



Beyond **vulnerability**

A guidance note on youth,
climate, peace and security



Beyond Vulnerability: A Guidance Note on Youth, Climate, Peace, and Security

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Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	OPD	Organization for persons with disabilities
AU	African Union	OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
COP	Conference of the Parties	PBF	UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund
COP28	28th United Nations Climate Change Conference	PBSO	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office
COY18	The 18th UN Climate Change Conference of Youth	PISFCC	Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change
CPS	Climate, peace and security	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
CRSRs	Climate-related security risks	SIDS	Small Island Developing States
CSM	Climate Security Mechanism	SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
CSO	Civil Society Organization	SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
EDA	Enable the Disable Action	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
EFAI	Eco Friendly Africa Initiative	UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
EU	European Union	UNODA	United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	UNSC	United Nations Security Council
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia	UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
FBA	Folke Bernadotte Academy	UNSSC	United Nations System Staff College
GBV	Gender-based violence	WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
GHG	Greenhouse gas	WPS	Women, Peace, and Security
ICJ	International Court of Justice	YES	Youth and Environment Society
IOM	International Organization for Migration	YCC	COP Presidency Youth Climate Champion
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change	YCPS	Youth, climate, peace and security
LDCs	Least Developed Countries	YOUNGO	Official Children and Youth Constituency of the UNFCCC
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer	YPS	Youth, Peace and Security
MENA	Middle East and North Africa		
NAP	National Action Plan or National Adaptation Plan		
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization		
NGO	Non-governmental organization		
NSAG	Non-state armed group		

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Executive summary

The emergence of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda and the Climate, Peace and Security (CPS) agenda indicates a shift in the global peace and security system toward more inclusive, preventive, and holistic approaches. The YPS agenda has brought a new understanding of young people in peace and security processes, recognizing their right to meaningfully participate and their potential to drive positive change. Similarly, the emerging CPS agenda highlights the connection between climate change and peace and security, advocating for integrated approaches to address climate-related security risks (CRSRs) for stability and for a sustainable future. Together, these agendas suggest increased focus at the global policy level on preventive measures and on addressing the root causes of insecurity in fragile and conflict-affected countries.

The intersections of the YPS and CPS agendas are self-evident. About 47% of the world's youth aged 18–29 live in countries with extreme or high levels of violent conflict. Concurrently, one billion, or 75% of the world's youth, reside in the world's less developed regions—with 250 million living in the world's least developed countries (LDCs), where the effects of climate change are the most acute. Countries within these regions have comparatively large youth cohorts as shares of the total population. Climate exposure, fragility, and median age overlap at the country level, with the strongest overlaps concentrated across the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and Central Africa. This overlap of climate hazards, violent conflict, and relatively large youth populations translate into a reality where the

combined effects of climate change and insecurity disproportionately affect young people and future generations compared to other age groups.

Although the connections between youth, climate, peace and security are unquestionable, the emerging field of CPS has largely overlooked youth perspectives, or limited the perspective to young peoples' vulnerabilities. In a similar vein, matters concerning the climate crisis have received little attention in the YPS agenda, despite the growing evidence demonstrating that the effects of climate change compound existing vulnerabilities in fragile contexts, affecting young people and human security more broadly.

There are some nascent approaches toward the integration of youth, climate, peace and security in the policy field. The UN Secretary-General's reports on YPS reflect somewhat of a shift, with the 2022 report identifying climate change as a threat multiplier and the 2024 report recognizing the disproportionate burden on youth, exacerbating vulnerabilities and inequalities. Notable emerging practices include the Arab Strategy for YPS (2023–2028) and Finland's NAP on YPS, which highlight climate-related security risks and young persons' contributions to global agendas. In climate change processes, notable progress includes the COP28 Youth Climate Delegates Program (IYCDP), with prioritized representation from under-represented groups and fragile settings, and a multi-partner-initiated development of a global framework on youth, peace, and climate security.



JAMAA Grands Lacs, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Photo: Flory Aza

Moving back from policy to reality, young people of diverse backgrounds and identities are severely affected by climate-related security risks. Research has identified four interrelated pathways through which climate change interacts with economic, social, and political factors to increase the risk of conflict in fragile contexts. These pathways encompass:

- a) worsening livelihood conditions,
- b) increased migration and shifting mobility patterns,
- c) tactical considerations for militant and armed actors, and
- d) elite exploitation and political and economic mismanagement.

Young people tend to be more vulnerable to worsening livelihood conditions as a result of climate change compared to older generations, given their state of dependence or transition toward autonomy. Young

persons who are forced to migrate as a result of climate change experience a range of challenges and risks, from loss of livelihood and education to discrimination and violence, including gender-based violence (GBV). Forced or irregular migration often primarily concerns young people,² and migration from climate-related disasters is on the rise.

Militant and armed actors' tactical considerations resulting from climate change, including new—and sometimes forced—recruitment patterns, are directed toward and negatively affect young people. While it is true that certain factors can *push or pull* groups of young persons—particularly but not exclusively already-marginalized young men—toward involvement in armed conflict as a means of survival in increasingly challenging environments³, this is not a narrative applicable to all young people. Only a minute fraction of the youth population is at risk of engaging in violence or of joining armed groups.

2 UNFPA and PBSO (2018, p. 22)

3 UNDP (2023b)

In contexts of climate-related insecurity, young people, especially young women, often face further marginalization due to limited access to decision-making spaces and resources, which can be exploited by national and local elites for political purposes. Notably, young persons may feel frustrated and like they do not have a stake in their own future when they experience exclusion from political participation and decision-making, all of which may lead to disenfranchisement, without them resorting to, or being pushed or pulled into, violence.

In the face of these interlinked climate and conflict crises, young people are not standing idly by. Growing numbers of young persons of diverse backgrounds recognize the need to see challenges to climate, peace and security through an integrated lens. They are driving change in their communities—and some on the global arena—to address climate-related security risks and secure a sustainable future. As such, young people contribute to breaking silos of traditional programming and set out objectives for their activities which address multiple sources of climate change and instability simultaneously, because this is the reality in which they have grown up and the one they continue to face.

While the explicit aim of the guidance note is to move beyond a *vulnerability perspective* on young people in matters of CPS and recognize their positive and transformative roles, it is important to acknowledge that YPS practitioners may have varied perspectives on youth agency and participation that differ from those presented here. Engaging with the CPS agenda does require untangling youth's vulnerabilities as well as their responses to climate-related security risks. Conversely, the definition and examples of climate security interventions provided may not fully align with the diverse views of CPS practitioners, who might advocate for a more expansive or nuanced approach to addressing climate-related security challenges. In turn, the guidance note presents young people's perspectives on climate-related security risks and responses. Understanding climate-related security risks will undoubtedly expand knowledge of risks to peace and security as well as opportunities for peacebuilding within the YPS field. Conversely, understanding a youth perspective on climate-related security risks will foster a more robust understanding of demographic dynamics in the CPS field—expanding the scope and relevance of each of the agendas.

Whereas climate insecurity pathways represent risks to peace and stability as a result of climate change, integrated entry points for addressing climate-related security risks can be found in climate mitigation, climate adaptation, and in a spectrum of peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities. Whether or not these entry points may present co-benefits for climate, peace and security depend on the *intentionality* of these efforts—whether they are *purposefully* addressing simultaneous risks through *effective mechanisms*. As such, not all youth-led climate action will address peace and security, nor will all youth-led peacebuilding contribute to co-benefits for climate action. However, through careful selection, each youth-led example presented in this guidance note demonstrates intentional efforts to address simultaneous climate and conflict risks.

Young people are actively engaging in climate mitigation, adaptation, and peace and justice mechanisms to address climate-related security risks. Through a wide range of youth-led initiatives, they enhance carbon storage and lower emissions, reduce resource conflicts, and promote sustainable livelihoods. In multiple regions, youth-led projects foster collaboration, improve water management, and support climate-smart agriculture, thereby enhancing food security and reducing migration. Global networks advocate for disarmament to lower military greenhouse gas emissions, while legal actions and nonviolent resistance raise awareness and drive policy change. These efforts collectively contribute to simultaneously reducing climate change impacts and enhancing resilience and peace.

The youth-led initiatives detailed in the guidance note demonstrate what integrated analysis and implementation can look like, and as such, provide a clear rationale for increased efforts on all levels toward addressing youth, climate, peace and security in an increasingly integrated manner. The final part of the guidance note therefore offers *exploratory guidance* for how working with youth, climate, peace and security (YCPS) in mutually supporting and *increasingly integrated* ways could play out in research, studies, analysis, programming, strategic planning and policy-making, and funding—as the first contribution of its kind that bridges the climate, peace and security (CPS) and youth, peace and security (YPS) agendas.

Foreword

The climate crisis is already here, and today's youth and future generations will face its most severe consequences. That includes the approximately one billion young people who live in less developed regions—one-quarter of whom live in the world's Least Developed Countries (LDCs), where climate change impacts are the most severe. Indeed, without accelerated climate action, children born in the year 2020 could experience up to seven times more extreme weather events like scorching heatwaves during their lifetimes compared to their grandparents.¹ While young people have contributed little to climate change, they are the ones who are and will continue to be disproportionately affected by its damaging environmental and social impacts. Moreover, while climate change alone does not cause conflict, its impacts can exacerbate vulnerabilities, undermine livelihoods, and increase grievances and tensions which may in some cases increase the risk of violent conflict. These interlinked challenges demand urgent and collective action.

Across the globe, many young people are now assuming responsibility for responding to the unsustainable societal and environmental trajectories set by previous generations. They are driving change in their communities and on the global stage to address

the interlinked climate and conflict crises—everything from leading efforts to restore our natural world to influencing the outcomes of climate negotiations and leading efforts for climate justice and intergenerational equity in courtrooms. Others are finding innovative ways of adapting to new uncertain realities. It is crucial to move beyond viewing young people only as vulnerable and to recognize their resilient responses, while reinforcing their pivotal roles as leaders in climate and peace action. Young people, in all their diversity, have the undeniable right to participate in decision-making processes, charting paths toward mitigating the impacts of climate-related risks and sustaining peace. Their meaningful engagement is not optional; it is essential for effectively addressing climate-related security risks and ensuring a sustainable future.

Although the connections between youth, climate, peace and security are evident in reality, they have not been adequately translated into integrated policy and programming approaches. This guidance note by the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) is the first of its kind that bridges the climate, peace and security (CPS) and youth, peace and security (YPS)

1 Thiery et al. (2021)

agendas. It sheds new light on how young people are at the leading edge of these efforts—already acting and working in an integrated manner to address climate-related security risks. It also provides practitioners with exploratory guidance and considerations for creating an integrated agenda on youth, climate, peace and security within research and analysis, programming, strategic planning, policy-making, and funding that can ultimately drive progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the young expert contributors and partners who have collaborated on this guidance note. As countries now embark on the design of their crucial third generation Nationally Determined Contributions in advance of COP30 in Brazil in 2025 that will be vital to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, we hope that this report will empower young people and partners to youth with innovative tools and new impetus—a proven means to help navigate a pathway out of the turbulent waters of an escalating climate crisis and mounting global instability.



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Background

Why a Guidance Note on youth, climate, peace and security?

In recent years, young people's crucial role in preventing conflict and maintaining peace has become increasingly recognized as the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda has gained momentum.⁴ At the same time, the Climate, Peace and Security (CPS) field is developing rapidly at the research and policy levels. CPS is also increasingly becoming an entry point for programming;⁵ recognizing the interactions between climate change and existing vulnerabilities, which compound risks of insecurity, including violent conflict and the erosion of social cohesion.⁶

To date, little attention has been directed to how *young people*⁷ may respond to—or conversely, how they are affected by—climate-related security challenges. As a result, there have been calls to explore youth empowerment work around climate-related security

risks and peacebuilding,⁸ and for greater attention to be paid to the needs of youth within CPS and climate adaptation programming in fragile and conflict-affected settings,⁹ and to promote the leadership of young people in climate-related decision-making.¹⁰ In general, discussions around inclusion and participatory approaches are building momentum in the policy sphere, given exclusion as a driver of climate vulnerability, insecurity, and conflict.¹¹

While several relevant studies on the dynamics between gender, climate, and security have been published,¹² the ways in which young people—in all their diversity—are affected by and respond to climate-related security risks are yet to be explored in more depth. As such, there is little practical guidance on how to integrate and benefit from a youth and generational lens in the CPS field, and respectively, a climate (security) perspective in the YPS field.

4 UNSC (2020a)

5 In 2023, 29 per cent of newly approved UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)-projects included climate, peace and security considerations. See UNGA (2024, p. 17)

6 Gaston et al. (2023)

7 In this guidance note, young people are defined as persons aged 18-29 years old, in line with UNSC (2015).

8 UNDP (2023a)

9 Gaston et al. (2023)

10 COP28 (2023a)

11 Potts et al. (2023)

12 For instance, see Smith (2022); UN Women, UNEP, UNDP and UNDP/PA/PBSO (2020); and UNDP/PA (2022).



Hüaitoto Foundation, Colombia. Photo: Hüaitoto Foundation

With this guidance note, FBA, UNDP, and SIPRI jointly address this gap by contributing to an emerging understanding of how young people from different backgrounds and identities are affected by climate-related security risks, and how they perceive and address these interrelated risks. It outlines the links between the YPS and CPS agendas and provides real-world examples of how young people perceive, engage with, and lead CPS-related efforts. The guidance note also aims to inspire actors to reflect upon, explore, and realize the nexus of youth, climate, peace and security (YCPS). For this two-fold purpose, the guidance note is organized into five parts:

Part 1: Understanding the YPS and CPS agendas provides a brief overview of the YPS and CPS agendas.

Part 2: The links between the YPS and CPS agendas—in practice and policy explores the relationship between the two agendas, drawing upon relevant policy documents and publications, as well as from existing academic literature.

Part 3: Youth perspectives on climate, peace and security analyses how young people of different backgrounds

are affected by climate-related security risks and how they respond to these risks. The analysis draws upon first-hand accounts gathered through interviews with young peace and climate actors in diverse settings.

Part 4: Exploring youth, climate, peace and security in practice aims at inspiring practitioners to increasingly engage with the youth, climate, peace and security nexus by providing considerations and guiding questions connected to studies and research, analysis, programming, strategic planning and policy-making, and funding.

Appendix: Cross-cutting issues and perspectives provides practical guidance for understanding certain transversal and cross-cutting issues and lenses particularly relevant when working with youth, climate, peace and security. These include meaningful youth participation, intersectionality, gender equality, and ‘do no harm’, as well as the application of a youth lens, an intergenerational lens, and a climate lens, respectively. If you are new to these cross-cutting issues and lenses, it is recommended you read the appendix after Part 2, as it is important in understanding and fully benefiting from the upcoming sections.

The guidance note is intended for CPS and YPS practitioners as well as policy-makers and public officials, while also catering to various peace, security, and development practitioners and researchers, including young people leading efforts and those actively engaged in these matters.

A note on methodology

The methodological framework employed in the development of this guidance note on youth, climate, peace and security consisted of desk research combined with qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, and consultations. The desk research has involved a review of existing literature, reports, and policy documents relevant to youth, climate, peace and security. A total of 37 semi-structured interviews and two focus group discussions were conducted with key informants representing diverse stakeholder groups, with a strong emphasis on young persons active in the YPS and CPS nexus across Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In terms of scope, the primary focus has been on youth-led initiatives in fragile and conflict-affected settings, recognizing the disproportionate impact climate change has in these environments. Qualitative interviews have provided invaluable insights into the lived experiences, challenges, and aspirations of youth actors operating at the intersection of peacebuilding and climate action.

The formation of a sounding board comprised of young climate professionals and advocates, young peacebuilders, and global experts on youth, peace and security, as well as on climate, peace and security has been central to the development process. Consultations with the sounding board have served as a cornerstone for shaping the research agenda and

ensuring the incorporation of varied perspectives. A validation exercise was conducted with the sounding board to enhance the credibility and validity of findings and recommendations. This iterative process involved sharing an advanced draft with the sounding board containing preliminary findings and proposed guidance. Members provided collective feedback in online workshops and individual input and critique through written submissions. Together with an organizational peer-review, subsequent revisions were made based on the input received, ensuring alignment with the diverse perspectives and insights gleaned from involved stakeholders.

Leveraging global platforms for youth advocacy and engagement, a side event was organized during the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum in April 2024. The side event facilitated direct interactions with youth leaders, enabling the exchange of ideas, experiences, and innovative solutions pertinent to the thematic focus of this study.

This process has aimed to generate emerging insights and exploratory considerations for advancing a collective understanding of youth, climate, peace and security relevant to young experts, climate, peace and security practitioners and peace, security and development actors at large. However, in crafting this guidance note, it is necessary to acknowledge inherent limitations within the field. Given that CPS is still a relatively new and exploratory field and that there is therefore a scarcity of concrete insights on the *intersections* of YPS and CPS, this guidance note is necessarily based on emerging practices. Authors recognize that the topic requires further exploration and input from other actors, and thus encourage ongoing efforts to delve deeper into this intersection for more comprehensive understanding and effective implementation.

PART 1:

Understanding the YPS and CPS agendas

The Youth, Peace and Security agenda: A power shift in peace and security

The YPS agenda came to life as a response to a need identified in civil society for a global framework which could engage Member States and United Nations entities to support young people's peacebuilding efforts.¹³ Historically, there had been a common narrative across the peace and security field which portrayed young persons as one of two things: either as perpetrators of violence or as passive victims of conflict. Adding a gender perspective to this, young men had typically been seen as perpetrators, while young women were regarded as victims.¹⁴ This agenda has made important strides in challenging harmful narratives around young people and replacing such narratives

with an evidence-based understanding of youth, including young persons as peacebuilders, mediators, and leaders in their own right—as recognized in the Independent Progress Study on YPS.¹⁵ The YPS agenda, as enshrined in the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 (2015)¹⁶, is the first Security Council resolution to recognize the important role that young persons, in all their diversity, play in maintaining and promoting international peace and security. The resolution defines youth as young adults aged 18 to 29 years,¹⁷ and acknowledges that young people are a heterogeneous group.

UNSCR 2250 (2015) did not come from a vacuum, but came to life as a result of years of dedicated work and commitment by young peacebuilding leaders and advocates, civil society, governments, and UN representatives. It is changing the way the UN,

¹³ Search for Common Ground and GCYPS (2020)

¹⁴ UN Women (2018)

¹⁵ UNFPA and PBSO (2018)

¹⁶ UNSC (2015)

¹⁷ Resolution 2250 also notes the variations that exist on national and international levels. Other definitions used by countries and organizations typically vary in the range of 15 and 35 years.

its Member States, and regional and civil society organizations engage with young people in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It is a result of a youth-driven and institutionally supported process.

Since the endorsement of UNSCR 2250 in 2015, two other YPS Resolutions have been adopted by the United Nations Security Council; namely UNSCR 2419 (2018) and UNSCR 2535 (2020). Together they constitute a framework for action, urging UN Member States to enable young people's *meaningful* participation in decision-making and peace processes at all levels. It is based on the understanding that young persons have the right to meaningfully participate in decision-making. It recognizes that young people's influence at all levels of decision-making makes policies, programmes, and peace processes more relevant, practical, sustainable, and impactful, and increases the effectiveness of peace and security initiatives.¹⁸ The YPS agenda outlines five pillars of action:¹⁹

The YPS agenda builds on and reinforces other UNSCRs and important global agendas, such as the Sustaining Peace Agenda²⁰, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development²¹, and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda.²² Beyond the three Security Council Resolutions on YPS to date, there has been significant policy progress which has continued to develop and solidify the YPS agenda.²³

The Independent Progress Study on YPS, as requested by UNSCR 2250 (2015) and published in 2018, provided unprecedented evidence and data on how young people positively impact peace and security, and thereby helped debunk stereotypes and policy myths²⁴ associated with young people. Its recommendations provided pathways for including, investing in, and partnering with young people to ensure a peace dividend.²⁵

Figure 1: The five pillars of action in the YPS agenda



18 UN and FBA (2021, p. 15)

19 UNSC (2015)

20 UNGA (2016); and UNSC (2016)

21 UNGA (2015)

22 UNSC (2000) and subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

23 Such as Altiok and Grizelj (2019); Tanghøj and Scarpelini (2020); UN and FBA (2021); Izsák-Ndiaye (2021); and GCYPS (2022).

24 Policy myths associated with young people are theories and narratives that rest upon erroneous and stereotypical assumptions about youth, sometimes used to justify certain policy responses. Policy myths are not grounded in evidence and, as such, have led to ineffective and counterproductive policy responses in the context of peace and security, sometimes exacerbating youth alienation and eroding their trust in governments and multilateral actors. For a full account on this debate, see UNFPA and PBSO (2018).

25 UNFPA and PBSO (2018)



United Nations Security Council Adopts Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). UN Photo: Eskinder Debebe

The Secretary-General has published three reports on YPS to assess the institutionalization of the agenda to date. The reports have taken stock of a growing recognition of young people’s key roles in peace and security and accelerated progress in the institutionalization of the agenda. Meanwhile, the reports also underline that major challenges persist in the form of structural barriers, human rights violations, and inadequate investment, hindering the meaningful participation of young people in decision-making and peacebuilding.²⁶

At the regional and country levels, progress is emerging. The African Union has adopted a 10-year Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security,²⁷ and the League of Arab States has endorsed an Arab Strategy for Youth, Peace and Security²⁸. To date, four countries—Finland,²⁹ Nigeria,³⁰ the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC),³¹ and the Philippines³²—have published

National Action Plans (NAPs) on YPS. The strong advocacy and coordination efforts by youth-led YPS coalitions, such as the Global Coalition on Youth Peace and Security (GCYPS), have been part and parcel leading up to the adoption of the four NAPs on YPS.³³ Youth actors and duty-bearers across local, regional, and global levels keep moving the dial on YPS, despite significant hindrances and resistance.³⁴



Do you want to learn more about the YPS agenda?

Visit the [SparkBlue Global Youth](#)³⁵ platform to explore key documents or sign up for the [Youth Peace and Security Primer](#),³⁶ a free online based training course.

26 UNSC (2020a), UNSC (2022); and UNSC (2024)

27 African Union Commission (2020)

28 League of Arab States (2023)

29 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland (2021)

30 Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development Nigeria (2021)

31 Ministère de la Jeunesse, Initiation à la Nouvelle Citoyenneté et Cohésion Nationale (2022)

32 Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity (2022)

33 GCYPS (2022).

34 UNSC (2024)

35 UNDP (n.d.)

36 UNSSC (n.d)

Climate, Peace and Security: An emerging agenda

Climate change is causing widespread adverse impacts on ecosystems and human societies, with implications for peace and security particularly in fragile contexts.³⁷ The effects of climate change exacerbate existing vulnerabilities in fragile contexts, creating compound risks which affect human security. Scientific evidence has consistently shown that although climate change alone does not cause conflict, its impacts can exacerbate vulnerabilities, undermine livelihoods, and increase grievances and tensions, which may increase the risk of violent conflict.³⁸ Today, this understanding is widely accepted and captured in the term of climate-related security risks (CRSRs).

Defining climate-related security risks

Remling and Barnhoon (2021) define climate-related security risks (CRSRs) as *“risks emerging from climate change to people’s wellbeing and livelihoods that may have implications for societal, economic, or political stability at local, national, regional, or international levels.”* They warrant that *“the concern (...) is about the relationship between climate impacts, human security, and deteriorating societal stability. Whether specific climate change impacts translate into human security risks, and further societal, economic, or political instability, depends on different intervening factors and political governance structures.”*³⁹

Building on the understanding of how the effects of climate change and conflict dynamics interact and how climate change can increase the risk of insecurity or

violent conflict in a variety of contexts,⁴⁰ research has also recently begun to explore how addressing the effects of climate change can contribute to peacebuilding.⁴¹

The links between climate change and insecurity have also been increasingly recognized at the policy level, as well as in the fields of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Emerging out of a focus on the potential risks that the effects of climate change can pose for peace and security—and the need to integrate a climate perspective into analyses—there is a growing interest in climate-sensitive conflict prevention and peacebuilding as well as in conflict-sensitive climate action.

At the level of the UN Security Council (UNSC), the climate and security agenda first emerged in 2007 as part of an open debate on Energy, Security, and Climate, where it was discussed as an issue of international peace and security. In 2018, more than a decade later, two notable points of progress took place. First, the Group of Friends on Climate and Security was established at the UN Headquarters in New York, consisting of 60 Member States. Second, the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) was formed, which supports the UN, and UN Member States and entities to better understand and address the links between climate change, peace, and security.⁴²

In December 2021, for the first time, a thematic resolution establishing climate change as a risk to peace and security was brought to a vote in the UN Security Council. While the resolution was not adopted, progress on the agenda has continued within the Security Council and other UN institutions. A notable sign of policy progress on matters concerning climate and security has been the inclusion of language related to climate change in UN field mission mandates; for example, reporting requests on the implications of climate change in missions’ operating contexts.

37 IPCC (2022); and Black et al. (2022)

38 Mach et al. (2019); Sakaguchi, Varughese and Auld (2017); Scartozzi (2021); van Baalen and Mobjörk (2017); Koubi (2019); and von Uexkull and Buhaug (2021)x

39 Remling and Barnhoon (2021)

40 Mach et al. (2019); Sakaguchi, Varughese and Auld (2017); Scartozzi (2021); van Baalen and Mobjörk (2017); Koubi (2019); and von Uexkull and Buhaug (2021)

41 Krampe et al (2024); Hammill and Matthew (2010); Hegazi and Seyuba (2022); and Hegazi and Seyuba (2024)

42 CSM is a joint UN initiative between the Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs (DPPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Department of Peace Operations (DPO).



Since 2021, the deployment of CPS Advisors to UN peacekeeping operations and special political missions tasked to support analysis, policy mainstreaming, and partnerships and cooperation represents significant progress. Advisors have been deployed to Somalia, South Sudan, Iraq, and West Africa and the Sahel, for example. Additionally, through the CSM, advisors have been deployed to regional- and sub-regional organizations, including the League of Arab States, The Liptako Gourma Authority and the Lake Chad Basin Commission. Furthermore, through UNDP, Climate Security Advisors are deployed regionally to Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Central Asia, and Asia and the Pacific.

In November 2022, the climate and security agenda was reformulated to climate, *peace* and security as a result of Kenya and Norway's Arria-formula meeting in the Security Council. This effort sought to add a peace perspective and explore opportunities for peacebuilding within the climate and security agenda.⁴³ To date, this framing has been widely adopted and in 2023, 11 out of 15 Security Council members pledged to advance a systematic, responsive, pragmatic, comprehensive, and evidence-based approach to climate, peace and security during their respective terms.⁴⁴

This expanded focus and more ambitious approach at the policy level reflect the practice and experience of UN agencies such as UNDP, UNEP, UN Women, and others working with peacebuilding and climate portfolios at regional and country levels.⁴⁵ The increased focus on opportunities for peacebuilding is also addressed in two DPPA practice notes focusing on the links between peace and security, climate, and gender as well as the implications and potential entry points of climate change for mediation and peace processes.⁴⁶

Beyond the UN, discussions and considerations of climate, peace and security links have featured in institutions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the African Union (AU), the Pacific Island Forum States (PIFS), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), among others.⁴⁷ The AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC), for example, adopted a landmark Communique on Climate Change and Peace and Security in 2021 and is currently (at the time of writing in 2024) developing a common African position on CPS aimed at facilitating a common understanding of the agenda among its member states and guiding them in their engagement in addressing CPS issues.⁴⁸ The Bamako Declaration adopted at the inaugural Sahel Climate, Peace and Security Forum in Bamako, Mali, in November 2023 is another example, calling for regional collaboration and the development of strategies to address climate security across the Sahel.⁴⁹ In the Pacific region, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) has also made significant strides in addressing the intersection of climate change, peace, and security. The Boe Declaration on Regional Security, adopted in 2018, reflects the Pacific leaders' recognition of climate change as the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security, and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific.⁵⁰

43 Norwegian Mission to the United Nations (2023)

44 United States Mission to the United Nations (2023)

45 See, for example: UN Women, UNEP, UNDP and UNDPPA/PBSO (2020)

46 See UNDPPA (2020) and (2022)

47 Barnhoorn (2023); Krampe and Mobjörk (2018); and Security Council Report (2022).

48 African Union Peace and Security Council (2023b)

49 Governments of Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and The Gambia, and UNDP (2023)

50 Pacific Islands Forum (2018)



UNDP Senegal. Photo: Julie Teng & Jin Ni

Many peacebuilding organizations are proactively working on operationalizing the CPS agenda and exploring ways to realize co-benefits for climate and peace.⁵¹ For example, by using climate change as an entry point for dialogue and by facilitating local agreements to resolve and prevent conflicts related to natural resources.⁵²

The CPS agenda has also been featured in various fora, including at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Conference of the Parties. At COP27, the Climate Responses for Sustaining Peace (CRSP) initiative was launched by the COP27 Presidency.⁵³ At COP28, “Relief, Recovery, and Peace” was included as a thematic day for the first time at a COP and a Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery, and Peace was endorsed.⁵⁴

Finally, the latest summary report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) also issues a stark warning that climate-related risks “will become more complex and more difficult to manage”.⁵⁵ Therefore, taking up CPS considerations and addressing associated risks is more urgent than ever, especially among the majority of those affected, such as the young population in fragile settings.



Do you want to learn more about the CPS agenda?

Check out the “Climate, Peace and Security Board”, established by the CSM and containing a range of resources, training materials, and tools on climate, peace and security:

[Climate, Peace & Security Board | Trello](#)

⁵¹ See, for example, adelphi and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (2024)

⁵² Meijer and Seyuba (2022); International Alert (2022); and Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (2022).

⁵³ COP27 (2022)

⁵⁴ COP28 (2023a)

⁵⁵ IPCC (2023)

Figure 2: Key messages on the YPS and CPS agendas

YPS

- Young persons have the right to participate meaningfully in peace processes and decision-making at all levels.
- Young people play a crucial and positive role in maintaining and promoting international peace and security. Furthermore, their participation strengthens the relevance and effectiveness of peace and security initiatives.
- The United Nations, its Member States, and regional organizations should consider ways to increase support for young people's meaningful participation in peace processes and decision-making, at all levels.
- Efforts in support of young people should be made across the five pillars of the YPS agenda: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, and disengagement and reintegration.

CPS

- Climate change intensifies existing vulnerabilities in fragile contexts, leading to compounded risks that affect human security. While climate change alone does not directly cause conflict, its effects can disrupt livelihoods, and heighten grievances and tensions, thereby increasing the likelihood of violent conflict.
- There is an increasing recognition of the need to address the interlinked challenges of climate change, peace, and security through integrated approaches. This includes climate-sensitive conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and conflict-sensitive climate action.
- The effects of climate change may sometimes create opportunities for peacebuilding, for example by using climate change as an entry point for dialogue.

PART 2:

The links between the YPS and CPS agendas—in practice and policy

The disproportionate effects of climate change and insecurity on young people

Young people aged 18–29 comprise 1.45 billion of the world’s population.⁵⁶ 690 million of these individuals, or about 47% of the world’s youth, live in countries with extreme or high levels of violent conflict.⁵⁷

Concurrently one billion, or 75%, reside in the world’s less-developed regions,⁵⁸ with 250 million living in the world’s least developed countries (LDCs),⁵⁹ where the effects of climate change are the most acute.

56 UNDESA (2022) (Medium variant projection for 2023).

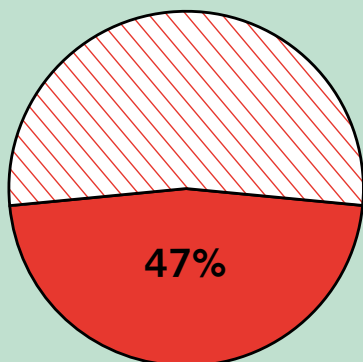
57 UNDESA (2022) and ACLED (2023)

58 Less developed regions, excluding China.

59 As per ECOSOC (n.d.) Least Developed Countries (LDC) Identification Criteria. Data from UNDESA (2022).

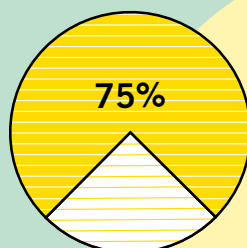
Figure 3: Youth demographics, climate change, and conflict

Young people, aged 18-29, comprise 1.45 billion of the world's population.



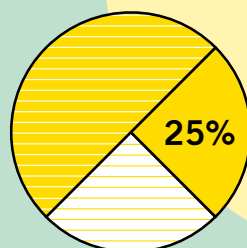
Living with conflict

47 % of young people, or 690 million, live in countries with extreme or high levels of violent conflict.

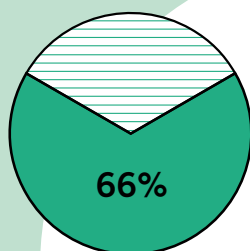


In developing contexts

75 % of young people, or one billion, reside in the world's less developed regions.



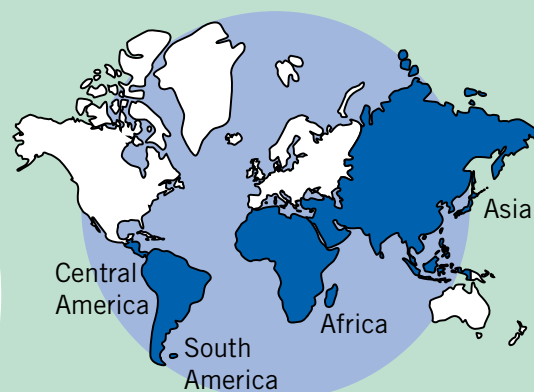
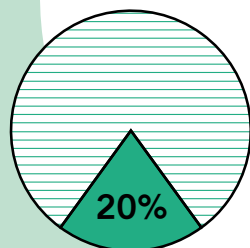
25 %, or 250 million, live in the world's least developed countries (LDCs), where the effects of climate change are the most acute.



A disproportionate impact

In the LDCs, people under the age of 30 make up two thirds of the population.

More specifically, young people aged 18-29 typically make up more than 20 % of the total population, compared to about 15 % in more developed regions.



Regions most affected by climate change

Countries within these regions have comparatively large youth cohorts as shares of the total population.

These dynamics worsen existing inequalities and vulnerabilities for young women in particular.

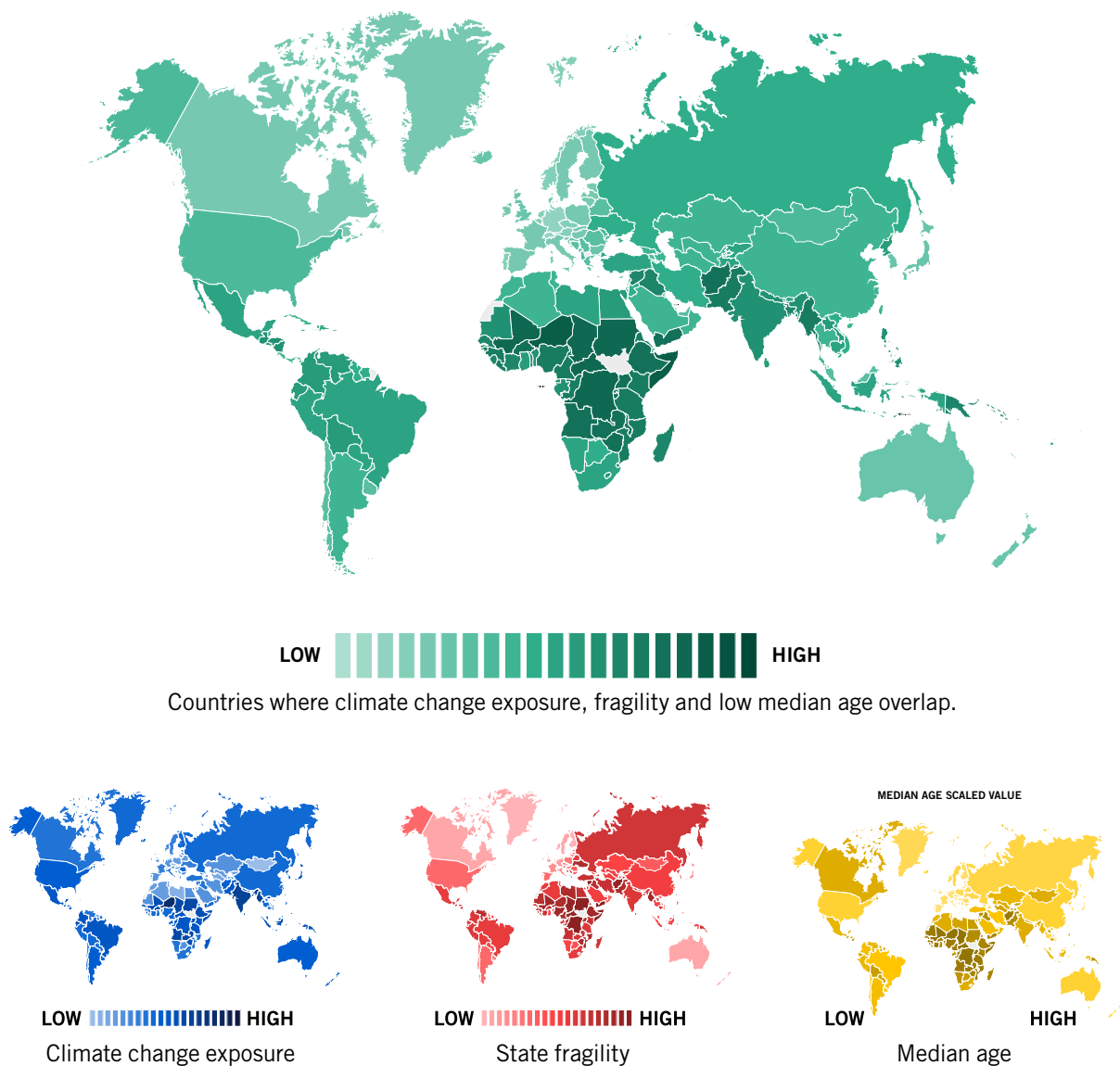


According to the IPCC, Africa, Asia, and Central and South America, including small island developing states (SIDS), are the regions most affected by climate change.⁶⁰ Countries within these regions have comparatively large youth cohorts as shares of the total population. In LDCs, people under the age of 30 make up two thirds of the population.⁶¹ More specifically, young people aged 18–29 typically make up more than

20% of the total population in LDCs, compared to about 15% in more developed regions.⁶²

Some of the countries most susceptible to climate change are also some of the most fragile and conflict-affected settings in the world. Out of the twelve countries deemed the most fragile, five are also among the most exposed to climate hazards.⁶³

Figure 4: How climate exposure, fragility and median age overlap



60 IPCC (2023, p. 5)

61 UNDESA (2022)

62 Ibid.

63 Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) (2021) data compared against data from Institute for Economics & Peace (2021).

The above illustration captures the overlaps of climate exposure⁶⁴, fragility,⁶⁵ and median age⁶⁶ at the country level. The strongest overlaps are found in a distinct regional concentration across the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and Central Africa; including Niger, Somalia, Chad, Sudan, Congo, the DRC, Central African Republic, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Burundi. Significant relationships are also found across Asia and Central

and South America. These overlaps of climate hazards, violent conflict, and relatively large youth populations translate into a reality where the combined effects of climate change and insecurity disproportionately affect young people compared to other age segments. Taken together with the confluence of gender, these dynamics compound existing inequalities and vulnerabilities for *young women* in particular.⁶⁷

Figure 5: ‘The extent to which current and future generations will experience a hotter and different world depends on choices now and in the near term’

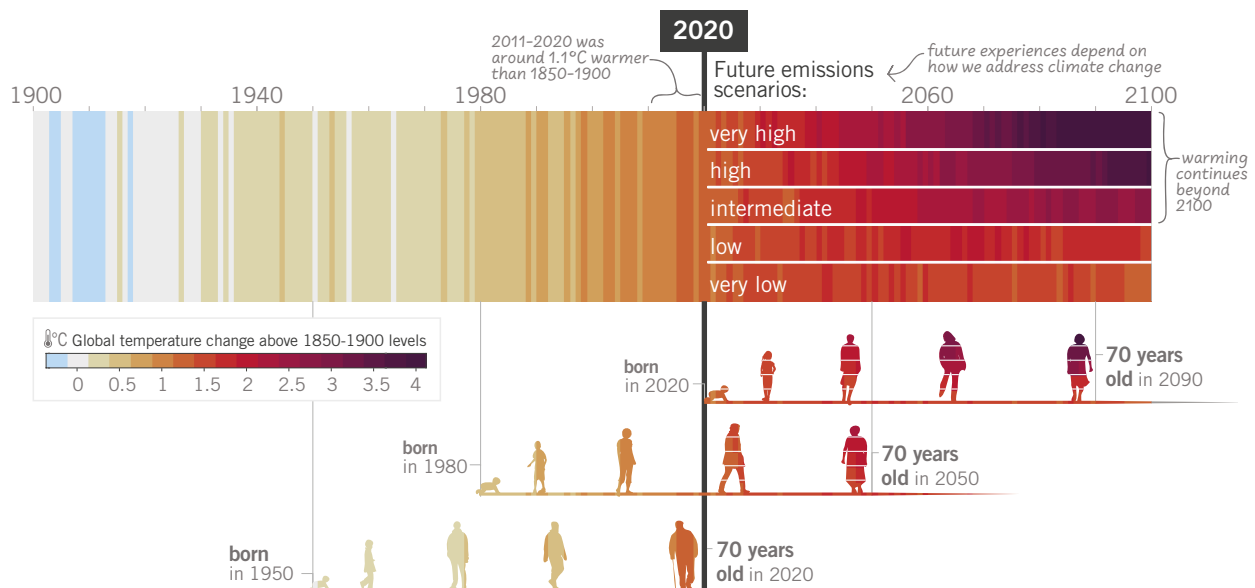


Figure SPM.1 Panel (c) in IPCC (2023)

The effects of climate change on peace and security are not only shaping young people’s challenges in the present, but are also shifting conditions for their generation’s life trajectory. As determined by the IPCC, adverse impacts from human-caused climate change will continue to intensify.⁶⁸ As the illustration above

shows, while those born in the middle of the 20th century will experience some of the damaging effects of climate change, today’s youth and future generations will live through far worse consequences. Young generations in low-income countries are particularly hard hit. They will face the strongest increases in

64 Data derived from the Fragile States Index (Fund for Peace, 2024). The Fragile States Index includes twelve conflict risk indicators used to measure cohesion, economic, political and social conditions of a state at any given moment.

65 Data derived from the Fragile States Index (Fund for Peace, 2024). The Fragile States Index includes twelve conflict risk indicators used to measure cohesion, economic, political and social conditions of a state at any given moment.

66 Data derived from UNDESA (2022).

67 UNDP (2022)

68 IPCC (2023)

lifetime exposure of sudden-onset extreme climate events, with a more than fivefold increase for young people born in 2020 in these regions compared to those born in 1960 under current climate pledges.⁶⁹ Hence, climate change is an inherently intergenerational issue, demanding *intergenerational climate justice*.⁷⁰

Intergenerational climate justice

Intergenerational climate justice emphasizes the responsibility of the current generation to ensure that their actions do not compromise the ability of future generations to live healthy and sustainable lives. In this sense, intergenerational climate justice is closely linked to the protection pillar in the YPS agenda, emphasizing the protection of human rights and young people. The concept is rooted in the principle that decisions made today on climate change mitigation and adaptation will have lasting impacts on the environment and on the well-being of future generations.

Key aspects of intergenerational climate justice include ensuring fair distribution of natural resources and environmental benefits (distributive justice), addressing past and current environmental damages, restoring ecosystems (restorative justice), and involving all generations in decision-making processes to ensure inclusive and fair governance (procedural justice). Understanding and implementing these principles is vital to creating a just and sustainable future for all.⁷¹

Young people today, particularly in the Global South, carry a double burden; the weight of a climate crisis and a simultaneous trajectory of increasing insecurity, both of which they have no other choice but to address and attempt to adapt to, as these crises place their futures at stake. Unsurprisingly, climate change is perceived as an emergency to a larger extent by young persons than by older generations.⁷²

At the same time, young people today face a double deficit. They do not have equitable access to decision-making spaces, or the resources necessary to bring about needed change. In the political sphere, persons under 30, while constituting half of the world's population, only make up about 2.6% of the world's parliamentarians, and less than 1% of these young MPs are women.⁷³ In terms of resources, youth-led peacebuilding organizations with recognized comparative advantages working in fragile and conflict-affected settings often operate on less than USD 5,000 per year.⁷⁴ They consistently remain out of reach for substantial resources due to funding entities' inaccessible and inflexible priorities and modes of operation.⁷⁵ In fact, only 0.76 % of grants from the largest climate foundations are directed towards youth-led climate activism, of which only a tiny fraction is dedicated to the Global South.⁷⁶

Despite this, most young persons are not passive bystanders in these challenging realities. They are positioning themselves as active and competent climate- and peacebuilding agents.⁷⁷ In fact, many young persons are leading efforts to address climate-related risks and conducting youth-led resilience- and peacebuilding interventions. Others actively adapt to these new challenges. Their efforts suggest they are using new and different mental models⁷⁸ capable of novel and integrated solutions aimed at transformative change.

69 Thiery et al. (2021).

70 Wang and Chan (2023)

71 Ibid.

72 Flynn et al. (2021)

73 UNDP (2024b)

74 UNOY and Search for Common Ground (2017)

75 Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (2023)

76 Youth Climate Justice Study (2022)

77 UNFPA and PBSO (2018)

78 Mental models are the sets of causal beliefs we “run” in our minds to infer what will happen in a given event or situation. See for instance Bostrom (2017).



IYCDP Graduation pose for a group photo during the UN Climate Change Conference COP28 at Expo City Dubai on December 8, 2023, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Photo: COP28 / Anthony Fleyhan

Where are the young people in climate, peace and security?

Although the links between youth, climate, peace and security are evident in practice, the emerging field of CPS has largely overlooked youth perspectives. Publications and discussions on CPS have to date typically lacked discussions pertaining to the situations and perspectives of young people. In instances where youth are mentioned, they have tended to be portrayed negatively. Young men in particular have been seen as perpetrators of violence or extremism, and are often reported as being lured into joining armed groups when their livelihoods become further stressed by climate change.⁷⁹ This is part and parcel of the ‘idle hands’ narrative and the long-since debunked ‘youth bulge’ theory,⁸⁰ which inaccurately portrays the pull of large groups of unemployed youth into violence as a type of natural law.⁸¹ As such, it is evident that the dominant narrative in CPS which describes how young people are affected by climate-related security risks and how they respond to them is predominantly filtered through a vulnerability perspective.

While it holds true that certain groups of already vulnerable young persons do engage directly in violence as a means of survival—especially in challenging environments where popular trust in the government and state actors is low—the absolute majority of young people do not, nor are at risk of, participating in violence.⁸² Climate-induced environmental stressors may contribute to creating compounded insecurities which may make certain groups of young people—particularly but not exclusively young men—more vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization.⁸³ However, most young people try to adapt to the challenges posed by climate change peacefully while, importantly, some actually take on leading roles to develop and implement solutions to mitigate its impacts.

While understanding the factors that influence vulnerability among young persons is crucial, limiting the analysis of the roles of youth to only a *vulnerability* perspective risks missing out on factors shaping youth’s *responses* and *adaptability* to climate-related security risks. There is a need to build a deeper understanding of young people’s motivations⁸⁴ and agency in order to better support young persons’ climate-related

79 For example NUPI and SIPRI (2021); and Institute for Economics & Peace (2023).

80 The youth bulge theory treated correlation as causation claiming that large (male) youth populations increased the likelihood of conflict. Youth bulge theorists have identified levels of development and regime type as more important explanations of violence than young demographic cohorts. See for instance Urdal (2006).

81 UNFPA and PBSO (2018, p. 30)

82 Ibid., p. 18

83 UNDP (2023); and UNFPA and PBSO (2018)

84 Gaston et al (2023, p. 52)

security risk responses.⁸⁵ Indeed, the demography of young people could yield significant peace dividends, if meaningful youth participation is enhanced and youth-led initiatives are fully supported.⁸⁶

Is climate a missing piece in youth, peace and security?

For many young people, especially in the climate arena, climate action and peacebuilding are fundamentally one and the same. Countless young people express that climate action is inherently about peace, and no peace is possible without fighting climate change and achieving climate justice.⁸⁷ Both climate action and peacebuilding concern the future of all people and the planet. Still, the YPS agenda has not engaged substantially with matters concerning the climate crisis and its impacts on peace and security, despite the growing evidence of the detrimental effects of climate change on young people's security.

The YPS agenda has traditionally focused on issues such as conflict prevention, resolution, and the role of young people in peacebuilding efforts, without explicitly incorporating climate change as a significant factor influencing peace and security dynamics. Many YPS initiatives have tended to prioritize immediate conflict-related challenges and youth empowerment/participation strategies, overlooking the longer-term impacts of climate change on peace and security, as well as the specific vulnerabilities of young people to climate-related risks and their responses to these risks.

Failing to grasp how climate-related security risks relate to the realities of young persons of diverse backgrounds in peace and security means bypassing a fundamental aspect shaping young people's current situations as well as future trajectories.

Siloed approaches within the international system, diverse interests, and a lack of awareness or understanding among policy-makers and practitioners at large should not come as a surprise but constitute three likely explanatory factors. The dearth of concrete

insights and data exploring the links between youth, climate, peace and security is a fundamental issue. Efforts to address climate change, youth participation, and peacebuilding are often pursued separately within distinct policy and programmatic frameworks, leading to a gap in recognizing the fundamental rationale of integrating climate considerations into youth-focused peace and security efforts and resulting in missed opportunities for synergies and integrated action across these domains. A climate lens on the YPS agenda would more authentically mirror the lived experiences of young people, especially those who live in contexts affected by both conflict- and climate-related security risks, offering a more comprehensive approach to addressing the complex challenges they face. This being said, at regional and national levels, there *are* budding examples of where a climate perspective is integrated into the YPS framework.



Photo: Private

The YPS agenda grants climate activists the power to say that 'we are supposed to be here, we should be included, we should be doing this' from COP all the way down. My first rationale for taking interest in this Nexus is the fact that there is already a framework that supports these engagements. Climate activists are peacebuilders.

– Wevyn Muganda
Founder of ISIRIKA and International Security Expert

85 UNFPA and PBSO (2018)

86 UNDP RSCA (2023, p. 7)

87 Interviews with sounding board members, and UNDP and UNFPA (2022)



Felipe Paullier, Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs, briefs the Security Council on the third biennial report of the Secretary-General on Youth, Peace and Security. Photo: UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

Nascent approaches toward policy integration of youth, climate, peace and security

The exploration of climate change and its security implications for young people is only beginning to unfold within the YPS agenda. In the three resolutions on YPS to date, the sole reference to climate-related security risks can be found in UNSCR 2535 (2020), with a passage stating that “young people play a unique role in strengthening the national, local, and community-based capacities in conflict and post-conflict situations to prepare for and respond to *increasingly frequent and severe weather events and natural disasters*”.⁸⁸

The three UN Secretary-General’s (SG) reports on YPS to date represent somewhat of a shift. While the first SG report on YPS (2020) made no mention of the topic, the second (2022) report recognized climate change as “a threat multiplier that exacerbates existing grievances

and aggravates root causes of conflict” and young people as a powerful force calling for transformative climate action.⁸⁹ Published in 2024, the third SG report on YPS further acknowledged that young people bear a disproportionate burden of climate change effects, and that climate change worsens vulnerabilities and inequalities, threatens development gains, and increases risks such as GBV, poverty, and resource scarcity, while highlighting young people’s pivotal role in global climate action mobilization.⁹⁰

At the regional level, the AU, during its AUPSC thematic session on YPS in November 2023, included the need to “enhance youth capacities to anticipate and address climate change impacts...as part of the emerging threats to peace and security...” as critical components for advancing the YPS agenda on the continent.⁹¹

Although CPS has not been a notable topic in regional and national YPS action plans to date, there are some promising practices. Climate-related security risks are

88 UNSC (2020b)

89 UNSC (2020a); and UNSC (2022)

90 UNSC (2024)

91 African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC) (2023a)

featured in the context analysis and objectives of the Arab Strategy for YPS (2023–2028)⁹² and recognized in Finland’s NAP on YPS. Finland’s NAP further credits young influencers for putting the item on the global agenda.⁹³

Youth inclusion is increasingly prioritized within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process. The institutionalization of the Presidency Youth Climate Champion (YCC) during COP 28 mandates every COP Presidency moving forward to appoint a YCC (aged 18–35) to strengthen young peoples’ inclusion and meaningful engagement in climate action. The COP28 International Youth Climate Delegates Program (IYCDP) is a concrete example of an initiative that engages young people in climate policy making spaces in a substantial way. The programme was the largest COP Presidency initiative to-date to expand youth participation in international climate negotiations by providing robust capacity-building for 100 young delegates and funding their attendance in the 18th UN Climate Conference of Youth (COY18), COP28, and other milestones in the climate negotiation cycle. In collaboration with the official Children and Youth Constituency of UNFCCC, the program selected 100 young delegates to participate in COP28 negotiations, prioritizing those from under-represented groups and fragile settings,⁹⁴ such as from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Indigenous Peoples, and other minorities.⁹⁵ Promisingly, COP28 also resulted in accelerated efforts toward the development of a global framework on youth, peace, and climate security, initiated by the COP28 Presidency, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Global Coalition on YPS, and the official children and youth constituency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) YOUNGO.⁹⁶

At a global level, the UN Secretary-General’s Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change provides input and recommendations to the Secretary-General on

climate-related policies, initiatives, and strategies, drawing on their expertise, experiences, and networks within the global youth climate movement. The recommendations and insights provided by the Youth Advisory Group, including those on addressing climate-related security risks, have informed the development of climate-related policies, initiatives, and strategies within the United Nations system. Their input has helped shape the UN’s approach to addressing the climate crisis, making it more inclusive, responsive, and youth-focused.⁹⁷



Coming from a small island developing state, the climate crisis continues to be relentless in negatively impacting lives and livelihoods. Our survival is now dependent on a global community which is unified in urgently advancing the climate agenda, with the power of young people being a catalyst to drive this much-needed accelerated action.

– Jevanic Henry
Member of the UN Secretary-General’s
Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change

The New Agenda for Peace by the UN Secretary-General contends that while climate action can offer avenues for inclusive and effective peacebuilding, failure to tackle the challenges posed by climate change and the inequalities it creates head-on will have devastating knock-on effects for prevention and peacebuilding efforts.⁹⁸ In the Agenda, the Secretary-General puts forth several recommendations on addressing climate-related security risks which reflect the need for a more integrated approach. Although the role and participation of youth in shaping the future for peace is mentioned in the Agenda, reference to young

92 Notably objective 10 in the strategy which is focused on “Supporting and harnessing the potential of young men and women to promote climate action for peace and security.” See League of Arab States (2023)

93 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland (2021)

94 Out of 100 youth delegates, the programme included 29 young persons from fragile or conflict-affected contexts.

95 COP28 (2023b)

96 COP28 (2023c)

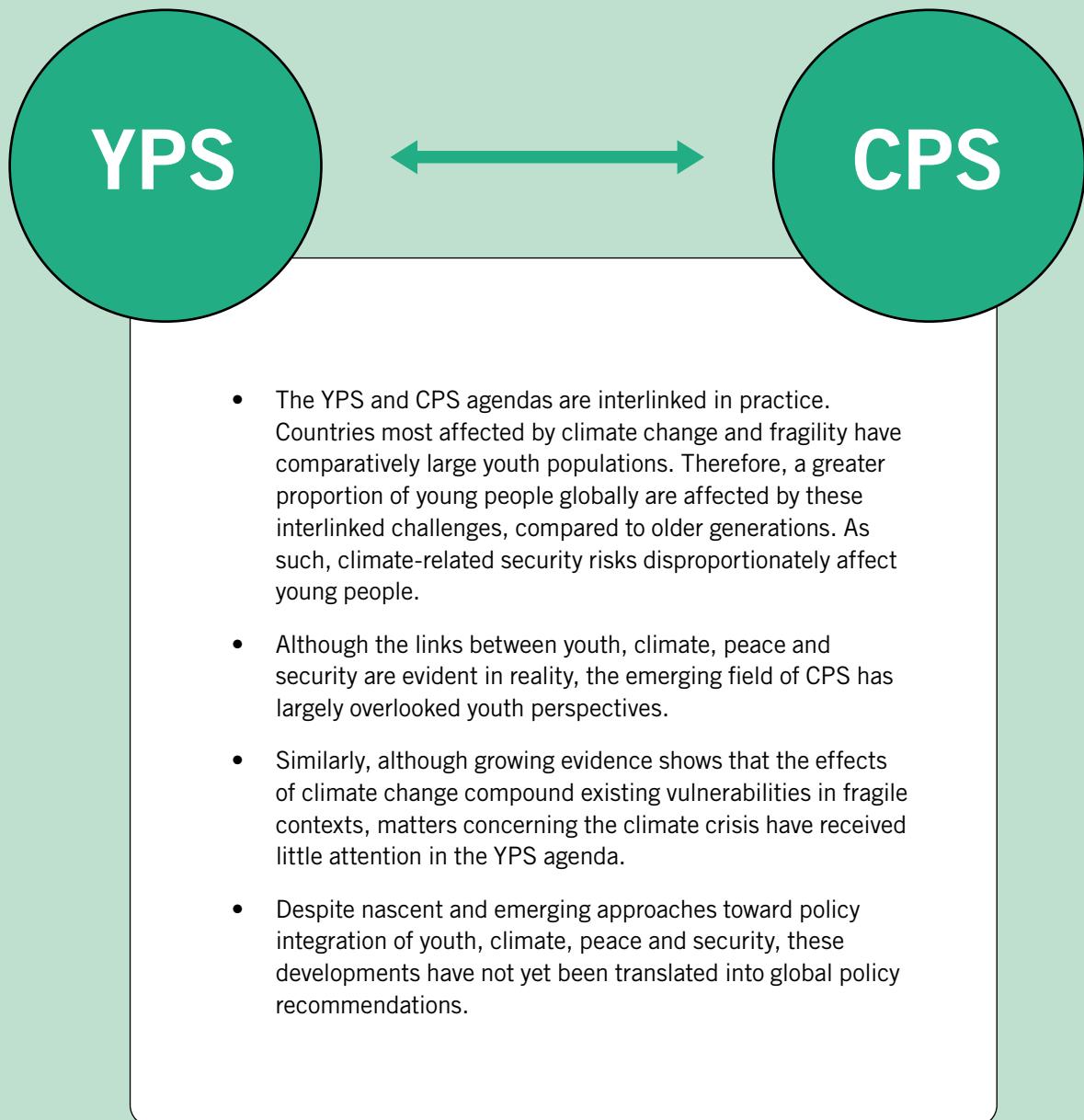
97 United Nations (2023a)

98 United Nations (2023b)

people in the recommended actions on addressing the interlinkages between climate, peace and security are currently missing.

In summary, despite nascent and emerging approaches toward policy integration of youth, climate, peace and security, these developments have not yet been translated into global policy recommendations.

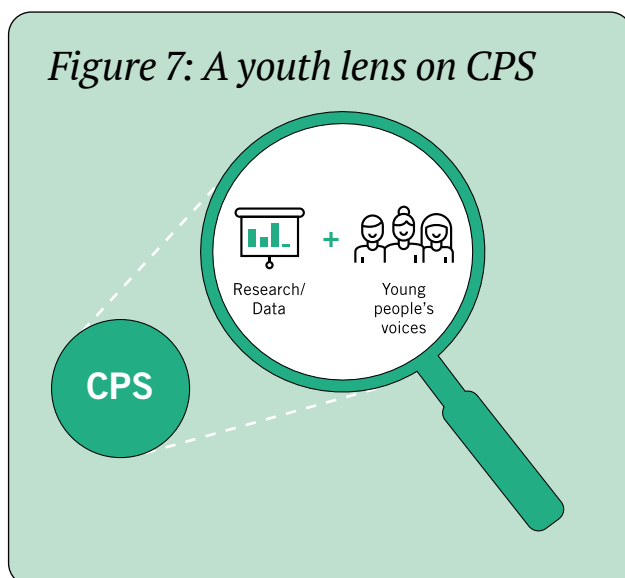
Figure 6: Summary of interlinkages between the YPS and CPS agendas



PART 3:

Youth perspectives on Climate, Peace and Security

In this chapter, youth perspectives on climate-related security risks and integrated responses are presented. In this way, CPS is explored through a youth lens (see Figure 7 below and the appendix for more details on the youth lens).

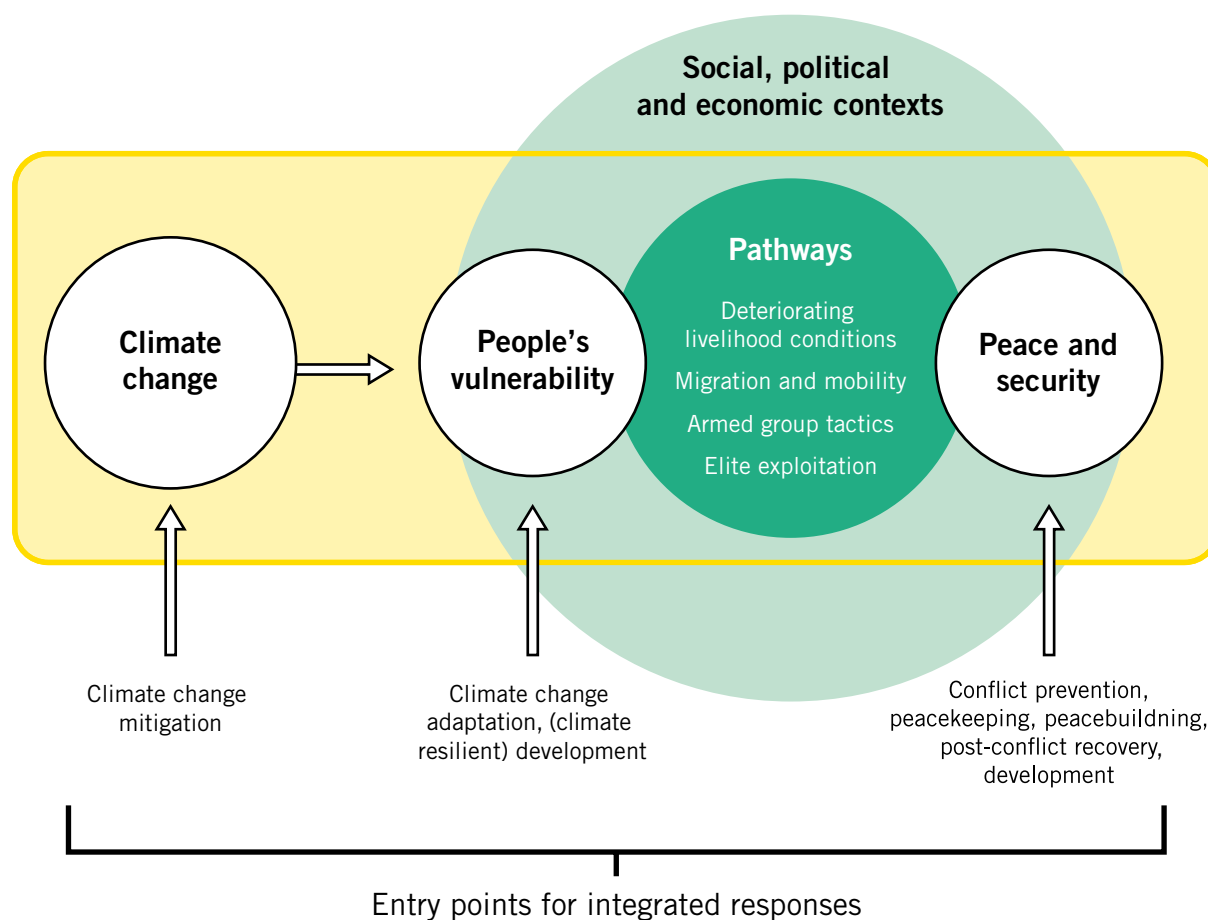


By focusing on the situation as well as the perspectives and experiences of young people, the aim is to highlight the unique challenges and opportunities youth have in facing and addressing these critical issues. The climate insecurity pathways model developed by SIPRI (see Figure 8) is used as a framework to structure this section. Through this approach, the emerging CPS agenda is informed by the realities, needs, insights, and actions of young people.

Climate insecurity pathways

Research has identified four interrelated pathways through which climate change interacts with economic, social, and political factors to increase the risk of conflict in fragile contexts (see Figure 8). These pathways encompass: *a)* worsening livelihood conditions, *b)* increased migration and shifting mobility patterns, *c)* tactical considerations for militant and armed actors, and *d)* elite exploitation and political and economic mismanagement.⁹⁹

Figure 8: Pathways of climate-related security risks



Tarif et al. (2023, p. 2)

While there are many different potential mechanisms which can help explain the relationship between climate change and conflict/insecurity, the four pathways serve as a valuable resource to understand how climate-related stressors interact with political, social, economic, and environmental stressors to compound existing vulnerabilities, which in turn increase the risk of grievances and tensions escalating to violence and conflict. The pathways approach is useful for understanding how young people are affected by climate-related security risks and how they respond to them.

How are young people affected by climate-related security risks?

Deteriorating livelihoods

Livelihoods are central to the connection between climate change and insecurity. Severe economic challenges and loss of income and productive assets, including food insecurity linked to climate change, can worsen livelihoods and increase the likelihood of violent conflict.¹⁰⁰ In the absence of alternative viable livelihood sources, hardships from worsening

100 van Baalen and Mobjörk (2016); Tarif (2022); Nordqvist and Krampe (2018); UNDP RSCA (2023); and Mbaye (2020)

livelihood conditions may fuel grievances and tensions for marginalized groups, including for young persons.¹⁰¹ For instance, research in Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and the Sahel region—contexts with comparatively large youth populations—indicates that conflicts between farmers and herders are connected to the negative impacts of climate change on livelihoods, including the reduced availability of grazing land and water sources. In other settings, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, climate stressors and declining livelihood conditions contribute to grievances that spark protests or increase community tensions and intensify competition over shared natural resources.¹⁰²

Most young persons are more vulnerable to worsening livelihood conditions as a result of climate change compared to other generations. Deteriorating livelihood conditions can dislocate the normal progression of young persons' lives and disrupt their "conventional places of belonging, social status, and social cohesion".¹⁰³ Given their state of transition to autonomy, young people are affected individually as well as in their family or kinship groups. Some young persons may be forced into a breadwinning role prematurely.¹⁰⁴ Others, particularly young girls, may be subjected to child marriage for dowries or bride prices.¹⁰⁵ For others, insecurity can interrupt young people's education and diminish their employment opportunities, thereby making them ineligible for marriage and family formation, leaving them trapped in youthhood and dependent on older generations' livelihoods. As such, climate change hazards can interrupt or fast-forward the natural progression of young people's life cycles.

In 2017, Hurricane Maria struck our island. It developed within minutes. The morning after, the aftermath was truly traumatic. Coming from a farming community, agriculture has always been a part of my life; my parents were farmers and fisherfolks. My aspiration was to continue my family's legacy in agriculture, but I had to take employment away from my community to help my parents. Not being able to carry on my family's legacy is one way I am being affected.



Photo: Private

– Ferdison Valmond
Youth Fellow at the UN
High-Level Climate
Champions Team

Increased migration and changing mobility patterns

Climate change contributes to migration and displacement. For example, extreme weather events like floods and cyclones often destroy homes and infrastructure, forcing people to move, while loss of livelihoods and income as a result of droughts can indirectly drive migration and displacement. Indigenous Peoples are disproportionately affected.¹⁰⁶ While migration is recognized as an important strategy in adapting to climate change, increased climate-induced migration and changing mobility patterns can heighten the likelihood of conflicts, particularly in host communities.¹⁰⁷ Migration itself does not cause conflict, but the risks of such conflict depend on various factors including existing

101 van Baalen and Mobjörk (2016); Tarif (2022); and UNDP RSCA (2023)

102 Tarif et al. (2023)

103 UNFPA and PBSO (2018, pp. 10-11)

104 UNDP (2016)

105 UNFPA (2021) and Doherty, Rao and Radney (2023)

106 International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (2022)

107 Tarif et al (2023); van Baalen and Mobjörk (2017); and Tarif (2022)

political, economic, and social issues, as well as on attitudes towards migrants in host communities.¹⁰⁸ Climate change also influences the mobility patterns of pastoral communities, bringing them into clashes with farmers over grazing lands and water points, as evidenced in West Africa and the Sahel.¹⁰⁹

The IPCC projects that climate-related displacement will increase in the mid- to long-term with the intensification of extreme weather events and rising sea levels.¹¹⁰ The Pacific Islands, for example, are susceptible to increased climate-related migration due to rising sea levels and loss of livelihoods linked to fishing and tourism. Increased climate-related migration in the Pacific Islands is likely to increase the risk of tensions and conflict, as an influx of migrants may spark rivalry over dwindling natural and economic resources, and the mix of diverse ethnic backgrounds may create ethnic tensions within communities.¹¹¹

The impact of climate-related migration on young people is contingent on the young persons' social, political, and economic contexts and varies depending on the type of migration. Some youth are affected individually as autonomous actors, others as dependents of migrating families. Whereas rural-to-urban migration may have its own set of challenges, disaster-related internal displacement may pose entirely different difficulties. It is hard to know how many young persons are in situations of forced displacement, as global trends and statistics do not currently disaggregate data by the age brackets associated with youth.¹¹² However, population movements in terms of rural–urban migration, internal displacement, and transborder forced or irregular migration are often primarily comprised of young people,¹¹³ and forced displacement has sharply increased in the last 10 years, totaling 108.4 million people in 2023.¹¹⁴ Far from all individuals who migrate do so as a result of climate change. However,

in 2022, disasters triggered 32.6 million new internal displacements, and without decisive climate action, this yearly figure is bound to increase.¹¹⁵

In Latin America, we're witnessing a rise in temperatures (...). Unfortunately, this has had a significant impact on my career trajectory. Migration became a factor, leading me to recently leave Paraguay.

– Young sounding board member
South America

Young persons who are forced to migrate as a result of climate change experience a range of challenges and risks. Particular to this age group, young migrants aged 18 and above 'age out' of protection and support mechanisms. However, they often still need guidance and assistance as well as access to rights and protection. In situations concerning migration, young people express difficulties accessing quality education and skills-building opportunities, commonly coupled with few youth employment and livelihood opportunities. They express facing discrimination, racism, and xenophobia. Young persons, in all their diversity, and particularly young women, girls and LGBTQI+ youth, express being subject to sexual exploitation and GBV, including domestic violence, child and forced marriage, sexual assault, and rape. Young migrants report lack of access to quality health care, and a lack of safety, security and freedom of movement, as well as a lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making.¹¹⁶

108 Mobjörk, Krampe and Tarif (2020)

109 Tarif (2022); and NUPI and SIPRI (2021)

110 IPCC (2022)

111 Ocean Policy Research Institute of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (ed.) (2022); Kendall (2012); and Shibata and Carroll (2023)

112 UNHCR (2023b)

113 UNFPA and PBSO (2018, p. 22)

114 UNHCR (2023a)

115 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2023)

116 UNHCR (2016)

Because of the constant need to relocate because of natural disasters hitting the island, we don't have community and connection anymore.

– Ferdison Valmond
Youth Fellow at the UN High-Level Climate Champions Team

Tactical considerations of armed groups

Climate change can also affect the dynamics of ongoing conflict and create opportunities that may influence the strategic decisions of armed actors. In some cases, armed actors leverage climate-related stresses on livelihoods to bolster their recruitment efforts. In other instances, they take advantage of climate-related disasters to establish themselves as alternative service and relief providers in areas with weak or no state presence.¹¹⁷ In the Sahel, for example, extremist groups have used economic incentives and food provisions to garner support from rural populations and marginalized pastoralist groups, often offering these resources in return for loyalty. In central Mali, the Katiba Macina group capitalized on the impact of climate change on pastoralist communities to build local support and expand its influence.¹¹⁸ In Somalia, al-Shabab has taken advantage of the recent drought to impede government relief operations, destroying water wells and relief convoys, and confiscating livestock from communities that resist sending young men to join their ranks.¹¹⁹

In contexts of ongoing conflict, young persons are victimized and traumatized by “armed groups, terrorists or violent extremist groups, gangs, and organized crime networks (...)”.¹²⁰ Women and men experience conflicts differently; women and girls are often at higher risk of sexual violence and exploitation, while men and boys are more likely to be subjected to deadly violence. Climate change exacerbates these behaviours among armed groups and elites. As such, climate-induced environmental stressors can

create conditions—especially when popular trust in the government and state actors already are low—which push or pull certain groups of young persons, in particular but not exclusively young men, towards involvement in armed conflict as a means of survival in increasingly challenging environments.¹²¹ At the same time as it is true that certain groups of young persons, under specific circumstances, are vulnerable to recruitment, radicalization and violent extremism, this is not a narrative applicable to all young people, as only a minute fraction of the youth population join violent or extremist groups.

In my country, abundant mineral and natural resources attract army groups to these areas. They exploit the forest, often forcing the local population, mainly young people, into illegal logging operations. Young people are being deprived of education. Instead of attending school, they are forced to work for armed groups during what should be their schooling years.

– Sylvain Obedi
Executive Director of Enable the Disable Action (EDA)



Photo: Youth4Climate

117 Mobjörk, Krampe and Tarif (2020); NUPI and SIPRI (2023a, 2023b and 2023c)

118 NUPI and SIPRI (2021)

119 NUPI and SIPRI (2023c)

120 UNFPA and PBSO (2018, p. 15)

121 UNDP (2023b)



United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in Kidal, northern Mali. Photo: UN Photo / Marco Dormino.

Elite exploitation and natural resource mismanagement

National and local elites may exploit climate-related stresses on marginalized people for their own gain. Political elites can exploit pressures caused by climate change to incite conflict over shared natural resources; either to deflect attention away from their mismanagement or to further their own political agendas.¹²² Elites can also leverage climate-related disasters to seize land from displaced communities or divert humanitarian assistance to benefit their interest at the expense of the marginalized.¹²³ In Yemen, for example, armed conflict and influence from political elites have degraded traditional dispute resolution mechanisms that were important in preventing conflict over land and water. This has contributed to intercommunal conflict over water and land becoming increasingly deadly over the last decade.¹²⁴

In Brazil, climate change intersects with youth, poverty, and existing vulnerabilities, leaving young people, especially those in favelas, more exposed to security risks and more marginalized. In these vulnerable communities, climate change can lead to premature death due to the severe impact of events such as rainfall, floods, and disasters. Additionally, indirect factors reinforce networks of vulnerability and violence, exacerbating insecurity in many communities.

– Rayssa Lemes
Social Scientist, Advisor to the National Youth Council of Brazil and Youth20/Y20 (G20 Youth Engagement Group)



Photo: Private

¹²² Mobjörk, Krampe and Tarif (2020); and Tarif (2022)

¹²³ Nordqvist and Krampe (2018); and Tarif (2022)

¹²⁴ NUPI and SIPRI (2023d)

In contexts where climate-related insecurity is prevalent, most young people, and especially young women, often find themselves further marginalized due to their limited access to decision-making spaces and essential resources. In these situations, national and local elites can use the pressures of climate-related impacts to exploit young persons.¹²⁵ Political leaders may seek to manipulate already-vulnerable youth groups for political purposes, either by attempting to mobilize them as “foot soldiers for warfare or by cultivating a pervasive fear of militarized, rebellious, dissenting, or marauding youth”.¹²⁶ Notably, young persons may feel frustrated when they experience exclusion from political participation, lack of opportunities to voice their concerns, and a sense of being marginalized in decisions affecting their very survival, all of which may lead to feelings of disenfranchisement, without resorting to or being pushed or pulled into violence.

Young people, already suffering from the impacts of climate change and losing their education, moved to cities to sell things. Then they became the most vulnerable when the war happened. For them, it was just a story where they lost everything, every time.

– Nisreen Elsaim
 Founder of the Youth and Environment Society (YES) and former Chair of the UN Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change



Photo: Private



Aerial view of the area surrounding Anefis and Kidal, northern Mali. Photo: UN Photo/Marco Dormino

125 United Nations Development Programme (2023b)

126 UNFPA and PBSO (2018, p. 18)



Nui Island, Tuvalu, after Cyclone Pam.
Photo: Silke von Brockhausen/UNDP

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and climate-related security risks

For Pacific people, climate-related security risks are of a particular nature. They are existential. Climate change represents a threat to the very existence of many small and low-lying atoll nations.¹²⁷ Indeed, Pacific leaders, through the 2018 Boe Declaration,¹²⁸ have recognized climate change as the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security, and well-being of the Pacific people.

With many SIDS barely above sea level, even a modest increase in sea levels can have catastrophic consequences, leading to loss of land, displacement of populations, and contamination of freshwater sources. Coastal erosion exacerbates this issue, further diminishing available land and threatening infrastructure and livelihoods. The prospects for young people living in SIDS are deeply intertwined with the challenges posed by climate change. They are not only facing the immediate impacts of climate change but also inheriting a future defined by its consequences.¹²⁹

Small Island Development States (SIDS) are vulnerable in the sense that we are very remote. (...) for us, the impacts of climate change are huge. It affects things like food security and water security, but also our statehood and sovereignty. (...) I feel that it's important that we prepare for the worst.

– Marilyn Moira Logovaka Simmons
Climate Security Advocate (Tuvalu),
COP28 International Climate Delegate and
member of YOUNGO.

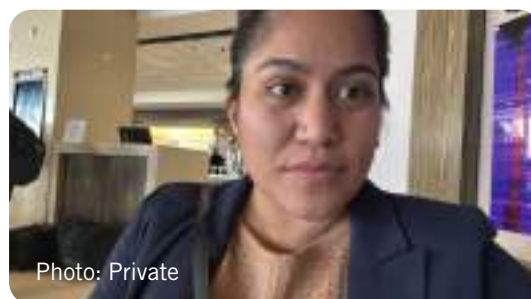


Photo: Private

¹²⁷ Paeniu (2024)

¹²⁸ Pacific Islands Forum (2018)

¹²⁹ Interviews with sounding board members.

How are young people responding to climate-related security risks?

Young people's actions to address climate-related security risks have not been recognized to date. However, in the face of interlinked climate and conflict crises, many young persons are driving change in their communities and at the global arena to address climate-related security risks and securing a sustainable future. Young environmental advocates and peacebuilders choose to act, despite facing increasing levels of threats and intimidation which disproportionately affect Indigenous youth.¹³⁰

The key lies in young people's intentionality of addressing these interlinked challenges. By purposefully addressing root causes, building resilience, promoting social cohesion, empowering marginalized groups, and advancing peacebuilding skills, young people contribute to climate, peace, and/or security co-benefits. As such, youth-led efforts to address climate-related security risks are intricately connected to the prevention pillar of the YPS agenda. While their activities are viewed as

addressing climate-related security risks in this guidance note, many initiatives also align with environmental peacebuilding objectives.¹³¹ It is crucial to understand that many young people view security risks in a broad and fundamental sense, meaning that entry points may involve positive 'levers' not immediately recognizable as related to security risks by outsiders.

We try to see our living conditions, and address these.

– Sylvain Obedi
Executive Director of Enable the Disable Action (EDA)

The examples below detail young people's perspectives on addressing climate change and insecurity through the following entry points for integrated responses: climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, and peace and justice (see Figure 9). Countless more examples exist of young people's work in climate action and peacebuilding respectively, but this guidance note focuses on where these efforts intersect conceptually and practically.¹³²



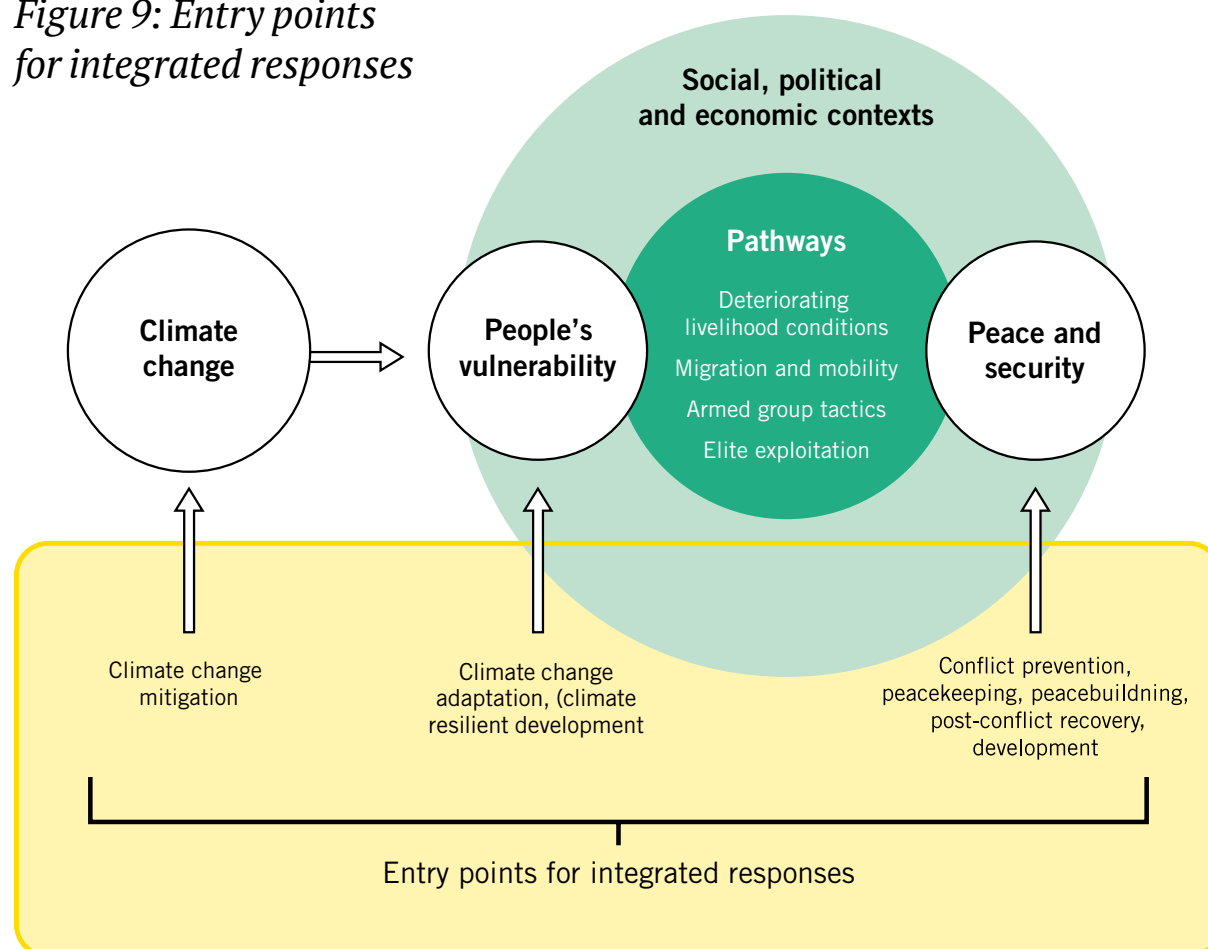
Photo: Rayssa Lemes / FicaVivo!

¹³⁰ Bahuét and Oltorp (2022)

¹³¹ Environmental peacebuilding focuses on addressing environmental factors as a means to build peace and prevent conflicts. It emphasizes sustainable natural resource management, environmental cooperation, and resilience-building as essential components of peacebuilding efforts.

¹³² For protection purposes, some details have been omitted from examples where necessary.

Figure 9: Entry points for integrated responses



Tarif et al. (2023, p. 2)

Young people's perspectives on climate mitigation to address CRSRs

Climate mitigation “involves actions to reduce or prevent greenhouse gas emissions from human activities”¹³³ and these can serve as an entry point for addressing climate-related security risks. Activities such as reforestation, mangrove restoration, regenerative agriculture practices, and sustainable energy production can help stabilize ecosystems, sequester carbon, and protect against extreme weather events, thereby reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing community resilience. Adopting such sustainable practices can also yield dividends for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, particularly by reducing the risk of conflict over dwindling resources and opening up opportunities for community dialogue

and cooperation. For these efforts to be effective, they require inclusive and long-term planning, investment, governance, and community ownership.

Mangrove reforestation in Colombia to address CRSRs

In Colombia's mangrove areas, a group of young people analysed the connections between dying ecosystems, diminished fish stock, dwindling tourism and income streams, and young people's migration for livelihood opportunities (which could involve illegal mining or other organized crime) and designed an integrated solution. By training young peers on the cultural and instructional knowledge to become new caretakers of Mangrove areas, they are providing livelihood opportunities and simultaneously addressing a crucial climate change issue.¹³⁴ Mangrove forests can store

133 UNDP (2024a)

134 Interview with sounding board member, 2024-01-24



Trees for Peace Somalia
Photo: Somali Greenpeace Association

up to five times as much organic carbon as tropical upland forests, making them vital for climate change mitigation.¹³⁵ This integrated solution addresses several root causes of conflict by improving economic conditions, restoring vital ecosystems, and reducing the need for migration and risk of involvement in illegal activities.

Planting trees and collaborating across clan lines in Somalia

In Somalia, groups of young people from different clans with a history of clashes have come together to work side-by-side to plant trees through the project “Trees for Peace” to combat deforestation.¹³⁶ Since 1990, Somalia has lost about 25 % of its forested areas, mainly due to charcoal burning.¹³⁷ As detailed above, deforestation indirectly but significantly contributes to a spectrum of climate-related security risks. In Somalia, cutting trees for charcoal is leading to desertification, which worsens conflict over natural resources, results in displacement when people cannot use the land as before and contributes to temperature extremes, risking positive climate feedback loops. Planting trees *can* contribute to mitigating this issue, when maintenance is ensured and there is political and social will to restore deserted landscapes. Furthermore, through working and collaborating across clan lines,

these young persons also addressed past grievances. They identified the need to compensate families for lives lost due to past conflict and took initiative for realizing this, “and the elders followed in the footsteps of the youth”.¹³⁸ By tackling both the environmental and social dimensions of security, the project offers a comprehensive approach to building resilience against the complex challenges posed by climate change.



Photo: Abdishakur
Abdirahman

The uniqueness of young people, they are the army forces, yet they are the peacemakers. They can meet across clan lines in the capital, and they start initiatives. Then they take it back into their communities. Young people are pioneering the peace.

– Hassan Mowlid Yasin
Co-Founder, Somali Greenpeace Association

A clean fuel transition to protect and empower persons with disabilities in the DRC

In the DRC, the youth-led organization for persons with disabilities (OPD), Enable the Disable Action (EDA), is realizing peacebuilding and climate change objectives while “leaving no one behind”. Through an in-depth understanding of their own context, needs, and opportunities, young leaders in EDA have designed a livelihood programme for young people with disabilities which addresses both climate change and

¹³⁵ Donato et al. (2011); and Song et al. (2023)

¹³⁶ Interview with sounding board member 2024-02-19.

¹³⁷ Government of Somalia (2022, pp. 140-141)

¹³⁸ Interview with sounding board member 2024-02-19.

insecurity. By learning how to produce bio-charcoal instead of using firewood for cooking, young persons with disabilities can gain economic autonomy, which makes them safer and less vulnerable. Simultaneously, producing bio-charcoal contributes to climate mitigation, as it is several times more efficient than firewood or charcoal.¹³⁹ In conjunction with technical training, EDA also trains young persons with disabilities on peace mechanisms and international frameworks and conventions, encouraging them to advocate for peace on their own behalf and participate in conflict resolution. EDA's initiative addresses climate-related security risks and drivers of conflict by improving livelihood opportunities, reducing the potential for resource-based conflicts and mitigating impacts of climate change.

When it comes to young people like myself, with a disability, discussions about youth fail to consider us. What is forgotten is that insecurity involves more consequences for us. Once we are included in these discussions, we can offer insights into disability-specific solutions, yet this aspect often remains overlooked. I always recommend, do not speak about youth in general, speak about underrepresented youth.

– Sylvain Obedi

Executive Director of Enable the Disable Action (EDA)

Photo: Justice & Peace Netherlands



JAMAA Grands Lacs, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Photo: Flory Aza

Dual solutions for climate mitigation and reducing GBV in the DRC

Also in the DRC, the youth-led organization JAMAA Grands Lacs is responding to the interlinked challenges of climate change and insecurity. Cutting wood for fuel not only contributes to deforestation and climate change, but also exposes displaced women to the risk of rape by rebels, sexual violence, and unwanted pregnancies within camps for the displaced. In response, JAMAA offers alternatives such as training on the production of bio-charcoal, which is made from organic waste. The organization's initiative to train women on bio-charcoal production serves both climate change objectives as it mitigates deforestation and reduces GHG emissions, and protection objectives, as it lowers exposure to GBV and strengthens the financial independence of women.

139 World Bank (2022)



Action by UK Youth Climate Coalition during the UN Climate Change Conference COP28 at Expo City Dubai on December 8, 2023, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Photo: COP28/Walaa Alshaer

Our work is closely linked to the issue of security and conflict risks, especially concerning threats to peace and security caused by climate change. The initiatives we are working on address and resolve these problems in various ways.

– Héritier Mumbere Sivihwa
Executive Director of the JAMAA
Grands Lacs organization



Photo: Madi Pictures

Advocating for reduction of GHG emissions through disarmament

Finally, at the global level, networks of young people are working together with international institutions to address climate-related security risks through mitigation activities. As an example, a young United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) #Leader4Tomorrow¹⁴⁰ has published a youth guide to addressing climate change through disarmament and advocates for states to tackle military greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by reducing their military budgets. As experts estimate that military GHG emissions are responsible for 5%-6% percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, this initiative seeks to mitigate a substantial source of climate change. Reducing military emissions can decrease the overall climate impact, which in turn may help to prevent climate-related security risks.¹⁴¹

Young people's perspectives on climate adaptation to address CRSRs

Climate adaptation is another entry point for addressing climate-related security risks by reducing vulnerabilities and building resilience to climate impacts. Strategies like climate-resilient agriculture practices and

140 The UNODA initiative supports young leaders in advancing disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control objectives.

141 OSGEY (2023)



GreenSquad, Pakistan. Photo: Fahad Rizwan

livelihood diversification that improve food security and incomes, restoring ecosystems, and enhancing water management directly address the root causes of many climate-related resource conflicts. For these adaptation efforts to be effective, they require inclusive and participatory planning processes and investment, departing from local knowledge and needs.¹⁴²

Improving food security in flood-prone areas to address CRSRs in Pakistan

In Pakistan, a group of young people enrolled in a “Green Squad” support farmers in improving food security in increasingly frequent flood-affected areas by sharing their knowledge on climate-smart agriculture. Improving food security specifically in flood-affected areas is directly related to inter-communal stability, because when floods occur, affected people migrate towards unaffected open settings where competition over resources risk increasing tensions and grievances.¹⁴³ As such, Green Squad’s initiatives in Pakistan address climate-related security risks by reducing the need for migration, and by minimizing resource competition in times of floods.

If I consider my group, we have almost all the expertise. We are passionate people who are grassroots environmentalists and botanists with technical expertise; sometimes we may require mentorship but most of the time we expect trust in our abilities and easy access to finances, being a grassroots collective of young people.

– Jayaa Jaggi
Co-founder, GreenSquad



Photo: Fahad Rizwan

¹⁴² Hegazi and Seyuba (2022)

¹⁴³ Interview with sounding board member, 2024-02-25

Restoring corals to protect livelihoods and prevent conflict on Nui island

In the Pacific, coral reefs serve important functions as barriers against storms and erosion, and as vital sources of food and income. The degradation of coral reefs a result of climate change could therefore translate into worsened social cohesion and grievances. The youth-led environmental organization Fuligafou is leading the restoration of corals on Nui Island to address these risks.¹⁴⁴ The organization focuses on uniting young persons of all backgrounds and is addressing climate-related security risks by protecting coastal areas, sustaining food and income sources, fostering social cohesion, and preventing resource-based conflicts.¹⁴⁵

If we don't have fish, which is our main resource, we will have no peace. In Tuvalu, we don't have land and resources to produce food, and we cannot live without fish. We are a small island with a vast ocean, so we have to take care of our ocean resources. Corals are vital for the preservation of food resources, which in turn alleviate the social pressures that can lead to conflicts.

– Talua Nivaga
Fuligafou Co-founder

Improving community water management and engaging in dialogue in Somalia

In Somalia, a number of young persons from different clans with a similar history of intercommunal conflict overcame the divides of older generation's divides by adopting a gamified challenge on a mobile application¹⁴⁶ to improve community water management. As opposed to the practices of clan elders, young people were open to challenging the status quo and cooperating across clan lines. While participating in developing

proposals for inclusive and participatory water resource management mechanisms, they simultaneously engaged in dialogue and local conflict resolution.¹⁴⁷ The initiative addresses climate-related security risks by promoting equitable resource distribution, fostering cross-clan collaboration, and challenging traditional conflict dynamics.

On Game Day we worked in groups to promote interaction between communities, finding solutions to the problems of moving safely and freely between the two towns.

– Quresho Abdirizak
Somali youth leader

Advancing research to integrate climate considerations into conflict management

In Sudan, the Youth and Environment Society (YES) is at the forefront of youth-led initiatives, conducting youth-led research on the relationship between climate change and armed conflict, as well as on how armed conflict impedes climate action. Their rationale is that the lack of data on the connections between climate change and conflict favours the *status quo*, making it difficult to reshape and resource the work according to the most pressing priorities in Sudan, which involve climate-related security risks. According to YES's youth-led research, while conflict intensifies humanitarian crises such as famine, climate change also plays a significant—and often overlooked—role in exacerbating these crises. By prioritizing proactive measures to manage the impacts of climate change, the severity of crises like famine could be significantly reduced or even prevented, even when conflict flares up.¹⁴⁸ Their work exemplifies the potential of youth-led action to address climate-related security risks; not only in research but in advocating for climate considerations to be integral to conflict management and humanitarian aid processes.

144 As an implementing partner to the joint UNDP-IOM Climate Security in the Pacific project, funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund.

145 UNDP (2023c)

146 Developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and implemented in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Project funded by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

147 UNDP (2022) and FAO (2023)

148 Interview with sounding board member [2024-03-05]

Much of my work has focused on how to use climate action as a conflict preventer. Things that can actually prevent conflicts from happening in the first place. Work on climate change is usually done in post-conflict settings. However, if only addressing it as a peacebuilding activity, we are neglecting the fact that climate drives conflict and action in this area can be conflict preventative.

– Nisreen Elsaïm

Founder of the Youth and Environment Society (YES)
and former Chair of the UN Secretary-General's Youth
Advisory Group on Climate Change



Photo: Private

Increasing and disseminating knowledge on CSRs and climate adaptation

Young persons build collective understandings of the effects of climate change and insecurity which usher in new networks of knowledgeable people who work together for climate adaptation. The youth-led Eco Friendly Africa Initiative (EFAI) builds the capacity of climate communicators on the frontline of climate advocacy, educates on the nexus of climate, conflict, and security in Africa, and organizes climate, peace and security working groups and advocacy campaigns across the continent. By amplifying the voices of vulnerable communities, increasing joint knowledge, and fostering collective action, the 'Eco Friendly

Africa Initiative' builds capacity to effectively address climate-related security risks.¹⁴⁹

Pursuing climate adaptation in public security to lower vulnerabilities in Brazil

In Brazil, young actors organized through the civil society organization Fica Vivo! are addressing the intersections between public security and climate change. Rain-induced disasters in some areas of Brazil caused by climate change aggravate displacement, economic strain, the breakdown of social structures, and may increase drug trafficking, violent crime (including GBV), and homicide levels, if there are no systematic responses from civil authorities.¹⁵⁰ To address these issues, young actors are implementing homicide control programs in affected areas. These combine repression actions focused on violent individuals, proximity policing, and social prevention programs and are effective—resulting in a substantial reduction in homicides where programs operate.¹⁵¹ Identifying climate change as a compound factor to already-existing instability, these young actors also mobilize their communities to advocate for and demand government action on climate adaptation measures and sustainable practices.¹⁵²

Collaborative adaptation responses to manage disputes and displacement

On the border of Paraguay and Brazil, a youth collective developed collaborative adaptation responses to manage disputes and displacement, including those of indigenous populations, following the construction of a large-scale cross-border hydroelectric dam. Ongoing climate impacts and operational changes compound negative effects on these communities, contributing to social unrest and local conflicts over resource allocation and environmental management.¹⁵³ In response, young leaders founded a cross-border youth collective and gathered youth from 25 impacted cities, educating and providing resources to local activists. Together, they have become a network of young local leaders who collaborate to develop solutions to climate-related security risks in and around their communities.¹⁵⁴

149 Eco Friendly Africa Initiative (2024)

150 Franchini and Viola (2020)

151 Kopittke and Ramos (2021, p. 426)

152 Interview with sounding board member, 2024-03-06

153 Longo (n.d.)

154 Interview with sounding board member, 2024-03-05



Somali Greenpeace Association, Somalia.
Photo: Su'ad Mohamed

Advocacy for integrated climate adaptation action to address CRSRs

In Somalia, youth-led Greenpeace Somalia have advocated for the interlinkages between climate change and insecurity to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, and the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, respectively. Through serving as an outside liaison, Greenpeace Somalia has contributed to an initiation of a closer working relationship between the Ministries, where they are planning joint events and initiatives.¹⁵⁵ This is significant, because bridging the divides between government policy silos is instrumental in addressing interlinked climate-related security risks.

Young people's perspectives on peace and justice to address CRSRs

Peace and security interventions can serve as entry points for addressing climate-related security risks. These interventions can include conflict resolution mechanisms and inclusive governance structures which consider environmental stressors, as well as nonviolent resistance. Many young people perceive climate-related security risks in a broad and fundamental sense, regarding issues like climate justice as integral to peace and security. Entry points may involve leveraging these

positive aspects—which might not be immediately recognized as related to addressing climate-related security risks by outsiders—to foster a comprehensive and inclusive approach to peace and security. This requires an understanding of the interconnectedness of climate action, social equity, and sustainable development to create a peaceful and just society.

Recognizing the salience of climate justice to address CRSRs in Dominica

In Dominica, the 'Youth for Peace' project led by Indigenous young persons is increasing knowledge among Indigenous students on the interlinked challenges of climate change and insecurity on their island, materializing in a loss of traditional livelihoods, and increased migration and crime. Recognizing the significance of climate justice, particularly for a small island developing state, the youth-led organization hosted Dominica's inaugural Climate Justice Conference, which was held in an Indigenous community. Through Youth for Peace's efforts, there has been a growing recognition among government officials and policy-makers in Dominica of the link between climate change and peace and security. Young persons have emerged as catalysts for addressing these issues, driving meaningful conversations and advocating for solutions.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Interview with sounding board member 2024-02-19

¹⁵⁶ Interview with sounding board member, 2024-02-23

Pursuing litigation to address the existential threat of CRSRs in the Pacific

In the Pacific, climate-related sea level rise is a severe climate-related security risk as it poses an existential threat to low lying and atoll island nations. This risk is not only about displacement and loss of habitable land but also about the broader implications for national security, sovereignty, and the well-being of these communities. A group of 27 students organized through the Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change (PISFCC) brought the issue of climate change and human rights to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).¹⁵⁷ Garnering international support for their campaign, resolution 77/276 was adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2023, requesting the ICJ to “issue an advisory opinion clarifying the duties of states to protect the climate system and the rights of present and future generations, and explain the legal consequences for states that have caused significant climate-induced harm to the most vulnerable communities.”¹⁵⁸ This is a significant example of how young people’s legal action to address climate-related security risks can also pave the way for measures to address intergenerational climate justice.

Climate action for the Pacific is non-negotiable and we see naming and shaming as not progressive in this critical decade. Instead, our focus is on advocating for forward-looking global solutions to accelerate climate action. One way of achieving this is to take climate change to the world’s highest court—the International Court of Justice’.

— Cynthia Houniuihi
President PISFCC

Nonviolent resistance and advocacy to address CRSRs in the Pacific

Also in the Pacific, a grassroots youth-led movement for climate justice, the Pacific Climate Warriors, raises awareness of their communities’ particular vulnerability to climate change and non-violently resist the fossil fuel industry. They advocate for climate-sensitive security policies and practices at the national and regional levels and have supported community-based climate resilience and peacebuilding initiatives.¹⁵⁹ In their fight for the human rights of current and future generations, they contribute to the realization of the protection pillar of the YPS agenda. In 2020, they were the recipients of the Pax Christi International Peace Award for their outstanding leadership on climate justice issues.¹⁶⁰

Being a Pacific Climate Warrior is being someone you hope your grandchildren could be proud of. It’s being committed to a movement fighting for climate justice because of the love you have for your islands and future generations. Being a warrior is being someone who is motivated by love and justice.

— Brianna Fruean
Founder of the Samoan chapter Pacific Climate Warriors, 2022 Global Citizen Prize winner for Oceania and recipient of the Queen’s Commonwealth Youth Award

Addressing the complex dynamics of deforestation, NSAGs, and climate change in Colombia

In Colombia, 25 children and young persons successfully sued the government in 2018 for causing climate change and endangering the fundamental rights of its citizens through its failure to prevent deforestation.¹⁶¹ Following the 2016 peace agreement, Colombia experienced rapid increases in the rate of deforestation due to illegal logging operations by non-state armed groups (NSAGs) in areas previously

157 Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change (2024)

158 Wang and Chan (2023).

159 350 Pacific (2024)

160 Pax Christi (2024)

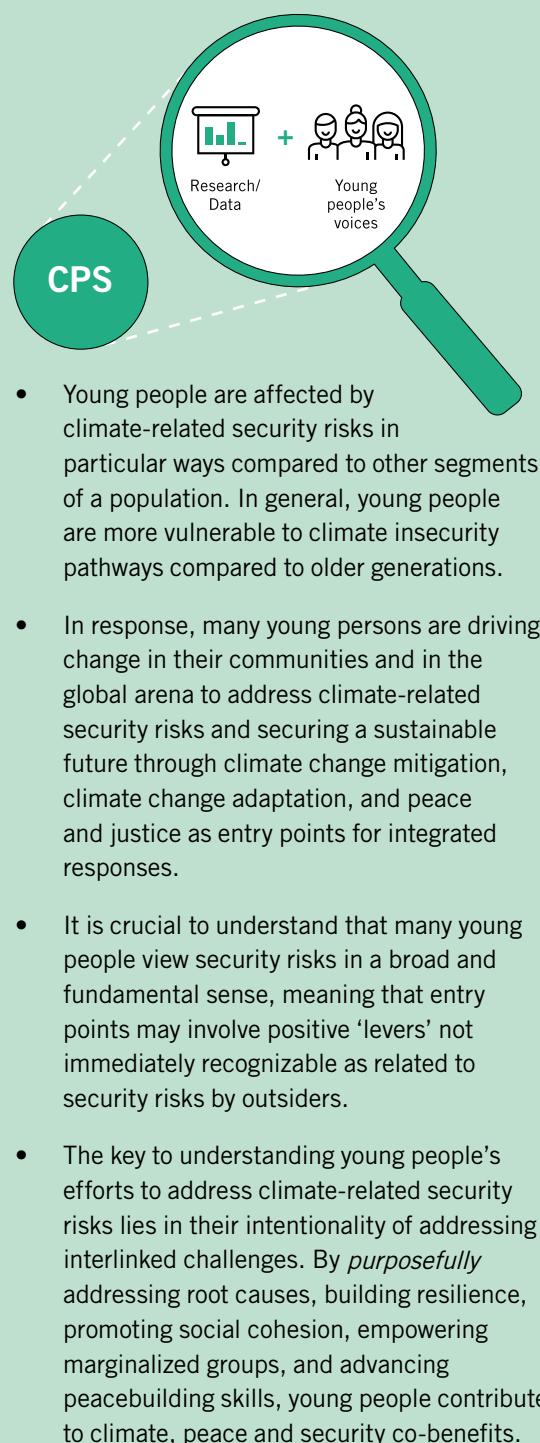
161 Indigenous Peoples Major Group for Sustainable Development (2018)

controlled by FARC.¹⁶² While deforestation itself is a human activity rather than a climatic change, it directly contributes to climate change and magnifies its impacts. Deforestation in the tropics causes a net release of CO₂ from land, and therefore contributes to mean annual global warming.¹⁶³ By exacerbating climate change and altering local and regional climates through soil erosion, altering rainfall patterns, and causing temperature extremes, deforestation indirectly but significantly contributes to a spectrum of climate-related security risks. Resulting natural disasters, such as floods and landslides, result in the displacement of communities and the disruption of livelihoods, often leading to humanitarian crises. Furthermore, illegal logging operations finance NSAGs, enabling them to sustain their operations and perpetuate violence and conflict.¹⁶⁴ By pursuing litigation against the government to prevent deforestation, these young people drove action to prevent further climate change and prevent its related security risks, as recognized by the Colombian Supreme Court of Justice¹⁶⁵.

Deforestation is threatening the fundamental rights of those of us who are young today and will face the impacts of climate change the rest of our lives.

– Official statement by the young Colombian plaintiffs.

Figure 10: Key messages on applying a youth lens on CPS



162 Clerici et al. (2020); and Urzola and Gonzalez (2021)

163 Jia et al. (2019 pp. 176-177)

164 Igarapé Institute and Insight Crime (2021)

165 Generaciones Futuras v. Minambiente (2018)

PART 4:

Exploring youth, climate, peace and security in practice

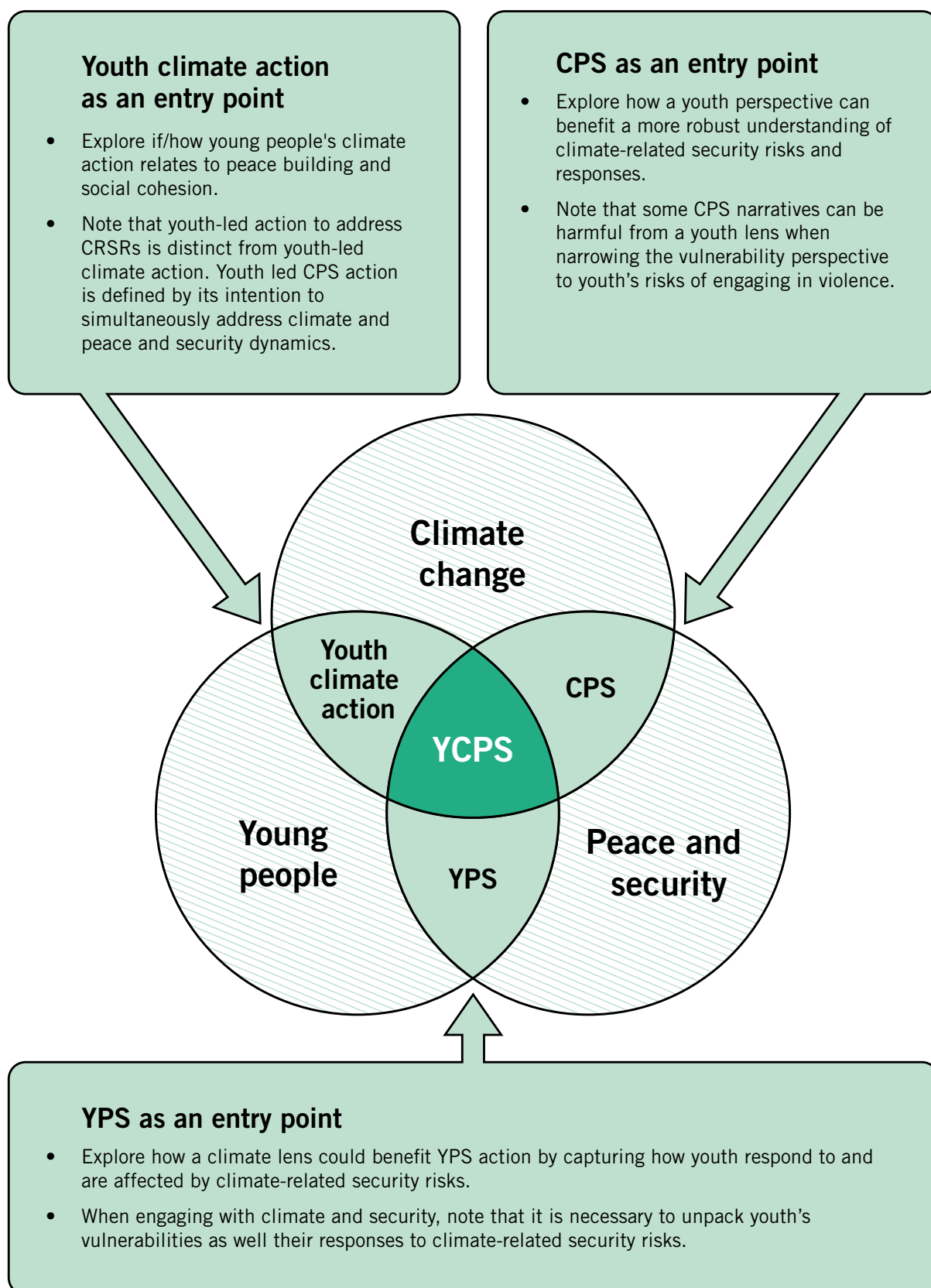
Young persons' conceptualizations of climate, peace and security and their efforts to address climate-related security risks provide a clear rationale for increased efforts toward addressing youth, climate, peace and security (YCPS) in an integrated manner. This could be conceived of as a YCPS '*nexus*'.

The conceptualization of a YCPS nexus is illustrated in Figure 11. As the illustration demonstrates, the different aspects of young people, climate change and peace and security have been unpacked to allow for conceptual clarity as a starting point. To approach the nexus, an initial overlap can be identified between *young people* and *climate change*. The resulting intersection becomes *youth climate action*. The second overlap is *young people* and *peace and security*. The resulting intersection is the *YPS agenda*. Likewise, where *climate change* and *peace and security* overlap, is where the *CPS agenda* is emerging. Where the three individual circles overlap, an intersection of *youth, climate, peace and security* appears. Depending on which intersection becomes the entry point to the diagram—be it through YPS, CPS or youth climate action—the vantage point from where and how to

engage with the *nexus* will change. In the three text boxes featured in Figure 11, readers will find considerations for how to engage with the nexus, depending on the respective entry point.

This chapter offers *exploratory guidance* for climate, peace and security, for peacebuilding and youth focused practitioners alike: from scholars, to policy actors to those in programming. Any YCPS intervention or approach needs to be contextualized to account for these diverse identities and experiences, ensuring that they are relevant, inclusive, and effective in addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by young persons of diverse backgrounds. The aim of this coming chapter is therefore to explore how working with youth, climate, peace and security (YCPS) in an *increasingly integrated* manner *could* play out in research, studies, analysis, programming, strategic planning and policy-making, and funding. To benefit fully from the coming chapter, it is advised to review the appendix on cross-cutting issues and lenses.

Figure 11: Exploring the youth, climate, peace and security nexus



Exploring YCPS in studies and research

Research and data are key to understanding how climate hazards and conflict dynamics interact with youth and age dynamics. As there is a lack of age-disaggregated data relevant to CPS, further research and increased data collection has great potential for advancing common understandings of the nexus and response strategies. Advancing our common evidence-

based understanding on these matters is also key for combating harmful narratives on youth in climate, peace and security. The following section outlines considerations to reflect around and explore toward advancing a knowledge-based nexus of YCPS. It is intended for researchers in a variety of disciplines, but also for actors responsible for enabling research.

Studies and research: Considerations and action points

On further research

- ☑ Conduct studies and research on matters related to the YCPS nexus and the interlinkages between CPS and YPS, and encourage researchers (including junior researchers) to undertake such studies. To fill research gaps and contribute to an emerging literature and evidence base, additional and more comprehensive studies and research around the following topics may be of relevance:

- » Impacts of climate-related security risks on youth, including country-specific and/or regional.
- » Youth-led responses to climate-related security risks and engagement with CPS; in particular youth engagement with climate change mitigation or adaptation-related co-benefits for peace, stability, and security in fragile and conflict-affected settings.
- » Intergenerational responses to climate-related security risks, exploring examples of collaboration and partnerships across generations to address such risks.
- » Climate change and intergenerational justice.

Fundamental age- and gender disaggregated data collection:

- ☑ There is a critical need to collect age- and gender-disaggregated data on how young people, and other age groups, are affected by and respond to climate-related security risks. Such data are scarce but essential for researchers and for effective policy-making.

Cross-fertilizing sectors and disciplines:

- ☑ Enhance interdisciplinary collaboration between climate change research, climate security research, development research, peace and conflict research, and environmental peacebuilding research. Explore collaborative research initiatives involving partnerships between youth-led organizations, academic institutions, NGOs, and governmental agencies. These partnerships can pool resources, expertise, and data while building the analytical capacity of young experts through on-the-job learning and peer-to-peer exchanges.

Reference and build upon existing youth-led research on climate, peace and security.

- ☑ (See examples in the box on “Additional readings” below.)

On youth-inclusive and youth-responsive research processes

For those who enable research

- ☑ Promote and increase funding for young researchers and youth-led research initiatives on (youth) climate, peace and security. Consider the establishment of a youth, climate, peace, and security research fund or other granting mechanisms.

For those carrying out research

- ☑ Apply a youth lens in research on climate-related security risks by collecting age-specific data and including young people's voices throughout the research process.
- ☑ Engage in iterative processes of investigation that involve repeatedly refining and revising research questions, methods, and analyses based on feedback from diverse young people.

When involving young people, consider:

☑ How and when to consult young people.

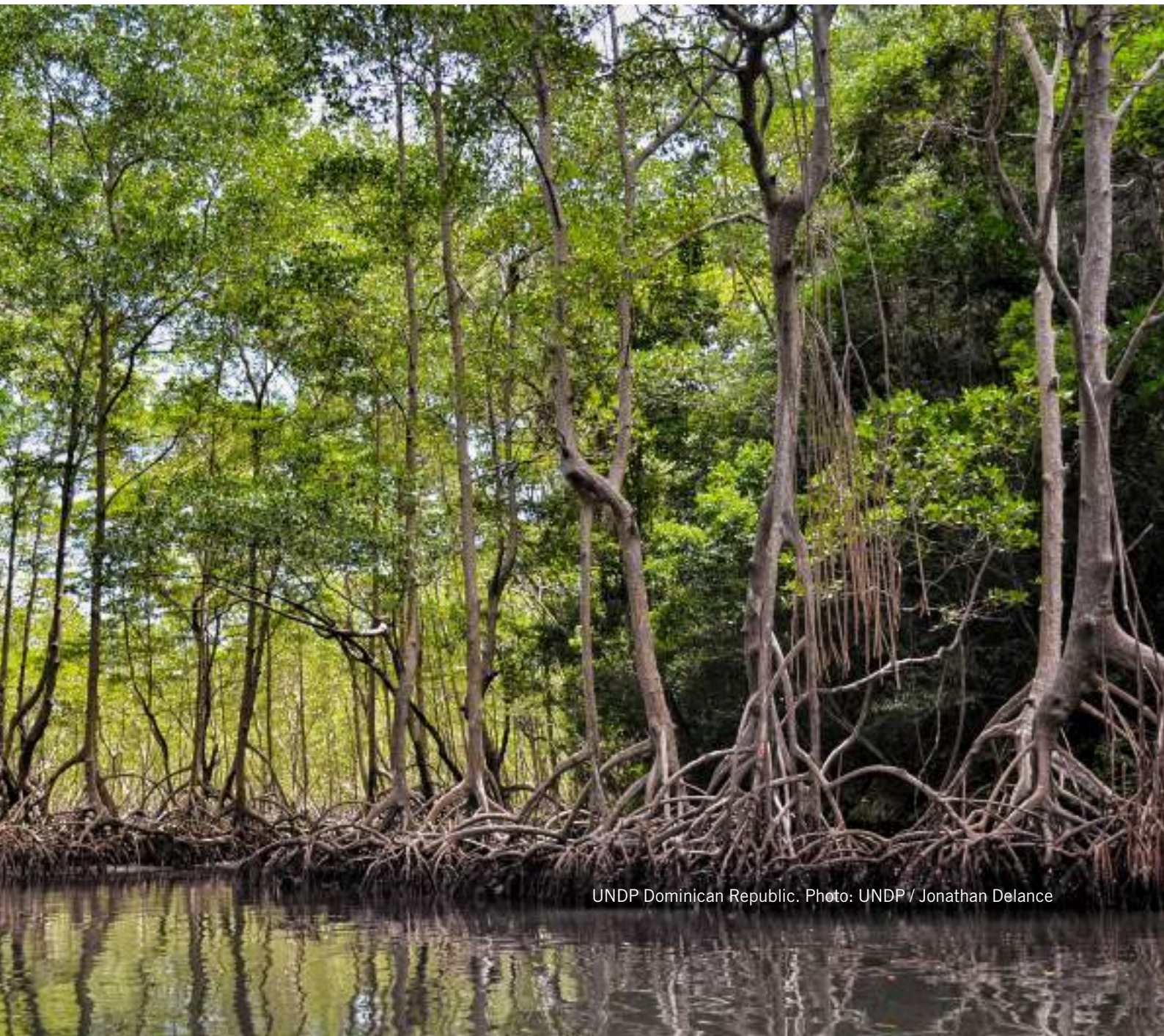
- » During the conceptualization and design phases, identify YCPS-related gaps in the literature and consider how these may inform the research approach and question(s).
- » During the data collection phase, it can be beneficial to organize youth consultations on how they perceive climate-related security risks in their communities, and how they are responding to and addressing these risks. For more support on how to carry out a youth consultation, see info box *"Food for thought"* on page 68.
- » During the data analysis and writing phase, young people should be invited to peer-review the research findings to ensure that their views are accurately represented and acknowledge any gaps. It is crucial that young people engage in predominantly adult-led research environments.

☑ Whom to include:

- » Map youth organizations, movements, and networks working on these topics to get a lay of the land and to be able to engage with a diversity of young persons to better understand their perspectives and priorities.

On gathering intersectional perspectives

- ✓ Ensure gender equality and considerations throughout the process, with a particular focus on young women and how they are affected by and respond to climate-related security risks.
- ✓ Prioritize generational indigenous knowledge, as this includes unique knowledge systems and practices that can help shape adaptive responses to climate-driven environmental change at the local level and beyond.
- ✓ Collect age- and gender- disaggregated data on how young people and other generations are affected by and respond to climate-related security risks. This often requires conducting interviews or surveys with people of different ages, as readily-available age-disaggregated data are uncommon.



UNDP Dominican Republic. Photo: UNDP / Jonathan Delance

On bridging (young) practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers for collaborative exchanges:

For those who enable research

- ✓ Provide platforms for continuous dialogue between researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners of diverse generations, including youth, to disseminate knowledge about issues related to the YCPS nexus; discussing emerging issues, methods, and tools, sharing findings, and scrutinizing policies based on the latest evidence and practical experiences from implementation of YCPS initiatives.
- ✓ Invest in supporting the analytical capacities and technical expertise of young researchers and youth-led organizations working on youth, climate, peace and security issues, through training, mentorship, paid internships, employment and/or access to resources.

For those carrying out research

- ✓ Translate academic research within the YCPS field into policy briefs and practical guidelines that can be readily used by practitioners and policy-makers. This can help bridge the gap between complex research findings and actionable steps.

Red flags

- ! Avoid departing from theoretical frameworks based on one-sided academic narratives of youth in relation to climate, peace, and security.
- ! Avoid using data produced as propaganda by certain governments. Carefully check the independence and scientific credibility of 'raw data' sources.
- ! Avoid treating young persons as an afterthought in research. Failing to include their perspectives from the start may result in incorrect conclusions, which—if used as evidence in policy or programming—risks ineffective or even harmful responses.



Additional reading and promising practices



[Kofi Annan youth-led research on climate, environment and peace](#)



[Sudan Youth Organization on Climate Change \(SYOCC\)](#)



[Centre for Youth and International Studies](#)

Exploring YCPS in analysis

Similar to research and studies, solid analysis is key to understanding how climate hazards and conflict dynamics interact with young people and age dynamics. Analysis also serves as an important bridge in translating knowledge into actionable programming or policy pathways. Integrated analysis on YCPS combines data, methods, and perspectives on youth and demographics, climate hazards, and peace and security dynamics to identify synergies, relationships, and overarching patterns that might be overlooked when analysing these topics in isolation.

A YCPS integrated approach in analysis, where conflict, climate, and youth lenses are applied systematically and in parallel, is particularly important in contexts where both YPS and CPS dimensions interlink in practice.

Below process considerations and guiding questions are intended for practitioners looking to integrate youth, climate, peace and security factors into conflict analysis. They may also be relevant for, e.g., context, situational, or other political analyses.

Analysis: Considerations and action points

On process

- ☑ Apply a youth, climate, and conflict lens systematically and in parallel throughout analysis processes to ensure a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the interconnected challenges, conflict drivers, and (peace) opportunities.
- ☑ Explore opportunities for youth participation, co-leadership or full leadership in the analysis process, ensuring the involvement of diverse youth groups and youth-led and youth-focused organizations throughout. Hold space for young persons to take the lead in analysing data, designing methodologies, and making decisions, treating them as equal partners and providing resources to support their efforts effectively. Other ways of including diverse young persons' voices could be through sounding boards or reference groups, or as thematic experts.
- ☑ Consider partnering with young people to set up youth-led observatories or monitoring bodies to track climate and security trends, collect data, and provide regular reports to analysts and/or policy-makers. These observatories can also serve as an early warning system for emerging risks.
 - » To start, explore and map what youth-led research or analysis initiatives on climate-related security risks look like in the given context and consider partnering with these, identify what available youth-specific data are readily available and consult young people on what questions they think are necessary to seek answers to.
 - » Draw upon the experiences and emerging practices of existing knowledge hubs, such as the Climate Security Mechanism, and/or initiate other informal working groups or networks with practitioners of various disciplines to share information, experiences and lessons learned in the field of climate, peace and security.

On gathering multiple perspectives

- ✓ Recognize the intersectionality of identities and experiences within youth populations, including gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location to ensure a comprehensive understanding of their vulnerabilities and capacities in the context of climate-related peace and security challenges. In the context of YCPS, special attention may be directed toward persons with disabilities, young persons with refugee or other migratory statuses, and indigenous youth.
 - » Conduct a gap analysis to identify existing age-disaggregated data and information, such as perception surveys, polls, or basic censuses. Then decide on how to fill the gaps, by conducting your own surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.
- ✓ Incorporate an intergenerational perspective into the analysis to take into account potential ripple effects of present actions on future outcomes, recognizing the importance of considering the needs and perspectives of current and future generations alongside those of current youth.
 - » Ask questions about how climate-related insecurity affects different current generations, and how possible scenarios may affect incoming and future generations. Here, it may be useful to consider different scenarios by the IPCC.
- ✓ Utilize participatory data collection methods, such as youth-led participatory action research, focus group discussions, participatory mapping, and storytelling, and intergenerational dialogue to engage diverse persons of different ages directly in the analysis process and capture their lived experiences, perceptions, and aspirations related to climate, peace and security.

On nuancing perspectives

- ✓ When discussing the involvement of young people in armed groups within climate-affected contexts, provide a nuanced analysis that highlights the diverse roles young people play, including positive contributions beyond involvement in conflict to avoid stigmatization and misrepresentation.
- ✓ Integrate youth-sensitive information into climate risk assessments to better understand how age intersects with climate-related security risks, both in terms of vulnerability and responsiveness, helping to tailor interventions and policies more effectively. (See the guiding questions above as ideas for integrating youth, climate, peace and security factors into e.g. context, conflict, situational or political analyses).

Guiding questions for analyzing climate-related security risks from a youth perspective

Sociopolitical and economic situations

- ✓ What are the social, political, and economic situations of young persons from diverse backgrounds and identities? How are these changing as a result of climate-related security risks?
- ✓ Are some intersectional demographics disproportionately affected, such as, e.g., young women or indigenous persons?
- ✓ How do political, economic, and social inequalities and discrimination (based on age, ethnicity, religion, disability, etc.) intersect with climate change dynamics to affect different youth populations?
- ✓ What are the persisting (age-based) power structures that enable these vulnerabilities?
- ✓ How do gender dynamics intersect with aged experiences of climate insecurity, and what are the differential impacts on women, girls, boys, men, and non-binary persons?

Key dynamics and stakeholders

- ✓ What do young people from different backgrounds describe as the key dynamics in terms of climate hazards and violence affecting climate insecurity in their context? What do older generations describe as key dynamics?
- ✓ To what extent does competition over dwindling natural resources (water, land, etc.) drive conflict in the region, and how does this affect younger generations?
- ✓ What role, if any, do young people of different backgrounds play in both the challenges and solutions related to climate-related security risks?
- ✓ How do key actors perceive different groups of young people? (As threats? As troublemakers? As peacebuilders?)
- ✓ How do young people perceive older generations? How do tensions as a results of climate-related security risks play out in narratives across different age groups?

Climate security pathways

- ✓ How are the effects of climate change interacting with conflict dynamics?
- ✓ How are climate impacts affecting different age groups', including youth, access to sustainable livelihoods/education/training?
- ✓ How are climate impacts affecting young people in terms of migration or displacement (rural–urban, temporary/permanent, transhumance, internal displacement/asylum)?
- ✓ How are different age groups affected by climate-related climate armed/organized crime group tactics and dynamics?
 - » Are some demographics offered economic incentives or food provisions in exchange for loyalty?
 - » Are armed/organized crime groups destroying vital infrastructure or impeding government relief operations, and whom does this affect?
 - » Which groups of young people are (or at risk of) being recruited into armed groups due to climate-related security risks? What percentage do they represent of the total youth population?
 - » Are some demographics forcibly recruited into armed/organized crime groups?
 - » What influences those who refuse recruitment, and what risks do they and their communities face?
- ✓ How is climate-related elite exploitation playing out in the context?
 - » How are young people of diverse identities and backgrounds affected by climate-related elite exploitation?
 - » Is there political messaging inciting conflict over shared natural resources, and whom does this affect? Are there age-based structures in the messaging?
 - » Are political elites seizing land or diverting humanitarian assistance, and whom does this affect? Are political elites attempting to mobilize marginalized demographics (such as young people), and what are the consequences for these populations?

Guiding questions for analyzing young people's responses to climate-related security risks

Institutional mechanisms

- ✓ What institutional mechanisms exist for young people to participate in decision-making processes related to climate mitigation/adaptation, preventing violent conflict, and peacebuilding efforts?
- ✓ Are young people engaging in policy advocacy, legislative initiatives, or legal claims to demand climate justice in contexts affected by climate insecurity?
- ✓ How do young people describe the availability of resources, opportunities, and knowledge for their climate change and peacebuilding work?
- ✓ What support to young people may be necessary?

Entry points

- ✓ What mechanisms do young people from different backgrounds describe as effective to address climate insecurity in their context—*and how do these address conflict drivers?* (E.g., addressing livelihoods, natural resource management, migration, etc.)? Are they similar or different to other age groups?
- ✓ Are there initiatives which aim to build local resilience, including through community-based adaptation strategies, sustainable agricultural practices, and natural resource management, and do these purposefully also address conflict drivers? Who leads and supports these initiatives?

Youth-led initiatives

- ✓ How are youth organizations and networks mobilizing around climate change and peacebuilding? What are different groups of young people's aspirations concerning peace- and climate-related issues?
- ✓ Are there examples of youth-led climate initiatives and/or peacebuilding projects that have addressed both climate impacts and peace objectives *intentionally*? If so, what lessons can be drawn from these?
- ✓ What do other young people do in the face of climate-related insecurity?
- ✓ How do young people adapt to climate-related insecurity?

Stakeholders

- ✓ Are there intergenerational partnerships between youth and non-youth actors in addressing climate-related security risks?
- ✓ Is there dialogue between younger and older generations on climate-related security risks?
- ✓ Are future generations considered stakeholders? *For guidance, see "Additional reading and promising practices" below.*
- ✓ Is there cross-border collaboration or regional cooperation between youth organizations or networks to address shared climate insecurity challenges?

When writing your analysis

Red flags

- ! Avoid assumptions on climate, peace, and security mechanisms. Carefully unpack how an intervention (youth-led/youth-oriented, if applicable) leads or does not lead to co-benefits for peace, security, or climate change—and question *under what circumstances* and *conditions* the sought-after change may occur.
- ! Avoid treating young persons as an afterthought in the analysis, but rather as integral to the analysis process. Failure to include their perspectives from the start may result in incorrect or even harmful analyses, which may in turn result in counterproductive or harmful programming.
- ! Avoid using ideological or one-sided narratives in the analysis as facts. Avoid this by rigorously cross-referencing descriptions of youth with demographic data, first-hand accounts, and research from diverse sources.
- ! Avoid writing about young people as a homogenous group in the analysis and abstain from the conflation of youth with (some) young men, acknowledging the varied experiences and gendered identities within this demographic.

Food for thought

- The unprecedented and unpredictable nature of the human-induced climate crisis necessitates iterative analysis and innovative modelling.
- To *attempt* to account for this, it is necessary to conduct *iterative* analyses by testing and modifying assumptions and hypotheses on incoming insights/data and focus on *potential scenarios*, rather than relying on past trends. This necessitates integrating diverse data sources, employing innovative modelling techniques, and trying to build a deeper understanding of complex, interrelated systems to anticipate and navigate the uncertainties of the future.



Additional reading and promising practices



[Applying a youth lens on analysis: the YPS Programming Handbook.](#)



[Participatory mapping: Good Practices in Participatory Mapping.](#)



[Youth-Led Participatory Action Research: A Collaborative Methodology for Health, Education, and Social Change.](#)



[Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 1: To Think and Act for Future Generations.](#)



[United Nations System Staff College \(UNSSC\) course offerings on Integrated Analysis for Sustaining Peace.](#)



FBA Sandö, Sweden. Photo: FBA

Exploring YCPS in strategic planning and policy-making

Strategic planning and policy-making constitute pivotal mechanisms in shaping responses to interlinked climate and conflict hazards. Strategic planning and policy-making in the context of YPS and CPS can include advancing normative political agendas and processes at the regional, national and local levels. This includes for example the development of National action plans on YPS, National adaptation plans, nationally determined contributions (NDCs), and other strategic governmental and intergovernmental strategic plans.

The considerations, guiding questions and entry points presented in the boxes below are exploratory and intended to inspire CPS and YPS policy-oriented

practitioners alike as well as public officials and policy-makers at international, national, and local levels to explore more YPS and CPS integrated approaches to strategic planning and policy-making¹⁶⁶.

Regardless of policy domain, when developing a strategic plan with bearing on the intersection for youth, climate, peace and security, it is necessary to apply a youth, climate, and conflict lens in parallel to develop an integrated approach and mutually reinforcing policy responses. As such, any policy and/or strategic plan relating to youth, climate, peace and security requires a context analysis which includes these perspectives as a starting point.

¹⁶⁶ Please note that this document does not provide specific guidance on identifying key components or on the development, implementation, and follow-up of a policy or strategic plan.

A climate lens on YPS policy and strategic plans:

Analysis

- ✓ Integrate a climate lens throughout the YPS strategic plan or policy process to ensure that it factors in and addresses the implications of climate change on youth and on the peace and security landscape in a given context. Recognize that many young people view CPS as a priority. *For further information on applying a climate lens, see the appendix on cross-cutting perspectives.*

Vision and strategic priorities

- ✓ Explore whether and how youth climate action has the potential for peacebuilding co-benefits and whether the strategic plan or policy could support such initiatives. Recognize that not all youth climate action will have a peacebuilding effect and that efforts that do, centre on **intentionality**.
- ✓ Ensure that the YPS policy or strategic plan will align with national and international climate commitments, such as the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

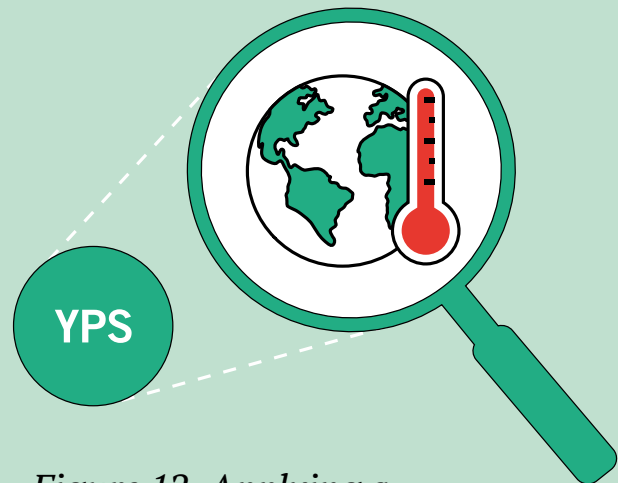


Figure 12: Applying a climate lens on YPS

Process design and partnerships

- ✓ Encourage collaboration between climate scientists, security experts, and youth organizations to develop comprehensive policies that address climate-security risks.
- ✓ Recognize and integrate the traditional ecological knowledge and conflict resolution practices of Indigenous Peoples, including youth, in YCPS strategies. Ensure their proven sustainable practices are reflected in strategic planning and policy discussions.

Implementation

- ✓ Consider the potential effects of climate change on objectives and results of the plan or policy. Vice-versa, the potential effects of the YPS strategic plan or policy on climate and environment should also be considered.

A youth lens on CPS policy and strategic plans:

Analysis

- ✓ Integrate youth perspectives throughout the CPS strategic plan or policy process, ensuring youth voices, input, and expertise are reflected and recognized from agenda-setting to implementation and follow-up. *For youth-sensitive guiding questions, see above section on Analysis.*

Vision and strategic priorities

- ✓ Systematically incorporate youth perspectives in vision and strategic priorities by recognizing youth proposed solutions for addressing climate-related security risks, and their visions for a peaceful and climate-resilient future.
- ✓ Ensure that climate security considerations are aligned with international frameworks on YPS as well as with existing national security and youth policies.

Process design and partnerships

- ✓ Create and institutionalize consultative mechanisms that facilitate youth participation in CPS-relevant policy processes and decision-making spaces at all levels, ensuring that young people have formal avenues to contribute to policy dialogue and formulation. *For more information on how to enable meaningful youth participation in the CPS sphere, see appendix on cross-cutting perspectives.*

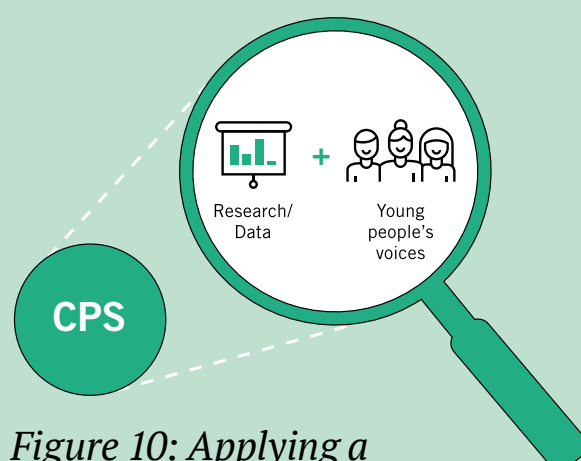


Figure 10: Applying a youth lens on CPS

Implementation

- ✓ Ensure young people's active engagement in the implementation of the action plan and other policy measures. This may include providing the necessary resources and capacity-building support for them to contribute effectively to climate and peace objectives, and to take on leading roles within the implementation process.
- ✓ Utilize the progress made by the YPS agenda to advocate for the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes at all levels, ensuring CPS policies are youth-inclusive and youth-responsive. E.g., ensure less represented groups—for example youth from fragile and conflict affected settings—are well-represented in their official country delegations to the COP.

Integrated policy and strategic plans:

Entry points and considerations

- ✓ Do not hesitate to pursue an integrated YCPS policy or strategic plan, especially in countries and regions where climate change hazards and conflict insecurity are strongly interlinked. While more resource- and time-consuming, the resulting plan or policy is more likely to reflect a greater degree of policy coherence. This approach will benefit from a systems- and/or whole-of-government approach.

Vision and strategic priorities

- ✓ Priorities should reflect creating and supporting initiatives that leverage youth engagement to build climate resilience and enhance peace and security.

Partnerships

- ✓ Explore cross-sector partnerships. Explore which stakeholders (government, NGOs, community, private sector) will benefit the process and its results by virtue of their respective vantage points.
- ✓ Foster collaboration between different government agencies, such as those responsible for climate, environment, defense, and foreign affairs, youth, and education, to create a cohesive approach to youth, climate, peace, and security.

Process

- ✓ Develop an adaptive policy/strategic framework that can evolve based on new research, emerging trends, and feedback from youth. Given the complex nature of climate and security challenges, ensure that frameworks will be flexible enough to respond to sudden and unforeseen changes.



Figure 13: Toward an integrated YCPS approach

- ✓ Ensure that YCPS policies and strategies are gender-sensitive, recognizing the different impacts of climate change and conflict on young women and men. Promote the active participation of young women in leadership roles within these initiatives.

Implementation

- ✓ Integrated YCPS policies or strategic plans need to respond simultaneously to humanitarian/development/peace needs and therefore cannot be siloed into one 'pillar'. Setting specific funding windows and adopting high-risk tolerance may be necessary to enable implementation.
- ✓ Promote intergenerational dialogue on CPS in climate, prevention, or peacebuilding in strategic planning and policy processes. This should aim to resolve generational divides by leveraging the experience of older generations, while harnessing the expertise of young people and acknowledging the needs of future generations.

Red flags

- ! Avoid basing policy solutions on common myths about young people, rather than evidence on young people's roles in climate, peace, and security.
- ! Ensure that young advocates and practitioners are not exposed to harm when engaging in the policy process; e.g., in the form of political repression as a consequence of their activism, by not actively applying protection mechanisms.
- ! Do not limit the understanding of youth participation in policy processes to activism, advocacy, and consultations. Actively engage with young people from, e.g., academia and the private sector as well.
- ! Do not forget the needs of future generations in policy and decision-making on climate, peace and security.



Additional reading and promising practices



[YPS in political processes](#)

[Youth, Peace and Security: Fostering Youth-Inclusive Political Processes](#)



[Youth responsive national action plans:](#)

[Implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at Country-level: A Guide for Public Officials](#)



[Youth inclusive Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\):](#)

[On equal terms: A check-list for decision-makers & practitioners for on a youth inclusive NDC process](#)



[Aiming Higher: Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Action \(UNDP 2022\)](#)





Youth for Peace, Dominica.
Photo: Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)

Exploring YCPS in programming

Programming addresses identified needs to create positive and measurable impacts on communities and countries. The examples in Part 3 have shown that groups of young persons are leading integrated programming solutions that simultaneously address risks to climate and to increased conflict. While promising climate and peacebuilding programs have to-date focused on applying a peace and security lens to climate mitigation and adaptation practices, as well as applying a climate lens to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, the youth-led examples mentioned above stand out for their integrated responses to multifaceted challenges.

One of the biggest misconceptions (around young people) is that we cannot handle it. Such as financial resources, or safety and security issues. But the biggest misconception is that age equals experience. As we speak, learning processes are becoming far faster, and we as young people have all the resources possible.

– Nisreen Elsaïm
Founder of the Youth and Environment Society (YES)
and former Chair of the UN Secretary-General's Youth
Advisory Group on Climate Change



Photo: Private



Solomon Islands. Photo: UN Photo / Eskinder Debebe

Intentionality is key in addressing interlinked climate and conflict risks. As such, theories of change in this type of programming should explicitly and *purposefully*¹⁶⁷ aim at achieving climate, peace and security *co-benefits*¹⁶⁸. In practice, it means moving beyond mutually reinforcing to integrated solutions. There is a great need for establishing emerging and best practices and building the evidence base on integrated YCPS programming. **Therefore, guidance herein should be considered exploratory, rather than prescriptive.**

The following considerations and guiding questions are intended for practitioners, including young people, and to conduct programming related to, e.g., peace and security, climate-security, and/or climate change adaptation or mitigation as well as youth. A YCPS integrated approach to programming is particularly important in fragile and conflict-affected settings where both YPS and CPS dimensions are closely interlinked.

Considerations in the programming cycle

Analysis

- Programming initiatives in fragile and conflict-affected settings need to be grounded in a youth-sensitive and context-specific conflict analysis that integrates climate risks. This type of analysis allows for understanding and addressing the deep sociopolitical causes of climate vulnerability and conflict. It entails applying and combining a youth lens, a climate lens, and a conflict perspective on the programming context. *For youth-sensitive guiding questions, see above section on Analysis.*

¹⁶⁷ adelphi, UNDP/PA/PBSO (2024)

¹⁶⁸ Climate, peace and security co-benefits refer to the mutual positive impacts that arise when climate interventions and peacebuilding efforts reinforce each other. Actions to address climate change, such as sustainable resource management, can enhance peace and security, and vice versa—peacebuilding efforts can simultaneously address climate change.

Program design

- ☑ Map existing programmes, including youth-led initiatives, with bearing on youth, climate, peace, and security to learn from and build on emerging and best practices. As part of this, enable and/or engage in inclusive and accessible learning exchanges convening youth, climate, and peacebuilding practitioners for the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding and identifying YCPS-specific programmatic entry points and areas of collaboration. Explore whether there are existing youth-led initiatives that can be supported and scaled up, better ensuring sustainability of the programme.
- ☑ Considering the diverse understandings and experiences of CPS interlinkages among youth in different geographic contexts, as the specific local context, and its particular sociopolitical composition must be a fundamental point of departure for any programmatic initiative.
- ☑ Entry points and strategic priorities should be based on how young people and other relevant stakeholders view the causal connections between climate, peace and security in their context, and what they express as priorities in terms of envisioned change. It is crucial to understand that many communities view security risks in a broad and fundamental sense, meaning that entry points may involve positive ‘levers’ not immediately recognizable as related to security risks by outsiders.¹⁶⁹
- ☑ Explore whether there are entry points in youth-led or youth-participatory initiatives, such as:
 - » Addressing livelihood insecurity through climate adaptation and livelihood diversification programmes,
 - » Community-oriented nature-based solutions to environmental management and sustainability,
 - » Finding durable solutions for displaced youth populations and returnees,
 - » Building social capital and fostering social cohesion,
 - » Disaster risk reduction and management and mitigation,
 - » Improving the management of shared natural resources and strengthening local conflict resolution mechanisms,
 - » Promoting sustainable development in fragile contexts,
 - » Cross-border collaboration in regions facing transnational climate and security challenges.

¹⁶⁹ In the Pacific context, it is essential to understand that security risks are viewed in a broader and more fundamental sense. In the Americas, security risks commonly include organized violence in addition to armed conflict.

☑ Formulate an integrated theory of change after identifying entry points and strategic priorities for programming. In doing so, recognize that climate, peace and security initiatives centre on intentionality. Integrated theories of change should therefore explicitly explain *why* a certain intervention is expected to bring about certain climate, peace and security co-benefits. If there is a peace dividend identified in climate action by young experts, consider it.

☑ Given the complex nature of climate change and conflict dynamics, strive towards designing iterative and adaptive interventions that can respond to the cross-sectional impacts, challenges, and opportunities in a dynamic way. Therefore, avoid developing theories of change that are linear (e.g. ,theories of change that are based on, e.g., ‘if...then’ statements). Instead, write an analytical narrative delineating how different facets of a complex system reinforce each other and how the planned actions are expected to influence the desired change(s).¹⁷⁰ This should be questioned and reformulated throughout the process based on emerging developments.

170 UN and FBA (2021, pp. 45-65)

Partnerships and collaboration

- ✓ Cross-sectoral partnerships are key in enabling integrated programming. Instead of competing for space and funding, consider initiating joint programmes, drawing upon different entities' respective expertise and added value and consider a range of traditional and non-traditional partners (e.g., bilateral, green climate funds, international financial institutions, private sector, foundations).
- ✓ Work with young people:
 - » **Young people as leaders:** prioritize supporting and reinforcing local youth-led organizations engaged in existing climate, peace, and security work over developing new initiatives (for instance, initiatives by students' organizations, environmental groups, local peace committees or youth advisory boards) Avoid bypassing youth in localization approaches and ensure direct support for youth-led initiatives.
 - » **Young people as collaborators:** Build upon young people's integrated responses to climate-related security risks in programming. Rather than seeing them as mere implementers, provide space and trust for young people to take the lead in climate, peace, and security initiatives and recognize them as equal partners.
- » **Challenges faced by youth:** Recognize that youth-led organizations may face challenges in sustainability due to a lack of core funding and high mobility. Therefore, institutional and organizational support are key in supporting youth-led or youth partnered programmes over time.
- ✓ Leaving no one behind: Ensure deliberate outreach to marginalized and under-represented young persons, such as young women and girls, Indigenous and tribal youth, young people of African descent and of mixed race, national and linguistic minorities, LGBTQIA+ youth, refugees, young persons with disabilities, rural youth, and those facing caste-based discrimination. Make intentional efforts to connect with young people who cannot be reached through digital communication by seeking referrals from other young people, youth organizations, movements, and networks.

Implementation

- ☑ Actively involve young people in the implementation and acknowledge and make use of their unique insights and context specific approaches to develop solutions and/or adaptation strategies to climate-related security risks that are relevant and effective.
- ☑ Consider incorporating capacity building in YCPS programming. Both youth and non-youth may benefit from training and capacity-building opportunities to enhance their skills and capacities in the field of YCPS. Specifically, investing in YCPS capacities of non-youth partners can provide a necessary understanding and foundation to work in partnership with youth on these issues.
- ☑ Promote intergenerational dialogue as an implementation strategy with the aim of overcoming generational divides on issues of climate, peace and security by building on the experiences of older generations. Meanwhile, harnessing the expertise of young people—and considering the needs of future generations—may generate more robust solutions to climate-related security risks, with buy-in from a broader range of actors.
- ☑ When actively asked for by young people, provide mentorship and collaboration opportunities in climate, peace and security programming. Encourage experienced individuals to mentor and collaborate with young people, providing practical support and guidance based on their own experiences, tailored to the learning needs expressed by young people. Mentorship can help young people navigate challenges while implementing their own ideas effectively.

Monitoring and evaluation

- ✓ Monitoring of iterative and adaptive YCPS programmes in complex contexts requires a flexible approach, accounting for the unexpected. Outputs and outcomes will likely need to be revisited and revised. This should be done by testing the theory of change along the way. Accordingly, plan for checkpoints and feedback in the programme plan.
- ✓ To evaluate iterative and adaptive YCPS programmes, it can be beneficial to use methods such as outcome harvesting and narrative inquiry approaches to better access contextualized results. These types of evaluations are also able to account for unexpected or reverse relationships (such as sudden onset disasters contributing to stability and cooperation, or armed conflict to restoration of nature).
- ✓ Genuinely consider what young people perceive as (valid) YCPS results. Work with both qualitative and quantitative indicators.

Red flags

- ! As shown in the examples in part 3, young people working at the intersection of YCPS are not always organized into ‘formal’ organizations but rather into networks and grassroots movements. Programme initiatives should adapt as far as possible to support and leverage these informal structures in the design—rather than compelling them to formalize into a traditional organizational structure, as this may stifle youth’s engagement and innovation.
- ! In a similar vein, be mindful of not bypassing youth in localization approaches, or taking over young people’s initiatives and ideas.



Additional reading and promising practices



[Youth, Peace and Security: A programming Handbook](#) ¹⁷¹

171 UN and FBA (2021)

Exploring YCPS in funding

The funding landscape of climate, peace and security is complex and multifaceted. Funding gaps persist, particularly in areas such as the intersection of preventing violent conflict, climate adaptation, and supporting the agency of young people in building resilient and peaceful societies. Furthermore, funding for climate, peace and security is often hampered by other pressing needs, such as humanitarian aid. There are concrete actions that could be taken in this field to enable integrated YCPS efforts and support youth-led action on peace and climate.

Each agenda needs to be funded, but the priority should be on enabling integrated YCPS initiatives through using and expanding existing channels for flexible funding arrangements focused on the interlinkages. The following considerations aim at exploring how the funding landscape could become more responsive to the needs of young people at the intersection of climate, peace and security issues. Considerations are intended for those in various functions who enable funding for youth, or climate, or peace or security programming/initiatives at multi- and bilateral levels.

Funding: Considerations and action points

For international and multilateral donors and partners:

- ✓ Enable climate and resilience funding for youth-led initiatives, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Apply a prevention approach in funding throughout the conflict cycle.
- ✓ Establish flexible and easily accessible funding, large-scale, small-scale, long-term as well as catalytic, designed with the specific needs of youth organizations, or youth initiatives, in mind, without excessive protocol requirements. Aim to simplify the application procedure by reducing bureaucratic hurdles, providing clear guidelines, and offering application support which could build organizational capacity and financial sustainability over time.
- ✓ Be transparent from the onset regarding funding horizons for any given initiative, to allow young people to make an informed decision about whether it is worthwhile to invest their time, energy, and resources into applying.
- ✓ Promote collaborations between international/multilateral organizations, government, private sector, and philanthropic organizations to pool resources and expertise and amplify the impact of YCPS initiatives and bring innovative funding solutions.
- ✓ Support projects or programmes which aim to collect data and undertake research focused on the intersections of youth, climate, peace and security. This could include research focused on collecting and developing age- and gender-disaggregated data in fragile and conflict affected contexts impacted by climate change.

For national and local governments:

- ✓ Integrate youth-responsive budgeting practices in climate and peace-related financial planning. This involves actively involving young people in the budgeting process to ensure their needs and perspectives are adequately addressed.
- ✓ Provide financial and technical support for youth-led startups and social enterprises that focus on the intersection of sustainable development, renewable energy, environmental conservation, and prevention/peacebuilding.
- ✓ Take initiative for collaborations between government entities, international/multilateral organizations, private sector, and philanthropic organizations to pool resources and expertise and amplify the impact of YCPS initiatives and bring innovative funding solutions.



Food for thought for international and multilateral donors and partners

- Youth, climate, peace and security-responsive funding needs to simultaneously respond to humanitarian/development/peace needs. Specific funding windows or changes to existing eligibility criteria and scope of funding may be necessary.



Red flags



For programming organizations: Avoid crowding-out or competing with local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for funding. Instead, identify and support local existing youth-led CPS initiatives.



Additional reading and promising practices



[Investing and Partnering with Youth for Peace \(Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation\)](#)



[Advancing financing of the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda in the United Nations system: Beyond commitments \(OSGEY and UNOY\)](#)



[Global youth climate action fund](#)



[The YPS Fund](#)



[Fund for responding to loss and damage](#)

Appendix—Cross-cutting issues and perspectives

This chapter summarizes the key transversal and cross-cutting issues to consider when exploring youth, climate, peace and security. These issues include meaningful youth participation, intersectionality, gender equality, the do-no-harm principle, and the application of perspectives such as a youth lens, an intergenerational lens, and a climate lens. Each of these elements is essential for a holistic and inclusive approach to analysis and action in the interconnected areas of YPS and CPS. The following section does not present an exhaustive account of each of these topics. Rather, regard them as brief introductions and consult the 📌 tip boxes in the following pages for more in-depth sources.

Meaningful youth participation

Meaningful youth participation is at the centre of the YPS agenda. The YPS agenda recognizes that young people, in all their diversity, have the undeniable right to take part in decision-making processes, including regarding mitigating the impacts of climate-related risks on sustaining peace. The meaningful engagement of youth is not a matter of choice; it is an essential prerequisite for efforts to address climate-related

security risks. There are a range of different definitions of what meaningful youth participation means and entails. This note adopts an understanding of meaningful youth participation as requiring:

An inclusive, intentional, mutually respectful partnership between young people and non-youth whereby power is shared, respective contributions are valued, and young people’s ideas, perspectives, skills, and strengths are integrated into all stages of decision-making.¹⁷²

The key concept in this definition is the aspect of power-sharing between young people and non-youth, including duty-bearers. As such, meaningful youth participation in this sense “recognizes and seeks to change *the power structures* that prevent young people from being considered experts in regard to their own needs and priorities”.¹⁷³ Whether or not their participation has been meaningful should ultimately be determined by young people themselves.

¹⁷² Adaptation from YouthPower (n.d.)

¹⁷³ Ibid.

1) Recognize diverse forms and levels of youth participation

- ◀ **Green flag:** Understand that youth participation can take many forms and occurs at different levels. Recognize that some young people are already actively addressing climate-related security risks. Others are not actively engaged, but still have the right to have their views, needs, and concerns taken into consideration. Provide support by acknowledging young people's efforts and amplifying their voices. This may, for example, entail setting up youth advisory boards, engaging with youth councils, and appointing youth champions in CPS processes (e.g., the Youth Climate Champion in the COP). Whenever possible, encourage and facilitate youth-led processes and activities, ensuring that young people play significant roles in decision-making.

2) Foster intergenerational partnerships

- ◀ **Green flag:** Because both climate change and armed violence and conflict have strong cross-generational aspects, strive for various collaborative efforts between generations. Decisions made today about climate-related security risks can impact future generations, so it is essential that these decisions reflect the needs and insights of all age groups, including future ones.

3) Prevent overbearing empowerment efforts

- ◀ **Orange Flag:** Do not 'suffocate' youth under the guise of empowerment. Instead of imposing new initiatives, focus on identifying and removing barriers that hinder young people's own efforts. Barriers can be systematically addressed through policy changes, funding, or capacity-building initiatives, depending on the context. Often, the best support is to avoid 'crowding out' young people's own spaces and autonomy to initiate and lead.

4) Avoid tokenistic and manipulated participation

- ◀ **Red Flag:** Ensure that youth involvement is meaningful and not merely symbolic—or even worse, manipulative. Do not treat young people's participation as a checkbox exercise without any real influence or impact on the decision-making process. These types of practices reinforce existing power dynamics and inequalities by not giving young people a real voice, thus perpetuating the marginalization of young people. Tokenistic and manipulated participation does not go unnoticed by young persons. Organizations that engage in unethical practices risk losing credibility and trust not only among youth but also among other stakeholders.



Food for thought: Making youth consultations matter

- Youth consultations should be organized in a way that can be considered genuinely inclusive and meaningful by its participants, ensuring that they address youth concerns and priorities vis-à-vis climate-related security risks. These consultations should be co-created with young people to define the objectives, guiding questions and format, and can be youth-led. It is important to consider translations in local languages and both digital and offline tools to collect data, such as interviews, in-person meetings, workshops, etc.



Tip box: Do you want to learn more about how to enable meaningful youth engagement and participation?

Supporting youth's meaningful engagement and participation is an entire subject on its own. If you are interested in learning more, check out the following resources:



[Aiming Higher: Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Action \(UNDP\)](#)



[Meaningful Youth Engagement checklist \(United Network of Young Peacebuilders\)](#)



[Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 3 on meaningful youth engagement in policy- and decision-making processes](#)





Kidal, Mali. Photo: UN Photo / Marco Dormino

Intersectionality and gender equality: Youth, in all their diversity

It is important to recognize that ‘youth’ are not a homogeneous group. On the contrary, young people represent a wide and diverse range of individuals with various backgrounds, identities, needs, realities, and aspirations. Therefore, young people’s individual experiences are unique, which often result in different perspectives and opinions about the world, their communities, and what needs to be done.¹⁷⁴ Likewise, young persons are also affected differently by climate insecurity depending on how different identities intersect. Gender inequality is one factor which overlaps in similar ways to the youth demographic

with climate vulnerability and insecurity. For more information on gender, climate, and security, see the below tip box.

Given the diversity of young people, listed below are important aspects to consider when working with youth, climate, peace and security.

174 Tanghøj and Scarpelini (2020)

1) Legitimacy and Representation

Reflect on the representativeness of the young persons engaged to understand the spectrum of perspectives, views, and identities represented: Are they representatives of wider youth constituencies and societal groups? Are they in a position of power or are they marginalized?

2) Recognizing intersectional identities

Various intersecting identities, such as gender, age, class, race, religious affiliation, livelihood source, and sexuality, significantly influence a young person's perspectives and possibilities. Engaging a diverse group will enhance and deepen the understanding of the context from multiple viewpoints and opportunities.

3) Special accommodations

Some youth groups may require specific measures for meaningful participation. This might include providing support for transportation, translation, or childcare for young people with disabilities and for 'hard to reach' groups. Marginalized groups, such as some young women, might need their own meeting space to ensure they are able to freely express their opinions without risking repercussions. Other young persons may need security provisions, such as ensuring anonymity, due to facing threats or risks related to their participation.



Tip box: Gender equality and climate, peace and security



[Gender, Climate, & Security: Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change](#)



[Weathering Two Storms: Gender and Climate in Peace and Security. DPPA Practice Note \(2022\)](#)



[Gender Dimensions of Climate Insecurity](#)

Do-no-harm and protection

Young persons engaged in climate and peace action are subject to fierce repression.¹⁷⁵ Yet there is a glaring lack of dedicated mechanisms, institutions, or structures for reporting or for triggering accountability measures for the threats they endure.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, there is currently no global protection mechanism offering emergency funding to address the urgent and specific protection needs of young people worldwide.¹⁷⁷ Existing mechanisms are often under-resourced and lack the flexibility to provide timely emergency support. Since the adoption of UNSC 2250 and its dedicated pillar on protection, little progress has been made to protect young persons from the threats and violence that they face.

When working with young people, it is therefore imperative that the “do no harm” principle is strictly observed. First and foremost, it is essential to have a valid reason for involving young people. Their participation must be meaningful, allowing them to express their opinions and influence decisions. Additionally, it is important to have a clear plan outlining expectations, how their involvement will function, and the anticipated outcomes.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ OHCHR (2023)

¹⁷⁶ Izsák-Ndiaye (2021)

¹⁷⁷ UNSC (2024)

¹⁷⁸ Tanghøj and Scarpelini (2020)

Furthermore, partners to youth must be fully aware of cultural, social, and political sensitivities and take all necessary measures to reduce and mitigate any risks young people endure due to their engagement in initiatives. Partners to youth should also be mindful that some young people might be reluctant to or would prefer not to engage in initiatives or efforts. While some young people may simply not be interested, others may harbour mistrust of external actors

due to negative experiences of exclusion, abuse, or manipulation. It is necessary to recognize the validity of such fear or reluctance and proactively seek ways to regain trust and encourage participation. As do-no-harm is an important topic of its own, see the below Tip Box for additional readings. Nonetheless, listed below are a few do-no-harm considerations to keep in mind when working within the YCPS nexus.

Do-no-harm considerations

- ✓ Conduct conflict analysis in order to identify potential risks related to young people's engagement in the YCPS space. In doing so, make sure to consult the young persons you are trying to engage to really understand what their specific (security) needs are in the space of climate and conflict issues, and what they expect from you in order to be able to participate meaningfully and safely.
- ✓ Identify and put in place mitigation measures to ensure the protection of young activists and professionals in the YCPS field.
- ✓ Acknowledge the increasing threats against young environmental defenders and peacebuilders and analyse them from an intersectional perspective. Address young people's safety concerns when engaging with them publicly. Create and/or advocate for dedicated guidance and protocols on the protection of young persons, including in the YCPS space.
- ✓ Conversely, realize that many young persons active in climate action and peacebuilding are their own security experts. Do not abstain from engaging young people based on an outside analysis of risks they may face, but understand their specific situation to tailor a contextual protection response.
- ✓ Realize that transparent information about risks related to young people's involvement, and available or unavailable protection mechanisms, are also important parts of applying a 'do-no-harm' approach.



Tip box: Do-no-harm and protection

Want to learn more about do-no-harm and protection of youth? Consult this resource:



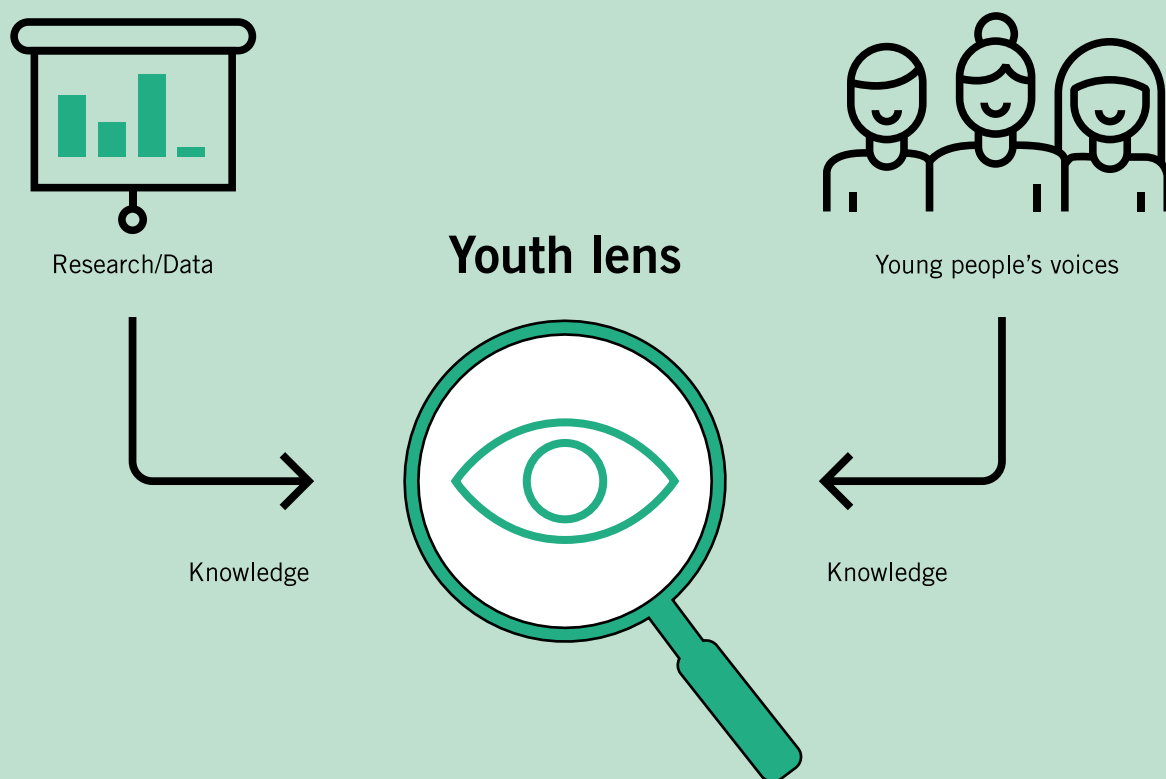
['If I Disappear': Global Report on Protecting Young People in Civic Space](#)

Applying a youth lens

A youth lens is an analytical filter used to gain knowledge about situations pertaining to youth. It consists of information from two sources: information coming from young people's own accounts; and secondary sources containing information about youth, such as statistical data, research, and studies. Applying a youth lens means actively considering the unique needs, challenges, and contributions of young people while also acknowledging that non-youth have a crucial role to play in realizing these needs. Indeed, young persons have the right to be represented even if they are not 'around the table' or 'in the room'.

Therefore, it is essential to ensure that non-youth actors also take responsibility and contribute to the realization of the YCPS nexus from the perspective of young persons (by applying a youth lens)—even when no young persons are represented. This means collecting information and data about young people of different backgrounds and identities, and their challenges, needs, perspectives, and aspirations. This includes investigating and taking into consideration age-based norms and power structures affecting them.

Figure 14: The youth lens



Applying a youth lens is crucial in addressing the complex challenges at the nexus of climate change, peace, and security. While young people are often seen as the future and are 'praised' for their innovation and potential to drive positive change, it is important to recognize that they cannot, and should not,

be expected to solve these problems on their own. This expectation risks creating a stereotypical narrative that, although positive, can absolve older generations of their responsibility in these critical areas.



Tip box: Applying a youth lens

Want to learn more about how to apply a youth lens? Consult these resources:



[The YPS Programming Handbook](#)



The [Youth Peace and Security Primer](#),¹⁷⁹ a free online based training course.

Applying an intergenerational lens

There is inherent intergenerational salience in climate change. Disparities between past generations' actions and future generations' responsibilities can fuel tensions, which in turn can drive conflict. Therefore, it is crucial to apply a generational perspective to the intersection of youth, climate, peace and security. This approach entails recognizing and addressing power structures which unevenly impact different generations. A generational perspective complements a youth lens, underscoring the responsibility of current older generations to consider and address the needs and interests of younger and future generations. This dual approach empowers today's youth by directing responsibility for the present, while ensuring older generations remain accountable and engaged, and safeguarding the well-being of those yet to come. It reminds us that our actions today impact not only present generations but also those who do not yet have a voice. Ensuring that future generations are considered in our decision-making processes is essential for long-term sustainability and peace.

Furthermore, incorporating a generational perspective allows us to appreciate and learn from traditional methods and practices, many of which are sustainable and can complement modern technology and knowledge. Intergenerational learning combines past wisdom with present innovations, leading to more holistic and sustainable solutions. Intergenerational engagement can contribute to inclusive and representative policy formulation which mitigates the risk of short-sighted decision-making.¹⁸⁰

While all generations share responsibility to address the challenges of climate change, peace, and security, distinct generations have different levels of power and influence. By integrating both youth and generational perspectives, it is possible to develop more equitable and effective strategies to address the intertwined challenges of climate change, peace, and security. Ensuring that the needs and rights of all generations—present and future—are respected and upheld is a collective responsibility.



Tip box: Intergenerational dialogue as a relevant method for the YCPS nexus

Want to learn about intergenerational dialogue as a method to address the salience of climate change? Then have a look in the [Connecting generations: A guidance note on inclusive intergenerational dialogue](#),¹⁸¹ developed by the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa and the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA).

¹⁷⁹ UNSSC (n.d.)

¹⁸⁰ Tanghøj (2023)

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

Applying a climate lens

Applying a climate lens¹⁸² serves to ensure that analysis and programming factor into and address the implications of climate change in a given context.

In the context of analysis, applying a climate lens helps create an understanding of the impact and the relevance of the effects of climate change; e.g., on the availability and quality of natural resources such as water or arable land and livelihoods in general and how these effects interact with, for example, conflict dynamics. Such an analysis builds on and integrates climate data and various scenarios, which allows for an understanding of how climate change affects a given context. Depending on the context in question, this can include data and analyses about trends in temperature rise, the change of precipitation patterns, desertification, or the quantity and quality of available freshwater resources due to changing rainfall patterns. In addition to slow-onset events, climate-sensitive analysis also comprises information regarding the risks and likelihood of climate-shocks like droughts, floods, heat waves or other extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change. Given the dynamic nature of climate change, applying a climate lens not only requires looking at the current impacts of climate change but on integrating localized risk assessments and a forward-looking perspective that considers future developments and scenarios, including the impact for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

Building on a basic understanding of the current and future trends and effects of climate change, these findings can then be integrated in other analyses, such as conflict analysis to understand the links between climate change and conflict dynamics. Moreover, the climate lens should complement analyses focusing on gender and youth. Using concepts like the pathways of climate-related security risks developed by SIPRI (see above) will ensure a climate-sensitive analysis that can help us understand how climate-related stressors interact with political, social, and environmental stressors to compound existing vulnerabilities, which in turn increase the risk that grievances and tensions will escalate to violence and conflict.

Building on climate-sensitive analysis, applying a climate lens in programming helps ensure that projects, programmes and processes account for the potential effects of climate change on outcomes and results, and that climate change is factored in when designing, planning, and carrying out initiatives. Vice-versa, the potential effects of programmes and projects on climate and environment should also be considered. A climate lens in programming is therefore comprised of different dimensions, including using climate change as potential entry point for dialogues and other peacebuilding activities. Ideally, applying a climate lens can translate into integrated climate adaptation and peacebuilding programming to achieve climate, peace and security co-benefits.

182 For example, see World Bank (n.d.)

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