



Alliance for
Peacebuilding



YOUTH, PEACE & SECURITY

In December 2015, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted, under the leadership of the Kingdom of Jordan and the chairmanship of the United States, Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS). UNSCR 2250 was the first UN Security Council Resolution dedicated to affirming the positive role young women and men play in maintaining and promoting international peace and security and in building and advancing peace in their own countries.

The Alliance for Peacebuilding and Search for Common Ground co-lead a growing NGO coalition in support of H.R. 6174, the Youth, Peace, and Security Act of 2020, introduced by Representatives Grace Meng (D-NY), Susan Brooks (R-IN), Dean Phillips (D-MN) and John Curtis (R-UT) in March 2020. This bipartisan legislation aims to be catalytic in advancing the global youth, peace, and security movement, creating an unprecedented global investment stream to support youth leadership, and giving young people the political platform and support they need to advance peace in their communities.

Purpose of Legislation

To establish a United States policy of support to youth peacebuilders worldwide and increase United States support for youth, peace, and security efforts worldwide.

Justification

In 2014, the world's youth population rose to 1.8 billion, eclipsing the adult population in scores of developing countries. It is estimated that one in four young people today are living in or are otherwise affected by armed conflicts and violence. Youth populations have long been at the forefront of building peace in their communities -- creating movements, organizations and networks -- to mitigate negative effects of conflict and, at times, take up adult roles of preventing recurring cycles of violence and becoming the primary actors in grassroots community development (McEvoy 2001; Del Felice and Wisler, 2007; Smith and Ellison, 2012; UNOY and SFCG, 2017).

The United States does not currently have a coherent or targeted approach for supporting youth peacebuilders around the world. In numerous evaluations and studies, young people have reported feeling systematically excluded and even stigmatized by national policies as well as foreign assistance in their country. This dynamic renders U.S. foreign assistance less effective in fragile environments, where young people are often the majority of the population and catalytic leaders in building more just and peaceful states. By establishing a U.S. policy for supporting youth peacebuilders and creating a dedicated funding stream for this support, the United States can play an increasingly positive role in reducing and preventing conflict and promoting sustainable peace worldwide, while also ensuring power dynamics are more evenly distributed worldwide.

Supporting Evidence

In South Sudan (Nov 2017), youth peacebuilding programs increased by 69% the percentage of participants who reported identifying more strongly with their national identity over their ethnic identity, the latter of which has been a major driver of the country's chronic conflict. The same programs increased by 78% the number of participants who said they trusted members of another ethnic group as a result.

From 2011 - 2017, USAID-funded youth peacebuilding and education programs in Somalia contributed to a near 50% reduction in young Somalis' willingness to support or participate in political violence.



YPS Act Policy Objectives

1. To establish a United States policy of supporting youth peacebuilders worldwide;
2. To ensure that the perspectives and interests of young people are integrated into the design and execution of U.S.-funded peace and security activities and strategies;
3. To encourage partner governments to adopt plans to improve the meaningful participation of young people in peace and security processes and decision-making institutions;
4. To support youth-led programming to prevent violent conflict and build peace through financial and diplomatic assistance;
5. To protect the physical safety, economic security, and dignity of young women and men; and
6. To collect and analyze age-disaggregated data to better understand the roles played by young people in areas affected by fragility and conflict.

Strategy & Collaboration

The YPS Act of 2020 pursues the above-stated objectives through the following actions:

- Calls upon the President to designate a Youth Coordinator responsible for all U.S. government resources and activities dedicated to youth.
- Establishes an Advisory Group of Experts bringing together youth delegates with representatives from the United States Government to guide program development.
- Requires an inter-agency Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy, with a focus on:
 - Prioritizing funding for training and technical assistance to young people engaged in peacebuilding, violence prevention, mediation, and negotiation;
 - Integrating youth consultation in program design and implementation and supporting their participation in communities of practice to improve monitoring and evaluation capabilities;
 - Encouraging the development of youth-inclusive transitional justice and accountability mechanisms, disengagement, and reintegration programs;
 - Supporting inclusive education with a focus on context-specific critical thinking skills, socioemotional learning and conflict resolution;
 - Applying age- and gender-disaggregated analysis to reduce barriers to youth participation and improve program design, targeting, and early warning;
 - Including young people in assessments of U.S. peace and security initiatives; and
 - Supporting quotas for direct and gender-equitable participation of youth in all phases of peace and political transition processes.
- Requires that each relevant Federal agency have a specific implementation plan including anticipated technical, financial, and in-kind contributions.

Improved U.S. Capacities & Accountability to Young People

- Supports the equal access of youth to U.S. foreign assistance aid distribution mechanisms and services.
- Establishes a baseline of standard indicators that reflects state-of-the-field best practice regarding how to meaningfully include youth.
- Recognizes the unique context girls and young women experience in conflict settings by adjusting YPS programs and policies to protect girls' and young women's safety, economic security and dignity, while prioritizing their equal access to aid distribution and programs that improve outcomes in gender equality and empowerment.

Funding

- Amends the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to expand microgrants to assist in expanded training, technical assistance, and grants managed and controlled by youth leaders.
- Authorizes a Youth, Peace, and Security Fund to provide grants and technical assistance to youth-led civil society organizations and youth peacebuilding implementers, including emergency assistance for those who require immediate support in the face of legal and safety concerns.

If you have any questions or comments on the Youth, Peace & Security Act, please reach out to Alliance for Peacebuilding's Senior Associate for Policy & Communications, Megan Schleicher, at megan@allianceforpeacebuilding.org