

Advancing the Five-Year Strategy on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes

Year-in-Review
2023



Introduction

This Year-in-Review was developed to highlight initiatives that advance the [Five-Year Strategy on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes \(Five-Year Strategy\)](#). It aims to spotlight various initiatives, knowledge products, and events undertaken by the [International Steering Group members \(ISG\)](#) throughout 2023, which contributes to strengthening youth participation in mediation and peace processes. While this document provides a summary of selected initiatives of ISG members, it is important to note that it is not an extensive overview of activities and projects on Youth-Inclusive peace processes implemented in 2023.

The International Steering Group

To guide the advancement of a first-of-its-kind [Five-Year Strategy on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes](#) the International Steering Group consisting of expert members was created in February 2023. The International Steering Group (ISG), co-chaired by the United Nations Youth Office, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and Search for Common Ground, serves as a platform for sharing best practices while supporting and guiding initiatives to implement the Five-Year Strategy. The ISG is composed of 23 members including youth organizations, civil society, representatives of regional and international organizations, UN entities, experts, and academia.

The ISG is comprised of the following members (listed alphabetically): CINEP (Investigadora Grupo Violencia, Paz y Formación del Estado), Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, CMI - Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, European External Action Service (EEAS), Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), Nama Network for Human Rights Defenders, Network 2250 in Iraq (Youth, Peace and Security), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Peace Hub The Gambia, Search for Common Ground, swisspeace, The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), the KESHO Alliance and the Kenya Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, United Nations Youth Office, United Network of Young Peacebuilders, University of Glasgow, and Youth for Peace DRC, among others.

The **Five-Year Strategy** aims to ensure that governments, non-state actors, young people, civil society, mediation actors, and regional and international organizations have the resources, capacity, knowledge, and partnerships to implement Youth-Inclusive peace process and mediation through four interconnected streams:

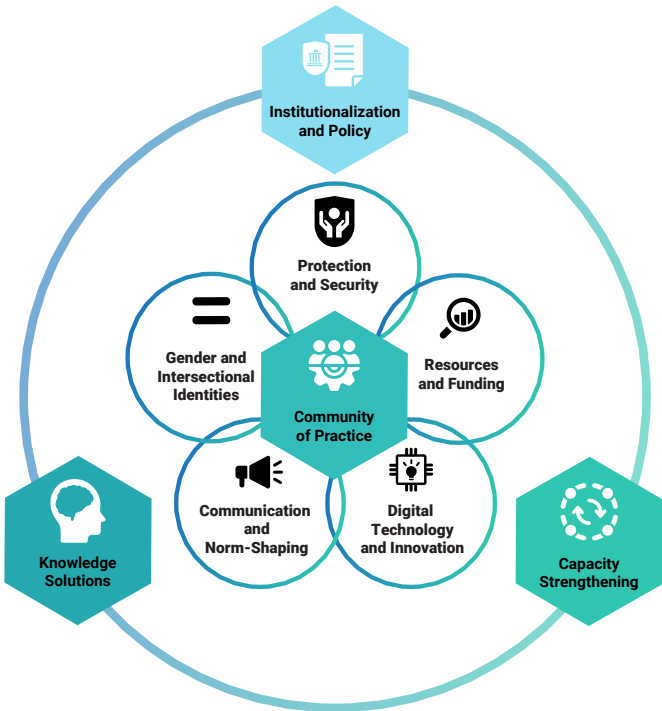
- Institutionalization and Policy
- Knowledge Solutions
- Capacity Strengthening
- Community of Practice

This Five-Year Strategy, launched during the [High-Level Global Conference on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes \(2022\)](#), aims to transition from Youth-Inclusive norms to actively engaging youth in the design and implementation of peace processes over the next five years. The Strategy is rooted in the global policy paper "We Are Here," and developed in conjunction with the first International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes (2019).³

Initiatives to Advance the Five-Year Strategy

The individual members of the ISG have been implementing various initiatives aligned with the four interconnected streams of the Five-Year Strategy. These key initiatives support the realization of the Strategy. Examples are listed per stream and per region/country.

Five-Year Strategic Framework



¹ The United Nations Youth Office (UN Youth Office) was established in September 2022 by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution [A/RES/76/306](#) as a dedicated office for youth affairs in the Secretariat, integrating the former Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY).

² The ISG is composed of various stakeholders that were selected based on their expertise and the relevance of their work in advancing Youth-Inclusive peace processes. Institutions and members of the ISG are actively engaged throughout the process and for the entire duration of the Five-Year Strategy's implementation.

³ The global policy paper "We Are Here" emphasizes that inclusion and participation of youth in peace processes cuts across three interconnected layers, called In the Room (youth participation within the formal peace architecture and structures, inside the room during peace negotiations and political dialogues), Around the Room (young people not directly in the room, but close to the peace agreement through formal or informal mechanisms and who are able to get in the room) and Outside the Room (young people who engage and participate through informal and alternative approaches).

Examples of ISG Members’ Initiatives in 2023



Photo Credits



STREAM 1: INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND POLICY

Youth for Peace Sub-regional Symposium

- **Organization:** Youth for Peace DRC
- **Region/Country:** Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo
- **Date:** November 27 – 28, 2023

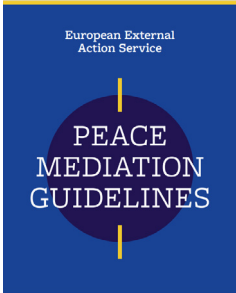
Summary: The Youth for Peace DRC and its partners⁴ hosted a sub-regional symposium in November, in Bujumbura (Burundi). Attended by 84 young delegates from Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC, the event highlighted youth participation in peacebuilding efforts. The discussions focused on the region's peace process challenges, and emphasized the crucial role of youth in decision-making. As an outcome, an **advocacy document with tangible recommendations** was produced, encouraging the **creation of spaces for youth inclusion in peace processes** and the formation of a regional youth network for dialogue and knowledge exchange. These recommendations are aimed at governmental authorities, civil society organizations, UN agencies and youth-led groups.



Peace Mediation Guidelines

- **Organization:** European External Action Service
- **Region/Country:** Global (Multiple Countries)
- **Date:** October 2023

Summary: The European External Action Service (EEAS) introduced a revised edition of its [Peace Mediation Guidelines](#) in October 2023. These guidelines offer a comprehensive framework of principles and methodologies aimed at the wide community of practitioners involved in EU peace mediation. The revised guidelines include a **dedicated chapter on youth** and ensuring their meaningful inclusion and participation, as well as relevant **case studies**. EEAS **revisited** these **guidelines** through a process that **included input from youth** and consultations with stakeholders. Updating these guidelines involved a meticulous review of accumulated experience and lessons learned, notably through collaboration with field experts. Initially adopted three years ago, these guidelines are pivotal in shaping effective mediation processes as the EU endeavors to achieve lasting conflict resolution.



⁴ Youth Empowerment and Leadership Initiative (YELI) Burundi, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) Young Women+ Leaders for Peace (YWL) chapters in North and South Kivu, DRC, Association Modeste et Innocent (AMI) Rwanda, We Got your Back Rwanda, the Peace and Reconciliation project of the Schoenstatt Fathers’ community Mont Sion Gikungu, the University of Burundi and the University of Fribourg (Caritas Studies) and Life & Peace Institute (LPI)



STREAM 2: CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

Young Peacebuilders Forum 2023

- **Organization:** [United Network of Young Peacebuilders](#)
- **Region/Country:** Global (Multiple Countries)
- **Date:** September 2023

Summary: The [6th Young Peacebuilders' Forum](#), convened 50 global peacebuilders in Nairobi. Over four days, participants discussed challenges and best practices in promoting youth-led peace efforts. Key topics included implementing the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, along with its intersections with gender, climate action, and protection. To advance the strategic action plan for Youth-Inclusive peace processes, [young participants met and engaged with non-youth stakeholders involved in peace processes](#), such as the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, and the Intergovernmental Agency for Development. These links promoted **intergenerational dialogues on enhancing youth inclusion in peace processes and shaping policies for more Youth-Inclusive practices.**



Young Women Learning Hub on Dialogue, Negotiation, and Mediation

- **Organization:** [Women Volunteers for Peace \(WVOP\)](#) - UNOY member organization
- **Region/Country:** Africa, Kenya
- **Date:** July 2023

Summary: WVOP's annual [Dialogue, Negotiation, and Mediation \(DNM\) Learning Hub](#) empowered 30 young women fellows aged between 18 and 30 years from diverse backgrounds in the 8 sub-counties of Kisumu County. The three-day intensive training **strengthened young women's skills in dialogue, negotiation, and mediation.** The fellows noted that young women mediators play diverse roles in mediation, serving as **negotiators, initiators of dialogue**, and **facilitators** in bringing parties to the table or rebuilding relationships. The training also led to the **development of interventions in mediation** and gender-related conflict situations.



<i>Building Peace from the Inside</i> <i>Phase II: Supporting Insider Mediation for Sustainable Transformation of Conflict</i>	<i>Accelerating the Implementation of the Youth and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization: Search for Common Ground • Region/Country: Africa (Burundi, Niger, and Zimbabwe) • Date: Throughout 2023 <p>Summary: Search for Common Ground trained and supported 319 young people in Burundi, Niger, and Zimbabwe, known as Insider Mediators. About one-third (33%) of the young mediators are under 35, and about one-sixth (16%) are under 29. In Burundi, among the 36 young mediators, there are no reported cases mediated by them yet, nor is youth mentioned as an actual party in conflict. In Niger, youth actively resolved 6 cases, with 12 young mediators participating. Among them, only 1 case of a violent incident involved youth as a conflicting party. In Zimbabwe, out of the 8 cases mediated by the cohort, 6 involved the active participation of young mediators. They successfully addressed conflicts over land, political tensions, and other issues, despite facing challenges. Their efforts fostered dialogue, built trust, and laid the groundwork for future cooperation and peacebuilding efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe • Region/Country: Global (Multiple Countries) • Date: Throughout 2023 <p>Summary: In March 2023, the OSCE launched a series of Model OSCE editions as part of the "Accelerating the Implementation of the Youth and Security Agenda in the OSCE region" project. These events includes a simulation designed to help young people learn conflict resolution, mediation, and peace processes. The new series of national, sub-regional, and regional Models OSCE aims to promote dialogue and mutual understanding, contributing concretely to the capacity strengthening of young people. The first edition of the Model OSCE, held in Vienna in June 2023, brought together 26 young people from Western Europe. Subsequently, the second edition convened 25 young women and men from Central Asia in Istanbul in September 2023. These events provide several days of hands-on training in mediation and dialogue facilitation, negotiation skills, and strategy building, as well as knowledge about multilateral decision-making processes, the YPS agenda, and the OSCE's work with and for youth. In 2024, the OSCE is organizing additional Model OSCE Conferences, including for participants from South Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia.</p>



STREAM 3: KNOWLEDGE SOLUTIONS

<i>Journal of Youth, Peace and Security</i>	<i>Dataset of References to Youth in Peace Agreements</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization: Youth, Peace and Security Research Network • Region/Country: Global (Multiple Countries) • Date: December 2023 <p>Summary: Published by the Youth, Peace and Security Research Network, the research journal provided valuable insights into the intersection of youth and peace. The contributors used storytelling to share their own experiences working with people impacted by armed conflict; sharing how they implement peacebuilding programs in challenging contexts, how they interact with fellow youth, and how they draw from previous peace processes. In the Journal's second issue, one of the articles focused on youth inclusion in peace processes, contributing to the evidence base of the YPS agenda.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization: University of Glasgow • Region/Country: Global (Multiple Countries) • Date: August 2023 <p>Summary: The dataset, a first of its kind, provided insights into 208 peace agreements (1990-2022) through a youth lens and revealed practices related to youth inclusion in negotiation and implementation. The dataset aimed to enhance understanding and inform future policymaking on youth participation in peace processes.</p>

Summary: Developed alongside the European External Action Service's updated mediation guidelines and in line with the global Five-Year Strategic Action Plan for Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes, this [guide](#) commissioned by the Greens/EFA and carried out by Search for Common Ground serves as a **practical resource for incorporating youth into peace mediation efforts**. Offering actionable recommendations and inspiring youth-led examples, the guide covers normative and operational frameworks, Youth-Inclusive strategies throughout the mediation process, pathways for leveraging EU capacities, and four illustrative cases of successful youth involvement. The guide is a valuable resource to EU decision-makers, practitioners, and mediation experts, as well as stakeholders in EU policy on inclusive peacebuilding and mediation, including civil society and youth-led groups, and institutions supporting mediation efforts at all levels.



STREAM 4: COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AND PARTNERSHIPS

EU Community of Practice on Peace Mediation (CoP)

- **Organization:** [European External Action Service](#)
- **Region/Country:** Global (Multiple Countries)
- **Date:** October 2023

Summary: A Steering Group convened by the EEAS Conflict Prevention and Mediation Support Division, composed of several peacebuilding organizations, has been leading the preparations for the [Community of Practice on Peace Mediation \(CoP\)](#) held in October 2023 in Brussels. The CoP emphasized the role of mediation and dialogue support in preventing, mitigating, and managing conflicts. The CoP included a breakout session on the topic of youth inclusion, as well as a brown bag session and booth (Youth and Peace Agreements: Learning from Three Decades of Peacemaking Practice). It provided an opportunity to analyze successful mediation instances to identify effective strategies and gather practical recommendations from the practitioner community. Discussions on mediation and peace process support facilitated knowledge exchange and constructive reflections on challenges and best practices, directly informing EU policy and practice. The CoP also fostered peer learning, expanded the global peace-building community, and encouraged innovative thinking.

Syrian Civil Society Support Room

- **Organization:** [Swisspeace](#)
- **Region/Country:** Middle East and North Africa, Syria
- **Date:** 2022 – 2023

Summary: Swisspeace, the implementing partner for the [Syrian Civil Society Support Room \(CSSR\)](#), mandated by the UN Office of the Special Envoy for Syria (OSE-Syria) as a **mechanism to consult with a broad and diverse range of civil society actors, actively engaged youth in Syria to enhance their representation in peace processes**. Swisspeace, in support of OSE-Syria, conducted several outreach meetings and collaborated with active youth groups across the country. This initiative resulted in an increased understanding of identifying youth priorities for sustainable conflict resolution in Syria. As part of this effort, the CSSR team established and involved a youth group focusing on the theme of youth perspectives in the political process during a CSSR side event on the margins of the 6th Brussels Conference. During the event, the youth group discussed their potential roles, challenges, and opportunities to participate in public affairs. The group collaboratively formulated clear recommendations to the UN-OSE-Syria and the EU, aiming to reinforce the role of youth in their respective work and policies related to Syria.

Basel Peace Forum Session on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes

- **Organization:** [Swisspeace](#)
- **Region/Country:**
- **Date:** January 2024

Summary: In the framework of the annual [Basel Peace Forum](#), swisspeace organized an **expert discussion on the reality of youth-inclusion in peace processes**. The discussion included young experts from conflict contexts (Syria and Afghanistan) as well as experts bringing in a policy and conceptual viewpoint. The discussion touched on different elements such as practical realities of youth inclusion, challenges and obstacles to include young people more meaningfully in the peace processes and recommendations on ways forward. The discussion was attended by approximately 60 participants from different organizations and fields of work and many actively engaged in discussions and shared their reflections and ideas with experts.

Building and Sustaining a Community of Practice on Youth and Government Collaborations for Implementing National Strategies on Youth, Peace, and Security

- **Organization:** [United Network of Young Peacebuilders](#) and [Search for Common Ground](#)
- **Region/Country:** Global (Multiple Countries)
- **Date:** January 2023, ongoing

Summary: In January 2023, UNOY Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground played a key role in establishing the Community of Practice (CoP) focused on Youth and Government Collaborations for Implementing National Strategies on Youth, Peace and Security. This CoP builds upon the foundations laid during the Helsinki process, which featured the [first International Symposium on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes](#) in March 2019, and a [High-level Global Conference on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes](#) held virtually in January 2022. Between August and October 2022, three virtual workshops were conducted, along with an in-person workshop in Finland, in November 2022. The CoP garnered support from participants of the Helsinki workshop, including government representatives, youth leaders, multilateral institutional leaders, and civil society leaders active in the YPS space. The CoP provides a **platform for capacity building, experience sharing, and advocating for youth engagement in peacebuilding processes**.

