divided communities (e.g. Cyprus, Caucasus, Ukraine, Balkans) to share experiences and build trust.

## 1.4 Other Recent Advancements (2023-2025)

In 2023, the EU took a notable step toward integrating youth and YPS perspectives into its civilian security efforts by including a commitment on YPS in the updated **policy framework for Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions**, which guides EU civilian crisis management and peacebuilding operations. This has since been complemented by an internal practice guidance document to operationalise the commitment. In September 2023, sub-regional youth engagement advanced, with Finland hosting the first **Nordic Forum on Youth, Peace and Security in Helsinki**. UN Youth of Finland, the UN Student Association of Norway, and the National Council of Swedish Children and Youth Organisations laid the foundation for the **Nordic Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security**, demonstrating that youth themselves are driving the agenda.

In May 2024, following advocacy and technical input by the EU YPS Coalition, the EEAS updated its **Peace Mediation Guidelines** to incorporate a chapter on meaningful youth participation. That same year, the European Parliament's **annual report** on the implementation of the common security and defence policy 2024 recommended that the EEAS integrate youth into its YPS agenda work more systematically, explicitly calling for cooperation between defence institutions and universities of EU member states to engage youth in defence-related education and exercises (point 136).

Progress at the EU level has gone hand-in-hand with a gradual strengthening of the EU YPS Coalition, notably with increasing buy-in from EU institutions and Member State bodies. As a sign of this, in March 2025, the EEAS officially joined the UN Association of Finland and Search for Common Ground as co-chairs of the Coalition.

In June 2025, the **Youth Peace Summit at NATO** was held as a youth-led event bringing together over 100 young people from 43 countries, including Russia and Ukraine, to present a "peace manifesto" to an official representative of NATO during the NATO summit same month. Rather than focusing on military deterrence, the youth emphasised the importance of a rule-based global order, dialogue, and the nonviolent power of civil society. **[16]**

In July 2025, the **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Chairpersonship Youth Forum** gathered young leaders and international stakeholders to shape an OSCE-wide YPS roadmap that Finland is aiming to launch during its Chairpersonship, marking a major regional step toward systemic youth inclusion. The forum focused on defining the OSCE's role and clarifying its unique position compared to other international and regional organisations in advancing the YPS agenda. **[17]** In August, the EU Monitoring Mission in Armenia (EUMA) **[18]** engaged various local youth leaders in peace dialogues and **celebrated a decade of YPS** (UNSCR 2250), reaffirming youth roles in peace processes at the regional level.

16. Peace SOS (2025). <https://peacesos.nl/yps-youth-peace-summit/>

17. Over the past decade, the OSCE has emphasized the role of young people in peace and security issues in various declarations, such as the **Declaration on Youth and Security 2015** and the **Declaration on the Role of Youth in Contributing to Peace and Security Efforts (2018)**.

18. The EU Mission in Armenia (EUMA), launched in February 2023, is a civilian mission observing the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, supporting human security and confidence-building, with a mandate extended until February 2027.

At the national level, Finland remains the only EU member state to have developed and implemented a NAP on YPS. As its first NAP was for 2021–2024, it launched its [second NAP \(2025–2028\)](#) in December 2020. Italy has also expressed its [intention to draft its first National Action Plan on YPS](#). At the same time, a wide range of civil society organisations in different countries are actively striving to operationalise the agenda in practice, promoting youth inclusion in peacebuilding, building YPS coalitions and advocating for its multilateral implementation across different policy arenas.

## 2. Regional Dynamics

### 2.1 Civil Society-led Traction



The regional momentum for YPS in Europe emerged primarily from the bottom up, while the funding mechanisms of the EU and the Council of Europe supporting international youth work enabled youth-led collaboration and advocacy. Following the adoption of UNSCR 2250 in 2015, youth-led and civil society organisations such as UNOY and Search for Common Ground became the driving force behind YPS advocacy. Through platforms such as UNOY's E-YAT, targeted briefings, and consultations between 2016 and 2018, these actors ensured that youth voices and the YPS agenda were incorporated into broader EU debates and youth frameworks (e.g. 2018 Council Conclusions). The EU itself recognised this dynamic at the '[2018 EU conference on YPS](#)'. However, without strong institutional follow-up, there is a risk that the agenda remains symbolically acknowledged rather than operationally mainstreamed.

### 2.2 The European Union as One of the Key Actors for the Institutionalisation of YPS

Building on this bottom-up traction, the European Union has become one of the central actors for YPS institutionalisation within Europe. Starting from 'EU conference on YPS' and the 'Council Conclusions on the role of young people in building a secure, cohesive and harmonious society' in 2018 to adopting the Youth Action Plan in EU external action (2022–2027), EU institutions were not merely echoing the language of UNSCR 2250 but were also embedding YPS principles into their own political discourse and institutional processes. From 2023 onwards, initiatives such as the EEAS [Youth Policy Dialogues](#) represent an even more structured approach to integrating youth perspectives into policy, marking progress towards a more systematic inclusion of youth interests and voices. Nonetheless, institutionalisation progress remains uneven, and follow-up processes often lack transparency and systematic engagement with young people themselves, leading to a gap between political commitments and operational practice.

## 2.3 YPS Within Broader EU Youth Policy: Institutional Visibility, Limited Thematic Focus

While the EU has been a driver for mainstreaming and institutionalising the YPS agenda, many of its initiatives that are often cited as part of the YPS-related milestones are in fact broader youth participation or youth cooperation programmes, with YPS appearing as only one small component. So while YPS advocates (like UNOY) managed to plug the YPS agenda into these broader youth frameworks, the EU itself has often treated YPS as a sub-theme within general youth policy or external cooperation rather than as a stand-alone peace and security priority. The consequence is that the YPS is institutionally visible, but mostly within the broader subject of youth work, such as the EU Youth Strategy, EU Youth Goals, Youth Action Plan 2022–2027 for EU external action, etc. “Along with this, most of the framing leans toward the securitisation of the youth work rather than reimagining security through a youth-led or broader human security lens”, as expressed by Sölvi.

This pattern is also reflected in EU funding mechanisms. Despite a global decline in peacebuilding and development funding, the EU has expanded its financial support for youth-led action. Under the Youth Action Plan, several initiatives have been launched, including the Youth and Women in Democracy Initiative (€40 million) to strengthen rights and participation, and the Youth Empowerment Fund (€10 million) to support youth-led action in EU partner countries. Similarly, AU–EU youth labs provide sub-grants to youth organisations through intermediaries. However, none of these instruments is specifically dedicated to YPS. Their contribution to the YPS agenda, therefore, depends on whether youth-led peacebuilding organisations and networks are among the recipients.

## 2.4 A Multi-institutional Landscape

The YPS agenda in Europe has evolved through the overlapping efforts of regional institutions, such as the EU, EEAS, Council of Europe, European Commission, and OSCE, etc. Each of them has contributed distinct strengths, from policy frameworks and funding to youth empowerment. While this diversity has enriched the agenda, it has made it challenging for youth organisations to sustain diverse advocacy efforts with limited resources. It also underscores the need for greater coordination and coherence to fully realise the transformative potential of the YPS agenda.



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## 2.5 External–Internal Split

Interestingly, the EU has primarily advanced YPS through external action (e.g., EU-AU Youth Agenda, Abidjan Youth Declaration, Youth Action Plan 2022–2027 for EU external action), formally channelling YPS into EU foreign and security policy. This “externalisation” of YPS aligns with the EU’s self-image as a global peace actor. Until 2022, much of continental Europe was seen as a relatively peaceful space, which probably made EU policymakers focus on YPS in other high-conflict risk contexts in Africa and MENA.

By contrast, the domestic youth space on peace and security has followed a different path. It focuses more on youth exchange, dialogue, human rights education, and media literacy, closely aligned with YPS principles but not framed explicitly as “peace and security”. [19] Europe was adopting robust youth policy frameworks that were addressing many YPS-relevant issues (participation, migration, violence prevention) without connecting them explicitly to peace and security. This probably made the EU feel less urgency about the need to “domesticate” YPS as a policy framework.

## 2.6 War in Ukraine and Shifting Security Dynamics

The outbreak of this large-scale war on the continent forced institutions and civil society to confront the relevance of YPS within Europe itself. Young people saw heightened vulnerability and unprecedented mobilisation. Ukrainian youth networks, as well as diaspora and European youth organisations, quickly emerged/positioned themselves as crucial actors in humanitarian aid delivery, information-sharing, digital activism, and transnational advocacy for peace and justice. While it could have brought more attention to the YPS agenda’s domestication, most institutional responses (such as the EU’s 2022 [Strategic Compass](#) and other rapid policy moves) still overwhelmingly emphasised defence and security capabilities.

## 2.7 Finland as State Champion

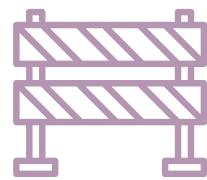
Among states, Finland emerged as the European YPS frontrunner, becoming the first country globally to adopt a YPS National Action Plan in 2021, supporting the YPS National Action Plans Community of Practice (CoP), and hosting key YPS forums such as the 2019 Helsinki Symposium on Peace Processes, the 2023 Nordic Forum on Youth, Peace and Security, and the 2025 OSCE Chairpersonship Youth Forum. In December 2025, Finland adopted its [second NAP \(2025–2028\)](#).



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[19]. While this is largely applicable to the EU and its member states, the Council of Europe and many CSOs have already promoted activities focused on youth and peace (if not security), as noted earlier.

### 3. Barriers to Regionalisation



#### 3.1 Reliance on Individuals and Ad Hoc Advances

UNOY highlighted in 2019 that much of the progress has been slow and personality-driven, with key advances tied to the initiative of individual policymakers, diplomats, or civil society leaders rather than to systemic institutional change. [20] As noted by Eoin O'Leary, "the early days of YPS regionalisation also included quite some efforts from individual EU officials who recognised the potential of the YPS agenda". This reliance on champions resulted in an uneven momentum, which was vulnerable to shifts in political priorities. Over time, however, the landscape began to shift, thanks in part to the sustained advocacy of the EU YPS Coalition, towards a more structured and institutionalised commitment.

#### 3.2 Fragmented Mechanisms and Opportunities to Advance YPS

While Europe may offer the most favourable funding environments in the world for youth-led initiatives, accessing consistent support for YPS work has been a recurring challenge. There were a few long-term structural grants from both the EU and the Council of Europe, which helped organisations like UNOY sustain its secretariat. However, many smaller or less well-positioned organisations struggled to secure consistent resources. While UNOY benefited from its secretariat being located in the Hague, which made accessing European funding comparatively easier, "yet applications for activity grants had to be made through annual work plans, making long-term planning difficult," as Sölvi noted.



Even with new initiatives such as the Youth Empowerment Fund and the Youth and Women in Democracy Initiative, much of the funding is project-based, not YPS-focused, and channelled through intermediaries, limiting sustainability and direct access for grassroots peacebuilders. Further, while EU mechanisms occasionally provided advocacy and dialogue opportunities, these remained ad hoc and did not translate into dedicated YPS policy instruments comparable to those developed, for instance, by the African Union, as described by Eoin O'Leary (Co-Chair, European YPS Coalition).

20. United Network of Young Peacebuilders (2019), Mapping the Progress of YPS in the EU; <https://unoxy.org/downloads/mapping-the-progress-of-youth-peace-and-security-in-the-eu-2/>

### 3.3 Slow Institutional Uptake

Although the EU has adopted Council Conclusions, hosted high-level conferences, and launched the Youth Action Plan, turning rhetorical commitments into concrete policy frameworks, especially at the domestic level, has been slow. It took several years for the EU to codify YPS into official strategies, and even then, YPS has often been absent from flagship youth policy frameworks such as the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027. Part of this delay stems from the fragmented nature of EU policymaking, with responsibilities spread across the European Commission, EEAS, European Parliament, Council, and others. This institutional complexity complicates coordination, slows implementation, and can dilute accountability, making it difficult to create a coherent regional approach to YPS.

## 4. The Way Forward



The European Union has made considerable progress in elevating YPS as a policy priority, but much work remains to consolidate these gains and ensure the agenda's sustainability. A critical next step lies in coordinating exchanges among EU Member States on developing and implementing national YPS strategies. At present, Finland remains the only country to have adopted a dedicated YPS National Action Plan, and the process in other states has been slow. Here, Eoin suggests "the EU could play a convening role similar to the African Union, which has supported its Member States in drafting NAPs by providing technical assistance and facilitating peer learning". Building on Finland's pioneering experience and the Finland-supported [Youth, Peace & Security National Action Plans Community of Practice \(CoP\)](#), the EU could foster a collaborative environment in which Member States systematically share lessons and accelerate progress.

Progress also depends on further mainstreaming YPS into EU security and foreign policy practice, for example, in the mandates and capacities of Common Security and Defence Policy missions. Systematic integration of YPS across such missions would send a strong signal that youth are not only beneficiaries but also strategic partners in peacebuilding and crisis response. The recognition of youth contributions must extend from declarations to implementation "as Team Europe" (Eoin), with Member States acting together on the unique opportunity YPS presents.

Importantly, Europe has shown that youth-led trajectories work. Civil society and youth networks catalysed political attention, creating the initial momentum that led to Council Conclusions and the Youth Action Plan. The EU's own consultations with young people during the YAP design process produced operational commitments that can now be used to normalise youth inclusion across EU external action. This approach should remain central: sustained regionalisation of YPS requires maintaining youth at the forefront as co-creators, not just consultees.

Further recommendations include ensuring funding mechanisms support youth-led action without fostering competition among youth-led organisations, undermining collaboration. Eoin suggests that the Cooperation Grants model under the AU-EU Youth Action Lab, which requires cooperative applications, could be replicated. Additionally, the Youth and Women in Democracy Initiative and the Youth Empowerment Fund should be adapted to ensure flexibility, sustainability, and accessibility for all youth.

Lastly, the EU must address the separation between its internal and external youth policies. The trajectory of YPS in Europe has largely been about integration into general youth policy frameworks, rather than treating YPS as a distinct strategic priority for peace and security. A more integrated approach across domestic, external, and Member State levels could ensure coherence and strengthen legitimacy. Developing a regional YPS roadmap could unite EU institutions, Member States, and civil society around a shared vision, accelerating progress and avoiding the slow, fragmented advances that have characterised the domestic process to date.

## Conclusion

As Eoin noted, while many challenges remain, "the EU's efforts to implement the YPS agenda are a positive story so far". The Union has achieved important milestones, combined with increased funding opportunities for youth-led organisations and the establishment of intergenerational dialogues between EU institutions and civil society. At the same time, while the Youth Action Plan and the EEAS Youth Policy Dialogues show promising institutionalisation of youth participation, they do not yet amount to a wholesale reorientation of policy toward youth as peacebuilders. Still, much of the policy language remains anchored in the traditional "security toolbox" rather than the broader "peacebuilding toolbox" advocated by youth networks. In short, the EU has laid a solid foundation for YPS, but the regionalisation process is far from complete. Its success will depend on bridging the gap between rhetoric and practice.



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# Regionalisation of YPS in Middle East & Northern Africa

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## 1. Origins, Momentum, and Stakeholders Involved

### 1.1 The Path of Regionalisation: How YPS Entered the MENA Agenda (2016-2020)



The trajectory of Youth, Peace and Security in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region has been fragmented and at times inconsistent. Resolution 2250 (2015) served as a global entry point, but its resonance in the region was initially limited. The only early adopter was Jordan, which immediately positioned itself as a role model by hosting the first regional consultation in December 2016 for the first progress study. Organized under the patronage of the Crown Prince, and supported by UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA and the Peacebuilding Support Office, the meeting brought together around 60 youth from 18 countries across the region. The consultation provided a space for young people to discuss how Resolution 2250 could apply to their contexts and contribute to regional stability. While the event offered youth visibility and a sense of hope, it lacked a clear roadmap or implementation mechanism, leaving the YPS agenda largely aspirational.

From 2016 to 2020, YPS engagement slowly expanded. On the one hand, advances occurred at the national level: Jordan's YPS coalition (2017) and Iraq's YPS coalition (2020). On the other hand, since 2017, UNFPA has taken the lead in regional YPS work. Together with partners, it convened (a) an international conference [21] and (b) a High-Level Partnership Meeting in Morocco [22] to mobilize support for a regional strategy. These efforts, together with other initiatives [23,24], paved the way for the joint UNFPA-UNESCO development of the 2018–2021 Regional Strategy on YPS in Arab States which served as a framework for coordinated action. At the same time, UNFPA and its partners supported national consultations on YPS in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Palestine, and Yemen, while UNESCO and UNFPA jointly organized a Sub-Regional Consultation on Youth, Peace and Security in North Africa. UNFPA also facilitated the establishment of national YPS coalitions and working groups in Jordan, Iraq, Palestine, and Yemen.

**21.** UNFPA Arab States Regional Office partnered with the Council of Europe, Union for the Mediterranean, Moroccan Ministry of Youth and Sports, as well as the ONDE's Center of Excellence for Arab and African Adolescents and Youth to convene: (a) an international conference entitled "The Mediterranean Crossroad of Civilizations between Africa, the East and the West: Towards Making Youth, Peace and Security a Reality" on 27 April 2017 in Iran

**22.** and (b) a High-Level Partnership Meeting in support of the Development of a Regional Strategy on Youth, Peace and Security in the Arab States Region on 28 April 2017 in Fes, Morocco.

**23.** The first-ever Youth Forum in the Arab Region, organised in 2018 in Morocco by UNFPA, the World Organization of the Scout Movement, and the Mediterranean Forum for Youth.

**24.** The second Youth Forum, held in 2019 in Tunisia, was organized by UNFPA ASRO with the Tunisian Ministry of Youth and Sports and in collaboration with ESCWA, UNDP, WFP, UNESCO, and the Global Council for Tolerance and Peace.

Beyond these cases, youth themselves, alongside some civil society organisations, carried the agenda forward by raising awareness, exchanging experiences, and trying to unify their efforts across borders, though with limited impact. The League of Arab States (LAS), despite sending a handful of observers to the 2016 consultation, was largely inactive and unaware of YPS at that time.

Regional momentum began to grow further after the Helsinki workshop in 2019. In 2020, leaders of youth organisations from the MENA region established the [\*\*MENA Coalition for YPS\*\*](#) (mena4yps) as an independent, youth-led platform unaffiliated with either governments or UN agencies. It aims to network and build partnerships with stakeholders and decision-makers at the national, regional, and international levels, mobilise resources, and strengthen youth capacities around the YPS agenda. In parallel, [\*\*LAS\*\*](#) and [\*\*UNFPA\*\*](#) attempted to create regional youth networks out of the regional youth forums organised in 2018 and 2019, but these initiatives collapsed after only a few months, illustrating the difficulty of sustaining youth engagement within rigid institutional frameworks.

The contrast between the independent coalition and the state-led attempts to organise youth highlighted a persistent tension between grassroots activism and top-down approaches, with feelings of “competitive[ness]” emerging between independent youth initiatives and state-led structures, as noted by the interviewee.

## **1.2 The Development of a Regional YPS Strategy (2021-2022)**

The YPS regionalisation momentum began growing in 2021 when LAS conducted a mapping of policies and programmes of Arab countries related to YPS. In late 2021, a regional training for youth representatives nominated by 10 member states [\*\*\[25\]\*\*](#) was organised by LAS, UOLAS and UNFPA to discuss youth-led implementation of the YPS agenda, marking one of the first regional capacity-building events for youth.[\*\*\[26\]\*\*](#) This was followed by a regional consultation to develop the YPS Strategy with government representatives, members of existing national YPS coalitions and other youth networks, as well as regional and international partners.

The online [\*\*High Level Global Conference on Youth Inclusive Peace Processes\*\*](#) in January 2022 proved particularly significant: it was there that the Assistant Secretary General of the League of Arab States, herself a Jordanian and former minister in Jordan, announced that LAS would develop an Arab Regional YPS Strategy and roadmap. This was the first political indication that YPS might move towards regional institutionalisation. Following this announcement, LAS began to take concrete steps, first by organising an orientation training on the YPS agenda for LAS staff in Cairo and then establishing a technical group tasked with supporting the strategy’s development.[\*\*\[27\]\*\*](#) On May 26, 2022, the Arab Council of Ministers for Youth and Sports adopted Resolution 1010 at its forty-fifth session, formally endorsing the development of the strategy.

**25.** Jordan, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Iraq, Qatar, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Yemen.

**26.** The training contributed to the data collection process that informed the development of the Arab Regional Strategy on YPS introduced in 2022.

**27.** The group was composed of focal persons from the United Nations Liaison Office to the League of Arab States (UNOLAS), the United Nations Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs (DPPA), the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for the Arab States (UNDP RBAS), UNFPA ASRO and two youth representatives.

Simultaneously, UN stakeholders began working on a study to support LAS and organized online youth consultations to inform the strategy. The proximity of both UNFPA regional offices and LAS in Cairo facilitated more effective collaboration and discussions. By formally convening consultations with youth representatives and government ministries, as well as appointing a dedicated consultant to oversee the strategy's development, the process gained structure and the results became more tangible. In September 2022, youth representatives and member states met to discuss the principles, axes, and objectives of the Arab Strategy, building on earlier virtual consultations conducted by LAS in collaboration with UN agencies, which had engaged over 200 young people from across the region.

The MENA Coalition, which had been an important step towards a platform and space for youth activism and youth engagement on YPS in the region, was not directly engaged in the strategy's development. Only a handful of individuals linked to the Coalition participated due to their personal connections with certain governments.

### **1.3 Difficulties in Drafting the Regional YPS Strategy (2023-2025)**

The drafting process itself was marked by tensions, as member states disagreed over multiple elements of the proposed strategy. Ultimately, LAS authorised Jordan to lead the effort, reflecting the country's established position at the forefront of the regional YPS agenda. By the end of 2022, Jordan's Ministry of Youth achieved greater institutional stability, enabling it to take on a clearer leadership role. Yet the strategy drafting remained fragmented, with five different UN agencies seeking to shape the outcome by contributing according to their respective mandates, dividing the strategy draft into five to six thematic chapters. The result was an incoherent document of more than fifty pages, written originally in English and translated into Arabic through automated tools, which diluted nuance and caused loss of information.

Despite these obstacles, the process reached a milestone in September 2023, when the Council of Arab Ministers for Youth and Sports adopted Resolution 1096, thereby endorsing the [\*\*Arab Strategy for Youth, Peace and Security\*\*](#) for the period 2023-2028. For the first time, YPS was formally codified within the institutional framework of LAS, representing a symbolic and practical breakthrough for the agenda in the region. However, the official launch of the strategy was repeatedly delayed. Originally planned for late 2023, it was postponed following the escalation of violence in Israel and Palestine after October 7. A new date set during Ramadan in 2024 was again pushed back. The strategy was ultimately published in September 2024 by UNFPA. In the meantime, work was underway on a regional action plan to guide the implementation of the strategy, but the events following October 7, 2023, significantly altered the regional context, making the drafting process difficult and creating new challenges for its rollout. While the regional context remained turbulent, the [\*\*Arab Strategy for Youth, Peace, and Security Action Plan\*\*](#) was formally adopted by the Arab Summit in May 2025 and officially launched in Amman on 9-10 July 2025.

## 2. Regional Dynamics



### 2.1 Breaking the Taboo

Ma'in Alshamayle mentions that, before 2015, the notion of 'youth in peace' was almost a taboo topic in the region's political space, largely due to associations with violent extremist activities and movements such as the Arab Spring. The emerging YPS discourse, therefore, marked a significant shift, legitimising the idea of youth as active peacebuilders. This shift enabled youth participation to move toward concrete engagement in peace and security initiatives, creating space for dialogue, innovation and advocacy.

### 2.2 Youth as Agenda Pioneers

In MENA, it was often young people themselves who drove the YPS agenda, particularly when institutional initiatives didn't make specific progress in parallel. Youth created independent spaces for dialogue, awareness-raising, and cross-border collaboration, often in the absence of institutional support. The formation of networks like the MENA Coalition for YPS (mena4yps) illustrates this dynamic, showing how youth mobilised themselves, exchanged experiences, and sought to unify efforts despite limited formal backing and resources. However, this period also demonstrates the limitations of grassroots activism: without sufficient institutional support, engagement can stagnate, and the agenda risks remaining aspirational rather than operational.



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### 2.3 The Role of Jordan as a Regional Leader

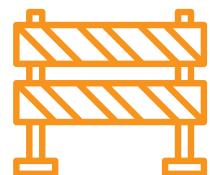
Jordan has consistently served as a role model for YPS in the region. In August 2015, Jordan hosted the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security in Amman, and later, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, championed and led the adoption of Resolution 2250. Post-UNSCR 2250, it hosted the first regional consultation in 2016, established a national YPS coalition, and took a leading role in shaping the regional strategy.

For many Arab youth, Jordan became a reference point for inspiration and best practices in YPS implementation. Between 2017 and 2022, however, frequent changes in youth ministers (six to seven during this period), limited continuity and institutional memory, slowed the agenda's progress. From 2022 onward, greater ministerial stability allowed the YPS process to gain momentum, supporting more coordinated efforts and stronger regional engagement, with Jordan taking a leading role in drafting the regional Arab Strategy for YPS. The Jordanian case also illustrates the challenges of translating global frameworks into regional agendas, as described by Main, "initially, the country approached YPS primarily as a global agenda, while overlooking the need to regionalise the agenda within the Arab region's realities".

## 2.4 Geopolitical Volatility

The MENA region's geopolitical volatility has profoundly shaped YPS trajectories, not only through external shocks but also through deeply entrenched and diverse national contexts. Countries such as Morocco, with relative stability, contrast sharply with contexts like Palestine, Syria, or Yemen, where protracted conflicts, atrocities, and lack of accountability dominate daily realities. For many young people in the region, speaking about "peace" feels almost aspirational in a landscape where conflicts multiply faster than peace processes. The escalation of the Israel–Palestine conflict after October 7, 2023, exemplifies how renewed violence can further derail whatever little progress the region can make, including delaying the planned launch of the Arab Strategy and constraining the development of a regional action plan. This underscores that while political will and institutional structures are essential, the persistent and overlapping crises across the region make YPS implementation challenging.

# 3. Barriers to Regionalisation



## 3.1 Institutional Fragmentation and Resistance

LAS was slow to engage with the YPS agenda, reflecting broader structural and political challenges within regional institutions. When LAS participation did occur, it was frequently hindered by disagreements among member states. These divisions delayed key milestones, including the drafting of the Arab Strategy, and underscored how political fragmentation within regional bodies can slow the translation into regional action.

## 3.2 Operational and Communication Gaps

The drafting of the Arab Strategy revealed significant operational weaknesses. Multiple UN agencies contributed to the process according to their own mandates, creating a patchwork approach rather than a coherent narrative. Translating the draft from English to Arabic relied on automatic tools, resulting in a substantial loss of information. Such communication gaps may have the potential to undermine both regional ownership of the strategy and its accessibility to the young people it was intended to serve.

### 3.3 Top-down vs. Bottom-up Tensions

Interview data highlight another challenge for regional YPS – the disconnect between youth-led initiatives and government- or UN-driven programs. Youth platforms, innovative and grassroots-driven, operated alongside more formal, top-down processes without meaningful coordination. This parallelism led not only to a duplication of efforts (such as the simultaneous creation of regional youth networks) but also to a feeling of competition. As a result, opportunities to leverage youth expertise for shaping the Arab Strategy might have been missed, limiting the potential for a truly integrated approach. Learning from this missed opportunity, the youth-led MENA coalition was formally invited to the Arab YPS Strategy Action Plan launch in July 2025.

### 3.4 War and Conflict in the Region

Ongoing wars and conflicts across the MENA region present a fundamental barrier to regionalising the YPS agenda, not only as isolated shocks but as part of a persistent reality that shapes political priorities and youth experiences. The escalation of the Israel–Palestine conflict after October 2023 shook the region. Unfortunately, this is not an exception in a region where atrocities, lack of accountability and overlapping crises are common, and progress is uneven. These dynamics underscore that regionalisation is not merely a technical challenge but a political endeavour constrained by instability and contested narratives.

## 4. The Way Forward



### 4.1 Plans for Regional Implementation

The adoption of the Arab Strategy on YPS (2023–2028) and its Action Plan offers a key opportunity to embed youth participation in peace and security across the MENA region. It provides a framework for coordinated action, institutional support, and long-term investment in young peacebuilders. The implementation of the Strategy will be carried out under the auspices of the General Secretariat of the Arab League, in collaboration with the Youth and Sports Administration and in cooperation with the Population Policies Administration in the Social Affairs Sector. Implementation will follow three integrated tracks:

1. Enhancing political will and institutionalising policies regarding the agenda of youth, peace, and security.
2. Strengthening the role of official institutions, youth, and their capacities, including knowledge solutions on the youth, peace, and security agenda.
3. Coordinating partnerships among implementing entities, preparing a communication plan, and supporting youth participation in both planning and implementation.

Together, these tracks have the potential to translate the Strategy from a policy framework into actionable initiatives that meaningfully engage youth, foster regional cooperation, and build sustainable structures for peace in the MENA.



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## 4.2 Conclusion

Over the past decade, the MENA region has slowly embraced the YPS agenda, evolving from global advocacy roles to regional ownership. With a few national coalitions, some youth-led initiatives, a youth-led regional coalition, and a few countries developing national action plans, the region is offering a strong model for regionalisation. While challenges such as limited civic space and structural inequalities persist, the emergence of regional frameworks, like the Arab Strategy on YPS and its Action Plan, and platforms like MENA4YPS signal a growing commitment to institutionalising youth participation in peacebuilding and transforming the region's approach to inclusive security.

At the same time, the ongoing war in Israel and Palestine has shown how vulnerable these efforts can be. Violent crises can quickly disrupt progress, shift political priorities, and undermine regional coordination. Yet, precisely because of this instability, the role of youth in peacebuilding has never been more critical. Youth are directly and disproportionately affected by war, highlighting why ensuring their voices are heard and empowering them to shape the pathway towards peace is not only urgent but essential.

# Comparative Analysis

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The regionalisation of the agenda has been nonlinear; however, it prevails the leadership of young people and support of allied stakeholders from civil society and bottom-up organisations for driving YPS regional momentum through advocacy, programming, and research actions to recognise youth as crucial actors in peacebuilding. Progress on YPS at the regional level varies from place to place; depending on several factors such as the stability of multilateral bodies, regional member states' political will to move efforts towards YPS frameworks and stakeholders' coordination, among others.

## Regional Glimpses: A Kaleidoscope of Initiatives

The African continent emerges as a frontrunner with efforts on YPS within AU and RECs structures, a comprehensive 10-year plan, a regional study, and vibrant initiatives, such as different institutional mechanisms for youth to participate actively in decision-making related to peace and security. The youth advocacy, the support of non-youth allies advocating for the affirmation of youth in peacebuilding spaces and the recent support of UN agencies and other partners have been crucial for the agenda to advance in the region. An existing solid ground with institutional, legal and normative frameworks, combined with resource allocation, has been central for mainstreaming YPS regionally.

In contrast, in the case of the Asia-Pacific, their steady beginnings have slowed down, partly due to subregional silos. SAARC struggles with a lack of focus on core peace and security themes. ASEAN strives towards a (sub)regional action plan, fueled by a major YPS forum, regional consultations on YPS, a joint statement by government officials and a recent regional study. Many of these processes have been implemented, not because of governments, but rather thanks to young champions fiercely advocating at the institutional levels.

In the European region, the multiple European institutions have supported the YPS at different levels and numerous activities within the region and transregionally -e.g. with MENA and Africa, yet systemic support and coordination remain areas of opportunity. While the EU initially focused its YPS efforts on international cooperation, there is an increasing movement to appropriate the agenda at the national level. At the subregional level, there are ongoing efforts with a regional coalition for the Scandinavian countries.

For MENA, the League of Arab States (LAS) has been the multilateral body embracing YPS, with the support of UN agencies, with the launch of a regional strategy and the development of a regional action plan that allows the implementation of the strategy. Also, it is noteworthy to shed light upon the fact that, in the midst of a context with political fragmentation and volatility, MENA youth have organised themselves beyond LAS, forming the world's first regional YPS coalition.

The Americas, in that regard, experience more challenges as there is a variety of multilateral bodies that account for different countries. In that context, the regional offices of UNFPA and UNDP have been key actors in moving efforts with young people and some actors at national levels, particularly through capacity building on YPS for UN Country Offices, seminars, and the 2023 Intergenerational meeting in Bogotá. At the subregional level, CARIROM and the UNESCO Caribbean office have mobilised efforts to work with young people and national governments. National YPS movements are also being consolidated.

## Similar Trends

The regional implementation, while differentiated, shares some similarities across regions: In the case of MENA and Asia Pacific, interviewees described a similar pattern of a long year gap between Resolution 2250's adoption and the first concrete regional initiatives on YPS. Regional YPS development accelerated after 2020. That echoes in the LAC region, where efforts at the regional level are in preparatory stages despite a national youth coalition being involved in YPS work since the Amman Declaration.

For many of the regional cases, language barriers have been a shared obstacle that needs to be overcome to achieve regional collaboration and progress. For instance, poor quality of translations has distorted the accuracy of regional strategies (earlier drafts of the Arab Strategy). Furthermore, while the UN global ecosystem and most regional processes primarily operate in English, many young people engage in peacebuilding using their local or regional languages. This creates barriers for them to access information, participate in consultations, apply for funding, and influence decision-making. Conversely, language gaps also make local YPS initiatives less visible at regional platforms and within UN programming, where English dominates. As a result, regional strategies risk being less innovative and less representative of the diverse, intersectional realities faced by youth on the ground.

In dissonance with the global level in which UN bodies have a clear mandate with YPS (DPPA -relationship with UNSC, and Peacebuilding Commission; UNFPA- entry point for youth organisations, programmatic implementation at local levels, and NAP technical support; and UNYO- relationships with UN member states and YPS high-level advocacy); the regional experiences reveal that there is an absent or confusing designated UN lead agency or focal point, which creates fragmentation as well as risks of task overlap. In such situations, YPS progress has relied less on institutional commitments and more on the individual's passion, networks, and priorities of persons in key positions. Such uncertainty and reliance on individuals instead of institutions, summed up with the current financial problems and staff downsizing of UN agencies and international cooperation agencies, can make YPS sustainability fragile.

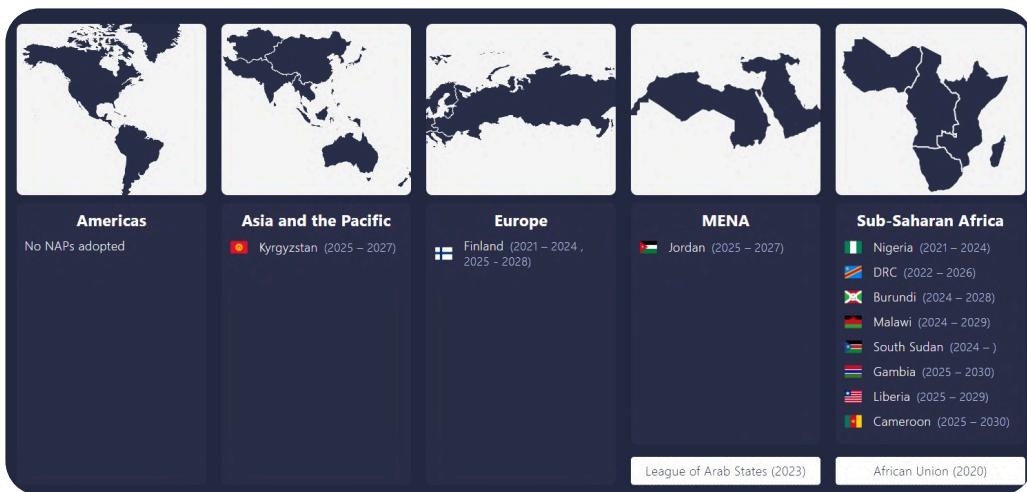
Across all the mentioned cases, there are identifiable achievements, challenges and recommendations regarding YPS regionalisation.

## Common Achievements



### Regional mechanisms and instruments that support national ones.

The MENA Coalition for YPS, the Arab Strategy for YPS, the Arab Strategy YPS Action Plan, the UNESCO's YPS Caribbean Coalition, the European Youth Action Plan, the Nordic Coalition on YPS, the ASEAN-UN Partnership Action Plan, the Youth for Peace Africa Programme, and the AU Continental Framework on YPS are examples of coordinated efforts to implement the YPS agenda in policy frameworks or programs. Many of these have the potential to inspire and become examples for other regions and multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms at the national level. Various regional processes also give a hope to advance YPS at national levels through NAP/strategy developments, in a similar vein as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda did.<sup>[28]</sup>



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### Multilateral regional structures

In most cases, the existence of a solid multilateral body with political will has been a catalyst in moving forward with YPS regionalisation. The integration of YPS into the structures and overall regional efforts nurtures the national levels and vice versa. That has been the case with the African Union and RECs, the European Union/OSCE, ASEAN or the League of Arab States. In the case of the Americas and Asia-Pacific regions, one limitation has been that the existing multiple multilateral bodies do not cover the whole region.

<sup>28.</sup> At the time this document is prepared, these are the current NAPs: The African region leads with 8 NAPs (Nigeria, DRC, Burundi, Cameroon, South Sudan, Liberia, Gambia, and Malawi). In the case of Finland and Jordan, their NAPs have positioned them as YPS global and regional champions. In Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan has developed a YPS-NAP. In the case of Southeast Asia, the Philippines has been the first country to develop an NAP, but it is yet to be officially released. Colombia is currently in the process of developing what could be the first NAP in the LAC region.  
<https://www.ypsmonitor.com/naps>



## Multistakeholder efforts for the success of YPS regionalisation

This successfully advanced the regionalisation of the agenda through continuous advocacy and inclusive engagement wherever we see good progress in different regions. Strong partnerships among youth, international NGOs, multilateral institutions, the UN and donors ensured they act with shared responsibility. This collective approach has been fundamental in embedding YPS principles across regions and creating sustainable momentum for implementation.

## Obstacles on YPS Regional Paths



### Limited National Influence and Tokenistic Implementation of YPS Regionalisation

In most regions other than Africa, the regionalisation process has not significantly inspired national progress. Many countries developed their NAPs before regional processes or with minimal influence from them. Even in Africa, where regionalisation set targets for member states, some NAPs risk becoming a tokenistic exercise to meet regional commitments without adequate funding or implementation strategies. While these plans hold policy value, they often change the situation for youth engagement in peacebuilding and security decision-making. This gap undermines the essence of empowering young people and renders NAPs ineffective as tools for transformative change.



### Funding Fluctuations: A Gamble?

One of the most pressing and recurring issues is limited funding and resources. NGO-led projects in general often navigate on the precarious tightrope of short-term funding streams or are in competition for limited funding with other NGOs or with other agendas (such as WPS). In the case of youth-based and youth-led organisations, peacebuilding initiatives face a complex web of structural and systemic challenges that hinder their effectiveness and sustainability.<sup>[29]</sup> Available funding for youth demographics often prioritises youth entrepreneurship and education rather than peacebuilding directly, limiting the scope for YPS-focused interventions and initiatives. Furthermore, dedicated funding mechanisms such as the UN Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF) are also highly restricted and do not support regional YPS processes. When financial support is nonexistent or dries up, so do projects, leaving behind a trail of unfulfilled potential.<sup>[30]</sup>

<sup>29.</sup> According to a 2017 **report** from UNOY and Search for Common Ground, a majority of the youth-led organisations at the global level operate with limited funding, 49% operating under USD 5,000 per annum and only 11% over USD 100,000. Additionally, and in comparison with children (0-18 years old) there is a lack of indicators that can track official development assistance (ODA) that goes directly to young persons between 18-35 years old.

<sup>30.</sup> Sri Lanka's initial YPS coalition serves as a stark reminder of this vulnerability.

# Recommendations for All YPS Stakeholders



## **Navigate and Adapt to Power Dynamics:**

The ever-evolving landscape of power dynamics and political transitions within and between regions demands continuous adjustments to YPS strategies and partnerships. Ignoring these shifts can render strategies obsolete and partnerships ineffective. Therefore, stakeholders need to adapt YPS regional strategies based on continuous context and power dynamics analyses. The success of YPS regionalisation depends on constant monitoring of political and social shifts, open dialogue with diverse stakeholders, and inclusive partnerships that transcend traditional power structures. Building alliances with regional youth organisations and mobilising grassroots movements can help create pressure for change and ensure diverse perspectives are heard.



## **Promote Regional Ownership and Leadership**

Regional organisations can play a pivotal role in championing and legitimising YPS, fostering knowledge sharing, and fostering cross-border collaboration among countries and regions. Therefore, it is key to continue advocacy with them and the governments involved in such spaces. This includes mapping those high-level stakeholders with a more positive narrative of youth while finding ways to dialogue with the reluctant ones so that YPS-related misleading perceptions can be changed. Additionally, there must be an effort to include these actors from the beginning of the process, supporting them in aligning YPS priorities, and coordinating regional and national work on youth and peacebuilding.



## **Promote Coordinated and Collaborative Efforts Within the Regions**

The regionalisation of YPS requires existing stakeholders and their initiatives to avoid isolated or scattered work. It requires a change of paradigm in which civil society and youth organisations see each other as collaborators. Also, UN agencies and INGOs at the global and regional levels need more communication to avoid overlapping work in mainstreaming YPS. Financially, funding mechanisms need to encourage collaboration, rather than creating a competitive environment for resources, despite resource limitations.



## Strengthen Regional YPS Networks/Platforms

Regardless of the existence or absence of governmental support, young people are organising themselves in the different regions around YPS. Regional YPS networks and platforms can accelerate progress, share best practices, and amplify youth voices at the regional stage with impacts on the national and global levels. These, however, need technical and financial support to sustain their work on YPS while, in some contexts, protecting themselves from multi-targeted threats due to their activism. Within the UN System, regional interagency efforts have demonstrated to have an important role in the positioning of YPS as a priority lens to work with and to support youth networks to advocate the agenda with governments. At the multilateral bodies, the institutionalisation of significant youth participation with representatives of YPS networks can ensure that youth perspectives are reflected in decision-making. INGOs' role must continue facilitating access to decision-makers and sharing capacities as these have played positively in the regional conformation of YPS movements.



## Develop Youth-centered Regional Mechanisms on YPS

In most regions, youth-based and youth-led organisations have been working with peacebuilding and security before the YPS was legitimised globally through the UNSCRs; however, they were not or are not aware of the movement and its milestones. There is a need to work on one side, appropriating YPS jargon based on regional contextual actors and dynamics, and on the other, to ensure that any YPS regional mechanism is developed and implemented, incorporating the youth perspective and contextual understandings on the notions of youth, peace and security. Youth organisations already working with YPS also need to socialise it among their networks, in order to have a robust representation of the different realities young people live in the regions.



## Ensure Cross-sectoral Work With YPS.

Young people in fragile and conflict-affected countries experience related effects such as militarisation, climate hazards, vulnerability, and digital gaps, among others. Therefore, regional work on YPS should continue cross-sectoral work with, for example, climate, security, and emerging technologies.



## Enhance Regional Monitoring and Evaluation of YPS Implementation

Being a relatively new Agenda, there is a need for developing more evidence-based documentation of YPS, at the regional levels. YPS regional mechanisms need to find metrics for monitoring, evaluation and reporting of its implementation. This can serve different purposes, such as tracking the progress of the agenda, enhancing evidence-based information that nurtures positive narratives on youth and peacebuilding, reducing the gap between political commitments and operationalisation, preventing risks of disruption, and promoting accountability among involved actors.



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## Strengthening Regional Collaboration

Regional organisations should deepen cooperation not only within their own regions but also across regions to accelerate YPS implementation. There is a need to facilitate learning and structured exchanges between regional bodies, youth networks, and implementing partners to share lessons, innovative practices, and strategies for overcoming common barriers. Mechanisms such as joint forums, peer-learning platforms, and thematic dialogues can help regions with advanced YPS frameworks (e.g., Africa, Europe) support those in earlier stages (e.g., Asia-Pacific, MENA, Americas). Cross-regional learning can also foster solidarity among youth movements and enable adaptation of successful models to diverse political and cultural contexts.



## Secure Sustainable Funding

Sustainable, flexible, dependable and long-term funding mechanisms are crucial to ensure impact, empower youth-led peacebuilding activities, and break the cycle of project discontinuity. Exploring innovative financing models, such as social impact bonds or public-private partnerships, can ensure sustained support for youth initiatives. Moreover, it is essential to advocate for such funding at the regional and national levels.



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## Deepen Youth Engagement, Particularly of Those at the Grassroots Levels

Meaningful participation of young people in regional and national YPS decision-making processes is not a privilege, but a necessity. Therefore, it is fundamental to create safe spaces for dialogue, information sharing, co-creation, and co-leadership to ensure YPS strategies respond to the needs and aspirations of young people themselves. This can be achieved through flexible spaces such as intergenerational programs, youth-led consultations, double-directed mentorship, and integrating youth representatives into decision-making bodies. Youth engagement at the regional level needs to consider access to those youth who work at the grassroots levels. While they tend to be frontliners in peace, humanitarian, and development work, their success stories are not heard due to hindrances including but not limited to their positionality (rural, conflict-affected, or difficult-reaching areas), digital connectivity, language, and connection with decision-makers.

# Final Remarks

**YPS regionalisation presents a dynamic landscape of both promise and challenges. By acknowledging the pitfalls and actively pursuing the outlined recommendations, we can navigate this intricate terrain and unlock the immense potential of young people as agents of peace and security.**

**Ultimately, the success of YPS regionalisation or regional implementation hinges on a collective commitment from all stakeholders to prioritise youth as relevant actors with equal importance as non-youth, invest in sustainable funding, and foster meaningful youth participation in decision-making related to peacebuilding and security. By working together, we can move beyond tokenism and unlock the transformative power of young people in building a more peaceful and secure future for all.**



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# Annex - Questions for Interviewees



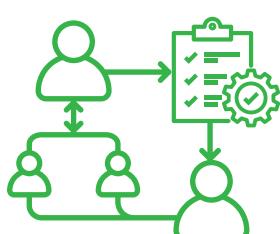
## Origins, Momentum and Stakeholders Involved

How did the implementation of the agenda begin in the region?  
How was it picked up?  
How did it reach where it is currently?



## Regional Dynamics

What actors took the lead, and what were the dynamics happening?  
How were the youth engaging in the process?  
Is there any previous language or structures that inspired the movement e.g. UN language, Structures, WPS?



## Implementation

Are there any milestones already achieved or planned for the implementation of YPS at the regional level?  
What kind of actions are taken on YPS? (Roadmap, Strategy, Regional Action Plan)  
Who is funding YPS implementation in the region? How much has been invested?  
What has been done with the funding?  
How is the regional movement linked to the national YPS movements?  
How is the interaction between the national and regional levels? Was it parallel?



## The Way Forward

What steps do you expect to witness in the YPS regional movement in the coming years?  
Who else should we reach out to in the region to understand this context better?



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