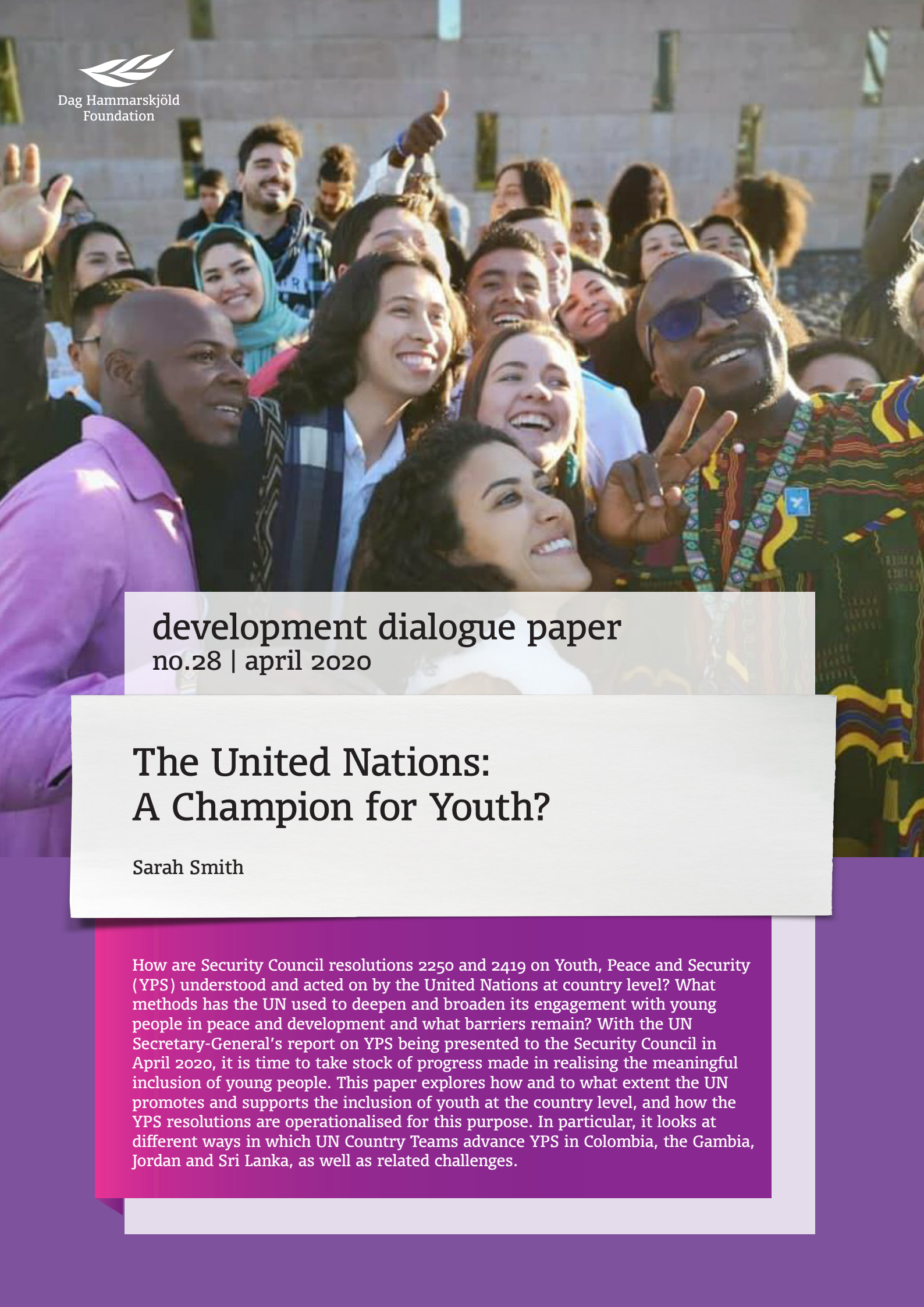




Dag Hammarskjöld
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The United Nations: A Champion for Youth?

Sarah Smith

How are Security Council resolutions 2250 and 2419 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) understood and acted on by the United Nations at country level? What methods has the UN used to deepen and broaden its engagement with young people in peace and development and what barriers remain? With the UN Secretary-General's report on YPS being presented to the Security Council in April 2020, it is time to take stock of progress made in realising the meaningful inclusion of young people. This paper explores how and to what extent the UN promotes and supports the inclusion of youth at the country level, and how the YPS resolutions are operationalised for this purpose. In particular, it looks at different ways in which UN Country Teams advance YPS in Colombia, the Gambia, Jordan and Sri Lanka, as well as related challenges.

The United Nations: A Champion for Youth?

Implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at country level

The Youth, Peace and Security agenda

Young peacebuilders have for many years contributed to sustainable peace in their communities, as well as at the national and global levels. The work by youth, civil society more broadly and international governmental and non-governmental organisations to promote youth participation in peace and development is not new. Recognition at the international policy level of young people's contributions to peace is.

During the past five years the United Nations has increasingly examined its role in advancing the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda, encompassing Security Council resolutions 2250 and 2419, but also referring to initiatives more broadly that are aimed at strengthening youth inclusion. Young people's participation is critical to implement some of the organisation's key policy agendas, including the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Sustaining Peace resolutions.

The UN Security Council adopted resolution 2250 on YPS in December of 2015. The resolution recognises the critical role that young people play in promoting peace and highlights five pillars of action (see Figure 1). The UN has since undertaken several measures to more systematically consider how it engages with youth in peace and development. As called for in resolution 2250, *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*¹ was presented to the Security Council in March 2018, with a full version of the report completed later that same year. The inclusive and participatory methodology used in producing *The Missing Peace* is in and of itself an example of a step in the right direction for the UN system and other actors working to engage with young people. During this process, diverse youth were able to share their perspectives on how they are contributing to peace and development in their communities, the barriers to engagement that they face and what is needed to strengthen their participation.

The Missing Peace outlines the following key messages:

- There is a need to rethink common assumptions of youth as either victims or perpetrators of violence.
- Young people globally are engaging throughout all phases of peace and conflict and with different types of violence.
- Young peacebuilders are implementing peace initiatives in their communities, as well as globally. They collaborate with diverse partners, and their work often bridges development, human rights, humanitarian and peace and security sectors.
- Young people expressed their exclusion from political and decision-making processes as a form of violence.

The study outlines several recommendations aimed at investing in the capacities, agency and leadership of young people; promoting their meaningful inclusion; and increasing national, regional and global partnerships for YPS.²

In response to *The Missing Peace* report, the Security Council adopted follow-up resolution 2419, which further recognises the role of youth in preventing conflict and sustaining peace. The Secretary-General also adopted in September 2018 a UN Youth Strategy (*Youth 2030: Working with and for young people*³) that sets out five priority areas to 'prioritise, invest in, engage and empower young people'. An organisation-wide action plan for operationalising this strategy at country level has also been developed.

As the Secretary-General's report on progress made towards implementation of the YPS agenda is presented in April 2020, it is important to take stock: to what extent have UN Country Teams used the agenda to strengthen the participation and leadership of young people? What challenges remain in realising the meaningful engagement of youth? This paper presents some key conclusions from Colombia, the Gambia, Jordan and Sri Lanka, as well as considerations for how the UN, through its Country Teams and at UN Headquarters, can advance the YPS agenda.

All four countries have significant youth populations: approximately 10% of Colombia's population in 2020 were between the ages of 18 and 23; 12% in the Gambia; 11% in Jordan; and nine percent in Sri Lanka.⁴ These percentages further increase when you look at the number of young people who fit within the category of youth as outlined in resolution 2250 (18–29), as well as other definitions within the UN system that include those as young as 15. Given these significant percentages, for peace efforts to be inclusive of a population, it is therefore necessary to work with young people.

Figure 1: The five pillars of resolution 2250



Participation

Take youth's participation and views into account in decision-making processes, from negotiation and prevention of violence to peace agreements.



Protection

Ensure the protection of young civilians' lives and human rights, and investigate and prosecute those responsible for crimes perpetrated against them.



Prevention

Support young people in preventing violence and in promoting a culture of tolerance and intercultural dialogue.



Partnership

Engage young people during and after conflict when developing peacebuilding strategies, along with community actors and United Nations bodies.



Disengagement and reintegration

Invest in youth affected by armed conflict through employment opportunities, inclusive labour policies and education promoting a culture of peace.

Source: *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, 2018*

Reflections from four country contexts

Reflections by diverse stakeholders working as staff or in partnership with the UN in Colombia, the Gambia, Jordan and Sri Lanka suggest that while the UN does promote youth engagement through its programming, this engagement is not always meaningful or inclusive of all young people. Programming to engage youth does not seem to be framed through the YPS agenda, in part because much of this work was initiated before the adoption of resolution 2250. The extent to which the resolution itself has been useful for the UN at country level to support the inclusion of youth is therefore difficult to gauge. Apart from initiatives specifically related to YPS coalitions – recommended in *The Missing Peace* as working groups to facilitate coordination on YPS between stakeholders – there is often little referencing of the resolutions in project framing documents. There also seems to be a lack of awareness

and understanding at country level on the YPS agenda and what it means for the UN's work with young people.

Data gathered from desk reviews and interviews with diverse stakeholders at country level reveal different ways that the UN works to strengthen youth participation, presented below in five categories. It should be noted that many initiatives referred to in this report fall into more than one of the presented categories. The following is meant to provide an overview of this work and highlight some specific examples in this regard while not going into detail on all youth-related UN initiatives in each country. While these examples show that there is movement in the right direction, a lot more is still needed to support the meaningful engagement of young people.

1. Consultations with young people

The first pillar outlined in resolution 2250, participation, calls for the 'inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels' and the need to 'take into account, as appropriate, the participation and views of youth'.

In addition to initiatives in Colombia and Sri Lanka to consult youth as input to *The Missing Peace* report, interviewees highlighted efforts underway to work with governments to consult young people. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the Gambia, for example, co-manages with the government and private sector an online platform, *U-Report*⁵, which sends out polls to young people for their input on various issues such as migration and environmental policies. Results are then shared back with the young people and issues further explored through an online dialogue. UNDP-Gambia also supports youth dialogues on reform in the country, allowing young participants to interact and share their perspectives with government representatives. In Colombia, UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) supported efforts by the Truth Commission to engage with children and young people in the process of documenting victim experiences during the conflict, seeking their perspectives and recommendations for ensuring that such conflict does not happen again. As input to a National Symposium on YPS in 2017, UNFPA and UN Volunteers (UNV) in Sri Lanka organised four provincial symposiums with youth (with support from the Peacebuilding Fund) to gather their perspectives. Lessons learned from these discussions were shared with participants at the National Symposium, and resulted in the creation of a panel of young leaders to drive youth-led solutions at the national level (see the discussion on the Youth Peace Panel below). However, interviewees raised the criticism that it was not a youth-led process.

Interviewees noted that consultations are not necessarily inclusive of all young people in a society. Consultative processes often include youth who are already engaged in their communities, are more educated and speak English or, in the case of Colombia, Spanish. Youth interviewed during the study often perceived consultations as:

1. Taking place without input from young people themselves on whether they want to be consulted in the first place and on what.
2. Coming too late in a process – after UN agencies have already designed a project based on what they think is needed rather than a real needs assessment drawing on interactive conversations with and listening to local communities.
3. Tokenistic, benefiting those who are doing the consulting without long-term follow up and support for those being consulted.

A youth activist in the Gambia suggested that the UN, rather than conducting consultations with young people in order to develop its own projects, should work with youth to identify how they can best contribute to ongoing and local peace and development efforts.

2. Programmes targeting specific youth groups identified as most marginalised

The Missing Peace underscores that youth, as a reflection of the society in which they live, come from different socio-economic backgrounds and have just as varied perspectives on peace and security. Some are more vulnerable to exclusion than others.

In an effort to reach young people who are not already engaged, the UN has worked to develop more targeted programming. This includes conducting assessments on intersecting identities that can affect experiences of exclusion. In Colombia, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF and UN Women work with young female ex-combatants – who have often been excluded from efforts to implement the peace agreement – to increase their participation in the reintegration process. The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the Gambia also makes a concerted effort to identify, including through consultations in rural communities, those youth most vulnerable to exclusion such as youth who have dropped out of school and returnee migrants. In addition, the IOM in the Gambia works to improve the situation of returning migrants, the majority of which are young people, by providing information centres, reducing stigma and giving psycho-social support.

In Jordan, UNESCO expressly frames efforts to work with youth through the 2030 Agenda and its call to *leave no one behind*; it intentionally seeks to engage youth living outside of Amman and in rural areas. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)-Jordan consciously targets *youth living in Jordan* rather than *Jordanian youth* as a way to ensure that youth in refugee communities are included in their programming. The Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF)⁶ in Jordan was cited by one interviewee as a benchmark analysis that provided guidance on 'who and how to engage' the most vulnerable groups. Through its *Y-Peer Network*⁷, UNFPA aims to mobilise those youth in Jordan whom the UN might not otherwise reach by supporting peer-to-peer exchange.

In coordination with Chrysalis⁸, a local social enterprise/NGO, the UN in Sri Lanka has supported the creation of a Youth Peace Panel composed of 30 individuals (as opposed to organisations) with representation from all nine provinces. This allows for a more

diverse set of young people engaged in smaller initiatives at the grassroots level. It was emphasised by a local organisation that UNFPA and UNV make concerted efforts to engage youth from the plantation and Muslim communities, as well as disabled youth, through consultation and dialogue. UNDP Sri Lanka highlighted practical considerations in ensuring the inclusion of diverse youth: making sure that information is available in all languages, including sign language, and serving halal food and allocating time for prayers for Muslim youth.

Despite these advancements, interviewees were explicit that much more is needed by the UN at country level to reach out to a broader spectrum of young people. In Jordan, several young peacebuilders pointed out that getting a response from the UN is often much easier if you as civil society know someone within the UN system. One young interviewee also indicated that there seems to be a tendency for the UN to select youth participants through application processes that typically target highly educated young people who speak English and who are already familiar with the UN's activities. An important step for the UN to increase inclusion of youth who are more vulnerable to exclusion would therefore be to think of ways to reach out to other potential participants and take into consideration the work they do rather than their ability to write a good application. Some young people mentioned the need to reach out to individual youth rather than established youth organisations. Others, however, indicated that as there is a tendency to engage the same individuals, working with youth organisations at the national and local levels would be a better way to reach out to those more marginalised.

3. Training, capacity building and awareness raising

The Missing Peace recommends that 'the capacities of youth organizations are enhanced, the leadership of youth is acknowledged, and youth networking is nurtured.' It also emphasises the importance of capacity building of government employees and international and local civil society organisations, including through 'training and sensitization sessions on YPS'.

In Colombia, efforts are underway to support the establishment and/or strengthening of national and regional youth peace networks through experience-sharing initiatives. Interviewees highlighted UN-Habitat's initiative, *Urban Peace Labs* – launched in 2018 – as a good example of how the UN at country level is working to mainstream resolution 2250. In partnership with the National Service for Learning (SENA), the labs conduct workshops in Cali and Barranquilla aimed at empowering young men and women to become leaders and change agents through the engagement of their

peers. Working in groups, participants developed action plans for themselves and their communities to tackle issues such as waste management, crime, drug addiction and disenfranchisement.

In Sri Lanka, UN Women, UNFPA, and UNV jointly implement a 2-year initiative funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).⁹ Working with university staff and students, the initiative aims to build the capacity of civil society to design and implement peacebuilding programming. The latter two agencies have taken the lead on the youth component, conducting Training of Trainers (ToT) with young peacebuilders in four provinces.¹⁰

In working to raise awareness on YPS, interviewees noted the importance of the UN identifying opportunities to support and collaborate with grassroots and national initiatives. One such example mentioned was an initiative by UNDP and UNV in Colombia to work with youth leadership schools in Nariño – run by a local youth organisation, *Fundación Visiones* – to conduct ToTs with students. Participants took what they had learned about the YPS agenda back to their communities. A UN interviewee noted that as a result of the ToTs, participants conducted their own trainings with peers, highlighting that 'between 2017 and 2018, we went from 119 to 12,000 youth sensitised about resolution 2250 through conferences in universities, music festivals, and other experience-sharing spaces. At least 60% of [these] youth [...] were women'. However, in 2018, UNDP's funding for the leadership schools ended, slowing down the work of youth peace networks in Nariño to advance resolution 2250. The reason for this decision was not provided in interviews.

In the Gambia, UNDP works with the National Youth Council (NYC)¹¹, a government entity under the Ministry of Youth and Sports which coordinates with a network of local activists on YPS. Together, UNDP and NYC identified the need to raise awareness on the YPS agenda, among both young people and government officials, and have taken several steps to do so. A training was conducted for young leaders and various representatives from the Ministry on resolution 2250 and 2419 to initiate the drafting of a National Action Plan (not yet adopted) on their implementation. Additional ToTs are being organised to spread awareness in the different regions of the country. Similarly, UNFPA supported the NYC's development of a Gambia Programme of Action on Youth (GPAY), which is linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but does not directly refer to resolution 2250.

During the study it was evident that in all four countries there remains a general lack of awareness by governments

and local populations on YPS. Young people interviewed in Sri Lanka indicated that while the National Symposium (referred to previously) included an introductory session on resolution 2250, young people felt that at the end they did not necessarily have a better understanding of the resolution and how it relates to their work. There were differing views among those interviewed on the UN's responsibility to conduct awareness raising and the extent to which this should focus on resolution 2250 itself or more broadly on the importance of engaging youth. Many young people point to the UN as the actor best placed to make sure that civil society and governments are aware of normative frameworks adopted at the global level. UN actors, on the other hand, indicated that from their perspective more important than awareness raising of the resolution is the work the UN is doing to engage with young people. In the Gambia, for example, UNFPA has worked with government committees to include young people in dialogue processes, such as the *National Conversations* initiated to mitigate the impact of tribalism¹², but does not focus on increasing awareness of the resolution itself.

One young person in Jordan shared that for her it was important to learn about the resolution as it contributed to a sense that her work to advocate for youth participation in Jordan was part of a global initiative. Others indicated that for them, knowledge of resolution 2250 was not important and that, in fact, many youth are wary of working with the resolution given the seemingly formal processes that have been created to promote its implementation. This echoes one of the key messages from *The Missing Peace*, that young people are often less interested in engaging in formal spaces, preferring to create their own spaces and modalities for participation.

Young peacebuilders spoken to as part of this study also indicated a lack of understanding of how the UN is engaging in their respective countries and how to reach out to different UN agencies. It is therefore important that local communities are informed about the role of UN departments, agencies, funds and programmes in promoting these policy processes vis-à-vis the role of their individual governments who ultimately take decisions in global policy processes.

The lack of awareness among populations is mirrored by a lack of clarity within UN Country Teams about what is decided upon at headquarters and how these decisions relate to their work. More is needed to increase the capacity of UN staff to implement youth programming and to advocate with communities and governments on the importance of engaging young people. An organisation-wide action plan for implementing the UN Youth Strategy has been developed, but more time is needed to see its effect. The appointment of UN staff at country

level responsible for coordinating YPS implementation could also help strengthen knowledge within the UN on the YPS agenda. This has already been done by, for example, the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, which in 2018 appointed YPS focal points to its regional and sub-regional offices.

4. Partnerships with diverse stakeholders

The fourth pillar of resolution 2250 highlights the need for coordination between UN entities, as well as partnerships with young people, civil society organisations, regional entities and other relevant stakeholders in working to strengthen youth participation. The Missing Peace calls for YPS coalitions at the local, national, regional and global levels between young people, youth organisations, multilateral institutions, governments and civil society.

Efforts are underway in some countries to enhance coordination between UN agencies at the country level on YPS. One example of this is the informal mechanism that was set up between the UN Country Team and the UN Verification Mission in Colombia to hold periodic meetings and share information on youth-related programming. As a result of this joint mechanism, the Country Team and the Mission incorporated YPS inputs into the Common Country Analysis (CCA) for 2019.

National YPS coalitions have been initiated both in Jordan and Sri Lanka and are seen as a potential opportunity to advance resolutions 2250 and 2419. While a step in the right direction, interviewees in both countries expressed concerns about the extent to which these initiatives are actually promoting meaningful inclusion of youth. One UN agency in Jordan noted that beyond the creation of the coalition, there has been no 'actual operationalisation of the YPS agenda, in part due to a lack of political will from the government'.

In Jordan the coalition is currently co-chaired by UNFPA and the Crown Prince Foundation, with the aim of eventually having national civil society partners take over. In the beginning of 2019, the 19 member organisations¹³ of the coalition selected 21 youth as members of a voting body. This body is intended to make decisions for the coalition and is overseeing the development of a Strategic Framework. In 2019, the voting body chose the 2250 pillars of *participation* and *partnerships* as the main focus areas for the coalition's work during the year, underscoring the importance of reaching out to and engaging with diverse youth. The coalition has as a result worked to strengthen its work to build the capacity of diverse youth in working with and on YPS.

Several young peacebuilders in Jordan interviewed during this study were unaware of the coalition's existence, indicating that more is needed to reach out to diverse young people engaging at the grassroots level. From the perspective of one UN representative, the UN would 'prefer [the coalition] to be a youth-led rather than an organisation-led process', but young people can at times be wary of engaging in and with the coalition. Due to a lack of trust in public institutions, youth often prefer to distance themselves from the government, which is a member of the coalition. This can prove challenging for the UN since its mandate is to work with and in support of the government.

In January 2019, the YPS coalition chairmanship in Sri Lanka¹⁴ was handed over from the UN to local organisations: Chrysalis, Rotaract and CREATE. Interviewees indicated that this handover may have happened too early and that instead of strengthening local ownership of the coalition, it has in practice meant that the coalition has had little to no funding and limited capacity to implement activities. Follow-up discussions in the country suggest, however, that the coalition is slowly finding its role, focusing on coordinating advocacy efforts to push the YPS agenda forward in policy circles.

In Jordan and Sri Lanka, interviewees shared that from their perspective the coalitions are not truly youth-led and tend to be tokenistic rather than meaningfully supporting youth leadership. One respondent explained that the coalition in Sri Lanka is made up primarily of senior-level members of Colombo-based non-governmental organisations, though one of the co-chairs is based in the northern city of Jaffna. It is often youth who are already engaged and have access to decision makers who are part of these initiatives. In Sri Lanka, UN representatives mentioned that this kind of narrow approach to engaging youth is often tied to not having the needed resources (both in terms of human resources and programmatic funds) to reach out to a wider set of actors. New and diverse partnerships, as well as funding structures, would allow initiatives to reach more people in communities, including those who are more marginalised. Providing technical and financial support to pre-existing initiatives for coordination rather than creating new mechanisms is also critical.

5. Funding

The Missing Peace calls for Member States, donors, international financial institutions, other international organisations and the private sector to 'allocate \$1.8 billion, representing an investment of \$1 per young person, by 2025 for the 10th anniversary of resolution 2250'. The study highlights barriers to funding that smaller youth initiatives often face given their

limited capacity to apply for and implement projects with big grants. The insufficient resources available for youth activities and the way existing funding is typically structured negatively impacts young people's participation.

Almost all of the interviewees who provided input to this study mentioned funding as the biggest obstacle to advancing the YPS agenda, and it often compounds the challenges already mentioned above.

The Gambia, Colombia and Sri Lanka all receive PBF funding¹⁵, and the UN in these countries has implemented or is currently implementing youth-related projects, some of which are explicitly aimed at operationalising the YPS agenda, that are supported by the PBF, including through the *Youth Promotion Initiative*¹⁶. Through these projects, the UN seems to some extent to use the YPS agenda as a guiding framework for its peacebuilding work. The PBF's *Youth Promotion Initiative* in particular seeks to advance the YPS agenda by 'strengthen[ing] the participation of young women and men within existing prevention and peacebuilding initiatives'¹⁷. At the same time, initiatives aimed at engaging youth seem to build on previous UN programming as well as national policies more so than the YPS agenda. This shows a willingness to work with what is already in place rather than imposing an international policy framework on national governments and local communities. Nevertheless, more is needed to identify, where relevant, entry points to integrate 2250 within ongoing work at the community level.

The *Youth Promotion Initiative* also aims to 'enhance support to youth civil society organisations and facilitate their partnership with international CSOs, governments and UN entities active in their country'.¹⁸ The Initiative aims to allocate 40% of its funds to local/national CSO partners. In Sri Lanka, of the US\$ 6 million received through the *Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative*, US\$ 1.5 million went directly to CSOs, and 40% of the additional US\$ 4.5 million that went to the UN was channelled to CSOs. However, some interviewees questioned whether more funding actually is going towards youth-led initiatives, highlighting that funding requirements often make it impossible for smaller CSOs to access funds. It was also mentioned that the UN in Sri Lanka often acts as a competitor to civil society for the same funding. The Initiative is a good start in supporting work that is led by non-UN entities, but more is needed to ensure that these opportunities are accessible to young peacebuilders.

To prioritise the YPS agenda, more dedicated and flexible funding should be directed to smaller grassroots youth initiatives. In Sri Lanka, some interviewees pointed to PBF funding – through the *Youth Promotion Initiative*

but also other PBF funding – as a mechanism that has helped to incentivise and catalyse partnerships with civil society. In the Gambia, UN interviewees indicated that while UN agencies there have not received funding through the *Youth Promotion Initiative*, there are youth components in other PBF-funded projects.¹⁹ While several of these projects work with CSOs, including youth-led organisations, as implementing partners, most of the funds seemingly go to UN entities rather than directly to youth-led initiatives.

There are other efforts underway to develop flexible funding mechanisms. In Sri Lanka, the *SDG Action Campaign*, a global initiative to support advocacy and public engagement in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, has been active since 2017. It can be accessed on mobile platforms, allowing for outreach to a wider set of young people. The initiative also provides youth with an opportunity to design their own projects across the 17 SDGs and to apply for grants of up to 50000LKR (approximately US\$ 275).²⁰ In Colombia, UNDP, in response to the lack of funding for the leadership schools in Nariño and in consultation with other agencies and the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), is working to develop flexible funding mechanisms that ensure continuity of this and similar initiatives. This has proved difficult since much of the funding in the country is allocated towards post-conflict rapid response and efforts to support disengagement from armed groups. The MPTF does not have youth as one of its cross-cutting themes.

Further reflections

Efforts to institutionalise implementation of the YPS agenda, including through inter-agency working groups, are taking place. In the four countries that were part of this study, however, the UN's programming on youth was in general not framed through resolution 2250. This may not be that surprising given that the resolution is relatively new. The system-wide *Youth Strategy*, which outlines how the UN is going to strengthen youth participation in its work, is even newer. More time is needed to fully understand how the UN system, including Member States, operationalises the YPS agenda. The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) is tasked by resolution 2419 'to include in its discussions and advice, ways to engage youth meaningfully in national efforts to build and sustain peace'. The PBC's actions in this regard should be taken in coherence with other processes within the UN to advance the YPS agenda.

Working with resolution 2250 can prove challenging in patriarchal and traditional environments where youth do not always have the agency to contribute to decision making. Several people working within the UN high-

lighted the difficulties that can arise when working to strengthen youth participation, while also working with and supporting governments that regard youth as unstable and potential recruits of criminal and violent groups. The narrative by national governments and donors on the need to develop youth programming centred on preventing and countering violent extremism was raised by some as an obstacle to supporting youth engagement and spaces. Restrictions by governments often make it more difficult for the UN to reach those most marginalised. In many contexts, it is governments themselves that are violating the human rights of young peacebuilders. This requires creative ways to move the YPS agenda forward that may not always include explicitly using the resolutions as guiding frameworks.

In some of the countries in focus in this study, the UN's youth programming was more likely to be framed through the SDGs and in the case of Sri Lanka and Jordan through national youth policies and strategies. Jordan's National Youth Strategy, for example, is outlined according to the SDGs and their specific targets and indicators. It can be a strategic choice by the UN and other organisations to use frameworks other than resolution 2250 to advance youth participation, particularly in countries that are considered peaceful and where governments are reluctant to work with Security Council resolutions that are viewed as only relevant in situations of wide-spread violent conflict. In other countries with unstable political contexts, it might be necessary to use less sensitive framing – capacity-building and education rather than empowerment and participation – when developing youth programming.

Much more is needed to institutionalise YPS across the UN and ensure that its implementation goes beyond tokenistic engagement. A youth lens should be applied in the implementation of other policy frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda and the Sustaining Peace resolutions. Several interviewees mentioned the need for a better reporting structure within UN Country Teams to ensure that work on youth is being monitored, that agencies have access to the same information and that they can better work together. As the UN is strengthening the role of Resident Coordinators – tasked with coordinating the work of all UN agencies at country level – there is an opportunity to engage Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) in this effort, including Peace and Development Advisors and Human Rights Advisors. RCOs should integrate YPS as a priority for all UN agencies, funds and programmes at country level through the Common Country Analysis and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (CF). RCOs should ensure that there is a coordinated effort to meaningfully engage young people and that

these efforts are monitored and shared within the Country Team. Youth should also be engaged, and their interests and perspectives raised, in developing the CCA, aimed at assessing and analysing a country context, its opportunities and challenges as a core part of the CF. Resident Coordinators have an important role to play in using the resolution, and their relationship with governments, to advocate for the meaningful engagement of youth.

Recommendations:

What can the UN do to advance the Youth, Peace and Security agenda at country level?

1. *Engage young people throughout the life of a project, including pre-design and design phases.* This should include talking to diverse youth, including through carefully-designed consultations, to identify what young people themselves identify as needs, as well as the kinds of projects that could address these needs. Regular follow-up with participants is also needed, bringing information back to young people on processes.
2. *Take steps to broaden its outreach to youth to include those most vulnerable to exclusion.* This includes thinking of innovative ways to identify participants in ways other than traditional application processes, as well as engaging a mix of individual young people and youth organisations.
3. *Raise awareness of the UN's work at country level among communities, including its role vis-à-vis the host country government.* The UN should also improve the way it shares information with youth, particularly on the different opportunities that are available to them and how they can engage with UN entities.
4. *Diversify formal and informal partnerships with civil society, including youth.* YPS coalitions can provide a platform to increase coordination between the UN, youth organisations and other civil society organisations. Efforts should be made to ensure that coalitions are youth-led, reaching out to diverse youth and serving as a go-between between grassroots youth initiatives, the UN and governments.
5. *Increase capacities within and coordination between UN agencies, funds and programmes to better integrate YPS across UN peace and development efforts.* UN staff, including Resident Coordinators and RCOs, should be trained on the YPS agenda and its applicability at country level. Monitoring and reporting structures are needed to ensure that work on youth is being shared across agencies and that a youth lens is applied in country-wide strategic documents such as the CCA and the CF. RCOs should lead integration and coordination efforts.
6. *Develop flexible and creative funding mechanisms to reach smaller, grassroots youth initiatives.* The PBF Youth Promotion Initiative should provide mechanisms for funding local youth-led organisations and smaller, grassroots initiatives; other pooled funding mechanisms, such as the MPTF in Colombia, should add youth as a cross-cutting theme.
7. *Advocate for advancing the Youth, Peace and Security agenda with governments.* UN Country Teams, under the leadership of a strengthened Resident Coordinator, should seek to engage governments on sensitive issues including the inclusion and protection of young people.



*Youth participants of UNDP Sri Lanka's Twinning Schools Programme caught in action whilst doing a music video for the song 'Colours'.
Photo: UNDP Sri Lanka*

Realising inclusivity: Translating global policies at the country level

Project background

The importance of inclusion in peace and development processes has been recognised in various international policy frameworks. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which was adopted by all UN Member States with the intention to guide all countries across the globe in their development, puts the principle of *leaving no one behind* at its core, mainstreams aspects of inclusivity throughout the goals and targets, and defines inclusive societies as a goal in its own right (SDG 16). While the challenges to realising inclusivity have been identified in a number of reports and studies in recent years, including in previous case studies of the Foundation, a deeper and contextualised understanding of how meaningful inclusion is understood and pursued in practice at country level is still needed.

As the UN seeks to implement reforms to its peace and security, development and management systems, it is critical that inclusivity remains a priority for the organisation. A review in 2020 of how the UN supports peacebuilding at country level, with a strong focus on inclusivity, provides further impetus to reflect on this theme. In an ongoing project, the Foundation is exploring how the UN can promote greater inclusion in peace and development at the country level. The project collects examples and perspectives on how the UN is working in Colombia, the Gambia, Jordan, and Sri Lanka to support national governments and local civil society in strengthening inclusivity, including through the application of relevant international frameworks.

In particular, the project looks at how the UN has operationalised and engaged with the following normative frameworks to advance inclusivity: the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**; the **Youth, Peace and Security Agenda** (SCR 2250 and follow-up resolution 2419); the **Women, Peace and Security Agenda** (SCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions); and parallel resolutions by the Security Council and the General Assembly (SCR 2282 and GA 70/262) on **Sustaining Peace**, which emphasise the ongoing nature of peacebuilding as something that takes place before, during and after violent conflict.

This paper is based on four country studies conducted in 2019 through secondary sources and key informant interviews with approximately 50 individuals in all four countries.* A preliminary version of this paper and its key messages were also reviewed in two validation consultations with representatives from the UN and civil society, held in December 2019 in Jordan and in February 2020 in Sri Lanka. The paper was also shared with representatives in Colombia and the Gambia for input. While the methodology aimed to capture views of a diverse range of actors working for or with the UN in the four countries, the paper does not give a comprehensive picture or fully represent the experiences of all relevant stakeholders. Rather, it presents a snapshot and is intended for discussion and reflection purposes.

Defining inclusivity

The project and the paper understand inclusivity as an established norm in international policy, affirming that diverse groups across a broad spectrum of society should have a say in processes that affect them. Recognising that inclusion of all different stakeholders can be meaningful for a variety of reasons, the project specifically looks at the inclusion of marginalised groups, including but not limited to women and youth, and of civil society as the space where the voices of these are most often organised and channelled. The diversity of youth should be noted, recognising that some face greater exclusion than others.

The inclusiveness of a process is affected by a multitude of factors, some relating to its methodological design and others to the broader context and power dynamics that may hamper or enable inclusion of certain groups. While participation and representation are key aspects of inclusion, efforts to strengthen the capacity and ensure the rights of marginalised communities, including the right to information, may be as important for meaningful inclusion as inviting them to the table. In addition, inclusivity can also refer to the results of a programme, for example in terms of reduced socio-economic inequalities or application of non-discriminatory laws, norms and behaviour.

*The field work was primarily done in March-June of 2019 by consultants working with the Foundation, Radhika Hettiarachchi and Christian Cito. Some update information has been gathered in 2020.

In total, about 150 individuals have been interviewed or consulted, representing UN entities, civil society and to some extent government institutions in respective country. Approximately 50 individuals shared their reflections specifically on programming related to youth, peace and security.

Endnotes

¹ For more information on Youth, Peace and Security, see the youth4peace.info website. *The Missing Peace* report can be found at: <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-10/youth-web-english.pdf>

² See: <https://www.unfpa.org/youth-peace-security>

³ See: https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/18-00080_UN-Youth-Strategy_Web.pdf

⁴ There is a lack of precise data on the number of youth, or people aged 18-29, as the term is defined by UN Security Council resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. In addition, even within the UN, there is no standardised definition between agencies on what constitutes youth. The number provided here is taken from the UNDESA Population division (<https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>). Within each country, different numbers for various age ranges can be provided.

⁵ See <https://gambia.ureport.in/>

⁶ According to the VAF in Jordan: 'In response to a growing awareness that the impact of assistance differs across various beneficiary populations, the UNHCR office in Jordan continues to collect comprehensive data that allows for both the targeting and prioritization of refugees from Syria. The goal of the process is to gather data on and identify vulnerabilities of urban Syrian refugees in order to facilitate more efficient and effective programming in Jordan...The VAF by nature is not solely a UNHCR initiative but a collaborative initiative developed with the engagement of donors, UN agencies and INGOs operating in Jordan'.

⁷ See: <http://www.y-peer.org/index.php>

⁸ See: <https://www.chrysaliscatalyz.com/>

⁹ See: <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/project/00105731>

¹⁰ The project was initially supposed to end in 2019, but has been extended to September 2020.

¹¹ See: <https://nyc.gm>

¹² See: <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/insights/26846/still-reeling-from-the-yahya-jammeh-years-gambia-begins-its-journey-to-justice>

¹³ Jordan YPS coalition members: UNESCO, British Council, Mercy Corps, Generations for Peace, Jordan Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD), Jordan National Commission for Women (JNCW), Ministry of Youth, Ambassadors for Life, West Asia-North Africa (WANA) Institute, Terre Des Hommes, Intermediaries Change Center For Sustainable Change, Taqarob Foundation, Jordan Olympic Committee, UNFPA, UN WOMEN, UNDP, UNICEF, Search for Common Ground and I-Dare for Sustainable Development.

¹⁴ Members of the coalition include: Centre for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation, Chrysalis, CREATE, Enable Lanka, FAO, GIZ Sri Lanka, International Youth Alliance for Peace, H3 Foundation, Hashtag Generation, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, Interfaith Colombo, International Movement for Community Development, IVolunteer International, Open House International, Partners for Change, Plan International, Rotaract, Sarvoday, Search for Common Ground, Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum, Sri Lanka Unites, The Asia Foundation, The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka, UNDP, UNFPA, UNV, World University Service of Canada, World Vision Lanka

¹⁵ Colombia receives PBF funding as part of the Youth Promotion Initiative for a project entitled 'Young women territorial peace builders in Colombia', as well as an initiative as part of other PBF funding for a project entitled 'Apoyo a la salida de los niños, niñas y adolescentes de los campamentos de las FARC-EP'. Sri Lanka has received funding through the Youth Promotion Initiative for a project on 'Youth Engagement with Transitional justice for long-lasting peace in Sri Lanka'. Additional funding from the PBF goes towards youth-focused initiatives through the 'Promoting the Participation of Youth and Women in the Peacebuilding Process' project (mentioned earlier in this report). For more information see mptf.undp.org/factsheet/country/COL and mptf.undp.org/factsheet/country/LKA

¹⁶ See: <https://www.pbfgyipi.org> for more information

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ In the Gambia, the PBF funds a project entitled 'Increased Women and Youth participation in decision-making processes and as agents of community conflict prevention', aimed at advancing participation at different levels of government and engaging with political leaders to promote and support women and youth participation. The project partners with 7 organisations that are either youth-led or implement youth-related programming. Additional PBF-funded initiatives, related to for example strengthening sustainable and holistic reintegration of returnees and strengthening inclusive civic engagement, also work with youth-led organisations or organisations that have youth-related programming. For more information, see: mptf.undp.org/factsheet/country/GMB

²⁰ See: <https://lk.one.un.org/our-work/sdg-action-campaign/>

Lead author



Sarah Smith works as a Programme Officer at the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. Sarah facilitates work to support and strengthen UN policies aimed at building and sustaining peace, with a focus on inclusivity and youth, peace and security. Prior to joining the Foundation, she has conducted research and supported policy advocacy on conflict resolution and peacebuilding with the Uppsala Department of Peace and Conflict Research and the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington D.C. Sarah holds a BA in International Studies from Rhodes College and a Master's degree in Peace and Conflict Research from Uppsala University.

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Cover photo: Peacemaker 360 (peace360maker.com)

Young peacebuilders met in Bogotá, Colombia, in July 2019 for an annual Young Peacebuilder's Forum organised by the United Network of Young (UNOY) Peacebuilders. The forum focused on advancing youth inclusion through Security Council resolution 2250 and the Agenda 2030, with a strong regional focus on Latin America and the Caribbean, and looked at issues such as climate change, human rights and the role of technology in peacebuilding. For more information see: <http://unoy.org/en/young-peacebuilders-forum-2019/>

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Dag Hammarskjöld
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www.daghammarskjold.se
secretariat@daghammarskjold.se