YOUTH CONNECTED

iPYP
Investing and Partnering with Youth for Peace

Operationalising the Youth Peace Finance (YPF) Principles

What does youth-inclusive, peace-positive investment look like in practice?

24 November 2026
13:30-15:00 CET

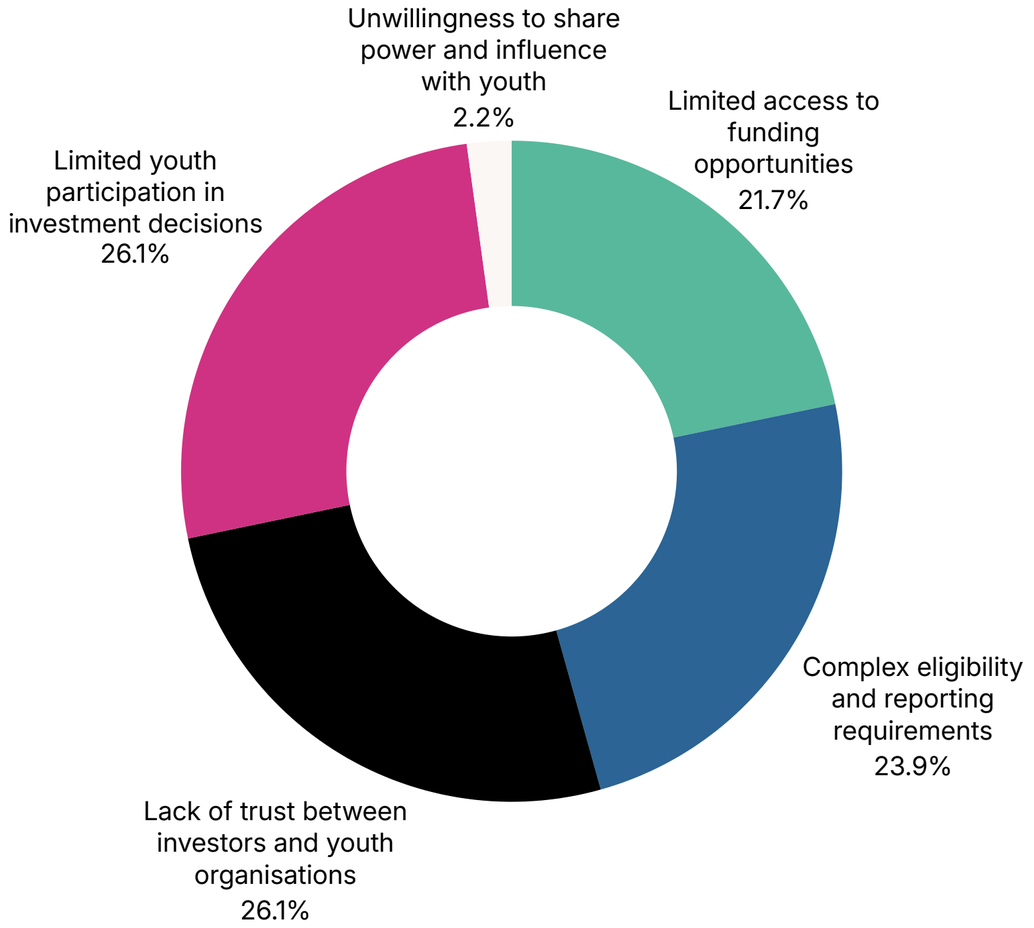


Barriers to financing youth-led peacebuilding

Insights from participants

The responses show that **limited youth participation in investment decisions** and a **lack of trust between investors and youth organisations** are perceived as the biggest barriers to financing youth-led peacebuilding.

This suggests that improving access to finance alone is not enough; building trust, simplifying requirements and ensuring meaningful youth participation in decision-making are equally important.



Your questions, our discussion

Insights from participants

Investor engagement & partnership

Building networks and aligning priorities

Accessible and sustainable finance

Flexible funding, innovative mechanisms and access to resources



Measuring impact

Demonstrating results and communicating social value

Youth inclusion & leadership

Meaningful participation and investor expectations



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Author Investors' Guide to Supporting Youth-led peacebuilding

Youth are already building peace



Youth peacebuilders are not simply beneficiaries of peacebuilding efforts. They are agents of change, often working in contexts where formal institutions struggle to reach communities.

- **Conflict prevention and mediation**: Young people facilitate dialogue, address local tensions and help prevent violence from escalating.
- **Social cohesion and reconciliation**: Youth-led initiatives build relationships across political, ethnic and social divisions.
- **Community mobilisation**: Young peacebuilders organise collective action, advocate for inclusion and respond to emerging threats.
- **Locally grounded solutions**: Their relationships, lived experiences and community knowledge enable approaches that external actors may overlook.

Example: Sudan

A young peacebuilder described how their team mobilised young people across political divides to reopen a contested road, succeeding where international actors had struggled for years. Their greatest asset was community trust, rather than institutional authority.

Leclerc, K., & Arnau, P. M. (2025). Investing in Youth for Peace: An Investors' Guide to Supporting Youth-Led Peace. Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and Finance for Peace. https://investinyouthforpeace.com/innovation-portfolio/youth-peace-finance-ypf.



The problem is not a lack of leadership

Despite their contributions, youth peacebuilders face structural barriers that limit the reach and sustainability of their work.

- Limited access to financing: Small, informal or unregistered youth-led organisations often struggle to meet eligibility requirements.
- Perceptions of risk: Young people are frequently viewed as inexperienced rather than recognised for their expertise.
- Short-term funding: Project-based financing rarely reflects the long-term, relational nature of peacebuilding.
- Unequal decision-making: Youth may be invited to implement activities without influencing priorities, budgets or investment decisions.
- Safety and accessibility: Security risks, administrative burdens and limited organisational resources create additional obstacles.

Example: Latin America

During consultations informing the guide, a young peacebuilder highlighted the disconnect between investors' expectations for immediate, measurable results and the slower process of building relationships and trust.

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What youth peacebuilders told us

The Investors' Guide was informed by regional consultations with young peacebuilders across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, alongside case studies and engagement with investors and practitioners.

Three recurring priorities emerged:

1. **Recognise our leadership and expertise.** Youth peacebuilders bring local knowledge, established relationships and experience navigating complex conflict environments.
2. **Invest in our long-term sustainability.** Flexible, predictable funding, organisational support and realistic timelines are essential for sustained impact.
3. **Include us in decisions that affect our work.** Meaningful engagement requires opportunities to shape priorities, financing arrangements, implementation and assessments of success.



Examples:

Consultations and experiences from the Democratic Republic of Congo, India and Syria illustrated how relatively small amounts of flexible support could enable young organisers to train peers, mobilise communities and help prevent escalation.

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From beneficiaries to meaningful partners

Meaningful youth participation must go beyond consultation or representation. It requires influence, agency and shared ownership throughout the investment process.

Rather than inviting youth organisations to deliver activities under an already-designed investment, investors could involve them from the outset in identifying conflict dynamics, developing the intervention and deciding how success will be measured.

Investment stage	What meaningful partnership looks like
Identification and design	Youth help define peacebuilding priorities, community needs and investment objectives.
Financing and implementation	Funding arrangements respond to youth-led organisations' capacities, risks and operational realities.
Monitoring and evaluation	Youth contribute to defining success, assessing peace outcomes and identifying unintended consequences.
Governance and accountability	Young peacebuilders have meaningful influence over decisions and access to feedback and accountability mechanisms.

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The Youth Peace Finance (YPF) Principles



The YPF Principles provide the framework to align investments with priorities, needs and aspirations of youth peacebuilders. They translate **peace finance** concepts into **guidance for investors**.

The YPF Principles

1. Inclusivity
2. Youth empowerment
3. Sustainability
4. Transparency and accountability
5. Collaboration and partnership
6. Innovation and adaptability
7. Conflict sensitivity
8. Impact orientation or intention
9. Learning and sharing
10. Resilience building

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The investment landscape for YPF

Youth are uniquely positioned to build resilience in communities. However, current (impact) investment landscape presents a series of challenges:

1. **Structural challenges:** traditional donor grants and impact investments present too complex application processes and strict reporting.

2. **Misalignment of priorities:** focus on initiatives with track record, proven financial and impact returns and collaterals pose unrealistic expectations for youth-led initiatives in conflict affected areas.

3. **Capacity gaps:** need to improve financial literacy and program management capacities for youth-led ventures to attract funding.

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Recommendations for investors

Prioritise inclusivity and equity
Engage diverse youth, including those from marginalised communities. Design funding mechanisms that address inequities in access to resources.

Implement flexible and innovative financing models
Both investors and donors can adapt financial instruments to needs of youth.

Provide capacity-building
Pair investments with technical assistance in topics such as financial management, planning or IMM

Foster co-creation and shared ownership
Involve youth at every stage of the investment process and establish governance structures that enable their participation.

Address safety and security concerns.
Incorporate measures to protect youth peacebuilders, such as legal aid, psychosocial support and emergency funding.

Emphasise monitoring, evaluation and accountability.
Develop participatory IMM frameworks that give voice to youth and ensure accountability.

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Investment scenario

The YPF principles in practice



A development investor is planning to finance a vocational training and employment programme in a conflict-affected region. The initiative aims to improve access to skills development, increase employment opportunities and support local economic recovery.

The programme has been designed in consultation with local authorities, employers and training institutions. However, young peacebuilders and youth-led / civil society organisations from the region have not been involved in shaping the investment decisions.

While the initiative is expected to create positive economic outcomes, concerns have emerged about whether the programme reflects young people's actual needs and aspirations, whether the skills being taught align with local labour market demands, and whether opportunities will be accessible to young people from different communities. There are also concerns that unequal access to these opportunities could reinforce existing tensions.





Jacqueline Molho
Gender expert
Cordaid



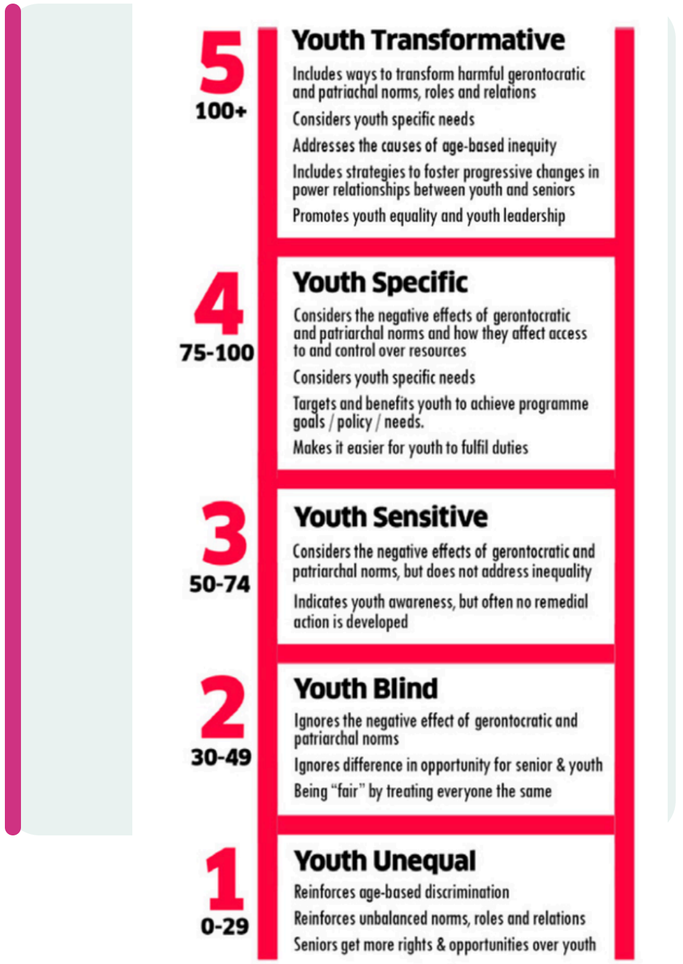
Rabih Yazbeck
Chief Program and Impact Office
Near East Foundation

Cordaid’s Youth Engagement Scorecard

The YPF principles in practice

This practical self-assessment tool helps organisations measure and strengthen meaningful youth participation throughout the project cycle.

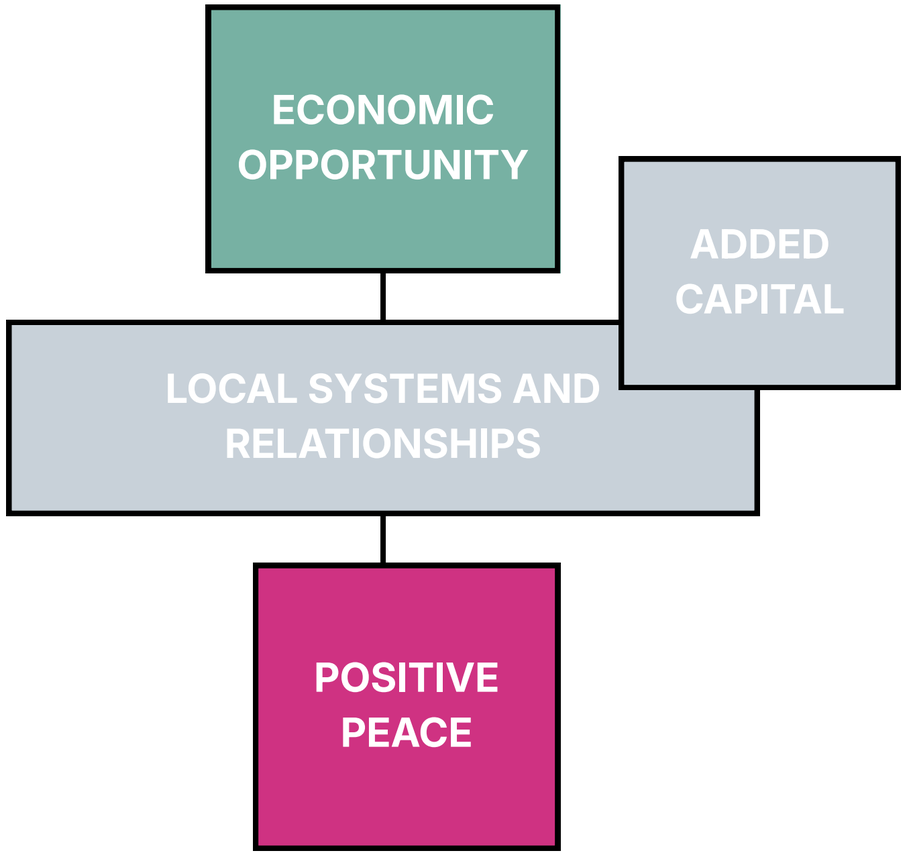
It enables organisations to reflect on how young people are involved, identify opportunities for improvement, and track progress. The tool can be applied both to youth-focused programmes and to programmes where youth engagement is important but not the primary focus.



When finance becomes peace-relevant

The YPF principles in practice - Practical lessons from Near East Foundation's innovative finance work

"Innovative finance is not inherently peace-positive. It becomes peace-relevant when it is intentionally designed to strengthen inclusive local systems, relationships and institutions alongside economic opportunity."



Rabih Yazbeck
Chief Program and Impact Officer
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The peace pathway

The YPF principles in practice

The causal question is not simply whether finance improves income. It is whether finance changes the conditions that shape cooperation, inclusion and peaceful problem-solving.

1. **Access and agency**

Excluded people gain economic voice, self-reliance and room to make choices.

2. **Relationships**

Shared markets, services and funds create practical cooperation and interdependence.

3. **Local Institutions**

CBOs, cooperatives and funds gain legitimacy, capacity and accountability.

4. **Positive peace**

Greater equality, trust, resilience and peaceful ways to manage tensions.

Finance is peace-relevant only when this pathway is intentional, conflict-sensitive and measured.

YPF / PFIF lens: intentionality · additionality· youth agency ·conflict sensitivity · Do No Harm· impact measurement

The investment proposition

The YPF principles in practice

The causal question is not simply whether finance improves income. It is whether finance changes the conditions that shape cooperation, inclusion and peaceful problem-solving.

Local knowledge

Frontline organisations see changing needs, social tensions and viable opportunities early.

Adapted capital

Flexible grants, risk sharing, patient debt and recycled funds match real cash-flow cycles.

Accountable capital

Youth and communities help define outcomes, monitor progress and shape adaptation.

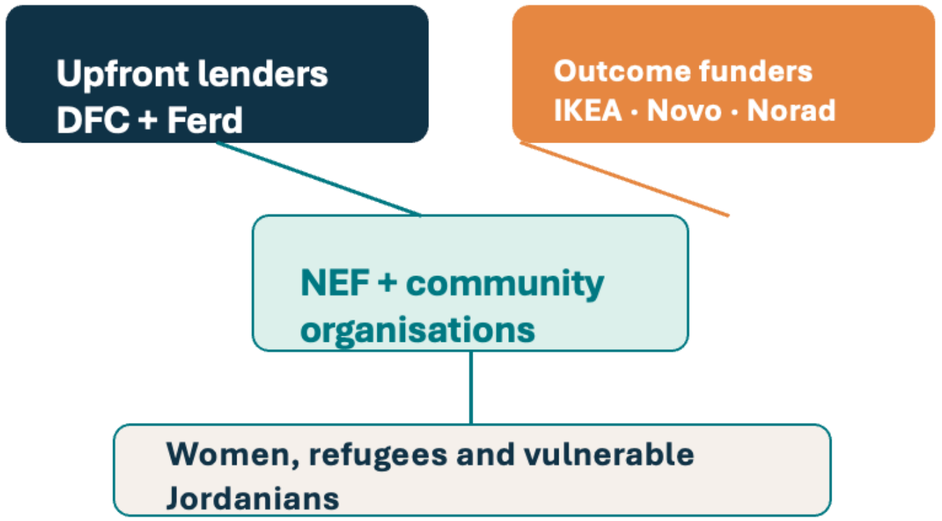
In YPF terms

Inclusive | Youth voice | Partnership | Conflict aware | Sustainable | Impact-led

Jordan DIB: financing gender equality and sustainable peace

The YPF principles in practice

The peace-finance design



Orange-labelled refugee impact bond	The first refugee impact bond to receive the Orange label.
Gender equality and peace	Connects SDG 5 and UNSCR 1325 to livelihood recovery and women's agency.
Refugee–host inclusion	Creates a shared economic platform for refugees and vulnerable Jordanians.
Accountable sustainability	Upfront capital, outcome payments, local delivery and independent verification share risk and sustain the model.

5,585
Participants

98.5%
active income-generating activity around 10 months after grant

+$1,245
household income at about 23 months

The Orange Bonds certificationconfirms the DIB as contributing to positive, sustainable peace by financing women's agency, inclusion and resilience through an accountable blended structure.

Finance as institutional infrastructure

"Our experience has taught us that finance is most relevant to peace when it is treated as institutional infrastructure, not only as a financial product."

Sudan and South Sudan

Technical assistance, local funds and enterprise finance strengthen collective problem-solving, productive roles and resilience in places formal finance cannot reach.

Sudan: 21 funds and 4,503 loans ·income +44% in Sudan · +24% in South Sudan

Peace relevance:

Who decides?

Who benefits?

Which relationships?

What remains?

What investors should finance and measure

Finance the conditions for peace

1. Local organisations as delivery and governance partners
2. Youth and women with influence, not only beneficiaries
3. Risk-sharing, patient and revolving capital
4. Technical assistance, data, safeguarding and adaptation

Measure the peace pathway

1. Economic resilience and enterprise survival
2. Agency, self-reliance and bargaining power
3. Trust, cooperation and inclusion across groups
4. Institutional strength, legitimacy and Do No Harm

"The question is not simply whether a loan increases income. The question is whether the way capital is governed expands agency, strengthens cooperation, supports legitimate local institutions and creates a more credible economic stake in peaceful relationships."



REVERSE Q&A

Contact information



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