

A person wearing a black headscarf is shown in profile, looking towards a whiteboard. The whiteboard is covered with numerous orange sticky notes, each containing handwritten text. The notes include various acronyms and terms such as 'Government', 'Regional orgs w/ youth focus', 'EU', 'AU', 'OSCE', 'CoE', 'ECOWAS', 'G5 SAHEL', 'PDA', 'SRSAs', 'PGA', 'Youth Envy', 'FPs', and 'LABORAT'. The person's right arm is extended towards the board, suggesting they are actively engaged in the discussion or work.

Executive summary of:
**Report on UN-FBA joint
Learning Forum on Youth,
Peace and Security**

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Between the 5th and 7th of December 2018 the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) hosted a **joint UN Learning Forum on youth, peace and security** (YPS). The Forum was designed and implemented in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Department for Political Affairs (DPA), Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY).

In total **23 professionals** (15 women and 8 men) participated in the three-day Learning Forum with representation from all above mentioned partner organisation as well as **UN Women, Unicef**, UN verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC), UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the UNDP-DPA joint PDA programme. Two non-UN youth representatives, one from Colombia and one from Kosovo, also participated during the first day¹.

Purpose and approach

The purpose of the Learning Forum was to foster joint learning and capacity development for UN entities currently implementing the YPS agenda. In particular, the Forum enabled practitioners to:

- Critically reflect on common challenges and best practices for implementing the YPS agenda in different contexts.
- Evaluate available resources and capabilities, as well as, identify gaps and needs in relation to specific targets of, and milestones in, the implementation of the YPS agenda.
- Recommend actions for moving the implementation of the YPS agenda forward, and, in particular for the continued UN-FBA YPS collaboration.

The Forum was modelled on the concept of a UN retreat and had a hands-on approach. The participants shared their own perspectives, experiences and examples of promising practises and solutions to challenges in the context of YPS.

Case studies

The discussions around common challenges and best practises were structured around four case-studies depicting successful youth related initiatives undertaken by the UN in Colombia, Iraq, Kosovo and Somalia.

In **Somalia**, the joint efforts of UNSOM and the UN country team to develop the UN Youth Strategy for the country (2016-2020) was raised as an impressive collaboration. The value of having a designated UN Youth Advisor appointed at the country level to coordinate UN inter-agency work and to champion the YPS agenda was also recognized and discussed. According to the participants it was especially appreciated to learn from UNSOM representatives about their efforts to institutionalize youth engagement in the Galkayo Peace Process through the Joint Galkayo Youth Committee. This experience demonstrates a concrete example of localizing the YPS agenda and should be further examined, documented and promoted.

1. The two youth representatives were invited to the Forum to share their experiences of being part of the YPS initiatives that the UN has been undertaken in Kosovo and Colombia.

In **Iraq**, the UNAMI Political Affairs Unit and Public Information Office worked closely with a local NGO last year to organize nine Youth & Coexistence Fora covering all 18 Iraqi provinces. In these fora over 500 young Iraqis discussed their ideas regarding youth contributions to national reconciliation, the shape of a post-ISIL Iraq, and measures to consolidate coexistence and bring Iraq's communities closer. Building on these consultations and the adopted recommendations, next year UNAMI and UNFPA plan to undertake capacity-building initiatives on: peacebuilding; conflict resolution and mediation; community mobilization and negotiations; and other issues for youth groups across Iraq. This initiative also exemplified another successful approach on how to localize the YPS agenda and how to engage young men and women and their perspectives in national reconciliation.

In **Kosovo**, UNMIK supported the establishment of the first UN Youth Assembly in Kosovo as the largest youth trust-building platform and representative consultation on the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security. By its second edition in May 2018, the Assembly became the key annual event to foster reconciliation among youth, address their concerns and reinforce access to decision-making. UNMIK also supported the formation of the Youth Task Force, a multi-ethnic team of young leaders in charge of advancing the implementation of recommendations within the UN system and Kosovo institutions at both local and central levels. It was highlighted that UNMIK has developed mission-wide YPS strategies to help guide programming.

In **Colombia**, the consultative process on ways to implement Resolution 2250, led by UNDP and the UN Country Team, yielded recommendations formulated by young people with their distinctive perspectives. Participants were inspired by learning about the UN Verification Mission's initiative to facilitate visits of youth leaders, students and entrepreneurs to the reintegration areas to engage with former FARC combatants and surrounding communities in support of reconciliation activities and socioeconomic reintegration projects. It was recognised that the UNVMC also have developed mission-wide YPS strategies to guide the implementation of the agenda.

Key findings

Opportunities and lessons learnt

There is a momentum to work on YPS related issues which needs to be cultivated and regionalised. The adoption of the UN Security Council resolution 2419 and the launch of the Global progress study "*The Missing Peace*" in 2018 present recent and important policy developments at the global level which maintains the visibility of young women and men in peace and security related matters.

Furthermore, there is a **gradually increasing number of actors engaging in the YPS agenda** both within and outside the UN system. These champions of the agenda play an important role in spearheading the implementation of the agenda at the local, regional and global levels. However, for a wider impact and for the successful realisation of the goals of the YPS agenda the participants of the Forum concluded that more and a broader set of stakeholders need to take active part in moving the agenda forward.

A lot is already being done by the UN on improving young women's and men's opportunities to participate in peacebuilding and conflict prevention (even if not all of the initiatives have been framed under the YPS umbrella). The experiences from these programs should be further elucidated and the lessons learnt should be taken advantage of in the continued operationalisation and

regionalisation of the YPS agenda. Emerging best practises from the case studies discussed during the Forum include:

- **The full support of the senior leadership** in UN missions and country teams is instrumental for the successful implementation of the YPS agenda.
- **Cross entity coherence and coordination** within UN is important to facilitate joint work and achieve sustainable results. For example, the adoption of UN mission **wide YPS strategies** at the country level is a common denominator attributed to the success of the YPS initiatives in UNMIK and UVMC.
- **Institutionalisation of the role of Youth Advisor** in missions and UN country teams, as in the Somalia example, strongly supports accelerating the implementation of the YPS agenda.
- **Programming must be done *with youth not for youth***. This include the best practises of:
 - Giving priority to support locally ongoing YPS-related processes, initiatives and organisations when doing programming;
 - Institutionalising young women and men’s meaningful participation in the planning, designing, implementation and evaluation phase of the program;
 - Committing long-term.

Challenges

Despite the momentum and the emerging best practises, the operationalisation of the agenda at global, regional and national level is still facing a number of hindrances. The **lack of political will**, both within the UN system and among the member states, to **prioritize and finance** YPS related work are two common and urgent challenges that must be overcome. Furthermore, **security restrictions** and limited access to young women and men in target areas, especially in hard-to-reach conflict settings, limit the operative opportunities. Lastly, the **lack of an integrated “one UN” approach** to YPS programming and the concrete proven methodologies that can be replicated or taken to scale at country level weakens impact and allows for duplications.

Ways forward for the UN

To reach the goals set out by the YPS agenda the Forum recommends the UN to, among other things²;

- **Develop a global roadmap for YPS implementation under the umbrella of the UN Youth Strategy** and support the development of YPS strategies in all missions and Country Teams;
- **Broaden the awareness and recognition of the YPS agenda** across the UN system, from HQ to country level. This requires that both international and national staff have access to information about the YPS agenda as well as basic YPS trainings and guidelines;
- **Create robust funding mechanisms and simplify procurement procedures** to support both youth-led CSOs in accessing funding and UN entities and missions to carry out YPS work.

2. A complete list of the recommended ways forward from the Forum is found in the full Forum report.

- **Establish a YPS network of UN focal points** connecting staff from relevant missions and country teams working on YPS initiatives. The role of **UN Youth Advisors** in missions should be institutionalised with a clear mandate and a direct reporting line to the UN senior management in the country. The lessons learnt from similar networks and positions must be taken into consideration when developing standard terms of reference.
- **Lobby for the inclusion of YPS language** in resolutions regarding mission mandates as well as in mission-specific reports to the Security Council;
- **Develop YPS guidelines, handbooks and practical tools** that are made accessible to UN staff in missions and country teams.

End notes and next steps for FBA

The Forum on YPS has taken a small but important step in supporting the UN to advance the YPS agenda. The opportunity for professionals representing different entities and levels of the UN system to informally interact and exchange experiences was highly appreciated by the participants. The Forum allowed the participants to not only increase their knowledge about the YPS agenda but also to extend and strengthen their networks and collaboration. The Forum also contributed to the identification of concrete actions aimed at strengthening the UN in working on YPS. In regard to this, FBA is committed to support the UN, including through the following activities over the next year:

- Host a **YPS Learning Forum** at the regional level to support UN professionals to develop and enhance the contextualisation and implementation of the YPS agenda.
- **Support existing YPS platforms** and multi-stakeholder networks relevant for the UN.
- Provide **technical support** in the development of YPS guidelines and practical tools.
- Explore the opportunities to **offer tailored YPS trainings** for UN staff at all levels.

In conclusion, the outputs of the Forum present good entry points for the continued capacity development process within the UN as well as the cooperation between UN and FBA. FBA is looking forward to take the next steps in supporting the UN in fulfilling the goals set out by the Security Council in resolutions 2250 and 2419.