



Gen-Forum 2024: Young Leaders for Women, Peace and Security in Asia and the Pacific

Strategic Outcome Document

July 2024

This is a plain text version of the document.

About this document

This outcome document was collaboratively developed by 25 young leaders from Asia and the Pacific who took part in a regional conference entitled, **Gen-Forum 2024: Young Leaders for Women, Peace and Security in Asia and the Pacific**.

They prepared this document under the leadership of the following five participants:

1. Khishigjargal Enkhbayar (Mongolia)
2. Robbie Francis Watene (Aotearoa/New Zealand)
3. Kainat Kamal (Pakistan)
4. Sanjana Ravi (Sri Lanka)
5. Elisa Shafiqah Binti Shahrilnizam (Malaysia).

The UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific provided technical support.

Background

There has been notable progress on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda over the last 20 years in the Asia and the Pacific region. However, critical gaps remain between the ambitions expressed by international commitments and the reality on the ground.

Women – especially young women – are still often excluded from decision-making, leadership and participation in initiatives and processes that address the region’s myriad peace and security risks and challenges.

The landscape of conflict and its underlying drivers are evolving, with gender dimensions of non-traditional security risks such as climate change, violent extremism, digital security and artificial intelligence posing new challenges to sustaining peace in the Asia and the Pacific region.

These emerging security challenges are exacerbating inequalities and instability, demanding new approaches, skills and a transformative shift towards sustainable and inclusive peace.

The Asia and the Pacific region needs young, and future generations of WPS advocates, practitioners and leaders to bring peaceful, innovative solutions and inspiring positive change.

The expertise and leadership of young women and their allies should be recognized and promoted, particularly in emerging peace and security domains.

Gen-Forum 2024 outcome

Gen-Forum 2024: Young Leaders for Women, Peace and Security in Asia and the Pacific' united a rising generation of 25 young peace advocates from 20 countries across Asia and the Pacific to examine regional peace and security challenges, including emerging security threats, and to identify innovative and concrete solutions to tackle these issues.

Organized by UN Women in partnership with the Australian Government, the objective of Gen-Forum 2024 was to build the expertise and leadership of young WPS champions in Asia and the Pacific, prioritizing youth perspectives in advancing the WPS agenda.

Through their diverse experiences and expertise, the youth leaders jointly developed a series of recommendations to support Member States in realizing their commitments to the WPS agenda in the region.

The concrete actions and next steps supporting their **six main recommendations** – as set out in this document – are solutions-oriented approaches that can be implemented by a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, development partners, multilateral organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs), media actors and knowledge partners.

Recommendation 1

- Advancing youth leadership in women, peace and security: promoting meaningful participation, protection and support through regional networks, intergenerational dialogue and enhanced access to resources and research

Foster young WPS experts' and practitioners' meaningful participation in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding:

Ensure that young WPS leaders are actively involved in all facets of conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts. Promote their representation and inclusion in government-led and intergovernmental mechanisms and initiatives.

Promote regional networks for WPS and youth, peace and security (YPS):

Encourage the development of regional networks comprising WPS and youth, peace and security groups and champions.

Promote intergenerational dialogues:

Facilitate meaningful connections between young women and men and older generations to bridge generational gaps, foster mutual understanding and build a peaceful future.

These dialogues should focus on preventing the recurrence of historical conflicts by incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences.

Increase inclusive and accessible capacity-building and educational opportunities for young WPS leaders:

Develop programmes and initiatives that cater to the diverse needs of youth, thus ensuring that they have the skills, knowledge and enabling environment necessary to effectively participate in WPS initiatives.

Sustain and expand Gen-Forum alumni networks:

Support Gen-Forum alumni to strengthen their networks and collaborate on conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. Support national and local peace initiatives led by Gen Forum alumni.

Expand funding access and technical support for young WPS leaders:

Current funding practices often favour privileged individuals with higher education and English proficiency, which is exacerbating inequalities. Re-evaluate policies to include people from diverse backgrounds and broaden the pool of applicants by expanding eligibility criteria. Simplify the bureaucracy in funding and grant schemes and introduce smaller-scale funding opportunities to improve accessibility for grass-roots organizations led by youth and young women.

Promote the meaningful participation of young women, men and persons with diverse gender identities in research:

Actively involve young WPS leaders in research efforts to generate evidence-based advocacy and develop targeted studies on young people's contributions to the WPS agenda.

Enhance civic space for youth and women-led CSOs and protect youth WPS experts and practitioners:

Legal frameworks should include protection mechanisms and be effectively enforced to ensure that youth and women-led civil society organizations can operate safely and receive adequate support for WPS work. Acknowledge the critical contributions of young women and men who invest their time and risk their safety for peace and security efforts. Implement robust protection mechanisms to ensure their safety and continued engagement.

Transform the youth bulge into a force for peace and stability:

The youth bulge and demographic shifts, especially in the Asia and the Pacific region, may lead to instability and conflict if not managed properly. Invest in young women to harness their potential to prevent conflicts, promote peacebuilding and social cohesion, and combat potential security issues stemming from demographic changes.

Recommendation 2

- Empower young WPS leaders to advance women, peace and security in the digital world.

Empower young people through digital literacy, safety and critical thinking:

Launch targeted and localized campaigns, led by young WPS leaders, to promote digital literacy, safety and critical thinking.

Integrate these elements into educational curricula to empower young people with knowledge about emerging digital security issues.

Advocate for human rights and transparency in data policies to protect women's rights advocates and peacebuilders from online harms:

Advocate for human rights principles and increased transparency to be at the centre of laws, regulations and corporate policies related to data collection, usage and protection.

Develop relevant policies and plans to protect women's rights advocates, including young advocates, from online harm.

Support youth and women-led online community engagement:

Host online national and regional forums on WPS to directly engage affected communities, including young women, men and other gender identities, and amplify their voices. Promote storytelling campaigns to share the experiences and perspectives of those affected by digital threats and harms, helping to understand and counter misinformation.

Allocate resources specifically for digital safety literacy initiatives led by women's grass-roots organizations. Develop digital accessibility strategies to ensure inclusivity for persons with disabilities.

Leverage artificial intelligence to combat gender-based online harms affecting young WPS leaders:

Ensure the proper use of artificial intelligence, such as to detect and combat gender-based hate speech, online misogyny, misinformation and disinformation tailored to local contexts and languages, as these harms disproportionately affect young WPS leaders. Promote the broader use of artificial intelligence in peace-tech initiatives.

Recommendation 3

- Empower young WPS leaders to address the nexus of women, peace, security and climate change.

Support and protect young WPS leaders addressing the nexus of WPS and climate change:

Support the development of young WPS leaders' skills to engage on climate change issues by providing scholarships for relevant studies, funding opportunities, recognition and awards. Additionally, ensure easy access to protection mechanisms for young WPS leaders and climate activists.

Support young WPS leaders' piloting of innovative climate, peace and security initiatives:

To effectively address climate change, support WPS leaders in piloting innovative initiatives that promote community-level climate change education. These initiatives should prepare future generations to understand the severity of climate change, learn about mitigation and adaptation methods, and foster a sense of responsibility to address it.

The pilot initiatives should focus on the specific needs of women, girls and marginalized communities, empowering them to combat the adverse effects of climate change locally.

Facilitate inclusive engagement of local young WPS leaders in climate security-related decision-making processes:

Create opportunities for young WPS leaders, including young women from conflict-affected local communities, to engage in climate change and WPS decision-making at the global, regional, national and local levels.

Facilitate the contributions of grassroots WPS leaders to ensure that their diverse voices and lived experiences are effectively represented. This will not only enhance the inclusivity of discussions but also ensure that decisions made at higher levels effectively reach and benefit local communities, overcoming various barriers.

Strengthen climate change-related policies to include WPS perspectives and ensure that WPS national action plans address climate change, peace and security-related issues by harnessing the leadership of young WPS experts:

Reinforce existing policies with enhanced accountability mechanisms to ensure adherence to WPS principles. Ensure that national and regional action plans and policy frameworks related to peace and security address climate change.

These processes should harness young WPS experts' leadership, reflecting their lived experiences, perspectives, solutions and aspirations.

Empower young WPS leaders to take active roles in the design and implementation of conflict-sensitive and peace-positive policies and programmes related to displacement and migration:

Rising sea levels and environmental degradation can lead to increased migration and displacement which, in turn, pose risks to societal peace and cohesion.

Empower WPS leaders to support the development of sustainable, gender-sensitive strategies, programmes and local initiatives that address immediate needs of women and girls affected by displacement and migration while building resilient communities capable of adapting to ongoing environmental changes.

Recommendation 4

- Ensure the meaningful participation and inclusion of young people with lived experience of intersectionality from the Asia and the Pacific region in the WPS agenda.

Actively engage young people with lived experiences of intersectionality from the Asia and the Pacific region in national action plans and policy development related to the WPS agenda, integrating intersectionality-related issues into its content:

Engage young people with lived experiences of intersectionality (including persons with disabilities, diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics, and individuals from ethnic, religious minorities and Indigenous Peoples) in all stages of WPS national action plan development, including in the planning, consultation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases.

Affirm intersectionality as a positive framework to be integrated into WPS national action plans and ensure that plans include specific attention to intersectional communities.

Ensure that policy is evidence-based, uses disaggregated intersectional data and includes the experiences of people with lived experience of intersectionality from the Asia and the Pacific region:

Data collection processes should target harder-to-reach populations, and all related activities should be delivered in linguistically diverse and accessible formats.

Data collection processes should follow an intersectional approach and be co-designed, led and delivered by people with lived experience of intersectionality. All data and evidence generation should be inclusive of intersectional communities.

Promote the specific inclusion and meaningful participation of diverse youth WPS leaders with lived experience of intersectionality from the Asia and the Pacific region:

Advocate for and support youth-specific inclusion when organizing international, regional and national forums, as well as in the context of developing policy frameworks.

Young WPS leaders with lived experience of intersectionality should be included, and their contributions should be valued as part of efforts to reform tokenistic approaches to youth engagement in peace and security initiatives.

Provide young people with lived experiences of intersectionality from the Asia and the Pacific region in resourcing and financial opportunities:

Resourcing and financial opportunities should enable young people with lived experiences of intersectionality to engage in and influence peace and security discussions and decision-making processes in the region. This can be achieved by prioritizing intersectionality in existing funding mechanisms and allocating targeted funding for individuals as well as organizations, programmes and practices that centre on intersectionality.

Additionally, individuals with lived experience of intersectionality should be provided with targeted economic opportunities such as training and professional development, employed in strategic roles, and be included in resource allocation decision-making processes. Funding and support should be increased for frontline and grass-roots organizations and individuals, especially those advancing diverse youth perspectives in WPS discussions and activities and those focusing on the human rights and safety of people with intersecting identities. Priority should be given to capacity-building activities for diverse youth WPS leaders and organizations representing intersectional communities, as well as local, national and regional women mediators' networks.

Recommendation 5

- Promote the engagement of young women peace and security leaders in the prevention of violent extremism.

Promote the engagement of young WPS leaders as agents of change to drive the development and implementation of gender-sensitive strategies for the prevention of violent extremism:

Misogyny is integral to the ideology, political identity and political economy of certain violent extremist groups. Such groups' propaganda and recruitment strategies frequently exploit gender stereotypes and misogynistic narratives. In order to effectively engage with the gendered dynamics of violent extremism and reverse its growing trend, it is critical that young WPS leaders are engaged in prevention and response efforts that prioritize women's rights, empowerment, participation and leadership.

The involvement of young leaders can significantly enhance the effectiveness of efforts to prevent radicalization and build resilient communities. By incorporating their unique perspectives and experiences, young WPS leaders can contribute to more inclusive and comprehensive prevention strategies that address the root causes of violent extremism and foster community resilience.

Cultivate a culture of early peace education by young WPS leaders:

Promote and integrate peace education and WPS principles into school curricula. Leverage digital platforms and social media to amplify the voices of young women and girls to disseminate peaceful counter-narratives to violent, misogynist or extremist ideologies and showcasing their contributions to peacebuilding efforts using safe platforms and messages tailored for young audiences.

Support young WPS leaders' efforts in community-led rehabilitation efforts:

Support inclusive community reintegration processes and gender-responsive rehabilitation programmes that include the perspectives and contributions of young women and young WPS leaders.

Recommendation 6

- Integrate women, peace and security principles and the voices of young wps leaders into other emerging issues, including outer space security governance.

Ensure that policies, legislation and strategies relating to space security and the governance of outer space are informed by WPS principles and promote the meaningful participation of young WPS leaders:

Review all space security-related issues through a WPS lens and align them with WPS commitments, ensuring young WPS leaders' meaningful participation in decision-making and policymaking processes related to space security and diplomacy.

For example, facilitate the participation of young WPS leaders from the Asia and the Pacific region in the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats and the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

More information

Gen-Forum 2024: Young Leaders for Women, Peace and Security in Asia and the Pacific took place from 21-23 May 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand.

UN Women organized this youth event under the Regional Framework Towards Peaceful, Inclusive Societies in partnership with the Australian Government. For more details and to access the laid out version of this outcome document, please visit <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/events/2024/04/gen-forum-2024-young-leaders-for-women-peace-and-security>.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this document are those of the Gen-Forum 2024 participants (the authors) and do not necessarily reflect the views of UN Women, the United Nations or its Member States.

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