

INTEGRATING YOUTH IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS CONTROLS AND PEACE AND SECURITY

YOUTH MAINSTREAMING refers to the deliberate inclusion of young people's perspectives, needs, and participation in the processes of reducing SALW proliferation and misuse. By ensuring that youth are actively involved in decision-making, awareness campaigns, and disarmament initiatives, the approach recognises the significant role youth can play in fostering peace and security.

600+ million

young people live in fragile and conflict-affected countries.¹



1 in 4 youth globally are affected, in some way, by armed conflict.²

1st

Firearms were the leading cause of death of U.S. children and youth in 2020.³

Youth are disproportionately affected by armed violence, yet are not integrated in policy decision-making and peacebuilding efforts.

≈  **50%**

of the 1.4 billion people in countries impacted by crises and fragility are under the age of 20.⁴

2.9%

The global proportion of members of parliament below the age of 30.⁵

Youth involvement makes a difference. Some examples :

- **Colombia:** In 2012, public consultations were a part of the peace negotiation process between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). During the victims forums, young people participated in a significant way and played a key role in shaping several peace agreement provisions.⁶
- **Afghanistan:** Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT), a youth-led organisation, collaborated with the United Network of Young Peacebuilders and other Afghan youth organisations to advocate for UN resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, & Security.⁷
- **Philippines:** Moro youth were active members of the secretariat during the 2014 round of peace negotiations creating the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region. Their presence shaped the content and the language of the agreements.⁸
- **Nigeria:** #EndSARS youth protests against brutality perpetrated by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) unit of the Nigeria Police Force led to its dissolution. This was largely due to the use of social media and digital activism to mobilise young people in major cities in Nigeria.⁹

UN Commitments and Actionable Steps by States

UN Commitments

"Young people around the world are a critical catalyst when it comes to building more peaceful and resilient communities. It's time we more adequately invest in the efforts of **young peacebuilders**, to ensure they have meaningful opportunities to contribute to inclusive peace processes." (UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth)¹⁰

"To recognize the important and positive contribution that **young people** can make to efforts to combat the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons and to promote their meaningful and inclusive participation." (UN PoA BMS8 outcome document)¹¹

"The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands. It lies also in the hands of today's **younger generation** who will pass the torch to future generations. We have mapped the road to sustainable development; it will be for all of us to ensure that the journey is successful and its gains irreversible." (United Nations, General Assembly, 2015, para. 53)

Recommendations to States

- Mainstream youth in the development of small arms control policies, programmes and activities at community, national and regional levels;
- Analyse and address the nature of the ownership and use of small arms by young people and the differentiated effects of small arms on youth;
- Commit to the full and effective participation of youth in all policymaking, planning, and implementation processes related to SALW control;
- Adequately fund civil society organisations that are youth-led or focused on youth and small arms issues;
- Include national officials working on youth issues in the work of national commissions on small arms and consider putting in place mechanisms such as "youth advisory boards" to have youth input into government programmes and policies.

This fact sheet was written by the Georgetown International Research Group team and designed by Hetva Joshi and Sebastian Zuba.



Funded by the United Nations through financial contributions received from the European Union (CFSP 2022/1965)

References

1. UNDP Youth Strategy 2014–2017: Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future: [UNDP_Youth-Strategy-2014-17 Web.pdf](#)
2. Talia Hagerty, [Data for Youth, Peace and Security: A summary of research findings from the Institute for Economics & Peace](#) (2017). This brief was for the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, as commissioned by Security Council Resolution 2250.
3. This data encompasses deaths caused by suicides and homicides. American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): [Firearm-Related Injuries and Deaths in Children and Youth](#) (2022)
4. Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, #YouthStats: Armed Conflicts, <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/armed-conflict/>
5. Our Common Agenda: [Policy Brief 3 Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policy and Decision-making Processes](#) (2023)
6. Altiok, A., Grizelj, I., [We Are Here: An integrated approach to youth inclusive peace processes](#) (2019)
7. Ozcelik, A., Nesterova, Y., Young, G., Maxwell, A. (2021). (tech.). [Youth-led peace: The role of youth in peace processes](#)
8. Primitivo III Cabanes Ragandang & Sukanya Podder (2022) [Youth inclusion in peace processes: the case of the Bangsamoro transition authority in Mindanao, Philippines](#), Conflict, Security & Development, 22:6, 609–628.
9. Osei Baffour Frimpong and Richmond Commodore, [#EndSARS Youth Protests in Nigeria: Lessons and Opportunities for Regional Stability](#) (2021)
10. Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, [World leaders renew commitment to "Youth, Peace and Security" agenda](#). This quote is taken from a statement delivered during the [High-Level Global Conference on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes](#) (20–21 January 2022)
11. Eighth Biennial Meeting of States on the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms outcome document (2022) ([A/CONF.192/BMS/2021/1](#)), para. 56.
12. Resolution [A/RES/70/1](#), Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015 during its 70th session, para. 53.