



Youth,
Peace &
Security

Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security *mandated by Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015)*

MANDATE

In December 2015, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted [resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security \(YPS\)](#). This resolution is the first fully dedicated to the important and positive role young women and men play in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. Resolution 2250 requests the Secretary-General “to carry out a progress study on the youth’s positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution, in order to recommend effective responses at local, national, regional and international levels”, and to present the results of the Study to the United Nations Security Council and Member States.

STRUCTURE

The UN Secretary-General appointed (August 2016) an independent **lead author**, [Graeme Simpson](#), to develop the Study, as well as an [Advisory Group of Experts](#), including 21 scholars, practitioners and young leaders. **UNFPA and PBSO** are jointly providing secretariat functions for the development of the Study, working in close collaboration with the Office of the Envoy on Youth. A [Steering Committee](#), composed of 34 partners from the UN system, civil society and non-governmental organizations, inter-governmental organizations, foundations, etc. is overseeing the development of the Progress Study.

BEYOND A STUDY – A STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNSCR 2250

The Progress Study is supported by the UN system and partners but it is an **independent report**. It will document young people’s positive involvement in sustaining peace and will identify innovative practices on the ground. The objective is to develop an **operational report proposing a forward-looking agenda for the international community, including practical recommendations** for the peace and security community to work with young people in new ways.

A CAMPAIGN TO HARNESS THE VOICES, AGENCY & LEADERSHIP OF YOUNG PEOPLE

A key goal of UNSCR 2250 is the fuller inclusion of young people in peace and security. The Progress Study models this intent through an inclusive and participatory methodology. Young people must be given an opportunity to substantively contribute to the discussions on peace and security issues in their communities, and to identify solutions for – and indicators of – progress for the YPS agenda. As of November 2017:

- Seven [regional consultations](#) with youth from civil society were held, involving youth from 149 countries (Arab States, December 2016; Asia & Pacific, May 2017; Eastern Europe & Central Asia, May 2017; Latin America and the Caribbean, May 2017; Eastern & Southern Africa, August 2017; West & Central Africa, September 2017; Europe, September 2017);
- [Country focused-research](#) was completed in 14 countries and through over 100 focus group discussions with “hard-to-reach youth” (about 1,250 total) in another twelve countries;
- 17 thematic papers were developed by partner organizations as expert/strategic contributions to the study;
- A [Global Survey of Youth-Led Organizations Working on Peace and Security](#) was completed by the United Network of Young Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground;
- 2 mapping exercises have been conducted, to document the work on YPS being undertaken by Member States and UN entities; and
- 5 thematic on-line consultations were completed on the youth4peace portal.

EMERGING KEY MESSAGES

- **A system-wide approach — Contributing to larger policy discussions**

The Youth, Peace and Security agenda is an essential contribution to “sustaining peace” (as defined by recent UN resolutions of the General Assembly (A/RES/262) and Security Council (S/RES/2282 (2016)), as well as to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the advancement of “peaceful, just and inclusive societies”. As such, Youth, Peace and Security lies at the heart of an integrated prevention approach to violent conflict.

Resolution 2250 also builds upon and extends the work of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), demonstrating the imperative of inclusivity in matters of peace and security, the crucial contributions of civil society actors, and opening avenues of participation for traditionally excluded actors – such as women and young people. The YPS agenda is an age-responsive approach to the WPS agenda in differentiating the unique experiences of young women and young men and appreciating the impact of the diverse gender roles within youth populations. These two peace and security agendas are therefore inextricably linked, with the YPS agenda re-emphasizing the pivotal role of young women, in particular, in preventing violent conflict and sustaining peace.

- **Counter-productive impact of “policy panic”**

Simplistic romanticized, demonized or patronizing stereotypes about young people have skewed policy and programmatic priorities. The dominant focus tends to remain on the “youth problem” or on “youth at risk”, to the exclusion of the everyday lives of young people or those contributing to peace. This has contributed to a number of “policy panics”:

- Policy panic about **violent extremism** based on assumptions that young people can be easily recruited to participate in violent groups – despite the fact that the majority of young people are *not* involved in violence.
- Policy panic about the **demographic growth of youth populations (“youth bulges”)**, particularly within conflict-affected societies. This centres on assumptions that large groups of young people present a risk for violence as a result of the lack of absorptive capacity of these societies and the exclusion that is a result. Yet, this fails to recognize the resourcefulness of most youth and the potential value of these “youth booms,” as well as the importance of political, social, cultural and economic inclusion of young men and women.
- Policy assumptions about how **unemployment and lack of education (“idle hands”)** stimulate or contribute to youth violence, despite the fact that most young people in these circumstances do not resort to violence. This also often results in the erroneous assumption that education and/or employment serve as stand-alone solutions to the problem of youth violence.
- Policy panic about the **crisis of (forced) migration and the influx of (young) migrants and refugees**: young forced migrants are often represented as a drain on the economy, a problem for the education system, competitors for scarce local jobs, intruders who cannot or do not ‘culturally assimilate’, or potential security threats or would-be terrorist infiltrators - all perceptions that also fuel anti-immigrant movements.

The mono-causal explanations which underlie much of these “policy panics” produce solutions that are – at best – palliative or ameliorative. **Prevention is not effectively served by these simplistic solutions** (e.g. repression, education, employment and control over movement) where these are often based on policy assumptions rather than good data, often address the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of conflict and violence, and seldom engage or listen to young people to assess the validity of these assumptions.

- **A prevention approach: countering the violence of exclusion**

The central problem is the systemic and extensive exclusion and marginalization of young people, which has led to a trust deficit in the relationship of young people to both their governments and the multilateral system.

Sustaining peace and preventing violence is best served by addressing the “**violence of exclusion.**” The multi-dimensional experiences of young people’s marginalization and exclusion (e.g. youth plus gender, plus forced migration, plus unemployment and plus victimization) have to be fully understood and appreciated.

Instead of investing in “problem-solving,” which is oriented around the small sliver of young people involved in violence, an effective prevention strategy has to be rooted in a better understanding of and focus on the positive attributes, resources, capacities or attributes (or “positive resilience”) of young men and women, in their responses to marginalization and exclusion, and to invest in supporting and sustaining them.

- **Prioritizing Protection**

Protection is one of the five pillars of SCR 2250. Indeed, a prevailing concern expressed by young men and women throughout all the research undertaken for the Progress Study has been the disproportionate victimization and traumatization of youth – at the hands of repressive governments, violent extremists, gangs and organized crime, because of gender-based violence, the particular violations experienced by young forced migrants, etc. Beyond physical violence, young people have also expressed the urgent need for the protection of their rights to organize, associate, move freely and express themselves to effectively pursue their work on peace and security. Many have pointed to the worrisome impact of some counter-terrorism and CVE approaches, which shut down the space for legitimate political activity, peaceful protest and dissent.

It is also important to note that young men and women are themselves active and creative protagonists in the protection realm, from monitoring and documenting human rights and humanitarian violations, to supporting the design and implementation of protection measures, building networks and support structures, and fighting for recognition of their civil, political and socio-economic rights. A critical component of the YPS agenda is to support and protect these dimensions of young people’s contribution to sustaining peace and preventing violent conflict.

- **It is only by listening to young people that we can move beyond reductionist and binary understandings of youth identity and motivation**

Stereotypes deprive young people of their agency and role as positive change agents in society. But defining exclusion and marginalization of young men and women as the core problem, still begs the question of what kind of “inclusion” is the solution. It is not enough to talk about youth “voices” and “representation”, or to opt for patronizing or tokenistic gestures. Rather, the “agency” and the “leadership” of young people needs to be supported. For young people themselves, participation and inclusion is not unconditional, but must be based on the integrity and accountability of social, political and economic systems and processes.

- **Focusing on a “positive security” approach**

There is strong evidence that moral messaging and strong law enforcement measures are remedial at best, but do not work as effective prevention or deterrence. Although it is neither determinist nor predictive, exposure to violence coupled with lived experiences and perceptions of injustice are key factors in determining whether or not young people may be desensitized to or subsequently predisposed to be involved in violence, and there is a significant danger that violent oppression will produce more violence in response.

Security needs to be embraced as a right, and defined positively as a protective entitlement of young people, rather than all young people being tainted by association and the youth sector as a whole being seen as a security risk.

- **Understanding youth peacebuilding**

Youth peacebuilding is often understood as highly localized, community-based, or even familial or individually based, under the radar, under-funded, or volunteer-based. But it should not be assumed to be limited to the local level: it often transcends geographic boundaries, is also national or even trans-national, and on-line. Youth peacebuilding is very diversified, spanning diverse social constituencies and different sectors – young

indigenous people, young migrants and refugees, victims, urban and rural youth, etc. It also goes beyond the horizontal relationships among youth alone, forging connections across generations and with other thematic sectors and organizations, for example in the human rights, gender and education sectors.

- From a demographic dividend to a peace dividend: investing in the positive resilience of young people**
 The priority is to “fund the upside”: invest in youth resilience to conflict and in innovation in sustaining peace. This should include strategies to support the creation of an enabling environment, addressing the (social, political, economic and legal) factors that inhibit young people’s peacebuilding and violence prevention work; prioritizing funding for youth-based peacebuilding; enabling the role of youth peacebuilding in “listening down” (engaging at community level); and “speaking up” (advocacy and critical partnership with government and policy-makers).

TIMELINE

December 2015	Adoption of Resolution 2250 by the UN Security Council
February-July 2016	Establishment of Steering Committee, identification of Lead Author and Advisory Group, first scoping of the Study
August 2016	Appointment of Lead Author and Advisory Group of Experts by the Secretary-General
September 2016- September 2017	Regional, sub-regional, national and on-line consultations Focus group discussions and country case-studies
September 2017- February 2018	Validation of Study’s key findings and recommendations Drafting of Study
March 2018	Production and translation
April 2018	Presentation of Progress Study to the Security Council

For more information, please contact the Secretariat for the Progress Study: mazzacurati@un.org.

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