

My Insights on Liberia's National Action Plan (NAP) on Youth Peace and Security (YPS)

Liberia's YPS NAP process is a result of young people relentless commitment, passion and resilience to advance YPS in Liberia, and a prove that Coalition building is very important to develop NAPs and advance YPS locally. During the inception of Liberia's YPS NAP process in 2024, a multi-stakeholder coalition was established to advance the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs 2250, 2419, and 2535), and the African Union Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) in Liberia. Comprising representatives from Youth Groups, Civil Society Organizations, and the Government of Liberia, the Coalition oversees the development and implementation of the NAP, including monitoring, evaluating, and reporting. As co-chair of the coalition, I coordinate, mobilize, and oversee young people effective involvement into the development of the NAP and YPS process in Liberia.

The development of Liberia's National Action Plan on Youth, Peace, and Security was a highly participatory and inclusive process, reflecting a strong commitment to elevating youth voices in national peacebuilding and governance. From regional consultations that brought together diverse groups of young people, to the drafting and validation workshops led by the Coalition, Ministry of Youth and Sports, a Technical Expert, and UNFPA, the process has demonstrated meaningful intergenerational collaboration and a rights-based approach. The YPS NAP development created a space for young people to shape the priorities that affect their lives, focusing on participation, protection, prevention, reintegration, and partnerships, while also building momentum for youth-led implementation and accountability. This milestone is a testament to the power of unity, collaboration, and youth-led advocacy.

Some notable youth-led initiatives that shape the NAP includes:

1. 2024 Annual YPS Forum organized to build young people's leadership capacity to promote the youth, peace, and security agenda. The forum was co-organized by Peace Agents Network (PAN), and member of UNOY network, in collaboration with the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY), with support from the Embassy of Ireland and European Union in Liberia.
2. Young people led participatory Regional Consultations, Design Workshops, Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, Peer-review, etc., to strengthen youth leadership and voices in the NAP.
3. The YSP Coalition ensured the voices of young people are raised and considered, including young women, youth with disabilities, and young people from rural communities.

Key Lessons

- **Youth-Led and Inclusive Ownership:** The process proved that when young people lead and drive national policy processes, it enhances legitimacy and fosters stronger ownership among youth constituencies.
- **Grassroots Engagement:** Reaching out to rural and marginalized communities made the NAP truly representative, ensuring the concerns of often-overlooked groups were reflected.
- **Intergenerational Collaboration:** Dialogue between youth and senior policymakers built trust, bridged stereotypes, and strengthened commitment to collective peacebuilding.

- Partnerships Matter: A strong coalition of youth organizations, CSOs, government, and international partners was instrumental in driving the process forward.

Challenges

- Resource Constraints: Limited financial and technical resources slowed some stages of the process and risked sustainability.
- Capacity Gaps: Not all youth and local actors had the same level of understanding of the YPS Agenda, requiring additional training and sensitization.
- Coordination: Ensuring alignment across diverse actors was sometimes difficult, especially balancing grassroots voices with policy-level priorities.

Opportunities

- Momentum Beyond Launch: The NAP's launch presents an opportunity to shift focus from design to action, ensuring meaningful implementation and monitoring.
- Regional and Global Learning: Liberia can learn from other YPS pioneers while also contributing its unique experiences to global practice through platforms like UNOY.
- Policy Influence: The NAP provides a framework to mainstream youth perspectives in broader peace and security policies and programs.
- Youth Empowerment: Implementation creates opportunities to strengthen youth leadership, build capacities, and promote innovation in peacebuilding.

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