



**UN  
WOMEN**



“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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1 Participation and discrimination in the public sphere 10

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2 Young women's agency in formal

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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 Republican 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
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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, 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. It highlighted numerous successes and the growing normative base for WPS, evidenced by a significant increase in the number of peace es ad (-) n edease Td [(a s /T1\_3 15e9(h)30.5<92>(Of s)23.1e f)19(or )19.0.17

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 programming 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

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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.

Young people are defined in UNSCR 2250 as being

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”<sup>9</sup>.

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.

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<sup>20</sup> 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”. 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,<sup>22</sup> 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

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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.

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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.

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.<sup>23</sup> 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

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.<sup>27</sup>

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“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.”<sup>28</sup>



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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup>

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."<sup>32</sup>

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.

- Peace strategies inspired by UNSCR 1325 have been more likely to focus on and invite mostly older women.<sup>33</sup> 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".<sup>34</sup>

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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".<sup>35</sup>

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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.<sup>36</sup> 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

specialized support for their daughter(s), but received very little help or received it only after a long wait.<sup>42</sup> Reports also reveal that young women who joined 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.<sup>43</sup>

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.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup>



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. 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-funded. 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.

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,<sup>48</sup> they tend to be very active in civil society.<sup>49</sup>

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

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.<sup>50</sup>

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.<sup>51</sup> 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"<sup>52</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup>

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-

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 offline 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 permits anonymous cruelty and facilitates harmful acts towards women and girls."<sup>61</sup>

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women

Despite the early promise of the democratizing and equalizing effects of the internet on the global community, the web's anonymity has not necessarily attenuated pre-existing sexist patterns; indeed "the web may have heightened sexism, as people brought

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.<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup> 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”.<sup>69</sup> 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,

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. Further gender-sensitive exploration as to how these spaces can be supported and linked to formal decision-making pro-

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.<sup>83</sup>

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 in

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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.

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.<sup>89</sup> 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.<sup>90</sup> Although research on young women specifically as armed combatants is limited, some cases have been documented. Young women can sometimes join

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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



needs, interests and capacities of these historically-excluded populations.<sup>101</sup> 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.<sup>102</sup>

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

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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.

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### Gender dynamics and transformative DDR

Young female ex-combatants can face additional and compounded challenges, which need to be 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.<sup>117</sup>

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."<sup>118</sup> 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.<sup>119</sup> In that sense, leadership and skills demonstrated by women are often met with the reappearance of gender stereotypes in post-conflict situations.<sup>120</sup> 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.<sup>121</sup>

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."<sup>122</sup>

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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.

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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.<sup>123</sup> 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



In the aftermath of conflict, transitional justice mechanisms are typically judicial and non-judicial measures

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

such work. Education and outreach campaigns on national transitional justice processes have taken place in Morocco,<sup>153</sup> Canada,<sup>154</sup> Nepal,<sup>155</sup> and the Solomon Islands,<sup>156</sup> 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

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.<sup>165</sup> “Girls are particularly disadvantaged, being 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than boys in countries affected by conflict.”<sup>166</sup> 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.”<sup>167</sup> 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.<sup>168</sup>

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### 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.<sup>169</sup> 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.<sup>170</sup> 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.<sup>171</sup> 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.”<sup>172</sup> 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.”<sup>173</sup> 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. Young girls are also more vulnerable to SGBV while carrying-out traditional tasks (wood or water collection) in the surrounding areas of camps.

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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<sup>176</sup> through sustainable livelihood and social norms change interventions to enhance self-reliance and prevent violence against women, including young women and girls.

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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

- Policies and programmes: Gender mainstreaming is an essential requirement of sustainable peace; thus, the implementation of UNSC resolutions

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-General's target of 15 per cent of peacebuilding funds to





Forgotten females women and girls in  
post-conflict disarmament demobilisation  
and reintegration programs.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>109</sup> Webinar, "Rtition\_

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