



Advancing Youth, Peace and Security in Southeast Asia

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Abstract

Young people have been at the forefront of advancing the Youth Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda in Southeast Asia. This can be seen through their engagement via their youth organizations and networks, as well as through their different affiliations, as they influence decision-making, engage in peace and political processes, and lead online and offline social movements. Young people's work in YPS is contextualized in the multidimensional and diverse experience and challenges of peace involving issues on gender equality, ethnic and racial divisions and discrimination, Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), and human rights. In recent years, national governments, as well as regional and international organizations, have been building on these youth-led and youth-focused initiatives to advance the YPS Agenda. For instance, the Philippines is currently finalizing one of the world's first National Action Plan on YPS (NAPYPS), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)¹ is currently looking at advancing the YPS Agenda. This paper outlines the recent challenges, developments and opportunities in advancing the YPS Agenda in Southeast Asia. It further highlights that formal structures, regional policies and focused programmes, should support, build on and invest in the existing efforts by young people to strengthen initiatives and mechanisms for their systematic and meaningful engagement, which is crucial for the advancement of the YPS Agenda in the region.

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¹ ASEAN is a regional intergovernmental organization that is a collective economic, political, and security cooperation community of interrelated yet diverse cultures of 10 nations, namely Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. As the 11th independent nation of Southeast Asia since 2002, Timor-Leste applied to join ASEAN in 2011.

1. Youth, Peace and Security in Southeast Asia

Young people, acting through youth organizations and youth networks, serve as agents of peace in the Southeast Asia region in various ways,² including through engagement in peace processes and advocacy, both online and offline, to inform policies to make them more inclusive. Building on the various forms of youth engagement and leadership in the region, there is an opportunity for national governments, as well as regional and international organizations, to further support youth as agents of peace and thus advance the YPS Agenda in Southeast Asia.

At present, young people compose around 30% of the overall population of Southeast Asia,³ which is the largest cohort of youth the region has ever seen.⁴ Regional institutions such as ASEAN and national governments have recently acknowledged the need to engage and include youth in decision-making processes.⁵ While there is diversity in backgrounds and experiences among Southeast Asian youth, both across and within countries, there is an increasing regional identity that is anchored in ASEAN. Young people have been connecting and bridging this diversity using information and communications technologies. The #Youth4Peace in ASEAN⁶ is an example of such a regional movement. Meanwhile, the Philippines is one of the first countries in the world, besides Finland and Nigeria, to develop a national action plan on YPS (NAPYPS), which is currently being finalized.

The paper outlines recent developments and opportunities in advancing the YPS Agenda in Southeast Asia.

2. What does Youth, Peace and Security mean in Southeast Asia?

‘Youth agency’⁷ has been a historical driving force for change across the region. In colonial and pre-colonial times, young people were at the forefront of independence and democracy movements in several Southeast Asian countries. Today, youth continue to play a significant and positive role in shaping Southeast Asian politics and societies. For instance, the presence of young people in the peace negotiations for the Bangsamoro region of the Philippines; a youth-led congress organized to make ceasefire recommendations in Myanmar in the years before 2021; SDG localization through youth councils in Brunei and Thailand; and the involvement of youth in the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (NAP-PVE) in Indonesia.

In a series of recent YPS consultations, Southeast Asian youth defined peace not only as the absence of violent armed conflicts, but also as human security.⁸ As such, Southeast Asian youth take a holistic

² Some countries in Southeast Asia are experiencing internal armed conflicts and some varying forms of violence, such as sexual and gender violence, violent extremism, economic inequality, discrimination, and alike.

³ Based on available data from 2019, the youth population is generally presented as 185 million young people (15-30 years) in Southeast Asia.

⁴ According to the first ASEAN Development Index (2017). Access the document here: <https://asean.org/book/first-asean-youth-development-index-2/>

⁵ The first ASEAN Youth Development Index (YDI) identifies ‘youth participation’ as a priority for youth development. The ASEAN Secretariat together with UNFPA led the development of the ASEAN Youth Development Index to help the ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat assess the effectiveness of policies and programmes concerning youth in ASEAN. Access the document at: <https://asean.org/book/first-asean-youth-development-index-2/>

⁶ The #Youth4Peace in ASEAN is a movement that resulted from the ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO), Asian Youth Peace Network (AYPN) and other Southeast Asian regional youth organizations who have been organizing an annual Southeast Asian Youth Meeting on Peace and Security where youth from across the region reflect on the advancement of the YPS Agenda in the region. See ‘Opportunities’ Section for more information.

⁷ Youth agency is the active engagement of youth to make or influence decisions affecting their lives, such as through active engagement in peace processes and decision-making, influencing and driving political agendas, leading online and offline advocacy, etc.

⁸ These points were raised by Southeast Asian youth representatives from different youth civil society groups in various consultations in the region, and in particular two recent events: (1) Evaluating Implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in Southeast Asia (on 4 November 2021) and (2) the ASEAN Youth Meeting (on 9 December 2021).

and human-centered approach to the YPS Agenda, associating it not only with engagement in peace and political processes, but also with ensuring safe civic spaces, environmental and climate justice, and protection of human rights (see Table 1).

<i>Table 1. Cross-cutting issues that Southeast Asian Youth has associated with YPS</i>	
• gender equality and gender-based violence	• economic, education and technological disparities
• ethnic and racial divides and discrimination	• vulnerabilities and social protection
• urbanization, migration, and displacement	• drug abuse, gang violence and transnational organized crimes
• violent extremism and terrorism	• humanitarian action, climate and disaster mitigation
• protection of democracy and human rights	• equal access to health care services

In relation to this, some Southeast Asian youth organizations and networks working on cross-cutting issues identify themselves as working on peace and security, since they are contributing to the attainment of justice and equality by building and sustaining peace. For instance, the Mekong Youth Assembly, a youth network across the Mekong riparian countries, has been advocating for environmental governance and climate justice to achieve sustainable peace. The #FixSchoolsNotStudents campaign in Singapore advocates for gender equality and LGBT+ rights to improve peace and harmony. RespectME, a Brunei youth-led organization, has been advocating for justice for sexual violence victims and enhanced security for young people. Such cross-cutting initiatives reflect many youth groups' underlying desire to address all forms of violence that impact peace, stability, and prosperity.

This interpretation of peace and security echoes the discussions during the 2017 Asia-Pacific YPS Regional Consultations,⁹ as well as the national consultation in Myanmar¹⁰ and country-focused papers on Myanmar¹¹ and the Philippines¹². The Regional Consultations brought together around 40 young people from across the Asia-Pacific region in a first attempt to conceptualize the YPS Agenda in the

The first event was organized by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders together with the Asian Youth Peace Network and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders. The second event was spearheaded by the ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO), ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF), IYC4Peace Initiative of International Youth Centre Kuala Lumpur, Asian Youth Peace Network, AsiaTV and SEAYPO. The definition from the Southeast Asian focused consultation echoes the meaning of 'peace and security' as defined by participants in the 2017 Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on YPS (See Annex 3 for full list of recommendations).

⁹ Report of the 2017 Youth, Peace & Security in Asia and the Pacific Regional Consultation. Access here: <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2017-11/2017.08.07%20-%20Report%20-%20Asia%20and%20the%20Pacific%20Regional%20Consultation%20on%20Youth%2C%20Peace%20%26%20Security.pdf>

¹⁰ Report on the Myanmar National Consultative Workshop for Youth, Peace & Security. Access here: <https://www.youth4peace.info/node/263>

¹¹ Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (2017) Youth engagement in peace and development: Myanmar. Submitted Study for the YPS Global Progress Study. Access here: https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-04/24.%20CFR_Myanmar-Youth%20Participation2_DHF.pdf

¹² Alar, M. (2017) Young People and their Role in the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Peace Negotiations. Commissioned Study for the Global Progress Study on YPS. Access here: https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-04/11.%20CFR_Philippines%20-%20Young%20People%20and%20their%20Role%20in%20Peace%20Negotiations_Michael%20Frank%20A.%20Alar_0.pdf

region, and to inform the Global Progress Study on YPS¹³. A key recommendation from these initiatives was that young people should be offered opportunities and the space to engage meaningfully in peace processes (See Annex 3 for the full list of recommendations.). These recommendations are key to ensuring that peacebuilding and sustaining peace initiatives are youth-responsive and youth-inclusive.

The 2017 Asia-Pacific Regional Consultations also highlighted the limited engagement by the UN on the YPS Agenda at the regional level. In response, the UN and youth civil society organizations set up the Thematic Working Group on Youth, Peace and Security (TWG-YPS)¹⁴, under the Asia-Pacific Interagency Network on Youth (APINY)¹⁵, as a mechanism to enhance coordination in advancing the YPS Agenda in the Asia-Pacific region.

Young people have been engaged in several peace initiatives across the region. As an example, the Bangsamoro peace process in the Philippines included several young people as part of the legal team that crafted the technical papers of the Bangsamoro Organic Law.¹⁶ Prior to 2021 in Myanmar, around 800 Myanmar youth from 26 ethnic groups participated in the Ethnic Youth Conference in 2016 and established the National Ethnic Youth Alliance that developed recommendations to feed into the national peace process. One such recommendation was to include a seat for youth at the Union Peace Conference.¹⁷

Since 2020, several youth-led movements took a prominent role in driving the YPS Agenda in Southeast Asia. In some countries, social media contributed to the youth political awakening, enabling mobilization and solidarity-building across borders. For example, the #MilkTeaAlliance linked up youth-led democracy movements across Asia-Pacific. Another example are youth climate activists from Myanmar, Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand who localized the global campaigns #StrikeForClimate and #FridaysForFuture, demanding climate justice and accountability. These and other youth movements have reinforced the sense that there are currently limited or ineffective institutional mechanisms for youth engagement, in particular in political processes and overall, in civic life.

Credit for much of the progress made thus far in operationalizing the YPS Agenda in Southeast Asia goes to the vibrant youth organizations and networks across the region, including the Asian Youth Peace Network (AYPN), United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY), and the ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO). Their work spans capacity-building, policy advocacy, inter-faith and inter-generational dialogue, peacebuilding and social cohesion, and cross-cutting areas (such as environment, gender equality, etc.). These youth groups engage primarily at the local level and connect regionally through the TWG-YPS and globally through the Global Coalition on YPS¹⁸. The youth

¹³ The UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on YPS requested the UN Secretary-General “carry out a progress study on the youth’s positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution” wherein he appointed an independent lead author, Graeme Simpson, to develop the study. Access the Global Progress Study on YPS here: <https://www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy>

¹⁴ The TWG-YPS is co-led by the UN and youth civil society. It serves as a coordination and support mechanism for youth-led organizations and networks, youth-serving civil society, and UN agencies

¹⁵ APINY primarily serves as an information sharing network for UN agencies, NGOs, and others working in youth development. See here for more info: <https://asiapacificyouth.net/about-us/>

¹⁶ Altio, A. and Grizelj, I (2019) We are here: An Integrated approach to youth-inclusive peace processes, Global Policy Paper on Youth Participation in Peace Processes, United Nations Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, New York. Access here: <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/peace-processes/>

¹⁷ Hald, M. & Smith S. (2018) Supporting youth contributions to peace in Myanmar. Access here: https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-04/24.%20CFR_Myanmar-Youth%20Participation2_DHF.pdf

The 2021 coup put the Myanmar peace process on hold, and there are reports that many young people have been utilizing online platforms for their advocacy and have joined the resistance democracy movement.

¹⁸ The Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security (GCYPS) is the leading platform for shaping global policy and practice on youth, peace, and security. The GCYPS facilitates exchange, coordination, and collaboration between more

groups have consolidated partnerships with governments, other civil society actors (for example, women's groups), ASEAN, and the UN. An ASEAN regional framework on YPS could add further impetus to YPS localization efforts in the region.

3. Challenges faced by youth in relation to YPS

Young people play a significant role in peacebuilding efforts in their respective countries but are constrained by the absence of meaningful institutional mechanisms to channel their views and make their voices heard. They believe that the lack of familiarity of government officials with the YPS Agenda limits their opportunities for engagement, and that a regional YPS framework could expand their role as an agent of peace. In the absence of such opportunities for meaningful engagement, young people complain of tokenized outreach by governments and other stakeholders, including the UN.¹⁹

Youth are also impacted by the overall shrinking of civic space across the region, including measures to limit freedom of expression online through 'hate speech' and cyber-security legislation, and digital surveillance. Restrictions on the freedom of speech constitute a serious barrier to youth's work, with governments increasingly using "lawfare" strategies to suppress young voices. The problem is compounded by the lack of access to human rights protection, in particular for youth activists. Additional youth-specific challenges include unequal access to quality education, rural-urban disparities, gender inequality, informal employment, and the digital divide.

Conservative social and cultural norms and traditions across the region also impact the YPS Agenda in several ways. The 'seniority culture' posits youth as 'inexperienced' and thus undeserving to be part of consultative processes. Meanwhile, identity-related issues, including LGBTIQ+ rights, are particularly important for youth, who consider them part of the YPS Agenda.

The COVID-19 pandemic compounded the challenges to youth participation, as governments imposed lockdowns and limited the freedom of assembly. The closure of schools and universities not only impacted education, but it also further limited youth's avenues to come together and organize. Rising discontent among young people towards national governments' handling of the pandemic resulted, in some cases, in negative narratives about youth who were portrayed as a "source of instability". This is due to young people taking their issues to the streets despite the COVID-19 restrictions, as seen in 2020-2021 protests held in Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar.²⁰ While the pandemic brought challenges, there was also space for the YPS Agenda to adapt to the changing realities brought about by COVID-19, including by creating online spaces for marginalized voices.

4. Opportunities for advancing the YPS Agenda

Youth-led organizations and networks have demonstrated creativity, dynamism, and capacity in advocating for and pursuing peace in online and physical spaces in-country and at the regional level. In several civil society-led regional consultations organized in 2020 and 2021,²¹ youth noted that implementing the recommendations made at the 2017 Regional Consultations and in the Global Progress Report required stronger institutions, especially in the areas of governance and law

than 70 organizations from civil society, including youth-led and youth-focused organizations, UN entities, donors, academia and inter-governmental bodies. See more here: <https://www.youth4peace.info/node/347>

¹⁹ These points were raised by Southeast Asian youth representatives from different youth civil society groups in various consultations in the region.

²⁰ In 2020-2021, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, more young people invigorated their involvement in activism such as in Indonesia's protests over controversial labour laws, Philippines' protests on controversial anti-terrorism laws, Malaysia's protests about youth inclusion in elections, Thailand's pro-democracy protests, and Myanmar's anti-coup protests.

²¹ Ditto.

enforcement. At the regional level, youth suggested setting up a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the YPS Agenda, in addition to further investments in YPS programming and setting up frameworks to support youth initiatives. It remains much-needed to strengthen the existing regional youth groups by building their capacities and creating opportunities for their effective engagement with decision-makers.

At the **national level**, the Philippines is currently finalizing a National Action Plan on YPS, which could serve as a blueprint for localization of the YPS Agenda, and for youth engagement before, during, and post-conflict. The process, which is expected to conclude in 2022, is led by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process in collaboration with the UN, civil society, and youth organizations and networks. This in-country localization of the YPS Agenda could provide a model for future efforts in other countries across the region.

At the **regional level**, the role of youth as agents of positive change has been recognized in various regional initiatives. Since 2020, AYO, AYPN and other Southeast Asian regional youth organizations, with the participation of the ASEAN Secretariat and other partners, have been organizing an annual Southeast Asian Youth Meeting on Peace and Security where youth from across the region reflect on the YPS Agenda in the region.²² In parallel, the UN continues its work with youth-led civil society under the *#Youth4Peace in Southeast Asia* initiative (launched in 2020), which serves as a platform for capacity-building, dialogue, and knowledge-sharing, including on issues such as linkages to Women, Peace and Security (WPS), human rights, and the prevention of violent extremism (PVE).²³ Leveraging such partnerships and strengthening the UN's support to civil society is crucial for advancing the YPS Agenda in the region.

At the **regional institutional level**, the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR)²⁴, as ASEAN's Track 1.5 platform, has focussed on youth participation in peacebuilding to promote ASEAN's culture of peace. In 2018, the ASEAN-IPR Youth Conference on Peace and Tolerance²⁵ resulted in the ASEAN Youth Declaration on Peace and Tolerance²⁶. In 2021, as part of the effort to close the gap in YPS knowledge in government institutions, AYPN developed YPS e-modules targeted at young public servants in ASEAN countries, which were endorsed by the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs and ASEAN-IPR.²⁷

In August 2021, ASEAN-IPR convened the event "Youth as Agents of Peace – Utilizing Digital Platforms for Narratives of Peace"²⁸, bringing together young peacebuilders and regional peace and security experts. ASEAN-IPR is also developing a module on "youth and digital technology for peace" to enhance youth engagement in building and sustaining peace in the region. In October 2021,

²² The theme for the 2020 meeting was 'ASEAN+ Youth Meeting on Peace and Security' which focused on systematic participation of peacebuilding in the 'new normal' of COVID-19. See report here: http://aseanforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Final-Report_ASEAN-Youth-Meeting-on-Peace-and-Security-1_copy-compressed.pdf. In 2021 the theme was 'Youth Reflection on Local Peace and Tolerance' which focused on collaboration for building and sustaining peace. See joint statement here: <https://www.youth4peace.info/topic/2021-asean-youth-meeting-peace-and-security>

²³ The initiative expanded to include youth from South Asia in 2021

²⁴ The ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) is an ASEAN institution dedicated for research activities and supporting the ASEAN bodies on the issues of peace, reconciliation, conflict management and conflict resolution.

²⁵ ASEAN-IPR Youth Conference on Peace & Tolerance. See here: <https://asean-aipr.org/multimedia/asean-ipr-youth-conference-on-peace-tolerance/>

²⁶ ASEAN Youth Declaration on Peace and Tolerance. See here: <https://asean-aipr.org/resources/asean-youth-declaration-on-peace-and-tolerance/#:~:text=The%20E2%80%9CASEAN%20Youth%20Declaration%20on,the%20Closing%20of%20the%20C onference.>

²⁷ Youth Peace and Security for Young Public Servants E-Modules can be accessed here: <https://asean-aipr.org/resources/youth-peace-security-for-young-public-servants-e-modules/>

²⁸ See more here: https://asean-aipr.org/discussion_series_2021_session2/

Indonesia, through the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth convened the annual ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp under the theme: “Championing Youth as Agents of Interfaith Harmony”. Until now, AYPN and AYO have been closely engaged with ASEAN-IPR and the ASEAN Secretariat on their youth-led initiatives with the prospect of further collaboration.

At the **political level within ASEAN**, there have been significant initial efforts to formalize the advancement of the YPS Agenda in the past two years. In his briefing to the Security Council on 30 January 2020, the UN Secretary-General encouraged ASEAN to advance the YPS Agenda in Southeast Asia as part of the priorities of the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership. In this regard, it was formally agreed in the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action (2021-2025) that ASEAN and the UN would explore “advancing the youth, peace and security agenda in line with UN Security Resolution 2250.”²⁹

In 2021, Brunei, as the Chair of ASEAN, greatly contributed to the initial formalization of YPS in ASEAN through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)³⁰, which is composed of 27 states³¹. In August 2021, the ARF Ministerial Meeting adopted ASEAN’s first YPS-related statement on Promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, pledging to put youth at the centre stage in ASEAN efforts to promote a peaceful, stable, secure, and resilient region (see Annex 4).

The adoption of the joint ARF statement was followed by the first dedicated ARF Workshop on YPS, on 1-2 December 2021, which included ARF member states, youth civil society representatives, and the UN. Recommendations from the workshop included leveraging ASEAN mechanisms to promote inter-generational dialogue and to facilitate the engagement of youth in ASEAN’s peace and security initiatives, including the ASEAN “Bali Workplan” on PVE, interfaith dialogue, and WPS. In his keynote speech, the UN Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific (for the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations) recommended that the ARF and its member states, as well as ASEAN and other regional organizations, consider developing local, national, and regional action-plans on YPS.

At the **global level**, two senior ASEAN officials and one civil society representative from an ASEAN YPS network presented experiences from ASEAN in the focus session on ‘Regional Collaboration for YPS’ during the High-Level Global Conference on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes (the so-called Doha Conference) in January 2022. Proposals made during the session included undertaking a regional mapping of YPS and developing national action plans, similar to ongoing efforts in the Philippines. In interventions on the formal ASEAN process, the Executive Director of ASEAN-IPR highlighted the importance of building on the youth’s existing efforts and leveraging existing frameworks, including interlinkages between the YPS and WPS Agendas in ASEAN. The Director-General of the ASEAN Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam, who had led the efforts of the Chair of ASEAN on YPS in 2021, encouragingly raised the prospect of ASEAN exploring the development of a regional YPS framework.

²⁹ As adopted by the UN Secretary-General and ASEAN Foreign Ministers, the ASEAN-UN ‘Plan of Action’ (2021-2025) to Implement the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership, action line 1.1.3.1. calls for the continued convening of regular ASEAN-UN Track 1.5 workshops and regional dialogues on political-security cooperation in areas such as advancing the YPS Agenda in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2250. See here: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASEAN-UN-POA-2021-2025-final.pdf>

³⁰ The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), established in 1994, is a platform for security dialogue in the Indo-Pacific where member states can discuss current security issues and develop cooperative measures to enhance peace and security in the region.

³¹ The 27 ARF member states are: the 10 ASEAN member states (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam); the 10 ASEAN dialogue partners (Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Russia and the United States); Bangladesh, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Timor-Leste; and one ASEAN observer (Papua New Guinea).

Looking ahead, ASEAN-IPR and the UN will co-organize a Track 1.5 regional workshop, hosted by Lao PDR, focused on YPS in 2022 bringing together government and ASEAN officials and youth civil society representatives to explore concrete ways to further advance and develop the YPS Agenda in ASEAN. At this juncture, there is considerable potential for the formalization of YPS in ASEAN structures, including developing an ASEAN regional framework on YPS as a model for the concrete implementation of the YPS Agenda as has previously been the format in advancing PVE and WPS under formal ASEAN structures and processes.

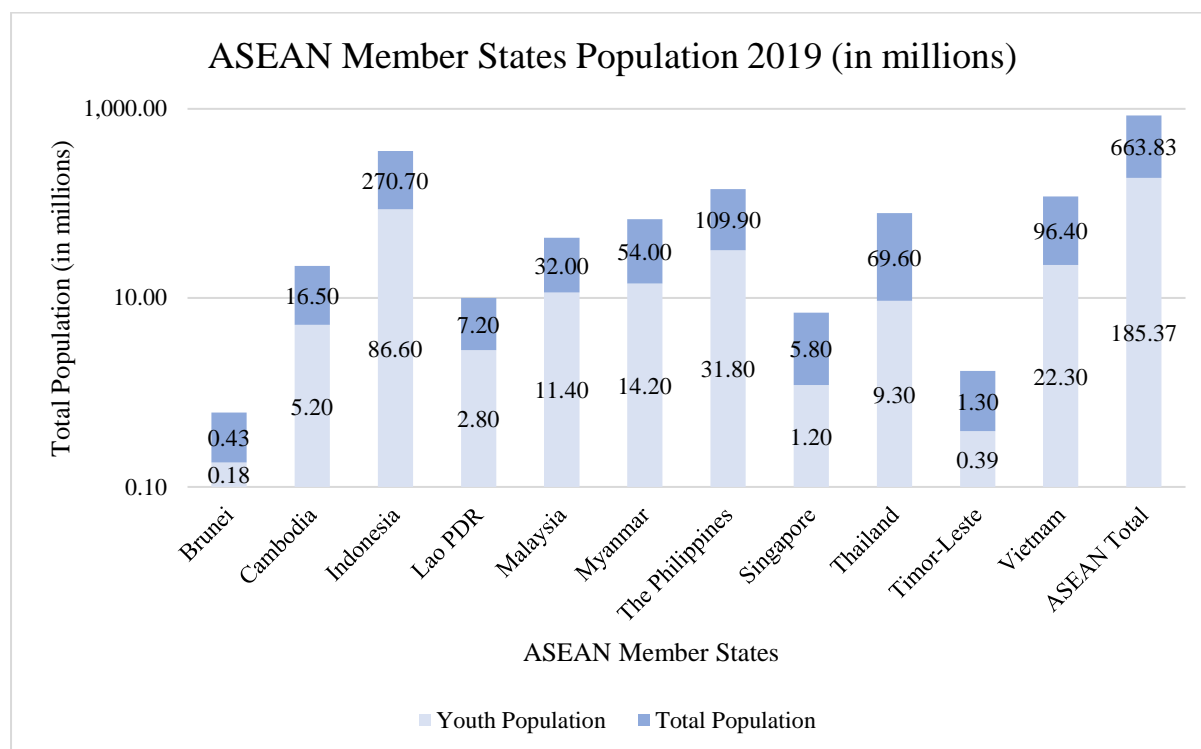
5. Conclusion

Despite the different challenges young people face in Southeast Asia towards their fully meaningful and systematic engagement in political and peace processes, youth continue to engage in and drive peace and security processes across the region. Increasingly, youth-led organizations and networks are at the forefront of advancing the YPS Agenda in the region. The role of Southeast Asian youth as agents of peace remains too often under-represented and under-utilized in the absence of institutional frameworks at the national and regional levels that can facilitate their meaningful participation in political processes and decision-making, including developing a process to finance youth-led and youth-focused peacebuilding initiatives. Recent developments, however, underscore the significant momentum to advance the YPS Agenda by strengthening the partnership between youth groups and networks and other stakeholders, including national governments, ASEAN, the UN and regional institutions with the potential of addressing narratives and recognizing the full potential of youth as agents of peace.

Efforts by ASEAN to advance the YPS Agenda through formal structures, regional policies and focused programmes, should build on and invest in the existing efforts by youth civil society to strengthen initiatives and mechanisms for the systematic and meaningful engagement of young people in building and sustaining peace across the region. Given the multidimensionality of peace in the region, it will also be vital to ensure ways to meaningfully engage youth in cross-cutting areas, such as gender equality, ethnic and racial divisions and discrimination, PVE, and human rights.

To this end, all stakeholders, including youth civil society, national governments, ASEAN and the UN, with the support of the private sector and other international organizations, will need to continuously ensure the engagement of young people through broad consultations, representative platforms, and consolidated networks to enable inclusive policy development for the benefit of young people and in support of just and lasting peace in Southeast Asia.

Annex 1: Youth in Southeast Asian countries³²



³² Source: [PopulationPyramid.net](https://www.populationpyramid.net)

Annex 2. National youth policies and ministries, by country

Country	Youth Policy	Ministry
Brunei	National Youth Policy and Strategy, (2020-2035)	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports
Cambodia	National Policy on Cambodia Youth Development, Education Strategic Plan 2019-2023	Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MOEYS)
Indonesia	National Youth Strategy 2015-2019 (Stranas)	Indonesian Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs
Laos PDR	Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy 2021-2030	Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union (LYU)
Malaysia	Malaysian Youth Policy adopted in 2015, revised in 2018	Ministry of Youth and Sports
Myanmar	Myanmar National Strategic Plan for Youth Policy (2020-2024)	NUG's Youth Affairs Directorate of the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs (MOWYCA)
Philippines	Philippine Youth Development Plan (PYDP) 2017-2022	National Youth Commission
Singapore	SG Youth Action Plan 2025	Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY)
Thailand	National Child and Youth Development Plan 2012-2016	Ministry of Social Development, Youth and Human Security, Department of Children and Youth
Timor-Leste	National Youth Policy was adopted in 2016 in Dili	Secretary of State Youth and Sports
Vietnam	Vietnamese Youth and Development Strategy (2011-2020)	Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), Department of Youth Affairs

Annex 3. 2017 Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on YPS Recommendations³³

Theme	Recommendation
1) Support for Youth Organizations/Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a sustainable Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Fund. • Establish a global, regional, national, or local youth, peace, and security network. • Create virtual and physical space for youth peacebuilding. • Develop practical mechanisms to recognize and appreciate youth peace work
2) Mechanisms for the Implementation of UN SCR 2250	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop National Action Plan (NAP) for SCR 2250. • Translation of UN SCR 2250 into a Regional Context. • UN Country Teams should establish Youth Advisory Panels (YAP).
3) Political Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create formal political participation mechanisms for young people to have a say in peace and security processes. • Collect data at the community level to develop evidence-based policies. • Make data on security policies available to public. • Close the gap between youth representation in formal politics and proportion of youth population. • Develop protection mechanisms to ensure the participation of young in national and international level policy-making processes.
4) Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform school curricula (Peace Education) • Transform education systems. • Highlight that education is human right. • Support researchers and academicians in the field of youth and peacebuilding to collect data at local level. • Establish more UN Peace Universities. • Build organizations that work with UN entities on integrating peace education in school curriculums. • Provide support for training of trainers (ToT) projects on youth & peacebuilding • Provide more bachelor's degrees in Peace Studies in universities • Encourage schools and UN country offices to work together
5) Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a baseline research cybersecurity and cyber safety • Develop a special campaign for peer-to-peer approach in peacebuilding across the region by linking peacebuilding networks across the Asia-Pacific region. • Engage local social media influencers to raise their voice to amplify the issues of peace and security in the national context up to the regional and international level.

³³ Meeting Report: Youth, Peace and Security in Asia and the Pacific: A regional Consultation. Bangkok, 16-19 May 2019. Access here: <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2017-11/2017.08.07%20-%20Report%20-%20Asia%20and%20the%20Pacific%20Regional%20Consultation%20on%20Youth%2C%20Peace%20%26%20Security.pdf>

Annex 4. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) joint statement on *Promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda*³⁴

The 28th ASEAN Regional Forum held on 6 August 2021, via videoconference under Brunei Darussalam's 2021 ASEAN Chairmanship;

RECALLING UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2282 (2016), 2419 (2018), 2535 (2020), and 2558 (2020); the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security;

NOTING the World Programme of Action for Youth; the Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding; the UN's 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals; Colombo Declaration on Youth 2014; the August 2015 Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security; the Amman Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security; the September 2015 Global Youth Summit against Violent Extremism; the Action Agenda to Prevent Violent Extremism and Promote Peace and the UN Youth 2030 Strategy;

CONCERNED by the increasing threats to regional and international stability and prosperity as well as human rights posed by, inter alia, armed conflict, violence in armed conflict terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism (VECT), and the increasing numbers of displaced persons;

FURTHER CONCERNED that youth, particularly young women, account for many of those adversely affected by the abovementioned threats, and that the disruption of youth's access to education and economic opportunities has a dramatic impact on regional stability and prosperity, and on durable peace and reconciliation;

UNDERSTANDING that peace and security are essential in achieving stability, prosperity, as well as physical, mental, economic and social well-being, sustainable development, and creating an environment that is conducive to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms;

EMPHASIZING the importance of preventing radicalization to violence, and VECT among youth, as well as preventing the participation of youth in transnational organized crime, as a way to preserve stability and development, and ensure progress in peacebuilding and stabilization efforts;

EMPHASIZING the importance of a comprehensive and inclusive approach to peaceful settlement of disputes and sustaining peace, particularly through the prevention of armed conflict, strengthening of the rule of law, and promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, poverty eradication, social development, sustainable development, national reconciliation and unity including through inclusive dialogue and mediation, access to justice, accountability, good governance, and gender equality while promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms;

RECOGNIZING that the scale and nature of the challenge of sustaining peace calls for close strategic, innovative, and operational partnerships between the United Nations, national governments and other key stakeholders, including international, regional and sub regional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society organizations, women's groups, youth organizations, and the private sector, taking into account local and cultural contexts, and national priorities and policies;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING the important and positive contribution youth can make to efforts for the maintenance, and promotion of peace and security, and

UNDERSCORING youth's full, effective, and meaningful participation, empowerment, engagement, and involvement in the prevention, mitigation, and resolution of conflicts, as a key aspect of the sustainability,

³⁴ 28th ASEAN Regional Forum. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Joint Statement on Promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda. 6 August 2021. Access here: <https://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Adopted-Joint-Statement-to-Promote-the-YPS-Agenda-at-the-ARF.pdf>

inclusiveness and success of peacekeeping, and peacebuilding efforts, and in shaping lasting peace and contributing to justice and reconciliation.

STRESSING the importance of investing in, and working with, youth, including those most vulnerable, to build peaceful and inclusive societies, where they can capitalize educational and economic opportunities, and develop a sense of belonging, purpose as well as direction in their lives, in order to strengthen their resilience against peace and security challenges.

CONCERNED by the increased use of new and emerging information and communication technologies and platforms by terrorists and their supporters, targeting youth for the purposes of recruitment and incitement to commit terrorist acts, as well as for the financing, planning and preparation of their activities;

REAFFIRMING the importance of strengthening cooperation at community, national, regional and international levels to prevent terrorists from exploiting information and communication technologies (ICTs) and resources to incite support for terrorist acts while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms and in compliance with other obligations under international law;

RECOGNIZING the challenges faced by youth, including political, economic and social inequalities, which can perpetuate all forms of discrimination and violence, and that persistent inequalities put youth at particular risk, and;

REAFFIRMING the commitment towards the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and promote a life of dignity for all;

NOTING the regional commitments to the Youth, Peace and Security agenda as expressed in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of Violence Against Children in ASEAN (2013); the Ha Noi Declaration on the Enhancement of Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children (2010); the ASEAN Declaration on Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society (2017); the ASEAN Youth Declaration on Peace and Tolerance (2018); ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalization and Violent Extremism (2019-2025); ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration (2019); Declaration on the Protection of Children from all Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse in ASEAN (2019); and the Joint Statement on Reaffirmation of Commitment to Advancing the Rights of the Child in ASEAN (2019); BUILDING ON the Joint Statement on Promoting The Women, Peace And Security Agenda at the ASEAN Regional Forum (2019); the ARF Statement on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism (2019), and the ARF Statement on the Treatment of Children recruited by or Associated with Terrorist Groups (2020);

HEREBY ENDEAVOUR TO COMMIT, IN THE SPIRIT OF SOLIDARITY, TO MAKING PROGRESS ON YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

1. CONSIDER ways to increase inclusive representation of youth, including youth-led organizations, in the prevention and resolution of conflict, as well as in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, taking into account the views of youth, including when negotiating and implementing peace and ceasefire agreements, recognizing youth as important change makers and essential partners, and inclusivity as a key to advancing national peacebuilding processes and objectives in order to ensure that the needs of all segments of society are taken into account, and that the marginalization of youth is detrimental to building sustainable peace.
2. RAISE awareness on the Youth, Peace and Security agenda among policymakers as well as the general public, and encourage inter-governmental negotiations and discussions, where appropriate, with the participation of civil society, including youth-led organizations, on issues of critical importance to the Youth, Peace and Security agenda in order to share policy experiences, lessons learned and best practices, and identify ways of cooperation.

3. ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT youth in developing and participating in international, regional, sub-regional, national and local networks to develop partnerships to build inclusive communities and promote a culture of peace, tolerance, intercultural and interreligious dialogue involving youth, including through civic engagement and volunteerism.
4. PROMOTE media and information literacy among youths to enhance digital and critical thinking skills and encourage effective measures, as well as initiatives that help address hate speech, disinformation, and terrorism and VECT, including online, with the involvement of youth in the planning, development and implementation stages, in conformity with relevant international and domestic laws – as part of a wider approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.
5. BUILD the capacity and skills of young men and women, with the cooperation of relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, to ensure their full, effective and meaningful participation in the prevention and resolution of conflict, as well as in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.
6. PROMOTE policies for, and with the involvement of, youth that positively and meaningfully contribute to conflict prevention, peaceful settlement of disputes, peacebuilding and sustaining peace, including social and economic development, supporting projects designed to grow local and sustainable economies, promoting gender equality, tolerance, respect for diversity of, inter alia, different cultures, languages, and religions, and intercultural awareness, and providing youth with opportunities for personal development, including through education and vocational training, generating employment, encouraging entrepreneurship as well as the exercise of leadership, and promoting political engagement, where appropriate.
7. TAKE appropriate measures to promote the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of young survivors of armed conflict, including those with disabilities, and survivors of all forms of violence, sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated in armed conflict situations, as well as youth affected by displacement, by providing, amongst others, access to quality healthcare and education, psychological support, socio-economic support, and skills development such as vocational training, to resume social and economic life.
8. LEVERAGE ASEAN-led mechanisms and entities, including the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, external partners, and other international and regional organizations as well as UN mechanisms to support the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.
9. TASK the ARF Experts and Eminent Persons (EEPs) to provide recommendations regarding the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda within relevant ARF work plans, programs and processes, including through, where relevant, inter-sessional meetings, workshops and other activities as well as engaging and collaborating with youth, including youth-led organizations, to understand their particular needs and challenges.

Adopted on the Sixth of August in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-One (2021) on the occasion of the 28th ASEAN Regional Forum

Statement Ends