

[~116H6174]

Grace Meng

(Original Signature of Member)

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To support the inclusive and meaningful participation of youth in peace building and conflict prevention, management, and resolution, as well as post-conflict relief and recovery efforts.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. MENG introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee
on _____

A BILL

To support the inclusive and meaningful participation of youth in peace building and conflict prevention, management, and resolution, as well as post-conflict relief and recovery efforts.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Youth, Peace, and Se-
5 curity Act of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

1 (1) There are currently 1.8 billion young people
2 in the world, the largest number ever to have ex-
3 isted. 1 in 4 youth are directly involved in and af-
4 fected by conflict.

5 (2) Youth represent the majority of the popu-
6 lation in many conflict-affected countries, where on
7 average 50 percent of the population is below the
8 age of 20, and in some countries more than 70 per-
9 cent of the population is below the age of 30.

10 (3) Around the world, youth remain under-rep-
11 resented in peace building and conflict prevention,
12 management, and resolution, and post-conflict relief
13 and recovery efforts.

14 (4) Violence impacts over 1 billion people glob-
15 ally each year.

16 (5) Youth and youth-led groups and movements
17 led by them have demonstrated the capacity to play
18 critical roles in—

19 (A) de-escalating destructive conflict from
20 spreading;

21 (B) preventing recurring cycles of violence;

22 (C) effectively encouraging defection from
23 armed groups;

24 (D) improving the effectiveness and sus-
25 tainability of peace processes and agreements;

1 (E) improving social cohesion and toler-
2 ance between and among groups;

3 (F) building resilience to violence and re-
4 cruitment;

5 (G) strengthening a culture of peace and
6 security; and

7 (H) contributing to improved and more in-
8 clusive democracy and governance.

9 (6) Youth are critical actors in development at
10 all levels of society, despite personal risks, oper-
11 ational challenges, and limited technical and finan-
12 cial support for their work.

13 (7) Preventive and resilience-based approaches
14 to youth are more effective at reducing violence than
15 hard security responses and at-risk and remedial ap-
16 proaches, which are often counterproductive.

17 (8) Youth who have participated in United
18 States-supported civic engagement and development
19 programs were less likely to participate in or support
20 political violence.

21 (9) Youth participation in the design and imple-
22 mentation of community development strategies is
23 critical for effectively reducing violence and extre-
24 mism, and increasing peace.

1 (10) Young people, particularly girls, around
2 the world face the added pressure of online harass-
3 ment, which limits their ability to participate in on-
4 line peacebuilding movements. In a study by PLAN
5 International, 58 percent of girls reported that they
6 have personally experienced some form of online har-
7 assment on social media platforms, and activists in
8 particular attract additional harassment. In the
9 same study, 47 percent of respondents reported
10 being attacked for their opinions.

11 (11) The shrinking of global civic spaces facing
12 youth, as documented in the United Nations Office
13 of the Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth’s report,
14 “*If I Disappear*”, shows the complexity of the grave
15 threats, challenges, and barriers against diverse
16 groups of youth active in the civic space, taking the
17 forms of sociocultural, financial, political, legal, dig-
18 ital, and physical.

19 (12) Many national and international mecha-
20 nisms for the protection of human rights defenders,
21 peacebuilders, and humanitarians usually apply to
22 adults and adolescents, excluding youth, due to their
23 age.

24 (13) United Nations Security Council Resolu-
25 tion 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security, which was

1 adopted on December 9, 2015, formalized an inter-
2 national framework to address the role of youth in
3 building and sustaining peace and preventing con-
4 flict.

5 (14) United Nations Security Council Resolu-
6 tion 2419 on Youth, Peace, and Security, which was
7 adopted on June 6, 2018, calls for increasing and
8 formalizing the role of youth in negotiating and im-
9 plementing peace agreements;

10 (15) United Nations Security Council Resolu-
11 tion 2535 on Youth, Peace, and Security, which was
12 adopted on July 14, 2020, advocates for the in-
13 creased protection of youth peacebuilders at risk of
14 violence, creates a two-year reporting mechanism on
15 Youth, Peace, and Security, and recognizes the crit-
16 ical role of youth in mitigating humanitarian crises,
17 such as COVID–19.

18 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

19 It is the sense of Congress that the United States
20 Government should—

21 (1) promote the meaningful participation of
22 youth in peace building and conflict prevention,
23 management, and resolution, as well as post-conflict
24 relief and recovery efforts, reinforced through diplo-
25 matic efforts and programs;

1 (2) provide assistance to and build the capacity
2 of youth-led organizations dedicated to advancing
3 peace and review administrative and bureaucratic
4 impediments to achieving this aim;

5 (3) build on existing United States Government
6 strategies addressing youth to ensure the meaningful
7 and inclusive participation of youth in decision mak-
8 ing at all levels and, at a minimum, such decision
9 making should be designed and assessed in consulta-
10 tion with diverse, representative youth;

11 (4) integrate youth outreach and engagement
12 into relevant conflict-resolution, leadership, and de-
13 mocracy and governance programs supported by the
14 United States Government;

15 (5) include age- and gender-responsive policies
16 and programming in the design, implementation,
17 and evaluation of relevant United States foreign as-
18 sistance programs; and

19 (6) build on existing United States Government
20 strategies addressing inclusive peace processes and
21 peace and security efforts, including the Women,
22 Peace, and Security Act of 2017 (Public Law 115–
23 68) and the strategy established under section 6, to
24 ensure the meaningful inclusion and participation of

1 young women and to ensure coordination with this
2 strategy.

3 **SEC. 4. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

4 It shall be the policy of the United States to promote
5 the inclusive and meaningful participation of youth in
6 peace building and conflict prevention, management, and
7 resolution, as well as post-conflict relief and recovery ef-
8 forts, reinforced through diplomatic efforts and assistance
9 programs that—

10 (1) elevate and incorporate mainstream, the
11 perspectives and interests of affected youth into con-
12 flict-prevention, violence-reduction, and post-conflict
13 peace building activities and strategies;

14 (2) increase meaningful and inclusive youth
15 participation in program planning and policy devel-
16 opment related to conflict-prevention and violence-re-
17 duction, democracy and governance, and security-
18 sector initiatives funded by the United States Gov-
19 ernment;

20 (3) promote the safety, economic security, and
21 dignity of youth in conflict and other fragile environ-
22 ments;

23 (4) provide technical and financial support to
24 diverse youth-led groups, initiatives, and innovations
25 working on issues of peace and security;

1 (5) support the equal access of youth to United
2 States foreign assistance aid distribution mecha-
3 nisms and services;

4 (6) encourage partner governments to adopt
5 plans to increase meaningful youth participation in
6 peace and security processes and decision-making in-
7 stitutions;

8 (7) recognize the unique context girls and
9 young women experience in conflict settings by ad-
10 justing programs and policies that pertain to the
11 achievement of the strategy and policy goals of this
12 Act to protect girls and young women's online and
13 offline safety, economic security, and dignity, while
14 supporting their equal access to aid distribution and
15 prioritizing programs to improve outcomes in gender
16 equality and their empowerment, and recognizing
17 their critical roles and agency in peacebuilding;

18 (8) recognize the unique challenges facing
19 youth, especially young men with regard to high
20 mental health issues, problems with reintegration
21 after conflict, post-conflict employment issues, and
22 gender norms around masculinity, and

23 (9) recognize the unique challenges facing
24 young people from a variety of different back-
25 grounds and demographics including, but not limited

1 to, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual and gender mi-
2 norities.

3 **SEC. 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF YOUTH COORDINATOR.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—The President shall designate a
5 current employee of the United States Agency for Inter-
6 national Development (USAID) serving in a career or
7 non-career position in the Senior Executive Service or at
8 the level of a Deputy Assistant Administrator or higher
9 to serve concurrently as a coordinator for components of
10 overseas conflict prevention, management, and resolution,
11 and post-conflict relief and recovery efforts related to
12 youth (in this section referred to as the “Coordinator”).

13 (b) DUTIES.—The Coordinator shall—

14 (1) have the primary responsibility for the co-
15 ordination of all resources and international activi-
16 ties of the United States Government appropriated
17 or used for overseas conflict prevention, manage-
18 ment, and resolution, and post-conflict relief and re-
19 covery efforts related to youth;

20 (2) lead implementation of the strategy estab-
21 lished under section 6;

22 (3) lead revision, not less frequently than once
23 every 5 years, of the strategy established under sec-
24 tion 6;

1 (4) establish an advisory group of experts to
2 advise the Coordinator on the development and im-
3 plementation of the strategy established under sec-
4 tion 6—

5 (A) which shall be composed of representa-
6 tives of relevant civil society, international orga-
7 nizations, and United States Government enti-
8 ties;

9 (B) of which not less than 30 percent of
10 such representatives shall be youth, and not less
11 than 50 percent shall be female; and

12 (C) which shall facilitate exchanges be-
13 tween a diverse range of youth leaders across
14 the country to connect youth and government
15 officials around the world on the youth, peace,
16 and security agenda and use these exchanges to
17 provide insight and improvements to the strat-
18 egy;

19 (5) coordinate with relevant Federal agencies,
20 including the Department of Defense, the Depart-
21 ment of State, and the National Security Agency,
22 the United Nations Office of the Secretary-General's
23 Envoy on Youth and Envoy on Children in Armed
24 Conflict, the private sector and relevant partner en-
25 tities as appropriate, to carry out the strategy estab-

1 lished under section 6 and to align current and fu-
2 ture investments with effective, evidence based inter-
3 ventions;

4 (6) provide direction to the design and oversight
5 of grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements
6 with nongovernmental organizations and private sec-
7 tor entities for the purpose of carrying out the strat-
8 egy established under section 6; and

9 (7) support the designation of a Youth Point of
10 Contact (YPOC) in diplomatic overseas missions and
11 United States Agency for International Development
12 bureaus, as selected by the Coordinator.

13 (c) RESTRICTION ON ADDITIONAL OR SUPPLE-
14 MENTAL COMPENSATION.—The Coordinator shall receive
15 no additional or supplemental compensation as a result of
16 carrying out responsibilities and duties under this section.

17 **SEC. 6. STRATEGY.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the
19 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State,
20 in coordination with the USAID Administrator, shall co-
21 ordinate the development and implementation of a United
22 States whole-of-government strategy to accomplish the
23 policy objective set forth in section 4, which shall—

24 (1) prioritize funding programs that provide
25 training and technical assistance to youth engaged

1 in peace building, violence prevention, mediation,
2 and negotiation and peacekeeping to the extent prac-
3 ticable;

4 (2) integrate youth consultation in program de-
5 sign and implementation as assessment criteria with-
6 in the procurement process during the United States
7 foreign assistance and acquisition application proc-
8 ess;

9 (3) create standards for collecting and ana-
10 lyzing age and gender data for the purpose of devel-
11 oping and enhancing early warning and response
12 systems for conflict, mass violence, and atrocities;

13 (4) support youth peace builders to participate
14 in communities of practice and virtual mentorships
15 programs aimed at improving monitoring, evalua-
16 tion, reporting, and program management capacities;

17 (5) encourage the development of youth-inclu-
18 sive transitional justice and accountability mecha-
19 nisms, disengagement, and reintegration programs;

20 (6) support inclusive education with a focus on
21 context-specific critical thinking skills,
22 socioemotional learning, and conflict resolution;

23 (7) identify and address barriers through age-
24 disaggregated analysis to youth participation in pro-
25 grams described in paragraph (1), improve program

1 design and targeting, as well as recommending any
2 necessary changes to procurement regulations, with
3 a focus on communication technology, that may cur-
4 rently impede youth participation or the meaningful
5 inclusion of youth in peacebuilding efforts;

6 (8) specifically address the impact that expand-
7 ing internet connectivity, private sector platforms,
8 and emerging technologies play in achieving or im-
9 peding the inclusive and meaningful participation of
10 youth in peacebuilding efforts;

11 (9) include youth in assessments of United
12 States peace and security initiatives;

13 (10) support the use of quotas for the direct
14 and gender-equitable participation of youth in all
15 phases of formal peace and political transition proc-
16 esses, from prenegotiation to implementation, includ-
17 ing in national dialogues, constitution-making, tran-
18 sitional justice, and other political processes related
19 to peace and security; and

20 (11) facilitate an inclusive and safe environ-
21 ment in which youth actors are provided adequate
22 protection and support from violence to carry out
23 their work in peace and security in relation to this
24 strategy, as well as promote the physical and psy-
25 chological recovery of young survivors of armed con-

1 flict, including those with disabilities and survivors
2 of sexual violence in conflict.

3 (b) AGENCY-SPECIFIC PLANS.—The strategy shall in-
4 clude specific implementation plans from each relevant
5 Federal agency that describes the anticipated technical, fi-
6 nancial, and in-kind contributions to integrate the strategy
7 into ongoing planning processes.

8 (c) REGIONAL PLANS.—The strategy shall include
9 specific implementation plans and consideration in con-
10 sultation with each regional bureau within the United
11 States Agency for International Development, the Depart-
12 ment of State, and the Department of Defense as part
13 of ongoing planning processes, including relevant Country
14 Development Cooperation Strategies and Joint Regional
15 Strategies.

16 **SEC. 7. DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TO EXPAND TRAINING,**
17 **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND GRANTS MAN-**
18 **AGED AND CONTROLLED BY YOUTH LEAD-**
19 **ERS.**

20 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 252 of the Foreign Assist-
21 ance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2211a) is amended—

22 (1) in subsection (a)—

23 (A) in paragraph (5), by striking “and” at
24 the end;

1 (B) in paragraph (6), by striking the pe-
2 riod at the end and inserting “; and”; and

3 (C) by adding at the end the following:

4 “(7) assistance to expand training, technical as-
5 sistance, and grant management managed and con-
6 trolled by youth leaders.”; and

7 (2) by adding at the end the following:

8 “(d) DEFINITION.—In subsection (a)(7), the term
9 ‘youth’ means individuals who have attained the age of
10 18 but have not attained the age of 30.”.

11 (b) YOUTH, PEACE, AND SECURITY FUND.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Coordinator is author-
13 ized to provide grants, emergency assistance, and
14 technical assistance to eligible youth-led civil society
15 organizations and youth peace building implementers
16 who seek to achieve the following:

17 (A) Peace building.

18 (B) Conflict prevention.

19 (C) Conflict management.

20 (D) Conflict resolution.

21 (E) Post-conflict relief and recovery ef-
22 forts.

23 (F) Assistance for those who require im-
24 mediate support in the face of legal and safety
25 concerns due to their participation in the activi-

1 ties described in subparagraph (A), (B), (C),
2 (D), or (E).

3 (2) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

4 There are authorized to be appropriated such sums
5 as may be necessary to carry out this subsection.

6 Amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization
7 of appropriations under this paragraph may be re-
8 ferred to as the “Youth, Peace, and Security Fund”.

9 **SEC. 8. YOUTH DEFINED.**

10 In this Act, the term “youth” means individuals who
11 have attained the age of 18 but have not attained the age
12 of 30.