YOUNG WOMEN IN PEACE AND SECURITY: AT THE INTERSECTION OF THE YPS AND WPS AGENDAS

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"I have something to say... Please do not forget me."*

*Statement to the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission
from a 19-year-old witness*

* International Center for Transitional Justice, *Engaging Children and Youth in Transitional Justice*, (Nov. 19, 2012), available at: https://www.ictj.org/news/engaging-children-and-youth-transitional-justice. citing Ruth Rubio-Marin, ed., "What Happened to the Women?" (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2006)

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ACRONYMS

CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
GA	General Assembly
GAR	General Assembly Resolution
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
IRA	Provisional Irish Republic Army
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Intersex
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MPs	Members of Parliament
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
RAP	Regional Action Plan
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual Gender-Based Violence
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TSM	Temporary Special Measures
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
YPJ	Kurdish Armed Women's Fighting Protection Units
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

INTRODUCTION

The global normative frameworks for sustainable, comprehensive and inclusive peace have greatly expanded over the last 17 years. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda set forth in United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) and seven subsequent WPS resolutions[1], the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda set forth in UNSCR 2250 (2015), and the evolving concept of sustaining peace, outlined in parallel resolutions of the Security Council (UNSCR 2282) (2016) and General Assembly (GAR 70/262) (2016), all call for inclusive planning, programme design, policy development and decision-making processes for conflict prevention, resolution and recovery. Resolution 2250 requests the Secretary-General to "carry out a Progress Study on youth's positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution, in order to recommend effective responses at local, national and international levels". This paper contributes to this study by focusing on the actions and experiences of young women in building peace and highlighting existing gaps to enhance their full participation, prevent further discrimination and capitalize on their work and potential.

The 2015 *Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325* bolstered recognition for women's positive contributions to peace and security.[2] It highlighted numerous successes and the growing normative base for WPS, evidenced by a significant increase in the number of peace agreements "including references relevant to women, peace and security". A key finding was that inclusive peace processes are more sustainable, and that women's full and meaningful participation in peace and security processes is core to the effectiveness and durability of p*eace agreements.[3] At the same time, the* Global Study also emphasized that implementation of the WPS agenda remains uneven and challenging, with persistant obstacles hindering, negating or diminishing women's participation and full inclusion in peace and security processes.

This background paper reflects on the lessons learned from the WPS agenda, recognizing that women are not a homogenous group, and that gender is "one axis of difference which intersects with many other forms of identity and experience" including age, a determining factor in women's lived experiences and contributions to peace and security.[4] In this regard, this paper provides an overview of the various roles young women play in conflict situations and peace processes as well as the different ways they are affected by armed conflict. It aims to explore how gendered dynamics play out in peace and security, especially for young women. The paper further identifies gaps and barriers to the full engagement, recognition and contributions of young women in building sustainable peace. By highlighting existing gaps in the current knowledge base, it identifies areas where more targeted research and analysis is needed to better inform policy development and continue to build the evidence base supporting the important contribution young women make as agents of change in building sustainable peace. Increasing young women's participation in policy, programming and decision-making processes has catalytic potential for efforts to prevent, mitigate and recover from conflict.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on a desk review of available literature on the different kinds of activities young women are engaged in during conflict and post-conflict periods, on the gender and age dynamics within peace and security contexts, and on policies and programing responding to young women's needs and the challenges that they face in conflict-affected contexts. The research included here builds on lessons learned from the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, including findings from the *Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*, as well as other sources.

This paper also seeks to look through an 'age lens' contextualized to the local environment. Therefore, although UNSCR 2250 defines youth to mean young women and men between the ages of 18 and 29, this paper uses a more flexible definition of young women, including young women below the age of 18 and above the age of 30, in consideration to cultural and context-specific understandings of the definition of 'young woman'. This definition and conceptualization is further explained in the paper.

One of the main limitations highlighted by this paper is the lack of available data and analysis specifically on young women's experiences in peace and security contexts and processes. There is still relatively limited age-disaggregated data and research on WPS as a whole, and even more limited youth, peace and security research that incorporates a gender lens.[5] This paper attempts to identify some of these gaps, and the need to engage in comprehensive intersectional[6] analysis, to improve policies and increase young women's participation—essential to building inclusive and sustainable societies and to realizing Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. Another limitation is the multiple understandings of what defines a young woman. This paper addresses this issue, arguing in favour of a more critical examination of the differential impacts and experiences that women have at different ages.

1. GENDER AND YOUTH IN PEACE AND SECURITY: DEFINITIONS AND POLICY OVERVIEW

A one-dimensional approach grouping all young people together without a gender lens, or all women together without an age lens, regardless of the specificities of their contexts, experiences and skills, both discriminates against young women, and disregards them as agents with a set of unique abilities that can open the door to additional peacebuilding opportunities.

1.1 Defining Terms

Young people are defined in UNSCR 2250 as being between the ages of 18-29 years, while the GA resolutions A/36/215 and A/40/256 define young people to be between the ages of 15-24 years "without prejudice to other definitions by Member States".[7] Despite the difference, each of these frameworks recognizes that such definitions depend on subjective and localized factors, and that the notion of being 'young' can therefore vary a great deal. Hence, the concept of youth is ultimately culturally and contextually defined by customs and beliefs of societies and families.[8] For the most part, 'youth' signifies the transition from childhood to adulthood.[9] This transition has an important gender dimension. As a report from UNDP[10] notes:

> "Youth is often the time when « the world expands for boys and contracts for girls ».[11] Girls begin to experience new restrictions [...], in particular, the sexuality of young women begins to be more closely watched, even 'policed'.[12] Cultural norms dictate that females are sheltered at the stage of puberty, for reasons such as purity and marriageability, stigma or family reputation."

The transition from childhood to adulthood is not only physical but also psychological, emotional and social. Similarly, "gender refers not only to the physiological or sex differences between females and males, but also to those that are socially constructed"[13] such as

gendered beliefs and relationships which can vary across cultures and time. "These relationships are characterized by differences in gender roles, the division of labor, power relations, and access to resources, information, decision-making processes, and other assets or benefits."[14]

The experiences of young women and men in conflict are "strongly determined by gender, or more precisely, by how the rights, roles, responsibilities and capabilities of females and males are defined within a particular social context".[15] Youth and gender are often mentioned separately in the realm of peace and security. References to "women and youth", and attention to them as individual blocs, tends to narrow the focus to stereotypical experiences of young women and young men. Indeed, the term 'youth' in the peace and security discourse has been customarily used to refer to *young men*.[16] While the need to integrate a gender dimension is acknowledged, at least in theory[17], most studies on youth and violence implicitly or explicitly refer to young men, reflecting this gender imbalance.

> "[...] young women tend to disappear when it comes to theories on youth and violence, most likely because they are perceived as less of a threat. As a result, the way in which young women negotiate the trials of youth, and their capacities and rationale for violence (and for peace) are under-studied." [18]

While adults are typically seen as authority figures, providers and protectors, young people are mostly considered in relation to adults – as subordinates, dependents, learners and assisting in the tasks expected of their respective genders. For instance, this may include expecting young women help with care work in the household, while young men may be expected to get an education, work or join the army. In conflict and post-conflict settings, gender roles and gendered relationships may be subject to modifications, forcing young women and young men into 'non-traditional' activities, and, "at times modifying or transforming the adult and gender roles they have assumed".[19]

This paper attempts to demystify gender and age stereotypes, particularly those of young women, which serve to disproportionately affect and marginalize them. In addition, this paper argues for highlighting the importance of understanding the gender dynamics within youth, women and community groups, in order to design transformative programmes to build inclusive, equal and peaceful societies that adequately address both young women's and young men's concerns.

1.2 Age Disaggregation in International Women, Peace and Security Policies

The need for consistent application of categories is clear when reviewing the WPS and YPS resolutions. All eight of the WPS-related United Nations Security Council resolutions[20] clearly refer to "women" – and six of these mention "girls" specifically. "Youth" is included in UNSCR 2242, while UNSCR 2282 on the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, adopted after UNSCR 2250 (2015), references "young people".[21] Young women are consistently subsumed into these different categories, which renders them vulnerable to being left out, especially if recommendations from Security Council resolutions and other policy

instruments are implemented subjectively and without clarity on precisely who is included in which category. **Future WPS and YPS resolutions should include clearer references to the diversity of women and make explicit references to young women.** This important distinction will have an impact on the policies establishing targets and framing data collection regarding the participation of women of all ages, and of both young women and young men in particular, in peace and security efforts.

The current lack of intersectional approaches to peace and security policy and practice is reflected in strategic documents related to data-gathering efforts. Age targets are not systematically included in gender data-gathering and research. For example, UNSCR 1889 asks the UN Secretary-General to ensure that relevant UN bodies, in cooperation with Member States and civil society, collect sex-disaggregated data regarding women's participation and inclusion in peacebuilding. This should be further disaggregated to reflect the diversity of women, including by age. Moreover, the absence of language reflecting the diverse roles of women of all ages is also apparent in the policies, planning tools and other guidelines of a number of UN bodies. While some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators require age-disaggregation and sex-disaggregation,[22] disaggregation of data by age and sex should be required throughout the goals, in particular SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on sustaining peace, as an opportunity to identify and respond to the specific needs, experiences and realities of young people.

The flip-side of this phenomenon can be seen in policies targeting young people in peace and security. Currently, the inclusion and application of gender in the YPS agenda needs to be further developed and solidified as a key cross-cutting provision. For example, the Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security – which was instrumental in the adoption

As a result of the adoption of UNSCR 2250, there is new emphasis on developing policy papers, practice notes, and tool kits related to the YPS agenda. **This presents a critical opportunity to ensure that the inclusion, empowerment and systematic engagement of young women is central within the full range of guidance to inform implementation of the YPS agenda.** In order to avoid some of the pitfalls of the WPS agenda mentioned earlier, urgent work should be done to create clear guidelines for Member States and the UN system to fully leverage young women's contributions to peacebuilding efforts.

of UNSCR 2250 – recognizes that: "in several parts of the world, the political participation of young women in particular is jeopardised … [and that] international agencies, national governments and donors must identify and support youth-led organizations which address gender inequality and empower young women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution as those are crucial partners in peacebuilding efforts." UNSCR 2250 is strongly framed by the WPS agenda and recalls its eight Security Council resolutions, however gender is not sufficiently mentioned and integrated throughout the resolution itself.

1.3 Women, Peace and Security at the Regional and National Levels

The adoption of UNSCR 1325 was heralded as a breakthrough in terms of gaining international recognition of the differential impact that violent conflict has on women. The resolution provides clear guidance to Member States and UN entities, and served as the foundation for the seven subsequent WPS resolutions (as well as other related resolutions, including UNSCR 2250). However, despite widespread support for UNSCR 1325 and the adoption of a variety of other international norm-setting documents supporting the WPS agenda, meaningful regional, national and local implementation of the agenda remains limited. In some cases, political will is lacking, in others implementation is hampered by low capacity or lack of financing.[23] This has serious implications for women of all ages, including young women, in conflict-affected contexts, and it is a cautionary tale for implementation of UNSCR 2250. **Adoption of the resolution is only the first step – it will not have impact if it is not followed by accountability and monitoring mechanisms, and adequate funding and capacitation for implementation.**

A number of mechanisms exist to accelerate implementation of UNSCR 1325, including National Action Plans (NAPs) and Regional Action Plans (RAPs) on WPS. These have the potential to situate women of all ages at the centre of national and regional peace and security responses. The *Pacific Regional Action Plan* – which covers all members of the Pacific Islands Forum – is a good example of a plan that recognizes the unique and critical contributions that young women can make to peace and security efforts. While it is regional rather than national in nature, it offers a good model for bringing more women, and especially young ones, into regional peace and security processes. The Pacific RAP clearly states that it aims to "provide an enabling environment at the regional level to improve women and young women's leadership in conflict prevention and management, peacekeeping, security policy decision-making and ensure protection of women's and girls' human rights".[24]

Other mechanisms also have the potential to be powerful tools for the implementation of the WPS and YPS agenda—however, support for age- and gender-responsive policies and programming will be vital to ensure these frameworks live up to their potential. For instance, r**eference to young women in policies should not be limited to their protection or addressing discrimination. It should also emphasize the positive and transformative role young women can play in building sustainable peace.** The *African Union Youth Charter* offers a good example. It includes an entire chapter on girls and young women which states that governments should "ensure that girls and young women are able to participate actively, equally and effectively with boys at levels of social, educational, economic, political, cultural, civic life and leadership as well as scientific endeavors".[25]

The *Executive Action Plan to Protect Women in the Arab Region: Peace and Security 2015-2030* provides another strong example of what an age- and gender-responsive framework can look like. The plan was developed by the League of Arab States in partnership with UN Women, the Arab Women Organization and Women's Machineries. It explicitly mentions young women in one of its four expected outcomes: "Promote effective women and young women participation and leadership at all levels of decision making, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, conflict management and resolution and counter terrorism."[26] Crucially, this reference focuses on the *agency* of young women in peacebuilding rather than casting them solely as victims needing protection.

When developed and implemented, WPS RAPs, NAPs and other policies should be simultaneously age- and gender-responsive. In addition, young women should participate in the drafting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies as a whole, including, where relevant, RAPs and NAPs.

At the national level, youth policies unevenly mention young women in peace and security, and when they do, policies tend to put forward their need for protection, but insufficiently address their agency.[27]

1.4 The complementarities of the WPS and YPS agendas

> "The inability to see beyond gender stereotypes and recognize the diversity of roles males and females play reinforces erroneous assumptions about their capacities and needs. This gender blindness directly affects how youth are supported in diverse and dynamic social and gender environments, including armed conflict and post-conflict settings."[28]

Women make up roughly half of the global population, and young women and young men between the ages of 15-29 currently count for approximately 25 per cent of the global population.[29] Yet both women and young people have been traditionally excluded from the realm of peace and security. In many respects, the road leading to the adoption of UNSCR 2250 by the Security Council mirrors the journey that led to the adoption of UNSCR 1325, particularly in the way women's organizations and civil society sought to defy the pervasive stereotypes limiting women's involvement in peace and security discourses, to include women and ensure their agency, and to address the fundamental questions of protection, participation and inclusivity, common pillars to both agendas.

Similarly, both the YPS and WPS agendas seek to address a significant gap in the international community's efforts to address the increasingly complex challenge of preventing conflict and sustaining peaceful and inclusive societies through more comprehensive approaches. The twin Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on sustaining peace (2016) represent an important milestone which focuses on inclusivity and sustainability of peace efforts, and emphasizes the essential and transformational roles of young people, including young women.

The following matrix provides an overview and short practical analysis of the normative frameworks covering both the WPS and YPS agendas, and outlines some of their key limitations.

Young women's needs and experiences, as well as young women's meaningful participation should not be undermined or treated as a sub-category. Their concerns and contributions should be treated equally, as it is for young men and adult women, taking into consideration other factors influencing inclusivity, such as socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. Intersectionality is key to inclusivity and diversity of participation.

	YOUTH in Women, Peace and Security	GENDER in Youth, Peace and Security
Normative	The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda set out in UNSCR 1325 (2000) and subsequent WPS resolutions the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda with its UNSCR 2250 (2015), and more recently the Sustaining Peace agenda through UNSCR 2282 (2016), all call for highly inclusive planning, programme design, policy development and decision-making processes for conflict prevention, resolution and recovery.	Resolution 1325 and its subsequent resolutions partly inspired the push for resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security. Often policies and programs focused on young people in peace and security contexts do not fully recognize and successfully leverage the potential and actual contributions of young women.[30] Despite the contribution that UNSCR 1325 made in terms of highlighting the tangible, active and constructive role women play in advancing the peace and security agenda, it has not fully documented the distinct realities, potential and realizations of young women.[31]
Experience	The Global Study on Women, Peace and Security (2015) highlighted in its findings that peace processes inclusive of civil society have a greater chance of success, and societies with higher gender equality markers were proven to be more stable and less at risk of conflict. The same logic of inclusive processes and agency extends to the YPS agenda. Peace and stability cannot be built without young women and young men, and it cannot be built for them without them. Adolescent girls and young women face a double discrimination due to their sex and age, falling between the majority of youth-focused peacebuilding and prevention programmes, and women-targeted peacebuilding interventions. These challenges are not new, as a study pointed out in 1995: "Action in support of women often focuses on those who have passed the stage of youth, not fully integrating the concerns of young women and adolescent girls."[32]	While UNSCR 2250 aims to highlight and explore the transformative role young people play in building a peaceful world, implementation should be done in a manner which recognizes how gender shapes young people's realities, perceptions and actions. In the short and medium term, efforts should include, for example, gathering age- and sex-disaggregated data, developing age- and gender-responsive targets and indicators, as well as incorporating age- and gender-responsive strategies and tactics in peacebuilding planning processes. In the longer term, the objective is for both the YPS and WPS agendas to become fully integrated and internalized throughout all elements of the peace and security work, rather than being considered as separate or parallel (or even competing) agendas.
Shortfalls	Peace strategies inspired by UNSCR 1325 have been more likely to focus on and invite mostly older women.[33] Understanding the structural and technical barriers to young women's participation should be an essential part of both the YPS and WPS agendas.	The failure to apply an age and gender lens in the realm of peace and security results in a failure to understand the diversity of experiences of young people and in particular of young women. This consequently results in "the loss of opportunities to more effectively support the protection and development of young people and the overall well-being of their societies".[34]
Conclusion	The WPS agenda should not treat the YPS agenda as a separate thematic area of work, but instead recognize the need for full engagement of young women in the WPS agenda while reinforcing that youth equally applies to young women and young men. The YPS lens is complementary to WPS work, and an age-responsive approach only strengthens the inclusivity and relevance of WPS work.	Applying a youth lens in the WPS agenda, as well as a gender lens in the YPS agenda, ensures the protection of young women's and young men's rights "so that their distinct roles and capacities for survival, community recovery and conflict prevention are not sidestepped or subsumed under programmes for children or adults".[35]

2. GENDER AND AGE NARRATIVES: YOUNG WOMEN'S DIVERSE ROLES AND EXPERIENCES

The impact of conflict can be exacerbated by age-related inequalities stemming from cultural or social practices and perceptions where young women, due to their age, gender and status are disproportionately affected by power structures which limit access to their rights to education, resources, property, healthcare and others.

Most peace and security interventions targeting 'youth' tend to prioritize young men, and consider young women mostly as *victims* of conflict.[36] The reality of the diverse roles and experiences of adolescent girls and young women is much more complex and nuanced than generally acknowledged. Although there is limited available research specifically on young women's experiences in these contexts, it is already apparent from what is available that gender and age inequalities tend to worsen during and after conflict, impacting young women in particular. At the same time, because of rapid social change, post-conflict situations and peace and security processes can sometimes present opportunities for social transformation and advances in gender equality — gender roles may be challenged and transformed in conflict and post-conflict recovery. There is potential in these contexts therefore to support and enhance young women's abilities, bolster their agency and open opportunities for the positive roles they can play in peacebuilding.

2.1 Young women impacted by violent conflict

While there is extensive literature on women as victims of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings, most studies do not specifically report on or analyze young women as a distinct category. Yet, as mentioned, the outbreak of conflict has a disproportionate impact on young women, exacerbated by their sex, age, societal traditions, norms, patriarchy, stereotypes and culture. In fact, "when conflict erupts, the risks associated with adolescence increase for boys, but multiply for girls."[37] For example, young women affected by conflict are particularly at risk of sexual violence, including sexual slavery, while also experiencing other types of gender-based violence and discrimination. This includes young women who are forcefully displaced or fleeing conflict — conditions under which the risk of human trafficking increases significantly. Women and girls are overwhelmingly (96 per cent) the victims of trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation.[38] Young Yezidi women in Iraq kidnapped by ISIL and forced to act as sex slaves,[39] young women abducted by Boko Haram in Nigeria subject to sexual violence and forced to marry their captors[40] — these are among the most documented examples which have garnered worldwide media attention, but they are, by far, not the only cases in fragile contexts.[41] Several reports describe the horrors endured by young Yezidi women captured by ISIL, many of whom tried to commit suicide or know of others who killed themselves. Families of returning sex slaves repeatedly requested

specialized support for their daughter(s), but received very little help or received it only after a long wait.[42] Reports also reveal that young women who fled Boko Haram after being abducted were then re-victimized, subject to sexual violence by government officials and other authorities in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.[43]

Violence, while associated with armed conflict, is not limited to combat zones. It also occurs within homes and communities, partly due to deepened gender divides and social upheaval leading up to and during conflict. Youth, including young women, are affected in a myriad of ways both within and after conflict amid the political, social, economic and psychological instability. Moreover, women face a disproportionately high risk of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, post-conflict and fragile settings.[44] They are not only the most targeted group when it comes to rape and sexual slavery, but also kidnapping, forced labor, torture, abandonment, and human trafficking.[45] In addition, there is evidence that women, including young women and girls, in conflict and post-conflict settings tend to experience heightened levels of other forms of violence such as intimate partner and domestic violence, forced and/or coerced prostitution, child and/or forced marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, female infanticide, and/or forced/domestic labour. This assault on the safety of women and girls is also observed in cases of non-armed conflict and natural disasters—for example, studies suggest a significant increase in aggravated domestic violence related to natural disasters, such as occurred in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2011 floods in Pakistan. [46]

Systematic research, documentation and analysis of the specific and differential impacts of conflict on young women, are essential to effective and inclusive prevention and peace-building efforts. Also critical, is the recognition and treatment of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence in gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and mitigation efforts.

2.2 Young women's participation and influence in decision-making processes

Women of all ages are at the forefront of building peaceful, resilient and inclusive societies, as police and military officers, mediators, religious leaders, public servants, activists, community organizers and advocates for peace and gender equality.[47] In doing so, they have unique resources and experiences which are only recently being recognized more broadly. Young women have shown, time and again, that they are active agents of peace, defying gender stereotypes and peace and security discourses. They are at the frontlines of the efforts to build peaceful and inclusive societies, yet their work remains under-recognized, under-studied, and under-financed. They continue to be insufficiently engaged as part of effective solutions to peacebuilding challenges by a range of peace and security actors at all levels.

2.2.1 Participation and discrimination in the public sphere

In conflict and post-conflict contexts, youth tend too often to be marginalized from their family and community, and from national and international public institutions that ignore their critical contributions and potential. Although, and perhaps because, young people, and young women in particular, are largely left out of formal decision-making processes in the public sphere,[48] they tend to be very active in civil society.[49]

In fragile and conflict contexts, there are very few safe spaces for young women to meet to organize alliances and build friendships beyond the private/domestic sphere. Real or perceived threats to their security often restrict them to the home, thus narrowing their social networks. Yet, even under these circumstances, peer relationships do develop—young people seek each other out for comfort and companionship, supporting each other to address unmet needs in their protection and care. For example, in Uganda, internally displaced young women meet to talk together in places such as the market, at water pumps or when doing

laundry. Young people, including young women, may organize formal and informal associations and groups – becoming focal points for youth activism – as a way to actively cope with their circumstances, and to convey their concerns to decision-makers. [50]

There are numerous examples of young women leading organizations or initiatives working to prevent conflict and drive peacebuilding. Project Silphium in Libya, which advocates for advancing women's equal rights and empowerment as a tool for peacebuilding, uses a mix of technology and innovation to highlight Libyan women's stories, share their voices, and reach a wide community.[51] A team of young women who created the Youth Women's Peace Academy in the Caucasus and the Balkans, is working to "increase young women's leadership, advocacy and communication skills and strengthen their capacity to influence policymakers at a local and international level for a positive change".[52] Aware Girls, a young women-led organization for gender equality and peace in Pakistan is working to strengthen the leadership capacity of young women, so they can act as agents of social change in their communities and beyond.[53]

Interestingly, women's groups, including within the WPS realm, may not directly engage with young people's groups or actively support young women and adolescent girls within their own organizations. As a result, they often do not consciously address age-specific concerns of young women or work to develop young women's leadership.[54] This may translate to additional barriers to the participation and involvement of young women, who may not have the same political connections and networks as women who are older and more established.

To make progress in an already shrinking space for women's groups, more research is needed to better understand inter-generational dynamics and structural barriers to enhance young women's agency and access to decision-making. Young women should participate in WPS policy and programme design and implementation. WPS actors should pro-actively support young women-led organizations financially and through capacity-building. Addressing structural barriers also includes engaging with young men and men on gender equality.

Social media

Social media and the internet can be powerful tools to help draw attention political violence, spread messages of peace, and promote tolerance and mutual understanding.[55] For example, in Egypt, the website HarassMap allows women to report sexual harassment via email, text, or Twitter.[56] Social media platforms offer a window for young women to express their opinions, access information, and communicate with people outside of their physical social circles. It allows them to engage in collective action and bring women's rights issues to the attention of a broader audience, in the face of barriers to their entry into civic and public spaces. In societies where young women are mostly confined to their homes or small private spheres, young women can use these platforms to create "a robust, participatory, and leadership role for themselves in cyberspace."[57] The Arab Spring movements in 2011, where young women in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Bahrain and Yemen used social media and cyber-activism to carve out central roles in the revolutionary uprisings, are an illustration of the potential of information communications technologies. Using social media, young women helped organize virtual protests as well as street demonstrations; they also played bridging roles with the mainstream media to sustain the 24-hour news cycle with ever-ready sources. In so doing young women broke with traditional gender roles and communication methods, and re-configured the power dynamics between youth and older generations of political elites, who were overwhelmingly male. [58]

On social media, young women can challenge gender stereotypes, by building narratives to reach others, including men, who would not normally be exposed to such points of view.[59] Indeed, the surge of female bloggers globally has helped attract a younger generation of activists in many countries who represent a key target audience to begin to dismantle established stereotypes and help advance gender equality.[60] In conflict contexts, social media also offers a means for women to take action to mobilize and protect themselves, in the absence of more formal mechanisms and support structures. For example, crowd-sourced crisis mapping tools like Ushahidi can provide users with the ability to report outbreaks of violence, violations of rights, and other dangerous situations in real-time.

However, social media is also being used to spread violent extremist ideologies, racist and misogynist and racist narratives, incite violence and threaten peace, social cohesion and gender equality. Online violence, including online gender-based violence, is an insidious and growing phenomenon in cyberspace – social media can and is being used to stir up hatred and harassment, to instigate bullying, promote of-fline violence, and destroy people's lives. Death and rape threats, and so-called revenge porn are direct assaults disproportionately affecting young women. The ability of technology to reveal locations and personal information, coupled with the anonymity afforded to perpetrators, significantly heightens the threat of virtual violence spilling over into real life. The use of social media for violence and hatred must be addressed to avoid or mitigate potentially disastrous consequences, especially for young women.

> "Online violence has subverted the original positive promise of the internet's freedoms and in too many circumstances has made it a chilling space that per-mits anonymous cruelty and facilitates harmful acts towards women and girls."[61]
> —*Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women*

Despite the early promise of the democratizing and equalizing affects of the internet on the global com-munity, the web's anonymity has not necessarily attenuated pre-existing sexist patterns; indeed "the web may have heightened sexism, as people brought hegemonic norms of a male-dominated society to the online world".[62] Furthermore, especially in develop-ing countries, persistent social discriminatory norms against young women continue to limit their access to education and technology, in turn affecting their agency and ability to use technology to participate in public life.

Young women's engagement in building peace through alternative means, such as social media and the internet, begs further exploration. While technology offers opportunities to increase young women's participation in the public sphere, it is important to understand the risks they face both online and in public spaces. Importantly, there is also a need to address the lack of safe spaces for young women – security concerns can directly affect their protection and ability to engage in de-cision-making processes in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

2.2.2 Young women's agency in formal peace and political processes

In many countries, young women carry the double burden of being young and female. Gender and age-biases can combine to further limit inclusion of young women in formal political and peace processes. Stereotypes and assumptions about the capabilities and credibility of young people, and young women in particular, as unqualified too inexperienced to productively contribute to policy and programmatic decisions result in their exclusion.[63]

Gender stereotypes which reinforce that women are inferior and/or serve to perpetuate discriminatory practices that limit women's access to resources (such as education, livelihoods) only compound the prob-lem. They can have a pronounced negative impact on political awareness among young women, which in turn, may result in a lower level of participation in po-litical activities[64] —young women may not be aware of opportunities to engage, or not feel adequately quali-fied or prepared, thus lowering their will to engage in politics or leading to self-censorship. Furthermore, although there are cases of young people's groups and women's groups working together to advance an agenda, as mentioned earlier, this is not a given. Established women's groups may not automatically include young women's voices, address age-related female concerns or work with young women's orga-nizations to increase their participation in politics or peace processes. In fact, funding and access to deci-sion-making—when available in an already challenging space for women overall—seems to be directed mostly to already well-established women's organizations. While, in some cases, young people's organizations and women's organizations work together in advanc-ing their respective agendas, other cases reveal a lack of support or solidarity from established women orga-nizations to young women organizations.[65]

Political participation

The overall representation of young women and young men is limited in formal political institu-tions and processes (parliaments, parties, elections, public administrations) and "people under the age of 35 are rarely found in formal political leadership positions"[66], with formal politics continuing to be

largely dominated by people over 35. For instance, according to an Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) report, young parliamentarians represent only a small minority of the world's members of parliament (MPs), with only 1.9 per cent under age 30 and 14.2 per cent under 40. About 30 per cent of the world's parliaments have no members under 30, and women tend to be less represented than men across all age groups.[67] Further, a UN survey of 33 countries in 2015 found that active political party membership was less prevalent among people under 30 than among older adults – and within this, gender was a significant determinant. 5.2 per cent of young men and only 3.1 per cent of young women claimed to be active political party members, and in Africa, Europe, South America and Southeast Asia, young men were twice as likely to be active as young women.[68] In formal political leadership positions, it is even more rare to find young people under age of 35, and "even more difficult for both young women and women at mid-level and decision-making/leadership positions".[69] Capacity building initiatives can be instrumental to increasing the numbers of women engaged in political leadership. In South Sudan, UN Women, in collaboration with the University of Juba and the Ministry of Gender, established a National Transformational Leadership Institute (NTLI) with the mandate of training women and grooming young women leaders. The training focuses on peacebuilding, transformational leadership and economic empowerment.

Young women in particular, face a wider range of obstacles preventing and/or deterring them from actively engaging in formal political processes. Factors of exclusion can include "domestic and care burdens, discriminatory social norms regarding girls' mobility, and negative views about the appropriateness of their involvement in political issues or legal frameworks".[70]

Moreover, as women of all ages become civically and socially engaged, they are at greater risk of violence. As International Alert observes, "politically active women are far more likely than men, even in peaceful societies, to be subjected to violent and sexualised intimidation, ranging from verbal or physical abuse to gender-based violence, abduction or death".[71] A 2016 IPU study on violence against women parliamentarians found that 65 per cent of their survey respondents

experienced psychological violence in the form of humiliating sexist remarks in parliament, primarily from male colleagues. They also experienced this on social media. Further, 44 per cent reported receiving threats on social media of death, rape, beatings and abduction, as well as threats to kidnap or kill their children. Age for women appeared to be an aggravating factor: "[...] women parliamentarians under 40 are targeted by more sexist remarks, intimidation, threats and degrading treatment on social media. Conversely, several of their elder female colleagues had the impression of being protected or respected because of their age and experience in politics."[72]

The 'youth bulge' and dynamics between generations can be reflective of the sometimes vast age differences between a country's leadership and the country's population. Excluding young people from political processes and participation can lead to frustrations that are played out through violence and that contribute to instability and undermining peace.[73]

UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security formally recognized the importance of young people in the maintenance of international peace and security.

To ensure that young women in particular are not left out and equally recognized and included in peacebuilding, decision-making processes and reconstruction efforts, more gender-specific measures are needed to address the challenges young women face when it comes to political participation, from gender and age-related temporary special measures including quotas, to awareness campaigns and capacity-building initiatives.[75]

Peace processes

As mentioned previously, young women face challenges in participating in and influencing peace processes due to their age and gender. In fact, the voices of women, especially young women, are rarely heard beyond the consultative phase of peace processes, which restricts them to a role in civil society. In this context, within their communities, universities and online, young people, including young women, are creating spaces for dialogue and peer-to-peer support, and thereby

attempting to influence roadmaps for peace. In Mali, following strong mobilization to influence the peace process, young women are actively taking part in building peace, through youth organizations and young women networks in Africa such as the Réseau Ouest Africain des Jeunes Femmes Leaders.[75] **Further gender-sensitive exploration as to how these spaces can be supported and linked to formal decision-making processes would contribute to increase youth influence on peace negotiations.**

Lessons learned highlighted in the *Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325* show that when women are included in peace processes, there is "a 20 per cent increase in the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least two years. This percentage grows over time, with a 35 per cent increase in the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years. ...Increasingly, research is showing that the impact on effectiveness is a result of women bringing a particular quality of consensus-building to public debate, not necessarily on issues, but on the need to conclude talks and implement agreements."[76] There is growing evidence that supporting women as mediators is a solid investment, making peace processes more inclusive and therefore more resilient, particularly where there is very little official or national-level mediation. In family or community settings, women can be uniquely positioned to act as "inside mediators" as they may have the ability to influence and "help change the social mechanisms that guide individuals into violent extremism".[77]

While there is a gap in research on the participation of young people in Track 1 or formal peace processes—and even more limited research that documents young women's direct or indirect participation in or influence on these processes—young people, including young women, can be powerful agents for building peace at the informal or community level, as successful mediators in post-conflict settings.[78] This can be explained, in part, by the fact that "young mediators may challenge conventional means and processes and seek innovation in the tradition of mediation". At the community level, young women local mediators, by drawing from their lived experiences "are more likely to inject new perspectives into traditional mediation theories and practices, while implementing compromising or collaborative styles".[79]

2.2.3 Increasing meaningful participation: lessons learned from the WPS agenda

The *Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325* noted that the overall participation of women in peace processes is actually increasing—although too slowly, and sometimes more symbolically.[80] Even where their direct participation is challenged, women are finding ways to make substantial contributions to peace processes and constitution-making. Lessons learned from the implementation of the WPS agenda highlight several strategies that can contribute to increasing women's participation in and influence on formal decision-making and peace processes. **These lessons should also be applied to young people so as to potentially increase young women's influence and participation in these processes as well.**

Strategies, measures and modalities to increase participation and influence

> "The more successful selection processes in terms of inclusivity are transparent, and carried out by constituents in conjunction with quotas or other temporary special measures for women. When selection is driven entirely by belligerents, women's capacity to influence the talks, especially with regards to representing gender equality concerns, is likely to be reduced."
>
> —*Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325, UN Women*

There is evidence that temporary special measures (TSM) like quotas can be an effective tool of increasing women's participation (when properly enforced). They could be replicated at the local, national and international levels, and across a wide array of political and peace processes. For instance, they could allow for more inclusiveness and representation of women in the case of Track 1 peace processes, which rarely go "beyond the political and military elite that is often male".[81] Research shows there is a correlation between strong influence of women on peace processes with agreements being reached and implemented, and that "women's quotas, as part of a selection criteria for negotiation delegations, are often effective in enlarging women's representation at the table".[82]

In defining TSMs, gender and age-disaggregation is important to ensure greater diversity among women

and young people, and less discrimination against young women. One good practice in this regard was the Yemen National Dialogue Conference which took place over 10 months in 2013 as part of national reconciliation efforts (prior to the outbreak of the current conflict)—a system of mixed quotas was adopted across groups, where women (as a group) needed to include 20 per cent of young women, and youth (as a group) needed to include 30 per cent of young women.[83]

Yet, TSMs alone cannot guarantee that women's influence and participation will be meaningful, and not merely token or symbolic. The form of participation, whether it be through consultations or commissions, as observers or through direct participation at the table, as well as context and process factors such as 'transfer' strategies, funding, early inclusion and diversity in women representation, all affect women's level of influence.[84]

Research indicates that successful 'transfer' strategies used by women's networks and coalitions include the development of a common document expressing a unified position of a cross-section of women's groups, which can then be handed to mediation and negotiation teams. Here, external actors—such as mediators and envoys—can be particularly important to increasing women's influence. In Kenya for example, Graça Machel, who played the role of mediator, helped women's groups negotiate their differences and come up with a joint memorandum to be submitted to the African Union panel, resulting in most of its provisions

appearing in the agreement.[85] Yemen is also a striking example of the importance of external actors' senior leadership and political will to increase women's participation in the National Dialogue in 2013-2014.[86]

Another strategy that has contributed to increasing women's participation in some cases is the adoption and effective implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) on WPS. In Georgia, the NAP—which included specific provisions on women's inclusion in formal and informal peace processes—was instrumental in increasing the number of women from one to four (out of a delegation of ten people) in the Georgian Delegation to the Geneva Talks.[87] In Nepal, following extensive advocacy from the Nepali women's movement who decried the absence of women from formal peace negotiations, the government launched its NAP after extensive consultations and participation from many stakeholders, including women and girls affected by the conflict. 'Localization' of the NAP at sub-national levels, with the strong participation of Nepali civil society organisations, has had some successes, such as the integration of 1325 into school curricula and in police and army training.[88]

Importantly, as these strategies are being applied to improve women's level of influence, it becomes apparent that age considerations cannot be left out. The voices of young women—in terms of their specific needs and concerns, and their contributions to peacebuilding—will only enrich women's overall demands for access and influence.

Women's coalitions working together to develop common positions should ensure young women's voices are included, while external actors such as mediators can be instrumental in requiring young women's participation and engagement in the process.

Addressing structural and institutional barriers

Increasing young women's participation in and access to peace processes and peacebuilding, requires addressing the structural and institutional barriers that may hinder them from playing an active role.

While the barriers may vary depending on the context, the following are **some of the measures that can assist in dismantling them**:

• increasing programmes for capacity-building, leadership education and training;

• encouraging young women's political socialization and political education;

• supporting young women's grassroots peacebuilding initiatives and linking them to the national peacebuilding processes;

• providing economic/financial and logistical support to facilitate their participation;

• raising awareness and sensitizing counterparts and 'gate-keepers' as to the importance of young women's participation;

• tackling gender- and age-related stereotypes which minimize young women's abilities and the limit their activities, through awareness campaigns, education and advocacy;

• providing technical and substantive support on the various areas of work/discussion (including SSR, DDR, resources management, accountability, transitional justice, reconciliation, resilience and healing) to women and young women through capacity building programmes; and

• facilitating inter- and intra-generational dialogue to foster cooperation and inclusion, and develop strategic alliances between younger and elder women, especially within civil society networks.

These measures should include men, women, young men and young women, religious leaders, community leaders, and teachers, among others. The objective is to create a safe space and environment for young women to feel encouraged and confident about participating in public life and peacebuilding.

Moving forward, gender- and age-based quota systems, TSMs and other measures should be accompanied by capacity-building programmes responding to the specific needs and requests of women, including young women and young people's groups and organizations, in order to have more representative and stronger influence on peace processes.

2.3 Young women in armed groups

Women of all ages can be, and are, active combatants in armed conflicts. Young women are also engaged in various activities within armed groups, including providing logistical support and security, gathering intelligence and being care-givers. Collection of accurate data is difficult, given the instability and dynamics of conflict environments, but there is some reliable information that is emerging. In some armed groups women can account for up to 30 per cent of combatants. [89] In order to understand the spectrum of grievances and motivations of combatants generally, and young women combatants specifically, it is essential to move beyond the general discourse which casts women and girls largely as victims of conflict, and young men largely as threats to peace or perpetrators of violence.

Reasons for becoming combatants

There is no one reason why young women choose to become involved in armed conflict, and their motives for doing so are undoubtedly complex. While some are abducted and forced into combat, others may join willingly for ideological or political reasons, as a survival strategy, to seek revenge, for economic reasons, or to follow a partner, among many other reasons.[90] Although research on young women specifically as armed combatants is limited, some cases have been documented. Young women can sometimes join

armed groups in order to attain equal status with men and to challenge gender stereotypes.[91] Joining armed groups can represent "an opportunity and alternative to a better life" for young women, as was the case for many young women in Sierra Leone. Economic inequality and the chance to quickly obtain cash or material goods, including through raiding and looting, can also entice women to join and remain in armed combatant groups.[92] In Syria, some young women who had joined the al-Khansaa Brigade, an all-female morality police of the Islamic State in Raqqa and Mosul, explained their choice to join was driven by their desire to "assuage the Organization and keep their families in favor... and win some freedom of movement and an income in a city where women had been stripped of self-determination".[93]

In addition, research from Colombia, Sri Lanka and Liberia indicates a high correlation between domestic exploitation, physical and/or sexual abuse and the decision of young women to leave their household and join armed groups. Their decision to run away may be linked to the greater prevalence of sexual abuse of girls, as well as to their use for domestic labor — whether in their own homes, in the extended family or elsewhere, as well as the scarcity of other options for them.[94] On the other hand, women, including young women, often pay a very high social price for diverting from traditional gender roles and struggle to reintegrate.[95]

One study focusing on young female fighters in Africa documents a number of cases in which young women were present in armed groups for a variety of strategic reasons, including to outnumber the enemy while adding legitimacy to the group, or for ideological reasons where the inclusion of young women symbolized progress and equality.[96] Moreover, in some cases armed groups actively seek to attract women in order to grow their influence via additional women's own social networks.[97]

Agency

While under-researched, the agency of young women combatants should not be underestimated. Kurdish women in Syria for example have created the armed women's fighting protection units (YPJ). Asya Abdullah, a politician and driving force for Kurdish freedom says that women's emancipation has been put at the forefront of their agenda: "We have the YPJ because

women need their own autonomy, to prove they can do things themselves."[98]

Young female fighters tend to reach high-ranking positions, with some, as a result of the conflict, gaining significant power within their communities, something they might not otherwise have achieved.[99] Conflict can transform traditional gender roles and responsibilities, endowing women with greater responsibilities and rights in traditionally male-dominated areas. It is important to recognize however, that these gains often tend to be lost in post-conflict reconstruction, particularly if efforts at reintegration disregard young women's agency and either ignore them or attempt channel them into 'traditional' feminine activities. **Supporting young women's agency in post-conflict reconstruction can be transformative in rebuilding inclusive and more gender equal societies.**

This section does not cover the full spectrum of considerations related to understanding women as actors within armed groups due to the limited scope of this paper. However, it is evident that gender dynamics and status influence their choices.

It is therefore critical to underscore the importance of applying both gender and age lenses in conflict analysis and to ensure the participation of young women in the design and implementation of programmes and policies.

2.4 Young women in DDR: a tailored and transformative response

For more than a decade now, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) efforts have given greater attention to the inclusion of women and young people. Yet, as young women are often omitted from either category. Further sex- and age-disaggregation within these categories is essential to avoid leaving young women behind. During the mid-2000s, the Second Generation of DDR[100] emerged as a response to calls to integrate broader communities and reach individuals who had been previously excluded from traditional DDR processes, which focused primarily on male combatants. With the Second Generation of DDR, women, young people and the elderly were recognized as part of an expanded caseload, to ensure that DDR gave greater consideration to the

needs, interests and capacities of these historically-excluded populations.[101] Importantly, policy changes in the international system permitted the expansion of the scope of DDR work to incorporate other cross-cutting issues such as gender, youth and ability, which was recognition of the ways in which identities and perceptions shape gendered behavior and gender roles. DDR efforts also placed greater emphasis on the importance of long-term psychosocial support and community-based approaches.[102]

Security Council resolution 1325 recognized for the first time the importance of involving women in peacebuilding, the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution, and the diverse and differential impacts of armed conflicts on women and girls. Resolution 1325 created new space and new public recognition of the differential gendered impacts of conflict and specific needs of women in post-conflict scenarios, which is essential to understanding that women's contributions to peacebuilding and social cohesion are unique and need to be seen as a key component of DDR.[103] Disarmament, has been one area where women have been shown to have profound impact on encouraging ex-combatants to lay down arms and participate in weapon-collection programmes.[104] In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, women rallied to call for disarmament as a precursor to the opening of peace talks.[105]

It is estimated that female fighters constituted up to 40 per cent of the membership of groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) or The Shining Path in Peru.[106] In Liberia, women and children formed 38 per cent of armed groups, yet only 17 per cent of those participated in the subsequent DDR programme.[107] In the case of Sierra Leone, just 506 of the estimated 12,056 girls affiliated with armed groups participated in DDR.[108] Some cases show that female ex-combatants, and young women in particular, are less likely to participate in DDR programmes,[109] citing a wide range of reasons including stigma from being associated with an armed group; security concerns and/or the fear of being exposed to sexual and gender-based violence[110], among others. The requirement to turn in weapons in order to participate in a DDR programme is also widely cited among women former combatants, as such a requirement ignores the reality that women may have had different roles

during wartime and not all carried arms. Lack of recognition of the various activities young women can be engaged in during conflict can also discourage them from participating in a process that they may perceive as too slow. For example, delays that accompany DDR processes can have a disparate impact on younger women who have families to look after, as was the case in Sudan.[111]

Indeed, the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) underscore the fact that women take on a variety of roles during wartime that are often overlooked in the DDR process. **Understanding the full range of factors motivating women to become armed combatants, as discussed earlier, can critically influence the success of DDR programmes.** The IDDRS offers policy and operational guidance on two complementary levels: (i) gender-aware interventions which aim to understand and address concerns of both women and men in DDR, and (ii) female-specific interventions which seek to answer the specific needs of women and girls adapted to their realities and multiple roles during conflict.[112] The IDDRS also reports on the importance of young people in DDR and their potential both as spoilers or risk factors and in reconciliation and recovery efforts.[113] The IDDRS chapter on youth recognizes that the "specific needs and capacities of young female ex-combatants are often poorly catered for" and that young women are rarely seen as a specific group in their own right in most DDR initiatives.[114] The type of reintegration opportunities (e.g. technical and vocational training, business training, entrepreneurship training, etc.) described are mostly geared towards young men.[115] Specific reintegration activities tailored for young women are largely absent or reinforce stereotypical or 'traditional' gender roles, preventing young women from acquiring skills in typically male-dominated areas/activities. The IDDRS are currently being revised, including content on gender and youth.

As mentioned, the categorization of "women and youth" narrows the diversity of experiences and contributions of young women within these groups, thus undermining efforts to identify their specific needs when trying to design and implement suitable reintegration programmes. In this regard, there are significant gaps in both guidance and implementation on how to address young women's distinct

needs and leverage their unique capacities. Women's participation has already been noted as influential to community-based recovery efforts.[116]

In view of even more comprehensive reintegration efforts, further research should be carried out to document the activities and contributions of young women in community-based reintegration approaches. Systematic gathering of sex- and age-disaggregated information, as well as age- and gender-sensitive analysis within each of the categories (women and young people) must take place to ensure effective and context-specific national and local DDR responses, that adequately address the specific grievances and post-conflict needs of young women.

Gender dynamics and transformative DDR

Young female ex-combatants can face additional and compounded challenges, which need to taken into account in women-specific DDR processes. In patriarchal societies where military or associated activities may not be culturally acceptable for women, young women might be rejected by their families after their demobilization. Young female ex-combatants may also face discrimination by those who know about their history as armed combatants when they attempt to access educational or economic opportunities.[117]

Young women who were able to improve their social status by joining armed groups could face another set of unique challenges in DDR processes. For both men and women, membership in an armed group can offer new and alternative ways to achieve recognition, autonomy and positions of authority. Yet their status they achieved during conflict can vanish post-conflict: "Gains women make during conflict or periods of transition are often rolled back in the post-conflict period."[118] While conflict may allow women combatants to play roles that are traditionally associated with men, employment and livelihood opportunities in post-conflict scenarios can disregard the needs and skills of women: "Women…are more willing than men to accept any job that meets the needs of their families and children, including farming and selling goods in local markets. Women may still face, however, the expectation to return to their previous status as caretakers or other 'traditionally' female

jobs. For some, this represents a loss of the status and respect as well as skill-set they might have earned or developed as a member of the armed force or group."[119] In that sense, leadership and skills demonstrated by women are often met with the reappearance of gender stereotypes in post-conflict situations.[120] This can put social reintegration at risk since both male and female ex-combatants often face a return to narrow or restrictive gender roles and many may struggle to negotiate new ones.[121]

While there is growing acknowledgement that "(ex)-combatant young women may have important contributions to make to post-conflict stabilization, […], there is very little evidence that they are actively encouraged to do so".[122]

For post-conflict recovery to represent a real opportunity for transformational change in gender norms, young women must have full and equal access to adapted DDR processes, which recognize the complete spectrum of activities young women engage in during conflict (whether as combatants or non-combatants) and which encourage their contributions in reconciliation and reconstruction efforts.

2.5 Young women in terrorism, violent extremism and preventing violent extremism: understanding the context and designing responses

Despite the emergence of a strong set of international policy frameworks at the United Nations to address terrorism and violent extremism, the resolutions and activities of the Security Council and the General Assembly remained largely gender-blind until 2013, with the adoption of resolution 2122, in which the Security Council expressed its intent to increase its attention to women, peace and security in all relevant thematic areas, including threats to international peace caused by terrorist acts.[123] Prior to this, gender, women, and especially young women, received little attention from policymakers, practitioners and experts focused on addressing the evolving transnational threat. However, as violent extremist and

terrorist actors began increasingly and explicitly targeting women and girls, the international community began to take notice. As terrorist and violent extremist groups increasingly target women and girls for recruitment, ideological and material support, and terrorism and counter-terrorism efforts continue to impact women's rights and opportunities, more attention is now being paid to the gendered dynamics and gender narratives that are driving recruitment to violent extremist groups and incitement to violence.[124] In some instances, both terrorism and counter-terrorism have fostered increased insecurity and instability, curtailed resources for women and women's rights organizations and created a more constrained environment for civil society groups and communities that are at the forefront of efforts to prevent terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization.

Terrorist groups like ISIL and Boko Haram have had a horrific impact on women's security and rights, and have deliberately utilized sexual violence as a tactic. The sexual violence perpetrated against Yezidi women and girls by ISIL in Iraq,[125] the severe restrictions on women's rights and freedoms enforced by ISIL in Libya,[126] the use of women and girls as suicide bombers by Boko Haram, and the destruction of girls' educational facilities in Pakistan[127] exemplify this effect. Yet recent reports also highlight women as perpetrators, ideologues, recruiters and supporters of terrorism and violent extremism.[128] Research indicates that the motivations and drivers for women can echo those of their male counterparts, with some variation in that economic factors appear to matter less to women. Recent reports on Boko Haram, for example, demonstrate that women have not only played domestic support roles, but have also been involved in combat. The phenomenon of female suicide bombers, in some cases, demonstrates "the extent to which women are prepared to take action in conflicts".[129] They can more easily conceal themselves, avoid suspicion and therefore elude police detection. Terrorist groups and organisations increasingly exploit traditional gender and age stereotypes and societal expectations and prejudices around gender as an effective means of carrying out attacks, gathering intelligence, and building trust. The use of young women, even children, as suicide bombers further upends common conceptions

of women and children as less threatening and thus less subject to scrutiny, and while there are reports of women being manipulated, coerced and abused to carry out these acts, there are also women who have reportedly volunteered for such roles.[130] More investigation is needed to better understand the factors behind the phenomenon of girls and women as suicide bombers. In recruitment efforts, including via new platforms such as social media, women are also participating in legitimizing, sanitizing and propagating terrorist narratives.[131]

Despite these complex dynamics, analyses of women's actions have been closely shaped by gendered stereotypes[132] that neglect women's agency. Presumptions about women's motivations, needs and contributions as well as social and cultural perceptions and norms, in some contexts, have served to limit engagement with women in counterterrorism efforts. For example, although women have long participated in and supported terrorist groups, including the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), Provisional Irish Republic Army (IRA) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), it is only now with the unprecedented flow of fighters and supporters to join ISIL — estimated at 30,000, with women comprising 20-30 per cent of that number — that greater attention is being paid to the full range of roles women can play in relation to terrorism.[133]

Consequently, UN Security Council resolutions 2122, 2242, and 2250 focus on women and young people and the need to integrate their perspectives in UN and national counterterrorism activities. Women's participation and leadership in prevention efforts were also highlighted by Member States when they reviewed the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy in 2016, and in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action on preventing violent extremism.[134] Yet, more needs to be done to translate these normative frameworks into practical action and sustainable programmes. Responses need to integrate young people and gender across the full spectrum of efforts — from prevention to interdiction, and from rehabilitation to reintegration. There is an urgent need to better collect gender- and age-sensitive data. While UNSCR 2250 and the YPS agenda provide tools to counter and prevent violent extremism, most youth programming continues to focus on young men.

It is crucial to integrate gender analysis into the design and implementation of youth-oriented Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programmes. Young women's perspectives on and actions in support of violent extremist groups, as well as their agency in prevention and de-radicalization should be recognized and consistently considered. Moreover, there is a pressing need for states and international organizations and partners to allocate sufficient resources to ensure that gender is integrated into national policies and programmes addressing terrorism, including programmes focusing on young people. Finally, institutional capacities need to be strengthened, such as through the recruitment and retention of women in law enforcement, border security, police and prisons.

2.6 Young Women and Transitional justice

In the aftermath of conflict, transitional justice mechanisms are typically judicial and non-judicial measures designed to facilitate justice and accountability for crimes committed during the conflict; address the root causes of conflict; transform pre-conflict status quos of discrimination and inequality; and, importantly, provide redress and rehabilitation for victims.[135] Young women have a right to full participation, leadership, and access to transitional justice processes, whether their rights were violated as children, adolescents or young women.[136] Moreover, inclusive and meaningful transitional justice processes, developed through the consultation, ownership, and leadership of affected communities, can not only restore, but transform the social contract towards renewed rule of law, equality, and an ensured lasting peace.[137]

Transitional justice processes are most successful when they build upon and balance the common objectives of justice and peace, acknowledge the disparate impact of conflict on women and girls, and holistically address the full range of human rights violations, including violations of social, economic and cultural rights.[139] Criminal justice alone cannot repair the harm caused by violent conflict and repression, and is often not feasible given the extent of the crimes

committed. Survivors—who in many contexts cannot seek criminal justice due to lack of evidence, social stigma, fear of reprisals, weak rule of law institutions and other barriers—may benefit from truth-seeking processes or reparations programmes.[140] Furthermore, sustainable design, development, and implementation of transitional justice processes requires a gender analysis that attends to the intersectionality and multiplicity of discrimination women face, including based on indigeneity, class, ability, and age. Colombia offers a recent example of comprehensive transitional justice that aims to holistically address harm suffered by women and girls, and transform gender inequalities.[141] The country's peace agreement, signed in 2016, explicitly affirms a gender-sensitive approach to its transitional justice mechanisms, which respond to the needs of women, men, girls and boys.[142]

Transitional justice processes often take place in highly technical, legalistic, political spaces where young women are *de facto* excluded.[143] Nonetheless, young women activists are working on transitional justice from advocating at the highest levels to documenting cases and demanding access to justice at the grassroots level. One example is renowned survivor Nadia Murad, a young Yazidi woman who escaped enslavement by ISIL, who now advocates as a Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking of the United Nations.

As rights bearers, young women have a right to be consulted on the design, development, and implementation of these processes. Indeed, transitional justice mechanisms that specifically include and respond to the unique experiences and perspectives of young women (women from age 18-29 pursuant to UNSCR 2250), will best position post-conflict and post-authoritarian States to build inclusive and sustaining peace,[139] and achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

For transitional justice processes to systematize young women's leadership and participation, they must assess the barriers young women face in accessing transitional justice, empower them to overcome those barriers, and build on lessons learned for young women's leadership and participation in shaping both processes and outcomes in the future. It bears emphasis that young women not only act as "caregivers, activists, survivors, educators and in professional capacities," but also "contribute to national recovery and peacebuilding."[144]

Increasingly, transitional justice mechanisms and related normative documents are recognizing the importance of young people's engagement, and age- and gender-sensitive approaches. For example, a 2014 guidance note of the Secretary-General on reparations for conflict-related sexual violence calls for the right to a remedy and reparation to be fulfilled without discrimination, including on the basis of age.[145] In addition, reparations programmes should give special consideration to the needs of child beneficiaries, taking into account their age, abilities and intellectual capacities.[146] The guidance note cites the reparations plan in Peru, which recognized children born of rape as a distinct category of beneficiary, noting they should be entitled to economic compensation up to the age of 18 and should be eligible for preferential access to education services.[147]

Despite growing recognition of the need for an inclusive and intersectional approach however, an initial review of seven peace agreements that include transitional justice frameworks shows inconsistency in how the agreements addressed the impact of conflict on young women and their right to participation, often referring to "women and children" as a single group.[148] In addition, much of the critical gender analysis on transitional justice also uses the term "women and girls" when calling for attention, prioritizing, and/or highlighting the lived experiences of the group. There is generally a lack of qualitative and quantitative information about young women's specific participation in transitional justice, to analyze any gains over time or compare across contexts.

Enhancing intersectional approaches

UN Women has conducted extensive research on women's leadership, inclusion, and influence in peace processes and transitional justice mechanisms.[149] Findings reveal that the **involvement, leadership, and consultation of women,** *including young women,* **at the outset of peace negotiations is critical to ensure that peace agreements include gender-specific language, so that young women are then reached as both stakeholders and participants in transitional justice processes, and the process results in a sustainable peace.**[150]

While the detailed findings from the *Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325* equally apply to the rights of young women, additional research on young women's specific participation is needed. To track progress and establish baselines of participation in post-conflict spaces, we must gauge the current extent to which young women are engaged in both consultation and implementation stages of transitional justice processes. **Equally, a gender- and age-sensitive analysis of transitional justice processes—across criminal justice, truth-seeking processes, reparations programmes, and other guarantees of non-recurrence—would provide insight into the ability of these mechanisms to be responsive to, and inclusive of, young women.** Here, gender-sensitive analysis of qualitative and quantitative data is essential to inform decision-making that can systematize young women's leadership and participation in transitional justice and highlight missed opportunities for engagement.

The obstacles young women face to participation do not stop at the doors to peace negotiations and the creation of transitional justice mechanisms. As noted above, young women may face barriers in terms of understanding or accessing information and knowledge of transitional justice processes, or accessing political opportunities to voice their experiences, needs, and concerns.[151] At the same time, there is no data to support any assumption that young women de facto do not already possess the tools and skills to participate.[152] **To address gaps in information around transitional justice processes, public awareness and education campaigns must specifically target young women, and also inform the broader public and those in leadership positions of the importance of young women's participation.** These efforts can boost opportunities to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Some NGOs, governmental authorities, and United Nations entities have already begun engaging in

such work. Education and outreach campaigns on national transitional justice processes have taken place in Morocco,[153] Canada,[154] Nepal,[155] and the Solomon Islands,[156] for example.

UN Women continues to engage with diverse groups of women and women's organizations across its transitional justice work. For example, in 2016, UN Women, with support from the European Union, held consultations with women's organizations from conflict-affected regions in Colombia regarding priorities for the country's new truth commission. A total of 320 women were consulted, with approximately six per cent identifying as indigenous, six per cent identifying as Afro-Colombian, four per cent identifying as LGBTI, and five per cent under the age of 18. Preliminary findings from the consultations show that women want to play a substantial role in the work of the future truth commission, including by documenting the impacts of the conflict on their communities.

Finally, for transitional justice processes to document the experiences of young women, young women must be willing to come forward and participate—by giving statements, acting as witnesses, and benefiting from reparations programmes. It is a misconception that they do not wish to discuss their experiences—rather, conditions of impunity and fear of retaliation and stigmatization are key impediments to their involvement. While safeguards for victims, witnesses and beneficiaries have improved over the last decade, **including specialized witness protection and psychosocial support services,[157]** much work remains to be done to ensure that safe spaces exist for young women to share their stories in an empowering and supportive environment.

2.7 Young women's livelihood in peace and security

Education and employment: discrimination and negative coping mechanisms

During armed conflicts, family and other support systems can break down, intensifying pressure on young people to ensure their own, and often others', survival and well-being. Such support systems can be the backbone of economic activity, making it more difficult for young people to access economic and livelihood opportunities.[158] This in turn is linked directly to increased risk of young people to exploitation and abuse, including sexual violence, early marriage, trafficking for sexual and other purposes, recruitment into fighting forces, and the spread of HIV/AIDS. For girls and young women, early and forced marriage often results in early pregnancy, social isolation and termination of education, which severely limits their opportunities, and increases their risk of experiencing gender-based violence.[159] Early marriage can lead to early maternity, which represents a risk factor for maternal and infant/child mortality[160] and strongly reduces future opportunities, including access to education, which then perpetuates a cycle of vulnerability for young women. Further, the lack of access to maternal care and delivery services in conflict and post-conflict settings significantly raises rates of female mortality and rates of young women's infection with HIV/AIDS.[161] Emergency contraception, availability of PEP-kits or hygiene items for young girls, are not always ensured by service-providers in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Households headed by young people, most often run by young females, are also especially vulnerable. As the percentage of young women-headed households increases during and after conflict, women and girls can be forced into low-reward and high-risk work like survival sex or forced marriage, which can have negative impacts on community recovery, and the physical and emotional well-being of children and families.[162]

Gendered dimensions of access to economic activity can also be a determinant factor when it comes to young women's education: "Adolescent girls' enrolment in school often declines sharply due to the need of their help at home or the fact that their education is considered less important than the education of their brothers or male peers."[163] Stereotypical gender roles affecting young women's access to education can be aggravated by other factors, such as the emphasis governments tend to give to primary education at the expense of supporting higher education opportunities when considering young people. As shown in many cases around the world, school segregation on racial, religious, linguistic or other grounds can be a factor in furthering group isolation and exacerbating tensions in society.[164] **Equal access and quality of available education both have profound impacts when it**

comes to recovery from conflict and advancing gender equality. The economic strain brought about by conflict, even once it is over, greatly reduces the chances that girls will attend school, as families tend to prioritize education for boys.[165] "Girls are particularly disadvantaged, being 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than boys in countries affected by conflict."[166] In addition, "young women [in conflict-affected countries] are nearly 90 per cent more likely to be out of secondary school than their counterparts in countries not affected by conflict."[167] For girls and young women, lack of education increases their vulnerability not only to child labor and exploitation, but also to early marriage and trafficking.[168]

For post-conflict recovery to represent a real opportunity for transformational change in gender norms, young women must have full and equal access to adapted DDR processes, which recognize the complete spectrum of activities young women engage in during conflict (whether as combatants or non-combatants) and which encourage their contributions in reconciliation and reconstruction efforts.

Sexual violence, reproductive and sexual rights and services

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) increases dramatically during conflict and post-conflict, and young women are particularly at risk. Such violence is commonly a **continuation or an intensification of violence experienced by girls and women and tolerated by their societies in peacetime.[169]** Even though all girls and women, and many boys and men, are at risk of gender-based violence during armed conflict or in post-conflict situations, the threats and consequences can be different according to age and social circumstances.

As mentioned earlier, in conflict and post-conflict situations, young women are more at risk of being forced to marry at a young age for a variety of reasons including because families are struggling to care for their children.[170] Young women's experiences during conflict may also result in their becoming heads of households due to the disproportionate and sex-specific targeting of men in conflict or because of stigma surrounding children born of rape and other forms of and experiences of sexual and gender-based violence.[171] In the case of young women survivors of sexual violence, they "run the risk of never marrying, losing schooling opportunities, or being forced to marry their assailants".[172] In some contexts, local traditions or lack of awareness about different forms of sexual and gender-based violence, normalize these practices against young girls and foster a climate of impunity. These incidents are rarely reported to official justice mechanisms and are decided on instead by customary leaders.

Internally displaced women and children, and refugees—especially heads of households and young people who have lost or were separated from their families—are at high risk of SGBV: "Because refugee women and children often have limited means to sustain themselves and lack legal and physical protection, they are less able to assert their rights and therefore face a greater risk of sexual abuse and exploitation."[173] Refugee and IDP camps are often high-risk areas for young girls in regards to SGBV, with young women at heightened risk of kidnapping, forced recruitment into armed forces, sexual violence and increased risks of STIs and HIV/AIDS.[174] Young girls are also more vulnerable to SGBV while carrying-out traditional tasks (wood or water collection) in the surrounding areas of camps.

There is a need to significantly improve and increase investment in services for survivors of SGBV, including: access to mental health and psychosocial support, shelter, livelihoods support, justice and reparations, sexual and reproductive health services and rights (including for the treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections), and safe termination of pregnancies resulting from rape, without discrimination and in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law. This necessitates facilitating young women's leadership and participation in humanitarian action, and strengthening prevention efforts[176] through sustainable livelihood and social norms change interventions to enhance self-reliance and prevent violence against women, including young women and girls.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper highlights the complementarities and similarities between the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agendas, particularly with regards to the participation and involvement of young women. While there is no doubt that young women are engaged in a variety of activities in building and sustaining peace, their roles remain under-recognized and underfunded. This paper reveals the research and policy gaps specific to young women's experience in the realm of peace and security. The causes of this marginalization/exclusion in practice share commonality with the pervasive cultural and normative stereotypes that the WPS agenda has been addressing. Lessons learned from the WPS agenda in addressing these causes should contribute to present and future policy-making and programming.

This paper also emphasizes the importance of intersectionality, language and data in ensuring that young women's needs and concerns are taken into account at all levels. Young women are part of both the WPS and YPS agendas and yet are at risk of exclusion when they are subsumed into the categories of "women and youth". It is crucial to acknowledge and include the diversity of voices, and address the diversity of needs, both within the WPS and YPS agendas. Systematic collection and use of both sex- and age-disaggregated data, and both gender- and age-sensitive analysis, as well as adequate financing and monitoring of allocated funding to support young women's agency and address their specific needs is an imperative. The implementation of special temporary measures and programmes to increase young women's participation in and influence over peace and security processes can not only significantly improve safety and status of young women, but also benefit the broader society and strengthen the effectiveness and durability of peace and security policies and programmes.

Young women are bridging the YPS and WPS agendas. In response, the international community and national and local actors must work to implement the YPS and WPS agendas, not in parallel, but complimentarily, working together towards more inclusive, just and peaceful societies. Young women, along with women of all ages and young men, must be at the centre of the Sustaining Peace agenda as key partners in preventing conflict and building sustainable and inclusive societies.

Recommendations

Experience from nearly 20 years of efforts aimed at implementing the WPS agenda is instructive to the YPS agenda. The below cross-cutting recommendations draw from some of the most relevant recommendations and lessons learned from the WPS agenda. These recommendations should be taken on board by a range of actors working to include young women in preventing conflict and building sustaining peace.

- *Definitions and categories:* **The intersectional and divergent identity associations that differentiate the lived experiences of young people in conflict necessitate a nuanced and inclusive implementation of YPS programmes and policies.** *The Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325* underscores the fact that women are not a homogenous or monolithic group. Women, as a category, includes a diverse range of individuals with vastly different lived experiences. In implementing UNSCR 2250 and expanding the YPS agenda, the use of the term young people should be understood as both young women and young men equally, and be

context-specific and reflective of the diversity of experiences and perspectives of these young people beyond gender and age groups. Moreover, gender-sensitive analysis of dynamics between young people, as well as gender- and age-sensitive analysis of inter-generational dynamics should guide policy and programmes. Young women include individuals from diverse socio-economic, political, geographical, educational, cultural, religious, ethnic, and national backgrounds, and with different sexual orientations and abilities. They are part of majority and minority communities, with vastly different levels of access to rights, resources and decision-making. All of their voices should be included in the work related to the implementation of UNSCR 2250 specifically, and the YPS and WPS agendas more broadly. Intersectionality is key to inclusivity in the implementation of the YPS and WPS agendas and peace and security policies and programmes more broadly.

- *Monitoring progress on implementation:* **The complementary goals of the YPS, WPS, and Sustainable Development agendas warrant the establishment of strong, well-defined, and measurable indicators of UNSCR 2250 that align with UNSCR 1325 and SDG indicators.** UNSCR 1889 called for a common set of "indicators for use at the global level to track implementation of its resolution 1325 (2000), which could serve as a common basis for reporting by relevant United Nations entities, other international and regional organizations, and Member States, on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in 2010 and beyond". A similar push could be made for a strong set of indicators to track progress on implementation of UNSCR 2250. Indeed, some of the indicators used to track and report on UNSCR 1325 could be adapted to track progress around UNSCR 2250, and other indicators can draw from and align with efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to these indicators, clear guidelines regarding age- and sex-disaggregated data collection could facilitate high-quality assessment and monitoring of progress in the implementation of both the YPS agenda and the WPS agenda in complementarity.

- *Establishing and broadening the knowledge base:* **There should be a concerted effort to increase both qualitative and quantitative research concentrating on young women in conflict that is informed by appropriately disaggregated data and diverse narratives.** The lack of data regarding young women is a major impediment to the development of evidence-based and appropriate policies and practices. It is essential to invest in research that includes data which is simultaneously age- and sex-disaggregated and intersectional in analysis. In addition, studies involving young women in conflict and post-conflict situations would significantly contribute to the qualitative understanding of their realities, needs and contributions. There is very limited documentation of young women's actions and contributions to peace and security, and a need for more specific research and documentation on young women's activities and experiences in such contexts. Peace and security policy-making needs to be anchored in both solid research and theories of change that include sufficient evidence focused on young women and all the roles they play, concurrently or sequentially, in peacebuilding.

- *Repository of data, good practices and case studies:* **An online collection of peer-reviewed research centered on the role of young women in the peacebuilding process is crucial to facilitate knowledge exchange and learning between the various actors of the YPS agenda.** Given the relative shortage of information on young people generally, and young women specifically, as active peacebuilders, the *Progress Report on Youth, Peace and Security* should call for the creation of a *dynamic, on-line and peer-reviewed repository* of data, case studies and good practices regarding all aspects of young people and peacebuilding. In addition, in order to bridge the information gap on young women as peacebuilders, this repository should prioritize collecting gender-disaggregated data, case studies and good practices. Recommendations should also include financial support to create and organize workshops and dialogue platforms to exchange lessons learned and good practices with the WPS community, including women's groups and community organizations. Similarly, building inter-generational channels for exchange of data and good practices would benefit both young people, including young women's organizations, and more established organizations.

- *Policies and programmes:* **Gender mainstreaming is an essential requirement of sustainable peace; thus, the implementation of UNSC resolutions 1325 and 2250 should be an inclusive effort that features the meaningful participation of women, especially young women.** UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 2250 should not be treated as separate, but rather as mutually-reinforcing normative frameworks guiding the actions of a diverse range of actors, including governments, civil society and international bodies. Inclusive implementation of UNSCR 2250 will only be possible by building on the foundation established by UNSCR 1325, acknowledging that young women face unique challenges and offer unique skills, abilities and perspectives crucial to ensuring inclusive, sustainable peace.

  ◦ All work undertaken in an effort to implement UNSCR 2250 should include assessments of its accessibility, relevance and impact on young women. Evaluations should include a scoring system to illustrate how successfully – or not – specific interventions meaningfully integrated young women in their work.

  ◦ All international, regional and national policies and action plans should be reviewed through age and gendered lenses, with special attention to young women.

  ◦ Young women need to be partners in the development of policies, norms and standards related to both the WPS and the YPS agendas. They need to be meaningfully engaged in policy-making at the international, national and local levels. Mechanisms ensuring their substantial participation need to be developed in ways that specifically address the wide range of barriers they face, from logistical and institutional to societal and cultural.

  ◦ When young women cannot take part in peace and security policy-making, creative and context-specific solutions, including use of technology, should be devised to best ensure their participation is inclusive in both a quantitative and qualitative manner (numbers and influence).

  ◦ Young women engaged in policy-making need to be representative diverse populations. Policy-making bodies should avoid relying on a cadre of 'elite' or familiar participants. Inclusion of young women from from rural areas, indigenous communities, cultural and religious minorities, migrants, IDPs and refugees, young women living with disabilities, and impoverished or illiterate communities as well as other marginalized groups, is essential to ensuring accurate representation.

  ◦ International actors and Member States, as well as civil society organizations, must create a pipeline of young women, and keep it filled, to engage in international and national high-level fora. These actors must avoid relying on 'the usual suspects' when they want to showcase young women.

- *Advocacy and awareness-raising:* **The meaningful inclusion of young women in peacebuilding efforts requires the generation and strategic dissemination of research and resources higlightng their instrumental role in building sustainable peace.** Advocacy and awareness-raising regarding the positive impact young women have in peace and security efforts need to be considerably enhanced and more widely disseminated. These efforts will help mitigate pervasive gender and age-based stereotypes preventing young women from participating in and being served by initiatives targeting both young people and women. At the same time, resources should be allocated to the development and dissemination of accessible and detailed knowledge products regarding the realities, needs and actions of young women in conflict and post-conflict settings. These knowledge products should aim to reach a diverse audience of key stakeholders, including a wide range of decision-makers and policy-makers within governments, civil society (including young people-led organizations), educators, community leaders, religious organizations, international bodies, and others. Efforts should be made to sensitize authorities and 'gate keepers' to ensure understanding and buy-in to the importance of inclusion of young women from diverse backgrounds in advocacy and decision-making spaces. Providing

young women with access to high-level audiences in global fora provides opportunity to raise awareness about young women in preventing conflict and sustaining peace. Similarly, educating young people on WPS and gender equality contributes to building more inclusive, peaceful and gender-equal societies.

- *Financing:* **Advancing gender equality and sustainable peace requires dedicated financial investment that empowers young women to become dynamic leaders.** Pervasive age and gender stereotypes in peace and security can no longer come at the expense of investing in young women. Specific numerical targets—such as the Secretary-Genera's target of 15 per cent of peacebuilding funds to address women's specific needs and advance gender equality—should be established to ensure a percentage of the funding for the YPS agenda is directed to young women specifically. This should include a minimum percentage of funding that goes directly to local young people-led organizations working with young women and on gender equality issues, as well as directly to young women-led organizations. Gender markers and specific indices are used by a growing number of entities working in conflict-affected and crisis contexts are tools which should be considered in YPS programming. Although applied differently, such markers may contribute to more gender-sensitive analysis and response. Capacity building for gender-sensitive financial monitoring and accountability is needed across organizations and actors.

- *Applying the Leaving No One Behind and Do No Harm principles:* **Acknowledging the unique vulnerabilities of the world's most marginalized communities must be a funadamental principle compelling YPS actors to judiciously amplify the voices and stories of young women from disadvantaged backgrounds and communites.** Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development makes the bold pledge, not just to ensure that no one is left behind, but indeed to "reach the furthest behind first."[176] Inclusion of young women in the YPS and WPS agendas is a step in that direction, but to realize the pledge made in Agenda 2030, all actors must go further and endeavor to bring to the fore those who are most vulnerable, most excluded, most marginalized. In the process of actively engaging young people, young women, and particularly those from marginalized and persecuted backgrounds, policy-makers and practitioners must be constantly mindful of the need for sensitivity in their efforts in order to guarantee more equitable representation and a richer representation of young people that reflects the reality of their diversity, and the diversity of the communities they come from. Engaging young women must be done in a way that is not extractive, and does not put them, or their families or communities at risk.

ENDNOTES

1 The Women, Peace and Security agenda is guided by a set of Security Council resolutions that establish a normative framework to promote gender equality and strengthen women's participation, protection, and rights in conflict prevention through post-conflict reconstruction contexts. These include resolutions 1325 (2000); 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013): and 2242 (2015). Collectively, these resolutions stress the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, the prevention of conflicts, the incorporation of gender perspectives in all areas of peace building, and adequate protection, notably from sexual violence in conflict.

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3 "Between 1990 and 2000, when the Security Council adopted resolution 1325, just 11 per cent of peace agreements signed included a reference to women. Since the adoption of 1325, 27 per cent of peace agreements have referenced women. Of the six agreements resulting from peace talks or national dialogue processes supported by the UN in 2014, 67 per cent contained references relevant to women, peace and security." Ibid., p.14.

4 Ibid. p.34.

5 This is an observation based on the extensive desk review undertaken for this paper.

6 Intersectionality is a term introduced by critical race and gender theorist, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and uncovers the ways in which overlapping or intersecting social identities, particularly among minorities, relate to systems, and structures of oppression, domination or discrimination. For more on Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, see Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color*, in: Martha Albertson Fineman, Roxanne Mykitiuk, Eds. The Public Nature of Private Violence. New York: Routledge. p. 93-118. Available from: http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mapping-margins.pdf.

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20 UNSCR 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122 and 2242.

21 Such as UNSCR 2106 (2013).

22 See the global indicators framework for the SDGs: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/.

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UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.