



Forging and Fostering Peace
**ASEAN Institute for
Peace and Reconciliation**



**Youth,
Peace &
Security**

ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation

Regional Study on Youth, Peace and Security





**ASEAN Institute for Peace
and Reconciliation**

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List of acronyms

ACCT	ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism
ACPoA on CT	ASEAN Comprehensive Plan of Action on Counter-Terrorism
ACW	ASEAN Committee on Women
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AICHR	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
AIPA	ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly
AMS	ASEAN Member States
AMMY	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth
APSC	ASEAN Political-Security Community
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASCC	ASEAN Sociocultural Community
ASCCR	ASEAN State of Climate Change Report
ASEAN-IPR	ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation
AU	African Union
AWPR	ASEAN Women for Peace Registry
AYD	ASEAN Youth Dialogue
AYF	ASEAN Youth Forum
AYO	ASEAN Youth Organization
AYPN	Asian Youth Peace Network
CAYC	Committee on ASEAN Youth Cooperation
CPS	Climate, Peace and Security
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EU	European Union
GA4P	Girl Ambassadors for Peace
GNWP	Global Network of Women Peacebuilders
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
INGOs	International Non-governmental Organisations
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

NAP	National Action Plan
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
P/CVE	Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism
ROK	Republic of Korea
RPA	Regional Plans of Action
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SOMY	ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Youth
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIANYD	UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development
UNOCT	United Nations Office of Counterterrorism
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UNYAP	United Nations Youth Advisory Panel
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

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The ASEAN-IPR YPS Study was developed by Erika Isabel Bulan Yague (Griffith University – Griffith Asia Institute) with Roxanne Figueroa (former UNV/UN DPPA-DPO) and Mridul Upadhyay (UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub). The research team worked in close collaboration with Aya Huyen Duong of the ASEAN Youth Forum, Bibi Zurkiple of the Committee for ASEAN Youth Cooperation, Ahmad Afryan of the ASEAN Youth Organisation, and Neny Adamuka of the Asian Muslim Action Network Indonesia, Ratu Bintang Assyifa Arweys of the Kami Damai Indonesia and Vanessa Marie Yaoyao of the Asia Youth Advocacy Team. The process was guided by Kartika Budhi Wijayanti and Rifat S. Fachir (ASEAN-IPR Secretariat) and Mark Harris (UN DPPA-DPO).

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Executive Summary

The young people in Southeast Asia are a pivotal force for change as they have been taking the lead in peacebuilding efforts across the region. Through their active involvement in youth organisations, networks and independent initiatives, young people have become the driving force behind many positive changes in their respective communities and countries. Youth leaders have influenced decision-making and ensured their voices are heard in political and peace processes. They have protected human rights, promoted environmental and climate justice, and led online and offline social movements. It is inspiring to see how young generations are paving the way for a better future, and their contributions deserve to be recognised and celebrated today.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional intergovernmental organisation that comprises 10 nations with diverse cultures, including Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam – with Timor-Leste currently with ‘observer’ status¹. ASEAN is

well known for its cultural diversity, economic vibrancy and geopolitical complexities. The region faces various challenges and opportunities, including many that deeply impact young people.

Recent years have seen collaborative efforts between national governments, regional and international organisations, and youth-led and youth-focused peacebuilding organisations to promote the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda and the United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) [2250](#) (2015)², [2419](#) (2018)³, [2535](#) (2020)⁴. For instance, the Philippines was the first ASEAN Member State and nation in the Asia-Pacific region to develop a National Action Plan on YPS (NAP YPS).

Under Brunei Darussalam’s 2021 [ASEAN Chairpersonship, the ASEAN Regional Forum \(ARF\)](#)⁵ took its first steps towards advancing the YPS Agenda. Notably, the ARF issued the [ASEAN Regional Forum \(ARF\): Joint Statement on Promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda](#) (see [Annex 2 for complete statement](#)). Additionally, ASEAN and

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1. In 2011 Timor-Leste applied to join ASEAN and was granted “observer” status during the Forty-First ASEAN Summit in Cambodia in 2022.
 2. United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 (2015), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/413/06/PDF/N1541306.pdf?OpenElement>
 3. UNSCR 2419 (2018), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/173/81/PDF/N1817381.pdf?OpenElement>
 4. UNSCR 2535 (2020), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3872061?ln=en>
 5. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was established in 1994 as a platform for security dialogue in the Indo-Pacific and is characterised by consensus-based decision-making. It comprises 27 members: the 10 ASEAN Member States (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam); 10 ASEAN Dialogue Partners (Australia, Canada, China, the European Union (EU), 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, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste.

the United Nations (UN) agreed to include YPS as a new area of cooperation in the [second ASEAN-UN Plan of Action \(2021-2025\)](#)⁶ of the [Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN \(2021-2025\)](#).⁷

In December 2022, a major step in advancing YPS in ASEAN was taken wherein the ASEAN-IPR and the UN, in collaboration with youth-led organisations and networks, co-organised the [ASEAN-IPR-UN Workshop on Advancing Youth, Peace and Security](#), hosted by Lao PDR (see [Annex 3 Outcome and Recommendations](#)). The workshop brought together representatives from the government, ASEAN, youth civil society, the UN and other regional organisations to discuss concrete steps to advance and adopt the YPS Agenda in ASEAN. The main recommendations included developing an ASEAN-IPR YPS Study, developing an ASEAN regional framework on YPS and creating a governance infrastructure for systematic youth engagement.

In February 2023 the ASEAN-IPR Governing Council approved the development of the ASEAN-IPR YPS Study. In accordance with the approved concept note (see [Annex 5](#)), this ASEAN-IPR YPS Study examines the recent developments, challenges and opportunities in advancing the YPS Agenda in ASEAN. It highlights the existing initiatives around youth and peace in ASEAN and its Member States, suggesting that working with and for youth can effectively advance the YPS Agenda and contribute to ASEAN's vision of regional peace and prosperity.

This ASEAN-IPR YPS study complements the [2022 Second ASEAN Youth Development Index \(ASEAN YDI\)](#),⁸ which has a new focus on youth safety and security. Together, the ASEAN-IPR YPS Study and the ASEAN YDI provide evidence-based policies and programmes for youth development in ASEAN to strengthen initiatives meaningfully involving young people in peace and security.

This ASEAN-IPR YPS Study is a promising development for youth-inclusive peace in the ASEAN region. These are the four key findings that informed the recommendations:

- **The meaning of 'peace' for ASEAN youth transcends the traditional and normative meaning, which is the 'absence of violence', but further includes the access to and the protection of fundamental human rights, education, gender equality, climate justice and safe civic spaces (both online and offline).** This ASEAN-IPR YPS Study exhibits how ASEAN youth approach the YPS Agenda from a holistic and human-centric perspective, associating it with involvement in peace and political processes, ensuring safe civic spaces, environmental and climate justice and the defence of human rights. Several youth organisations and networks in ASEAN operate on cross-cutting issues and identify themselves as peace advocates. Further, it also highlights the fact that YPS Agenda complements other relevant agendas such as Women, Peace and Security (WPS), Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) and Climate Security (see [Section V for further discussion](#)).
- **ASEAN youth have diverse and complex experiences of peace.** Hence, promoting the YPS Agenda requires an intersectional approach that recognises gender, age, race, class, disability and other overlapping identities. This approach is crucial to ensuring the inclusive representation of youth in conflict prevention, in conflict resolution and in building and sustaining peace initiatives. It involves consulting, engaging and representing youth from different backgrounds to ensure their voices and perspectives contribute to a holistic and inclusive approach to regional peace and security.
- **ASEAN youth are not simply a demographic dividend, but also a peace dividend,⁹ as they are already playing a vital role in building a more resilient, cohesive and prosperous ASEAN community.** The progress made in advancing the YPS Agenda in the ASEAN region owes much to the energetic youth organisation and networks across the region (discussed more in [Section III](#) and [IV](#)). Historically and today, the youth agency has been a driving force for change across the region. From leading independence movements in the past to today's initiatives of volunteering, developing innovative solutions through youth-led organisations and networks,

6. Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations (2021-2025), <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASEAN-UN-POA-2021-2025-final.pdf>

7. Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Joint-Declaration-on-Comprehensive-Partnership-between-ASEAN-and-the-United-Nations.pdf>

8. ASEAN Youth Development Index – ASEAN Youth Development Index 2022, <https://asean.org/serial/144771/>

9. The 'Peace Dividend' is used in "The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security" which affirms the critical role of youth in promoting peace and security. It means that investing in youth can benefit society through creating opportunities for their participation at national, regional and international levels and in peer-to-peer learning and horizontal exchanges across country contexts.

engaging in political and peace processes, or leading online and offline social movements, young people continue to demonstrate their commitment to positively impacting society. Their contributions should not be overlooked.

- **There is a significant opportunity to implement and formalise the YPS Agenda in ASEAN as a means to address existing gaps in the systematic engagement and participation of youth.** Recent YPS statements, workshops and meetings demonstrate the commitment of ASEAN and its Member States to advance the YPS Agenda in the region. Although it is a relatively new peace agenda, youth and peace initiatives by ASEAN and ASEAN Member States are already in place. These could be further leveraged to support the systematic participation and engagement of ASEAN youth (see [Sections III](#) and [IV](#)). This is an opportune time to build on the current momentum and political will of ASEAN leaders and decision-makers to foster intergenerational collaboration and partnerships in achieving regional peace and prosperity.

The ASEAN-IPR YPS Study provides policy and programme recommendations for ASEAN and national governments, international partners and youth to achieve inclusive peace and prosperity in the region. The study aims to support the implementation and advancement of the YPS Agenda across the ASEAN region and to encourage collaborative initiatives, in line with UNSCRs 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020). By promoting deeper cooperation with and among youth, ASEAN and its partners can effectively address emerging challenges to building and sustaining regional peace and security.

Section I:

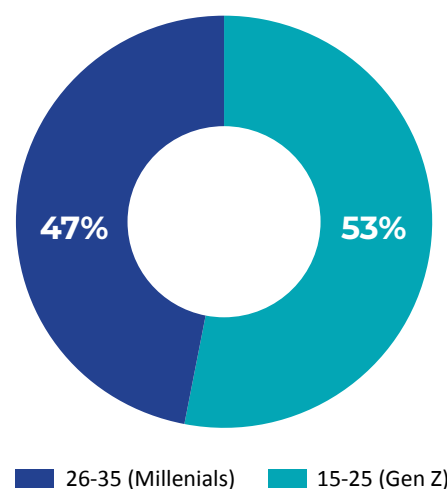
Overview of Youth, Peace and Security

Introduction

The youth of this generation is the largest-ever cohort of ASEAN youth, comprising one-third of the region's combined population. In 2020 the ASEAN region had 224.2 million youths, with 53 per cent aged 15–25 and 47 per cent aged 26–35.¹⁰ The Second ASEAN YDI projects that in 2038 the proportion of youth will peak as a percentage of the region's total population, which shows the development potential of this demographic dividend.¹¹

Thus the ASEAN Member States (AMS) have undertaken efforts towards establishing and implementing evidence-based youth development policies and other programmes to realise the potential of this segment of ASEAN's population and invest in this demographic dividend, including peace and security. Further, the vast and diverse youth in ASEAN countries already play a vital role in advancing peace and security in the region, which can contribute to building a more resilient, cohesive and prosperous ASEAN Community.

224 million
ASEAN youth



10. Figures generated by the ASEAN Statistics Division based on the data of ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2021, https://www.aseanstats.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ASYB_2021_All_Final.pdf

11. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), as referenced in the Second ASEAN Youth Development Index (YDI) Report, <https://population.un.org/wpp/>; https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Jan/un_2015_factsheet1.pdf

Globally, the active engagement of youth in sustainable development efforts is recognised to be central to achieving sustainable, inclusive, and stable societies by 2030. In 2015, the unanimous adoption of the [UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security \(UNSCR 2250 \(2015\)\)](#)¹² emphasised the crucial role of youth in building and sustaining peace.

It was further strengthened by “A New Agenda for Peace” which envisaged a new perspective on the engagement of broader stakeholders, including women and youth. ASEAN and the United Nations have officially agreed to include YPS as a new area in the [second ASEAN-UN Plan of Action \(2021-2025\)](#)¹³ of the [Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN \(2021-2025\)](#).¹⁴

By implementing this plan, both sides will continue to work together to promote harmony between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 (and subsequently ASEAN Community Vision Post-2025) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this light, ASEAN has placed youth development at the heart of regional prosperity, recognizing young people as both current and future leaders and as catalysts for economic, social and cultural development, peace and security.

In the Second ASEAN YDI, ASEAN’s priorities for 2021-2025 included preparing young people to become ‘future-ready’ through skills development and through increasing their participation in policy discourse. ASEAN has made a significant commitment to the region’s youth by encouraging their participation and empowerment, enabling them to realise their full potential and contribute meaningfully to the achievement of the [ASEAN Community Vision 2025](#).¹⁵

This investment in youth is clear in [ASEAN’s Youth Cooperation](#),¹⁶ which was structured around the five areas of the ASEAN YDI: (i) education; (ii) health and well-being; (iii) employment and opportunities; (iv) participation and engagement; and (v) ASEAN awareness, values and identity. The second updated version of the ASEAN YDI includes the safety and security domain to assess young people’s sense of personal and societal safety and links to the YPS Agenda.

The YPS Agenda offers an immense potential to support ASEAN’s peace and security goals in the region by encouraging the participation of young people in peacebuilding efforts. It further emphasises the importance of recognising and harnessing youth’s unique and diverse perspectives, energy, and creativity in building and sustaining peace—going beyond the traditional view of youth solely as drivers of economic prosperity. The YPS Agenda also provides a comprehensive framework to address the many challenges faced by youth, while offering opportunities to work with and for them – supporting young-led initiatives aimed at building and sustaining regional peace.

Youth possess the power to be agents of positive change and catalysts for political and peacebuilding processes. Their meaningful engagement and participation are crucial in addressing the pressing issues that impede regional unity and stability. This ASEAN-IPR YPS Study examines the unique challenges and opportunities faced by young people in the Southeast Asian region. It sheds light on their crucial role as key stakeholders in shaping the immediate and long-term future of ASEAN. The ASEAN-IPR YPS Study explores the multifaceted domain of YPS, assessing how the active contribution of young people can advance peacebuilding efforts and promote sustainable peace and security within the ASEAN region, its Member States and communities.

12. UNSCR 2250 (2015), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/413/06/PDF/N1541306.pdf?OpenElement>

13. Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations (2021-2025). Access here: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASEAN-UN-POA-2021-2025-final.pdf>

14. Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Joint-Declaration-on-Comprehensive-Partnership-between-ASEAN-and-the-United-Nations.pdf>

15. ASEAN Community Vision 2025, <https://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/2015/November/aec-page/ASEAN-Community-Vision-2025.pdf>

16. ASEAN’s Youth Cooperation, <https://asean.org/our-communities/asean-socio-cultural-community/education-youth/>

The Youth, Peace and Security Agenda

Globally, today's youth represents the largest generation ever recorded, and in many conflict-affected nations, young women and men make up a significant share of the population. In 2015 the unanimous adoption of UNSCR 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security¹⁷ established the first-ever global framework recognizing young people's vital role in preventing and resolving conflicts and sustaining peace. The resolution recognises young people's inclusion and participation as critical to building and sustaining peace and security for all.¹⁸ This was reaffirmed subsequently by SCR 2419 (2018)¹⁹ and 2535 (2020)²⁰ that strengthened and operationalised the YPS Agenda. The agenda aims to promote the meaningful inclusion and participation of young people across the full spectrum of peace and security efforts, from peace processes to peacebuilding, from protection to prevention, from partnerships to disengagement and reintegration.²¹

The YPS Agenda seeks to create an enabling environment for young people by promoting their participation in decision-making, protecting their rights and dignity in conflict-affected situations, preventing violence and fostering social cohesion, building partnerships with diverse stakeholders and supporting their disengagement from armed groups and reintegration into society. The YPS Agenda catalyses action by promoting meaningful youth participation, access to quality education and employment, protection from violence and exploitation, and recognition of young people's agency in shaping their own future.

It is a comprehensive framework that calls upon all stakeholders – including governments, civil society, academia, multilateral institutions, and youth-led and youth-focused organisations – to work collaboratively in supporting youth-led and youth-inclusive peace efforts around the world. A wide range of global, regional and national actors – including CSOs, youth-led and youth-serving organisations, academia, the private sector and governments – have taken important steps towards implementing the YPS Agenda.



Box 1: UN Security Council Resolutions on Youth, Peace and Security

- UNSCR 2250 (2015): This landmark resolution calls on Member States to give youth a stronger voice in decision-making at local, national, regional and international levels, and to establish mechanisms that would enable their meaningful participation in peace processes. The resolution identifies five key pillars for action: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships and, disengagement and reintegration.
- UNSCR 2419 (2018): The second UNSCR resolution on YPS was unanimously adopted. It recognises young people's positive role in negotiating and implementing peace agreements and conflict prevention. The resolution urges stakeholders to consider young people's views and to facilitate their equal and full participation in peace and decision-making processes at all levels. The resolution also requests the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of resolution 2419 (2018) and 2250 (2015).
- UNSCR 2535 (2020): The third resolution on YPS underscores the critical role of youth in preventing and resolving conflicts. The resolution calls for greater efforts to implement UNSCRs on YPS, with the aim of institutionalising the agenda and developing guidance on the protection of young people. Moreover, the resolution introduces regular reporting on YPS and requests the Secretary-General to submit a biennial report to the Security Council.

17. United Nations. Youth, Peace and Security | peacebuilding, <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/policy-issues-and-partnerships/policy/youth>

18. UNSCR 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/413/06/PDF/N1541306.pdf?OpenElement>

19. UNSCR 2419 (2018), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/173/81/PDF/N1817381.pdf?OpenElement>

20. UNSCR 2535 (2020), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3872061?ln=en>

21. United Nations, 2022, World leaders renew commitment to Youth, Peace and Security Agenda – office of the secretary-general's envoy on youth, <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2022/01/world-leaders-renew-commitment-to-youth-peace-and-security-agenda/>

Box 2: The YPS Agenda Identifies Five Pillars for Action

1. **Participation:** emphasises the meaningful participation of young people in decision-making processes related to peace and security. It seeks to promote youth participation at all levels, including in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. The agenda also recognises that young people bring unique perspectives and experiences that can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts.
2. **Protection:** ensures the safety of young people from violence, abuse, and exploitation during and after armed conflict. This includes measures to protect young people from armed groups, sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking, and attacks on educational institutions, including safety for their civic and political engagement. It also recognises the role of youth in promoting peace and calls for efforts to counter terrorist narratives through engagement with youth and youth-led civil society. All parties to armed conflict are called upon to comply with their obligations under international law and protect educational institutions as spaces free from violence and accessible to all youth, including marginalised youth.
3. **Prevention:** supports youth-led initiatives to prevent violent conflict and extremism, while encouraging young people's positive contributions to peacebuilding. This includes advancing social and economic development, expanding access to education, promoting youth employment and vocational training, fostering entrepreneurship and enabling constructive political engagement.
4. **Partnership:** highlights the significance of working together with young people and their collaboration with other stakeholders – governments, CSOs, international organisations and the private sector – in promoting peace and security. It recognises the vital role of youth-led organisations in promoting peace and security and calls for support to these organisations as key partners in youth employment and entrepreneurship programmes.
5. **Disengagement and Reintegration:** supports young people associated with armed groups in disengaging from violence and reintegrating into society. It calls for measures to ensure they are not stigmatised upon returning to their communities and reintegrating into society. It also ensures that youth affected by armed conflict have access to education, vocational training, health care, psychosocial support and other services to help them rebuild their lives and cope with the emotional and psychological trauma resulting from conflict or displacement.

The YPS Agenda empowers all young people to participate in peace and security efforts that uphold their rights – including the right to a peaceful and secure environment – enabling their contribution to more inclusive and democratic societies. The agenda also urges Member States to establish mechanisms for the meaningful participation of youth at all levels of decision-making, and calls on all actors to take youth participation into account. Thus, it complements other peace and security agendas such as WPS, P/CVE and Climate Security (see [Subsection V on Enhancing Interlinkages Between Peace and Security Agendas](#)).

Moreover, the YPS Agenda addresses young people's challenges and barriers in accessing their rights and opportunities, such as discrimination, violence, exclusion and a lack of investment.²² It aligns with the principles of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), which recognise that peace extends beyond the absence of violence to include development, fostering social cohesion and leaving no one behind.²³ The YPS Agenda is also aligned with the principles of human rights, social justice and equality.²⁴ By recognising the diversity of young people, the YPS Agenda creates opportunities that promote more equitable societies through the inclusion of marginalised youth.

22. H. Berents, Thinking intergenerationally: WPS and the youth, peace, and security agenda. IPI Global Observatory, 7 October 2020, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/10/thinking-intergenerationally-wps-and-youth-peace-security-agenda/>

23. UNESCO Youth Engagement to foster peaceful societies in the Caribbean (Youth, Peace and Security agenda), 2021, <https://en.unesco.org/yps-caribbean>

24. UNFPA Youth, Peace and Security, <https://www.unfpa.org/youth-peace-security>

Currently, the YPS Agenda has gained significant recognition and importance at the regional and international level due to several key factors, such as the active youth engagement in peacebuilding and conflict resolution,²⁵ and the establishment of international networks and organisations that provide spaces for young people to connect, share experiences and collaborate on peacebuilding initiatives, among other activities. Several other regional intergovernmental institutions have started developing their own regional YPS initiatives to respond to these challenges.

For instance, the African Union (AU) has developed a [Continental Framework for YPS in the African Union](#)²⁶ to significantly expand youth's role as agents of peace, and a [10-Year Implementation Plan for this Continental Framework on YPS \(2020-2029\)](#),²⁷ with a number of specific targets and indicators to track progress over the decade. The [League of Arab States \(LAS\)](#) took a similar approach. [The Arab Strategy for Youth, Peace, and Security 2023-2028](#),²⁸ endorsed by the Council of Arab Ministers of Youth and Sports in March 2023, was developed to serve as a roadmap to implement and advance the YPS Agenda and to enhance cooperation in the Arab region.

Moreover, the European Union (EU) adopted the ["Council Conclusions" on 'youth in external action'](#)²⁹ in June 2020 that highlighted the need to actively engage youth in efforts to build lasting peace. To that end, a Civil Society Dialogue Network Policy Meeting was held in 2022 that resulted to [recommendations on the EU's implementation of the YPS Agenda](#)³⁰ and [the inclusion of YPS within the EU Youth Action Plan 2022-2027](#).³¹ Therefore, in some regions regional plans of action (RPA) are advancing the YPS Agenda. The RPAs offer a framework to expand youth participation by actively engaging, supporting, and recognising their contributions to governance, peace and security.

Box 3: Localising the YPS Agenda through National Action Plans

Following the adoption of the UNSCR 2250 (2015), the YPS Agenda gained significant traction in various countries worldwide. Several nations – Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Finland, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Nigeria, the Gambia and the Philippines – have developed NAPs on YPS as part of their commitment to the agenda. These plans serve as comprehensive frameworks for implementing the YPS Agenda at the national level. NAPs are designed to achieve the goals outlined in the YPS Agenda and to prompt meaningful changes in behaviour, policies and funding. In line with the YPS Agenda principles, the plans are meant to be contextualised to address their respective young populations' unique peace and security concerns.

The Philippines is one of the first countries in the world, apart from Finland and Nigeria, to develop a NAP YPS in 2021 ([see Annex 4 for the Philippine NAP YPS](#)). Developing a NAP YPS in each ASEAN Member State is expected to ensure that the unique needs and perspectives of young people in each country are addressed. It would provide a roadmap for engaging youth in national peacebuilding efforts tailored to each country's specific context, thereby advancing the YPS Agenda in a globally informed and locally relevant way.

NAPs are anchored in the five YPS pillars outline in UNSCR 2250 (2015) and aim to recognise, strengthen and build on existing local and international existing mechanisms to address institutional, structural and cultural barriers to young people's participation in conflict prevention, resolution, management and peacebuilding. NAPs also provide space for

25. United Nations and Folke Bernadotte Academy, Youth, Peace and Security: A Programming Handbook, New York, 2021.

26. African Union Continental Framework for Youth, Peace and Security, <https://au.int/en/documents/20200821/continental-framework-youth-peace-and-security>

27. AU 10-Year Implementation Plan for the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) 2020-2029, <https://au.int/en/documents/20200821/10-year-implementation-plan-yps-2020-2029>

28. Referenced in the Security Council high-level briefing Cooperation between the United Nations Thursday, 8 June 2023 | 10:00 AM EDT and the League of Arab States, https://uaeun.org/app/uploads/2023/06/EN_-Concept_Note_UN_LAS_coop_briefing-8_June-2023-5.pdf; Also see Peacebuilding Commission Ambassadorial-level meeting on Youth, Peace and Security on 7 June 2023, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/230607_chair_summary_pbc_meeting_on_youth_peace_and_security_rev.pdf

29. EU Outcome of Proceedings Youth in external action – Council conclusions (5 June 2020), <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8629-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

30. Civil Society Dialogue Network Policy Meeting. The EU's Implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda: Gathering Young Experts' Recommendations (13-14 January 2022), https://eplo.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/CSDN_PM_EU_Youth_Peace_Security_Report_Jan22.pdf

31. EU Youth Action Plan 2022-2027, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ganda_22_5882

governments, multilateral institutions, civil society and youth-led organisations to work together in advancing and implementing a contextualised YPS Agenda.

Furthermore, the NAPs aim to guide policymakers and service providers in incorporating and adopting action points as they formulate and implement policies and programmes to address the needs of the country's youth. Moreover, the NAPs seek to provide capacity-building training for national government agencies (NGAs) on UNSCR 2250 (2015) and to help map out the different NGAs and NGOs' youth-related programmes and projects that could be leveraged to ensure meaningful youth engagement in building and sustaining peace.

One useful resource is the '[Implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at Country-level. A Guide for Public Officials](#)', which was developed to help address implementation challenges at the national level, in line with UNSCR 2535 (2020) and intended to support Member States.³²

32. Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, "Implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at Country-level: A Guide for Public Officials" (New York: Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, 2022), <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/YPS-guide-for-public-officials-1.pdf>

Section 2:

Purpose and Methodology

Purpose

This ASEAN-IPR YPS Study addresses one outcome of the recommendations from the ASEAN-IPR-UN Workshop on Advancing YPS in December 2022 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. A study proposal was approved by the ASEAN-IPR Governing Council (see Annex 5). This ASEAN-IPR YPS Study is a product of a consolidated effort of ASEAN-IPR with regional youth-led CSOs, such as the [ASEAN Youth Organization \(AYO\)](#), the [ASEAN Youth Forum \(AYF\)](#), and the [Committee on ASEAN Youth Cooperation \(CAYC\)](#). The study also received technical support from UN partners, think tanks and academia, such as the [Folke Bernadotte Academy \(FBA\)](#), [CMI](#), [Griffith Asia Institute](#), and other regional and national peace and security experts and CSOs.

The ASEAN-IPR YPS Study aims to advance the YPS Agenda in ASEAN through an evidence-based and youth-centred approach. This study aims to enhance understanding of the YPS Agenda within the ASEAN context. It offers a cumulative, though not exhaustive, overview of how ASEAN

Member States are engaging with and for youth in building and sustaining peace at local, national, and regional levels. It also identifies the challenges faced by youth in peace and security, as well as current opportunities that can be harnessed to address these challenges.

Methodology

The ASEAN-IPR YPS Study employed a qualitative research methodology utilising a ‘youth and everyday peace framework’ which offers as a new approach to peace and conflict studies that recognises youth’s significant role in everyday peace and peacebuilding.³³ The framework highlights the importance of acknowledging the complex personal and political experiences of youth as they navigate the spaces of peace and conflict.³⁴ Furthermore, applying the ‘youth and everyday peace framework’ avoids isolating youth from broader societal and political discourse by emphasising their lived experiences and the role of intersectionality.³⁵

33. H. Berents and S. McEvoy-Levy, Theorizing youth and everyday peace(building). *Peacebuilding*, 3(2), 2015, pp. 115-125, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2015.1052627>; H. Berents, An embodied everyday peace in the midst of violence. *Peacebuilding*, 3(2), 1-14; L. Dwyer, Beyond Youth ‘Inclusion’: Intergenerational Politics in Post-Conflict Bali. *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 10(3), 2015, pp.16-29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2015.1085810>

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

ASEAN defines youth as individuals aged 15-35 years old, while the UNSCR 2250 (2015) on YPS defines youth to be ages 18-29 years old. For the purpose of this study, the ASEAN definition is adopted to contextualise the YPS Agenda within the regional framework. While the age definition helps the parameters in which this study is being conducted, employing the 'youth and everyday peace framework' allows the recognition of the diversity and intersecting identities of ASEAN youth.³⁶

The ASEAN-IPR YPS Study is based on an in-depth literature review of primary and secondary resources on the YPS Agenda in ASEAN and its Member States, including policy frameworks, statements, reports and other ASEAN literature. The study also includes data and information from the reports and outcome documents from various youth consultations, dialogues and workshops held at the regional and national level between 2017 to 2023. These events were organised by ASEAN, civil society, ASEAN-IPR and the UN ([see Annex 6 for full list](#)).

Further, discussions and inputs from in-country and regional experts from UN, civil society and government ministries informed the ASEAN-IPR YPS Study, particularly country cases in [Section IV](#). The ASEAN-IPR YPS Study also underwent an online validation process in 2023, involving representatives from youth-led organisations and networks in several ASEAN Member States, during which the study's recommendations were drafted.

In its final stages, the study underwent in-depth review, editing, and approval by the ASEAN-IPR Governing Council. Its findings offer valuable insights into the intersections between ASEAN youth, ASEAN and other stakeholders in advancing the YPS Agenda and contributing to regional peace.

36. Ibid.

Section 3:

Youth, Peace and Security in ASEAN

Youth agency has been a historical driving force for change across the Southeast Asian region.³⁷ Young people of diverse backgrounds have been at the forefront of independence and democracy movements in several Southeast Asian countries during periods of colonial times. Today youth continue to impact Southeast Asian politics and societies. Their involvement in various movements has been instrumental in driving transformational change. For instance, young people were actively present in the peace negotiations for peace and autonomy in the Bangsamoro region of the Philippines.

In Myanmar a youth-led congress was organised to make ceasefire recommendations before 2021. In Brunei Darussalam and Thailand youth councils helped support the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Cambodia the NAP for Cambodia Youth Development 2022-2026 was developed through the efforts of the youth movement and advocacy. In Indonesia youth played a critical role in the development and implementation of the NAP for Preventing Violent Extremism.

These are just a few inspiring examples of how young people of diverse backgrounds and genders continue to positively impact society. Their contributions should not be overlooked.

Young people, whether volunteering on their own or working with youth organisations and networks, play a crucial role in promoting peace in the region. They contribute to this objective through their active involvement in peace processes, advocacy efforts and participation in social movements, both online and offline. Youth have been engaged in influencing policymaking by providing valuable insights that can enhance inclusivity. Given the diverse ways in which young people engage and lead within their communities, governments and regional entities have a valuable opportunity to support them as catalysts for peace by advancing the YPS Agenda in ASEAN.

37. Youth agency as used here is the ability of young people to drive and influence change in society. See White, R., & Wyn, J. (1998). Youth agency and social context. *Journal of Sociology*, 34(3), 314-327. <https://doi.org/10.1177/144078339803400307>

The progress made in operationalising the YPS Agenda in ASEAN owes much credit to the energetic youth organisations and networks across the region. These include the ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF), the ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO), the Asian Youth Peace Network (AYPN), and the Committee on ASEAN Youth Cooperation (CAYC), to name a few. Their work encompasses capacity-building, policy advocacy, inter-faith and inter-generational dialogue, conflict resolution and mediation, peacebuilding and social cohesion. Cross-cutting areas include gender equality, entrepreneurship, youth leadership and empowerment, resilience and climate action.

These youth groups are mainly active at the local level, some regionally through the [Asia-Pacific Interagency Network on Youth's Thematic Working Group on YPS](#),³⁸ and others globally through the [Global Coalition on YPS](#).³⁹ They have established partnerships with governments, other civil society actors, including women's groups, ASEAN and its sectoral bodies and the UN.

Young people have the potential to play a crucial role in promoting regional peace and prosperity. However, their efforts must be consolidated, invested in and scaled up to have a more significant impact. Additionally, an established formal and systematic mechanism must be established to promote youth participation in regional peace and security discussions. Previous meetings and workshops (see sub-Section III on ASEAN Initiatives in Advancing the YPS Agenda) have recommended the creation of an ASEAN Regional Framework or Plan of Action on YPS to serve as a

roadmap in addressing the challenges that youth face and to advance the YPS Agenda in ASEAN.

By building on and learning from existing ASEAN mechanisms, the envisioned ASEAN Regional Framework, or Plan of Action, could generate the momentum needed to formally and institutionally engage young people in regional peace and security efforts, contributing to a more peaceful and prosperous future for all.

What Does Youth, Peace and Security Mean in ASEAN?

In previous YPS consultations and dialogues,⁴⁰ ASEAN youth defined peace as the absence of violent armed conflicts and the presence of human security.⁴¹ As such, ASEAN youth take a holistic and human-centred approach to the YPS Agenda, associating it with engagement in peace and political processes and ensuring safe civic spaces, environmental and climate justice and protection of human rights (see Table 1). This interpretation of peace and security echoes the discussions during the broader 2017 Asia-Pacific YPS Regional Consultations,⁴² the 2017 national consultation in Myanmar⁴³ and the country-focused papers on Myanmar⁴⁴ and the Philippines,⁴⁵ all of which contributed to the [first Global Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security](#).

38. Asia-Pacific Interagency Network on Youth, Thematic Working Group on Youth Peace and Security. Access here: <https://www.youth4peace.info/topic/thematic-working-group-youth-peace-and-security-twg-yps>
39. Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, https://www.youth4peace.info/About_GCYPs
40. Such as the Track 1.5 meeting on the ASEAN-IPR-UN Workshop on YPS, <https://asean-aipr.org/asean-aipr-un-yps-workshop-media-release/>. Another is the ASEAN Regional Forum Workshop on YPS, <https://asean.org/events/asean-regional-forum-arf-workshop-on-promoting-the-youth-peace-and-security-agenda-in-the-arf/>. The consultation and dialogues were led by youth networks and civil society groups. In 2020 the theme for the youth 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, http://aseanforyouth.org/wpcontent/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, <https://www.youth4peace.info/topic/2021-asean-youth-meeting-peace-and-security>. A consultation led by GNWP, AYPN and UNOY was also held in 2021. See Policy Brief, https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/GNWP-Policy-Brief-Intersections-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-WPS-Youth-Peace-and-Security-YPS-and-Humanitarian-Action-across-Southeast-Asian-Region-2023_for-web.pdf. This is also in reference to the 'Advancing Youth, Peace and Security in Southeast Asia' thematic paper as part of the UN Secretary-General's Report on YPS. See full paper, <https://www.youth4peace.info/topic/advancing-youth-peace-and-security-southeast-asia>
41. E. Yague and I. Gomez, Advancing Youth, Peace and Security in Southeast Asia, 2022, https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2022-07/220603%20YPS%20SEA%20Thematic%20Paper_clean.pdf
42. UN 2017 Asia Pacific Youth, Peace and Security Consultation Report, <https://www.youth4peace.info/node/264>.
43. Myanmar Consultative Workshop for Youth, Peace and Security, <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2017-10/2017%20-%20Report%20-%20Myanmar%20National%20Consultative%20Workshop%20for%20Youth%2C%20Peace%20%26%20Security.pdf>
44. Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Youth engagement in peace and development, Myanmar, 2017, submitted for the YPS Global Progress Study, https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/201804/24.%20CFR_Myanmar-Youth%20Participation2_DHF.pdf
45. M. Alar, Young People and their Role in the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Peace Negotiations, 2017. Commissioned Study for the Global Progress Study on YPS, 2017, https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/201804/11.%20CFR_Philippines%20%20Youth%20People%20and%20their%20Role%20in%20Peace%20Negotiations_Michael%20Frank%20A.%20Alar_0.pdf

Table 1. Cross-cutting issues that ASEAN Youth have associated with YPS

Gender equality and gender-based violence	Economic, educational 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 justice and disaster mitigation
Protection of democracy and human rights	Equal access to health care services

Many youth organisations and networks in Southeast Asia work on cross-cutting issues and identify themselves as peace and security advocates, believing that by promoting justice, equality and sustainable peace, youth can help achieve these goals. For example, the [Mekong Youth Assembly](#) is a youth network working across the Mekong riparian countries that advocates for environmental governance and climate justice to achieve sustainable peace. [RespectME](#) is a youth-led organisation in Brunei that advocates for justice for sexual violence victims and enhanced security for young people. These cross-cutting initiatives reflect the dedication of many youth-led civil society actors to address all forms of violence that impact peace, stability and prosperity.

The YPS Agenda is an essential component of global peace and security. UNSCR 2250 (2015) requires governments to consider ways to increase young people’s participation in maintaining peace and security. Localising UNSCR 2250 (2015) is critical to addressing context-specific peace and security issues faced by young people. One way to contextualise the YPS Agenda (see [Subsection I on Localising the YPS Agenda through National Action Plans](#)) is through the development of NAPs, which offer a coherent and practical framework for implementation.

However, one should note the various ways of effectively implementing the YPS Agenda, such as through roadmaps, frameworks, policies, programmes, projects and services. This can ensure that young people are empowered to make a valuable contribution to global peace and security.

Civil Society-led and Youth-led Organisation YPS Initiatives in ASEAN

CSOs have been instrumental in empowering young people to take active roles in peace and security initiatives in all ASEAN Member States. Many CSOs are youth-led and working to engage young people online and offline in political and civic processes. CSOs involvement has brought about positive changes and progress locally, nationally, regionally and globally. They have actively worked towards to ensure youth representation and inclusivity in government and decision-making processes. CSOs have also partnered with youth-led groups and leveraged multi-party systems to foster youth-led political movements, promoting positive societal change and encouraging youth participation in governance.

CSOs have played a crucial role by advocating for youth-related policies that address peace, security and empowerment. CSOs have lobbied for youth perspectives in national development strategies and sustainable development initiatives. They have supported youth networks by providing capacity-building and funding opportunities, empowering young people to take on leadership roles and develop projects for their communities. In addition, CSOs have helped nurture a new generation of active and informed youth leaders. Their continued efforts in advocating for youth-related policies will be critical in shaping a brighter future for the next generation.

Youth-led CSOs have actively engaged in peacebuilding efforts, community-based initiatives and advocacy campaigns to promote peace within their countries. In some AMS, such as the Philippines, youth-led CSOs have collaborated with the UN and international organisations to promote youth-related knowledge and evidence, enabling the localisation of the YPS Agenda and fostering global partnerships for peace and security. In Indonesia CSOs have worked to transform negative perceptions of youth – portraying them not as victims or perpetrators of conflict, but as active community members and agents of positive change in promoting peace and security.⁴⁶

As an apt example, a committed group of youth-led organisations, such as AYO, AYPN and other regional CSOs, took the lead in organising the ‘[ASEAN Youth Meeting on Peace and Security](#)’, an annual meeting on peace and security for young people in the region.⁴⁷ Supported by the ASEAN Secretariat and other partners, the event in 2020 aimed to reflect on the YPS Agenda in the ASEAN region. In parallel, youth-led civil society partnered with the UN under the #Youth4Peace in Southeast Asia initiative (2020-2021) to create a platform for capacity-building, dialogue and knowledge-sharing on critical issues, such as linkages to WPS, human rights and P/CVE.

ASEAN Initiatives in Advancing the YPS Agenda

Figure 1: ASEAN Initiative Relevant to Youth, Peace and Security



In 2021, as part of the effort to close the gap in YPS knowledge in government institutions, AYPN developed [YPS E-modules](#)⁴⁸ targeted at young public servants in ASEAN countries. These were endorsed by the ASEAN-IPR and Department of Foreign Affairs – Philippines. Forging strong partnerships with civil society, ASEAN, the UN and all partners and stakeholders can ensure effective support for the advancement of the YPS Agenda in the ASEAN region.

46. Refer to the “Implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at Country-level A Guide for Public Officials”, <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/YPS-guide-for-public-officials-1.pdf>

47. ASEAN Youth Meeting on Peace and Security, <https://www.youth4peace.info/topic/2021-asean-youth-meeting-peace-and-security>

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

[ASEAN-IPR](#),⁴⁹ as ASEAN’s Track 1.5 platform,⁵⁰ has focused on youth participation in peacebuilding to promote ASEAN’s Culture of Peace. In 2018 the [ASEAN-IPR Youth Conference on Peace and Tolerance](#)⁵¹ resulted in the ASEAN Youth Declaration on Peace and Tolerance (See Annex 1 for full declaration). In August 2021 ASEAN-IPR convened a Discussion Series Session with the theme “[Youth as Agents of Peace—Utilising Digital Platforms for Narratives of Peace](#)”, bringing together young peacebuilders and regional peace and security experts for intergenerational discussion and knowledge sharing.

ASEAN-IPR, in partnership with youth-led groups such as AYO, developed a module on “[Youth and Digital Technology for Peace](#)” to enhance youth engagement in building and sustaining peace in the region. In October 2021 Indonesia, through the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth (AMMY), convened the annual ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp under the theme, “Championing Youth as Agents of Interfaith Harmony”. ASEAN-IPR and the ASEAN Secretariat have also engaged and partnered with youth-led organisations, such as AYO, AYF, AYPN and CAYC, in delivering various youth-focused initiatives with the prospect of further collaboration.

Under the 2021 ASEAN Chairpersonship, Brunei Darussalam led ASEAN’s efforts to formalise the YPS Agenda through the [ASEAN Regional Forum \(ARF\)](#). ASEAN’s first-ever YPS-related statement, titled, “Joint Statement on Promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at the ASEAN Regional Forum”, emphasises the importance of prioritising youth in ASEAN’s efforts to promote a peaceful, stable, secure and resilient region (See Annex 2 for full statement).

As a concrete next step, the statement tasked the ARF Experts and Eminent Persons with providing recommendations on implementing the YPS Agenda within relevant ARF workplans, programmes and processes. This historic milestone reflects the power of collaboration and stands as a compelling example of what can be achieved when nations and civil society – including youth – work together toward a common goal.



The joint statement was followed by the [ARF Workshop on Youth, Peace and Security Agenda](#) which was a significant event that took place from 1-2 December 2021. It was the first workshop solely focused on YPS and was co-hosted by Brunei Darussalam and the United States with participation from the ARF Member States, youth civil society representatives and the UN. The workshop recommended that ASEAN mechanisms be leveraged to promote intergenerational dialogue and facilitate youth engagement in ASEAN’s peace and security initiatives, such as the ASEAN Bali Workplan on PVE, the interfaith dialogue and WPS.

During his keynote speech, Khaled Khiari, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, emphasised the “importance of developing local, national, and regional action plans on YPS”. Overall, the insights shared during the workshop highlighted the importance of involving youth in peace and security initiatives.

The [ARF Symposium Building on Lessons Learned from the Women, Peace and Security and the Youth, Peace and Security Agendas was organised in 2022](#), co-hosted by the United States, the EU and Singapore. It was attended by officials from over 35 countries, including representatives from the Indo-Pacific, Africa, various regional and INGOs and women and youth groups. The symposium highlighted the importance of the WPS and the YPS Agendas in conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution and peacebuilding.⁵² This multi-stakeholder event facilitated dialogue and exchange

49. ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, <https://asean-aipr.org/>

50. ASEAN’s Track 1.5 Platform occurs when government representatives and non-governmental experts engage in dialogue or meetings.

51. ASEAN-IPR Youth Conference on Peace and Tolerance, <https://asean-aipr.org/multimedia/asean-ipr-regional-youth-conference-on-peace-and-tolerance/>

52. ASEAN Regional Forum Symposium Building on Lessons Learned from the Women, Peace and Security and the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/asean-regional-forum-arf-symposium-building-on-lessons-learned-from-the-women-peace-and-security-and-the-youth-peace-and-security-agendas/>

of ideas among diverse stakeholders from governments and CSOs on the WPS and the YPS Agendas, resulting in increased understanding and collaboration on these agendas at both regional and international levels.

At the global level, two senior ASEAN officials and one civil society representative from an ASEAN youth-led network presented experiences in working with and for youth in peace 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. The Doha Conference demonstrated the collective commitment and action of different stakeholders in advancing the role of young people in global peace and security worldwide.

During the sessions, the Executive Director of ASEAN-IPR emphasised the significance of capitalising on the youth's existing efforts and existing frameworks, particularly the interlinkages between the YPS and WPS Agendas in ASEAN. In addition, the Director-General of the ASEAN Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam, who spearheaded the efforts of the Chair of ASEAN on advancing YPS in 2021, proposed that the development of a regional YPS framework should be explored by the ARF. This would be a vital step towards harnessing the potential of youth to drive positive change in the region.

By the end of 2022, additional significant steps to advance the YPS Agenda were taken by ASEAN-IPR and the UN – hosted by Lao PDR, in collaboration with youth-led organisations and networks, through the [ASEAN-IPR-UN Workshop on Advancing Youth, Peace and Security](#), which is a ASEAN-UN Track 1.5 regional dialogue ([see Annex 3 for Outcome Document](#)). Lao PDR hosted this workshop providing an opening for the YPS Agenda to be discussed within a formal ASEAN process.

The workshop was attended by youth experts, senior officials from the AMS, high-level officials from the UN, regional civil society partners, and representatives from youth-led organisations. The main recommendations were collectively put together by the participants. This included conducting an ASEAN-IPR YPS Study, developing an ASEAN regional framework on YPS and creating a political and governance infrastructure for systematic youth engagement. Responding to the recommendations, the ASEAN-IPR Governing Council approved the development of the ASEAN-IPR YPS Study in February 2023 ([see Annex 5](#)).



Additional initiatives related to the YPS Agenda were also undertaken in recent years. On 29 July 2024 to 2 August 2024 the ASEAN-IPR conducted a training on “Enhancing the Role of Youth in Peacebuilding” to build the capacity of more than 30 youth from ASEAN Member States, Timor-Leste and Japan. Indonesia initiated this project which aimed to empower youth with the requisite knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles as agents of peace.

In February 2025 the ASEAN-UK YPS Forum, under the theme “Building Understanding on the Use of Technology-Enabled Transnational Security Threats”, was organised by ASEAN-IPR, the UK Mission to ASEAN and the Asia Foundation to provide a platform for discussion and engagement. The focus was on exchanging experiences over transnational security threats and YPS. Another initiative by ASEAN-IPR is the ‘Cybersecurity Youth Essay Competition’ in conjunction with the ASEAN-IPR Regional Conference on Cybersecurity and Fostering a Culture of Peace in ASEAN.

Youth aged 21-35 submitted essays across five sub-themes, which were reviewed by experts and recognised through awards presented by ASEAN Member States and Timor-Leste. The awarded authors participated in the Conference held from 24-26 February 2025, in Bangkok, Thailand, where the top three best essays were presented to an audience of nearly 100 participants.

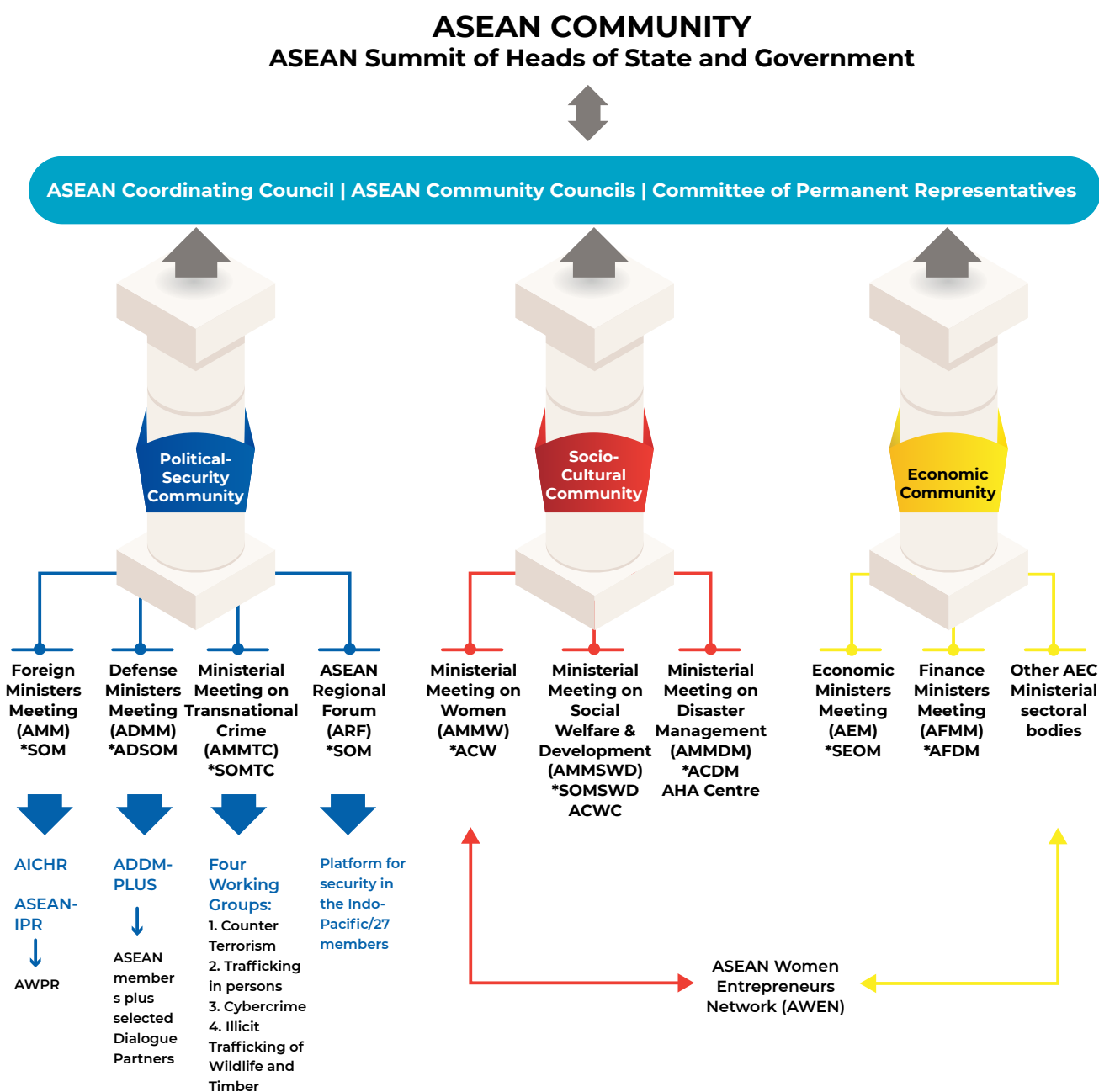


At present, many other initiatives continue, including youth exchanges, youth leadership programmes, youth volunteerism opportunities, skills training and social entrepreneurship programmes, that support youth development in ASEAN. ASEAN has established several youth-focused mechanisms that facilitate engagement between young people and ASEAN leaders and senior officials. These platforms provide opportunities for youth to voice their concerns, contribute ideas and participate in decision-making processes shaping the future of ASEAN:

1. ASEAN Leaders Interface with Youth Representatives at the ASEAN Summit: This interface takes place during the ASEAN Summit and serves as a crucial platform for dialogue with representatives from youth; the same interface for meetings also takes place between ASEAN Leaders and representatives of the [ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly \(AIPA\)](#) and the [ASEAN Business Advisory Council \(ASEAN-BAC\)](#).
2. ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF): The [AYF](#) is a movement that represents and fights for young people in ASEAN to voice their concerns and strategies for achieving a better ASEAN.⁵³
3. ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp (AYIC): [AYIC](#) is an annual event initiated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports Indonesia to strengthen the culture of peace and the value of moderation in the ASEAN Community.
4. ASEAN Young Professionals Volunteer Corps (AYPVC): The [AYPVC](#) is an initiative designed to bring together young professionals from AMS to undertake voluntary community work in areas of their expertise.
5. ASEAN Youth Dialogue: The [ASEAN Youth Dialogue](#) is a flagship programme that brings together youth representatives from the 10 AMS and Timor-Leste to deliberate policies on the role of the youth in the ASEAN Community.
6. [ASEAN Youth Volunteer Programme \(AYVP\)](#): A dedicated youth volunteerism platform whose main goal is to drive youth volunteerism and community development that engage young people aged 18 to 30 years (youth from higher education, colleges and working professionals) across ASEAN. Through targeted in-country projects in ASEAN AMS, the AYVP will provide a dedicated youth volunteerism platform that will facilitate multi-disciplinary, knowledge-driven and/or post-disaster recovery volunteerism projects across the region.
7. ASEAN Foundation youth-oriented projects/initiatives: As an ASEAN body with the unique mandate and ability to promote greater awareness of the ASEAN identity by working with business sector, civil society, academia and other stakeholders, [ASEAN Foundation](#) has many youth-oriented projects, such as [Empowering Youths Across ASEAN](#), [ASEAN Young Climate Leaders Programme](#), [Future Ready ASEAN](#), and many others.

53. Prior to 2015 the AYF was a meeting of youth representatives from the 10 AMS, under the auspices of SOMY, organised prior to the first ASEAN Summit of the year under each ASEAN Chair. Its role was to formulate the youth statement and select the youth representatives who would attend the ASEAN Leaders Interface with Youth Representatives.

Figure 2: ASEAN Community Pillars, Sectoral Bodies, Institutions and Entities relevant to Youth, Peace and Security



ASEAN Community Pillars Relevant to YPS:

ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC): The APSC pillar focuses on promoting peace, stability and security in the region by addressing security challenges, preventing conflicts and promoting cooperation among AMS.

ASEAN Sociocultural Community (ASCC): The ASCC pillar aims to enhance the region’s social progress, cultural development and human resources. It includes initiatives related to youth development, education and social welfare.

Sectoral Bodies and Entities relevant to YPS:

1. ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth (AMMY) and Senior Official Meeting on Youth (SOMY): ASEAN focuses on youth development through various programmes and initiatives. This includes youth exchanges, youth leadership programmes and youth volunteerism opportunities.⁵⁴
2. ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR): The ASEAN institution is mandated to conduct research activities and supports ASEAN bodies in handling peace, reconciliation, conflict management and resolution issues. The structure of Institute is as follows: the Governing Council is the highest decision-making body; an Advisory Board provides guidance on research priorities; and the Executive Director manages all administrative and operational matters and heads the Institute's Secretariat.
3. ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR): The AICHR is the overarching institution responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights in ASEAN. Its work includes efforts to improve awareness and to engage students and youth in the promotion and protection of human rights,⁵⁵ through their flagship youth-related project, the AICHR Youth Debate on Human Rights, among other initiatives.
4. ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW): The ACW is a sectoral body under the ASCC pillar that promotes gender equality and women's empowerment. It plays a role in addressing issues related to youth, peace and security, in particular, the rights and well-being of young women.⁵⁶
5. The ASEAN State of Climate Change Report (ASCCR): highlights a "Whole of Nation Approach" incorporating the active participation of civil society organisations – including NGOs, CSOs, and youth groups – from Brunei Darussalam and Cambodia. These groups were engaged in the design and planning of national climate change policies exemplifying an innovative decision-making process to address long-term climate change challenges.⁵⁷
6. ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF): The ARF is an important platform for security dialogue in the Indo-Pacific providing a setting for members to discuss current security issues and to develop cooperative measures to enhance regional peace and security. The ARF is characterised by consensus-based decision-making and frank dialogue among the 10 AMS and 11 ASEAN Dialogue Partners. A Joint Statement on Promoting the YPS Agenda was adopted during the twenty-eighth ARF under Brunei Darussalam's 2021 ASEAN Chairmanship,⁵⁸ while the European External Action Service has also highlighted the importance of partnerships in sustaining peace and promoting the YPS Agenda.⁵⁹
7. ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA): AIPA is a platform that facilitates communication among Southeast Asian parliamentary organisations, promoting cooperation and understanding. It also helps raise awareness among people about policies aimed at accelerating the creation of an ASEAN Community by 2025.⁶⁰ Since 1983 the AIPA General Assembly has adopted around 15 resolutions on youth and young political leaders. In August 2023 the AIPA Standing Committee adopted a resolution regarding the establishment of the Young Parliamentarians of AIPA.
8. ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime Working Group on Counter Terrorism: Established in 2007 to facilitate discussions on terrorism cases in the region and to enhance cooperation to counter the challenge. The group meets annually and serves as a permanent mechanism to monitor and review the implementation of the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism and the ASEAN Comprehensive Plan of Action on Counter-Terrorism.

54. ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community – Youth, <https://asean.org/our-communities/asean-socio-cultural-community/education-youth/>

55. AICHR Five Year Work Plan 2021-2025, https://aichr.org/aichr-fywp-2021-2025-approved-at-53rd-amm_for-web/

56. ASEAN Major Sectoral Bodies/Committees. Access here: <https://asean.org/our-communities/asean-political-security-community/peaceful-secure-and-stable-region/counter-terrorism/major-sectoral-bodies-committees/>

57. Note: most AMS have involved sectoral agencies, local government and the private sector as part of multi-stakeholder engagement and public participation (Nation reports submitted to ASCCR process), https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ASCCR-e-publication-Correction_8-June.pdf

58. Government of Canada. Joint statement on promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at the Twenty-Eighth ASEAN Regional Forum, https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/news-nouvelles/2021-08-06-joint-statement-asean-declaration-commune_anase.aspx?lang=eng

59. European Union External Action (2021). ASEAN Regional Forum: Joint Statement on promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/asean-regional-forum-joint-statement-promoting-youth-peace-and-security-agenda_en

60. ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, <https://aipasecretariat.org/>

Section 4:

Youth, Peace and Security in ASEAN Member States

The overview of regional Youth, Peace and Security initiatives and activities in ASEAN provides background information and insights into efforts to advance the YPS Agenda in each country. By presenting previous and current initiatives in each ASEAN Member States, this ASEAN-IPR YPS Study will offer initial benchmarks to assess national implementation and explore ways to achieve higher standards of youth engagement and development in peace and security across the region.

Brunei Darussalam

Country Context

Approximately 26 per cent of Brunei's population is aged between 15 and 29.⁶¹ Under Wawasan 2035, Brunei's national development policy, the country regards its youth as a resource base for a highly educated and skilled workforce and as a crucial partner in shaping the country's future.

Historically, young people played important roles in Brunei's political development. In 1946 the Barisan Pemuda or "Youth Movement" (BARIP) was the first youth political party formed to "safeguard national honour, ensure the protection of the sovereignty of the Sultan, the country and its people". The youth party became inactive in 1948 as the British colonial government began targeting its leaders. However, in 1962, the youth participated directly in the Brunei Revolt, which influenced the Sultan's decision in 1963 not to join Malaysia, eventually paving the way for Brunei's independence in 1984.

Brunei has participated in several regional and intergovernmental organisations, such as the Commonwealth and ASEAN. As the ASEAN Chair in 2021, Brunei Darussalam led the advancement of the YPS Agenda in the ASEAN region and beyond. During the Twenty-Eighth ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held in August 2021, the ARF participating countries issued a Joint Statement on Promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, pledging to raise awareness of the agenda among policymakers and the public and to consider ways to increase the inclusive representation of youth in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives.⁶²

61. ASEAN and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). First ASEAN Youth Development Index, <https://asean.org/asean2020/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/First-ASEAN-Youth-Development-Index.pdf>

62. European Union External Action. ASEAN Regional Forum: Joint Statement on promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/asean-regional-forum-joint-statement-promoting-youth-peace-and-security-agenda_en

Today, Bruneian youth remain active in governmental and regional initiatives through youth-led organisations and networks, particularly through the Brunei Youth Council (Majlis Belia Brunei or MBB). Brunei has few CSO and NGOs at the local and national level compared to other Southeast Asian countries due to restrictive policies.⁶³

Understanding Youth in Brunei

Brunei defines youth as those aged 15 to 40, with no age restriction for ‘youth leaders’.⁶⁴ The National Youth Policy for Brunei has five objectives: (1) Uphold Islam as the official religion and integral to daily life; (2) Enable youth to contribute to the economy, culture and society; (3) Foster understanding and awareness; (4) Build knowledge and skills of youth; and (5) Develop attitudes and personal qualities, such as patriotism, confidence and creativity. The National Youth Policy includes key strategic areas: education, employment and training, leadership, socioeconomic initiatives, international exchange and community service.

The revised National Youth Policy and Strategy (2020-2035) of Brunei Darussalam emphasises youth participation in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The National Youth Policy and Strategy aims to tackle youth unemployment and encourage youth participation in society, particularly through entrepreneurship, to realise the Wawasan Brunei 2035.

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) is the main governmental body responsible for youth affairs. Its objectives include formulating and implementing the National Youth Policy, designing youth programmes that generate community involvement, promoting volunteer work and coordinating youth efforts among all agencies in various fields.

Youth Participation in Peace and Security

Government-led Initiatives on Youth, Peace and Security

As part of the government’s ‘Whole of Nation’ approach, youth initiatives were implemented through the Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Foundation (Yayasan Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah). The Foundation provides financial assistance to local youth development projects to advance youth participation at the local and national levels.⁶⁵ Government initiatives to prevent violence, especially domestic violence, have been integrated into the MCYS plans. Furthermore, youth were engaged while drafting the Brunei National Climate Policy.

During Brunei Darussalam’s ASEAN Chairmanship in 2021, the YPS Agenda was one of its priorities as the country adopted the Joint ARF Statement on YPS in August and an ARF Workshop in December (as discussed above). As a member of the Commonwealth, Brunei Darussalam’s youth leaders received technical support from the Commonwealth Secretariat on ways to combat violent extremism. The youth leaders learned about using dialogue and social media platforms to promote peace and intercultural harmony. In 2018 to 2019 the Commonwealth Secretariat trained 20 senior officials from Brunei Darussalam to help young people set up and manage businesses as part of their youth and peace programme.

Youth-led Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

The Brunei Youth Council (Majlis Belia Brunei or MBB) is a non-governmental, non-profit volunteer organisation to unite all youth organisation to promote the economic, social, cultural, physical, mental and spiritual development of youth.⁶⁶ The MBB Youth General Assembly meets annually to formulate youth-oriented policies. The MBB is part of the International Youth Council of Southeast Asia and has participated in the annual youth-led ASEAN Youth Meeting and other YPS-related regional discussions. In 2021 MBB,

63. International NGOs are determined by the Companies Act which enables non-profit organisation to register as a company. The company must be “formed for promoting commerce, art, science, religion, charity, or any other useful object”, https://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-brunei_darussalam/civil_society/international_ngos/

64. Government of Brunei – Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, National Youth Policy, 2010, http://www.kkbs.gov.bn/dasar_belia_latar.html

65. United Nations. 2020 United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: Voluntary National Review Report of Brunei Darussalam, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26410VNR_2020_Brunei_Report.pdf

66. Brunei Youth Council, <https://www.bruneiyouthcouncil.com/>

the Malaysian Youth Council (MBM) and the Indonesian National Youth Council (KNPI) released a joint statement in solidarity with the Palestinian struggles for peace.

Youth organisations in the MBB have been active in ASEAN forums. The youth groups strengthened regional networks and knowledge sharing and reviewed the ASEAN Youth Charter (2009) and the ASEAN Community Blueprint. Through the most recent ASEAN Youth Forum, Bruneian youth groups have raised seven thematic concerns for discussion, including peace, politics and democracy, youth networks and organisation, freedom of expression and the right to information. A few cross-cutting youth-led initiatives and organisations are the following:

- RespectME is a youth-led community established in October 2019 to raise awareness of sexual violence in Brunei Darussalam. It aims to reduce sexual violence in Brunei Darussalam through storytelling, educational reform and advocacy.
- The [Big BWN Project](#) supports local youth and community through networking and capacity building. Its Young Entrepreneur Project, for instance, seeks to conduct outreach projects on Entrepreneurship, Leadership, Design Thinking and Soft Skills related education and activities around the country.
- Youth Against Poverty 4.0 (YAP), organised with the Futuremakers initiative by the Standard Chartered Bank, brought together ten local start-ups to initiate a social business to benefit underprivileged communities. A three-day workshop was held to educate youths on the importance of poverty alleviation and encourage participants to develop projects to help the underprivileged.
- HIV Awareness Programme for Peers and Youth (HAPPY) is a youth-led project that spreads awareness about HIV and teenage pregnancy through videos, audio and visuals.
- Hand4Hand Brunei, a non-profit organisation founded in 2016, focuses on volunteerism to create awareness and encourage actions among youth for Brunei Darussalam's underprivileged families.
- Society for Community Outreach and Training (SCOT) aims to help underprivileged families in Brunei escape the vicious cycle of poverty through sustainable projects. SCOT launches awareness-raising campaigns among local youth and provides volunteering opportunities.

UN-led Youth and Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

In partnership with the government, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) has been supporting youth empowerment through the following initiatives:

- Since 2019, the UN has provided micro-grants under the Development Assistance and Youth Entrepreneurship Enhancement Programmes, which supported 32 young entrepreneurs to run and expand their business.
- The Community Empowerment Programme, in collaboration with the Youth Development Centre (YDC), empowers participants by providing skills training tailored to their skills and interests.
- The Visionary Youth Innovation Programme (PIBB) was introduced as an initiative to eradicate poverty by empowering targeted youth early. There are three phases to the programme: beginning with a three-month National Service Programme, followed by basic skills training and education at Politeknik Brunei, and finally, a work attachment to provide exposure and increase young people's marketability.
- During COVID-19, young people volunteered to distribute food to 3,000 households.

Challenges and Opportunities

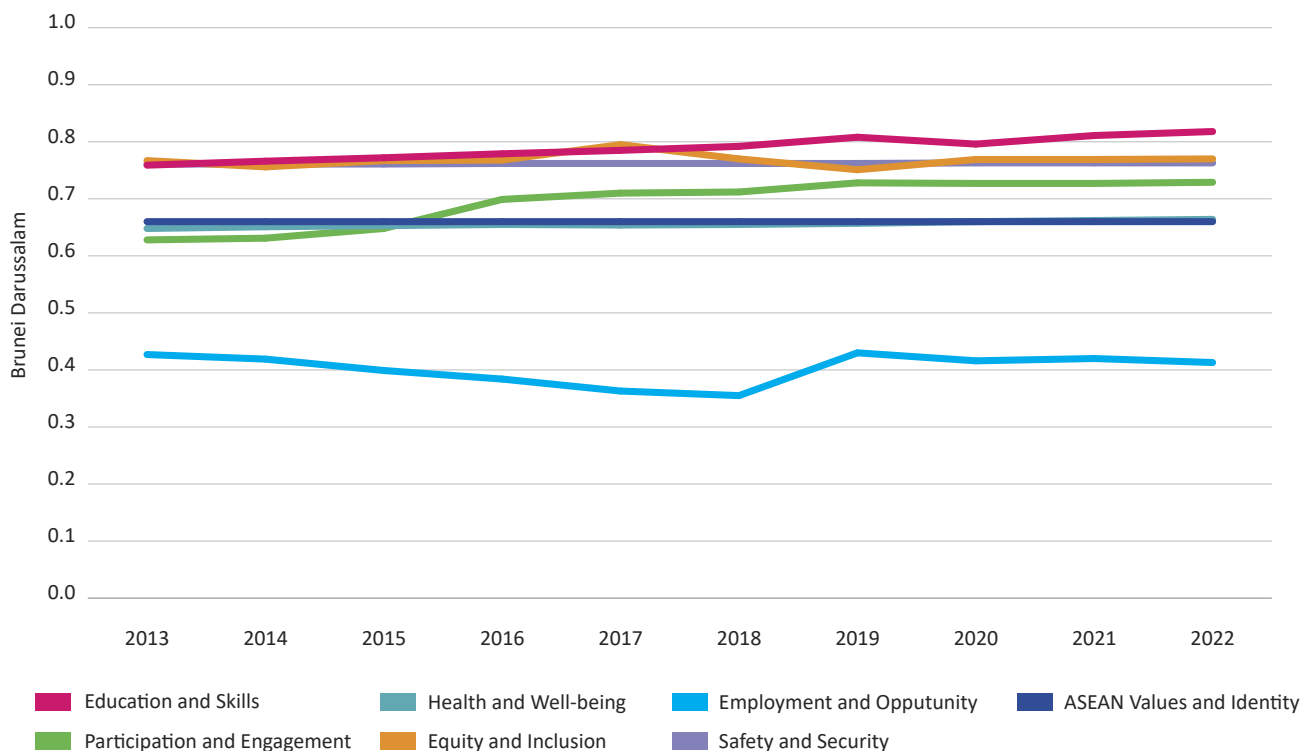
Challenges

Young people in Brunei Darussalam have constantly called for a review of the National Youth Policy and Strategy to enhance accountability, lowering the definition of youth from 40 to 35 years and imposing an age limit for youth leaders. This is to ensure opportunities, particularly on participation and employment, are given to younger cohorts of Brunei youth.

Coordination between youth groups and the broader civil society needs to be strengthened, as young people are often left out of government-led initiatives. Opportunities to participate in these initiatives are also usually reserved for a particular cohort of young people who have established ties with the government. The ability of young people from diverse backgrounds, especially those marginalised, to influence decision-making remains limited.

Restrictions on civil society activities and fundamental freedoms remain a challenge for Bruneian youth. There was no provision for freedom of speech in the constitution

Figure 3. Overall YDI and Domains score for Brunei Darussalam, ASEAN Youth Development Index (2022)



or laws, and the government’s emergency powers restricted the right to assembly. Organisers of events on topics, such as LGBTQI+ rights, tend to hold meetings in private rather than apply for permits or practice self-censorship at public events.⁶⁷ The limitation on civic space has essential implications for meaningful youth participation.

Opportunities

Brunei Darussalam ranked 3rd in the ASEAN YDI out of the ten countries in ASEAN in 2022, wherein the most significant improvement was observed for ‘Participation and Engagement’ and the score increased from 0.628 to 0.729 in ten years. The domains ‘Education and Skills’ and ‘Health and Well-being’ were well above the regional

average. It was reported that most of the change could be attributed to an increase in Internet Usage and may benefit from targeted policies on Graduation Tertiary, Mental Disorder, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), as well as Employment and Opportunity.

The overview of regional Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) initiatives and activities in ASEAN provides background information and insights into efforts to advance the YPS Agenda in each country. By presenting previous and current initiatives in each ASEAN Member States, this ASEAN-IPR YPS Study will offer initial benchmarks to assess national implementation and explore ways to achieve higher standards of youth engagement and development in peace and security across the region.⁶⁸

67. Civicus Monitor on Brunei Darussalam. Access here: <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/brunei-darussalam/>

68. ASEAN Youth Development Index 2022, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, pp. 29-30

Cambodia

Country Context

The Kingdom of Cambodia underwent a bitter history of war resulting in tragedies and killings from 1970 to the late 1990s. Due to war and insecurity, the social, cultural, economic and educational infrastructure were destroyed to zero, especially between 1975 and 1979. Many young women and men lost their lives due to mass killings, forced labour, starvation, and emaciated survivors were left with trauma and poor health.

Following the liberation on 7 January 1979, the surviving Cambodian people and leaders, mostly young people, were struggling to overcome all obstacles in order to restore the socioeconomic sector of the country, on the one hand, and to prevent the resurgence of a Democratic Kampuchea, on the other hand.

From 1980 to 1993 Cambodian youths had the opportunity to build their capacity through practical work and to pursue their education in friendly countries within the socialist bloc. After 1993 some Cambodian youths also had the opportunity to receive a Western education. However, regardless of where they are educated, the knowledge obtained is used to serve their beloved Cambodia in the spirit of upholding the noble interests of the country under the motto: Nation, Religion, King. Cambodia has experienced a significant transition over the past two decades. After earning the status of lower-middle income country in 2015, the country aims to become an upper-middle income country by 2030 and a high-income nation by 2050.

Politically, Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliamentary government. Cambodia has a young and dynamic population. Based on the latest 2019 General Population Census data, people aged under 35 years comprise 64.2 per cent of the total population. The youth can be a forceful catalyst for driving economic activity and innovation leading to economic growth and prosperity.

However, the young population puts additional pressure on the economy because of their greater demands for better employment, education, skills development, health care and other social services.⁶⁹ This segment has impacted the country's political development thanks to modernisation, substantial economic improvements and better access to education and information, including through social media.

Understanding Youth in Cambodia

According to the National Action Plan on Youth Development (2022),⁷⁰ youth are between 15 and 30 years old, representing 30.5 per cent of the Cambodian population. The National Action Plan on Cambodia Youth Development (NAP-CYD) 2022-2026 was approved on 17 June 2022 by the Council of Ministers, Prime Minister, and President of the National Youth Development Council and officially launched on the 15 November 2022.

The NAP-CYD focuses on 12 strategies and five key priorities, including: 1) education; 2) health and well-being; 3) employment and opportunities; 4) institutional capacity in coordination and participation; and 5) monitoring and evaluation.

Key priorities for the NAP-CYD (2022-2026) are determined based on consultation and existing data and are consistent with the NPCYD (2011) and other relevant policies, particularly the Rectangular Strategy Phase IV. Therefore the NAP-CYD (2022-2026) focuses on the following five main priorities:

- Priority 1: Institutional capacity in coordination and monitoring and evaluation
- Priority 2: Education, vocational training, and capacity development
- Priority 3: Health, safety, and well-being
- Priority 4: Employment and entrepreneurship
- Priority 5: Youth participation and volunteering work

69. United Nations Cambodia (2021). Cambodia Common Country Analysis: Towards an Inclusive, Equitable and Sustainable Recovery, https://cambodia.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/CCA%202020_UN%20Cambodia_26Aug2021_Final%20-%20smaller.pdf

70. Youth Policy.org. Cambodia 2011 Policy Youth Development, https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Cambodia_2011_Policy_Youth_Development.pdf

Reshaping the previous National Youth Development Policy (NYDP) of 2011 and its action plan, the new NAP-CYD continue to reflect a new political engagement to involve youth and mainstream youth-related topics in sectoral policies. A National Youth Development Council (NYDC) was established in 2014,⁷¹ chaired by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport (as permanent vice-chair), to operationalise the NAP-CYD with a monitoring and evaluation framework for reporting on the implementation progress.

Since adopting the NYDP, the Cambodian Government has established councils for youth development in all ministries, institutions and provinces. Furthermore, in partnership and cooperation with the CSOs, the NYDC has undertaken a series of discussions on policy framework implementation and development of the Cambodia Youth Index document, which is important for data collection and analysis.⁷²

Youth Participation in Peace and Security

Government-led Youth and YPS Initiatives

Several national frameworks and programmes have established the rights of youth in Cambodia. The Cambodian youth agenda has progressively moved to the centre of policy debates as demonstrated in the adoption of the National Youth Development Policy (NYDP) in 2011 and its National Youth Action Plan (NYAP). The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, particularly its youth department, has been coordinating the implementation of the Policy in collaboration with other relevant ministries and youth organisations.⁷³

The National Council for Youth Development is responsible for coordinating, monitoring, evaluating and assisting the government for youth development. It is also responsible for promoting the youth agenda in national budgeting and within various ministries, public institutions and local authorities. The NYDP and NYAP are roadmaps to support young people at national and subnational levels. To achieve the objectives set out in the NYDP and NYAP, the National

Council for Youth Development has developed a framework for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the policies.⁷⁴ There is no formal structure or mechanism for ongoing peace talks, as the country has no active armed conflicts in the country.

Cambodia has focused on increasing the role of youth in achieving the SDGs. As evidence of fact, various youth development programmes, were effectively implemented to equip youth with 21st century skills and the understanding of new technology as well as to promote youth participation and contribution to socioeconomic development in both national and international programmes such as: the National Youth Debate, Youth21, the ASEAN Youth Debate, The First ASEAN Youth Dialogue, the 6th ASEAN Youth Video Contest and the ASEAN Youth Photo Competition.

The National Youth Debate is a national public speaking competition that provides opportunities for high school students who are passionate about public speaking. It aims to strengthen their critical thinking capability, problem-solving skills, public speaking and debating skills, as well as to improve networking and communication among Cambodian youth.

Youth21 is a national business model competition that provides opportunities for university students to design and implement digital business models. It aims to develop the capabilities of Cambodian youth to create business models in the context of the 21st century.

The ASEAN Youth Debate created to be part of Cambodia's 2022 as the Chairmanship of the ASEAN in priorities themed A.C.T: Addressing, Challenges, Together. This programme aims to provide the opportunities for talented youths to showcase their debating skills and to empower the ASEAN youth with regards to public debates.

The first ASEAN Youth Dialogue under the theme: "Youth in the Era of Fourth Industrial Revolution: Opportunities and Challenges in Post-Pandemic Recovery" aims to create a platform for the youth of ASEAN and the Republic of Korea (ROK) to engage in meaningful policy discourse

71. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2021). Key Issues affecting Youth in Cambodia, <https://www.oecd.org/countries/cambodia/youth-issues-in-cambodia.htm>

72. NYDC, Monitoring and evaluation framework of NAP-CYD, 2022

73. EU-OECD Youth Inclusion Project – Cambodia: How's life for youth in Cambodia?, https://www.oecd.org/countries/cambodia/Agenda_Youth_inclusion_Cambodia.pdf

74. OECD Youth Well-being Policy Review of Cambodia, <https://www.oecd.org/countries/cambodia/Youth-well-being-policy-review-Cambodia.pdf>

by participating in a dialogue session with ASEAN-ROK ministers and key high level dialogue partner. Plus, The ASEAN Youth Dialogue provides the opportunity for youth to learn and work together in pandemic recovery, as well as to promote mutual understanding between the youth from ASEAN and ROK.

The 6th ASEAN Youth Video Contest aims to provide the opportunities for the enthusiast video creator being part of the ASEAN community by creating videos to discuss the opportunities and challenges of the ASEAN under the theme, “Youth Addressing Challenges Together- Stay Dynamic in the Time of Pandemic” with the three sub-main themes including 1. inclusive education; 2. tech innovation; and 3. mental health.

The ASEAN Youth Photo Competition aims to provide the opportunities for the ASEAN youth to improve both photography and social skills, promote ASEAN values, awareness and identity as well as to establish a strong network for mutual understanding amongst the ASEAN youth.

Youth-led YPS Initiatives

The Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia (UYFC) is a non-benefit social organisation, an NGO, whose aims are to help train Cambodian youth to become the pillars and backbone of the nation and as potential successor to preserve the past achievements and to achieve future socio-economic development.⁷⁵ The resilience of Cambodian Youth means the promising future for the nation.

To achieve all these noble tasks, the UYFC is committed to providing vocational training and education; promoting education on health care and healthcare service delivery; maintaining security, safety, justice and freedom for youths; promoting the youth participation in the development of the country; and encouraging the strengthening of youth volunteer movements in social justice activities.

The Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC) is an independent and apolitical organisation that advocates for peaceful democratic and governance reform, and the promotion of enterprise-based development and economic opportunities for Cambodian youth. YCC has also engaged youth to advocate for national youth and employment policies.⁷⁶

The Mekong Youth Assembly (MYA) is a youth network from six countries that share the Mekong River: Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam.⁷⁷ The MYA aims to encourage all the Mekong region youths to bring positive environmental changes by working with their communities. It was established under the NGO Terre des Hommes Germany – Southeast Asia Working Group for Biodiversity and is currently supported by Terre des Hommes.

In relation to peacebuilding and conflict resolution, Youth for Peace (YFP)⁷⁸ is a youth organisation working and engaging in community memory initiatives that support community peace learning centres, including efforts to transform mass killing sites into centres for dialogues, remembrance and peacebuilding. The initiative focuses much of its programming on young people, helping them understand the intricacies and necessities of peacebuilding and reconciliation while envisioning a culture of democracy through education, research, and advocacy.

The Youth Star Cambodia (YSC) is a civic participation organisation active since 2005, with the objective “to build a just and peaceful nation through citizen service, civic leadership and social entrepreneurship”.⁷⁹ It places university graduates in rural communities for a volunteer period of one to two years.

Established in 1992 with over 4,000 members, the Khmer Youth Association (KYA) is a local organisation that works with young people on topics including health, gender equality, democracy building and education and vocational training. It operates through youth clubs based in Youth Learning Centres (with 10-15 full-time volunteers) in rural communities.⁸⁰

75. More information on the Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia at: <https://www.uyfc.org/en/about-us/>

76. More information on the Youth Council of Cambodia at: <http://www.ycc.org.kh/>

77. More information on the Mekong Youth Assembly at: <http://www.mekongyouth.org/about/>

78. More information on the Youth for Peace at: <https://www.yfpcambodia.org>

79. Find out more about the Youth Star Cambodia, <http://youthstarcambodia.org/>

80. Find out more about the Khmer Youth Association, <http://www.icicp.org/resource-library/icp-publications/global-youth-service-database/asia-and-the-pacific/southeast-asia/cambodia/>

The Khmer Youth and Social Development (KYSD) provides capacity-building programmes for young people living in rural areas.⁸¹ It also advocates for youth to be recognised as the government’s partner in development and peacebuilding.

The Youth Resource Development Programme (YRDP) engages young people to advance their critical thinking skills, empower their use of civic and political rights and strengthen their social conscience for positive social action.⁸²

The Cambodian Youth Network (CYN) is an informal youth network that promotes youth participation, civic engagement, the protection of human rights and the preservation of natural resources.⁸³ Based in Koh Kong province, the CYN has been working with the Areng community and Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary to protect the areas from illegal loggers and encourage students from the capital to work with rural communities.

Politikoffee is a youth informal platform that brings enthusiastic and social media-savvy young Cambodians who love sociopolitical and economic discussions and debates.⁸⁴ Established in 2011, Politikoffee has reached out to over 500 youth members and has organised at least 250 weekly forums to discuss various topics related to politics, peace, security and economic issues in Cambodia with the participation of national and international speakers, including government officials, diplomats and NGOs, think tank leaders, activists and experts.

UN-led Youth and YPS Initiatives

Established in 2007, the United Nations Youth Advisory Panel (UNYAP) is the youth advisory body of the UN Country Team in Cambodia. UNYAP is a platform for youth groups to advise the UN in the design of youth-friendly policies, strategies and programmes aimed at addressing adolescent and youth issues in Cambodia. Coordinated by UNFPA, the UNYAP includes 23-27 members from CSOs working with adolescents and youth and representatives

of people with disabilities, the LGBTQI+ community, and adolescents and youth groups. The UNYAP has offered a safe internal platform for youth members to exchange views and externally reached out to other people on social media platforms to share and generate discussions on key issues, including social development, education, employment, environment, peace and human rights.

UNFPA is the leading UN agency in Cambodia on youth development. It supports the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport on the Monitoring and Evaluation framework of the UNYAP and school curriculum on health and sexuality education. It also supports a diverse group of young people through capacity-building trainings.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project, “Promoting Decent Youth Employment in Cambodia”, aims to support the government to promote and expand decent employment among youth.⁸⁵ It identifies avenues for young people to maximise returns on their jobs and income opportunities in the context of the changing landscape of Industry 4.0.

In addition, UNDP’s Asia-Pacific Regional Hub and the Citi Foundation co-created the Youth Co:Lab⁸⁶ project in 2017 which aims to establish a common agenda for countries in the Asia-Pacific region to empower and invest in youth so that they can accelerate the implementation of the SDGs through leadership, social innovation and entrepreneurship. Cambodia is one of the implementing countries.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

Cambodia is a vibrant, young and growing nation. UNDP assessed that the demographic dividend from a large youth population could be capitalised on to boost economic growth further and bring about positive social transformation in Cambodia. But to realise these benefits, young people need better access to decent jobs, be able to start and sustain

81. Find out more about the Khmer Youth and Social Development, <https://apyouthnet.ilo.org/network/khmer-youth-and-social-development-kysd>

82. Find out more about the Youth Resource Development Programme, <http://www.yrdp.org/>

83. Hong, R. (2019). Cambodian youth network works on civic engagement in society. The Phnom Penh Post, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/lifestyle-around-ngos/cambodian-youth-network-works-civic-engagement-society>

84. Find out more about Politikoffee, <https://politikoffee.com/en>

85. UNDP Cambodia. Promoting Decent Youth Employment in Cambodia., <https://www.kh.undp.org/content/cambodia/en/home/projects/equipping-cambodias-youth-for-the-arrival-of-industry-4-0.html>

86. For more information more on the Youth Co:Lab see, <https://www.youthcolab.org/>

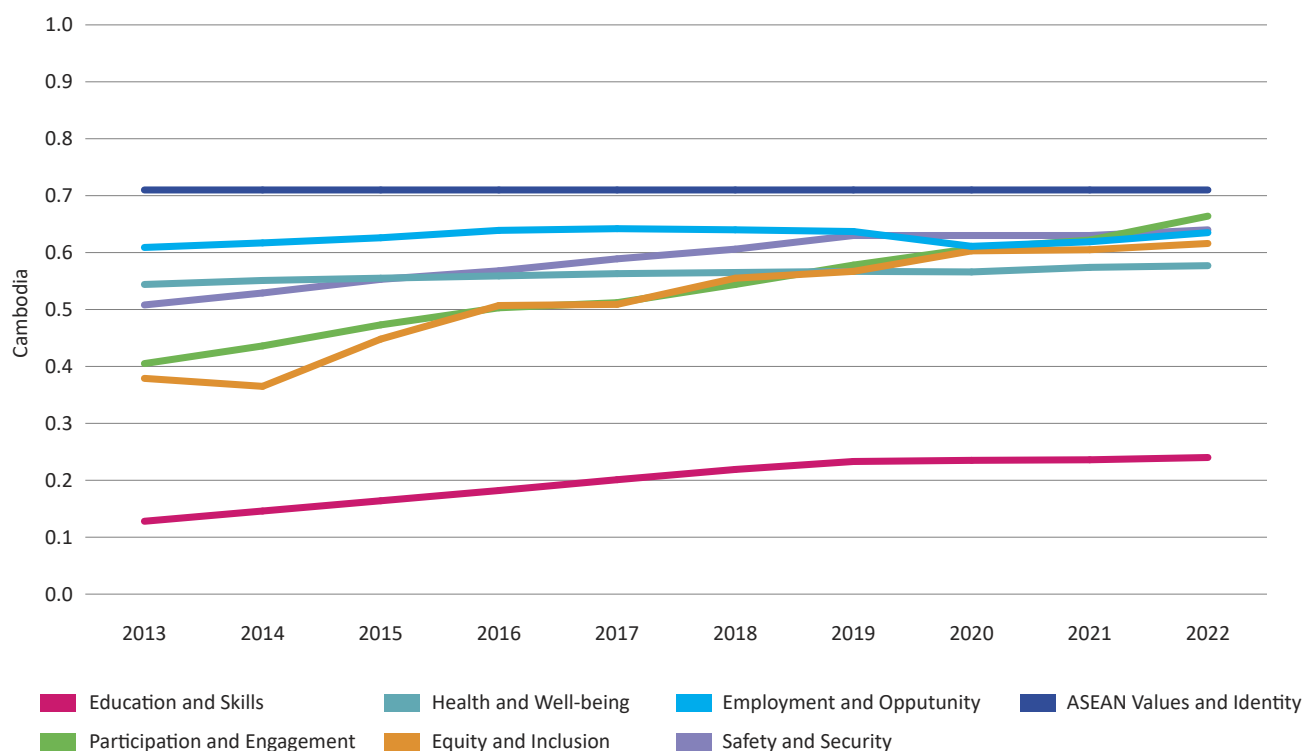
their enterprises, and adapt to rapid technological changes driven by the fourth industrial revolution.⁸⁷

In terms of employment, youth aged 15-29 comprise 43 per cent of the working-age population in Cambodia. Yet, many work in the informal sector with low wages and poor labour protection. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), approximately half of the youth population are employed in the agricultural industry, and 46.8 per cent are working as family workers.⁸⁸ In addition, almost three-fourths of employed youth are underemployed, with a higher proportion of poor youth.⁸⁹ In terms of education, the net enrolment rate in primary

school was 98.4 per cent, with a completion rate of 89.9 per cent.⁹⁰ However, the secondary education enrolment rate was only 27.7 per cent. Access to secondary education varied across gender, rural and urban settings, and socio-economic groups.

Youth in Cambodia are becoming more informed and engaged in civic and political activities, primarily through the rapid penetration of social media. In 2021 more than 70 per cent of the Cambodian population were active social media users which was a significant increase from 2016 (27 per cent).⁹¹ However, youth participation online is uneven across society, especially for those living in rural areas.⁹²

Figure 4. Overall YDI and Domains score for Cambodia, ASEAN Youth Development Index (2022)



87. UNDP Cambodia. Promoting Decent Youth Employment in Cambodia, <https://www.kh.undp.org/content/cambodia/en/home/projects/equipping-cambodias-youth-for-the-arrival-of-industry-4-0.html>

88. International Labour Organisation. Youth Employment Policy Summary Cambodia, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_534260.pdf

89. OECD Key Issues affecting Youth in Cambodia, 2021, <https://www.oecd.org/countries/cambodia/youth-issues-in-cambodia.htm>

90. Ibid.

91. Statista Research Department, Active social media users as a share of the total population in Cambodia from 2016 to 2022, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/883742/cambodia-social-media-penetration/>

92. OECD, Key Issues affecting Youth in Cambodia, 2021, <https://www.oecd.org/dev/inclusivesocietiesanddevelopment/youth-issues-in-cambodia.htm>

Cambodian youth participate actively, particularly in community-oriented activities, but according to the OECD, the degree of inclusiveness in young people's civic participation is still limited.⁹³ The main barrier towards meaningful participation is a lack of youth recognition caused by an age and knowledge hierarchy within society. Besides expressing their voices through social media, most youth, especially those living in rural areas and migrant workers in other countries, are left out of initiatives organised by political parties and NGOs.

Opportunities

Cambodia's ASEAN YDI scored 0.568 in 2022. 'Participation and Engagement' was the best-performing domain, while 'Education and Skills' were significantly lower than other domains.⁹⁴ It was also reported that there was a significant improvement in 'Safety and Security' because of a decline in the poverty rate and that young people may benefit from targeted policies in DRR, volunteered time, education and skills, among others.⁹⁵

The growing interest in civic and political activities among youth and the high rate of social media penetration represent an opportunity for further youth engagement in policies and decision-making. The NYDP and its Action Plan (NYAP) are avenues to ensure youth participation in programmes and policies across all sectors. In addition, Cambodia is in the process of developing a National Action Plan to prevent Violence Against Women 2024-2030 which could be another entry point for YPS implementation.

In advancing the YPS Agenda, ongoing community-oriented activities with active involvement from youth-focused NGOs serve as a foundation to be built upon. In the absence of active armed conflict, youth outreach initiatives can be implemented nationwide – especially in rural communities – to ensure young people's voices are reflected in public policy.

Indonesia

Country Context

Indonesia is one of the world's most populous countries with the largest Muslim population. It is home to more than 1,200 self-identified ethnic groups living on more than 17,000 islands. After the three-decade authoritarian regime under President Suharto, Indonesia experienced gradual democratic transitions, including democratic elections, security sector reform and the emergence of a more vibrant civil society and an independent media. In 2024 Indonesia, the third largest democracy, held its fifth direct presidential elections with young voters taking centre stage, constituting 56 per cent of the registered voters thereby giving them the power to swing the presidential election.

Throughout Indonesia's history, the 'youth agency' has proven to be a driving force for change. In the 1920s, under Dutch colonial rule, the *pemuda* (the youth) led national independence revolutions. In 1928 a few representatives of youth organisation issued the historic Youth Pledge (*Sumpah Pemuda*), whereby they vowed to recognise only one Indonesian motherland, one Indonesian people and one Indonesian language.⁹⁶ The Pledge was considered a national milestone for independence and unity. Later, in 1945, young people played a significant role in the country's independence movement as they directly demanded President Sukarno proclaim independence from the colonizers.

The anti-communist purge brought Suharto to power in 1967 replacing the country's founding President, Sukarno. In its early years of the Suharto Government, youth protests also took place in response to the worsening socioeconomic conditions but these demonstrations against authoritarian rule were repressed. Although the military raided and occupied universities seen as centres of student activism in 1974, youth in the 1970s remained a driving force behind fundamental critiques of authoritarianism.

93. Ibid.

94. The YDI score is a number between 0 and 1, with 0 reflecting the lowest youth development and 1 reflecting the highest level of youth development attained in the region. See more at: https://asean.org/storage/2017/10/ASEAN-UNFPA_report_web-final-05sep.pdf

95. ASEAN Youth Development Index 2022, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, p. 31.

96. L. Suryadinata, Indonesian Nationalism and the Pre-War Youth Movement: A Reexamination, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 9(1), 1978, pp. 99-114, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20070247>

Youth movements evolved in the late 1980s to 1990s with young people as activists calling for political change.⁹⁷ The 1998 student movement (*Reformasi*), which eventually led to the resignation of Suharto, was initially triggered by the economic crisis that affected Indonesia in late 1997 which had a devastating impact on the middle classes.⁹⁸

The role of young people as *aktivis* (activists) have important implications for youth activism today as young Indonesians continue to advocate for political reforms and peace through formal and informal channels. In 2019 the youth, including high school students, protested against the controversial Criminal Code draft law and the revision of the Corruption Eradication Commission Law as these symbolized the government's increasing authoritarianism. In 2020 a wave of nationwide protests led by labourers and student activists erupted against the controversial Omnibus Law on Job Creation.

Young activists took up digital activism, using hashtags and social media posts for their messaging. An online campaign known as the *#ReformasiDikorupsi* (*#ReformCorrupted*) began to trend on social media platforms. Other youth-led online protests include *#TolakOmnibuslaw* ('reject the Omnibus Bill'), *#LockdownDPR* ('lockdown Parliament').

Understanding Youth in Indonesia

Indonesia is home to 64 million youth aged 16-30, according to the National Youth Law No. 40/2009, comprising approximately 25 per cent of the total population (64.354 out of 255.461 million).⁹⁹ Young people's political engagement has continued to shape Indonesia's democracy. In the 2019 elections over one-third of the 193 million voters were between 17-35, and 21 per cent of the 7,991 candidates for the House of Representatives were between aged 21-35.¹⁰⁰ Further, 3.83 per cent of parliamentarians were under 30.¹⁰¹ Youth parties and the integration of youth leaders within parties also emerged as a movement to improve the representation of youth and women in the policy-making strategies for process.

The Law on Youth, enacted in 2009, provides guidelines for youth development strategies. The Ministry of Youth and Sports is responsible for coordinating and leading youth empowerment and providing the necessary services for youth. No systematic mechanism exists for formal youth participation, such as a youth parliament or youth council. However, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Social Affairs support youth organisations and networks, including the following entities:

- *Pramuka* (Boys' Scout)
- *Karang Taruna*
- *Komite Nasional Pemuda Indonesia* (KNPI)
- *Forum Komunikasi Putra Putri Purnawirawan dan Putra Putri TNI/Polri*
- *Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam*
- *Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia*
- *Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasionalis Indonesia*
- *Pemuda Katolik Republik Indonesia*
- *Keluarga Mahasiswa Hindu Dharma* (Hindu)
- *Keluarga Mahasiswa Buddhis* (Buddhism)
- *Gerakan Muda Konghucu* (Confucianism)

Most youth organisations were formed as a branch of established CSOs or of their 'youth-wing'. Here are some of the key youth branches under CSOs:

Religious-based CSOs:

- *Nadhlatul Ulama*
- *Jaringan Gusdurian*
- *GP Ansor*
- *IPPNU (Ikatan Pelajar Pemuda UN)*
- *Fatayat Nahdhatul Utama*

97. Doreen Lee, *Images of Youth: on the Iconography of History and Protest in Indonesia*, *History and Anthropology*, 22:3, 2011, pp. 307-336, DOI: 10.1080/02757206.2011.595003.

98. *Ibid.*

99. ASEAN Youth Development Index, https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ASEAN-UNFPA_report_web-final-05sep.pdf.

100. Indonesian Elections: Getting Realistic About Millennial Votes, 12 October 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/10/indonesian-elections-getting-realistic-about-millennial-votes/>

101. https://data.ipu.org/content/indonesia?chamber_id=13420.

- *Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia*
- *Muhammadiyah*
- *Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah*
- *Ikatan Pelajar Muhammadiyah.*

Non-religious based CSOs:

- *Indorelawand*
- *Gerakan Mari Berbagi*
- *Temu Kebangsaan*

Youth Participation in Peace and Security

Government-led Initiatives on Youth, Peace and Security

After 1998 youth movements reformed some organisations, influencing policies and decision-making in government and in the local peace processes. For instance, the PRD (*Persatuan Rakyat Demokratik*, People’s Democratic Union) and the *Solidaritas Mahasiswa Indonesia untuk Demokrasi* (Student Solidarity for Democracy in Indonesia, or SMID) have been at the forefront of advocating and supporting the peaceful and democratic resolution for East Timor, the abolition of the military’s *dwifungsi*¹⁰² role, democratisation in politics, economy and culture and the full restoration of the rights of former political prisoners. Young people have also been engaged in the peace processes of Kalimantan, Maluku and Poso, as most of the stakeholders were under 40.¹⁰³ For instance, in Kalimantan, *Forum Komunikasi Antaretnis Kalimantan* (Interethnic Communications Forum of Kalimantan) was composed of young intellectuals from both the Dayaks and Maduras.

In April 2019 the Indonesian Government hosted a Regional Workshop on ‘Establishing Youth Ambassadors for Peace Against Terrorism and Violent Extremism’, attended by 780 youth ambassadors across 13 provinces. The youth ambassadors were tasked with building networks and spreading positive messages on social media platforms. In 2019 Indonesia organised “*Santri for Peace*”, bringing together young religious actors to promote dialogue

and understanding in a diverse community. The Ministry of Sports and Youths encouraged youth participation in peacebuilding through a ministerial regulation adopting a general youth empowerment approach instead of the YPS Agenda framework.

The National Action Plan on Violent Extremism by the National Agency on Countering Terrorism (PP No. 71 2021) regulated and encouraged youth participation in the prevention of violent extremism through capacity-building, coordination and networking among youth, and fostering collaboration with other actors such as religious leaders, civic leaders, police and the local government. This NAP is more aligned with the Secretary-General of the United Nations’ Plan of Action in P/CVE, yet it includes aspects of YPS through its youth participation component.

In 2015 the Agency established the programme, “Youth Peace Ambassador” (Duta Damai), which aimed to engage youth in universities and schools to promote peace and the prevention of violent extremism within their communities. Focus 6 of Pillar 1 of the NAP responds to the gap in comprehensively integrating child protection and child-sensitive measures.

The Indonesian Government made a strong commitment to improving child and adolescent participation. “Improving child participation according to their maturity” is one of the child protection strategies of the National Mid-Term Development Planning (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional*) 2020-2024. There are ministerial regulations on child and adolescent participation, e.g. the Minister of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (MoWECP) Regulation Nos. 12/2015 and 1/2022, which have already outlined the monitoring mechanism of children’s participation in the development planning process with the government through the *Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan/Musrenbang* (Development Planning Consultation).

Here the emphasis is on the following: 1. the level of children’s participation in all stages of Musrenbang; 2. the proposed programme/activity in the planning document; 3. the budget allocated for the programme/activity for fulfilling children’s rights; 4. the budget disbursement and

102. A doctrine, implemented by Suharto’s military-dominated New Order Government in Indonesia following the removal of President Sukarno, was used to justify the military permanently increasing its influence in government, including in reserved military-only seats in parliament and top positions in the nation’s public service.

103. J. Braithwaite et al., “Anomie and Violence Non-truth and Reconciliation in Indonesian Peacebuilding”, <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/33823/458801.pdf?sequence=1>.

the activity related to fulfilment of children's rights; and 5. the impacts of the programme/activity on children. However, no mechanisms exist to collect evidence on how children's voices have impacted or been included in development planning programmes.

In 2022 MoWECP and the Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS) launched the Forum Anak, where adolescents were encouraged to participate in local decision-making processes at the grassroots. It is a platform where adolescents can voice their needs, opinions, desires and aspirations during the development process (*Musrenbang*). A technical guideline was published to ensure that young people were involved in the planning and overall development phases.

Indonesian NGOs have also played crucial facilitation roles. Muhammadiyah, a faith-based civil society, has participated in a hybrid mediation initiative. They have implemented local initiatives to build youth-led voluntary organisations on peacebuilding, interfaith dialogue, inclusive development, child protection and gender equality. Most of these activities were funded by an ad-hoc sponsor and a few local governments, such as the Youth and Sports Council and the Ministry of Health. The support accorded by local governments usually involves providing a venue and gifts instead of financial and human resources.

Youth-led Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

Youth organisations and networks work across Indonesia on human rights, peacebuilding, environmental protection and youth empowerment.

Launched in August 2021, the *Koalisi Anak Muda Indonesia untuk Perdamaian dan Keamanan* (Indonesian Youth Coalition for Peace and Security) is a YPS-oriented youth-led coalition. The network includes young people (16-30 years) and youth CSOs that work on peacebuilding and inclusive social development. It aims to maximise youth participation in peace and security issues, especially on PVE and the implementation of the UNSCR 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018), and 2535 (2020) in Indonesia. The coalition also aims to transform the perceptions and narratives attached to youth – from victims or perpetrators of violent conflicts to active community members and change agents in maintaining peace and security.

Another initiative is the Girl Ambassadors for Peace (GA4P), a network of 80 young women leaders who strive for long-lasting peace, equality and sustainable development. It

was launched in 2017 by the GNWP in partnership with the Asian Muslim Action Network – Indonesia (AMAN Indonesia), supported by the NAMA Women Advancement Establishment. The programme advocates for UNSCR 1325 (2000) on WPS and the UNSCR 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). The GA4P consists of Central Sulawesi, East Java, Lamongan and Poso and members.

AMAN Indonesia, together with the Coalition of Young People for Peaceful Indonesia (KAMI Damai), Peace Leader Indonesia and GA4P, initiated the formalisation processes of YPS in Indonesia in 2022 through the “Youth Forum for Peace and Security”. The online forum gathered 100 representatives from various youth organisations across the 24 provinces and produced recommendations.

Together with Gadjah Mada University's Youth Study Centre (YouSure) and KAMI Damai, the forum's recommendations became materials for drafting a policy brief document, entitled “Strengthening Youth's Meaningful Participation for Peace and Security: The Role of Youth in the Implementation of the RAN PE” and was further utilised as a lobbying document to advance YPS in Indonesia. AMAN Indonesia also facilitated the submission of the policy brief to the National Counter Terrorism Agency.

As part of the Global Peace Foundation, the Global Peace Youth Interfaith Assembly gathers young people from diverse backgrounds to promote a culture of peace and prosperity. Around 100 participants will focus on reducing identity-based conflict through interfaith partnerships and through using the media for peace and development.

Karang Taruna (Youth Clubs) is a non-partisan national youth organisation under the Ministry of Social Affairs which focuses on peer-to-peer support and youth participation through sports, skill-building, advocacy, religion and art. Its members comprise young women and young men aged 11- 45, and board members are restricted to 17-45-year-olds. The Pramuka (Scouts) has branches in 34 provinces across Indonesia and is partially government-funded. Their programmes include training on survival, first aid, camping, voluntary social service and leadership. The *Karang Taruna* and *Pramuka* joined hands with the Ministry of Education and Youth to counter violent extremism.

Youth, including young women, also actively participated in climate action initiatives aimed at addressing climate change. These included the “Youth in Climate Action” event, attended by more than 300 youth from across 26

provinces to discuss climate change issues.¹⁰⁴ They were also involved in movements that raised awareness about the impacts of climate change in general,¹⁰⁵ as well as on women and youth. Youth have also advocated for policies protecting their rights and ensuring their participation in decision-making processes.¹⁰⁶ In addition, young people were involved in peace and reconciliation initiatives across Indonesia. For instance, mostly young people under 30 served as negotiators in the conflict resolution processes in Maluku and Poso.

UN-led Youth and Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

The Indonesian UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development is a platform to coordinate agencies' efforts on youth and engage with local youth groups. Another UN inter-agency mechanism is the Peace Hub, which focusses on PVE and building peaceful communities in Indonesia. Some initiatives related to YPS include the following:

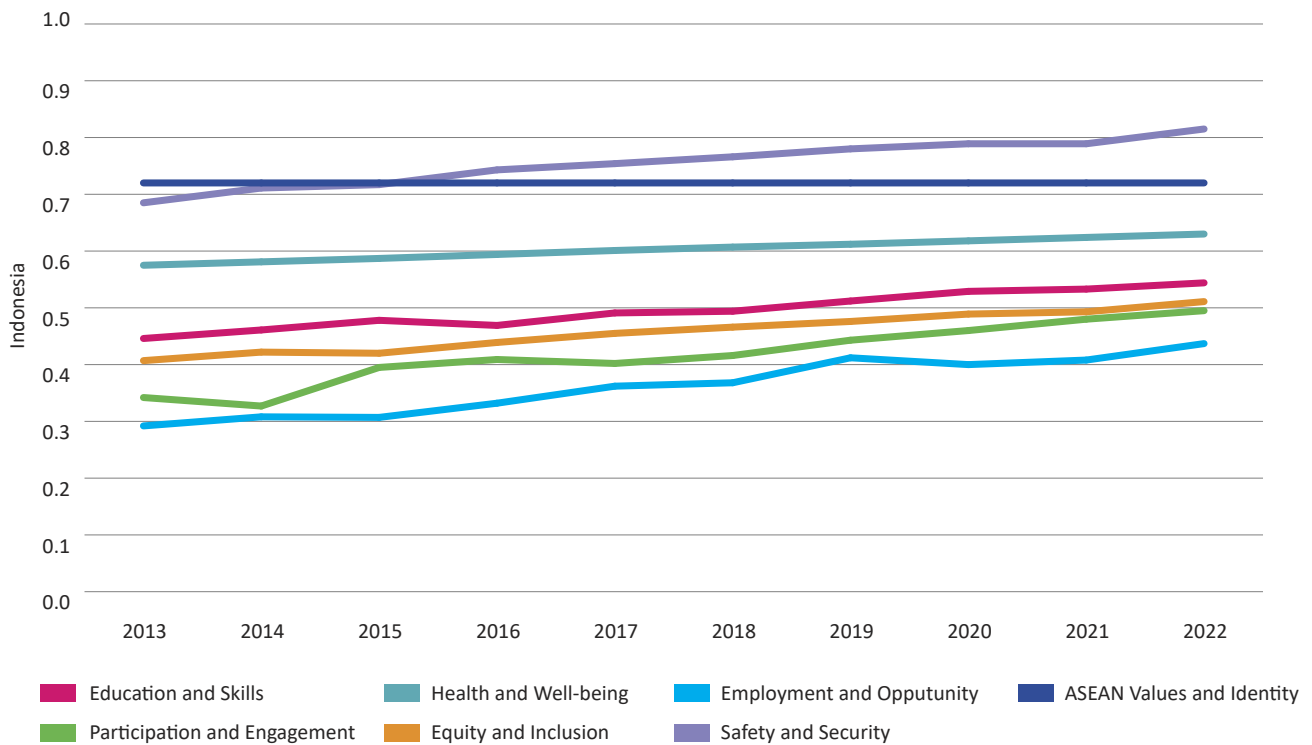
- UNDP's PROTECT project supports drafting the National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), engages youth to promote tolerance and respect for diversity and conducts research on P/CVE (Phases I and II).
- UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)'s Guyub project support the Government of Indonesia in tackling the threat of violent extremism in East Java and throughout the country.
- The United Nations Office of Counterterrorism (UNOCT)'s P/CVE Strategic Communication, New Frontiers (video games) and youth portfolios will assist Indonesia in developing a digital content creator network with civil society. The P/CVE Youth Portfolio has an innovative peer-to-peer youth engagement model that empowers youths to train their peers and young religious leaders on the role of mass/social media in P/CVE.
- UNICEF's Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation is an adaptable package to support adolescents aged 10-19, especially those affected by humanitarian and protracted crises. The Kit focuses on developing adolescents' skills and competencies to express themselves, to participate in decisions that affect their lives and to contribute to positive change in their communities. As a result, their communities now benefit from adolescent-led efforts that have included safe and inclusive spaces for adolescents, installed road safety signs near schools and 'sport villages' to encourage out-of-school adolescents to return to school.
- UNICEF developed a training module for teachers, public officials and other interested bodies to ensure further adolescent engagement, entitled "Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP)". The module is based on UNICEF's Global Guidelines on Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement: Engaged and Heard and the IASC Youth Guidelines.
- UNICEF also supports the Forum Anak platform, led by the MoWECP and BAPPENAS, through the development of a monitoring information system to track young people's voices during the Musrenbang planning process. It also assists the two ministerial institutions and CSOs for further inclusivity of the Forum Anak among vulnerable and marginalised children and adolescents.
- The UNIANYPD has established the SDGs Youth Hub, a forum for young people to interact and collaborate with the government and CSOs to realise the SDGs. The platform focuses on key development areas, including social, economic and environmental issues, and on justice and governance. Members of the SDG Youth Hub are focal points who engage with the UNIANYPD and other UN youth-related activities. The UNCT Interagency Peace Hub, comprised of more than six UN agencies, includes YPS on its agenda specifically on P/CVE.

104. UNDP, Mobilising Youth Voice for Climate Action in Indonesia, 2021, <https://www.undp.org/indonesia/news/mobilising-youth-voice-climate-action-indonesia>

105. A. Muh. I. Aqil, Indonesian youth concerned about climate future. The Jakarta Post, 1 Nov. 2021, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2021/10/31/indonesian-youth-concerned-about-climate-future.html>

106. Ibid.

Figure 5. Overall YDI and Domains score for Indonesia, ASEAN Youth Development Index (2022)



Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

Indonesia scored 0.578 in the latest ASEAN YDI, with the ‘safety and security’ sphere rating above the regional average.¹⁰⁷ Despite a rapid rise in its domain score for ‘employment and opportunity’, Indonesia might still benefit from the targeted policies to reduce the unemployment rate and its share of young people under the Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), among others.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, research findings indicated that young people continue to face restricted opportunities to participate meaningfully

in high-level decision-making, with tokenistic practices persisting due to cultural norms that regard youth as objects rather than active agents.¹⁰⁹ Youth leaders have also raised concerns about the older generation’s influential decision-making position, which may threaten youth’s independent and meaningful participation.

In recent years, a downward trend in civic freedom was observed with harassment against human rights advocates. Amnesty International Indonesia has recorded at least 402 victims of police violence during the 2020 Omnibus Law protests across 33 provinces, including journalists. At least 660 people have been detained for organising or

107. ASEAN Youth Development Index 2022, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, p. 32.

108. Ibid.

109. UNICEF Indonesia: Realising effective child and adolescent participation in decision-making and policymaking processes in Indonesia remains a challenge as many barriers before, during and after participating in such platforms are apparent. A UNICEF Indonesia study, in partnership with Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia and BAPPENAS, provides a strong evidence-based analysis for work in this area. The “Situational Analysis on Child and Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement in Indonesia” highlights the barriers adolescents and young people often face when participating in decision-making processes and policy formulation with the government. These include tokenism, lack of recognition from adults and adults acting as blockers of meaningful participation instead of enablers. Adolescents interviewed in the study expressed uncertainty whether the ideas they presented during decision-making processes would be taken up by the government.

participating in the demonstrations.¹¹⁰ Young people face with weak socioeconomic conditions, unemployment, violent conflict and the risk of recruitment by violent extremists.

Despite legislative frameworks from the Ministry of Youth, no formal national and local representation structures exist for youth. Young people running for office do not usually represent the majority of their age group, and they perpetuate a culture of political dynasties. The distribution of resources among youth organisations is uneven, with some funded by government ministries and others struggle to secure sponsors. The abovementioned challenges have discouraged young people from engaging politically and eroded their trust in institutions.

Opportunities

- The current National Youth Policy can be further utilised as a framework to ensure youth participation. Article 17.3 states that youth are agents of change and should be engaged in political and democratic education, the economy and entrepreneurship, community, sport, art and culture, the environment and in youth leadership and national development. There are opportunities to support young people through awareness-raising initiatives and capacity-building efforts.
- Existing youth organisations and networks have laid an effective foundation for youth partnerships and engagement. Through these networks, intergenerational dialogue and trust-building initiatives can foster conversations between youth, the government and other stakeholders. Participatory and systematic structures for youth engagement, such as youth councils and youth parliaments, can be considered.
- Engaging young people from different backgrounds is essential to ensure representation.
- Explore protection mechanisms for youth activists and ensure their safety as they express themselves online and offline.
- Building on existing work in youth and P/CVE, the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development and the Peace Hub have also been exploring further

opportunities for YPS. Efforts around the National Action Plan on P/CVE are a good entry point. The goal is to strengthen young people's positive role in P/CVE and change youth's narrative from perpetrators and victims to active agents of change.

- UN-CSO partnerships can be expanded. For instance, the Indonesian Youth Coalition for Peace and Security is currently exploring possibilities of establishing a National Action Plan on YPS (NAP YPS) in Indonesia. It has been engaging in the Global YPS discussions to learn how other countries (such as Finland and the Philippines) have developed their NAP YPS. The UN can offer technical support for these endeavours.

Avenues for engagement have also widened due to digitalisation. Nine out of ten Indonesians are active on social media. On Facebook, 75 per cent of the 175.4 million Indonesian social media users are 13 to 34 years old. Youth participation through the online space can be further explored.

Lao PDR

Country Context

Lao PDR is a 'Landlocked and Least Developed Country' (LLDC). About 7.4 million people live in its 18 provinces, with 67 per cent residing in rural areas.¹¹¹ The country faces several unique human development challenges: rural poverty, insufficient access to basic infrastructure and public services; and the presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO) (15 out of 18 provinces are contaminated, and 42 of the 46 poorest districts are affected by UXO).¹¹²

The Lao PDR today is the country most affected by cluster munitions and UXO in the world. UXO is hidden everywhere – in rice fields, school yards, on hillsides, in rivers, along roads and paths and even in the centres of provincial towns. Lao PDR has made significant progress in poverty alleviation over the past two decades, with poverty rates declining from 46 per cent in 1993 to 18 per cent in 2019.

110. U. Hamid and A. Hermawan, Indonesia's Shrinking Civic Space for Protests and Digital Activism. Carnegie Endowment, 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/11/17/indonesia-s-shrinking-civic-space-for-protests-and-digital-activism-pub-83250>

111. <https://laosis.lsb.gov.la/majorIndicators.do?paramGrpId=all#majorIndicatorsConts>

112. Uxolao.gov.la

Lao PDR is a one-party state led by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP). The rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly must be exercised in accordance with the law, including by the media and civil society.

Understanding Youth in Lao PDR

Membership in the country's largest youth mass organisation, the Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union (LYU), is for young people aged 15-30,¹¹³ while the recently enacted National Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy (NYADS) 2021-2030 covers individuals aged 10 to 35.

Lao PDR has one of the youngest populations among ASEAN countries, with over half (50.8 per cent) of the population aged between 10 and 35.¹¹⁴ Labour force participation among the youth population is high, at 48.9 per cent for those aged 15-19 years and at 83.7 per cent for those aged 20-24. Over the next two decades, today's large adolescent and youth population will transition into the working-age population of the future.

Youth Participation in Peace and Security

Government-led Youth and YPS Initiatives

The first National Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy (NYADS) was endorsed by the Prime Minister in 2020 and launched in June 2021. The NYADS (2021-2030) provides strategic direction to relevant ministries and mass organisations to create the necessary provisions, allocate budgets and implement programmes on youth health, education, employment, protection and youth civic participation.¹¹⁵ It focuses on collaboration and engagement to advance young people's capacity, skills, knowledge and awareness on important issues. The Strategy is expected to feed directly into the Ninth National Socioeconomic Development Plan and the 17 SDGs, with the vision of leaving no one behind.

The Lao Youth Union (LYU) is the largest national body for youth participation.¹¹⁶ The mass organisation, with around 702,695 registered members, is dedicated to increasing awareness about youth issues and mobilising young people to contribute to the country's development. The LYU has been conducting activities with line ministries, provinces, districts and villages. In some cases, the LYU implements community-led development projects in partnership with international organisations.¹¹⁷

The LYU and UNFPA have jointly established a Youth Reference Group to engage young people from diverse backgrounds when developing the NYADS. Young people will also be included in the implementation and monitoring structure of the strategy. The LYU and UNFPA have also organised periodic youth and parliamentarians' dialogues, panel discussions and the International Youth Day and International Day of the Girl Child, which provides young people with regular opportunities for civic participation.

In June 2021 LYU and UNFPA launched the first National Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy for Laos. The strategy, endorsed by the Prime Minister in December 2020, aims to improve the health, education, employment, protection and participation of adolescents and young people. It also addressed the impacts of COVID-19 on adolescents and young people.¹¹⁸

As discussed in the ASEAN Initiatives in Advancing the YPS Agenda, the Lao PDR has also taken a significant leading role by hosting the first ASEAN-UN Track 1.5 regional dialogue on YPS in December 2022. This [ASEAN-IPR-UN Workshop on Advancing Youth, Peace and Security](#), organised by ASEAN-IPR and the UN and hosted by the Lao PDR, was a key moment as it brought together government and ASEAN officials, and youth civil society to discuss concrete ways forward within a formal ASEAN process.

113. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 'Study on the Expectations and Aspirations of Lao Youth', 2016, [https://www.giz.de/en/downloads_els/Final_Report_Youth_Study_ENG\(1\).pdf](https://www.giz.de/en/downloads_els/Final_Report_Youth_Study_ENG(1).pdf)

114. National Statistics Bureau (LSB, 2015), <https://lao.unfpa.org/en/publications/results-population-and-housing-census-2015-english-version>

115. <https://lao.unfpa.org/en/news/first-national-youth-and-adolescent-development-strategy-laos-launched-today-lyu-and-unfpa>

116. https://www.la.undp.org/content/dam/laopdr/docs/Project%20Documents/Governance/Youth_Project%20Document_Final_signed.pdf

117. GIZ, 2016, p.66, [https://www.giz.de/en/downloads_els/Final_Report_Youth_Study_ENG\(1\).pdf](https://www.giz.de/en/downloads_els/Final_Report_Youth_Study_ENG(1).pdf)

118. <https://lao.unfpa.org/en/news/first-national-youth-and-adolescent-development-strategy-laos-launched-today-lyu-and-unfpa>

Youth-led YPS Initiatives

The Mekong Youth Assembly¹¹⁹ (MYA) is a youth network from six countries that share the Mekong River: Cambodia, Tibet/China, the Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. The MYA aims to encourage all the Mekong region's youths to bring about positive environmental changes by working with their communities. Established under the NGO Terre des Hommes Germany – Southeast Asia Working Group for Biodiversity, it is currently supported by Terre des Hommes.

On environmental issues, the youth-led organisation Zero Waste Laos engages young people in climate change and environmental protection.

On LGBTQI+ rights, Proud to Be Us Laos is an informal youth group with support from UNFPA working towards empowering young LGBTQI+ people for reproductive and sexual health and rights.

The Global Shapers Community is a network of young people driving dialogue, action and change on social issues. The 34 members of the Vientiane Hub,¹²⁰ aged 20-27, have launched projects on waste management, the COVID-19 response and youth leadership to create positive change in the Vientiane community.

On youth development, Stella¹²¹ is a young Lao community that provides a platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration. It provides space for trainings, seminars and conferences and previously launched workshops and online discussions on CV writing, interviews, personal branding and online marketing.

UN-led Youth and YPS Initiatives

YPS was included in the 7th UNFPA's Country Programme (2022- 2026) as one of the strategic intervention areas. Consultations were arranged with the LYU to advance the agenda in the coming years. UNFPA launched the "Noi 2030" framework in 2016 as an advocacy tool to raise awareness, build partnerships and increase investments in adolescent girls enabling them to achieve their full potential.¹²² The "Me, My Body, My Planet, My Future" campaign also encourages youth-led actions to promote the

SDGs and priority issues, including sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and climate change.

The Nang-Noi Girls Group Initiative, jointly run by the Non-Formal Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Sports and UNFPA, provides opportunities for young women to mentor adolescent girls in developing essential life skills. UNFPA and the LYU are working closely together to engage young people in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on adolescents and young people.¹²³

UNFPA also supports "Proud to Be Us Laos", a group of young LGBTQI+ people, by providing sexuality and reproductive health education and advocating for their rights to live dignified lives.¹²⁴ UNFPA also supports Zero Waste Laos, an organisation that encourages young people to act on climate change and environmental protection. UNFPA and Plan International co-chair the adolescent girls' working groups in Lao PDR. The working group coordinates programming and advocacy efforts among related UN agencies and NGOs. The Vientiane Youth Centre, run by the Vientiane Provincial Lao Women's Union and supported by UNFPA, provides reproductive and sexual health information, counselling and youth-friendly health services to adolescents and young people.

UNDP, in partnership with LYU, Lao Women's Union, and the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, launched a new support project for youth in Lao PDR – "Enhancing Social and Economic Opportunities for Youth in Lao PDR" in August 2020. The project aims to create an enabling environment for youth to realise their potential and to undertake important and fulfilling socioeconomic roles under the NYADS.

Activities targeting young people in Huaphan and Khammouan province will strengthen agricultural skills among marginal/disadvantaged youth and increase business opportunities for young women entrepreneurs. An inclusive social platform will also be established in these two provinces to strengthen youth participation, with a special focus on rural and ethnic populations, through the Community Radio.

119. For more information see, <http://www.mekongyouth.org/about/>

120. <https://www.globalshapers.org/hubs/vientiane-hub>

121. For more information see, <https://thestella.org/>

122. For more information see, https://lao.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/2021noi_ecosystem_eng.pdf

123. For more information see, <https://lao.unfpa.org/en/news/lao-youth-union-and-unfpa-strengthen-youth-focused-response-covid-19>

124. For more information see, <https://lao.unfpa.org/en/news/laotian-lgbtqi-youth-find-peace-purpose-and-community>

In collaboration with UNFPA, UNICEF is supporting the Lao Government to develop a multi-sectoral response action plan to deliver an essential service package for adolescent girls. It is designed to address adolescent pregnancy and child marriage. UNICEF also supports health outreach services to increase access to family planning and antenatal care access for adolescents and young women.

UN Volunteers (UNV), UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF, with the Global Shapers Vientiane Hub, organised an online youth consultation engaging youth and volunteers nationwide in 2021. The online consultation touched upon the country's progress, key challenges, and the way forward towards achieving the SDGs.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

The Lao PDR scored 0.476 at the ASEAN YDI in 2022, with an overall increasing trend from 2013.¹²⁵ The 'safety and security' and 'education' areas improved slightly despite starting from a relatively low base in 2013. The country ranked last in these spheres among all AMS which is mainly due to having the highest rate of child marriage in all 10 countries.¹²⁶

As Lao PDR has one of the youngest populations in the region, projections show a rapid increase in the working-age population and a falling dependency ratio. In the medium term, Lao PDR is set to benefit from the "demographic dividend" to the economy. In addition, the increasing integration of Lao PDR in its regional markets, such as the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), creates a demand for professional and skilled workers to develop competitive products for the domestic and international markets.

Yet such demands cannot be met without addressing the current mismatch between labour market needs and young people's education and skills. This gap is coupled with other challenges faced by young people, including limited access to quality education and vocational training; limited

employment for skilled workers; insufficient resources to operate training institutions; and an entrance to the labour force based on associations rather than skills, among others.¹²⁷

In terms of education, despite a high net enrolment and completion rate in primary education¹²⁸ (98.7 per cent; 97.89 per cent), literacy rates among young women are generally lower than their male counterparts. In particular, girls from ethnic communities and poorer families face educational disadvantages.¹²⁹ While people in Lao PDR tend to marry young, the per centage of women aged 20 to 49 years married before the age of 18 dropped from 37 per cent in 2011 to 32.7 per cent in 2017.¹³⁰

Nevertheless, the country has one of the highest adolescent birth rates in the region. The proportion of married young people is strongly correlated to their level of education and wealth quintile. A smaller proportion of urban youth are married young as compared to rural youth, and early marriage is more common in ethnic communities.¹³¹

In terms of access to water, sanitation and hygiene, adolescent girls in Lao PDR, particularly those in rural areas, have insufficient access to safe and appropriate facilities for menstrual hygiene management. In addition, women often bear the burden of collecting water in the 79 per cent of households without water on the premises. In mountainous regions, women and girls from ethnic communities face disproportionate hardships due to the lack of infrastructure and adequate water services.

Young people in Lao PDR can rarely contribute to decision-making at all levels. Most notably in rural areas, participation was often defined as engaging young people in village activities and festivities to build solidarity within their communities. Several barriers hinder their participation: limited representation of youth in local or national development planning; few engagement opportunities; restrictive perceptions by authorities and parents; and a lack of platforms for youth expression.

125. The YDI score is a number between 0 and 1, with 0 reflecting the lowest youth development in the region and 1 reflecting the highest level of youth development attained in the region. For more information see: https://asean.org/storage/2017/10/ASEAN-UNFPA_report_web-final-05sep.pdf

126. ASEAN Youth Development Index 2022, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, p. 33.

127. GIZ (2016), p.12.

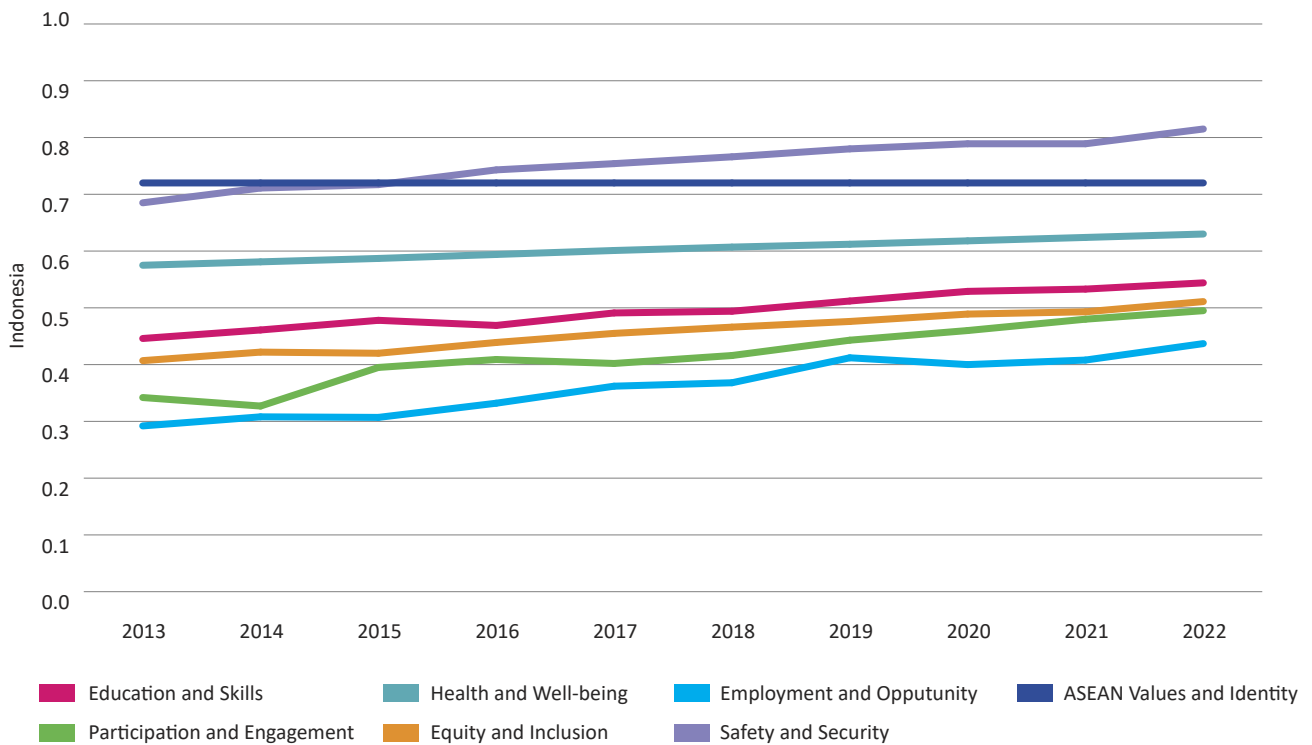
128. More information available at: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/where-we-work/lao-peoples-democratic-republic_en

129. UNFPA and LYU (2014), p. viii.

130. More information available at: <https://laopdr.un.org/14538-lsis-ii-highlights-equity-key-unfinished-business-lao-pdr>

131. UNFPA and LYU (2014), p.3.

Figure 6. Overall YDI and Domains score for Lao PDR, ASEAN Youth Development Index (2022)



Young people’s participation can be limited by their lack of finances to pursue an education and engage in capacity-building opportunities enabling their participation in the decision-making process. Furthermore, youth in rural areas are more likely to drop out of school to work at a young age. Young people living in remote, ethnic and mountainous areas face geographic and language barriers to their civic participation. Those with different sexual orientations and gender identities also face stigma and discrimination.

Opportunities

Challenges related to youth participation and YPS implementation in Lao PDR are closely linked to limited youth participation structures and socio-political barriers. Over the last decade, the Lao PDR has made notable progress in equity and inclusion, driven by broader access to electricity and sanitation, along with rising literacy rates among women.¹³² As such, implementing the recently

endorsed National Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy (NYADS) is key to advancing youth engagement in the country. Strategies should be devised to counter the difficulties young people face in participation, notably rural youths. Youth-led initiatives can be expanded through increased funding and technical assistance.

On YPS, its inclusion in the seventh UNFPA’s Country Programme for Lao PDR (2022 to 2026) is an opportunity to advance understanding, discussion and localisation of the agenda. Further, the Lao PDR has also been a YPS champion within ASEAN showing its commitment by hosting a Track 1.5 dialogue on YPS in 2022.

132. ASEAN Youth Development Index 2022, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, p.33.

Malaysia

Country Context

Malaysia, with the third-largest economy in Southeast Asia, is a federal constitutional monarchy with an estimated population of over 32 million. The country is ethnically and culturally diverse: more than half of the population is ethnically Malay, while the remainder includes Chinese, Indian and indigenous communities.¹³³

Young people have been active in Malaysia's public and political sphere since its independence in 1957. In the 1960s students were at the forefront of public demonstrations advocating for the rights of the poor and marginalised communities. In the 1970s the government began using repressive measures against young Malaysians through 'intellectual containment'. For instance, the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) prohibits students from holding political office in organisations outside the university, such as trade unions and political parties.

During the Baling Incident in 1974 many university students were arrested as they demonstrated against soaring food prices in solidarity with rubber farmers. The regime used the Internal Security Act (ISA) against young people on counter-terrorism grounds.¹³⁴ In 1975 the UUCA (1971) was amended to further limit students' participation in politics and to 'depoliticise' young people. Students were prohibited from becoming members of or expressing any form of support for political parties or trade unions, and all student organisations were dissolved.

In the 1990s the State continued to regulate young people's political participation. The 1998 Reformasi began as former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim was dismissed by the country's then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. Ibrahim reached out to young people for support against his dismissal and called for the Prime Minister's resignation. Youth-led protests were met with punitive measures and forceful responses from government authorities.

The 'anti-ISA' protest in 2001 saw a group of young people arrested and suspended from universities. In 2011 the government replaced the ISA with the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 to maintain national order and security. Although young people continued to call for the abolishment of the UUCA, only minor amendments were made to Section 15 permitting students to join political organisation outside of campus.

The Sedition Act of 1948 is another controversial policy that undermines youth civic engagement. This law criminalises any speech, actions, words and publications deemed to have a 'seditious tendency', including those that encourage hatred or incite dissatisfaction towards any ruler or the government. The Communications and Multimedia Act 1998, which censors internet communications, further curbed the use of social media platforms for advocacy and youth activism.

Despite operating in a tough political environment, youth activism continued to advance democracy and human rights in Malaysia. Youth-led nationwide protests gained momentum by raising awareness around voting rights, job security and democracy. In 2019 the parliament approved the Undi 18 bill which lowered the voting age for general elections from 21 to 18 years. This would allow more young people to participate in the fifteenth General Election in 2023. In March 2021 the Election Commission postponed the implementation of Undi 18 due to the pandemic and ongoing lockdowns. The announcement prompted young people's peaceful protests against the Commission's delay.

Violent extremism is a major concern in Malaysia. Local terrorist groups, such as Tandzim Al Qaeda Malaysia, Arakan Daulah Islamiyah and Daulah Islamiyah Malaysia, are reportedly linked to the Islamic State (ISIS). The rise in violent extremism prompted more preventive and counteractive initiatives in schools and universities. Some 181,000 people in Malaysia are officially registered as refugees and asylum seekers, according to the UN, about 57 per cent are Rohingya. Like many countries in the region, Malaysia does not recognise the UN Refugee Convention, and those caught without papers are considered "illegal" migrants.¹³⁵

133. Government of Malaysia, Demography of Population. For more information see, <https://www.malaysia.gov.my/portal/content/30114>

134. The Internal Security Act allows police to detain any person for up to 60 days, without warrant or trial and without access to legal counsel, based on national security concerns, <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/asia/malaysia-bck-0513.htm>

135. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/22/un-refugee-agency-shocked-at-rohingya-deaths-in-malaysia-escape#:~:text=Some%20181%2C000%20people%20in%20Malaysia,are%20considered%20%E2%80%9Cillegal%E2%80%9D%20migrants>

Understanding Youth in Malaysia

The National Youth Development Policy of Malaysia defines youth as those between 15-30, but provides targeted services to those between 18-25. Young people between 15-39 constitute at least 45 per cent (14.6 million people) of the total population.¹³⁶ Youth development in Malaysia is primarily led by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the National Youth Consultative Council and the Malaysian Youth Council.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS) oversees youth development as set out in the Malaysian Youth Policy (MYP), first issued in 1985, revised in 1997 and updated in 2015. The updated MYP focuses on strengthening the human capital and potential of youth as drivers of the future national strategic development. Formed in 1972, the National Youth Consultative Council (NYCC) is the principal body with oversight for youth policy formulation. The KBS chairs the NYCC, together with members from the MYC and several representatives from different government ministries with oversight of youth issues.

In 2007 the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act was adopted. It is responsible registering youth organisations; promoting and facilitating youth education and development; conducting research and human resources development; strengthening the NYCC) and establishing the Institute for Youth Research Malaysia (IYRES). In 2019 an amendment to the Act reduced the official youth age definition from 40 to 30 years old. It also sets out the minimum and maximum age limits for office-bearers of registered youth societies to 18 and 30, respectively.

The IYRES is a national research centre, responsible for conducting research on youth development, analysing current issues related to youth, and providing recommendations to youth development stakeholders. One of IYRES's most recent research was on youth and extremist activities¹³⁷ and developing a Guidelines for the Prevention of Radicalism and Extremism in Youth and Society.¹³⁸

The Malaysian Youth Council (MYC) is a voluntary NGO established in 1948. It monitors the implementation of the National Youth Policy and participates in the policy formulation process through the NYCC. The MYC is also the sole coordinating body for youth and student organisations in Malaysia. It has 145 affiliates, comprising 19 national-level youth organisations, 14 state youth councils, 106 district youth councils and 6 uniformed bodies.

In line with the Malaysian Youth Policy 2015, the MYC has been advocating for the adoption of the Future Generations Well-Being Act, based on the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 and SDGs 2030. The Future Generations Well-Being Act encourages political leaders and policymakers to consider the rights and well-being of future generations in decision-making. They also urge the government to enact the Professional Youth Work Act thereby creating an ecosystem for promoting professional youth workers.

Independent of the MYC, all states of Malaysia have their respective State Youth Councils, also known as the Malaysian Youth Parliament hosted by the KBS. The Youth Parliament simulates the parliamentary proceedings of the Malaysian Parliament for youth aged 15 to 25. It gives young people insight into the policymaking process and aims to raise awareness about the government's work. Another initiative, launched in 2021, was the 'Youth Advisors to the Prime Minister', which opens positions for young people under 35 to "contribute to the agenda of creating policies or decision-making of the country's highest leadership".

Apart from the aforementioned formal institutions, young people have utilised Malaysia's multi-party system to establish youth-led political movements. The Malaysian United Democratic Alliance (MUDA) is a youth-led party striving for positive societal changes. Other political parties have also engaged youth politicians such as YB Khairy Jamaluddin (UMNO), YB Nurul Izzah (PKR), YB Shahar Abdullah (UMNO) and YB Hannah Yeoh (DAP).

136. Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS), National Youth Development Policy, <https://www.kbs.gov.my/en>.

137. Institute for Youth Research Malaysia (IYRES), <https://www.iyres.gov.my/info/pencapaian-iyres/kebangsaan?highlight=WyJwZWxhbXBhdSld>

138. Institut Penyelidikan Pembangunan Belia Malaysia (IYRES), Garis Panduan Pencegahan Fahaman Radikalisme Dan Ekstremisme Dalam Kalangan Belia Dan Masyarakat, 2017, <https://www.iyres.gov.my/dokumen/Garis%20Panduan%20Ekstremisme.pdf>

Youth Participation in Peace and Security

Government-led Initiatives on Youth, Peace and Security

The Malaysian authorities are especially concerned about the spread of violent extremist ideologies among young Muslim communities. The Malaysian Islamic Development Department, a federal agency under the Prime Minister's Office, channelled the PVE programmes through schools, universities and other youth spaces. They have worked together with religious leaders and scholars through the National Convention of Preachers initiative, which focuses on propagating the real meaning of *jihad*. In January 2016 a programme led by the police and other security agencies held briefings for school children, including in Islamic (Pondok) schools, to raise awareness of the dangers posed by ISIS.

The Foreign Ministry's Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counterterrorism (SEARCCT) has conducted outreach activities with youth through talks, discussions and tabletop exercises. These activities are designed to encourage youth participation in P/CVE. The 'Bringing Communities Closer Together' campaign encourages youth in tertiary education to formulate creative and community-based solutions for P/CVE. The "University Lecture Series" initiative is a public awareness programme to create 'mental firewalls' among undergraduate students by discussing the dangers of radicalisation. The media campaign "Malaysian Voices Opposing Violent Extremism" engaged local influencers and celebrities to produce a series of audio and video public service announcements aimed at youth.

Youth-led Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

In 2019 the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) – a network of young individuals and organisation working on youth empowerment – organised a peacebuilding workshop for young people in South and Southeast Asia. The programme built the capacity among emerging young leaders to bridge communities, lead actions and prevent violent extremism through dialogue. The initiative forged a partnership with

the Commonwealth Secretariat's Countering Violent Extremism Unit, and was supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and KBS. The SEARCCT was also involved in providing literature for the participants speaking at the opening panel discussion and leading a session on 'Skills Youth need to Counter Terrorism'.

On 8 August 2020, in commemoration of the ASEAN Day, regional youth-led organisations came together online to discuss the YPS Agenda in ASEAN under the theme "#ASEANYouth4Peace, for the region, with the region, by the region". The MYC President participated in the discussion on youth participation in the Malaysian Government emphasising the importance of engaging young politicians and public servants to advance the YPS Agenda.

Another Malaysia-based organiser is the International Youth Centre Foundation (IYC) Kuala Lumpur, a CSO and partner agency of KBS. Their work focuses on the internationalisation of Malaysian youth. A policy paper, produced at the end of the event, recommended strengthening synergies among young public servants, grassroots communities and youth-led organisations in achieving the YPS Agenda.¹³⁹

Regarding democracy and human rights, youth movements have been calling for policy reforms through online and offline mechanisms. For instance, the Parlimen Digital (Digital Parliament), the world's first-ever youth-led digital 'parliament', engaged 222 youth representatives reflecting the federal seats in Malaysia. The Parlimen Digital was jointly organised by Challenger Malaysia, Undi18, Liga Rakyat Demokratik, and the United Nations Association Malaysia Youth, and supported by Microsoft.

Regarding youth in social and political movements, #KerajaanGagal ("Failed Government") trended on Twitter in April 2021 as Malaysian youth expressed frustrations over the government's poor performance in handling COVID-19 and the pandemic's impact on the worsening economy. Young politicians led peaceful protests held in early 2021, calling for implementing the Undi18 and greater government accountability.

139. ASEAN+ Youth Meeting on Peace and Security, http://aseanforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Final-Report_ASEAN-Youth-Meeting-on-Peace-and-Security-1_copy-compressed.pdf

UN-led Youth and Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

The UN in Malaysia does not have an inter-agency working group dedicated to youth, but several initiatives focus on working with and for young people:

- In January 2021 the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) organised the first “[Online Youth Consultation on Preventing Violent Extremism through Sports](#)”.¹⁴⁰ The initiative is designed under the framework of the UN “Global Programme on Security of Major Sporting Events, and Promotion of Sport and its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism.” UNOCT implements the initiative in partnership with UNAOC, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the International Centre for Sport and Security (ICSS).
- In May 2021 the International Organization for Migration (IOM) conducted a virtual training on “Media and Migration: Youth Voices Against Xenophobia”, in partnership with Benar Betul. This independent youth group promotes media literacy among Malaysians, funded by the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). The training provided an overview of global migration and development and discussed the critical role of media in influencing public perception, the usage of accurate key terminologies in migration reporting, and the importance of stigma-free language in COVID-19-related recovery efforts. Around 40 social media practitioners, influencers, young professionals, youth leaders and university students participated in the workshop.
- In 2021, with support from the NAMA Foundation, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) developed initiatives to ensure continuity in education, especially for those whose learning was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The projects supported 25 refugee learning centres under UNHCR by providing secondary education benefiting at least 1,600 refugee youths.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

Despite attaining a score of 0.699 in the 2022 ASEAN YDI and the presence of vibrant youth movements, youth participation in Malaysia in decision-making was still limited.¹⁴¹ Restrictive policies and legislation constrain youth and students’ participation in politics. Tokenism is another major challenge in political participation. Young people are often symbolically included in formal and informal spaces, but lack the influence to drive meaningful change or impact. Due to various policies that impede youth participation and engagement, young people’s democratic rights are not automatically recognised but must instead be continuously justified.

Another issue raised was the shrinking civic spaces, both online and offline, due to state authorities’ heightened surveillance and censorship. Some young people have highlighted the increased interrogation and questioning from authorities and using laws, such as the Communications and Multimedia Act and the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012, to justify harassment and intimidation.

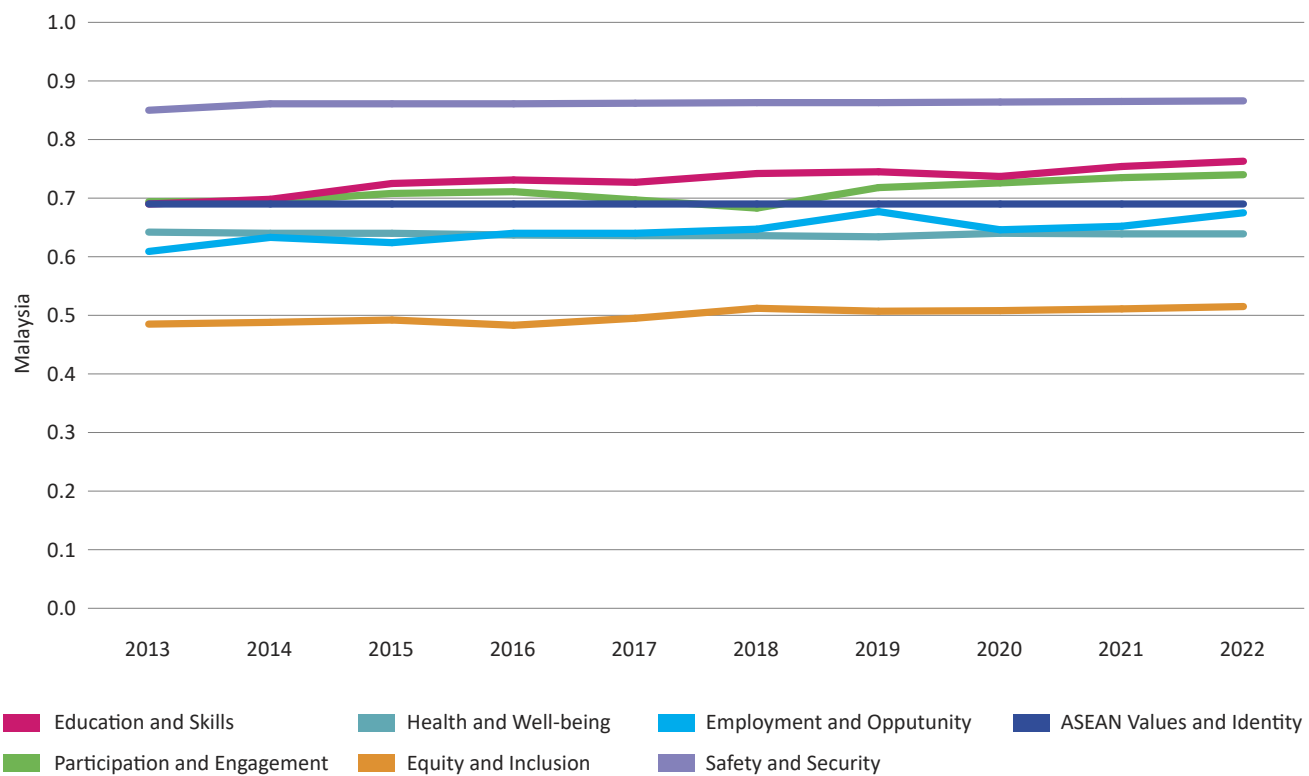
Malaysian youths have also raised issues concerning inequalities faced by ethnic minorities, which negatively impinge on their participation in youth and human rights movements. Opportunities are reserved for educated, urban-based young people who have a better socioeconomic standing, while young women and girls from religious minorities and the LGBTQI+ community, are often left behind.

Young people have also noted the linkage between sociopolitical and economic inequality and the rise of violent extremism. Some ISIS-inspired groups specifically recruited young, marginalised people online. The lack of dialogue between communities and across generations further widened the gaps between communities in Malaysia, which in turn undermines young people’s representation in the political system.

140. REPORT: Online Youth Consultation on Preventing Violent Extremism Through Sport, 20-21 January 2021, <https://www.unaoc.org/wp-content/uploads/Online-Youth-Consultation-on-PVE-Through-Sport-Report.pdf>

141. ASEAN Youth Development Index 2022, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, p. 34.

Figure 7. Overall YDI and Domains score for Malaysia, ASEAN Youth Development Index (2022)



Opportunities

In the ASEAN YDI 2022 Malaysia was ranked second in overall YDI out of the 10 countries in ASEAN with safety and security as the best-performing domain with significant improvements education and employment,¹⁴² thanks to progress from targeted policies on graduation tertiary and youth labour.¹⁴³

Young people continue to use formal and informal mechanisms to inform and influence initiatives, policies and laws affecting their lives. Several opportunities have been identified to support the meaningful engagement of young people in Malaysia's peace and security efforts. These are as follows:

- Efforts to promote youth representation in the government and the decision-making process can be strengthened through the Malaysian Youth Council, trade unions, civil service unions and women's groups.

- Repressive policies should be reformed to promote systematic youth political participation, and support for the Undi 18 bill's implementation is crucial. Partnerships with existing youth organisations ensure the scope, reach and sustainability of the YPS Agenda. Further, UN initiatives with a YPS focus or potential can be further leveraged to advance the agenda.
- The enactment of the National Youth Development Policy is another policy that can be leveraged. Ensuring a comprehensive action plan, with set time frames, measurable monitoring indicators and the active involvement of young people at every stage, is crucial for effective implementation.
- Building trust through intergenerational and intercommunity dialogue should take place. An example would be an open dialogue on controversial policies like the Universities and University Colleges Act. This also means protecting the democratic and civic rights of young people to participate safely in the political and public spheres.

142. Ibid., pp. 34-35.

143. Ibid., p. 35.

Myanmar¹⁴⁴

Country Context

Since 1962 Myanmar has had a long history of peaceful protests and armed resistance against military and civilian governments, particularly by armed groups in ethnic areas. Myanmar's youth have also played a key catalytic role in pro-democracy movements, such as "the 8888" protests in 1988 and the "Saffron Protests" in 2007, which were organised by students and young monks. This wave of activism gave rise to various youth organisations that went on to play a pivotal role in the following decade of political transition.

Prior to the 2021 military takeover, Myanmar ranked 147 out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index in 2020. Data indicated that 75 per cent of young men and 55 per cent of young women were employed in 2017, while nearly 70 per cent of young people (18-34) had not completed high school.¹⁴⁵ At that time, around 8 per cent (41 of 498) of representatives in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (National Assembly) were under 35 years old, and only 1.8 per cent were women.¹⁴⁶

By the time of the general election in November 2020, 5 million young people were first-time voters, comprising 13.5 per cent of over 37 million eligible voters. Perennial challenges – inequality (Myanmar had a GINI coefficient of 30.7 in 2017), ethnic conflicts, discrimination, poverty and the lingering effect of the COVID-19 pandemic – remain ongoing issues.

Following the military takeover in February 2021, youth activists, often referred to as Generation Z or Gen Z, led protests in peaceful, inclusive and creative ways across the country including at the community-level. In response to arbitrary arrests and violence against peaceful protesters, Myanmar's political and innovative youth played a critical role in advancing a call for an all-inclusive political vision for the country.

Since 2021 Myanmar's instability and its need for humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding initiatives have been elevated to a new level. Earlier initiatives related to

youth governance, institutional structures, and reforms have been largely suspended following the return of military rule in 2021. Nonetheless, youth policies introduced by the National League for Democracy (NLD) government, along with the numerous youth organisations and frameworks that emerged, are widely regarded as continuing to play a key role in the contemporary pro-democracy youth movement.

Since the establishment of the State Administration Council (SAC) in 2021, many young people involved in civil resistance and peaceful protests have been arrested or killed. The criminal charges many faced include incitement to terrorism. In addition, fundamental rights, including freedom of speech, have also been greatly restricted. According to some observers, many liberal achievements that took place after the political transition in 2011 have in effect been suspended. The SAC and the pro-democracy National Unity Government (NUG) continue to label each other "terrorist organisations".

After the military takeover, the SAC appointed a new Youth Minister to head the new structure of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The NUG continues to work through its own ministries, including the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs, with the subdivision of the Youth Affairs Directorate that interacts closely with the youth resistance movement. In February 2024 Myanmar's military announced mandatory military service for men (18-35) and women (18-27) for 2-5 years, with non-compliance potentially leading to imprisonment. The law was passed in 2010 but enforced only recently. According to available information, its goals and objectives include cooperation with youth networks and advocacy for strong legislation to support young people.

Understanding Youth in Myanmar

In 1993 Myanmar enacted the Child Law that applied to youth between 16-18 years. Through its Department of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, the Ministry of Social Welfare was responsible for youth development. The formulation of a Youth Policy started in 2016, and a draft policy was drafted with youth involvement nationwide and a series of youth meetings, forums and conferences held at each respective state and regional level. According

144. The contents are based on available information. The limited information available on the situation meant that the main sources were from interactions with youth working in the country.

145. Paung Sie Facility, Youth and Everyday Peace in Myanmar: Fostering the Untapped Potential of Myanmar's Youth, PSF, 2017, https://www.jointpeacefund.org/sites/jointpeacefund.org/files/documents/youth_paper_english.pdf

146. Ibid.

to a 2016 ASEAN-UNFPA Report, which defines youth as 15-29 years-old, Myanmar's youth population was around 14 million, comprising 27 per cent of the total population (approximately 52.5 million) in 2016.¹⁴⁷

In the Myanmar National Youth Policy in 2018, the "youth" were defined as aged between 16 and 35. Under that definition, Myanmar's youth comprised over one-quarter of the population, with 55 per cent of the overall population (around 54 million at the time) being under 30 and around 33 per cent aged 15-35 years old in 2018. Based on those datasets, the national median age in Myanmar then was 27 years old.

Prior to the military takeover, Myanmar's youth had already been active online, with a significant presence in numerous groups on social media platforms such as Facebook. The rapid proliferation of social media access and use among young people in Myanmar presented opportunities to engage in inter-communal dialogue and other Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda initiatives. University and educational associations, which would later come to be seen as centres of political opposition, were particularly active.

As a result, the current youth generation is better connected, outward-looking and more open to different ethnic groups than previous generations in Myanmar. Youth in Myanmar often embrace inclusive values and practices, influenced by their access to international and democratic ideas through social media. They also played a vital role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, actively volunteering in efforts to prevent, control and treat the virus across communities.

The new generation of youth in Myanmar developed greater cultural and ethnic awareness and more inclusive values that differed from their parents' more traditional and conservative values. Peace, democracy, equality and human rights are highly important to many of Myanmar's youth. Most youths belong to Generation Z (often referred to as *Gen Zers*), born between the late 1990s and 2012 and the first generation raised with full exposure to the internet and social media platforms. Many *Gen Zers* are deemed more likely to promote a federal, inclusive Myanmar, one based on democratic aspirations. The military takeover triggered many *Gen Zers* to contest the generally limited scope of

democracy offered to their generation. Civil rights, notably the treatment of ethnic minorities, have been central to *Gen Zers'* values movement. Many of the *Gen Zers'* aspirations are attitudinal and directed towards a universalism expressive of ideas promoting democracy and equality – rather than religious, racial or ethnic particularism.¹⁴⁸

Access to education remains a significant challenge in contemporary Myanmar. As a result of the military takeover and the COVID-19 pandemic, schools and universities were closed between February and November 2021. When the SAC reopened public schools in June 2021, more than half of Myanmar's 400,000 teachers reportedly went on a strike and refused to work. In 2021 many students boycotted the reopening of schools in protest against the military authorities, resulting in only about 10 per cent of the estimated 9 million students enrolling.¹⁴⁹

At present significant numbers of youth and youth organisations remain at the frontline of opposition to the military authorities. Protests in the country are often centred around the concepts of freedom and democracy and the future of young people in general. As one example, the Democratic Youth Council has actively called for an initiative to stop international funding of the military authorities. Therefore, the youth resistance is widely viewed as a form of "social opposition" rather than direct "political opposition" to the military authorities, calling for an inclusive and comprehensive reimagining of society. Myanmar's youth also continue to play a significant role in the resistance against the military rule in the country.

The opposition of many youths to the military authorities has led to political resistance across society and widespread cooperation between the Bamar majority and different ethnic minorities in a common cause. *Gen Zers'* active mobilisation of youth across diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds – narrowing the trust deficit and fostering coherence around inclusive democratic aspirations – represents a development that previous generations of resistance generations arguably failed to achieve.¹⁵⁰

It should be also noted that in recent years many youths and youth leaders fled Myanmar to neighbouring and other countries. Amid prolonged conflict and instability, youth have emerged as a vital force for good at the

147. ASEAN-UNFPA, First ASEAN Youth Development Index, https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ASEAN-UNFPA_report_web-final-05sep.pdf

148. https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/TRS7_21.pdf

149. <https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/junta-reportedly-eyeing-november-reopening-of-schools>

150. <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/how-is-myanmars-military-coup-revealing-the-youths-changing-political-culture/>

community level, forming informal networks to help ensure humanitarian assistance reaches the most vulnerable in remote, conflict-affected areas.

In 2022 a new set of legislation was introduced that further restricted the establishment and operations of organisations, including youth-led groups. Known as the ‘Organisation Registration Law,’ it imposed cumbersome and onerous requirements for organisations to register and operate. This legislation reflects the ongoing shrinkage of civic space in Myanmar and contributes to a growing perception of anti-youth sentiment among the military authorities.

Youth Participation in Peace and Security

Myanmar youth had had an increasing online presence after the political transition since 2011. The rapid proliferation of social media access and usage among young people in recent years has presented new opportunities to promote and engage young people in fostering intercommunal harmony and peace. University associations were especially active, with different organisations working in YPS-related issues across the region.

Government-led Initiatives on Youth, Peace and Security

As part of the ongoing political transition to a civilian-led government, from 2011 the National League for Democracy (NLD) encouraged the country’s youth to actively participate in the peace process between the State and the numerous ethnic armed organisations (EAOs). It organised Myanmar Youth Forums (MYF) in 2014 and 2015 at national and regional levels to include youth perspectives from different ethnic, political and educational backgrounds. The National Youth Congress (NYC) served as a coordinating body mandated to implement the outcomes of the Myanmar Youth Forum, working in collaboration with youth networks across the country and engaging with international youth movements.¹⁵¹

As Myanmar’s democratic transition progressed, structures for youth empowerment and inclusion gradually emerged, and access to information became easier through increasing internet accessibility. Examples included the Ethnic Youth Conference (EYC), the Myanmar Youth Educator Organisation and student organisations like the *Sagaing Student Union*,¹⁵² or the *Union of Karenni Student Youth*.

In 2015 the ‘Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement’ (NCA) was signed by the then government and eight ethnic EAOs, including the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Reconciliation Council of Shan State (RCSS). However, 11 other EAOs did not sign the NCA, including the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Shan State Army – North (SSA-N), the United Wa State Army (UWSA) and the Arakan Army (AA).

Following the signing of the NCA and through the first NLD government’s rule, the peace process could be understood as a two-track process. One track focused on the government and military negotiations with some EAOs to sign the NCA, and the other track focused on the government and signatory EAOs implementing NCA commitments. Some observers were critical of that peace process, however, due to the limited participation of women and youth and their absence in the key institutions involved in the peace process, including the government, the parliament, the military, ethnic armed groups and political parties.

In 2019 the then Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement set up the Youth Affairs Committee (YAC) to formally involve youth in governance at union, regional and local levels. Youth were represented in the government through the YACs. Otherwise before 2021 youth representation in governments remained low. In addition, a number of other governmental frameworks promoted youth engagement, including the National Youth Congress (NYC), Youth Affairs Committees, Regional Youth Networks (e.g. Kachin State Youth Network and the Union of Karenni State Youth), the Burma Federation of Youth Unions, Democratic Youth Council¹⁵³ and the National Ethnic Youth Alliance (NEYA).¹⁵⁴

151. <https://www.facebook.com/NationalYouthCongress.Myanmar/>

152. <https://mizzima.com/article/chairperson-sagaing-university-students-union-arrested-military-checkpoint>

153. <https://www.democraticyouthcouncil.org/committees>

154. <https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/21733-youth-ethnic-alliance-emerges-after-summit.html>

Youth-led Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

Over the years, numerous youth organisations have been established across Myanmar, engaging in a wide range of roles at local, regional and national levels. The Ta'ang Student and Youth Organisation (TSYO) was established in 1993 to initiate youth movements in political transitions and to strengthen youth capacity in political sectors. Activities included trying to empower Ta'ang youth by providing education opportunities; financially assisting displaced and impoverished Ta'ang villagers; advocating for the Ta'ang people; and reporting on human rights abuses in Shan state.¹⁵⁵

TSYO has played a key role in raising youth awareness of Myanmar's political situation and enhancing their understanding of fundamental human rights and democracy.¹⁵⁶ Generation Wave was a youth-led pro-democracy organisation founded after the Saffron Revolution in 2007. Members of the group were between 15 and 25. Before Myanmar's political transition to civilian government in 2011, the group was known for using creative forms of expression, such as hip-hop and graffiti, to advocate for democracy.¹⁵⁷

Athan ("The Voice") was founded in 2018 and was known for its research and promoting freedom of expression. Under the NLD Government Athan had already gained credibility for publishing reports about the state of media freedom in Myanmar.¹⁵⁸

The Interfaith Youth Cooperative Action for Peace¹⁵⁹ was an organisation integrating youngsters of different faiths. The initiative aimed to nurture interfaith youth leaders by strengthening collaboration across religious communities and supporting conflict-affected populations in overcoming trauma while fostering resilience and tolerance.

In October 2021 in Rakhine State, a Youth Forum was convened by the Centre for Diversity and National Harmony and the Youth Network of Rakhine State (YNRS). More than 1,500 youth participants attended the forum online despite ongoing internet connection challenges across the country. The forum provided a platform for district and

township representatives to discuss key issues, concerns and challenges facing their communities.

It was also a platform for representatives to present the various YNRS activities in 2020-2021, and to promote social cohesion. This was done in a number of ways, such as through visits to mosques, churches and Hindu temples, and interfaith discussions with Muslim youth; visits to IDP camps in Sittwe; awareness-raising campaigns on gender equality; and trainings/workshops among various ethnic groups on the dangers of landmines. It was also an avenue to discuss practical ways to further advance social harmony in Rakhine state.

UN-led Youth and Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

Before the military takeover in 2021, the UN had initiated peacebuilding programmes targeting youth and women through the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), which focused on youth participation and empowerment. As part of the Global Progress Study mandated by UNSCR 2250 (2015) on YPS, a Myanmar National Consultative Workshop was jointly organised by UN agencies and the Peacebuilding Fund in 2017. The consultation was attended by 25 young people (14 male and 11 female) from different subnational regions and states. The 11 recommendations from the consultation were as follows:

- The government and development partners will provide capacity-building and technical support to youth on peace and security issues.
- The government should establish a Youth Ceasefire Monitoring Committee/Desk to enable youth participation in peace processes, allowing them to contribute reports and develop recommendations for relevant stakeholders.
- Ensure meaningful formal youth representation by respective stakeholders in political dialogue and peace process.
- Youth conflict resolution groups should be established at the township level to support the community with trainings on paralegal and legal support to prevent violence.

155. <https://durablepeaceprogramme.com/en/partners/metta/ta-ang-student-youth-union-tsyu/>

156. <https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/organisations/tsyo/?location=myanmar&theme>

157. <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/generation-wave-celebrates-6th-anniversary.html>

158. <https://globalvoices.org/2019/02/14/athan-a-youth-group-promoting-freedom-of-expression-in-myanmar/>

159. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5459e8b1e4b0a4696b6ee99d/t/56a10dec40667a98ed486a35/1453395575637/Interfaith+Conflict+May+2015+Assessment+Taungyi+and+Mandalay+Adapt+Mercy+Corps_pierce.pdf; <https://www.facebook.com/iycapactions/posts/d41d8cd9/2479570625441026/>

- Youth organisations should participate in peace dialogues and discussions thereby creating a peace culture.
- Youth should participate in the development of peace education. The government and development partners shall strengthen and sustain youth capacities through relevant training and funding.

The UN Country Team’s interagency coordination structures harmonised youth engagement and development programming. In October 2021, a webinar on young people and peace was organised by UN partners, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and the Major Group on Children and Youth. The UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth opened the webinar, which included four young speakers from the Workers Union, the Kachin Peace Network, the Yangon Youth Network and the Rohingya community in Bangladesh.

In late 2020 to early 2021 UNFPA conducted an information gathering exercise exploring the existing YPS coalitions globally to learn from their experiences, good practices and to adapt the experience to the Myanmar context. Unfortunately, the prevailing security and political climate following the military takeover in February 2021 made it unsafe to form a YPS Coalition with Myanmar youth.

The UN Socioeconomic Resilience Plan (2021-2023) included some limited actions targeting youth as follows:

- On economic resilience and recovery, livelihood activities and safe, decent work for youth, including business training to communities and young people.
- On the promotion of the rule of law, support to media and information literacy programmes, focused on women and youth audiences, to combat hate speech and disinformation.

In addition, two INGO programmes supported by the UN, which aimed to empower young people through peacebuilding projects, continued to operate, focused on Youth, Peace and Security in large measure. The programmes included strengthening the capacity of young women and men, among others, through locally-led conflict prevention and promotion of social cohesion.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

In 2022 Myanmar’s overall YDI score was 0.466. Enhanced data collection would improve the accuracy of these scores.

Between 2013 and 2022 Myanmar scored above the regional average in both employment and opportunity and participation and engagement, the registering the highest score in the region. This significantly increased the number of youths who “Helped a Stranger” and “Volunteered”. However, the once-promising socioeconomic landscape appears to have deteriorated amid growing reports of economic in decline and instability.

It remains difficult to verify these reports as data on current developments in the country remain largely unavailable. According to the World Bank, Myanmar’s economy in 2023 remained 10 per cent below its 2019 level, with consumer prices having risen by nearly 29 per cent as of June 2023 and economy growth projected at just 1 per cent by March 2024.¹⁶⁰

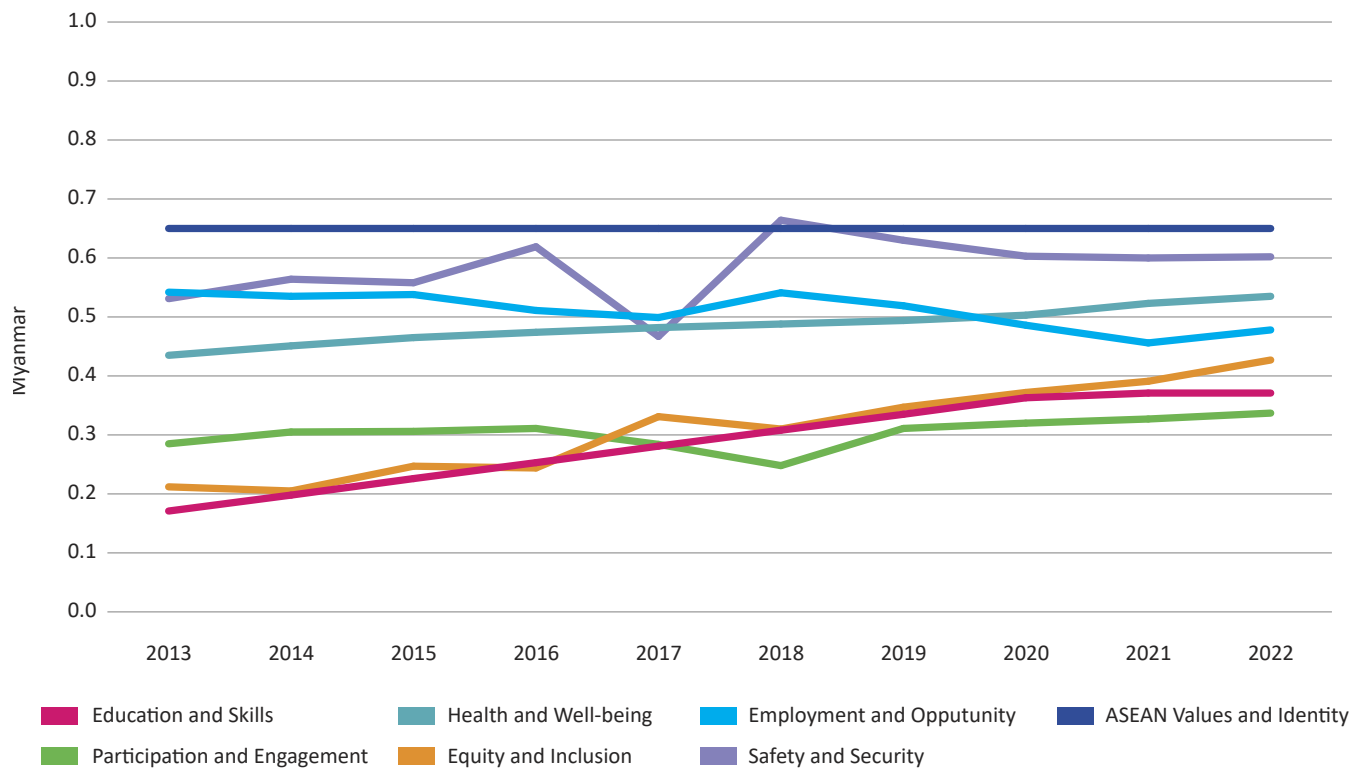
In the current context of widespread conflict and displacement, Myanmar’s youth continue to face a myriad of challenges. Insecurity, political instability, human rights violations and deep social divisions – compounded by information restrictions and cybersecurity concerns, including a draft cyber law restricting internet use – have led to growing distrust in the government among many segments of the youth population.

Migration and displaced youth remain a challenge, especially if the youth involved in Youth, Peace and Security initiatives migrate to other countries. Based on available census data from the 2014 Census, around 4.25 million Myanmar migrants were estimated to be working abroad, over 80 per cent between 15-39. Research indicates that the majority of potential migrants are aged 18-24, accounting for 55 per cent. Among internal migrants, young men primarily relocated for employment (approximately 45 per cent), while young women were more likely to move for family-related reasons (approximately 48 per cent).¹⁶¹

160. [Economic recovery falters as conflict and inflation weigh \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/12/12/economic-recovery-falters-as-conflict-and-inflation-weigh#:~:text=Myanmar's%20economy%20is%20projected%20to,the%20report%2C%20Challenges%20amid%20conflict), <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/12/12/economic-recovery-falters-as-conflict-and-inflation-weigh#:~:text=Myanmar's%20economy%20is%20projected%20to,the%20report%2C%20Challenges%20amid%20conflict>

161. https://www.jointpeacefund.org/sites/jointpeacefund.org/files/documents/youth_paper_english.pdf

Figure 8. Overall YDI and Domains score for Myanmar, ASEAN Youth Development Index (2022)



Perceived cultural barriers to youth participation include traditional social values, like the over-representation of older generations, a lack of self-worth among youth groups, combined with deference to traditional hierarchies, limited access to education and a poor education system, especially in rural and secluded regions.

In 2021 national and regional consultations with Myanmar youth were held. Despite the ongoing difficulties caused by the current crisis, its youth continue to appeal to the general population to support the transition to democracy. Many continue to believe that changes can lead to improvements in the country’s economic situation and open pathways to prosperity for youth. They also recognise that need for new policies that promote equal opportunities and ensure freedom of movement for all ethnic minorities. Many youths also continue to call on the international community, including ASEAN and the UN, to support the unhindered access of humanitarian aid for all communities.

Opportunities

The current situation in Myanmar continues to face several roadblocks to implementing programmes with and for young people. Opportunities, initiatives and policies should be leveraged for more meaningful engagement with young people on peace and security wherever possible. Engaging youth and youth organisations is vital to promoting social cohesion and supporting mechanisms for dialogue and dispute resolution, while also strengthening civic space and safeguarding freedom of expression wherever possible.

Opportunities for building youth capacities as foundational agents of peace and positive change in the future should also be identified. This may require innovative approaches to identify and engage appropriate youth and youth organisations that can contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding efforts.

As an example of meaningful engagement, the UN plans to provide support to YPS as part of its forthcoming Transitional Cooperation Framework 2024-2025. This includes support for the empowerment of civil society and the inclusion of women and youth as agents of peace and catalysts for positive change. Through the Youth Theme Group, UN Country Team (UNCT) will strengthen collaboration and explore partnerships with youth-led organisations, while establishing structures and processes that enable these youth actors to influence and advise on decision-making at strategic levels.

The Philippines

Country Context

The Philippines has a long history of insurgency. The Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace and Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU), established in 1993 – formerly the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) – has a mandate to manage, direct, integrate and supervise the implementation of the comprehensive peace processes through a whole-of-nation approach.

Negotiations were initiated between the government and various groups, such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), KAPATIRAN, and the Cordillera Bodong Administration-Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CBA-CPLA). These peace processes aimed to address the root causes of conflict and achieve a just and lasting peace.¹⁶² Dialogues were also held with the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army/National Democratic Front (CPP/NPA/NDF).¹⁶³ However, these were terminated in 2019 by former President Rodrigo Duterte, who declared these groups

as terrorist organisations.¹⁶⁴ National Action Plans were developed to provide a strategic framework for addressing these conflicts as part of these peace initiatives. Some of these ongoing negotiations reflect the complex and long-term nature of peacebuilding.¹⁶⁵

In 2014 the Philippines ended a decade-long conflict with the MILF in Mindanao. The Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro established power-sharing arrangements between the Government of the Philippines and the MILF and established the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).¹⁶⁶ Young people played a pivotal role in the peace negotiations, with the legal team mainly composed of youth who contributed to the technical papers underpinning the Bangsamoro Organic Law – the legal foundation for the autonomous region.¹⁶⁷

In August 2022 OPAPRU, together with the National Youth Commission (NYC), the Bangsamoro Youth Commission (BYC) and youth-led CSOs, launched the Philippine NAP YPS 2023-2033 (see Annex 4) to advance young Filipino's voices in conflict resolution, conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Extrajudicial executions and other human rights violations were not new to the Philippines but have been exacerbated under the government's "war on drugs" campaign under former President Duterte. In June 2020 the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) published a report documenting the unlawful killings of at least 248 human rights defenders, legal professionals, journalists and trade unionists related to their work.

Between July 2016 and December 2018 at least 122 Filipino youth under 18 were reportedly killed by police during the 'war on drugs' operations.¹⁶⁸ In 2022 newly elected President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr inherited the 'war on drugs' policy. Reports indicate that 471 people have been killed in "drug-related violence" since June 2022, alongside the continued use of the Anti-Terror Act to "red-

162. Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU), www.peace.gov.ph

163. See the recent communique between GPH and CPP/NPA/NDF, https://pco.gov.ph/news_releases/oslo-joint-communique/

164. Ibid.

165. Ibid.

166. M. Alar, Young People and their Role in the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Peace Negotiations, 2017, 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

167. A. Altiok and I. Grizelj, 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, 2019, <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/peace-processes/>

168. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and Children's Legal Rights and Development Centre (CLRDC, Philippines). How could they do this to my child. June 2020., https://www.omct.org/files/2020/06/25937/omct_philippines_childrights_06.2020_en_single.pdf

tag” of civil society groups – accusing them, often without evidence, of involvement in terrorism.¹⁶⁹

Understanding Youth in the Philippines

According to the 1994 Philippine Youth in Nation-Building Act, youth is defined as individuals between 15-30. Demographically, the youth cohort is the largest the country has ever seen, with around 30 per cent of the total population in that category. Several mechanisms created opportunities for youth to participate in governance at the local and national levels. The Republic Act 8044 (also known as the Youth in Nation-Building Act) created the NYC, attached to the Office of the President. It was then transferred to the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) as an autonomous and independent unit to implement the Philippine Youth Development Plan (PYDP).¹⁷⁰

From 2017-2022 PYDP identified nine priority areas, including peacebuilding and security, which aligns with the UNSCR 2250 (2015) on YPS. The NYC also works to ensure that the needs and priorities of young people are integrated in other policy areas, including DRR, education, economic growth and development. The latest PYDP 2023-2028 now has the “10 Centres of Participation” that includes the Philippine NAP YPS under the Peacebuilding and Security Centre.¹⁷¹

The Sangguniang Kabataan (Youth Councils) are another official youth participation mechanism through which young people aged 15-24 elect their representatives as part of local government and the Local Youth Development Offices (LYDO) at the community (barangay), city/municipal, regional and national level. The Youth Councils are established through the Local Government Code of the Philippines and the Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act (Republic Act No. 10742).¹⁷² Youth Council elections are held in parallel with local government elections.

The National Chair of the Youth Council convenes the Local Youth Development Council, which includes representatives from youth-led and youth-serving organisations, such as student councils and church-affiliated youth groups. In the Philippine House of Representatives, young people are currently represented by the KABATAAN (Youth) Party-list.¹⁷³ The local government’s party-list system allocates 20 per cent of the House to representatives from underrepresented community sectors, including labour, urban poor, Indigenous peoples, women, youth and other marginalised groups.¹⁷⁴

The Youth Peace Tables were established in 2017 through OPAPRU which was one of the roadmaps used to develop the NAP YPS. The platform fostered engagement and consultations between young people and different actors in the peace processes creating a space for young people to express their concerns. In particular, young people’s direct participation in the GPH-MILF negotiations contributed to the signing of the Bangsamoro Autonomy Act No. 10 in 2020.

The Act established the BYC and serves as the primary policymaking and coordinating body of the Bangsamoro Government in all matters affecting its youth. The Office of the Chief Minister of will implement the Bangsamoro Youth Transition Priority Agenda 2020-2022. It will include thematic areas such as health, governance, peacebuilding and security, education and active citizenship, with ongoing efforts to localise the YPS Agenda.

Young people have also been active in ensuring that legislation and policies address the needs and priorities of young people. In 2019 youth-led organisations, such as the 2030 Youth Force and Impact Hub, together with the *Kabataan* (Youth) Party list in the Congress, submitted the SDG Resolution to the House of Representatives.¹⁷⁵ The approved resolution includes clauses on youth engagement in the national processes towards achieving the SDGs, including SDG 16, that focuses on peace.

169. J.E. Mendoza, Int’l watchdog on human rights under Marcos: Some good news but situation still grim, 12 January 2024, <https://globalnation.inquirer.net/225274/intl-watchdog-on-human-rights-under-marcos-some-good-news-but-situation-still-grim>; Human Rights Watch opening statement delivered by senior researcher Carlos Conde to the European Parliament’s Subcommittee on Human Rights (7 September 2023), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/09/07/continuing-human-rights-violations-under-president-marcos>

170. Republic Act 8044: Youth in Nation-Building Act of 1995, <https://nyc.gov.ph/republic-act-8044/>.

171. Republic of the Philippines – National Youth Commission. Updated Philippine Youth Development Plan (PYDP), https://nyc.gov.ph/pydp/?fbclid=IwAR2Pf54hu-n3MqSecoVdtJp_YY5bHY8Vff8SuplbahcZtRZ10rye5uOclMo

172. Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act (Republic Act No. 10742), <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2016/01/15/republic-act-no-10742/>.

173. Kabataan party list, <https://kabataanpartylist.com.ph/>.

174. Republic Act 7941: Party-List System Act, [https://pcw.gov.ph/republic-act-7941-party-list-system-act/#:~:text=%E2%80%9320\(a\)%20The%20party%2D,Commission%20on%20Elections%20\(COMELEC\)](https://pcw.gov.ph/republic-act-7941-party-list-system-act/#:~:text=%E2%80%9320(a)%20The%20party%2D,Commission%20on%20Elections%20(COMELEC))

175. House of Representatives 654- Supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. 116th Congress (2019-2020), https://www.congress.gov/ph/legisdocs/second_18/HR00565.pdf.

An informal youth coalition comprising youth parliamentarians and peacebuilders currently has been established and is currently drafting a YPS resolution to submit to Congress. The coalition, a civil society movement to localise the YPS Agenda, has been engaged in the drafting committee of the NAP YPS and participated in global platforms on YPS. The NAP YPS Secretariat engaged the Multi-Stakeholders Group, a coalition composed of NGAs, CSOs and individual youth writers in drafting the NAP YPS 2023-2033.

Young people have been at the forefront of responding to crises and emergencies in the Philippines through a Humanitarian-Peacebuilding-Development Nexus Approach. During the Washi storm in 2011 and Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, young people were involved in the humanitarian assistance and recovery processes. For instance, the International Planned Parenthood Federation and UNFPA worked with young people to raise awareness on reproductive health, teenage pregnancy and HIV prevention in a post-disaster setting.

Other groups, such as the Red Cross Youth and Tulong Kabataan (Youth Helps), continue to lead humanitarian efforts focused on immediate relief and rehabilitation for victims of natural disasters. In the Caraga region, KKDAT youth representatives formally signed a Memorandum of Agreement with DSWD Caraga for the initiative titled “TinaBALANGAY sa Trese”, as part of DSWD’s the Volunteer Mobilisation Programme during Disasters.

In 2020 to support the humanitarian recovery and rehabilitation of the ISIS-led siege in Marawi in 2017, the NYC established youth hubs to assist displaced young people in transit to shelters.¹⁷⁶ This platform fostered peer-to-peer counselling among young people and provided opportunities for continued learning in areas such as computer literacy, entrepreneurship, good governance and livelihood development.

Youth Participation in Peace and Security

Government-led Initiatives on Youth, Peace and Security

The OPAPRU has established the Social Healing and Peacebuilding Office, with a dedicated YPS Division to realise the country’s commitment to the UNSCR 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security.¹⁷⁷ In actualising the Resolution, OPAPRU created opportunities for political, financial, technical and logistical support for young people’s participation in peace efforts.

These efforts include harmonizing peace initiatives that support the political track – such as the Five-Point PRU Agenda, the NAP WPS, NAP-P/CVE, and the development and co-implementation of the NAP YPS – alongside other government peacebuilding interventions. YPS initiatives specifically contribute to Agenda 4, which focuses on enhancing the resilience of peace communities and vulnerable groups through social healing and peacebuilding approaches in support of the peace process.

Anchored in the country’s long-term vision, Ambisyon 2040, as well as the Philippine Development Plan and OPAPRU’s renewed mandate on peace, reconciliation and unity under Executive Order 865, OPAPRU – together with the NYC – spearhead the government support for the YPS Agenda in the Philippines. OPAPRU’s long-term experience with the WPS agenda proved valuable in ensuring the intersectionality of the YPS and WPS agendas, especially in the government’s work in conflict-affected and conflict-vulnerable areas.

176. Security Council Open VTC Towards the 5th Anniversary of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda: Accelerating Implementation of Resolutions 2250 and 2419, 27 April 2020, https://www.un.int/philippines/statements_speeches/security-council-open-rtc-towards-5th-anniversary-youth-peace-and-security.

177. Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), <https://peace.gov.ph/2018/09/opapp-gears-for-youth-participation-in-peacebuilding/>

Box 4: The Philippine's National Action Plan on YPS

The Philippine National Action Plan on YPS (NAP YPS) is the first youth-led and multi-stakeholder driven national policy on youth, peace and security in the country. It went through a rigorous and meaningful five-year process, where the government let young people take leadership in crafting the NAP YPS, where OPAPRU ensured that all stakeholders were engaged in the drafting process, including the UN, INGOs, CSOs and youth organisation and networks.

The significance of this approach lies in its recognition of the crucial role that youth play in peace and security. By allowing young people to lead the crafting of the NAP YPS, the plan can address the needs and perspectives of this demographic group more effectively. This is particularly important since youth are not only significantly affected by peace and security issues but also can potentially be key contributors to solutions in these areas.¹⁷⁹

On 30 August 2022 the youth and the government launched the Philippine NAP YPS. The NAP YPS is a 10-year plan that details key action points strengthening the meaningful participation of young people in peacebuilding, governance, protection of human rights, and in the implementation of global and national sustainable development agenda. It

serves as the government's blueprint for a long-term sustainable plan through a whole-of-government approach in addressing the unique contexts faced by youth before, during and after conflict.

As for the contents of the NAP YPS, they provide a framework for the country's youth-centred, youth-serving, and youth-led programmes, initiatives, interventions and strategies on peacebuilding and security. Anchored upon the five YPS pillars defined in UNSCR 2250 (2015),¹⁸⁰ it seeks to recognise, enrich, and maximise local and international existing mechanisms to address institutional, structural and cultural barriers hindering young people's involvement in conflict resolution, prevention, management and peacebuilding.

Furthermore, the NAP YPS aims to guide policymakers and service providers toward incorporating and adopting action points as they formulate and implement policies and programmes that will address the needs of the country's youth.¹⁸¹ The Philippine Youth Development Plan 2023-2028 includes 'Peacebuilding and Security Social Inclusion and Equity' as one of its priorities and has integrated the NAP YPS.

See Annex 4 for the Philippine National Action Plan on YPS Primer. Official NAP YPS of the Philippines has yet to be released.

Youth-led Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

Even prior to the formulation of the Philippine NAP YPS, youth-led and youth-serving organisations across the country were already conducting and mobilising YPS initiatives. More than 400 youth-led organisations and networks focus on peace and security, with at least 150 on the island of Mindanao – where armed clashes between the government and armed groups persist.¹⁸¹

Social media platforms have become a hotbed for recruitment by violent extremist groups and the spread of hate speech. In response, university students in Iligan City launched a project to counter Islamophobia-linked hate speech and to increase cultural awareness among young people in Mindanao.¹⁸² Another organisation, PeaceTech, utilised information communications technology (ICT) to improve online learning for youth while reducing radicalism. Their programmes have reached 40,000 young Filipinos and Indonesians in conflict regions in Mindanao.

178. Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU), www.peace.gov.ph

179. Ibid.

180. Ibid.

181. P.C. Ragandang, 'Youth inclusion in post-conflict', New Mandala, April 2021.

182. P. C. Ragandang, Social media and youth peacebuilding agency: A case from Muslim Mindanao. *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 15(3), pp. 348–361, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1542316620957572>

Studies on UNSCR 2250 (2015), 2535 (2020) and their application in the Philippine context have documented various initiatives by local young peacebuilders. Among the strategies initiated was forging partnerships with fellow YPS practitioners diverse localities to seek guidance and bolster support for the implementation of the YPS Agenda.

Established in 2006, the Generation Peace Youth Network (or GenPeace) quickly became one of the leading peacebuilding networks in the Philippines. The network's member organisation supports peacebuilding, disarmament, human rights advocacy and the promotion of the YPS Agenda.

Youth-serving NGOs, such as the National Society of Parliamentarians (NSP), also conducted independent consultations on the prospects of crafting legislation on the institutionalisation of the YPS Agenda, while the Mindanao Tripartite Youth Core has been holding community dialogues among the tri-people youth in Mindanao through youth peacebuilding initiatives in schools, LGUs and churches.

The Volunteers' Initiatives in Bridging and Empowering Society is another youth-led and youth-serving peacebuilding organisation. Based in Cotabato City, it aims to create environmentally and culturally sensitive communities in Mindanao for sustainable peace and development.

Young women, girls and young LGBTQI+ have been engaging in peace and security issues and leading peacebuilding and social cohesion initiatives in their communities. For instance, the Young Women Leaders for Peace-Philippines is a network of young women and young LGBTQI+ leaders who advocate for human rights, women's rights, gender equality and peace and security.¹⁸³ In the 2019 election and during the drafting of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, the group led a youth campaign to promote youth involvement in politics and on destigmatising gender identities. The GNWP is part of the global network.

The Philippines has a rich history of youth activism and youth civil society movements. Examples of youth/student groups include the National Union of Students in the Philippines (NUSP), the Anakbayan, League of Filipino Students and the Association of Democratic Youth, among others.¹⁸⁴ In 2020, some of the progressive youth organisations continued to monitor the excessive powers of the authorities and sought to end the culture of violence and impunity, especially as it endangers Filipino youths and youth activists.¹⁸⁵

Furthermore, young women have been involved in combatting violent extremism working to raise awareness of the dangers of extremism, promote tolerance and understanding, and building bridges between different communities.¹⁸⁶ In this context, the WPS agenda is relevant as it recognises women's critical role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention,¹⁸⁷ and emphasises the importance of women's participation in all aspects of peace and security, including efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism.

UN-led Youth and Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

The UN Country Team established the UN Youth Thematic Group as a youth-responsive approach to the implementation of the Philippines-UN Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development (UNPFSD). As a knowledge hub on youth empowerment currently chaired by UNICEF, the UNYTG facilitated the consolidation, mapping, dissemination and promotion of youth and YPS-related knowledge and evidence generated by the UN and other partners in the Philippines.

A mirror thematic group on youth in Cotabato, Mindanao, has also been established for joint programmes related to YPS. The group works closely with the Office of the Bangsamoro Youth Affairs on the development of the Bangsamoro Transition Youth Priority Agenda 2020-2023.¹⁸⁸ The thematic group's work on YPS focuses on capacity-building, social cohesion (intergenerational and interreligious dialogue), P/CVE, gender equality, education and mental health.

183. GNWP's Young Women Leaders for Peace. More info at: <https://gnwp.org/what-we-do/young-women-leaders-for-peace-program/#:~:text=When%20young%20women%20and%20girls,fully%20realise%20their%20leadership%20potential>

184. Q. S Samonte, Student Activism and National Development: The Philippine Setting. *The Journal of Educational Thought (JET) / Revue de La Pensée Éducative*, 4(3), 1970, pp. 161-173, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23768353>

185. *Top universities denounce red tagging of schools*. Rappler Philippines. 24 January 2020, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/top-philippine-universities-denounce-red-tagging-schools>

186. UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, *Misogyny and Violent Extremism in the Philippines: Implications for Preventing Violent Extremism*, 2020, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEA/Docs/Publications/2020/05/BLS20099UNW/MisogynyVEPhilippinesWEB0022b.pdf>

187. ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security, <https://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/32-ASEAN-Regional-Plan-of-Action-on-Women-Peace-and-Security.pdf>

188. Office Of Bangsamoro Youth Affairs, <http://www.armmtransition.ph/armm-oby/>

For instance, UNDP, UNODC, IOM and UNFPA have been supporting young people by providing education and skills development, entrepreneurship and social cohesion trainings through the project – *Integrated Solutions Platform on SDGs*. UNICEF has utilised the U-Report¹⁸⁹ by engaging 8,000 adolescents and youth in BARMM to understand their perspectives on the COVID-19 vaccination, distance learning and mental health. Through the regional Youth: Co-Lab initiative UNDP has been providing entrepreneurship opportunities through innovation lab challenges.¹⁹⁰

The UNYTG established a UN Youth Advisory Board (UNYAB) in 2018¹⁹¹ to ensure meaningful youth participation in the implementation of the UNDAF/UNPFSD/UN Socioeconomic and Peacebuilding Framework for the COVID-19 Response and Recovery, the SDGs/2030 Agenda and the NAP YPS. UNYAB members include a diverse representation of young people with a proven record of advocating for youth issues and a strong connection to local and national youth networks.

UNYAB members are subsequently linked to national agencies to strengthen their influence in the decision-making processes. Dialogues between the UNYAB and UNCT have helped identify key national policy gaps across the UNPFSD pillars, including those related to transitional justice and reconciliation efforts under the Bangsamoro Act.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

According to the 2022 ASEAN YDI, the Philippines scored 0.522, reflecting a steady upward trend since 2013.¹⁹² The highest-performing domain was ‘Safety and Security’, primarily due to reduced interpersonal violence and improvement disaster risk reduction. The country also performed slightly above the regional average in ‘Education and Skills,’ while the ‘Employment and Opportunity’ domain showed a modest improvement.

Filipino youth have been active in informal spaces through civil society movements, volunteerism, activism and recently through online and media campaigns. At the same time, formal avenues for participation, such as the Sangguniang Kabataan (Youth Councils), NYC, and BYC, were established through government structures. But challenges remain in terms of the extent to which young people can participate meaningfully and make a direct impact on high-level decision-making.

A key barrier is the lack of and unequal access to quality education and capacity-building trainings, especially for youth marginalised due to their gender, disability, racial or socioeconomic status. Tokenism, a practice that superficially involves young people in the decision-making process in ways that keeps them powerless, underinformed and unaccountable, still prevails.

Opportunities

The vibrant youth networks in the Philippines have contributed directly to the localisation of the YPS Agenda. The following avenues can be strengthened:

- The existing frameworks and policies that ensure youth’s systematic participation in various sectors can be further utilised for meaningful youth engagement. These include the Sangguniang Kabataan (youth councils), the House of Representatives’ party-list system, the NYC, the BYC and the UNYAB, among others.
- Youth civil society movements remain active against the backdrop of red-tagging and other human rights violations. These movements utilised both online and offline spaces for mobilisation, advocacy, capacity-building, networking and partnerships with other stakeholders in society. The UN and the government can strengthen consultations and collaborative efforts through sustained engagement with established youth networks.

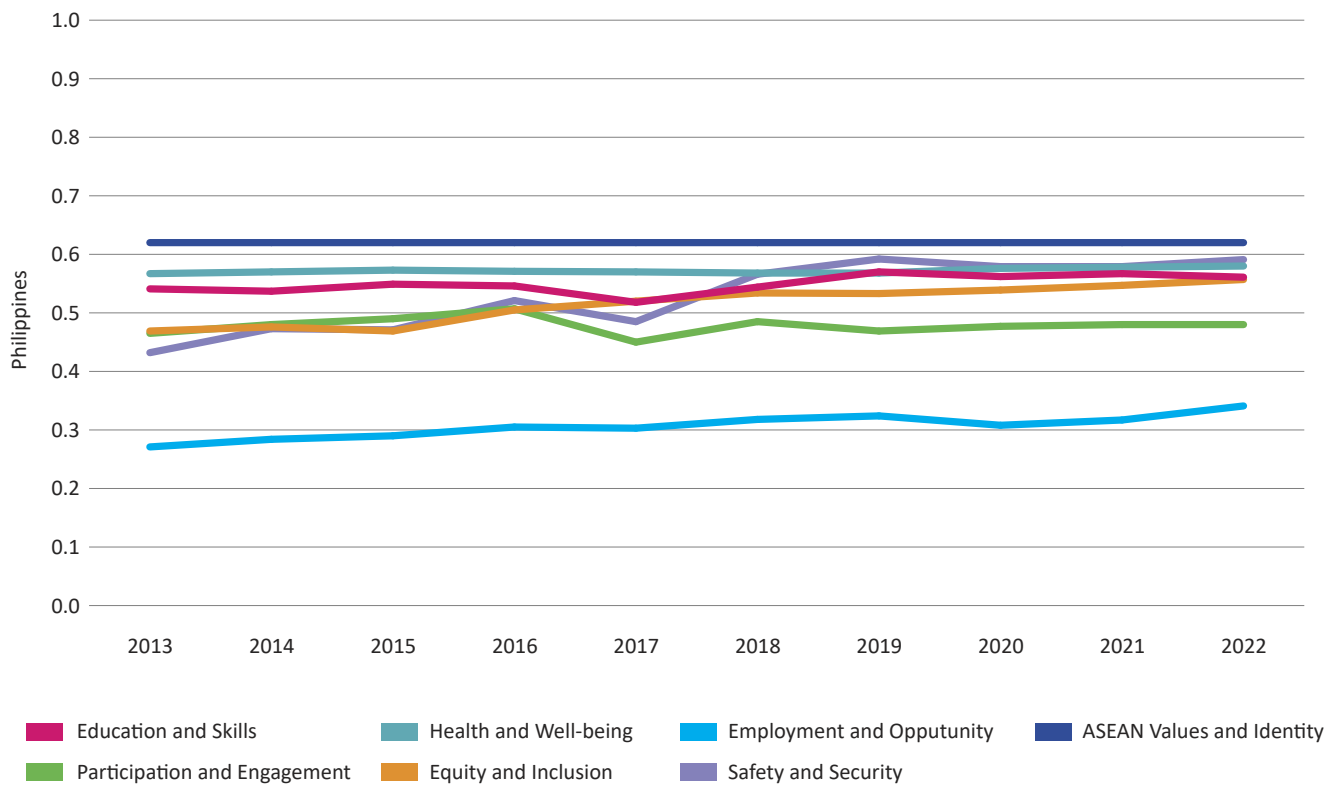
189. A social messaging tool and data collection system developed by UNICEF to improve citizen engagement, inform leaders, and foster positive change.

190. UNDP Youth Co:Lab (Philippines), <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=33966>.

191. United Nations Youth Advisory Board Philippines, More info at <https://www.facebook.com/UNYABPH/>

192. The YDI score is a number between 0 and 1, with 0 reflecting the lowest youth development in the region and 1 reflecting the highest level of youth development attained in the region. More information at: https://asean.org/storage/2017/10/ASEAN-UNFPA_report_web-final-05sep.pdf

Figure 9. Overall YDI and Domains score for the Philippines, ASEAN Youth Development Index (2022)



On YPS, the NAP YPS is a significant milestone for youth in the Philippines. It empowers them by providing a framework for meaningful participation in peacebuilding, governance, protection of human rights and the implementation of global and national sustainable development agendas. The NAP YPS also addresses institutional, structural and cultural barriers that hinder young people’s involvement in conflict resolution, prevention, management and peacebuilding. This is crucial for ensuring that all youth, including those from marginalised and vulnerable groups, can participate fully in these processes.

As the fourth country globally to develop a NAP YPS, the Philippines is a regional and global champion in advancing the YPS Agenda. The NAP YPS opens broader opportunities for meaningful youth engagement in peace and security by providing a platform for young people to voice their

concerns, contribute their ideas and participate in decision-making processes that shape the future of their countries.

Furthermore, the NAP YPS contributes to the promotion of sustainable peace in the region. By involving youth in peacebuilding processes, it harnesses their potential to contribute to conflict resolution and prevention. In conclusion, the NAP YPS is not just important for youth in the Philippines, but also serves as a model for other ASEAN Member States. It underscores the critical role of youth in peacebuilding and security and provides a roadmap for their meaningful participation in these processes.

Singapore

Youth and student activism has played a significant role in Singapore's history. From the 1950s to its independence in 1965, middle school and college students played an active political role in challenging the British colonial regime.

Today the changing socioeconomic landscape, coupled with the widespread use of social media among young people, signals a renewed shift toward a more politically engaged generation. Younger Singaporeans have also come to expect and value openness to issues such as racial and religious harmony and freedom of expression. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong acknowledged that “younger people have a different perspective ...which we have to take into account because young people will one day inherit Singapore”.¹⁹³

Recognising that the views towards gender among youth are complex and diverse opinions exist among students and their parents, the Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) has sought to deal with these issues sensitively and with compassion. In line with its commitment to making schools a common space for all students, the MOE continues to provide students experiencing gender dysphoria with a supportive and conducive learning environment, along with measures to promote their overall well-being.

MOE also seeks to inculcate values of mutual respect and empathy in our students so they can appreciate a diversity of views, and conduct conversations on such complex issues sensitively and respectfully. This is done in a holistic and age-appropriate manner, including through our national curriculum in Character and Citizenship Education (CCE).

The government is also taking steps towards addressing youth calls to address climate change. For instance, Singapore's Minister for Sustainability and the Environment, Grace Fu, engaged with youth in a dialogue on climate change in March 2021.¹⁹⁴ In line with the Glasgow Climate Pact adopted at COP26, Singapore committed to the reduction of emissions to 60MtCO₂e in 2030 and to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Understanding Youth in Singapore

In 2023 youth aged 15-34, made up 18 per cent (1.040 out of 5.917 million) of the total population. The Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) is responsible for youth affairs and has three aims: 1. to support youth needs and aspirations; 2. to empower youth voices and action through engagement and developmental opportunities; and 3. to foster youth leadership. Established in 1989, the National Youth Council (NYC) operates as an autonomous agency under the MCCY and as a national coordinating body for youth affairs. It is chaired by the Minister for Culture, Community and Youth.

The Children's and Young Persons Act 1993 serves as the policy reference for youth development in Singapore. It provides a framework for the welfare, care, protection and rehabilitation of children and young persons. National ministries and agencies support youth empowerment in domains including education, employment, human rights, marriage, health and housing.

In addition to government-led initiatives, numerous NGOs also play a crucial role in youth development. For instance, Impart Singapore is a charity that pioneers volunteer-driven community solutions to enable transformative youth development.¹⁹⁵ They work closely with community stakeholders to ensure educational resources are paired with the right relationships in order to create an educational experience where youths can thrive.¹⁹⁶

These NGOs provide additional avenues for youth empowerment and engagement, complementing the efforts of government agencies like the MCCY and the NYC. They offer a variety of programmes and initiatives that cater to different interests and needs, thereby contributing to a more holistic approach to youth development in Singapore.

193. <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/youth-activists-are-pushing-the-limits-of-singapore-politics/>

194. <https://www.mse.gov.sg/resource-room/category/2021-03-17-speech-at-the-singapore-cop26-youth-climate-dialogue/>

195. To find out more about Impart Singapore see, <https://www.impart.sg/>

196. Ibid.

Youth Participation in Peace and Security

Government-led Initiatives on Youth, Peace and Security

The NYC has been supporting different youth networks and organisations through capacity- building and funding opportunities. For instance, the Young Change Makers initiative provides grants for youth-initiated projects that benefit the Singaporean community and society. In 2019 the NYC and MCCY launched the Singapore Youth Action Plan (SG YAP), a platform for young people to share their vision for the country and to come up with a plan on how youth can partner with the government to actualise the vision.

Thematic areas include environmental protection, social issues and the Future of Work.¹⁹⁷ The NYC also introduced the Youth Action Challenge (YAC) to empower youth to champion ground-up initiatives, in collaboration with the government, businesses and communication organisations, to achieve youth's vision for Singapore in 2025.

In 2023 MCCY and NYC launched the youth panels initiative to involve youths in policymaking. Youth panels provide opportunities for youths and the government to come together to work on policies, conduct research and engage other stakeholders on issues that youths are passionate about. Recommendations from the panel will be submitted to the government, which will address them through channels such as written responses or parliamentary debates.

Youth-led Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

As a leading youth organisation, the People's Association Youth Movement (PAYM) has been reaching out to youths in Singapore aged between 12 to 35 since 1971. It offers meaningful programmes to excite, engage and empower the youths in creating a vibrant youth community.

They aim to make youths caring and responsible adults through various community service projects, outdoor activities and skills development programmes. The PAYM network currently consists of 107 Youth Network (YN) Committees, managed by young grassroots leaders.¹⁹⁸

Roses of Peace (ROP) is a ground-up youth-driven initiative that aims to promote the interfaith messages of peace, love and harmony. It trains and equips young people with the necessary knowledge and skillset to become peace ambassadors and interfaith leaders in their communities, and to create a network of youth committed to promoting interfaith dialogue. Since its establishment in 2012 the ROP has engaged more than 3,000 youth volunteers from diverse backgrounds.

The Global Compact Network Singapore Youth Alliance is the local chapter of the UN Global Compact that provides young people with learning, volunteering and career development opportunities. The Alliance seeks to empower youths to contribute towards advancing the SDGs while propelling career ambitions in sustainability.

UN-led Youth and Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

In 2019 the NYC partnered with UNDP and the Citi Foundation to launch the Youth Co:Lab in Singapore to further support youths, especially the young social enterprises, who participate in YAC. The Youth Co:Lab is an initiative co-created by the UNDP and the Citi Foundation in 2017. It aims to establish a common agenda for countries in the Asia-Pacific region to empower and invest in youth, and to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs through leadership, social innovation and entrepreneurship.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

Singapore enjoys excellent peace and stability and is working successfully on enhancing youth participation in leadership positions at the national and community levels. Its high degree of social cohesion will be important as Singapore navigates a more complex and uncertain world.

Opportunities

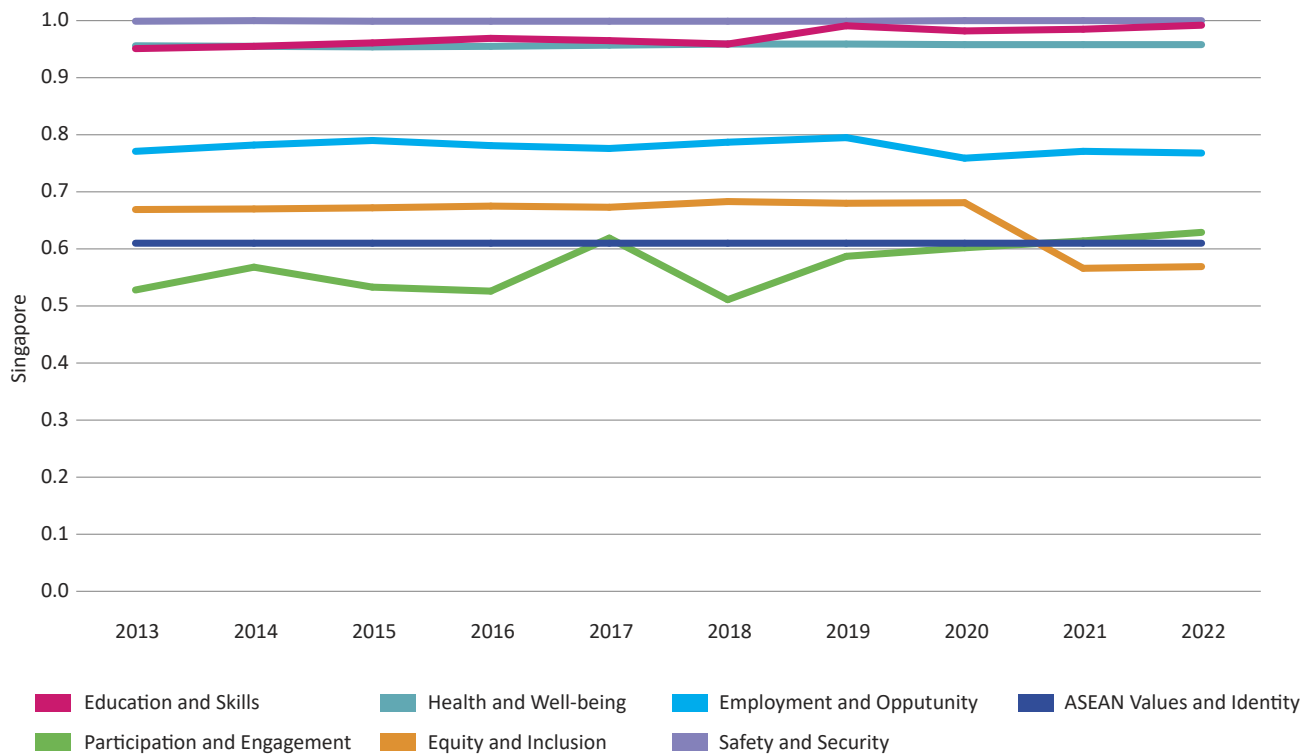
With a consistent ranking of first place out of the 10 ASEAN countries, Singapore has overall score of 0.830 in the 2022 ASEAN YDI. The country scored above the regional average in all four domains, with 'Safety and Security' and 'Education and Skills' performing the best.¹⁹⁹

197. Supporting the SG Youth Action Plan Journey, 2019, <https://youthactionplan.sg/download/supporting-the-sg-yap-journey.pdf>

198. More information available at: <https://www.pa.gov.sg/our-network/grassroots-organisation/peoples-association-youth-movement>

199. The YDI score is a number between 0 and 1, with 0 reflecting the lowest youth development and 1 reflecting the highest level of youth development attained in the region. More information available at: https://asean.org/storage/2017/10/ASEAN-UNFPA_report_web-final-05sep.pdf

Figure 10. Overall YDI and Domains Score for Singapore, ASEAN Youth Development Index (2022)



Singaporean youth are key actors for peace and security. A few avenues can be leveraged for meaningful engagement with young people on peace and security issues:

- Support youth-led initiatives on peace and security by forming partnerships with the MCCY, the NYC and other already existing youth-led initiatives and organisations to expand conversations and collaborations on YPS through provision of funding, resources and mentorship.
- Create a comprehensive youth policy in a participatory manner to build trust between the government and young people, and to guide government policies on youth-related issues.
- Provide opportunities for young people to learn about peace and security issues, including providing training on conflict resolution, mediation and peacebuilding and exposing Singaporean youth to different cultures and

perspectives to better understand the root causes of conflict.

- Create spaces for the Singaporean youth to discuss peace and security issues, such as youth forums, peace clubs, or online platforms where young people can share their ideas and perspectives in a safe environment.
- Engage young people in policy-making processes where the government can consult with the youth on peace and security issues and incorporate their viewpoints into decision-making.
- Encourage young people to raise awareness on YPS, promote peace and understanding through digital skills, and to volunteer their time to support peacebuilding initiatives in their communities and within their neighbouring countries.

Thailand

Country Context

Thailand has made impressive progress over the past several decades, both in economic and social terms. Sustained strong growth and rapid modernisation have transformed Thailand into an upper middle-income country with a dynamic and expanding urban centre. Economic success has brought impressive social advancement, poverty has plummeted, while education and health services have considerably expanded and improved.²⁰⁰ Despite declining poverty, inequality remains high, with a Gini coefficient of 34 per cent which can reduce the pace of sustainable growth and poverty reduction.

In the political landscape, the government has been implementing certain measures that have impacted civil and political rights, notably freedom of expression. These have led to the detention of activists advocating for democracy and changes in key political parties.²⁰¹ Between 2020 and 2021 Thailand witnessed a series of largely peaceful youth-led demonstrations, reflecting the political maturation of a new generation.

This movement originated from a group of university students calling for significant political changes. Their primary requests were a change in leadership with Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha stepping down, a reform of the parliamentary system, the creation of a new constitution and the protection of freedom of speech rights.

In the latter half of 2020, despite control by security forces, thousands of Thai youths took to the streets in Bangkok and across the country taking part in protests on an almost daily basis.²⁰² Youth played key roles in mobilising support for the movement, particularly through the savvy use of social

media to draw international attention to their causes.²⁰³ A solidarity movement, known as the Milk Tea Alliance, was built among anti-authoritarian protesters in Hong Kong Myanmar, Taiwan and Thailand, and by using Twitter hashtags.²⁰⁴

However, in October 2020, the Thai Government took an increasingly heavy-handed approach towards the protesters.²⁰⁵ Young movement leaders faced detentions and arrests, often under lèse-majesté laws, the Computer-Related Crime Act and sedition offences, placing them at risk of lengthy prison sentences.²⁰⁶

By 2023 these youth-led movements had evolved into a political force. The Move Forward Party, led by Pita Limjaroenrat and largely supported by the youth demographic, despite winning the most seats in the general election, were excluded from forming a government.²⁰⁷ This recent development signifies a shift in Thai politics and highlights the growing influence of youth in shaping the country's political landscape.

Thailand's Southern Border Provinces have experienced an active ethno-nationalist insurgency for decades. Deep divides remain between the ethnically Malay Muslim population and the Buddhist majority. The peace dialogue process, initiated in 2013, has largely stalled, with no durable solution to the conflict in place yet. Youth are not formally involved in the peace process and remain on the periphery, participating informally in the process through CSOs such as the Federation of Patani Students and Youth (PerMAS). While there have been concerns that young people in the Southern Border Provinces may be vulnerable to extremist ideologies, there is no evidence to suggest that transnational extremist movements have gained a foothold in the region.²⁰⁸

200. OECD, Multi-dimensional Review of Thailand (Volume 1), 2018, <https://www.oecd.org/development/mdcr/countries/thailand/>

201. More information available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/thailand>

202. <https://thediplomat.com/2023/03/from-the-streets-to-the-ballot-box-ex-student-protesters-prepare-for-thailands-election/>

203. Ibid.

204. Ibid.

205. Ibid.

206. See Thai Lawyers for Human rights for detailed reporting on cases against protesters, <https://tlhr2014.com/en/home>

207. <https://thediplomat.com/2023/05/key-thai-youth-activist-group-plans-senate-protest/>

208. More information at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/thailand/291-jihadism-southern-thailand-phantom-menace>

Understanding Youth in Thailand

According to the National Child and Youth Development Promotion Act (2007), youth is defined as individuals aged between 18-25 years. As of 2022, the total population of Thailand was approximately 71.7 million.²⁰⁹ The population of individuals aged 15 years or under is around 11.7 million.²¹⁰

Thailand's National Youth Policy, first implemented in 2002, was developed in line with the Constitution, the National Child and Youth Development Promotion Act (2007) and the Second National Child and Youth Development Promotion Act of 2018. Both the Constitution and the two acts emphasise the state's responsibility to promote and protect children and youth at all levels and to ensure their meaningful participation in society.

Currently, the Second National Child and Youth Development Plan (NCYDP) 2017-2021 is in effect, addressing the physical, mental, emotional, social and intellectual dimensions of child and youth development. Complementing this, the twenty-year National Strategy (2018-2037) serves as a long-term master development plan comprising six strategic indicators, all of which directly impact youth.²¹¹

These acts and policies enshrine the right of children and youth to participate in policy and programme development by addressing their concerns and involving them in decision-making processes. Notably, the 2017 NCYDP introduced a systemic focus on promoting the Children and Youth Council (CYCT), a formal mechanism that empowers over 150,000 elected child and youth representatives to "gather the needs and proposals for youth development and implement activities that benefit the community and society". The CYCT allows young people to serve as representatives of the Council at subdistrict, district, provincial and national levels.²¹²

Youth Participation in Peace and Security

Government-led Initiatives on Youth, Peace and Security

Formal structures for youth participation include the Children and Youth Council of Thailand and the Sanjaithai Sujaitai. The Sanjaithai Sujaitai is a project in the Southern Border Provinces supported by various actors including foundations, ministries and the armed forces. There are two main representation structures for youth at the local and district levels. The National Children and Youth Council was set up by the Office of Promotion and Protection of Children, Youth, the Elderly and Vulnerable Groups in 2008, with 954 councils at the district and provincial levels.²¹³

The councils play significant roles in providing learning, leadership and voluntarism skills for children and youth in the community. Another mechanism is a private sector coordinating mechanism called the National Council for Child and Youth Development (NCYD), which coordinates youth groups, schools and ministries for child and youth development in Thailand.

Youth groups are not formally engaged in the ongoing peace process between the Thai Government and MARA Patani, an umbrella organisation of Malay-Muslim separatist fronts from the Southern Border Provinces.²¹⁴ But organised youth groups, such as the Southern Border Provinces Youth Congress, Spark U, and White Dove Youth Network in the Southern Border Provinces are groups organised by civil society NGOs, and international organisations that are supported by the government.²¹⁵

Youth-led Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

In the Southern Border Provinces more than 20,000 incidents were recorded when 368 youth died, 1,115 were injured, 36 had physical disabilities and around

209. World Bank Statistics. Population, total – Thailand, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=TH>

210. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1283627/thailand-resident-population-by-age-group/>

211. The areas are: 1. Well-being of Thai people and society; 2. national competitiveness, economic growth and income distribution; 3. development of human capital; 4. social equality and equity; 5. sustainability of national biodiversity, environmental quality and natural resources; and 6. government efficiency and better access to public services.

212. UNICEF, Connected, Engaged and Empowered? – A Landscape Analysis of Young People's Participation in Thailand. Bangkok: UNICEF, 2023.

213. More information available at: https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Thailand_2010_Youth_Policy_Summary.pdf

214. More information available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/thailand/304-southern-thailands-peace-dialogue-giving-substance-form>

215. M. Jiman, From Policy to Practice, Young People of Advisory Board of UNICEF Thailand, 2022.

1,000 orphans were in need of assistance.²¹⁶ PerMAS²¹⁷ is a student human rights advocacy organisation founded in 2008 that advocates for peace in the region through peace education. Another active organisation is the Luuk Rieng Group²¹⁸ (Association of Children and Youth for the Peace in the Southernmost Provinces of Thailand). It seeks to empower child victims of political violence to become advocates for peace, transforming their role from marginalised, voiceless victims to active agents of peacebuilding.

There are several youth networks and CSOs working on environmental issues and supporting SDG localisation, such as the Wartani, D4P, WANITA and the BIE Card Game group.²¹⁹ On education system reform, Bad Student is a network of high school students calling for rights in school and education system reform.²²⁰ Another example is Teach for Thailand, a social initiative aimed at tackling learning inequality, working with children and youngsters across the country to promote better quality education.²²¹

On intercultural relations and diversity, the 'Local Chef to Peace' project is the winner of Youth Co:Lab Thailand 2019.²²² The team is from the Southern Border Provinces and operates under Lukriang. Targeting Thai-Buddhist, Muslim and Thai Chinese, the initiative uses local food as a tool to foster inter-group dialogue and transform conflict into constructive peacebuilding. Titang is the first runner-up of Youth Co:Lab Thailand 2019. It is a media platform established by stateless people for stateless people living in northern Thailand. The project aims to amplify the voices of the stateless population and to facilitate a more equitable and transparent process for acquiring Thai citizenship.

UN-led Youth and Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

The global initiative Youth as Researchers (YAR), was developed by UNESCO to connect and engage young people in conducting research on the impacts of COVID-19 and devising youth-oriented solutions.²²³ The programme has

been designed to give young people the skills they need to conduct credible research based on sound methods and ethical practices. A policy conference was held in March 2022 where YAR participants, along with Heads of State and Ministers responsible for youth, discussed priority commitments and policy solutions that respond to the ways in which COVID-19 has impacted youth.

Under UNDP's Youth Co:Lab Thailand was first organised in 2017.²²⁴ The programme focuses on building the capacity and participation of the new generation in developing innovations that will help solve problems and drive society in a better direction. In the past seven years more than 500 youths from all over the countries have participated in the programme and have come up with more than 150 social business ideas to tackle challenges on gender equality, urban planning, climate change and digitalisation.

In 2022 the Youth Co:Lab programme also became organised specifically for ethnic groups. Youth Co:Lab is now localising the programme at provincial level to ensure participation of youth from marginalised communities. The programme is currently available in Mae Hong Son, Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat.

In 2021 the UNCT Thailand established its 'SDGs Youth Panel' young leaders network as a brain trust of change-makers who advise the Resident Coordinator on youth engagement and national development priorities focused on the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) outcomes,²²⁵ including on ways to modernise UN advocacy by co-creating entry points in school curriculums, partnerships with micro-influencers and Thai universities network, and the use of social media.

On environmental issues, Youth Voices for Nature is a global initiative led by the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, which brings together UN agencies and international youth networks to advocate for sustainable and environmentally friendly policies.²²⁶ 'Climate Strike

216. Ibid.

217. More information available at: <https://www.facebook.com/The-Federation-of-Patani-Students-and-Youth-PerMAS-1438146019820331/>

218. More information available at: <https://www.changemakers.com/ashoka-fellows/entries/luuk-rieng-group-association-children-and-youth-peace>

219. Jiman, From Policy to Practice.

220. More information available at: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/politics/2022963/bad-students-not-your-typical-school-troublemakers>

221. More information available at: <https://www.teachforthailand.org/>

222. More information available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PW6SNA16bSU>

223. UNESCO. World Water Development Report. More information available at: <https://yar.bangkok.unesco.org/>

224. More information available at: <https://www.youthcolabthailand.org/>

225. More information available at: <https://thailand.un.org/en/166885-united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework-unsdcf-2022%E2%80%932026>

226. More information available at: <https://www.unmgcy.org/for-nature>

Thailand’ advocates for climate change and demands concrete measures to preserve nature.²²⁷ “Respect Children’s Right to a Healthy Environment” was launched by the Salween Network, a member of the Mekong Youth Assembly.²²⁸ The initiative brings together different CSOs to advocate for children’s right to a healthier environment. Other initiatives include the International Day of Action for Rivers (14 March) and the book ‘Becoming Mekong – Youth’.²²⁹

On environmental and climate change issues, a 2023 UNICEF study, *Impact Assessment of Climate Change and Environmental Degradation on Children in Thailand*, shows that children in Thailand are at high risk from climate change, especially those living in the North-Eastern and Southern Provinces of Thailand in Ubon Ratchathani, Nakhon Rachasima, Sri Saket, Nakhon Srithammarat and Narathiwat who face the highest risks of all.²³⁰

This study examines the impact of climate change specifically on children across provinces, incomes, disabilities and ages. It also features a Child-Sensitive Climate Risk Index for the country based on factors including extreme heat, cold, floods, droughts, as well as the availability of healthcare facilities and social services in each province. This can help the government, civil society and businesses prioritise climate action for children and their communities.

The national launch of General Comment No. 26 on children’s rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change was jointly organised in 2023 between Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, UNICEF Thailand, World Vision Foundation of Thailand and the CRC Coalition Thailand. The event underscored the importance of upholding children’s right to a healthy environment and highlighted the growing threat posed by climate change. General Comment No. 26 provides guidance for the Thai Government on integrating a child rights-based approach into environmental and climate policies.²³¹

Thailand still has many opportunities for young people’s participation in climate spaces and youth-led initiatives

and innovations for climate. The available information and guidelines will be crucial tools for the government to work further with youth, youth-led organisations, relevant government agencies or existing youth participation mechanisms, such as the Children and Youth Council of Thailand (CYCT), to enhance young people’s participation in climate policies and youth-led initiatives.

The Department of Climate Change and Environment (DCCE) is a national focal point for the Action for Climate Empowerment²³², a term adopted by the UNFCCC under Article 6 of the Convention.²³³ Article 12 of the Paris Agreement has already laid the framework for youth engagement.²³⁴ DCCE could work as a cross-sectoral coordinator and technical facilitator among relevant government agencies advocating for a more integrated approach on children and on environmental and climate issues.

In addressing LGBTQI+ rights, the Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand (RSAT), an NGO based in Bangkok that champions LGBTQI+ rights, took a significant step by organising a camp in 2023. This initiative was specifically designed for young individuals who identify as lesbian, transmen, or non-binary, some of whom are living with disabilities. The primary objective of the camp was to establish a secure and inclusive environment, fostering learning opportunities for these young people on the subjects of diversity and acceptance.

The camp aimed to combat various forms of violence, be it physical or verbal, in both offline and online spaces. Its broader mission was to instil a culture of respect for diverse identities and varying abilities. By creating a safe haven, RSAT sought to address issues such as bullying and discrimination faced by these young individuals, particularly those with disabilities.

Building upon the success of this initiative, RSAT has further developed a comprehensive training curriculum. By integrating these educational efforts, RSAT envisions a broader societal shift towards increased acceptance and

227. More information available at: <https://www.facebook.com/climatestrikethailand/>

228. More information available at: <https://www.facebook.com/Save-the-Salween-Network-1685498275073019/>

229. More information available at: <http://www.tdh-southeastasia.de/2019/02/20/new-book-becoming-mekong-youth-released/>

230. More information available at: <https://www.unicef.org/thailand/reports/impact-assessment-climate-change-and-environmental-degradation-children-thailand>

231. More info available at: <https://childrightsenvironment.org/general-comment-no-26/>

232. <https://unfccc.int/topics/education-and-youth/big-picture/ACE#Article-6-of-the-Convention>

233. <https://unfccc.int/resource/ccsites/zimbab/conven/text/art06.htm>

234. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/parisagreement_publication.pdf

understanding of diverse identities. This initiative not only aligns with the broader struggle for LGBTQI+ rights, but also significantly contributes to the overarching issue of the YPS Agenda. Empowering young individuals with the knowledge and tools to embrace diversity fosters a more inclusive and peaceful society. It sets the stage for a generation that is both tolerant and actively promotes understanding, respect and harmony among individuals of various identities, backgrounds and abilities.

On Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), youths have been encouraged and supported to voice their needs in this regard, as entitled to by the Prevention and Solutions of Adolescent Pregnancy Act, especially Article 5, which is focused on the rights of adolescents to SRHR. The National Child and Youth Council is supported to lead a youth-led survey aimed at assessing access to rights-based and youth-friendly services.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

Thailand's overall ASEAN YDI score was 0.574 in 2022. Thailand scored above the average in the 'Safety and Security' domain²³⁵ but was ranked last in the 'Health and Well-being' domain, mainly due to an increase in substance use and mental health disorders. The 'Employment and Opportunity' sphere also declined which can largely be attributed to an increase in the Youth Unemployment Ratio.²³⁶ In 2022 the latest recorded youth unemployment rate stood at 4.5 per cent in 2022,²³⁷ approximately five times higher than the national average of 0.9 per cent. Young women are also more likely to be unemployed than their male counterparts.

Thailand is undergoing a demographic transition with an ageing population, which has significant implications for social security, health care and intergenerational equity.²³⁸ Further, steady declines in the potential support ratio reflect a shrinking support base of economically productive persons upon whom older persons can depend.

The rising share of youth (aged 15–24 years) who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) in Thailand represents a concerning social and economic phenomenon. Youth NEET constitute an obstacle to economic growth, hampering productivity and competitiveness for the whole country, especially when this condition persists for a prolonged period. For Thailand, the issue is particularly pressing as the country is now an aged society.

Youth who are NEET are exposed to a high risk of poverty and social exclusion, as they often lack the means to improve their skills and competences. A total of 70 per cent of the NEET group in Thailand are female, most of whom dropped out of school due to pregnancy or caring responsibilities. Likewise, age is a significant factor, as the NEET rate is found to be higher in youth aged 20-24 years than for those aged 15-19 years.

Youth with disabilities also face significant challenges accessing educational and employment opportunities. Migrant youth and ethnic groups face significant challenges to education and work, including language barriers, stereotyping and administrative barriers (i.e. not having an ID card). Poverty and geographical location are another crucial factor affecting NEET status.²³⁹

Moreover, youth have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Among working youth, many lost their employment during the nationwide lockdown. The youth population overall, youth with disabilities and youth from Thailand's three southernmost provinces experienced a substantial increase in unemployment during the height of the COVID-19 crisis, with the strongest rise among daily wage workers, freelancers, one-person businesses and employees of private companies. In terms of political participation, the youth-led protests in 2020 point to the lack of meaningful political participation mechanisms for young people to express their views, and the growing generational disparities in terms of values and political stances.

Teenage mothers also reported substantially higher unemployment.²⁴⁰ This reflects the reality that over 80 per

235. The YDI score is a number between 0 and 1, with 0 reflecting the lowest and 1 reflecting the highest level of youth development attained in the region. More information available at: https://asean.org/storage/2017/10/ASEAN-UNFPA_report_web-final-05sep.pdf

236. Ibid.

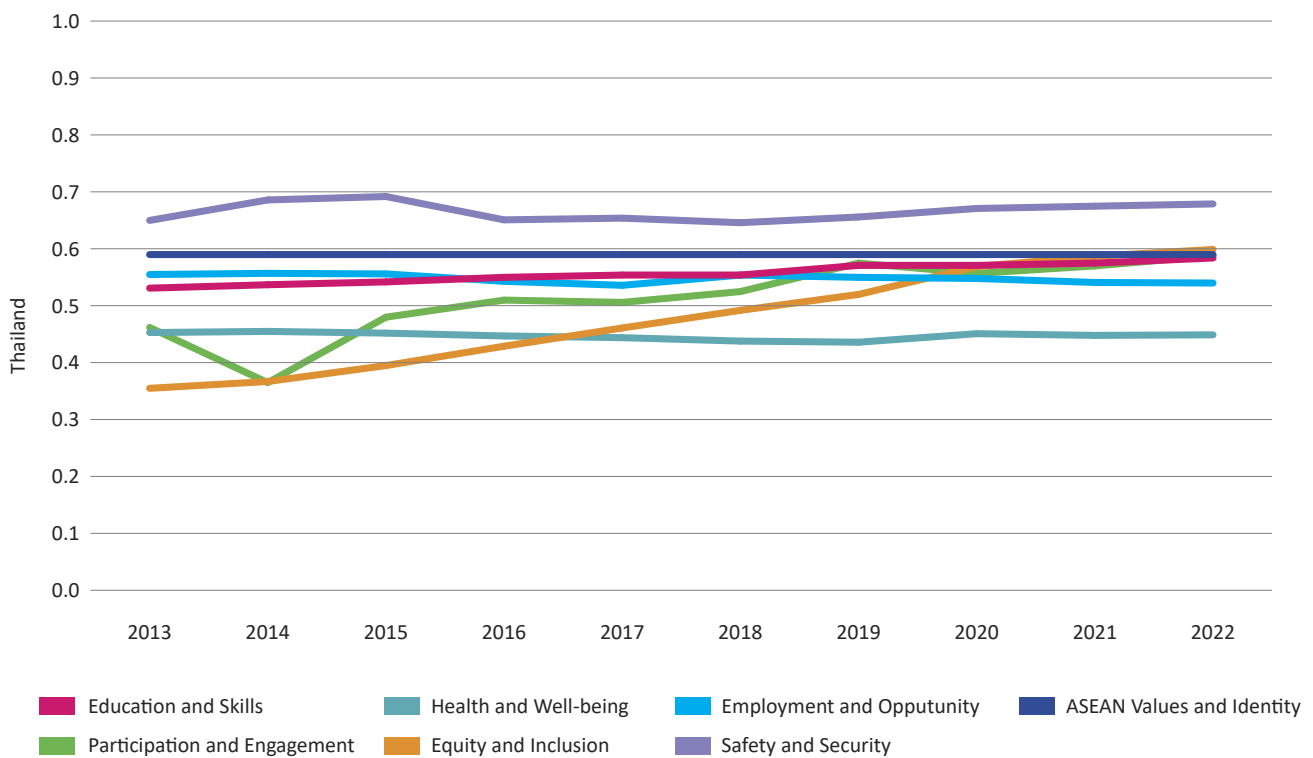
237. Data available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=TH>

238. More information available at: <https://thailand.un.org/en/96303-thailand-economic-focus-demographic-change-thailand-how-planners-can-prepare-future>

239. UNICEF and College of Population Studies, Social Research Institute, Chula Unisearch, (2023). In-depth Research on Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) in Thailand. Bangkok: UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/thailand/reports/depth-research-youth-not-employment-education-or-training-neet-thailand>

240. More information available at: https://thailand.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/youth_and_covid-19_summary_brief_en.pdf

Figure 11. Overall YDI and Domains Score for Thailand, ASEAN Youth Development Index (2022)



cent of adolescent mothers discontinue their education after childbirth, despite Article 5 of the Prevention and Solutions of the Adolescent Pregnancy Act B.E. 2559 (2016), which guarantees their right to return to school. The key challenges lie in prevailing social norms and weak policy enforcement. As a result, most adolescent mothers are unable to complete their education and are left with limited opportunities, often becoming unskilled labourers or remaining unemployed.

Vulnerable youths, especially those from ethnic groups, LGBTQI+, persons with disabilities and adolescent girls are still faced with ignorance and lack of knowledge and skills to prevent them from STIs/HIV and unintended pregnancy. This is due to difficult access to informed choices on family planning. In the past three years the number of STIs/HIV among youth aged 15-19 has increased.

In terms of political participation, the youth-led protests in 2020 point to the lack of meaningful political participation mechanisms for young people to express their views, and

the growing generational disparities in terms of values and political stances. Furthermore, Thai youth face limited access to quality platforms and mechanisms for participation at all levels. There is also a lack of capacity among policymakers, civil society actors and youth workers to effectively engage with young people. This is compounded by youths' low awareness and limited skills in civic participation, often due to language barriers and restrictive gender norms.²⁴¹

Opportunities

Youth and civil society actors continue to play a dynamic role, especially amid growing calls for political reform. The already existing youth networks can be utilised to strengthen youth inclusion in public policies and decision-making processes.

On YPS, although young people are not formally involved in the peace processes in the country's Southern Border Provinces, they have remained on the periphery and informally participated in the process. This represents

241. Jiman, From Policy to Practice.

an opportunity to further include youth organisations in the peace process and in related peacebuilding activities. Based on the 2022 ASEAN YDI, there are several ways that young people in Thailand can be leveraged for meaningful engagement on peace and security issues involving the youth and stakeholders.

First, the significant increase in the youth population's use of the internet presents an opportunity to engage young people through online platforms and social media. These platforms raise awareness about peace and security issues, provide information about how young people can get involved and facilitate discussions and debates.

Secondly, the increase in voter turnout rates suggests that young people in Thailand are becoming more politically engaged. This presents an opportunity to involve young people in decision-making processes related to peace and security issues. The existing policy frameworks and structures, including the National Child and Youth Development Plan, the National Commission on Youth and the National Children and Youth Council, ensure young people's systematic participation through different structures, which can be further utilised for meaningful youth engagement.

Thirdly, the improvements in education and skills present an opportunity to incorporate peace and security issues into the curriculum. This could involve introducing to the Ministry of Education the concept of Peace Education, which could be included in the curriculum of basic education for young people so they are informed about conflict resolution, human rights and global citizenship. In addition, extracurricular activities such as the Model United Nations or debate clubs, could provide young people with opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge related to peace and security issues.

Finally, targeted policies on issues such as youth labour force participation, volunteered time, youth NEET and child marriage²⁴² could help address some of the underlying factors that contribute to insecurity and conflict. By

addressing these issues, young people in Thailand could be empowered to play a more active role in promoting peace and security.

Viet Nam

Country Context

Viet Nam's socioeconomic development has been remarkable over the past 30 years. The poverty rate declined sharply from over 70 per cent to below 6 per cent, with 86 per cent of Viet Nam's remaining poor being ethnic minorities.²⁴³

Yet the country's rapid growth and industrialisation have had a detrimental impact on the environment and natural resources. Over the past two decades Viet Nam has emerged as the world's fastest-growing per-capita emitter of greenhouse gas.²⁴⁴ Compounding the issue is that much of Viet Nam's population and economy are highly dependent on natural resources, such as the Mekong River Delta, which has been increasingly vulnerable to climate impacts in recent years. The country often experiences flooding and landslides during the rainy season. The flooding in central Viet Nam in 2020 left at least 102 people dead or missing, while tens of thousands lost their homes due to rising waters.

In terms of politics, Viet Nam is a one-party state ruled by the Communist Party of Viet Nam. Freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, movement and religion remain restricted. There were reports of incidents of authorities limiting access to specific websites and requesting social media and/or telecommunication companies to remove politically sensitive content.²⁴⁵

Land disputes are common in Viet Nam as the country expands its economy rapidly through infrastructure and

242. ASEAN Youth Development Index 2022, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, p. 85.

243. More information at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/vietnam/overview>

244. World Bank. New World Bank Group Report Proposes Path for Vietnam to Address Climate Risks while Sustaining Robust Economic Growth, 1 July 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/07/01/new-world-bank-group-report-proposes-path-for-vietnam-to-address-climate-risks-while-sustaining-robust-economic-growth>

245. More information at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/vietnam>

investment projects. Land acquisition by the state or development companies often leads to prolonged disputes over insufficient compensation and poor relocation arrangements. In 2020 the construction of a military airport close to Dong Tam village in Hanoi reportedly sparked violent clashes between the authorities and villagers, resulting in the deaths of three policemen and a village leader.²⁴⁶

Understanding Youth in Viet Nam

According to the revised Viet Nam Youth Law (2020),²⁴⁷ youth is defined as those aged between 16-30. As of 2018, the youth population stood at 23,316,036, accounting for 24.6 per cent of the country's population.²⁴⁸ Male comprised a slightly higher proportion of the youth population than female (51 per cent and 49 per cent respectively). The proportion of the youth population living in rural areas is higher than in urban areas, but the gap is narrowing.

Youth Participation in Peace and Security

Government-led Initiatives on Youth, Peace and Security

Several youth policies, laws and strategies guide youth development in Viet Nam. The 2005 Youth Law provides a legal foundation for the rights of young people. It mandates the state to develop policies for youth in areas such as education, employment, health and recreation. The Law directly informed the Viet Nam Youth Development Strategy 2011-2020,²⁴⁹ which provides the groundwork for relevant ministries and sectors to respond holistically to young people's needs and rights.

The 2021-2030 Strategy was issued in mid-2021 by Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh,²⁵⁰ with six key tasks. These included strengthened access to justice and laws; education opportunities; vocational training and sustainable jobs; improved health and spiritual lives; and upholding young

people's role in socioeconomic development and national defence.

The Youth Development Strategy informs the National Socio-economic Development Strategy for 2011-2020, with a vision to build a quality young workforce and meet the new labour demands stemming from an era of industrialisation and modernisation. The Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (1992)²⁵¹ recognises young people's right to protection, care and education. It also recognises the obligations of the state, society and family to "create favourable conditions for the studies, work and recreation of young people and the development of their intellectual faculties and physical fitness."

The state-funded Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union (HCMCYU) and other youth organisations, such as the Viet Nam Youth Federation and the Viet Nam Students Association, are vital agents of youth mobilisation. HCMCYU assisted in developing the Youth Law and establishing the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2010 to design, implement and monitor youth policies. HCMCYU is present at every level of state administration and had a membership of over 7 million in 2012, accounting for 28 per cent of all young people aged 16-30.²⁵²

The Viet Nam Youth Federation is the official youth organisation in Viet Nam that provides platforms for youth participation.

Established in 1998, the National Committee on Youth of Vietnam (NCYV) aims to advise the Prime Minister on organising and coordinating youth-related issues. In 2008 the Committee began its "Green Summer" Youth Volunteer Programme, which mobilises young people to volunteer in mountainous and remote regions. Students participate in activities such as anti-illiteracy work, improving the environment and building houses for poor

246. More information at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vietnam-landrights-socialmedia-idUSKBN1ZF0YR>

247. More information at: <https://vanbanphapluat.co/law-57-2020-gh14-youth-law>

248. UNFPA, Report on Vietnamese Youth in the Period of 2015-2018, 2019, <https://vietnam.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Final%20Youth%20report%202018%20in%20Eng.pdf>

249. YouthPolicy.org. Vietnam 2011 Youth Development Strategy, https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Vietnam_2011_Youth_Development_Strategy.pdf

250. VNA, PM issues Youth Development Strategy for 2021-2030, VietnamPlus, 2021, <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/pm-issues-youth-development-strategy-for-20212030/205331.vnp>

251. More information on p.12: https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Socialist_Republic_of_Vietnam_2013.pdf?lang=en

252. OECD, Key Issues affecting Youth in Viet Nam, <https://www.oecd.org/fr/pays/vietnam/youth-issues-in-vietnam.htm>

and disadvantaged families.²⁵³ In recent years NCYV has carried out advisory and research initiatives for the National Assembly and the Government.²⁵⁴

Youth-led Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

On peacebuilding, Volunteers for Peace Vietnam (VPV)²⁵⁵ is a non-profit, voluntary organisation founded in 2005 to promote volunteerism as a tool to create peace and friendships, foster cultural and educational exchanges and address social issues. Since its establishment, VPV has welcomed over 4,500 volunteers from over 30 different countries.

On social affairs, the Global Shapers Community is a network of young people driving dialogue, action and change. The 24 members of the Ho Chi Minh City Hub²⁵⁶ have launched a series of projects on career support, mentorship and mental health advocacy. On LGBTQI+ rights, the Vietnam Youth Alliance,²⁵⁷ established in 2019, is a youth-oriented non-profit organisation that advocates for LGBTQI+ rights and provides comprehensive sex education for youth.

On environmental issues, ‘Be the Change Agents’ is an environmental youth group. Supported by the Asia Foundation, the southern branch of the group launched the initiative ‘Let’s Take the Bus’, which promotes bus travel to cut fuel use. The students worked with four universities and collected nearly 30,000 used bus tickets to show how many people take the bus. These were then used to make a massive map of Viet Nam and were displayed for a week at the Ho Chi Minh City’s Public Transport Management and Operation Centre. The Green Beli is a plastic waste reduction project founded by 15 young students.²⁵⁸ They initiated activities, including post-storm ocean debris removal and online campaigns on plastic waste, which have garnered considerable attention on Facebook.

Another initiative is the BOOVironment: To celebrate Earth Hour, the “Turn off the lights - Turn on ideas” campaign mobilises youth groups to raise community and national awareness about climate change and environmental

issues.²⁵⁹ After 10 years the campaign attracted more than 5 million youth volunteers and 50 organisations in 20 provinces and cities. In 2018 the campaign on plastic waste created broad awareness about plastic damage to the environment, which in turn, mobilized 100 stores/restaurants to reduce their plastic consumption practices.

Another example is the Root Project: By introducing Vetiver grass to the La Pan Tan commune, Mu Cang Chai District, the project aims to provide an economical, sustainable and easy-to-implement solution for landslides caused by floods and rains in mountainous regions, mostly occupied by ethnic minorities.²⁶⁰

The BRIMOFOT: “Bring more food to the table” project was initiated by a group of students and lecturers from three universities –Kien Giang, An Giang and the Royal University of Phnom Penh.²⁶¹ The project aims to promote gender equality and the participation of disadvantaged groups in wetland policymaking and management in order to ensure sustainable development and climate adaptation in the Lower Mekong River region. The project will be implemented in Tinh Bien district, An Giang Province and Ta Keo district in Cambodia.

The Youth Advisory Group (YAG), established in 2018, is an assembly of young individuals hailing from various regions of Viet Nam, including the North, South and Central areas. The YAG’s diverse group is particularly noteworthy for its inclusion of representatives from marginalised youth groups, thereby ensuring a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences within its rank and has been instrumental in several significant initiatives aimed at empowering and educating the youth of Viet Nam.

One of their notable contributions was their involvement in the revision process of the Youth Law 2020. This critical piece of legislation serves as a cornerstone for youth rights and opportunities in Viet Nam. The YAG’s participation in its revision underscores their commitment to advocating for the interests of young people.

253. More information available at: <http://www.icicp.org/resource-library/icp-publications/global-youth-service-database/asia-and-the-pacific/southeast-asia/vietnam/>

254. Based on interview with UNFPA Viet Nam.

255. For more information on Volunteers for Peace Vietnam see, <http://www.vpvn.vn/>

256. For more information on Global Shapers Community – Ho Chi Minh City Hub see, <https://www.globalshapers.org/hubs/ho-chi-minh-city-hub>

257. For more information on Vietnam Youth Alliance see, <https://vnyouthally.org/?fbclid=IwAR1Njp58GdSjMIWqAyQOUYtnk3JCZ0KthCxSQYcSzsWkJzJtJW3yDwxlfhM>

258. More information at, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/GBCLBXanh>

259. More information at, <https://diemdenxanh.com/>

260. More information at, <https://www.facebook.com/VetiverSongMa>

261. More information at, <https://brimofot.wixsite.com/official/about>

In addition to their legislative work, the YAG has also been proactive in promoting comprehensive sexuality education. Recognising the importance of informed and responsible attitudes towards sexual health, they have worked to disseminate knowledge and foster open discussions on this often-taboo subject.

Furthermore, the YAG has been a strong proponent of improving friendly sexual and reproductive health services. They understand that accessible and non-judgmental health services are crucial for the well-being of young people, particularly those from marginalised youth groups.

The Wild Act Vietnam is a local conservation NGO established in 2015.²⁶² Its mission is to inspire, motivate and empower society and individuals, especially women and young people, to engage in science-based conservation of threatened species and ecosystems.

The Mekong Youth Assembly (MYA) is a youth network from six countries that share the Mekong River: Tibet/China, Cambodia, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam.²⁶³ The MYA aims to encourage all the Mekong region's youth to bring about positive environmental changes by working with their communities. It was established under the NGO Terre des Hommes Germany – Southeast Asia Working Group for Biodiversity and is currently supported by Terre des Hommes.

UN-led Youth, Peace and Security Initiatives

In 2021 UNFPA Viet Nam provided around 3,000 Dignity Kits to the HCMC Community Youth Union to support the elderly in three central provinces affected by floods in 2020.²⁶⁴ The initiative reflects young people's active engagement in providing support for the most vulnerable in the country.

The United Nations Thematic Group on Adolescent and Youth (UNYGAY) organises the celebration of International Youth Day annually. This event serves as a platform for the UN in Viet Nam and its partners to champion youth empowerment and advocate for their active participation in development. The theme of International Youth Day,

chosen by the UN Secretariat, addresses various topics such as intergenerational dialogue and green skills, among others. In addition to these responsibilities, UNYGAY also provides policy recommendations to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) in finalizing the revised Youth Law and offers technical support to MoHA and other ministries in developing the National Report on Youth.²⁶⁵

As part of the Regional Plastic Initiatives for the Asia Pacific, UNESCO Viet Nam launched the “Youth and Innovation for Ocean” initiative on the 2020 World Oceans Day. The initiative encourages university students and young professionals to put forward innovative and practical solutions in reducing, reusing, recycling and managing plastic waste in coastal regions of Viet Nam. In 2021 Under the “We Are ABLE project – Achieving Better Living and Education” promoting education for ethnic minorities and girls, the Youth Union and UNESCO adopted the Advocacy Toolkit for Children and Youth, organised consultations and Training of Trainers, training for the student core groups and pilot implementation of the toolkit.

Since 2020 UNESCO also led the joint project “Mobilizing Cultural Dynamics and Youth Participation for Ha Noi Creative Capital” with the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation and UN Habitat. The project fosters the necessary conditions (policies, spaces, resources) for youth to articulate and act on creative ideas to influence the new development agenda of Hanoi as a UNESCO Creative City. The project also supports the incorporation of best practices for youth-owned creative enterprises with a particular focus on their product marketing and commercialisation to enhance their economic performance and contribution to the local economy.

The ‘Youth4Climate’ initiative is implemented under UNDP's ‘Climate Promise’ – a global programme that supports participating countries in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and increasing their resilience to climate impacts. In partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union (HCMCYU), ‘Youth4Climate’ builds capacity among youth representatives to advance climate actions in national and international forums.²⁶⁶

262. For more information on Vietnam Wildlife Action Centre see, <http://www.wildact-vn.org/>

263. More information at: <http://www.mekongyouth.org/about/>

264. P. Anh, UNFPA provides \$180,000 in flood relief to elderly Vietnamese. VnExpress International, 2021, <https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/unfpa-provides-180-000-in-flood-relief-to-elderly-vietnamese-4227299.html>

265. Based on an interview with UNFPA Viet Nam.

266. More information at: <https://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/youth4climate-conference--unlocking-youth-potentials-and-innovat.html>

Under the UNDP regional project Youth Co:Lab, Youth Co:Lab Viet Nam is a joint initiative between UNDP Viet Nam, the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) and the Citi Foundation. Working at both the national and subnational levels, Youth Co:Lab leverages public, private, academic and youth organisation partners to strengthen Viet Nam's ecosystem for youth social entrepreneurship and innovation.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

Viet Nam's overall ASEAN YDI²⁶⁷ was 0.661 in 2022, with a strong increasing trend since 2013. Viet Nam scored above the regional average in the 'Safety and Security' domain and the highest score of 0.765 per cent in the 'Participation and Engagement' domain through youth volunteerism and digitalisation.²⁶⁸

However, young people in Viet Nam still face significant barriers in terms of physical and mental health conditions, employment opportunities and vocational skills.

Young people are more likely to be unemployed, be among the working poor than adults, and are more vulnerable to low wages, informal employment and economic shocks.²⁶⁹ Moreover, gender, ethnicity, location, income and region are crucial in determining discrepancies in youth employment outcomes. For instance, young males are more likely to work as informal workers, whereas young females are more likely to be unemployed and receive no education or training (NEET).

At the policy level the state budget for youth remains constrained. There are also significant overlaps of mandate and responsibilities among three key actors related to youth affairs: the Ministry of Home Affairs, the National Committee on Vietnamese Youth and the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union.²⁷⁰

Youth participation in Viet Nam is commonly understood as volunteerism.²⁷¹ While youth policies and strategies are in place, youth participation in the formulation of youth-related policies is still low. According to the National Youth Report developed by MOHA and UNFPA in 2015, only 14.4 per cent of youth have participated in any part of the policy development processes, in part due to policymakers' lack of consultations. The 2022 Special Report on Youth Climate Action in Viet Nam highlighted that young people often lack the knowledge, self-confidence and communication channels needed to engage effectively with policymakers or contribute to policy development.²⁷²

In general, young people are not transparent about the policy contribution process or the opportunity for youth participation. Thus they do not understand their role in policy issues, leading them to think they are incapable of participating in and contributing to the process because their voices will not be heard.²⁷³ In addition, without guidance or aspirations to become policymakers, and if they do not work in relevant fields, it is difficult for young people to fully understand the wide range of policies issued by different ministries. It is difficult for them to actively learn without the help of experts.²⁷⁴

Socioeconomic inequalities play a key role in youth participation. The better-off and better-educated youth show more interest in politics and social affairs and are more likely to become members of youth organisations.

267. The YDI score is a number between 0 and 1, with 0 reflecting the lowest youth development and 1 reflecting the highest level of youth development attained in the region. More information available at: https://asean.org/storage/2017/10/ASEAN-UNFPA_report_web-final-05sep.pdf

268. ASEAN Youth Development Index 2022, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, p. 4.

269. OECD, Key Issues affecting Youth in Viet Nam, <https://www.oecd.org/fr/pays/vietnam/youth-issues-in-vietnam.htm>

270. Ibid.

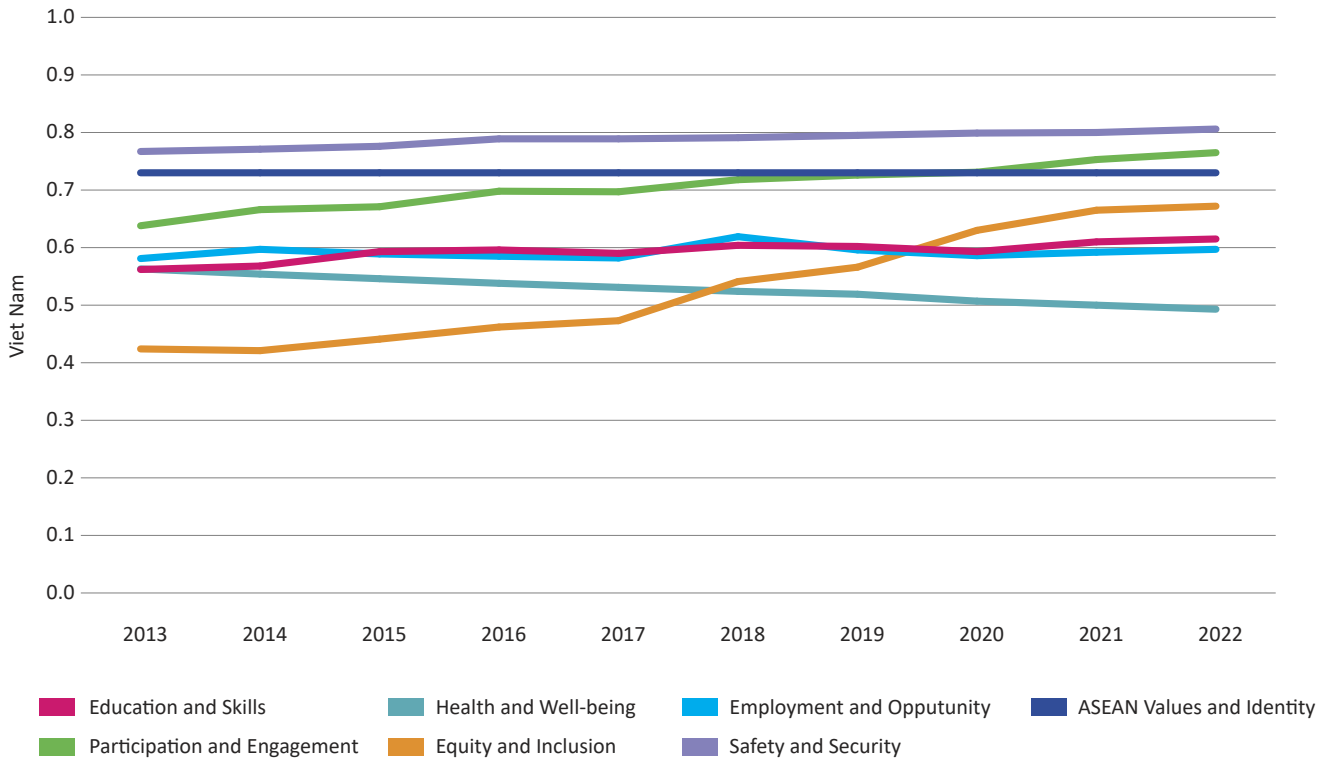
271. More information at: <https://www.oecd.org/dev/inclusivesocietiesanddevelopment/youth-issues-in-vietnam.htm>

272. Special Report Youth for Climate Action in Viet Nam, UNDP, 2022, pp. 13-15.

273. Ibid.

274. Ibid.

Figure 12. Overall YDI and Domains Score for Viet Nam, ASEAN Youth Development Index (2022)



Opportunities

The presence of multiple youth organisations allows consultation with young people to be strengthened, particularly such themes as the environment, LGBTQI+ and peacebuilding. The overlaps in mandates and responsibilities between administrations can be addressed by centralizing youth policies and youth engagement under one public body. The 2021-2030 Strategy issued in mid-2021 will also guide concrete policies and initiatives.

On YPS, as youth participation is commonly understood as volunteerism in Viet Nam, it can be used to promote peacebuilding. Youth participation in regional networks and initiatives, such as the ASEAN Youth Network, can be strengthened to enhance youth representation at the regional and/or international level.

Section 5:

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges Faced by Youth in Relation to YPS in ASEAN

The preceding overview of YPS initiatives and activities in ASEAN Member States demonstrates how young people play a significant role in their communities in a range of areas, including peacebuilding efforts, social cohesion, empowerment and public advocacy in their respective countries. However, youth need more inclusive institutional mechanisms to channel their views and make their voices heard. Despite their recognition as a demographic and peace dividend, youth are often excluded in public policymaking and decision-making processes.

This is particularly evident at the national level, where youth mechanisms such as youth parliaments or youth councils need strengthening and capacity-building to influence decisions made on legislative matters, including domestic budgets, peace negotiations and just transitions. The empowerment of young people of diverse backgrounds and identities to participate in decision-making processes at all levels can be facilitated by governments, public institutions and multilateral stakeholders taking steps to address the challenges and barriers to youth inclusion.

Since youth are not a homogenous group, their diverse backgrounds and intersecting identities should be recognised and acknowledged to ensure a broader range of youth participation and engagement. Such efforts will not only benefit the youth demographic but also contribute to more diverse, equitable and effective governance in support of peace and security.

The YPS Agenda provides a framework that enables young people to participate in governance, peace and security at all levels. However, in some ASEAN Member States, many young people feel that government officials are often unaware of the YPS Agenda, which limits opportunities for youth engagement. In the absence of institutional frameworks for the YPS Agenda implementation and mechanisms for meaningful engagement opportunities, young people often express dissatisfaction with what they perceive as tokenistic outreach by governments, regional organisations, other stakeholders and international partners, including the UN. Therefore it is crucial to raise awareness of the YPS Agenda and institutionalise policies that promote youth empowerment and inclusion in peace and security.

The country-by-country assessment of YPS shows that youth in several ASEAN countries are facing diverse and severe challenges like cyber-security, digital surveillance and online ‘hate speech’, which is having a harmful impact on their

work, activities and programmes. In addition, some young peacebuilders are facing challenges with the lack of human rights protection and other youth-specific obstacles such as unequal access to quality education, gender inequality, informal employment, rural-urban disparities and the digital divide.

It is important to recognise that the implementation of youth civic participation strategies may vary across various governments in ASEAN. Therefore it is imperative that prompt and effective measures are taken to protect the voices of youth and ensure their meaningful engagement in shaping regional peace and security.²⁷⁵

The genuine inclusion of youth in decision-making processes is essential for building and sustaining peace in ASEAN countries. However, several conservative social and cultural norms that prevail in some Member States in the region pose a significant challenge to achieving this objective. The ‘seniority culture’ that often views young people as ‘inexperienced’ and undeserving of being part of consultative processes needs to be addressed in a constructive manner.

Additionally, discriminatory gender roles and norms that discriminates against non-binary youth and restrict the participation of young women in decision-making must be eliminated. The same applies to young people with disabilities, young ethnic minorities, young migrants and refugees, whose voices are often at the periphery or silenced within discussions about peace. Some regional frameworks have emerged to address issues of participation, such as the Bali Declaration on the Enhancement of the Role and Participation of the Persons with Disabilities in ASEAN Community.

Yet there is still a need to strengthen these frameworks to be more inclusive and responsive to young people’s voices and needs within the region. To promote sustainable peace, it is imperative to recognise the value and potential of young people and to empower them to participate in

decision-making processes in a manner that respects cultural traditions and practices – such as through mentorship, intergenerational dialogues and the transfer of local knowledge and wisdom.

The youth in the region will face the brunt of climate-related security risks, yet they are often excluded from the conversation. It is imperative to acknowledge that climate-related security risks are highly specific to the context and impact regions, countries and communities differently. Therefore an intergenerational and integrated approach is required to analyse and respond to the risks faced by women, men and youth.²⁷⁶

These risks are particularly significant in areas where past or ongoing crises have already weakened institutions and communities’ capacity to adapt to the changing environment.²⁷⁷ The prospect of advancing the Climate, Peace and Security (CPS) Agenda in ASEAN provides the opportunity to address these challenges and risks, but future efforts to promote CPS must be inclusive and sensitive to the needs of the youth.

Although youth-led organisations and networks remain at the forefront of advancing the YPS Agenda in the region, the role of ASEAN youth as agents of peace remains too often underrepresented and underutilised. Arguably, that exclusion is caused by 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.

In addition, there is also a need to ensure the collection of disaggregated data (including but not limited to age and gender) in order to have accurate information that would measure the quantity and quality of engagement and participation of ASEAN youth in political and peace processes. Despite the challenges young people face in ASEAN towards their significant and systematic engagement

275. United Nations, *If I Disappear Global Report on Protecting Young People in Civic Space*, 2021, <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Global-Report-on-Protecting-Young-People-in-Civic-Space.pdf>

276. See FBA, “Connecting generations: a guidance notes on inclusive intergenerational dialogue”, 2023, <https://fba.se/om-fba/publikationer/connecting-generations-a-guidance-note-on-inclusive-intergenerational-dialogue/>

277. UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Addressing the Impact of Climate Change on Peace and Security*, <https://dppa.un.org/en/addressing-impact-of-climate-change-peace-and-security>

in political and peace processes, youth continue to engage in and drive peace processes and political activities in some Member States in the region.

Opportunities for Advancing the YPS Agenda in ASEAN

Among the numerous challenges, several youth-led movements have emerged to advocate for peace, justice and human rights in ASEAN. These movements, which include the youth-led climate change movement, calls for gender equality and demands for social and political reform and have demonstrated the potential of young people to effect positive change. The YPS Agenda presents a multitude of opportunities for the advancement of youth inclusion and participation in ASEAN.

Acknowledging the agency and prioritising the empowerment of young people can unlock their potential and drive economic growth and innovation across the region, contributing to a brighter, more prosperous future for all. By focusing on youth in peacebuilding, the region can benefit from engaging and empowering young people to promote understanding, bridge divides and foster a culture of peace. Initiatives focused on education, civic participation and grassroots activism can serve as catalysts for building a foundation of peace that will last for generations.

Genuine collaboration and investment in advancing the YPS Agenda in ASEAN would mean a step towards building a more peaceful, just, and prosperous future for the region.

ASEAN has shown its commitment to advancing the YPS Agenda through various means, as highlighted in [Section III on ASEAN Initiatives in Advancing the YPS Agenda](#). By leveraging existing initiatives and investing in innovative approaches, ASEAN recognises the importance of advancing the YPS Agenda through formal structures, regional policies and focused programmes.

This can also be achieved through the integration of YPS within existing and upcoming bilateral plans, such as the [ASEAN-UN Plan of Action](#) and more dialogue partners' plan of actions, wherein partners will continue to work together to promote harmony to achieve the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. Further, supporting youth-led initiatives, such as those presented in the ['Youth-led initiatives on YPS' of Section IV of each ASEAN Member State](#), will strengthen mechanisms for meaningful engagement of young people in building and sustaining peace across the region.

The YPS Agenda provides a vital framework to amplify these voices, channel their energy and support their efforts towards positive change. Developing contextualised frameworks, such as Regional Frameworks and National Action Plans, to provide normative guidance is essential to facilitate young people's participation in all areas of governance, peace and security. As ASEAN advances its YPS initiatives, valuable insights can be derived from the AU, the LAS and the EU in their regional YPS initiatives to promote greater participation and visibility among young people and their co-ownership of the peace and security agenda. Further, there are opportunities for interregional knowledge sharing and exchange to further create a norm of engaging youth in peace and security for a more inclusive peace.

Box 5: Advancing the YPS Agenda in the African Union

The African Union (AU) has committed to promoting peace, security, and justice for all, especially young women and men facing violence, injustice and exclusion. To this end, the AU has adopted regional policies, frameworks and systematic youth-engagement mechanisms, in line with the UNSCR 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018), focusing on youth, peace and security. This adoption is crucial in enhancing the impact of peace and security policies and strategies by involving young people in addressing their challenges and allowing them to reach their full potential.

The [African Union Continental Framework for YPS \(2020\)](#) is designed to guide youth participation in governance, peace and security. The goal is to increase youth participation and visibility, allowing them to co-own the peace and security agenda. A [10-Year Implementation Plan For the Continental Framework on YPS \(2020-2029\)](#) has been established to monitor the implementation of the YPS Agenda. The AU also established the [Office of the African Union Chairperson's Youth Envoy \(AUCYE\)](#) for youth representation and systematic engagement. The AUCYE represents and advocates for the voices and interests of African youth to relevant African Union decision-making bodies for political commitments.

This is a political office with a mandate to work towards advocating for implementing policies and impactful actions that promote youth participation, engagement and leadership in line with the African Union Youth Charter and Agenda 2063, including implementing the YPS Agenda. The [Youth for Peace \(Y4P\) Africa Programme](#) was established in September 2018 to engage young people effectively in promoting peace and security on the continent.

As a result of this programme, five regional African Youth Peace Ambassadors have been appointed to work with the AU Youth Envoy to promote peace on the continent. Each cohort is elected for a two-year non-renewable tenure with the first cohort from February 2020 to February 2022, the second cohort (February 2022 to February 2024), and the newly selected third cohort will lead from February 2024 to February 2026.

Box 6: Advancing the YPS Agenda in the League of Arab States

During its forty-fifth session on 26 May 2022, the Council of Arab Ministers of Youth and Sports adopted Resolution No. 1010 to promote peace and security in the Arab region. This resolution aims to facilitate the active participation of young people in society and encourage their contributions towards this goal. The council also paved the way for the development of the Arab Strategy for Youth, Peace and Security (2023-2028), which serves as a roadmap to implement and advance the YPS Agenda in the Arab region. The strategy focuses on enhancing regional cooperation to achieve its objectives.

The [Arab Strategy for YPS](#) was developed with the support of the UN Liaison Office to the League of Arab States, the Folke Bernadotte Academy, UNDP Regional Bureau for the Arab States, UNFPA Arab States Regional Office, and youth representatives, who provided technical expertise and crucial insights through the technical support group. The Arab Strategy for YPS has five chapters.

It introduces the YPS Agenda, analyses the context affecting Arab youth, outlines the basic concepts and guidelines for implementing the strategy, emphasises the priorities and objectives linked to the UNSCR 2250 (2015), and explains the implementation approach at national and regional levels. It also highlights the Arab region's accomplishments in the YPS Agenda. This Strategy provides a regional framework and offers guidance for the implementation of the three UNSCRs 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018), 2535 (2020). National authorities will determine the best approach to implementing the strategy and recommendations within their context.

Box 7: Advancing the YPS Agenda in the EU

In recent years the EU has emphasised its commitment to encouraging young women and men's participation in decision-making processes and the roles they can play in preventing conflicts and building peace. In 2018 the [EU Conference on Youth, Peace and Security](#)²⁷⁹ provided a platform for all stakeholders to exchange ideas and recommendations on promoting young people in peacebuilding, and aimed to create an inclusive and interactive space that encouraged collaboration and cooperation between all participants.

In June 2020 the Council of the EU adopted "[Council Conclusions](#)" on 'youth in external action'²⁸⁰ which emphasised the need to actively involve young people in efforts to build lasting peace, contribute to justice and reconciliation and counter violent extremism. The EU also expressed its support for UNSCR 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018), and 2535 (2020), and for implementation of the YPS Agenda in general.

In 2022 a Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) Policy Meeting brought together young civil society experts and officials from the European External Action Service and the European Commission and resulted in [recommendations on the EU's implementation of the YPS Agenda](#).²⁸¹ It also led to the inclusion of the YPS Agenda in the Youth Action Plan in EU external action for 2022–2027.²⁸²

Enhancing Interlinkages Between Peace and Security Agendas

The YPS Agenda interlinks with other pivotal agendas such as Women, Peace and Security (WPS), Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), and Climate, Peace and Security (CPS) which provide opportunities that could be leveraged within ASEAN. It is important to underscore the significance of engaging young people in various cross-cutting areas such as WPS and PVE, climate security and human rights, given that peace has multidimensional implications in the region. ASEAN's existing and emerging regional peace and security initiatives present numerous opportunities for interlinkages that could be leveraged to build and sustain peace in the region.

The YPS, WPS, CPS and P/CVE agendas cover crucial areas of interlinkages for ASEAN in promoting regional peace and security. The WPS Agenda recognises the importance of women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. The CPS Agenda highlights youth's unique

needs and experiences and how they view climate change and take action to promote peace and stability to avert negative impacts of climate change on society. The P/CVE Agenda seeks to prevent violent extremism and promote community resilience including through recognition of youths' role as agents of peace and societal cohesion. Implementing these agendas, with attention paid to the intersections of multiple forms of discrimination, can help strengthen ASEAN's efforts to promote peace, security and regional development.

By emphasising inclusion and participation in peacebuilding efforts, particularly for diverse young people, these agendas recognise and address these groups' specific needs and contributions. By acknowledging and addressing the particular needs of diverse groups of women, youth and children, ASEAN can further promote their inclusion and participation in peacebuilding efforts, ensuring that their voices and leadership are vital in sustaining peace, stability and development in the region.

278. Report on the EU Conference on Youth, Peace and Security, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/summary_report_-_eu_conference_on_youth_peace_and_security_0.pdf

279. EU, Outcome of Proceedings Youth in external action- Council conclusions (5 June 2020), <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8629-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

280. Civil Society Dialogue Network Policy Meeting. The EU's Implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda: Gathering Young Experts' Recommendations (13 – 14 January 2022), https://eplo.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/CSDN_PM_EU_Youth_Peace_Security_Report_Jan22.pdf

281. EU, Youth Action Plan 2022-2027 (2022), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_22_5882

Box 8: Women, Peace and Security

The synergy between the WPS and YPS Agendas is crucial and should be strongly promoted especially in the context of ASEAN. Both agendas emphasise the importance of the inclusive participation of women and youth in conflict prevention, resolution, recovery and peacebuilding efforts through an intersectional approach. The WPS and YPS Agendas both emphasised the protection of women and youth in conflict, post-conflict and emergency settings. Both agendas have also faced similar challenges that require fundamental changes in social norms that empower women and youth to participate in peace and security decision-making.

There is a common and unique synergy of the WPS and YPS Agendas that complements the efforts to sustain peace in the region.²⁸² The WPS and YPS Agendas build on intergenerational collaboration through intersectional inclusion, along both gender and age lines (as well as race, class, disability, sexuality, religion, marital status, indigenous and migration status, among others), to ensure a plurality of voices and viewpoints to strengthen responses to violence and insecurity.²⁸³

In this connection, addressing the multiple and intersectional discriminations, such as by gender, age, location, income, among others, can have significant impact on individual experiences in addressing peace and security challenges at the regional and country levels, including understanding their potential role and contribution to peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution. Young women often face double marginalisation due to their age and gender, and hence their role and contributions to peace and security are often under recognised and undervalued.

The YPS Agenda emphasises the need to include young people, including young women and men. Both agendas highlight the importance of taking intersectional

approaches, considering different experiences and perspectives based on age, gender among others in peacebuilding efforts. Both agendas advocate for active participation in preventing conflict and building peace. Both WPS and YPS emphasise the need to address structural barriers and social norm change to empower women and young women to participate in peace and security decision-making and processes.²⁸⁴

While women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, post-conflict and emergency settings, they also play a critical role in sustaining peace, conflict prevention and resolution in the ASEAN region. Their voices and leadership are vital to sustaining peace, stability and development in the region. ASEAN is committed to advancing the WPS Agenda, through its political statements of endorsement and the technical provisions in its Regional Plan of Action, recognising and supporting women's significant contributions in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.

There are critical opportunities to build on the WPS agenda and further advance the YPS Agenda in ASEAN, given the common synergies and complementary efforts between the two agendas.

During the fortieth and forty-first ASEAN Summits in November 2022 in Phnom Penh, the ASEAN Leaders adopted the [ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on WPS \(RPA WPS\)](#), a crucial deliverable during Cambodia's tenure as ASEAN Chair. The Plan outlines ways to implement the four main pillars of the WPS Agenda—protection, participation, prevention and relief and recovery – along with implementation, coordination, reporting and monitoring and evaluation.

While the Plan does not explicitly mention youth or young girls, it recognises the potential of youth, particularly young women, to contribute to peace and security and needs to be harnessed effectively. The ASEAN RPA WPS is

282. UN Women, Young women in peace and security: At the intersection of the YPS and WPS agendas, 2018, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/4/young-women-in-peace-and-security>; UN DPPA-DPO, Women Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Complementarities of the two agendas, 2021, <https://peacemaker.un.org/wps-yps-complementarities-2021>

283. H. Berents, Thinking Intergenerationally: WPS and the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, 2020, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/10/thinking-intergenerationally-wps-and-youth-peace-security-agenda/>

284. UN Women, Young women in peace and security: At the intersection of the YPS and WPS agendas, 2018, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/4/young-women-in-peace-and-security>; UN DPPA-DPO, Women Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security Complementarities of the two agendas, 2021, <https://peacemaker.un.org/wps-yps-complementarities-2021>; OGIP, Our Policy Papers: Inclusive Peace, Inclusive Futures: Exploring the urgent need to further the Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security Agendas, 2019, <https://ourgenpeace.com/policy-papers/>

a significant step towards promoting peace, security, and development in the region by recognising and addressing the specific needs, experiences, and contributions of women.

The RPA WPS provides a comprehensive framework for advancing the WPS Agenda and could be further leveraged to address the unique challenges and opportunities associated with youth, particularly young women and girls.²⁸⁵ Further, the ASEAN Regional Framework on Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Disaster Management (2021-2025) have also recognised the importance of young people in disaster preparedness, recovery and response and also their engagement and participation in decision-making.

Efforts continue to advance the implementation of the WPS and YPS Agendas in ASEAN. The [Global Network of Women Peacebuilders](#) has reported on the achievements and challenges in effectively implementing the WPS and YPS Agendas in the region.²⁸⁶ UN Women in ASEAN works with young women leaders and women's organisations on governance, peace and security, including addressing emerging non-traditional security issues, such as climate security, food security, environmental protection, humanitarian assistance and disaster response, health security, and human trafficking and forced displacement.

ASEAN can further strengthen its efforts to promote peace, security and development in the region by recognising and addressing the specific needs, experiences and contributions of women and youth. While the RPA WPS provides a framework for advancing the WPS Agenda, an equivalent framework for the YPS Agenda is currently needed.

In terms of concrete recommendations for policies, programmes and partnerships:

1. **Policies:** ASEAN could develop policies that promote the inclusion of women and youth in decision-making processes related to peace, security and development. This could include policies that address barriers to participation and promote gender equality.
2. **Programmes:** ASEAN could implement programmes that build the capacity of women and youth to participate in peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts. This could include training programmes on leadership, negotiation, conflict resolution and other relevant skills. For example, in the Philippines, the Joint Programme on advancing the WPS Agenda in BARMM, jointly implemented by UN Women and UNDP, also includes a series of capacity-building training programmes for youth and women leaders on leadership, conflict resolution and other relevant skills.

In addition, the UNDP programme, called 'Support to Bangsamoro Transition', implemented in the Philippines included dedicated support for youth. It was reported that some youth leaders who participated in the said training programmes were able to use their skills to organise peace rallies and to advocate for peace in their communities. A dedicated project/programme intervention, focusing specifically on advancing the YPS Agenda, will be greatly beneficial for ASEAN and ASEAN Member States to enhance the role of young men and women in sustaining peace in the region.

3. **Partnerships:** ASEAN could establish partnerships with CSOs, international organisations and other stakeholders working to advance the synergies between the WPS and YPS Agendas. These partnerships could facilitate knowledge exchange, capacity-building, advocacy efforts and other forms of collaboration. The GNWP is a strong advocate for the WPS-YPS interlinkages.

285. The RPA on WPS has been briefed by various technical briefing and brainstorming sessions. These solicited inputs allowed for discussions among ASEAN Member States, the United Nations and dialogue partners, representatives from civil society, women and youth groups, think tanks and research institutes within the region. Several priority actions have included "youth" such as in the RPA on WPS Priority Action 1.2.3 Priority Action 1.2.6 Priority Action 1.3.4., Output 2.2. The RPA on WPS also states the need to establish the WPS Community of Practice, which includes engaging with youth.

286. Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, Policy Brief: Integrating Women, Peace and Security, Youth, Peace, and Security and Humanitarian Action Across Southeast Asia, 2021, https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/GNWP-Policy-Brief-Intersections-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-WPS-Youth-Peace-and-Security-YPS-and-Humanitarian-Action-across-Southeast-Asian-Region-2023_for-web.pdf

Box 9: Climate, Peace and Security

The [Climate, Peace and Security Agenda](#) addresses climate-related security risks that are highly context-specific, with impacts that vary across regions, countries and communities, requiring integrated analysis and responses as women, men and youth are affected in different ways. The risks are most significant where past or current risks have undermined the capacity of institutions and communities to absorb the additional stress brought on by climate change or to adapt to the changing environment. From a youth perspective, climate security represents climate change's physical, economic or societal impacts that substantially alter political stability, human security, or national security infrastructure.

Young people are increasingly at the forefront of climate change activism and adaptation efforts. Yet they are more often excluded from decision-making and sometimes still seen as passive victims or vulnerable to join armed conflicts when faced with climate-related security risks. In this context, the YPS Agenda's alignment with CPS becomes clear. Youth are vital agents of positive change in tackling climate change and environmental issues in ASEAN.²⁸⁷

Creating an enabling environment for young people to participate in decision-making, protect their rights and dignity in resource-conflict-affected situations, prevent violence and foster social cohesion would empower them to participate in peace and security initiatives that ensure the fulfilment of their rights. This includes the right to a peaceful and secure environment so that they can contribute to more inclusive and democratic societies.

ASEAN has demonstrated a commitment to addressing climate change, including through multisectoral dialogue and relevant activities involving key partners in various sectors.²⁸⁸ Youth have a unique role in instigating change, and actions on pressing global challenges are pivotal to finding innovative solutions that speak to local and global realities.²⁸⁹ Realising this, ASEAN commemorates [ASEAN Youth in Climate Action and Disaster Resilience Day](#), which signifies the critical role of ASEAN youth in alleviating crises caused by disasters and climate change.

In Viet Nam, the Department of Climate Change under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, together with 24 young Vietnamese authors, released a special report entitled "[Youth for Climate Action in Vietnam 2022](#)" which contained four key themes, including the following ones: 1. youth in climate policy and decision-making processes; 2. accelerating the transition towards a circular economy; 3. climate mitigation towards net zero; and 4. climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

In November 2023 the ASEAN-UN Regional Dialogue VI on "Climate, Peace and Security" was convened to discuss the nexus of climate change, peace and security. Among the recommendations was the urgent need to integrate CPS with the YPS Agenda in the dialogue.

This integration would ensure that ASEAN, its Member States and all stakeholders build sustainable development that is inclusive of all sectors of the community, especially youth. The inclusion of youth in consultations, especially on DRR, was emphasised, with the establishment of youth councils proposed as a means to ensure meaningful youth participation in climate change-related processes across ASEAN.

287. UNICEF Report. Children's Rights to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment in the ASEAN Region Principles and Policy Guidance, <https://www.unicef.org/eap/reports/childrens-rights-safe-clean-healthy-and-sustainable-environment-asean-region>

288. ASEAN. ASEAN State of Climate Change Report: Current status and outlook of the ASEAN region Toward the ASEAN climate vision 2050, https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ASCCR-e-publication-Correction_8-June.pdf

289. United Nations Environment Programme. Youth Programme and Initiatives, <https://www.unep.org/youth>

Box 10: Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

The interlinkages between P/CVE and the YPS Agenda are significant and multifaceted. The YPS Agenda recognises young people's positive role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Similarly, P/CVE initiatives acknowledge the crucial role of youth in preventing violent extremism. While there is no single path to violent extremism, a combination of factors can make individuals vulnerable to recruitment, including economic and social marginalisation, weak governance and institutions, political instability and violence, personal experiences of injustice and trauma and ideological influences, and involuntary recruitment.

Accordingly, there could be various youth sensitive and youth inclusive pathways for preventing and addressing violent extremism., including the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and empowerment of youth while countering terrorism.²⁹⁰

In 2019 the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) adopted the [“Work Plan of the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism for 2019-2025”](#) (also known as the Bali Workplan) where AMS encouraged youth to undertake capacity-building programmes to educate youth and other vulnerable populations on the importance of moderation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.²⁹¹

The fifth Pillar of the YPS Agenda indicates that youth involved in armed conflict may face challenges in reintegrating into their communities and may require support to rebuild their lives and contribute positively to

society. Additionally, youth involved in armed conflict can use their experiences to advocate for peace and prevent others from being recruited into armed groups.²⁹²

In line with YPS principles, the [UNOCT's Youth Engagement and Empowerment Programme \(YEPP\)](#) enabled young people from the region to engage in P/CVE decision making through youth-led participatory action research and regional policy dialogue. The programme has led the development of a network with young leaders from South and Southeast Asia to promote their inclusion in P/CVE-related policy dialogue. The global P/CVE programme is also implementing an initiative to strengthen resilience to violent extremism in Southeast Asia by enabling young people from the region to use strategic communication skills in preventing violent extremism online.

Further, the UNOCT's Global Sports Programme, co-organised together with the ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN-UN Regional Youth Forum on Preventing Violent Extremism through Sport, was held in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2022. The host of this regional forum, Thailand, played a significant role in facilitating the forum which provided a platform for young leaders from across the region to share their insights, experiences and recommendations on using sport as a tool for P/CVE.

The outcomes of these consultations informed policy recommendations that emphasise youth leadership, innovation in P/CVE strategies, effectiveness and impact measurement, evidence-based policymaking and acknowledgement of the limitations of PVE-through-sport.²⁹³

290. A. Altiok, *Outside the Box: Amplifying youth voices and views on YPS policy and practice: The Counterstrike Generation*, 2022, <https://www.interpeace.org/outside-the-box-amplifying-youth-voices-and-views-on-yps-policy-and-practice/the-counterstrike-generation/>

291. Joint Statement Thirteenth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime, <https://asean.org/joint-statement-thirteenth-asean-ministerial-meeting-on-transnational-crime-13th-ammtc/>

292. More information at: <https://www.youthpower.org/what-works-youth-and-peace-and-security>

293. ASEAN-UN Regional Youth Forum on Preventing Violent Extremism through Sport [Forum], UNOCT, UNAOC, UNICRI, ICSS, ASEAN, 15 December 2015.

Section 6:

Conclusions and Recommendations

The youth of ASEAN are crucial stakeholders in maintaining regional peace and security. It is vital to support, invest in and meaningfully engage young people from diverse backgrounds – recognising their full range of identities and intersectional experiences – in both current and future peacebuilding efforts. Their inclusion in planning and decision-making processes not only strengthens the sustainability of peace, but also creates meaningful opportunities for all relevant actors to contribute to and shape peaceful solutions.

This ASEAN-IPR YPS Study demonstrates that the meaning of ‘peace’ for youth in the ASEAN region transcends the normative and traditional meaning of the ‘absence of violence or conflict’. It includes access to and the protection of fundamental human rights, education, gender equality, climate justice, and safe civic spaces (online and offline).

All stakeholders, including youth civil society, governments, ASEAN, the UN and all other partners, must continuously work to ensure the systematic engagement of young people through broad consultations, representative platforms, and consolidated networks to enable inclusive policy development. Given the multidimensionality of peace in the region, it will be vital to find ways to engage youth in cross-cutting areas such as gender equality, ethnic and racial divisions, discrimination, P/CVE, political participation, climate security and human rights in a meaningful way.

This ASEAN-IPR YPS Study also demonstrated the rich and vibrant youth movements, organisations and networks that are already contributing to building and sustaining peace in their own ways but also showed the gaps and challenges they face in making a greater impact. The study further showed the opportunities along with the existing initiatives related to the YPS Agenda that could be leveraged in further advancing the YPS Agenda in ASEAN. This would come with strong commitment from different AMS as elaborated through the joint statements, meetings and initiatives inclusive of YPS Agenda detailed throughout the study, specifically in [Section III: YPS in ASEAN](#) and [Section IV: YPS in AMS](#).

Thus, ASEAN needs to build on and invest in existing efforts and initiatives, including those by youth civil society, to advance the YPS Agenda through formal structures, regional policies and focused programmes. These efforts should aim to strengthen initiatives and mechanisms for the systematic and meaningful engagement of young people in building and sustaining peace across the region.

The following recommendations aim to support a region-wide understanding of implementing the YPS Agenda and promote collaborative activities in line with the UNSCRs 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020). The recommendations serve as programme and policy entry points for ASEAN and national governments, civil society and international partners across the political-security,

economic, and socio-cultural pillars. By promoting deeper cooperation in working with and for youth, emerging challenges to building and sustaining regional peace and security can be addressed more effectively by ASEAN and its partners.

To ASEAN, Sectoral Bodies and Institutions

- **Set up a Special ASEAN Working Group on YPS:** Leveraging existing ASEAN mechanisms is crucial to promoting the YPS Agenda and enabling meaningful youth engagement in peace and security initiatives. Previous activities by ASEAN-IPR and ASEAN SOMY (as discussed above in [sub-Section III on ASEAN Initiatives in Advancing the YPS Agenda](#)) demonstrate the existing technical expertise in facilitating youth dialogues, including intergenerational dialogue, as an effective way to contribute to advance the YPS Agenda. It is recommended to establish a special working group to conduct discussions with relevant stakeholders, including a diverse group of young people, youth-led groups and organisations, to identify implementation strategies for further advancing YPS in ASEAN. Specifically, ASEAN-IPR, SOMY and the ASEAN Foundation, which have successfully built trust between youth and policymakers, can play an instrumental role in promoting meaningful youth participation in peace and security advocacy and initiatives.
- **Develop a Regional Plan of Action on YPS:** The [UNSCR 2535 \(2020\)](#) encourages Member States to take action on YPS by developing dedicated local, national and regional roadmaps. It is recommended for ASEAN to contextualise the YPS Agenda and create a framework leading to an ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on YPS (ASEAN RPA on YPS). Adopting the YPS Agenda in ASEAN requires incorporating its principles, particularly participation, into existing frameworks and plans. The development of an ASEAN RPA on YPS could identify concrete steps to promote youth engagement in policy dialogues, consultations and decision-making, ensuring their voices are integrated into regional peace and security processes.

Under the lead of ASEAN-IPR and SOMY, the ASEAN RPA on YPS would support youth-led initiatives through funding, capacity-building and technical support, unlocking their potential to contribute to regional peace and prosperity. Setting specific indicators and targets that could measure the advancements in youth engagement in regional peace and security within the ASEAN YDI and SOMY Work Plan is critical to adopting YPS in ASEAN.

An ASEAN RPA on YPS would advance the YPS Agenda by building on existing mechanisms for youth participation and learning from the experience of advancing Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in ASEAN. It is imperative that the ASEAN RPA on YPS be inclusive and representative of the diverse needs and perspectives of young people across the region, such as ensuring that bottom-up approaches are taken.

- **Institutionalise Youth Representation through ASEAN Youth Envoy and YPS Panel:** Young people have the power to influence and contribute to decisions that affect them at all levels and stages of YPS implementation. It is recommended that an ASEAN Youth Envoy and/or an ASEAN YPS Panel or Network could be appointed to support coordination, implementation and engagement with policymakers as active participants of regional peace and security. It would create spaces for consultation where ASEAN youth representatives can discuss and provide input on the development and implementation of YPS policy priorities and action plans.

This youth representation mechanism would ensure that youth interests are considered and included in regional peace initiatives and national government plans by fostering partnerships and mobilising youth and civil society through creating platforms and safe spaces for youth engagement. The panel could include youth representatives from ASEAN youth parliaments, youth councils, civil society groups, academic institutions, intergovernmental organisations or private sector actors.

Young people can engage in initiatives that promote social cohesion, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, while at the same time ensure that the young people at the community and country level are heard and engaged. This approach aligns with international and regional schemes such as UN Youth Delegates or AU Youth Peace Ambassadors.

- **Strengthen YPS Linkages with Regional Peace and Security Agendas in ASEAN:** The YPS Agenda is interlinked and complements several of ASEAN's existing peace and security initiatives (as discussed in the [Section V on Interlinkages of YPS with other Peace and Security Initiatives](#)). This means ASEAN could adopt an intersectional approach, with all policies, programmes and initiatives fully capturing age and gender power dynamics.

It is thus recommended that ASEAN promote and institutionalise the intersectionality and integration of YPS in existing frameworks such as the RPA on WPS

and the ASEAN Bali Workplan on PVE, as well as future possible frameworks, such as CPS. For these agendas recognise the importance of inclusion and participation in peacebuilding efforts, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women, children and youth. It is further recommended that partnerships should be mapped to support advancing YPS, including through the [ASEAN Women for Peace Registry](#)²⁹⁴ and other established ASEAN mechanisms, to facilitate collaboration in integrating youth within their peace and security initiatives.

- **Implement YPS Initiatives:** It is recommended that advancing the YPS Agenda in ASEAN could be done through several project-based regional initiatives that highlight youths' significant role and contribution to building and sustaining regional peace. The ASEAN-IPR YPS Study indicated that capacity-building programmes on YPS should be conducted at different levels for both adults and youth focused on creating intergenerational partnerships to work together on regional peace and security.

Awareness-raising activities are also needed on the existing normative frameworks – notably UNSCR 2250 (2015) and related resolutions – that can help sensitize relevant ASEAN institutions on the YPS Agenda and develop a more balanced understanding of young people's roles in peace and security. ASEAN-IPR and the ASEAN Secretariat has led several YPS-related initiatives that can be continued and strengthened, such as regional youth peace camps or intergenerational dialogues, which foster a culture of peace within the youth demographic that extends to their communities and the region.

- **Set up an ASEAN YPS 'Group of Friends':** ASEAN AMS can establish a 'group of friends' platforms to facilitate exchange among public officials of country delegations to ASEAN and foster the political will to advance the YPS Agenda in the region. This exchange can leverage the experience and expertise from within the region, such as the Philippines' NAP YPS and Indonesia's integration of youth in NAP PVE. The ASEAN YPS dialogues and forums exemplify intergenerational engagement, ensuring young people are active contributors. Flexibility and adaptability

should be critical principles in advancing the YPS Agenda in each AMS.

- **ASEAN Community Vision Post-2025 (ASEAN Vision 2045):** As ASEAN is currently drafting the ASEAN Vision for Post-2025, as undertaken by the High-Level Task Force, ASEAN Member States should consider incorporating strategic action lines for the youth to be influential and active contributors to community building in the region. This is to ensure that the YPS Agenda remains relevant, sustainable and continuously developed for the next years.

To the ASEAN Member States

- **Promote and adopt the YPS Agenda:** In line with [UNSCR 2250 and succeeding resolutions](#), the YPS Agenda should be localised by each ASEAN Member State to address the context-specific challenges and harness existing opportunities in achieving a youth-inclusive peace. For instance, the Philippines has developed the first NAP YPS through multi-stakeholder efforts and includes a systematic mechanism for youth participation in peacebuilding initiatives (see section on [sub-Section I on Localising the YPS Agenda through NAPs](#) and [Annex 4 on Philippine NAP YPS](#)). Several YPS workshops, including the ARF Workshop on YPS Agenda in December 2021, recommended that the ARF and its Member States, as well as ASEAN and other regional organisations, consider developing local, national and regional action-plans on YPS.

Localising the YPS Agenda by each ASEAN Member State through a NAP YPS would be important in setting priorities, coordinating actions and tracking progress. In addition, there are more ways of localising the YPS Agenda in-country, such as mainstreaming YPS into existing government policies and programmes, developing national YPS projects and offering youth peacebuilding support.²⁹⁵ Ensuring the meaningful participation of youth by working with and for youth in the entire localising process of the YPS Agenda is crucial to ensure that youth gain ownership of the agenda.

294. ASEAN Women for Peace Registry is a means to take stock of its women experts in peace processes, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the ASEAN Charter, and pursuant to the function of the ASEAN-IPR to "pool expertise and support of ASEAN bodies". More information at: <https://asean-aipr.org/asean-women-peace-registry/>

295. For more information, see Implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at Country-level: A Guide for Public Officials, 2022, <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/YPS-guide-for-public-officials-1.pdf>

- **Institutionalise YPS Dialogue Fora:** Creating avenues for experience and knowledge exchange is vital for advancing the YPS Agenda in ASEAN. It is recommended that YPS dialogues and fora are organised by ASEAN-IPR, SOMY or other platforms where ASEAN youth peacebuilders and peace and security experts can come together for intergenerational dialogues and engagement. These meetings must ensure active participation and contribution from the youth, promote inclusivity and encourage meaningful discussions while avoiding tokenism and harmful power dynamics.

This could also entail conducting public and internal workshops and dialogues for information-sharing on the implementation of the YPS Agenda, especially by YPS champions from government, civil society and youth who could support continuous learning and upscaling of YPS efforts. Creating new institutions, such as a YPS Office or YPS Department, dedicated to advancing the YPS Agenda, could also provide additional platforms for youth engagement.

To the International Community

- **Strengthen Partnerships for YPS:** Implementing the YPS Agenda in ASEAN requires strategic action and strong partnerships to create a more peaceful and stable region. Strengthening partnerships among governments, partners and CSOs in ASEAN is crucial to promoting cross-sectoral collaboration on YPS issues to promote a more inclusive regional and global peace and security. In addition to the recent inclusion of YPS in the [second ASEAN-UN Plan of Action \(2021-2025\)](#)²⁹⁶ the [ASEAN-UK Dialogue Partnership Plan of Action \(2022-2026\)](#)²⁹⁷ and the [ASEAN-Australia Plan of Action to Implement the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership \(2025-2029\)](#),²⁹⁸ it is recommended that other ASEAN external partners also integrate the YPS Agenda in joint plans of action, promote youth participation in peacebuilding and explore political-security cooperation in advancing the YPS Agenda.

Further, supporting the expansion of UN-led international community initiatives and other international organisation networks at regional and national levels to promote further youth participation in peace and security. This includes providing resources, technical support and capacity-building for AMS to plan, develop and implement the YPS Agenda at the national and regional levels, such as through NAP YPS and ASEAN RPA on YPS.

- **Support Evidence-based YPS Initiatives:** To fully achieve the goals of the YPS Agenda, it is recommended to conduct further research and data collection on YPS issues to better understand the needs and perspectives of young people in the ASEAN region. This can be achieved by collaborating with academia, think-tanks, young researchers and young people themselves to share their experiences and initiatives for peace and security.

Additionally, advocating for human rights and the rule of law in ASEAN, especially in conflict-affected areas, is crucial. Supporting efforts to promote accountability for human rights violations and safety for young peacebuilders is also essential. The international community could initiate or support strategic engagements, such as intergenerational dialogues, where youth can interact with government officials, social entrepreneurs and peace experts.

Furthermore, the international community could also support ASEAN, its Member States and ASEAN youth peacebuilders in developing contextualised guidance and practical toolkits from evidence-based studies for the implementation and advancement of the YPS Agenda, including having a second regional study on YPS to see the progress from this initial study as a benchmark.

- **Support the Innovation of the YPS Agenda:** The international community's support for providing technical expertise and resources can lead to innovative approaches for YPS initiatives in the region. Investing in technology and digital initiatives can further engage

296. Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations (2021-2025), <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASEAN-UN-POA-2021-2025-final.pdf>

297. Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-United Kingdom Dialogue Partnership (2022-2026), <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/FINAL-ASEAN-UK-POA-2022-2026.pdf>

298. Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2025-2029), <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Adopted-ASEAN-Australia-POA-2025-2029.pdf>

young people in YPS and amplify their voices and perspectives. The international community can also build on the 2021 ASEAN-IPR Youth and Technology Training Programme as it continues to utilise digital platforms to build and sustain regional peace.

It is also recommended that the international community support innovative strategies in the integration of the YPS Agenda as a complement to WPS, P/CVE and CPS initiatives. Expanding these interlinking initiatives can ensure a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to YPS in ASEAN. The UN and the international community should support, invest in and partner with ASEAN, AMS and CSOs, including youth-led organisations and networks, in advancing the YPS Agenda in ASEAN.

To the Youth-led Organisations and Civil Society

It is paramount for youth-led organisations and CSOs to closely collaborate with ASEAN, governments and other partners towards promoting peace and security in the ASEAN region. To achieve this, the following recommendations are suggested:

- **Harness the Collective Power of ASEAN Youth:** Youth-led organisations and CSOs should conduct consultations with their respective groups and ensure that the voices and concerns of a broader population of ASEAN youth are heard and integrated into the YPS policies. This means reaching out to the youth who are often vulnerable and marginalised – such as youth refugees and migrants, young LGBTQI+, young women, youth living with disabilities and youth from minorities – and ensuring that they are consulted, engaged and represented.

Youth-led organisations and CSOs should also continuously build their capacity to effectively contribute to the development and implementation of the ASEAN RPA on YPS and other future initiatives, such as the appointment of an ASEAN Youth Envoy or the setup of the ASEAN Youth Panel, together with ASEAN, including developing skills and knowledge on peacebuilding,

conflict resolution and advocacy. By leveraging networks and enhancing capacity, youth will be better equipped to hold all stakeholders accountable for implementing the YPS Agenda in ASEAN.

- **Partner with ASEAN in Advancing the YPS Agenda:** It is recommended for youth-led organisations and CSOs to actively seek partnerships with ASEAN to advance the YPS Agenda. Some youth-led groups have already paved the way and contributed to past and ongoing regional initiatives on YPS (as discussed in [Subsection III Civil Society and Youth-led Organisation YPS Initiatives in ASEAN](#)).

This momentum of youth engagement should continue as it ensures that youth voices are heard and reflected, especially in the next phases of institutionalising the YPS Agenda. Strengthening existing and establishing new intergenerational partnership is essential as youth brings expertise that guarantees that the ASEAN initiatives on the YPS Agenda align with the needs and priorities of young people in regional peace and security.

- **Take Ownership in the Future Process of Advancing YPS in ASEAN:** Youth-led organisations and civil society groups are recommended to take ownership of the YPS Agenda by taking an active role in the regional YPS process together with ASEAN. Youth-led organisations and CSOs are recommended to internally coordinate on YPS initiatives under an agreed mechanism. This could be done through a ‘youth-led community of practice’ that could be the foundation of co-leading efforts with ASEAN on the implementation of the ASEAN RPA on YPS.

Furthermore, once systematic and institutionalised youth engagement mechanisms within ASEAN are in place, such as through the ASEAN Youth YPS Panel, the collective youth-led organisations and CSOs are ready to engage and influence the advancement of the YPS Agenda in the region, especially by ensuring that the voices of the vulnerable and marginalised are amplified.

Section 7:

Annexes

Annex 1: ASEAN Youth Declaration on Peace and Tolerance (2018)

ASEAN YOUTH DECLARATION ON PEACE AND TOLERANCE

WE, the Youth of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN);

ENGAGING IN DIALOGUES during the occasion of the “ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) Youth Conference on Peace and Tolerance: Building Unity and Common Understanding in Countering Intolerance and Violent Extremism”;

EMPHASISING the Youth is one of the driving forces and primary stakeholders in ASEAN’s efforts to build and uphold peace to ensure the sustainable and inclusive development of its people as part of the ASEAN Community-building processes;

OBSERVING the peace and security challenges in the form of radicalism, violent extremism, and terrorism in recent years, that are posing a serious threat to the cohesiveness of communities in the region and hampering the ASEAN Community-building process;

REALISING with concern, the direct impact of such peace and security challenges, marked by increasing intolerance in communities, including through social media, that would pose negative and lasting effect to future generations;

REAFFIRMING that the Youth in ASEAN are for peace and against all forms of intolerance that could cause radicalism, violent extremism, and other forms of violence;

STRESSING the importance to enhance the role and contribution of the Youth in promoting peace and tolerance in our communities;

STAND READY to support and contribute to the realisation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 in maintaining peace, security and stability with the spirit of Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society;

ACKNOWLEDGING AND SUPPORTING the UN Security Council Resolution of 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security;

WELCOMING the support from our fellow Youth of the Republic of Korea in promoting culture of peace and tolerance in the region.

DO HEREBY DECLARE TO:

1. Empower Youth in ASEAN as primary stakeholders in peace building efforts and initiatives to prevent, address, and counter radicalism, extremism, terrorism, and all forms of intolerance based on gender, race, ethnicity, and religion,
2. Affirm our commitment as the ASEAN future leaders to actively take part in the promotion of peace and tolerance, in line with one of ASEAN's purposes, to maintain and enhance peace, security and stability, as well as to further strengthen peace-oriented values in the region,
3. Pursue cooperation, support and assistance in partnership with the government, private sectors, civil society organisations, media, think tanks, academes, and all other relevant stakeholders to enhance the role of the Youth in promotion of peace and tolerance,
4. Mobilise, engage, and lead such efforts at the community level, through - among others - constructive dialogues or people-to-people contact, to achieve mutual understanding, peace, and tolerance,

5. Create and promote narratives of peace, tolerance, and pluralism through various platforms such as art, creative industry, as well as information and communication technology (ICT) – including social media,
6. Strengthen interaction, collaboration, and network among Youth within ASEAN through various avenues of communications as envisioned in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025,
7. Pledge our resolve and commitment to this Declaration for its effective implementation and to realise a common vision for an inclusive, sustainable, resilient, dynamic, and harmonious ASEAN Community.

WE REQUEST the ASEAN-IPR, the Secretariat of ASEAN and all relevant sectoral bodies under the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), and ASEAN Dialogue Partners to support the realisation and implementation of this Declaration and its Annex through appropriate mechanisms.

DONE in Jakarta, Indonesia, on this Twentieth Day of October in the year Two Thousand and Eighteen.

Annex 2: Joint Statement on Promoting the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at the ASEAN Regional Forum (2020)

JOINT STATEMENT ON PROMOTING THE YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA AT THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM

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;

EMPHASISING the importance of preventing radicalisation to violence, and VECT among youth, as well as preventing the participation of youth in transnational organised crime, as a way to preserve stability and development, and ensure progress in peacebuilding and stabilisation efforts;

EMPHASISING 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;

RECOGNISING 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 organisations, international financial institutions, civil society

organisations, women's groups, youth organisations, and the private sector, taking into account local and cultural contexts, and national priorities and policies;

FURTHER RECOGNISING 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, 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 capitalise 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;

RECOGNISING 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 Radicalisation 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 organisations, 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, recognising 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 marginalisation 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 organisations, 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 organisations 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 organisations, 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

Annex 3: Outcomes and Recommendations - ASEAN-IPR-UN Workshop on Advancing Youth, Peace and Security (2022)

Final



ASEAN-IPR-UN WORKSHOP ON ADVANCING YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY

7-8 December 2022: Vientiane, Lao PDR

Outcomes and Recommendations

The ASEAN-IPR-UN Workshop on Advancing Youth, Peace and Security in ASEAN was jointly organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation and the United Nations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR hosted the meeting in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The event was the latest in a series of ASEAN-UN regional events organised after the ASEAN-UN Comprehensive Partnership was adopted by the Leaders of ASEAN and the UN Secretary-General in 2011.

The event was opened by H.E. Mr. Thongphane Savanhphet, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR and Lao PDR's ASEAN SOM Leader; H.E. Mr. Michael Tene, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Political-Security Community; Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations of the United Nations; and Ms. Sururoh Tullah Ade Doin Uthman, representative of the National Youth Council of Indonesia. In his opening remarks, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs emphasised that "maintaining and promoting sustainable peace and security" required "multidimensional approaches, close cooperation and collaboration among countries and nations and active and constructive contributions of all parts of society, including youth", adding that "youths make up a vast majority of populations and are the future of every nation and a positive force in advancing a just and inclusive society."

Participants in the two-day event included: Senior Officials from ASEAN Member States, ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN-IPR including representatives of the ASEAN-IPR Governing Council, ASEAN-IPR Advisory Board, members of the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry as well as the ASEAN-IPR Executive Director and the ASEAN-IPR Secretariat.; representatives of regional youth networks and national civil society; and officials from the United Nations and regional organisations, including the African Union, the League of Arab States, and the Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe.

The Workshop was held under Chatham House rules, in line with the concept note approved by the ASEAN-IPR Governing Council. The sessions focused on sharing of knowledge and comparative experiences from the UN, regional organisations, and regional youth representatives and civil society. This following summary outlines the outcomes and recommendations suggested by participants, without attribution. This document was shared with all participants for their review prior to distribution.

A: Suggestions and Recommendations for ASEAN:

(i) Regional Plan of Action on YPS

- Several participants recommended that ASEAN identify concrete ways to mainstream Youth, Peace and Security into the ASEAN Community, including by **developing an ASEAN regional framework or plan of action on YPS** to support YPS efforts at the regional and national levels, including by leveraging existing youth-centred mechanisms. Some participants also impressed on the need for complementarity between regional-level and national-level efforts.
- One speaker emphasised the importance of the political process that leads to a normative framework, and several participants emphasised the **need to meaningfully engage with youth from the beginning of the process** of developing a regional YPS plan/framework (as well as national plans of action on YPS), including through intergenerational dialogues, multistakeholder consultations, partnerships, and awareness raising campaigns.
- Several speakers noted the **importance of regional youth ambassadors/envoys** for championing YPS at the regional level and for the operationalization of any regional YPS framework or plan of action.

(ii) ASEAN Regional Initiatives linked to YPS

- One speaker suggested that **Indonesia's Chair of ASEAN in 2023 may provide an opportunity to advance the YPS Agenda** with concrete steps.
- Some speakers suggested that **engaging with the ASEAN Meetings on Youth (AMMY and SOMY) would help secure regional and government ownership of the YPS Agenda**, and proposed that ASEAN-IPR engage with ASEAN SOMY through YPS-focused dialogues.
- One speaker underlined **the cross-pillar and cross-sectoral nature of YPS (ASEC)**, which may require not only the engagement of the youth sector but also of other relevant sectors, and suggested this to be looked into through a mapping of stakeholders.

(iii) Engagement with Youth Civil Society

- Participants recognised the importance of partnerships and mobilising youth civil society to advance the YPS Agenda, and stressed the **importance of creating platforms and safe spaces to engage youth, enhance trust between youth and policy-makers, and promote the active participation of youth**. A number of speakers suggested that trust and equal treatment of youth and non-youth in intergenerational engagements was critical in order to avoid tokenism and to overcome power dynamics.
- One participant **proposed that assessments be undertaken to ascertain youth and community needs**, and to inform future approaches to YPS.
- Several speakers shared practical experiences that demonstrated the importance of **developing multi-stakeholder YPS platforms and a governance infrastructure** that ensure the effective inclusion of youth voices in shaping policies at the national and regional levels. One speaker noted the **importance of fostering youth leadership** for meaningful dialogue, including through public and private sector partnerships.

(iv) *YPS Engagement at the National Level*

- Some participants suggested that **technical capacity building programmes be designed for both government officials (policy-makers) and youth** to enhance their ability to engage meaningfully with each another in the areas of YPS.
- Several participants noted the importance of **sustainable funding** for ensuring meaningful, localised, inclusive, and effective youth engagement.
- One speaker recommended that youth networks be engaged to support national governments' YPS efforts, including through **national youth dialogues**.
- Some speakers recommended concrete steps such as **engaging with the Indonesian Youth Ambassador network and the ASEAN study centres in universities** to enhance outreach on YPS to youth.

B: *Suggestions and Recommendations for the ASEAN-IPR:*

(i) *ASEAN-IPR Regional Study on YPS*

- A number of participants impressed the importance of generating more evidence on YPS and recommended that ASEAN-IPR undertake a **regional study on youth participation in peace and security**, which would include an assessment of the status of implementation of the YPS Agenda in the region.
- Some participants encouraged ASEAN-IPR to engage with the ASEAN youth sector, including by **developing an innovative platform to meaningfully engage youth, enable intergenerational dialogue and partnerships, and monitor YPS implementation in the region by capturing initiatives**.
- One speaker recommended that ASEAN-IPR explore ways to increase knowledge and awareness of UNSC Resolution 2250 in the region.
- One speaker suggested that ASEAN-IPR facilitate **regional, national, and local exchanges between young peacebuilders** to share experiences and initiatives.
- One participant suggested that in the event that the "ASEAN Panel of the Wise" initiative comes to fruition, **ASEAN-IPR consider nominating a youth member for the Panel of the Wise** and use that mechanism to facilitate intergenerational exchanges.

C: *Recommendations related to Interlinkages between WPS-YPS Agendas:*

- Several participants encouraged **ASEAN to closely focus on the interlinkages between Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and YPS** to ensure synergy between regional efforts to implement these two Agendas, including by avoiding duplication in implementing activities.

(i) *ASEAN WPS-YPS Mechanisms, including AWPR*

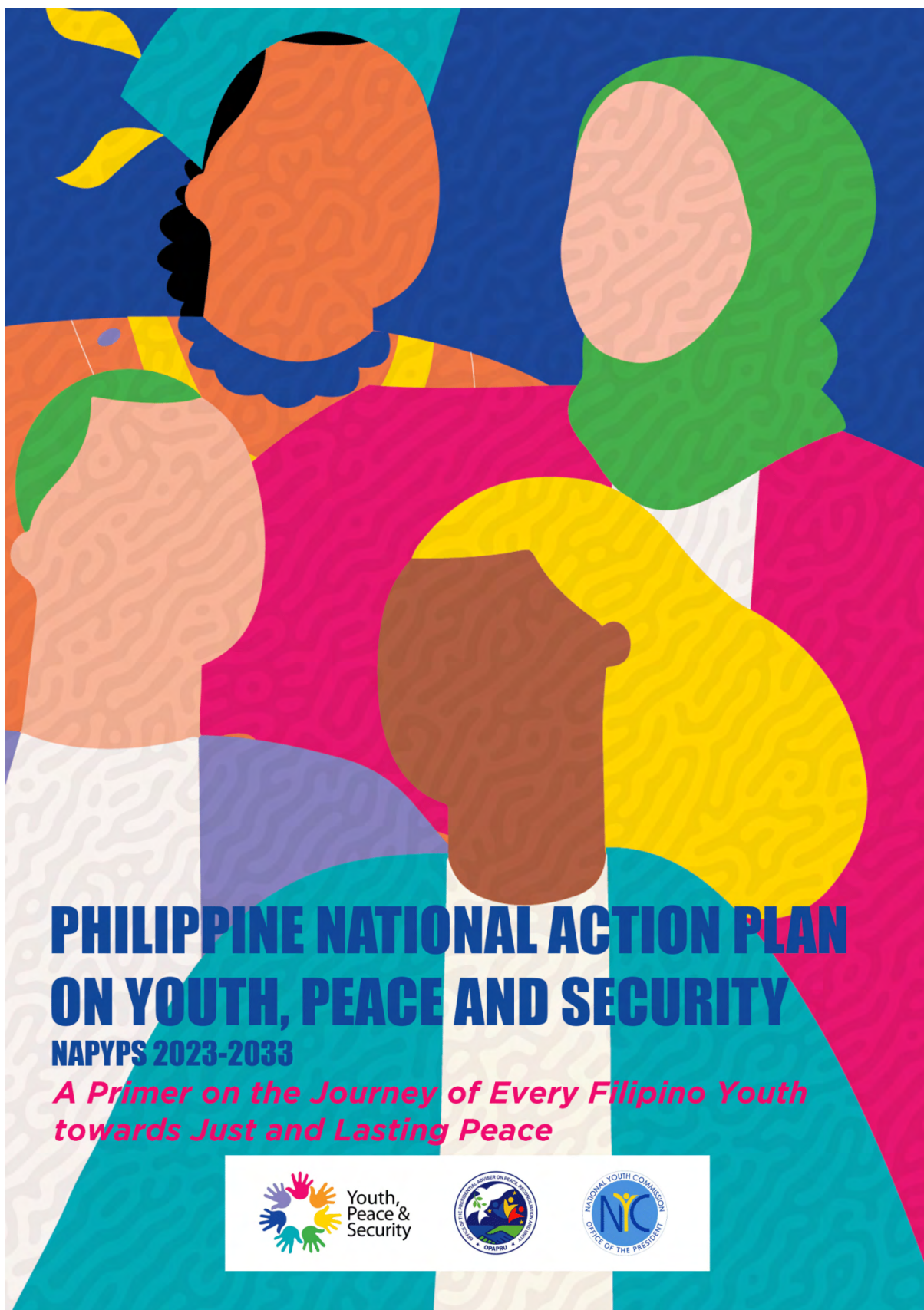
- Participants suggested that **ASEAN-IPR and the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry (AWPR) provide a platform for further practical discussions on the WPS-YPS**

linkages, including in terms of institutionalisation of the Agenda, government ownership, and lessons learned from the WPS regional process.

- Several participants recommended that **WPS and YPS initiatives be synergised to maximise resources and prevent duplication, including in the implementation of the ASEAN WPS regional plan of action** which includes several areas focused on youth.
- One speaker emphasised that the barriers to youth engagement were similar to those to women's engagement, and suggested **joint and inclusive dialogues as a mechanism for consolidating shared challenges and opportunities**.
- One speaker proposed that **ASEAN-IPR and AWPR facilitate inter-regional exchanges**, as an initial step between ASEAN and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) women and young women peacebuilders, **to enhance knowledge on women and youth empowerment**.

31 January 2023

Annex 4: Philippine National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security: A Primer (2022)



01

The Philippine National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security or NAPYPS is a 10-year plan that details key action points strengthening the **meaningful participation** of young people in peacebuilding, governance, protection of human rights, and the implementation of global and national sustainable development agenda. NAPYPS is the first youth-led and multi-stakeholder driven national policy on youth, peace and security in the country.

Anchored on the Philippines' peace policy agenda and the **United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250** – the first resolution on youth, peace and security adopted in 2015 – the Philippine NAPYPS recognizes the **unique experiences and role of the youth before, during, and after conflict and young people's inclusion and participation as key dimension of building and sustaining peace and security for all.**



Did You Know?

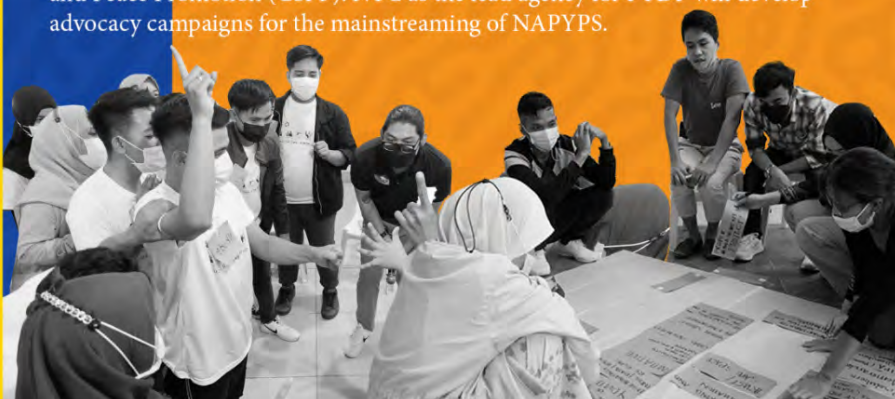
- ✓ The Philippines is the **first country in Asia** and the **fourth globally** to develop and adopt a National Action Plan on Youth, Peace, and Security.
- ✓ The NAPYPS is the **first youth-led and multi-stakeholder driven** national policy on peace and security in the Philippines - written and presented **by the Filipino youth, for the Filipino youth.**
- ✓ The Philippines is also the first country in Asia to have a National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAPWPS) and NAPYPS hand-in-hand.
- ✓ UNSCR 2250 notes that today's generation of youth is the largest the world has ever known, which is why the Philippine NAPYPS is anchored in guiding principles of youth-centric, inclusiveness, and participatory.

The Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue convened by the **Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity (OPAPRU)** and the **National Youth Commission (NYC)** served as the platform that regularly convened the youth stakeholders, government and non-government agencies, local and international partners such as the **BARMM Bangsamoro Youth Commission (BYC)**; **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**; **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)**; **European Union (EU)**; **Norwegian Embassy**; **Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)**; **LGUs**, **CSO partners**, and most importantly, the local and national youth organizations.

Institutionalizing the NAPYPS into the Philippine Development Agenda and the Comprehensive Peace Process

The fundamental role of the Filipino youth in peacebuilding is guided by the **Philippine Development Plan (PDP)** in its chapter on *Attaining Just and Lasting Peace*, where the Peace and Development Agenda featured the NAPYPS as a core policy in addressing the peace and security challenges faced by the youth, particularly those in conflict-affected and conflict-vulnerable areas.

This is further defined in the crafting of the **Philippine Youth Development Plan (PYDP) 2023-2028** to be led by the NYC, as the NAPYPS becomes one of the key strategies for its Peacebuilding and Security Centre of Youth Participation. NAPYPS will be further discussed in multi-stakeholder consultations for the PYDP, promoting the active participation of **Sangguniang Kabataan (SK)**, youth organizations, government agencies, and other stakeholders in implementing the NAPYPS. Module development for the training of SK will also include the NAPYPS and Conflict Sensitivity and Peace Promotion (CSPP). NYC as the lead agency for PYDP will develop advocacy campaigns for the mainstreaming of NAPYPS.



BY THE FILIPINO YOUTH, FOR THE FILIPINO YOUTH:

The Philippine NAPYPS is guided by the UNSCR 2250 Pillars of
“PARTICIPATION | PROTECTION | PREVENTION | PARTNERSHIP |
DISENGAGEMENT | REINTEGRATION”
in identifying the following overarching goals and strategies:

02

PARTICIPATION

The Filipino youth emphasize the need for personal safety as a cornerstone of active participation, as well as the recognition of their strengths and capacities to be empowered and to proactively participate in changing their situations and communities.



Outcome: Filipino youth are actively engaging themselves in peace and security issues - accompanying the different peace processes, participating in different levels of decision making, policy formulation, and implementation of peace and security initiatives.

Overall Strategy: Application of a youth-inclusive approach in all systems, procedures and mechanisms of peace and security governance, including conflict prevention and resolution, post-crisis reconstruction, public safety and order, safeguarding of territorial integrity and sovereignty efforts, and the promotion of national peace, reconciliation, and unity.

PROTECTION

In order to sustainably participate in peacebuilding, young people need to be protected from threats of violence and violent extremism.



Outcome: Young peacebuilders, especially those who work in human rights and social activism, are protected from all forms of violence, including gender-based and sexual violence, especially during armed conflict and other humanitarian crises.

Overall Strategy: Promotion, employment, and monitoring of youth-sensitive and youth-responsive protection mechanisms in compliance with human rights protocols and standards, shielding the youth from threats of conflict, all forms of violence, misrepresentation, and recruitment of extremist groups.

PREVENTION

Filipino youth have been engaged in violence prevention and conflict transformation initiatives in their local communities, mostly on a voluntary basis. Their dedication to peacebuilding work can further be strengthened when they are given more support to pursue and continue their work for greater impact.

Outcome: Filipino youth are not just recognized for their contributions to peacebuilding, but also given adequate technical and financial support to sustain their work in preventing violence at different levels.

Overall Strategy: Ensuring an inclusive and enabling environment for young people to sustain their work on peace and security through access to competence-building and training opportunities, peace education activities, life skills programs, and spaces to exchange and learn from their good practices.



PARTNERSHIP

More often than not, Filipino youth are seen as beneficiaries or mere participants of peacebuilding interventions that are supposed to be solutions to address their own challenges. The partnership pillar suggests that more young people are given leadership roles alongside adults to increase ownership and sustainability of these interventions.

Outcome: Filipino youth are considered meaningful and trusted equal partners in the implementation of whole-of-society and whole of nation approach to peace and security initiatives at the national and local levels.

Overall Strategy: Strengthen mechanisms for multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral partnerships with young people by expanding on different ways the government can engage in meaningful youth partnerships, as well as sharing good practices and experiences.



DISENGAGEMENT AND REINTEGRATION

For the Filipino youth, the meaningful reintegration of young people into society involves the inclusive process of ensuring the physical, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing of young people who are involved in armed conflict.

Outcome: Filipino youth affected by armed conflict are supported holistically, provided with meaningful and inclusive socio-economic and employment opportunities as well as conflict and gender-sensitive evidence-based reintegration interventions.

Overall Strategy: Integration of youth-responsive approaches that address the holistic well being of young people being reintegrated in society. The NAPYPS can be a space for the collaborative formulation of conflict-sensitive and peace-promoting disengagement and reintegration strategies that will be embraced by different stakeholders, most especially the security sector.



TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE NAPYPS AND YOUR ROLE,
SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ THE WHOLE POLICY DOCUMENT.



THE PHILIPPINE JOURNEY TOWARDS A YOUTH-LED, MULTI-SECTOR DRIVEN PEACE AND SECURITY ACTION PLAN

Years of youth consultations, sharing and listening sessions, and understanding the narratives and emerging realities faced by young people across the country led to the finalization of the NAPYPS. The transformation of real-life stories into policy action points – **by the youth, from the youth, and for the youth** – is the soul of this National Action Plan.



117 key youth leaders in the country gathered in a series of **Youth Peace Tables (YPT)** which resulted in the YPT Agenda as the Philippine statement for the open debate of the UNSCR 2250.

2017
OF MAY -
JUNE 2018

17 National Government Agencies (NGAs) participated in the **Inter-Agency Workshop on UNSCR 2250** to review the YPT Agenda in preparation for the Philippine NAPYPS.

2018
AUG-SEPT

National YPT Summit was held to celebrate the results of the YPT and served as space for dialogue on the UNSCR 2250 and the Philippine peace process.



2021
OF MAY -
AUG 2022

Multi-Stakeholders Consultation and Dialogue Platform with the youth government agencies, civil society, international partners, and youth organizations was established by OPAPRU in May 2021 to ensure an inclusive multi-stakeholder approach to the NAPYPS process.

Executive Order on the creation of a National Steering Committee for the NAPYPS - produced for the approval of the President.

13 Regional, Provincial, and Virtual Youth Consultations held to harvest the narratives and emerging peace and security challenges and recommendations of the youth.

385 Youth Leaders and 120 Youth Organizations participated from different sectors nationwide.

56 youth organizations shared the challenges faced by the youth in their context and recommendations through the **National YPS Survey**.

25 YPS Champions from the consultation-workshops across the country gathered to draft the Philippine NAPYPS during the OPAPRU-GIZ organized Writeshop under the "Youth for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence in Mindanao" (YOUCAP) project.

2019
OF JUNE -
DEC 2020

Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) YPS Consultation produced the Bangsamoro YPS Agenda which aims to guide the Bangsamoro Transition Authority in integrating and adopting action points for the youth.

Mindanao Indigenous People Youth Peace Assembly (MIPYA) gathered IP youth leaders to support the Mindanao IP Council of Elders and Leaders in strengthening Indigenous Political Structures towards fostering peace, reconciliation, and unification.



After a series of writings by the Filipino youth and feedback sessions with various stakeholders, the first ever **Philippine NAPYPS** was launched.

2022
AUGUST



04 YOUTH VOICES AMPLIFIED IN THE PHILIPPINE NAPYPS

Writing a NAP is very significant, it gives opportunity to exchange ideas specially to understand the IP youth sector on its views on peace building and security. How the IP youth can contribute on the peace and development, while promoting culture rights -based experience with shared responsibility.

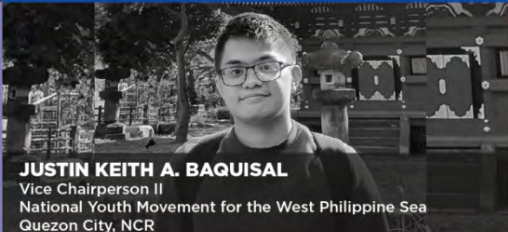


GERLIE P. TIAMBONG
Board of Trustee
Propelling Our Inherited Nation Through our Youth (POINTY)
Alegria, Surigao del Norte, Region XIII – CARAGA

I am delighted to be part of the formulation of the Philippines' National Action Plan. My participation conveys a strong message about the importance of young people's involvement in national and local policy-making, especially in addressing uncertainties in pushing sustainable and inclusive development in the post pandemic era. Youth, peace, and security are crucial to creating a healthier, habitable, and humane society for all. As a youth, who make up the largest group in the country, our voices should NOT BE LEFT BEHIND.

BRIAN JASON B. DELOS SANTOS
Founder
The Ahon Project
Placer, Masbate, Region V - Bicol

The NAP-YPS is a critical document in defining the topline issues and lines of effort about the youth's importance in peace and security. In addition to traditional issues such as the peace process and youth protection in armed conflict situations, I also hope to spotlight emerging concerns such as national sovereignty and the protection of civic space - an attempt to look not just at pressing problems but also strategic developments that may take years before significantly impacting our everyday lives. It's our chance to infuse futures-thinking in how we define the role of the youth in peace and security, and think more critically about reinforcing the scope and depth of youth participation.



JUSTIN KEITH A. BAQUISAL
Vice Chairperson II
National Youth Movement for the West Philippine Sea
Quezon City, NCR

As a leader who bloomed from the grassroots, I have started from the bottom and have seen what insurgency and violence can do to our children. Writing this National Action Plan means opening what eyes we have to the reality beyond the four corners of our homes, and what we can do to empower and mobilize the youth through the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 as its backbone. This means hope to me and this also means defining what the youth can do to make this nation peaceful. Para sa kapayapaan, kalayaan at progresibong Kabataang Filipino.

VANESSA MARIE V. YAORYAO
National Treasurer
Kabataan Kontra Droga at Terorismo (KKDAT)
San Francisco, Agusan del Sur, Region XIII - Caraga

I am very much thankful to take part in crafting the National Action Plan on Youth Peace and Security as I will also be an outlet on making our voices here in Mindanao LOUD. Malaking karangalan ang mairepresenta ko ang mga kabataan ng Tawi-Tawi. Ito Yung paraan namin para maipakitang kaming mga KABATAAN SA TIMOG handang makibahagi, makialam at makiisa para sa Kaunlaran, Pagkakaisa at kapayapaan.



CRISOL A. JASANI
Project Officer
Tau-SPARTAN
Tawi-Tawi, BARMM

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As of August 2022



Annex 5: Approved Proposal for an ASEAN-IPR Study on Youth, Peace and Security (2023)

Approved ad-referendum by the ASEAN-IPR Governing Council 6 March 2023



PROPOSAL FOR AN ASEAN-IPR STUDY ON YOUTH PEACE AND SECURITY (YPS)

1. ASEAN and the YPS Agenda

In recent years, ASEAN has taken significant steps in advancing the YPS agenda. The formalisation of a people-oriented, people-centred ASEAN Community has provided opportunities for greater participation of youth in promoting and deepening ASEAN integration. The ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Blueprint 2025, particularly action line A.3.1.ii, calls to “intensify the involvement of all members of the community as well as between relevant ASEAN Bodies and ASEAN stakeholders, including youth at national and regional levels in activities regarding the promotion of the culture of peace and moderation...” Additionally, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint 2025 (E.1.ii) calls to “promote culture of tolerance, understanding and mutual respect for religious and interfaith dialogue, including among youths.” Since 2017, Indonesia, through the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth (AMMY), has initiated the “ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp”, promoting tolerance and understanding in a highly diverse region, with participants also from countries outside of the ASEAN region. The ASEAN Youth Ambassadors for Peace initiative has also been initiated.

2. ASEAN-IPR and the YPS Agenda

The ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) has been at the forefront of ASEAN’s efforts to formally advance the YPS agenda. In 2018, the first ASEAN-IPR Youth Conference was organised by the Governing Council Representative of Indonesia to the ASEAN-IPR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, leading to the “ASEAN Youth Declaration on Peace & Tolerance” that pledged support for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2250. In August 2021, Brunei, as the Chair of ASEAN, greatly contributed to the formalisation of YPS through the ASEAN Regional Forum Ministerial Meeting, which adopted the first 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. It 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 Assistant Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. Recommendations from the ARF workshop focussed on YPS 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 Work-Plan’ on Preventing Violent Extremism, Interfaith Dialogue and the interlinkages with the ASEAN Women, Peace and Security agenda.

3. ASEAN-IPR - UN Regional Workshop on Youth, Peace and Security

On 7-8 December 2022, the first ASEAN-IPR – UN Workshop on Advancing Youth, Peace and Security in ASEAN was jointly organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation and the United Nations in Vientiane, Lao PDR. ASEAN-IPR Governing Council and Advisory Board representatives and alternates, as well as two members of the ASEAN Women’s Peace Registry, participated in the meeting, together with youth civil society representatives and officials from the UN and other regional organisations such as the African Union, the League of Arab States and the OSCE. Among the recommendations and outcomes agreed by all participants in the ‘Recommendations and Outcomes Document’ were the following: 1) “ASEAN-IPR undertake a regional study on youth participation in peace and security, which would include an assessment of the status of implementation of the YPS Agenda in the region”; and 2) the development of a Regional Plan of Action on YPS

4. The Proposal for an ASEAN-IPR Study on YPS

i) Objective

To follow up the recommendations the ASEAN-IPR – UN Workshop, an ASEAN-IPR Study on YPS would provide relevant background information and guidance for policy-makers in ASEAN on whether and how to advance YPS at the regional level. The ASEAN-IPR Study on YPS would take stock of previous and ongoing regional initiatives in ASEAN that enhance the role of youth in the areas of peace and security in ASEAN. Given the broad range of ongoing YPS initiatives in individual ASEAN member states, the study would map ongoing efforts related to YPS that involve governments, state agencies, civil society and other partners, such as the UN. In this area, the initiative of the Government of the Philippines, together with civil society, to formalise its YPS framework will provide an informative case-study as the Philippines is one of four countries in the world that has so far developed a National Action Plan on YPS, together with Finland, Nigeria and Congo.

ii) Research Methodology and Outcomes

A dedicated research team comprised of ASEAN-IPR Secretariat, ASEAN Secretariat, regional youth partners, academia and the UN would develop and draft the YPS Study. It would build on the outcomes and recommendations of recent regional initiatives such as the report on the 2017 Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on YPS and commissioned national research for the Progress Study (Philippines and Myanmar). Consultations with a network of YPS regional experts and practitioners, including through relevant academic bodies, will ensure a strong participatory approach and to bring youth voices and perspectives into the mapping of YPS in ASEAN. Similar to the ASEAN Women, Peace and Security Regional Study (2021), the ASEAN-IPR Study on YPS will provide an overview of YPS efforts in the region and individual ASEAN Member States and elaborate opportunities, suggestions and recommendations for regional policy-makers and practitioners on ways in which the YPS agenda can be advanced in the region, with an emphasis on building on regional best practices.

Annex 6: Methodology

The consultations and initiatives that informed the ASEAN-IPR YPS Study are presented below:

2017

- Asia Pacific Youth, Peace and Security Consultation organised by the United Nations
- 2017 Myanmar Consultative Workshop for YPS

2018

- ASEAN-IPR Youth Conference on Peace and Tolerance

2020

- ASEAN+ Youth Meeting on Peace and Security' organised by CAYC, AYPN, AYO and AYF
- 23 September 2020, #Youth4Peace in Asia Pacific: Public Forum (Participation. Dialogue. Priorities) organised by UN DPPA, UNFPA and UNOY
- 2020, Webinar Series 2020: #YouthforPeace in Southeast organised by UN DPPA, UNFPA, AYPN and UNOY
- 2020-2021 Consultations for the Philippine National Action Plan on YPS

2021

- Webinar Series 2021: #YouthforPeace in Southeast organised by UN DPPA, AYPN and UNOY
- 2021 'ASEAN Youth Meeting on Peace and Security': Youth Reflection on Local Peace and Tolerance'
- August 2021, ASEAN Regional Forum Workshop on YPS
- Consultations for the Philippine National Action Plan on YPS
- 'Youth as Agents of Peace—Utilising Digital Platforms for Narratives of Peace' Focus Group Discussion convened by ASEAN-IPR
- 2021 Consultation on WPS-YPS and Humanitarian Action led by GNWP, AYPN and UNOY
- 2021 Youth, Peace and Security in Southeast Asia Lessons for Developing National Action Plans on the YPS Agenda organised by USIP

2022

- ASEAN Regional Forum Symposium Building on Lessons Learned from the WPS and the YPS Agendas
- 2022 'Advancing Youth, Peace and Security in Southeast Asia' Thematic Paper as part of the UN Secretary-General's Report on YPS
- 6 December 2022 Youth Pre-meeting for the ASEAN-IPR-UN Workshop on YPS
- 7-8 December 2022 ASEAN-IPR-UN Workshop on YPS
- Youth, Peace and Security Online Academy organised by AYO

2023

- Youth Representatives Validation Meeting for the ASEAN-IPR YPS Study



Forging and Fostering Peace

**ASEAN Institute for
Peace and Reconciliation**



**Youth,
Peace &
Security**

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