

Building a Peaceful Future: The Relevance of Liberia's National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security

On August 29, 2025, Liberia became the third country in West Africa and one of the few in the world to launch a National Action Plan on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS NAP), placing young people at the center of peacebuilding and decision-making for sustainable development. The YPS NAP represent the views, opinions, and innovative ideas of young Liberians, addressing the unique challenges faced by young people, and promote their active participation in peacebuilding and decision-making processes.

The development of the NAP on YPS was a participatory process that engaged stakeholders, primarily young people from diverse backgrounds including grassroots communities, young women, and persons with disabilities. The plan is a testament of young people passion, resilient, commitment, and contributions to sustainable peace, and the Government of Liberia's dedication to domesticate the United Security Council Resolutions 2250, 2419, 2535, and the African Union Continental Framework on Youth Peace and Security.

For a country like Liberia affected by conflict and violence and with a history of armed conflict, young people are commonly perceived as perpetrators of violent conflict. However, young people have played a crucial role in preventing and transforming conflicts in Liberia. Young people have been at the forefront of championing peace, preventing conflicts, raising awareness to combat sexual and gender-based violence, and violence against women and girls including people living with disabilities. Young people have led key initiatives to end corruption, improve smart climate action, end poverty, promote youth employability and empowerment, advance creativity, innovation, Technical and Vocational Training skills, affordable healthcare, and education. All these align and support youth-inclusive peace processes.

However, the reality on the ground remains that the role of young Liberians in relation to peace and security is far more complex and its full comprehension often remains deficient. While their participation in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict remains low, there is growing acceptance that their meaningful inclusion and engagement are essential to building lasting peace. Liberian's youth are invaluable assets and innovative change makers with the potential to effectively contribute to the promotion of peacebuilding, good governance and democracy. The vision of a youth integrated and peaceful Liberia, driven by its own citizens, is only possible when youth and their resources and contributions to the country's governance, peace and security are actively solicited, supported, recognized and celebrated, and that is why the Liberia's NAP on YPS is timely and important.

In December 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2250 which acknowledged and praised the contributions of young people in conflict prevention and peacebuilding across the world. It also emphasized the imperative of partnership with and support to youth groups and organizations in peace efforts, and the need to consider the needs of youth in the planning and implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs. In August 2020, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) adopted the AU Continental Framework on Youth Peace and Security (CFYPS) with an overall objective to facilitate the meaningful engagement and participation of African youth in all spectrums of peace

and security at national, regional and continental levels. It envisions the mainstreaming of crosscutting issues including gender, capacity development, communication, inclusivity and knowledge management and up scaling of the contributions of youth to peace and security in Africa.

The CFYPS calls for the facilitation and development of youth-led and youth-centered strategic plans, initiatives and programs by AUC, RECs/RMs, Member States, and other stakeholders. This includes (but is not limited to) the development and implementation of national action plans on youth, peace and security that are aligned to national youth policies and development plans of Member States.

Liberia's landmark achievement to operationalize and localize the YPS agenda supports the United Nations and African Union efforts to include young people in peace processes, recognizing them as agents of positive change and sustainable peace. On June 7, 2024, with support from UNFPA, Liberia Coalition on Youth Peace and Security (LCPS) was launched with a mandate to monitor and oversee the implementation at country level – from the consultation process, formulation, drafting to the validation and adoption of the National Action Plan on Youth, Peace, and Security (NAPYPS). Chaired by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and Co-chaired by the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY) and West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) Liberia, the Coalition is crucial to ensure national ownership of the process and content of the NAPYPS, as well as the effective implementation of the YPS agenda in Liberia.

Liberia's National Action Plan on Youth Peace and Security speaks to development, peace and security, youth empowerment and employment, gender, climate, human rights, food security, education, and healthcare issues that require the implementation of robust local strategies and structures in order to be achievable and effective. The NAP seeks to leverage Liberia's youthful demography by harnessing Liberian Youth's potential by "building capacity for quality education and skills improvement, health and well-being, good governance, human rights and accountability, employment opportunities, leadership skills, empowerment and entrepreneurship, aligning these with the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250. The NAP also point to the key elements of protecting youth as part of broader civilian population from the effects of violent conflicts; prevent their participation in violence; ensure and acknowledge their participation in decision-making processes, especially in peace and security initiatives; partner and support young people's initiatives in peacebuilding efforts; and promote the recovery of youth affected by violence, drug abuse or use of harmful substances.

The development and launch of Liberia National Action Plans (NAPs) is crucial to advancing the Youth Peace and Security (YPS) agenda in Liberia as it also demonstrates the commitment of the government and development partners to meaningful youth participation. The African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) protocol at its 807th meeting in November 2018 convened the first open session on YPS, wherein it called on member states to develop NAPs and remove all structural barriers to youth participation in peace and security. Building on this momentum, Liberia joined few African countries to live up to this mandate by developing and launching its first National Action Plan on YPS.

Undoubtedly, the launch of Liberia's first NAP is as important as its implementation. The NAP is not an end, but a means to a goal, its development is one of the best strategies for the advancement

of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda because it is a practical guide and an advocacy tool. Therefore, if rightly supported, it has the potential to enhance a peaceful Liberia that prioritizes the development and inclusion of youth in decision-making, and policies design and implementation. With the NAP-YPS, we are contributing to building a Liberia free from all forms of violence. A Liberia where young people have the power to transform conflict; where youth participation is real and meaningful for all; where young people actively partner for peace without fear of threat.

I would like to offer some recommendations as we focus on the implementation of the NAP. While central government led coordination is good for accountability, room should be created for different actors' participation as well as its decentralization. Policymakers and stakeholders must avoid the temptation to monopolize the implementation process and unhealthy competition. There should be an inter-agency and inter-ministry platform to incorporate YPS into all government interventions and policies to guarantee a functional monitoring and evaluation process that will ensure that activities under the NAP are efficiently and effectively implemented by government agencies in line with various policies. The NAP if fully implemented will create and facilitate safe communication spaces for youth, and between youth and decision-makers, to promote intergenerational learning and mentoring, and to ensure that youth can express and engage with their concerns and grievances, and institutionalize a quota for leadership positions for youth to facilitate representation at the decision-making level, promote partnerships with youth and special programs related to youth.

I believe that there is nothing for youth that can be done without youth, and if there is anything that is done without youth, it's not done properly. I expect that the National Action Plan (NAP) on YPS will not be another framework document that will be developed and dash, but will rather be operationalized and implemented to enhance young men and women participation in formal and informal peace processes, and support youth-led peacebuilding initiatives. Mechanisms should be established to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the NAP. This includes setting up indicators, collecting data, and publishing regular reports on progress and challenges, creating platforms for youth to provide feedback on the NAP implementation, ensuring their voices are heard and considered in policy adjustments.

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