



INCLUSIVE PEACE, INCLUSIVE FUTURES: EXPLORING THE URGENT NEED TO FURTHER THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AND THE YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDAS

Introduction

Over the past 20 years, two different agendas have emerged from within the peace and security sphere, representing a significant shift towards understanding the impact of identity on people's experiences of conflict, insecurity and peace processes. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda have both reflected on the need for more inclusive and responsive peace, however, their genesis in the United Nations (UN) Security Council and the power politics of states responsible for their delivery has led many commentators to question their impact and the motivations driving their approach to implementation.

As a youth-led research and advocacy collective grounded in intersectional feminist methodologies, Our Generation for Inclusive Peace (OGIP) sits at the intersect of these two agendas and is perfectly positioned to reflect on the agendas' potential for strengthening youth-driven contributions to peace processes and their failure up to now to act on these overlaps. This policy paper discusses the synergies between the two agendas and explores the need to deepen these connections. It raises the issues of exclusive language, elite spaces and the creation of identity silos in limiting the impact of peace and security policy and practice for traditionally marginalised people operating within these

overlapping spaces. Finally, this paper makes recommendations on how different actors, including the UN, can work together, as well as alongside OGIP, to resolve the current gaps in policy and practice to achieve approaches that are truly inclusive of all voices.

Women, Peace and Security

The WPS agenda came into being with the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000. It emerged after decades of lobbying by civil society activists for the Peace and Security arena to acknowledge the unique and disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls. Subsequently, a further eight resolutions were passed between 2001-2019, building on the original four pillars of the WPS agenda; Prevention, Participation, Protection, and Relief and Recovery. The WPS agenda has been utilised by women, women's organisations and civil society around the world as a vehicle for change.

The overarching aim of the WPS agenda is to carve out space for women and girls to be heard in the male-dominated Peace and Security arena, and resultantly to change the discourse on the causes and impacts of conflict. Resolution 1325 worked to increase the participation and representation of women in security spaces and peace processes, and end the impunity of those responsible for genocide and sexual violence as a weapon of war. Resolu-

tions penned in the wake of 1325 took turns to refocus attention on the Protection and Participation pillars with less focus on the Prevention and Relief and Recovery pillars.

The primary implementation instrument of the agenda are National Action Plans (NAPs). NAPs institutionalise WPS commitments in a UN Member States' domestic and/or foreign policy. As of September 2019, according to analysis done by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), 82 United Nations Member States have adopted NAPs¹. However, criticisms have been raised about the lack of budget for and the implementation of NAPs, and the outward-facing nature of NAPs written by Member States in the Global North. NAPs formed in this way work to maintain structures of power rather than to dismantle them, with global powers given authority to command and direct change externally without any accountability surrounding their domestic policies.

Youth, Peace and Security

The Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda was adopted by the UN Security Council in 2015. Its founding Resolution, Resolution 2250, articulated five pillars² to encompass action on youth engagement in peace and conflict: Participation, Protection, Prevention, Partnerships and Disengagement and

Reintegration. Whilst Resolution 2250 recognised the importance of the WPS model it instead centred the youth perspective, urging UN Member States to acknowledge the voices of youth in conflict prevention and participation and noting the unique impacts of conflict on their childhood, development and education amongst other issues.

The first YPS Resolution was joined in 2018 by Resolution 2419 which further cemented commitments to youth inclusion within peace processes and conflict resolution and called for the issuing of a report on the implementation of the YPS agenda by May 2020³.

Overlap and linkages between the agendas

There are synergies between the two agendas, particularly as the YPS agenda took inspiration from WPS in its modelling⁴. The path treaded by the WPS agenda and its nine Resolutions carved out a model of engagement with powerful structures such as the UN Security Council, bringing some women to the proverbial table in an effort to counter exclusionary peace processes that have historically prevented women's participation. The existence of the WPS agenda meant that youth could be brought into conflict resolution and peacebuilding under a similar name, YPS - imaginable and actionable under a particular framework. In this way, YPS and WPS are

¹ Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Who Implements, <https://www.peacewomen.org/member-states> (accessed 2019).

² Youth 4 Peace, UNSCR 2250 Introduction, <https://www.youth4peace.info/UNSCR2250/Introduction> (accessed 2019).

³ United Network of Young Peacebuilders, 2250: A Youth Toolkit, <http://unoy.org/en/2250-toolkit/> (accessed 2019).

⁴ Graeme Simpson, The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth Peace and Security, (2018) <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-10/youth-web-english.pdf> (accessed 2019) p15.

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“inextricably linked,” as the two agendas share core strategies, “core commitments to prevention, participation and protection”⁵, and key principles of engagement with powerful political structures.

Moreover, both agendas have tabled approaches which go beyond typical and simplistic paths to peacebuilding and conflict resolution.⁶ WPS and YPS both work to tackle and raise awareness of broader inequalities which lie at the root of conflict, and which make particular groups more ‘vulnerable’ to harm in conflict than others.

Even though the YPS agenda emerged in the wake of WPS, utilising similar methods and approaches, in the four years since both agendas have existed side-by-side (2015-2019), there has been a lack of explicit links between them. Particularly, the YPS agenda has been critiqued as lacking an analysis and appreciation of gender, and the WPS agenda has, by default, centred older women rather than girls and young women. The Security Council Open Debate on YPS in April 2018 raised the need for YPS and WPS to integrate, but the discussion “missed a very necessary gendered focus, with only brief references to engaging with women’s groups and eradicating sexual violence.”⁷ In this way, YPS and WPS are siloing issues and identities.

However, there is also a risk that in attempting to rectify the lack of explicit links between the two

agendas, approaches could lump women and young people together without consideration, thought, and a fundamental assessment of the aims and requirements of both agendas. Efforts to understand and utilise the synergies between YPS and WPS need carefully considered and crafted links forwarded by women’s and youth organisations to ensure policy and practice reflective of the diversity of actors. In the Independent Progress Study in YPS, “young people were vocal in their opposition to the tendency to simply lump “women and youth” together. They compared it with the problematic pairing of “women and children” in other policy contexts, noting how this could be seen as both infantilizing women and diluting the core attention required for children. Expanding on the relationship between gender and youth is essential, rather than blurring women and youth as demographic categories. The value in this relationship resides in ensuring that the YPS agenda is engendered, and that the WPS agenda is more attuned to age and generational differences.” Without acknowledging the diversity and intersections of identities within these demographic groups current structures are demanding young women work within two different structures if they want to fully engage with both agendas.

Failures to strengthen inclusive policy and practice

Gendered Assumptions and Political Contexts

⁵ Ibid p15.

⁶ UN Women, Preventing Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, (2015) <https://wps.unwomen.org/> (accessed 2019).

⁷ Ijechi Nwaozuzu, Security Council Open Debate on Youth Peace and Security April 2018, (2018), <https://www.peacewomen.org/security-council/security-council-open-debate-youth-peace-and-security-april-2018> (accessed 2019).

The gendered assumptions and political contexts that informed the development of these policy agendas have shaped their approach and perspectives of the different people who engage in peace and security and why. By dichotomising Youth and Women and failing to explicitly acknowledge the needs and perspectives of different generations and genders, the YPS and WPS agendas have not only siloed identities but have entrenched harmful assumptions about those identities, failing to push beyond stereotypes.

The Progress Study found that the international agenda's assumptions have created a view of gender that has become synonymous with women and an interpretation of youth as synonymous with young men. This in turn has contributed to the victimisation of young women - limiting them to the space of those who need protecting from conflict, and the erasure of the role of masculinities, both positive and negative, in driving or resolving conflict. "Global policy and programming on youth, peace and security must engage with the gendered identities of both young men and young women, to support and promote positive, gender equitable identities and roles, paying particular attention to cultivating non-violent masculinities."⁸

The YPS agenda was passed in the context of the UN Security Council's (and many member states) expanding countering violent extremism agenda. The need to include youth voices in decision-making articulated in Resolution 2250 is prefaced by the

statement that young people now constitute a threat to international peace and security. The UN Security Council's press release on the day of the adoption of Resolution 2250 stated as it's first paragraph that "recognizing the threat to stability and development posed by the rise of radicalization among young people, the Security Council today urged Member States to consider ways to give youth a greater voice in decision-making at the local, national, regional and international levels." The political and security context in which youth participation was deemed necessary means that the inclusion of young voices is only made relevant by the perceived urgency of the threat posed by youth and their role in international violent extremism.⁹ Whilst Resolution 2250 also highlights "the important and positive contribution of youth in efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security"¹⁰ this acknowledgement does not negate the context within which UN Security Council chose to create this agenda.

Neither does it address the continued limitations this, therefore, puts on youth participation or the reinforcement of who is considered youth in this context. Multiple UN Security Council resolutions have demonstrated the assumption that armed conflict and political violence is perpetrated by men. Approaches to countering violent extremism are similarly shaped by this assumption. The perceived need to include youth in peace to prevent them from becoming radicalised, is therefore based on the default assumption that youth = young men, young men are

⁸ Simpson, (2018) pxii.

⁹ United Nations, Security Council, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2250 (2015), Urges Member States to Increase Representation of Youth in Decision-Making at All Levels, (2015), <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm> (accessed 2019).

¹⁰ Ibid.

the threat and therefore youth participation focuses on the needs of young men.

In much the same vein, the WPS agenda focuses on women as inherently peaceful and as victims in conflict. There has been very little engagement in any of the nine WPS resolutions with the notion of women's (active and informed) violence. Relying on these gendered assumptions, not only creates gaps in the international community's response to violence, but entrenches these stereotypes about how and why marginalised groups should be allowed to enter these spaces. It limits the scope of their participation and the breadth of their impact. Both the political context and the gendered language and assumptions are detrimental to the genuine inclusion of the multiplicity of perspectives shaped by people's intersecting identities.

Language as a Powerful Tool

The power of both agendas lie largely in their use as a tool for civil society to demand and protect the rights and needs of traditionally marginalised groups during and in the aftermath of conflict. These 'high-level' agendas provide a benchmark that activists and advocates can draw on to call those in influential positions to account, to standardise the quality of approaches internationally and platform the voices of those the world tends not to hear. Whilst the agendas have been critiqued for 'lacking teeth' and enforcement mechanisms, the leverage they can provide civil society actors is hugely valuable. It is for this reason that it is so important for language to be inclusive and encompassing. Demanding that the world acknowledge the experiences of marginalised people in building peace requires tapping into the pre-

agreed language of the political elite. If that language excludes certain groups, or fails to create the space for these conversations, this can further entrench exclusionary practice.

Both the YPS and WPS agendas have done this; siloing identities rather than recognising intersections, removing inclusive terminologies around gender and sexualities, defining marginalised groups as threats, victims, or saviours through binaries rather than acknowledging nuanced roles and identities.

Silos of Identity

By siloing different identity groups and failing to acknowledge the overlap and intersectional experiences of many individuals in conflict contexts, these international policy frameworks fail to create an accessible and relevant space and reinforces binaries when it comes to identity groups. Young women in all conflict contexts, for example, will experience a lack of peace and security in a way specific to their identity. How this manifests is highly context specific, a young muslim woman in Kashmir will face different barriers and challenges to a young indigenous woman in rural Colombia, for example. However, the way they are able to interact with the social and political dynamics of the conflict or any attempts at mediation, reconciliation or peacebuilding will be shaped largely by structural and social power dynamics and the transformative space often generated by war. Understanding their experiences and the possible spaces for their engagement in peace and security policy and practice, therefore, relies on an inherent acknowledgment of their multiple identities. By creating dichotomous policy frameworks in which young women do not explicitly, in all their diversity, fall

into either the WPS or YPS realm limits their capacities to engage with and leverage such policies.

Pigeonholing Issues

All too often it is the case that meaningful participation for women or for youth has been translated to mean women talking to 'women's issues' or young people raising 'youth issues'. Truly recognising diversity of experience and perspective means rejecting the limitations on what is a valid issue for defined demographics to speak to and encompassing all peace-related issues that reach beyond a stereotypical mandate.

Demanding space for women to be 'at the table' does not mean only allowing them to speak to sexual violence and victimisation but requires the acknowledgement that everyone has a valid contribution to make to all aspects of the peacebuilding process. Women experience society and conflict beyond roles as victims and will have contributions to make as business owners and professionals, advocates and activists, heads of families, people with caring responsibilities, consumers and human beings with fundamental rights. Interviews with youth peace advocates have similarly shown that young people see the 'pigeonholing' of youth work to contribute to the trivialisation and minimising of their perspectives and ideas.¹¹ Asking young people to speak to what those with power define as a youth issue, limits their contributions and creates a hierarchy of importance.

Weaving the aims of the WPS and YPS agenda together, whilst pushing it further to recognise the diversity of identities that inclusive peace should encompass and removing the limits to how and on what issues people's participation is deemed valid, will lay the foundations for genuinely participatory peace processes and generate innovation and vision for an inclusive and peaceful future.

Going further: challenging underlying assumptions in elite spaces

Currently the WPS and YPS agendas fail to interact in their inclusion of the diversity and intersectionality of people affected by conflict. However, resolving the current gaps in their language and framing does not just mean bringing the two agendas together but requires a fundamental challenge to the assumptions that underlie both. International structures and power dynamics remain intact in the aims of both agendas and it is these very structures that continue to limit who has access to influential peace and security spaces and whose contribution to peace and security is seen as valuable and valid. The importance given to 'grassroots' peace work compared to 'high-level' peace work is stark and fails to reflect the active roles of many community-based peace builders around the world. The access to these elite spaces is often reflected in the demographic split where women are far more likely to be found undertaking locally-based community peace work and men make up the majority of people at the table in high-level, elite peace negotiations.

Operating in a system that preserves these divisions and entrenches the low value given to the wide range

¹¹ Simpson, (2018), p13

of peace and security work that many young women (as well as young men, older women, traditional leaders across all demographics) are undertaking directly fails to meet young people's needs and demands. The Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, found that political inclusion was an essential demand from young people and that they considered the current status quo of exclusive political spaces as underpinning all other forms of exclusion. "At the same time, young people clearly stated that "participation" and "inclusion" are not unconditional. Inclusion in corrupt, undemocratic or oppressive systems is not valid, legitimate or acceptable to most youth. As a result, many young people create alternative spaces for political engagement, challenging the very notion of inclusion."¹² This should be considered to apply to international structures and institutions as well. It should not be assumed that including young voices in elite spaces will meet youth needs, nor will it resolve fundamental structural inequalities. By merely maintaining structures and asking youth voices or women's voices, or young women's voices, to adapt to the current modus operandi, the system is failing to adapt and progress.

Bridging the gaps and including diversity

Many of those working in peacebuilding have argued that there is a need for "more creativity and risk-taking when supporting grassroots youth initiatives". A need to move away from the elite structures and agendas that limit people to single identities and shape their voice according to predefined perceptions of their needs and/or the threats they pose.

There is a clear gap in the peace and security arena to promote the voices of the true diversity of youth engaged in building inclusive peace around the world. The vast and rich range of perspectives, ideas and voices are not being heard by those with the power to create wide-reaching change, and when youth voices are promoted, they are filtered through a lens that ensures they fit to the preconceived agendas that the international community currently works within.

As a cohort of young people working in this field, we have witnessed countless times the meetings in which youth participation is espoused as essential, and yet not one person under the age of 35 is invited to contribute. There is a need for a space in which young people can challenge the current structures that are failing to achieve true inclusivity, without needing to wait to be 'invited' and without needing to fit their ideas into the agenda that the international community is trying to push.

The role of OGIP

Recognising the ongoing gaps in the international community's approach to inclusive peace, OGIP aims to platform the voices of diverse, young people and advocate for their meaningful inclusion in peace and security policy and practice.

OGIP envisions a future where the voices and needs of young people are centred in peace and security spaces. In this future, policy and practice are grounded in intersectional feminist approaches, placing the transformation of power and gender dynamics as essential requirements to positive, inclusive and sustainable peace. By working directly

¹² Ibid, pxii.

with young people around the world who are active in peace and security spaces (as defined by them), OGIP can support youth working towards inclusive peace to make their voices heard.

As initial recommendations to addressing the challenges identified in this paper OGIP proposes:

- Future resolutions and agendas that center inclusive language and acknowledge multiple and intersecting identities that go beyond stereotypes and assumptions.
- A diverse range of youth advocates and practitioners working in peace and security are included at all discussions, roundtables, conferences, working groups (this is not an exhaustive list), not just those that focus on ‘youth issues’.
- Current ‘high-level’ peace and security policy spaces adjust perceptions on what is considered a ‘valid’ contribution to the debate, recognising the range of educational levels and styles that will shape how individuals communicate but not the legitimacy of their perspectives, ideas, and rights. By excluding those who currently do not communicate in the structure and language defined as acceptable by the elite, the international community is failing to listen to the views of those most affected by conflict.
- The creation and support of networks that truly amplify the diversity of people contributing to Peace and Security practice and policy rather than entrenching exclusionary spaces and facilitate mutual mentorship and partnership spaces that recognise the contributions and space for learning of all participants.

- Increased funding of research into preexisting youth work in peace and security that is founded on intersectional approaches to research and highlights the diversity of actors in this field. And the integration of these findings and participants into discussions at all levels of policy and practice to further shape strategies and outcomes.

This paper is the first of Our Generation for Inclusive Peace’s (OGIP) Policy Paper series.

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