



**GENERATION
EQUALITY** REALIZING
WOMEN'S
RIGHTS FOR AN
EQUAL FUTURE



BEIJING +25

BEIJING+25 WPS-YPS
ACTION COALITION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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CONNECTING WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY (WPS) AND YOUTH AND PEACE AND SECURITY (YPS) TO BEIJING+25 AND THE GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the lead-up to the 25th anniversary of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), the 20th anniversary of [United Nations Security Council Resolution \(UNSCR\) 1325](#), and the 5th anniversary of [UNSCR 2250](#), women and youth peacebuilders formed a coalition to discuss urgent, intersecting issues related to the full and effective implementation of the [Women and Peace and Security \(WPS\)](#) and [Youth and Peace and Security \(YPS\)](#) agendas. This civil society-led coalition—the [Beijing+25 WPS-YPS Action Coalition](#)—presents the following key messages and recommendations, which strongly reflect local voices from conflict-affected communities, organized by the thematic areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The outline of this Advocacy Paper is based on the Feminist and Women's Movement Action Plan, a parallel document coordinated by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women. The civil society-led [Beijing+25 WPS-YPS Action Coalition](#) will use this Advocacy Paper as a lobbying instrument in the Beijing+25/Generation Equality Forum processes and outcome documents; as well the anniversaries of UNSCRs 1325 and 2250.



KEY MESSAGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS

Women and youth's full, equal, and meaningful participation in all aspects of peace and security—including all formal and informal processes—is a human right. It must be promoted and safeguarded.

To effectively address stereotypes and promote inclusion, it is essential to consider that women and youth are not homogenous groups of people. The meaningful and effective participation of women and youth should extend to all persons who identify as such, including historically marginalized communities such as refugees, persons with disabilities, grassroots persons, LGBTQIA+ persons, indigenous persons, internally displaced persons, and former combatants.

Women and youth continue to defy stereotypes as peacebuilders and agents of change. In the absence of formal mechanisms and accessible opportunities to meaningfully participate in social, political, and economic spheres, women and youth have forged their own avenues to lead peacebuilding efforts and movements for progressive social transformation.

Women and youth participation in political decision-making and peace processes remains extremely low across the globe. In spite of ample evidence establishing the link between gender equality, women's participation, and sustainable peace, women—especially young women—continue to be largely excluded from peace processes, parliaments and senior positions in public service around the world.

When women and youth are included, it is usually in peripheral, advisory roles, rather than as peace negotiators and equal stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of policies and peace agreements.

Young women, particularly from rural and indigenous communities, are excluded from political and security decision-making, as they face multiple forms of discrimination. According to an Inter-Parliamentary Union report, only 1.9 percent of the world's members of parliament are under 30,[1] whereas the average age in parliament is 53 years old.[2] Young women are overlooked or ignored on the basis of their sex, age, geography, race and ethnicity, among other factors.

Political, economic, and social inequalities and discriminatory practices are major barriers to women and youth's meaningful participation in peacebuilding. The lack of access to information, threats and violence, lack of access to economic resources and opportunities, as well as unpredictable and inadequate funding—especially for grassroots women and youth organizations—prevent women and youth's participation in decision-making and peacebuilding.

Women and youth who seek to defend human rights and participate in local decision-making and peacebuilding face increased violence. Violent threats and killings of women human rights defenders are on the rise. This violence is pervasive and shaped by deep-rooted gender stereotypes. It is often perpetrated publicly and with impunity.

[1] "Young Women in Peace and Security: At the Intersection of the YPS and WPS Agendas." UN Women, April 2018. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/4/young-women-in-peace-and-security>.

[2] "Enhancing Youth Political Participation throughout the Electoral Cycle." UNDP, October 30, 2015.

https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/electoral_systemsandprocesses/enhancing-youth-political-participation-throughout-the-electoral.html.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ **Member States** should develop and implement concrete plans that promote institutionalized inclusion of youth and women in all processes related to peace and security and political decision-making, including by:
 - investing in the capacities and leadership of women and youth by ensuring safe and accessible learning opportunities for participation in peace processes and governance;
 - addressing the structural barriers limiting meaningful participation of women and youth, including lack of access to education, economic opportunities and resources;
 - increasing accessible, flexible, demand-driven and long-term financial support to civil society organizations working on peace and security;
 - guaranteeing that women and LGBTQIA+ people, including young people, do not face retaliation for their participation, and condemning any violence, reprisals, and other actions that interfere with their work;
 - adopting affirmative action measures to facilitate women and youth participation, and following through on existing national participation quotas and commitments for direct and gender-equitable participation; and
 - institutionalizing gender-based analysis training across all government institutions.
- ❖ **UN Entities** should demand meaningful participation of local women from diverse backgrounds as mediators and negotiators in all peace processes, including official negotiations.
- ❖ **UN Entities** should ensure a systematic focus on women and youth participation in the implementation of key policy frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda; and enhance synergies between mutually reinforcing agendas (such as the WPS and YPS).
- ❖ **Member States, UN Entities** and the **Donor Community** should allocate substantive resources for meaningful, systematic, and regular consultations with civil society organizations led by youth and women, to ensure that youth and women are involved in the development, implementation, and evaluation of peace processes. These should include both long-term funding, including for capacity-building and organizational strengthening of grassroots women and youth organizations; and rapidly accessible small grants to enable women and youth participation, by supporting travel, child-care etc.
- ❖ **Member States** and **UN Entities** should ensure that women, youth, and other historically marginalized groups are key stakeholders in the design, implementation, and monitoring of transitional justice processes, including reparation and reconciliation programs, institutional reform processes, criminal justice and accountability, and truth-seeking efforts.
- ❖ **Member States** and **UN Entities** should ensure accessible information and dedicated resources for youth participation in decision-making with specific attention to dissemination and recruitment of young people in rural and/or remote areas.
- ❖ **UN Entities** and the **Donor Community** should recognize the expertise of women and youth peacebuilders, and ensure that women and youth—including refugees, internally displaced, and host communities—are key contributors in design and implementation of humanitarian emergency response.
- ❖ **Civil Society** and the **Private Sector** should keep Member States and the United Nations accountable by increasing training opportunities and workshops to build capacity on institutionalized accountability, transparency, and good governance.
- ❖ **Civil Society** and the **Private Sector** should ensure, through meaningful and cross-sectoral partnerships, the monitoring of gender- and youth-focused funding and resources to ensure participation at all levels of the peace process.
- ❖ **Civil Society** and the **Private Sector** should mobilize grassroots and rural or remote women and youth to ensure their full participation at all levels, recognizing and highlighting the intersectionality of experiences and contributions.



FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, STIGMA, AND STEREOTYPES

Understanding intersectionality is essential to combatting prejudices and human rights abuses. Intersectionality means that various social identities such as gender, age, sex, race, ethnicity, ability, geography, religion, occupation etc. all contribute to one's particular experience of oppression, discrimination and conflict.

Girls, young women, immigrant women, LGBTQIA+ persons, refugees, internally displaced persons, indigenous women and women with disabilities are more likely to face conflict-related violence. During and after armed conflict, women, young women, girls, and other historically marginalized groups experience different forms of violence, including rape, forced marriages, trafficking, sexual slavery, abduction, honor killings, forced abortions, mutilation, and torture, amongst many other human rights abuses.

Violence against women and youth—including sexual and gender-based violence among many other human rights abuses—continues to occur with impunity during and after conflict. Despite the increased attention of the international community to sexual violence in conflict, the crime remains widespread, with little to no accountability.

Transitional justice processes are rarely gender-sensitive, allowing for the continued impunity of perpetrators of violence. Often experiencing stigmatization and marginalization, women, young women, and girls who have been victims of sexual and gender-based violence lack access to basic services, including sexual and reproductive health care and psycho-social support.

While young women are seen as passive victims without agency, young men are stereotyped as perpetrators of violent extremism and organized crime. These stereotypes contribute to the marginalization and stigmatization of youth by framing them as problems and threats, rather than as partners in prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

Most conflict and violence prevention initiatives are designed by governments and security sectors without consulting civil society. Consequently, they perpetuate hardline security measures which violate human rights and preserve harmful stereotypes of women and youth.

Evolving tactics of warfare require evolving, locally driven, multi-sectoral, and gender-sensitive strategies to sustain peace and address the root causes of conflict. New tactics of warfare, the absence of clear battlefields, the use of media and the internet to incite violence and radicalization, the rise of violent extremist groups and organized criminal networks, the use of child soldiers, and the increasing number and diversification of parties to conflict are all trends in the evolution of armed conflict that continue to deteriorate the human security of women and girls.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ **Members States** should reform discriminatory laws and policies that further the marginalization and stigmatization of youth, women, refugees, indigenous, grassroots, LGBTQIA+ and other historically marginalized groups; as well as policies that allow for the impunity of perpetrators of gender-based violence.
- ❖ **Member States** and the **UN** should meaningfully involve women and youth in the development of gender-sensitive and inclusive measures to address which take into account intersectionality and human rights to address evolving warfare tactics and prevent violent extremism.
- ❖ **Member States** should uphold their obligations under human rights law to prevent and protect women and youth from gender-based sexual violence and other human rights abuses perpetuated in the context of armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies; and strengthen accountability and safe-space reporting mechanisms.
- ❖ **Member States** should respect, protect, and uphold women human rights' defenders, civil society, and youth peacebuilder's universal, inalienable rights of freedom of organization, peaceful assembly, association, opinion and expression, and participation in public affairs, to foster an enabling and safe environment for women and youth working on peace and security, and ensure that they do not face reprisals for their work.
- ❖ **Civil Society Organizations**, particularly women's rights organizations, should work to engage men and boys, along with other important community stakeholders such as religious leaders, indigenous leaders, and local government in their advocacy for gender equality and sustainable peace.



INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, SHARED PROSPERITY, AND DECENT WORK

Economic exclusion exacerbates women's vulnerability to violence in armed conflict and is a barrier to their meaningful participation in peacebuilding, and an obstacle to sustainable peace. The gendered impact of conflict combined with economic exclusion aggravates the levels of violence women and girls experience, including sexual and gender-based violence, recruitment into sexual slavery and trafficking, limited mobility, and early and forced marriage.

The forced displacement that results from conflict and organized violence further affects women's access to economic opportunities. Many refugee households are headed by women, which increases their economic burden.

Women and youth continue to be excluded from dialogue and decision-making positions related to macroeconomic policymaking. In the context of conflict, women are left out from decision-making on economic recovery. Their perspectives are not adequately reflected in defining donor priorities.

Investing in inclusive economic development is a necessary conflict prevention strategy. Economic exclusion has been identified as a driver of conflict and recruitment to organized crime and violent extremist groups across the world. Growing inequalities within countries threaten social stability, development, and the government structures that underpin these processes, thereby increasing the prevalence of conflict and violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ **Member States** should adopt and enforce gender-responsive labor laws, including guaranteeing labor rights for domestic workers, formalizing unpaid economic labor, ensuring equal access for all women and youth to the labor market, and protecting the right of all persons to work. This should be considered as a priority in post-conflict recovery, rather than delayed.
- ❖ **Member States, UN Entities** and the **Donor Community** should transform structural barriers to economic participation by investing in gender and age-appropriate financial education, functional literacy, and economic empowerment initiatives for young women and girls, including in refugee and IDP camps and conflict-affected communities.
- ❖ **Member States** should institutionalize women and youth's participation at all levels in financial institutions and decision-making on economic recovery and sustainable development.
- ❖ **Private Sector Employers** must take tangible steps to prevent discrimination in recruitment – including discrimination based on gender, ethnicity and asylum status – and to increase women's participation in senior positions. This may include adopting affirmative action policies.
- ❖ **Member States** and the **Donor Community** must invest in gender and age-appropriate education for young women and girls, including in refugee camps and IDP camps and conflict-affected communities.
- ❖ **Member States** must increase diverse women's (including rural and indigenous women; IDP women etc.) participation in financial institutions and in decision-making on economic recovery.
- ❖ **Member States** and the International Community should integrate gender-responsive budgeting in post-conflict financing.
- ❖ **The Donor Community** should support women and youth-led peacebuilding initiatives – recognizing that peace is a prerequisite of inclusive economy.



POVERTY ERADICATION, SOCIAL PROTECTION, AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The impacts of poverty and conflict are strongly interconnected—and deeply gendered. Countries with high poverty rates are more prone to conflict. Poverty compounds the vulnerability to insurgency at both the individual and community level; it creates systemic discriminatory patterns that prevent women and youth from having equal access to opportunities, social protection, and economic opportunities.

Women and girls in conflict, particularly refugees and internally displaced persons, are denied equal access to basic rights provided through nationally appropriated social protection systems. Armed conflict and the resulting forced displacement and humanitarian emergencies have a deeply gendered impact on women and girls' access to public services, such as education, maternal care, sexual health and reproductive services, health care, food and water security, employment opportunities and fair pay, and representation in political decision-making.

The disintegration of social protection systems during armed conflict prevents women and girls from accessing basic, functional literacy training and education. This significantly limits their independence and employment opportunities.

Women and youth belonging to historically marginalized groups such as indigenous, ethnic, or religious minority communities, in particular, experience violent conflict and poverty, due to systemic discrimination and marginalization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ **Member States** should maintain and ensure equal access for women and girls—particularly from grassroots communities—to nationally appropriated social protection systems, which respond to the urgent and long-term needs of women, young women, girls, and other historically marginalized groups during or after armed conflict.
- ❖ **Member States** should make specific investments in education at all levels as a tool for peace and protection women, youth, and other historically marginalized and vulnerable communities (such as refugees, undocumented migrants, former combatants, indigenous people, and religious minorities) uninhibited access to educational institutions in conflict-affected settings.
- ❖ **Member States, UN Entities** and the **Donor Community** should develop and implement gender-sensitive humanitarian emergency responses that reduce the vulnerability of women and youth refugees to sexual violence, radicalization, and trafficking.
- ❖ **Member States, UN Entities** and the **Donor Community** should also prioritize access to sexual and reproductive health in times of crisis, recognizing that it is one of the basic services women need access to, and an inalienable part of a survivor-based approach to sexual violence in conflict.



PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

Peace is the foundation of sustainable development and gender equality. [3] Still, military spending continues to increase, and far exceeds social spending and investment in conflict prevention, gender equality and sustaining peace. In 2018, world military expenditure has grown to \$1.8 trillion representing an increase of 2.6 percent from 2017.[4] In contrast, the political support and investment in peacebuilding and conflict prevention is very inadequate. It is estimated that the annual expenditure on peacebuilding in 2016 was equivalent to less than 1 percent of the global cost of war that year.[5] Preventing conflict and sustaining peace is more than simply ending war; it must address root causes of conflict including militarization, arms proliferation, gender inequality and violations of human rights, lack of sustainable development, and a shrinking space for civil society.

Women and youth are leading the implementation of the WPS and YPS agendas, bridging the gap between national and local peacebuilding efforts. They advocate for peace, deliver relief goods, promote sustainable development, and address the root causes of conflict.

Women peacebuilders are effectively supporting the implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) on UNSCR 1325 and peace agreements in local communities. Through a people-based, localized approach, women and girls are raising awareness and ownership of NAPs and peace agreements (where they exist), and the WPS agenda in conflict-affected communities. Even though Member States have yet to develop NAPs on UNSCR 2250, investing in and amplifying existing efforts to build sustainable peace and gender equality championed by youth peacebuilders across the world is critical.

Support for women and youth organizations working on peace is alarmingly low. Multi-year funding and core funding for organizations working within the peace movement and for WPS and YPS implementation is key to sustaining peace. Yet, funding mechanisms are seldom direct, flexible, reliable, sustainable, and timely. As a result, grassroots women and youth organizations often cannot meet donor requirements—instead, they require non-traditional, informal, and innovative funding opportunities to continue their important work.

The UN and the rest of the international community should invest more in “collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace,” in line with its preventative role enshrined in its Charter. Prevention and mediation of conflict will not succeed without women’s and youth’s participation; and without broader, combined political efforts by all Member States in partnership with civil society.

The media continues to play a key role in combating stigma and stereotypes, as well as in holding governments accountable to the WPS and YPS Agendas. Journalists play a crucial role in raising broad public awareness of the WPS and YPS agendas, important developments in peace processes, stimulate debate, and generate public support for the role of youth and women in peace and security and political decision-making processes. Mass media can not only break the traditionally conservative stereotypes around women and youth portrayed as victims of conflict, but also report on government accountability.

Coordination and collaboration between governments, women and youth civil society, the media, UN entities and the private sector are essential to prevent conflict, build sustainable peace, promote tolerance, and uphold human rights. When women and youth participate in conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives, they help ensure that implementation is effective—and that it benefits everyone.

Monitoring and evaluation is critical to ensure effective implementation and accountability for commitments on the WPS and YPS agendas. However, monitoring and reporting capacities remain limited, financing insufficient, and coordination among regional and national authorities lacking. The lack of effective and robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks contributes to the weak accountability mechanisms for the implementation of the WPS and YPS resolutions.

[3] See, for example: Gates, S. et al., “Development consequences of armed conflict”, *World Development*, Vol. 40, No. 9, September 2012; Stewart, F., “Conflict and the Millennium Development Goals”, *Journal of Human Development*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2003; Denney L., “Security: The missing bottom of the Millennium Development Goals? Prospects for inclusion in the post-MDG development framework”, *Overseas Development Institute*, August 2012.

[4] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Accessed from: <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2019/world-military-expenditure-grows-18-trillion-2018> on December 28, 2019.

[5] *The Guardian*. Military spending or investment in peace? Accessed from: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jan/24/military-spending-or-investment-in-peace> on December 28, 2019.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ **Member States, UN Entities, and the Donor Community** should take decisive action to prevent conflict, avert humanitarian crises, and end war through inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding measures that:
 - address the root causes of conflict;
 - protect the human rights of all persons; and
 - support the full and effective implementation of the WPS, YPS, and Sustaining Peace agendas.
- ❖ **Member States** should ratify and uphold the Arms Trade Treaty, and stop arms transfers, especially when they may be used to commit serious violations of international law, including human rights and humanitarian law.
- ❖ **Member States, UN Entities and the Donor Community** should support women and youth-led peacebuilding and economic empowerment initiatives, including localization of National Action Plans (NAPs) and other localized approaches to the implementation of the WPS and YPS agendas.
- ❖ **Member States, UN Entities and the Donor Community** should ensure access to funding for civil society working on the implementation of the WPS and YPS without bureaucratic barriers and marginalizing requirements; and include women and youth civil society in development and decision-making in the allocation of grants. Multi-year funding and core funding for organizations working within the peace movement and for WPS and YPS Agenda implementation is key to sustaining peace.
- ❖ **Member States, UN Entities, the Donor Community, and Civil Society** should ensure consistent gender-disaggregated data collection, monitoring, evaluation, conflict analysis and reporting of the implementation, or lack thereof, of the WPS and YPS Agendas, along with consistent qualitative and quantitative data for evidence-based advocacy.
- ❖ **Member States and UN Entities** should support the coordination and mobilization of transnational grassroots led movements by women and youth, including with financial support and funding opportunities.
- ❖ **Member States and UN Entities** should commit to legal reform and the sustainability of peace through justice and local laws that protect advocacy initiatives, including the right to protest and organize. Facilitating these gatherings are essential for grassroots mobilization and social change.
- ❖ **Civil Society, the Media and the Private Sector** should increase cross-sectoral and cross-regional collaborative efforts for sustainable peace, promoting tolerance, and upholding human rights.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, PROTECTION, AND REHABILITATION

Conflict-affected women and communities around the world identify access to resources as one of the main sources of conflict. The scarcity of resources such as farmable land and water is aggravated by climate change, which in turn leads to more competition over resources, including violence.

The environmental impact of armed conflict is immense—and contributes to a recurrence of violence in post-conflict situations. Armed conflict has led to the widespread destruction of agriculture infrastructure, leaving people's livelihood prospects limited and more vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremist groups. Large population displacement as a result of conflict also puts a strain on the environment, and on the already limited resources of host communities. This is a potential driver of conflict, as it fuels tensions between refugee and host populations.

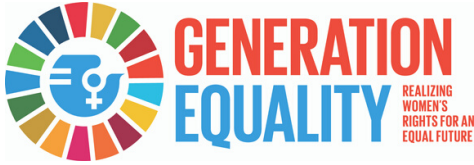
The changing climate fuels and aggravates poverty, inequality and violent conflict, compounding the burden and violence experienced by women and girls as a result. When resources dwindle as a result of climate change, young women and girls are forced to take on domestic work or agricultural labor to support their families. The incidence of early, forced and child marriage after floods and droughts increases, due to families' inability to support daughters financially during these crisis periods. Forced displacement as a result of extreme weather further increases the vulnerability of young women and girls to sexual violence and sex trafficking.

Enabling young women and girls to play a role in environmental conservation and peacebuilding is essential for progress. In the absence of formal mechanisms and accessible opportunities to meaningfully participate in environmental conservation, young women have forged their own avenues to lead advocacy for peacebuilding, the protection of the environment, and gender-sensitive access to natural resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ **Member States** should establish mechanisms to improve the meaningful participation of women and youth, particularly indigenous climate activists, scientists, grassroots farmers, and technical advisers, in decision-making at all levels for environmental safety and resource management programs and policies as an essential conflict prevention strategy.
- ❖ **Member States** should ensure equal and uninhibited access to natural resources for women, youth, and other historically marginalized groups across age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual identities, and socio-economic class.
- ❖ **Member States** should raise awareness of conservation and sustainable living practices in local communities and promote local participation of women and girls in spatial-planning and infrastructure development during peace processes, reconstruction and recovery.
- ❖ **UN Entities** should improve gender-based, sustainable and environmentally friendly humanitarian emergency response and peacekeeping missions.
- ❖ **UN Entities** should mainstream gender and youth perspectives into the design, approval and execution of projects funded under the Global Environment Facility and other suitable UN agencies.
- ❖ The **Private Sector** should commit to the Women's Empowerment Principles and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, along with the UN's Due Diligence Screening.

Connecting Women and Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth and Peace and Security (YPS) to Beijing+25 and the Generation Equality Forum



BEIJING+25 WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY - YOUTH, PEACE, AND SECURITY ACTION COALITION

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