Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund
Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative 2020

Promoting human rights and protection of women and youth peacebuilders and human rights defenders

28 April 2020
Overview

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► Relevant frameworks
► Key terminology
► Target groups: women, youth and LGBTI youth
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Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative 2020

- Two initiatives in one call: **Gender Promotion Initiative (GPI)** and **Youth Promotion Initiative (YPI)**
- Aim to support **new and innovative** ways to break down the different barriers faced by women and young people to engage in political and peacebuilding processes and to facilitate their meaningful participation in these processes at all levels

**GPI:**
- UNSC resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on WPS
- Innovative approaches that promote **gender equality** and **support women in peacebuilding**

**YPI:**
- Innovative approaches that support the **positive contribution of young women and men to peacebuilding**
1. Supporting **women and youth leadership, representation and participation** in peacebuilding processes and implementation of peace agreements.

2. Promoting **human rights and protection** of women and youth peacebuilders and human rights defenders.
General guidance

- A gender- and age-responsive conflict analysis is the basis for a strong project design.

- Gender does not equate women, it is also about power relations between men and women.

- Youth are not only ‘young men’.

- Different impacts of conflict and peacebuilding on people of different genders and gender norms or behaviors could be challenged or enhanced to promote peace.

- Women should not be viewed as victims with no agency or potential for peacebuilding nor youth as only potential ‘trouble makers’.
Relevant frameworks: WPS and human rights and protection

- UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions: *women’s human rights and gender equality are central to the maintenance of international peace and security.*

- International, regional and national HR mechanisms play an integral role in monitoring violations of women’s rights in conflict and post-conflict settings and inform decisions by the UN and other actors.

- An integrated approach by the international community can strengthen preventive actions and develop durable solutions to conflict situations to prevent re-emergence of conflict and sustain peace.

- **Protection** of women’s rights during and after conflict is one of the 4 pillars of the WPS agenda – link to *participation* and *prevention* pillars.
WPS and human rights and protection (continued)

- **Attacks and violence targeting women human rights defenders and peacebuilders show unprecedented high levels**, e.g. threats and harassment in the digital space, killings, sexual violence, abductions, forced disappearances, physical assault and mob violence.
  - **Intersectionality**: Those who experience multiple and intersecting forms (ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion,...) of discrimination are at particular risk.

- **Shrinking civil space**: National counter-terrorism legislation has been and continues to risk being used against civil society and human rights defenders, disproportionately affecting women’s civil society organizations that often take on the role of peacebuilders.
**YPS and human rights and protection**

- **Protection** is one of the five key pillars of YPS resolution 2250 (2015).

- Protection and full enjoyment of rights for young people is essential to inclusive and sustainable peace.
  - In order to achieve peace, it is essential that young peacebuilders and HRDs have the opportunity to promote their work without fear of threats or reprisals.
  - **Inequalities, discrimination, exclusion and persistent violations** are factors driving conflicts and are connected to the lives of young people.
  - For **young women**, age and gender discrimination intersect, rendering them more vulnerable, and even more so those from marginalized ethnic and religious groups.
  - **Exclusion** from political decision-making, educational and economic opportunities increases vulnerability to discrimination, SGBV and sexual exploitation.
YPS and human rights and protection (continued)

- The **rights realization gap**: from a human rights perspective, youth occupy a grey area between the rights and protections afforded to children and the rights and political entitlements that they should enjoy as young adults (The Missing Peace 2018).

SG’s Call to Action for Human Rights (2020)

A transformative human rights vision:

► Rights at the Core of Sustainable Development – Agenda 2030
► Rights in Time of Crisis – Human Rights risk analysis and prevention
► Gender Equality and Equal Rights for Women
► Public Participation and Civic Space – Inclusion, Participation
► Climate Emergency – Rights of Future Generations
► Human Rights at the Heart of Collective Action – Human Rights institutions
► New Frontiers of Human Rights – Human Rights online
Key terminology: Who are human rights defenders?

- Any person who, individually and in association with others, promotes and strives for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels (UN Declaration on HRDs).

- **Women human rights defenders**: all women and girls working on any human rights issue, as well as people of all genders who work to promote women’s rights and the rights related to gender equality.

- **Young human rights defenders**: any person aged 15-29, who promotes peace and human rights in their community.
Then, who can be HRDs?

- Doctor providing access to sexual and reproductive health during conflict
- Transgender woman who files a complaint against the police that attacked activists
- Young people expressing their views and taking action on climate change
- Journalists that expose abuses by security forces during protests
- Blogger who posts positive messaging against hate speech
- Young woman helping to secure access to an isolated community
- Parliamentarian who promotes rights of young leaders
- Youth CSO advancing the rights of LGBTI people
- Social worker providing mental healthcare to survivors
- Indigenous women acting to protect their community against forced eviction from their land
- Transgender woman who files a complaint against the police that attacked activists
- Human rights organizations working for gender equality and women's participation
- Young trade unionists peacefully demonstrating for labor rights
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- Youth CSO advancing the rights of LGBTI people
- Social worker providing mental healthcare to survivors
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What do we mean by human rights protection?

► It means ensuring respect for human rights in concrete ways for individuals. It is a desired outcome – where rights are acknowledged, respected and fulfilled by those under a duty to do so, and as a result dignity and freedom are enhanced.

► It results when - through specific actions - individuals, who otherwise would be at risk or subject to deprivation of their rights, are able to fully exercise them.

► It is based on international law, and focuses on both short-term responses where people are at risk, and on longer-term work to build and strengthen laws and institutions that protect rights and an enabling environment for enjoyment of rights — within countries and at the global level.

► In situations where individuals are at risk, protection can entail measures and interventions that contribute to preventing or minimizing the risk of harm and reduce any threats that can jeopardize their lives, or physical integrity and/or stop harm being inflicted to them.
What is the link to peacebuilding?

► Women and youth peacebuilders and HRDs are often at the forefront in conflict and post-conflict settings.
► They play an enabling role in bridging communities and State institutions, securing access to excluded, vulnerable and marginalized groups, supporting political and peacebuilding processes.
► Inequalities, discrimination, exclusion and persistent violations are factors driving conflicts and are often connected to the experiences of women and youth.
► Protection and full enjoyment of rights of women and youth is essential to building inclusive societies and sustainable peace.
► Youth peacebuilders and defenders often constitute the majority of population in countries with ongoing conflicts.
► Global environment of shrinking civic space curtails freedoms and rights of peacebuilders and defenders.
Examples of programmatic responses

► Engaging to promote human rights and civic space, e.g. rights to freedoms of opinion, expression, association and peaceful assembly, and participation in public life.

► Contributing to protection against harm, e.g. through awareness of intimidation and reprisals, addressing stigmatization and discrimination, supporting collective and self-protection strategies, and public support and recognition.

► Building skills and capacities, e.g. on human rights, to support participation in decision making and peacebuilding processes.

► Reinforcing inclusive and supportive networks that foster cooperation and exchanges, and build partnerships movements.

► Facilitating access and engagement with international and regional human rights bodies and mechanisms.
Target groups

- Women
- Youth
- LGBTI Youth
Women peacebuilders and human rights defenders

We still live in a world where women face exclusion from peace and political processes; where the number of attacks against women human rights defenders, humanitarians and peacebuilders continues to rise; where the attempted erosion of international human rights standards persists; and where xenophobia, racism, intolerance, homophobia, transphobia and violent misogyny continue to spread. We also continue to see high levels of conflict, violence and instability and are grappling with the imminent threat of climate change which, if unaddressed, will fuel further global insecurity and crises. Bold and urgent action is needed to ensure that next year’s twentieth anniversary of the women and peace and security agenda gives rise to concrete commitments and impactful action rather than empty rhetoric.

Report of the UN Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security 2019
Protection challenges

► Physical assault and death
  o Sexual violence by conflict actors
  o Domestic violence
  o Targeted killings
  o Abductions

► Increased gender-based violence
  o Ostracization
  o Spousal abandonment
  o Shelter/livelihoods deprivation
  o Denial of access to services

► Intimidation and harassment
  o Threats of violence to them/their families
  o Online harassment
  o Hate speech

► Judicial harassment and criminalization
  o Fake charges or threats thereof

► Involuntary self-harm
  o Health risks linked to undue stress/burnout
Enabling and exacerbating factors

► Generalized gender inequality
  o High levels of domestic violence
  o Unequal burden of care
  o Unequal access to formal employment
  o Unequal access to education
  o Harmful traditional practices and beliefs

► Weak institutions and Rule of Law
  o Insufficient and/or untrained security forces
  o Insufficient and/or untrained judges
  o Ineffective/non-existent complaint and referral mechanisms

► Ineffective protection mechanisms/service delivery
  o Lack/low-capacity protection mechanisms
    o Health services
    o Psycho-social
    o Legal services
    o Lack of medical supplies

► Weak support networks or lack thereof
  o Community
  o Professional

► Lack of infrastructure
  o Safe spaces for assembly
  o Safe houses
Examples of programmatic responses

**PREVENTION**
- Self-care awareness and support
- Community sensitization on the importance of women’s leadership/gender equality, positive masculinities
- Support in the establishment and functioning of community-based early-warning and protection mechanisms
- Engagement with actors to the conflict
- Building of safe spaces for assembly
- Awareness-raising/training for security forces, judges, legal counselors
- Creation of network-building spaces
- Advocacy for the adoption of protective legal frameworks
- Training of strategies on how to cope with and react to threats and harassment

**RESPONSE**
- Establishment/reinforcement and support of local protection and referral mechanisms in cooperation with local authorities. E.g. Hotlines, protection protocols, safe houses, apps
- Strengthening of and support to local protection structures. E.g. Health care, legal counselling, psycho-social services
- Ensure access to services for survivors of violence
- Ensure emergency livelihoods assistance to survivors of violence
- Assistance to judiciary and advocacy to combat impunity for violence against women peacebuilders and HRDs
“Young activists face harassment, attacks and limitations on their freedom of movement, assembly, association and expression. The work of human rights defenders is essential to all efforts towards peace and sustainable development.”

The UN Secretary-General’s first-ever report on Youth, Peace and Security
Protection challenges

► Approximately 408 million youth, aged 15-29, reside in conflict affected settings, and they often constitute the majority of population in countries with ongoing conflicts.

► Consultations with young activists at the grassroots level leading up to the publication of the Independent Progress Study on YPS revealed that they do not operate in safe environments.

► The discrimination that young peacebuilders and HRDs face often also includes age discrimination, further creating unique experiences of oppression that may remain unaddressed under the broader category of HRDs and peacebuilders.

► Young activists face sociocultural, political and legal, financial, physical and digital threats.
Threat type: Socio-cultural

Threat example:
Young people are often portrayed as perpetrators of violence, not advocates for peace.

Programmatic intervention:
Organize dialogues and interactive workshops with different actors (e.g. armed forces and police) to raise awareness on the important role of young people as peacebuilders and HRDs, and tackle stereotypes of young people as perpetrators of violence or passive victims. Find innovative ways to bring the peacebuilding and human rights communities together.
Threat type: Political and Legal

Threat example: Young activists face arbitrary arrests, imprisonment and prosecution.

Programmatic intervention: Draw media attention to the treatment of young activists in detention centers, create a social media campaign and engage political leaders and experts, including the Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRD, to advocate for protection of young people. Additionally, work directly in prisons between prison authorities and peacebuilders to support the dignity of prisoners and their proper integration into the community upon release.
Threat type: Physical

Threat example:
Young activists face numerous physical threats, such as kidnapping and torture.

Programmatic intervention:
Coordinate mental health and psychosocial support with counseling experts for young activists who were exposed to different physical threats. Think of ways to involve the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, as well as the Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
Threat type: Digital

Threat example:
Due to the COVID-19 crisis, young peacebuilders and HRD are moving their activism to online platforms, which increases their risks of being exposed to cyber bullying and other digital threats.

Programmatic intervention:
Organize trainings on digital security for young activists and create resources and tools to track and respond to digital threats and engage the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy.
LGBTI youth – definitions

**LGBTI**: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex.

**Sexual Orientation**: One’s physical, emotional or romantic attraction towards other people (e.g. heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual).

**Gender Identity**: One’s deeply felt sense of their own gender.
Protection challenges

► Criminalization of same sex relations and gender identity or expression of trans people.
► Aggravated forms of stigma and discrimination including sexual and gender-based violence, physical violence, summary execution, arbitrary detention etc.
► Deprioritization of the needs and human rights of LGBTI people.
► Invisibility of LGBTI people generally in conflict settings
► Impact of conflict on traditional gender roles which exacerbates social tensions around gender equality and negatively impacts LGBTI people
► Increased vulnerability of people including LGBTI people due to conflict on their livelihoods, food security among other spheres of life
Examples of programmatic responses

► Research on the impact of conflict on LGBTI people to adequately address any legislative or policy interventions.

► Review of reporting mechanisms on sexual and gender-based violence to ensure they include the right questions that include the experiences of SGBV faced by LGBTI people.

► Review of legislative or policy frameworks to ensure where possible they cover or address the needs of LGBTI people.

► Training of stakeholders depending on the context including with media, law enforcement, other UN entities involved in peacebuilding processes.

► Creating safe spaces including health and wellness of LGBTI people in the various settings.
Programmatic responses – useful tips

► Ensure the safety and security of LGBTI people including the principle of **do no harm**
► Enhancing gender-responsive approaches including intersectionality when making analysis
► Use the correct terminology
► Ensure programmatic interventions are built in consultation with LGBTI people
► Use existing resources across the system, including OHCHR-Regional Gender Focal Points, UN LGBTI Focal Points
► Use of already existing resources developed by UN entities, including OHCHR, IOM etc. on LGBTI people.
Useful resources

Born Free and Equal

Living Free and Equal

Background note on human rights violations against intersex people
https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Discrimination/Pages/BackgroundViolationsIntersexPeople.aspx

UN Free & equal factsheets (ENG) https://www.unfe.org/learn-more/
UN Free & Equal Factsheets (FR) https://www.unfe.org/fr/learn-more/

Summary of UN work +LGBTI Focal Points
Q&A