



**WPS.**  
AUSTRALIAN COALITION

# **Young Women, Peace and Security in Asia and the Pacific**

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“

Women and girls  
lead the response  
on ground **but**  
are not present in  
decision-making.

Carolyn Kitione, Regional Manager,  
Shifting the Power Coalition

”

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# Section 1.

# Executive summary

This report responds to calls from members and allies of the Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security (The Coalition), who have drawn attention to the crucial role of young women in the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. It builds on growing evidence from researchers and civil society actors pointing to the limited inclusion of young women in the agenda, an issue that must be addressed to ensure its sustainability.<sup>1</sup>

Drawing on insights from young women peacebuilders, the report points to the barriers and challenges that continue to limit their recognition and inclusion. It showcases examples of good practice that can inform more inclusive, intergenerational approaches and strengthen linkages with the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda. Overall, it reinforces the message that greater recognition of and investment in young women's peacebuilding work is needed.<sup>2</sup>

The findings and recommendations in this report are based on a mixed-methods approach, including a desk-based literature review, key informant interviews (KIIs), and a virtual roundtable. In total, 21 interviews were conducted with young women activists, academics and practitioners, including 12 young women and 9 allies. Participants represented 11 countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines.

Interviews explored key themes, including:

- Young women's priorities and experiences related to WPS in the regions
- Opportunities for young women's engagement and representation in the WPS and YPS agendas
- Ways to meaningfully support young women's leadership in WPS
- How intergenerational learning can strengthen and sustain the WPS agenda, including key opportunities and challenges
- Examples of young women's contributions to WPS.

A virtual roundtable was also convened, bringing together 10 young women across Asia and the Pacific alongside representatives from the Coalition. It provided a space to validate findings, share perspectives, and shape recommendations to strengthen the WPS agenda for young women.

## Overview of key themes and findings

The following themes emerged from the research process:

- 1. Young women in Asia and the Pacific face multiple and intersecting peace and security challenges.** These are shaped by their diverse lived realities and local contexts and extend beyond traditional understandings of peace and security and are being influenced by regional and global trends, including rising authoritarianism and the global gender backlash.
- 2. Barriers persist that influence and undermine young women's recognition and engagement in the WPS agenda.** These include age and gender bias and other intersecting forms of discrimination, patriarchal social and cultural norms, exclusion and lack of representation in policy documentation and spaces,<sup>3</sup> unequal geographic representation, and limited funding.
- 3. Despite these barriers and challenges, young women's leadership and activism continue.** Young women are making substantial contributions to peace, environmental and other social issues, especially at the local level and often informally. There is a need to recognise and fund this work and view young women as the leaders of today<sup>4</sup> while increasing the decision-making roles available to them.
- 4. Engagement with young women is often tokenistic, ad-hoc and inconsistent and can be unsafe for them, while a lack of institutionalisation is limiting the contributions and impact that young women can make.** Improving engagement and allyship with young women requires addressing these poor practices in youth engagement, learning from young women's organisations themselves, and ensuring meaningful, consistent and institutionalised engagement. Greater opportunities for young women to exercise decision-making and hold accountability are needed.
- 5. Young women are responding to this by setting boundaries, demanding respect and seeking authentic intergenerational allies and champions to advance their aims.** They are seeking allies within the women's rights movement and other like-minded networks, and are calling on governments and regional institutions to take on a leadership role to initiate much needed cultural change.
- 6. Supporting intergenerational leadership and mentoring:** Advancing intergenerational leadership is essential for the future of the WPS agenda.<sup>5</sup> There are many instances of good practice that can be drawn on, though this requires acknowledging and dismantling structural barriers, including from within the WPS movement itself.<sup>6</sup>
- 7. Opportunities and potential roles for the Australian Civil Society Coalition on WPS:** There are several ways in which the Coalition can support a more responsive and inclusive WPS agenda that reflects the needs of young women in the region, which should include young women in Australia as well as elevating diaspora and student voices, helping to translate the WPS agenda from the local to the global, and convening and inspiring young women from Asia and the Pacific.

# Section 2.

## Motivations for this research project:

### Building an Inclusive Movement for Peace

Building a more inclusive WPS agenda is central to the Coalition's work. This priority has been identified through consultations, roundtables, government-civil society dialogues and convenings with diverse civil society representatives and community members across Australia, Asia and the Pacific.

To advance this objective, the Coalition has worked with its members and allies to translate local expertise and lived experience into more inclusive and responsive policy solutions, strengthening the evidence base for this work.

This has included, for instance, the production of one of the first global reports on First Nations Women, Peace and Security, exploring the relevance of the WPS agenda for First Nations Women in Australia. More recently, the Coalition partnered with Edge Effect to launch Towards a Queer-Inclusive WPS Agenda in the Asia-Pacific Region which examines the experiences of LGBTQIA+ communities in conflict and crisis settings across the Asia and Pacific regions.

This new report, which has been supported with funding from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs, builds on the work of the Coalition, its members and allies. In October 2025, the Coalition hosted a regional convening: *Twenty-five years on: Reigniting the WPS Agenda in Response to Growing Conflict and Climate Crisis*, bringing together 60 civil society leaders from 18 countries. Participants included women with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ communities, First Nations peoples, diaspora groups, young people and women's networks involved in peacebuilding from the Pacific, Asia and Africa.

A clear theme emerging from the convening was the need to invest in young women's leadership. One key outcome was the co-creation of a set of priorities to advance the WPS agenda, including a call to '*invest in intergenerational and local leadership*'.

This report is a first step in contributing to this call to action. It provides a clearer picture of the current context facing young women in Asia and the Pacific and offers guidance not only to meet this call, but to go further – setting out a roadmap towards a more inclusive and sustainable WPS agenda where *all women* are included.

***Invest in  
intergenerational  
and local  
leadership.***



# Section 3.

## Introduction

October 31st, 2025 marked the 25th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, a landmark resolution in which the international community explicitly recognised the unique impacts of war, conflict and instability on women, and their crucial role as community leaders, peacebuilders and humanitarian actors.

Over the twenty-five years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions that together comprise the WPS agenda, civil society actors and conflict-affected communities have pushed for a more-inclusive agenda.<sup>7</sup>

These efforts respond to longstanding critiques of the WPS agenda, which has often homogenised women and overlooked factors shaping their experiences of conflict, including age, race, ability, sexual orientation and migration status.<sup>8</sup> In 2014, Lesley Pruitt highlighted the agenda's focus on adult women, drawing attention to the gaps in Australia's WPS policy making with regard to young women.<sup>9</sup> In 2015, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2250, Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda, which recognised the active role of young people in preventing conflict and building sustainable peace.

Since then, there has been increased focus on the opportunities and cross-linkages between the WPS and YPS agenda.<sup>10</sup> However, scholar-practitioner Katrina Leclerc and others have questioned whether YPS agenda has been able to fill this gap, suggesting that young women may be slipping through the cracks of both agendas.<sup>11</sup> As such, young women's representation and place in both agendas remains a live issue, warranting ongoing inquiry and attention.

Young women are affected by conflict and insecurity in distinct ways. Research shows they face heightened vulnerability due to their gender and age, often compounded by other identity factors.<sup>12</sup> This can increase their exposure to risks such as human trafficking, sexual violence and other harms.<sup>13</sup> In Asia and the Pacific, the focus of this report, young women face increasing risks due to frequent climate and humanitarian disasters, while their participation and political leadership remain low, including in peace, security and climate decision-making spaces.<sup>14</sup> These challenges are occurring against a backdrop of persistent levels of gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV), with the Pacific experiencing some of the highest rates of GBV globally and both regions exceeding global averages.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, young women play critical but often unrecognised roles in sustaining peace and security, which often begins at the local level. As one interviewee explained:

*'WPS and YPS are not implemented in the Security Council in New York or Geneva. They are implemented by women and young people on the ground, from the margins and borderlands to capital cities around the globe. The international community advocating for these agendas...needs to look at how they are and aren't implemented at the individual level in the lives of the people in their communities.'*

**Shadi Rouhshahbaz, founder of Peace Mentors (Iran) and researcher**

Recognising young women's agency in peace and security, this report examines young women's experiences of conflict and insecurity, alongside their role in contributing to more peaceful societies. It was commissioned by the Australian Civil Society Coalition on WPS as part of its work on intersectional feminist approaches to WPS.

This report seeks to showcase and amplify the contributions that young women across Asia and the Pacific, and the organisations working alongside them, are already making in spite of these challenges.<sup>16</sup> It shines a light on best practices that are being implemented, offering opportunities for cross-regional learning and network building, as reflected in the case studies in Section 6.

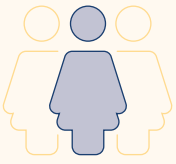
The report draws attention to the barriers and opportunities shaping young women's engagement with the WPS agenda, including structural challenges perpetuated by governments, regional organisations and, at times, within women's organisations themselves, as discussed in Section 5: Themes and Findings.<sup>17</sup> The report concludes with a series of recommendations for governments, regional organisations and civil society stakeholders in response to these findings.

# Section 4.

# Methodology

The findings and recommendations in this report are based on a multiple-methods approach, including a desk-based literature review, KIIs, and a virtual roundtable.

These activities were carried out between October 2025 and February 2026.



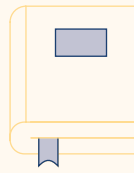
### **Defining young women:**

This report has taken a flexible approach to the definition of young women.<sup>18</sup> Interviewees were not directly asked their age and instead came to the research project as recommended by colleagues or acquaintances in the peacebuilding sector for their role as young women leaders and activists. All young women were aged between 18–35.

While the YPS agenda defines young women between ages 18–30, it is important to acknowledge that ‘no universal definition of “youth” exists,’ as Pruitt explains, the term is ‘deployed in complex and context-specific ways.’<sup>19</sup> Organisations in the Pacific, for instance, are adopting flexible definitions that reflect local cultural contexts, which may include marital status, as noted by one interviewee.

These nuances have practical and policy implications and are reflected where relevant. In this way, the report has sought to follow the lead of local organisations in their understanding of the term, while also noting concerns raised throughout the interview process that caution is needed to ensure younger women are not excluded or marginalised as a result.

Consistent with the Coalition’s commitment to supporting young women’s leadership, this report has been authored by a young woman. However, the author’s own positionality as a researcher based in Australia with a background outside the region on the upper cusps of the ‘youth category’ are aspects of this report that are acknowledged.



### **Desk-based literature review:**

A desk-based review of existing literature was undertaken on the theme of young women, peace and security with a focus on Asia and the Pacific regions when possible. Canvassing the literature, which includes United Nations and civil society reports and policy briefs, academic publications, online blogs and webpage pages, shows that a significant body of work has emerged in recent years on young women and WPS. Scholars from the region are increasingly shaping this field and are referenced throughout this report, demonstrating the importance of this issue for Australia, its neighbours and allies.

Civil society actors are shaping the narrative. Organisations such as the Global Network of Women Peace-builders (GNWP) and the World YWCA have developed policy guidance, tools and programs to support young women’s leadership in peace and security processes in Asia and the Pacific and beyond.

This literature has informed the subsequent phases of the project, shaping the interview content as well as the initial themes and findings discussed in the virtual roundtable held in early 2026. This report seeks to build on, amplify and compliment this work.

## Interviews and Virtual Roundtable

A total of **21** interviews were conducted between December 2025 and January 2026, including:

- **12 young women from Asia and the Pacific**, above the age of 18 and below the age of 35, with most women in their early-to mid-twenties and above
- **9 allies, including academics and civil society representatives.**

Interviews were held to explore in greater detail the findings of the literature review and to gain an understanding of young women's perspectives and priorities on various themes, including:

- Perspectives and priorities on WPS issues regionally, including on the four pillars: participation, prevention, protection and inclusive relief and recovery
- Young women's engagement in WPS, including their representation and participation in implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) and Regional Action Plans (RAPs) in Asia and the Pacific regions
- WPS and YPS linkages and how to leverage both agendas to support young women
- Creating a more enabling environment to support inclusive young women's leadership in WPS locally, nationally, regionally and globally
- Intergenerational learning and knowledge transfers for sustaining the WPS agenda
- Young women's contributions: Local examples and case studies of how young women are mobilising in their communities to advance WPS efforts. This is reflected in the four case studies in Section 6, which were drafted with the support of representatives from Conciliation Resources, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, Shifting the Power Coalition and the World YWCA. Representatives from these organisations participated in semi-structured interviews, provided reports and other materials for the case studies, which they also reviewed.

As one expert in the YPS field highlighted, many of the young women interviewed for the project are vocal and experienced advocates who are already working on these issues in their communities and beyond. Some may wish to gain greater recognition and acknowledgment for their work and contributions. With this in mind, interviewees were provided the option to have their quotes attributed to them or not. This was done by sharing prospective quotes to be used in the report with interviewees, who reviewed them for accuracy and clarified their preference to remain anonymous or not. In this way, the report has sought to highlight the voices of these young women while also respecting their agency and decision-making.

The interview findings were compiled alongside insights from the literature review process to develop an initial set of key themes.

**Participants represented 11 countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Tonga, the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines.**

The subsequent roundtable brought together ten young women from the region alongside representatives from the Coalition. The initial findings and themes identified from the literature review on young women and WPS were presented to attendees and discussed in more detail for validation. Participants were invited to collaborate to develop a set of recommendations for the Australian Government and other regional stakeholders. These are incorporated in Section 7 of the report. The following sections seek to capture the results of the research process.

***“Be bold about investing in young women’s leadership from a very young age.”***

Suchi Gaur, Ph.D. Senior Director of Strategy and Operations, World YWCA



# Section 5.

## Key Themes and Findings

Six key themes emerged from the research. While not exhaustive, they provide a foundation for advancing this agenda and inform the recommendations in the final section.

Firsthand insights from young women and their allies are included throughout.

# 1. Young women in Asia and the Pacific face multiple and intersecting peace and security challenges, shaped by their diverse lived realities and local contexts

## These challenges are broad and include:

- Climate insecurity and heightened risks in humanitarian contexts, including during climate-related disasters
- Economic insecurity and precarity, especially in areas still recovering from COVID-19
- Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including emotional abuse and technology-facilitated violence
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)
- Child, early and forced marriage
- Food and water insecurity
- Barriers to education and meaningful employment.

## These challenges are shaped by broader regional and global trends

The global backlash against women's rights and gender equality, shrinking civic space, rising militarisation, and regional migration flows are shaping and intensifying young women's peace and security challenges across the region.

One interviewee from the Pacific highlighted the impact of seasonal work on young women's safety:

*'A lot of our [Pacific Islanders participate in] a seasonal working program. They are parents... and they leave their children behind with relatives or with guardians to take care of them. And that's why the rate of gender-based violence is accelerating.... It's not blaming the seasonal working program. It has its own benefits. But if we are to prioritise the children or... our youth back at home, that is a problem and that is contributing to gender-based violence.'*

### KII, Pacific Regional Perspective

The same interview also reflected:

*'Gender-based violence is not only to be defined by let's say, men beating up their wives or men beating up their children. There are other sorts of violence, such as abuse not only physically, but also emotionally.'*

This highlights broader understandings of violence, including emotional and non-physical forms, which are often overlooked in traditional security frameworks.

At the same time, young women are not only adversely affected by these trends but are also shaping them. As one roundtable participant noted, young people, including young women, are also actors in the far-right and anti-gender movements, for instance. Recognising this complexity is important to understanding young women's experiences across the region, although this has not been explored in this report.

## 2. Barriers persist that influence and undermine young women's recognition and engagement in the WPS agenda

### Age and gender bias, and patriarchal social and cultural norms

Young women continue to face discrimination based on age, gender and other intersecting identity factors, shaped by patriarchal social, cultural and religious norms that limit their leadership, participation and decision-making. As interviewees emphasised, patriarchal norms that favour men, seniority and hierarchy, often reflected in the belief that “wisdom comes with age”, continue to limit young women's participation and leadership. This includes peace and security spaces, and regional organisations.

Research drawing on interviews with World YWCA program participants in conflict and post-conflict settings in Asia and the Pacific highlights similar barriers. Katrina Lee-Koo and Lesley Pruitt identify several barriers to ‘young women's peace building’; noting that ‘gender and age bias has limited support for, and recognition of, young women's peace building efforts.’<sup>20</sup> As interviewees emphasised, young women's presence in spaces where they are often seen as not belonging, is vital. Young people are directly impacted by these issues and have important contributions to make in designing solutions.

*‘Young people need to be within discussions of peace and security, like preventing and countering violent extremism, peacebuilding, social cohesion and conflict resolution... all of those areas are often seen as spaces where young people should not engage.’ Erika Isabel Bulan Yague, YPS Scholar-Practitioner*

At the same time, young women are often perceived as beneficiaries or in need of protection, rather than as leaders.<sup>21</sup> Analysing the language of Australia's first WPS NAP and government statements during its implementation, Lesley Pruitt found that ‘overall, the tendency throughout the NAP is to identify *girls* [which includes young women] as needing protection while focusing on agency and action as the domains of *women*’.<sup>22</sup>

More recent literature confirms that ‘in policy and practice...[young women] are commonly characterised as helpless victims.’<sup>23</sup> This contrasts to the characterisation of young people as agents of change or *current* leaders, which is emphasised in the YPS literature.<sup>24</sup> Because of this, some authors have suggested the YPS agenda as a better avenue for young women.<sup>25</sup>

Organisations across the regions are working to change these narratives. Initiatives like the World YWCA's *RiseUP! Program* (Case Study #4) are supporting young women's dignity, agency and leadership. Other organisations featured in this report similarly challenge limiting perceptions, highlighting young women's agency and their critical contributions to peace and security.

### Identify factors shaping young women's engagement in WPS

Young women's engagement in WPS processes is shaped by intersecting identity factors, including socio-economic status and education, geographic location, ability, caste, religion, refugee or migrant status and more. These identity factors impact young women's peace and security experiences and priorities or activism agendas.<sup>26</sup> Interviewees drew attention to a lack of diversity when young women are represented in peace and security policy spaces, noting that those with higher education or socio-economic status had greater access to speaking and policy influencing opportunities.

As one interviewee noted, there are many individual barriers that compound to limit young women's participation:

*‘Social and financial capital are required for young women to participate in conversations... decision-making spaces and forums can be alienating...’ Access issues related to language, passports, visas, credit, ‘are barriers to making these spaces more inclusive.’ Lynrose Jane Genon, Young Women+ Leaders for Peace, Philippines*

Despite this diversity, shared experiences based on gender and age-based discrimination persist.<sup>27</sup> This is reflected in the literature, which highlights the distinct challenges young women face in conflict and crisis settings.<sup>28</sup>

In South-East Asia, identity factors, including ethnicity, socioeconomic status and class are especially influential, shaping young women's access to political decision-making and their ability to contribute to peace and security processes.<sup>29</sup> Erika Isabel Bulan Yague and Linh Nong highlight the limitations of approaches that fail to account for these intersecting dynamics. They call for policy frameworks grounded in feminist peace theories that centre the contributions of young people, including young women, recognising the value of their diverse identities. As they argue, this shift requires a comprehensive approach that incorporates deeper analysis of intersectionality, agency, and the need for inclusive peace processes.<sup>30</sup>

## Exclusion and lack of representation

Research consistently highlights the formal exclusion of young women from leadership roles and decision-making spaces.<sup>31</sup> Lesley Pruitt notes that, despite being significant stakeholders, young women have not been centred within the WPS agenda.<sup>32</sup> Writing over a decade over, she observed that 'little ha[d] been done to ensure young women have a seat at the table when it comes to the WPS agenda,' urging Australia to 'exercise political leadership' to address this gap and drawing attention to the ways in which young women are already contributing to peace building efforts.<sup>33</sup>

This disconnect between participation and decision-making remains evident. As several interviewees highlighted:

*'Women and girls lead the response on ground but are not present in decision-making.'*

**Carolyn Kitione, Regional Manager, Shifting the Power Coalition**

Placing young women's absence within the WPS agenda front and centre, Katrina Lee-Koo highlights their limited representation in both the literature on gender and conflict and 'formal [WPS] global policy architecture,' an absence which is also reflected in the limited inclusion of young women in WPS NAPs.<sup>34</sup> Through her analysis of WPS resolutions, NAPs, and other documentation at both global and national levels of WPS governance, Katrina Lee-Koo makes the case that 'without... [a]...strong conceptual anchor at the global level, nations have little downward pressure to consider the roles that young women play in building peace and security.'<sup>35</sup>

Yague and Nong further examine this exclusion, noting that despite the historical involvement of young people in social change movements in Southeast Asia – including anti-colonial struggles, human rights, and democracy movements – and their ongoing engagement in grassroots peace work, they remain largely excluded from formal processes.<sup>36</sup> This is particularly pronounced for young women and marginalised groups who, alongside their peers, have led protests, promoted peace online, and influenced policy, in places like Mindanao, Philippines, though this work and contribution is not often formally recognised.

Similarly, early YPS NAPs have often failed to reflect young women's perspectives, mirroring gaps identified within WPS agenda, as Lee-Koo's work highlights.<sup>37</sup> As explained by **Katrina Leclerc, international specialist on WPS-YPS and Lecturer at the University of Winnipeg:**

*'The majority of the first NAPs on YPS that started emerging in 2021 were almost all gender blind except Finland, which was gender-inclusive because it talked about gender diversity. It wasn't necessarily about young women or gender diverse youth. It was gender diversity in a larger framework....[an informal study by GNWP found] ...that only about 25% of NAPs that existed on WPS in 2021 had any mention of youth or young women.'*

These findings reflect broader peace research on the 'disconnect between formal and informal demonstrations of agency, visibility and capacity,' a gap explored by **Helen Berents** and **Caitlin Mollica**, who highlight the significance of the formalisation of young people's role in peace building through the YPS agenda as part of the United Nation's embracing of more inclusive understandings of peace.<sup>38</sup>



***“Young people  
need to be within  
discussions of  
peace and security.”***

Erika Isabel Bulan Yague, YPS Scholar-Practitioner

## Unequal representation across geographic regions

When young women are engaged within the WPS agenda, participation is often unequal.

Young women from the Pacific, in particular, are frequently underrepresented in regional and global WPS spaces, despite leading on key issues, including gender, peace and climate. As explained by **Carolyn Kitione from the Shifting the Power Coalition**:

*'In Asia and Pacific youth spaces, including a major regional WPS Convening, where despite numerous youth being in attendance, Pacific youth were significantly underrepresented. Moreover, these same young people were invited to "celebrate" regional achievements that they were not adequately involved in from the start, leading to a sentiment that despite the strong contributions of young women from the region towards WPS aims, this was not being recognised.'*

Interviewees also highlighted a lack of Pacific representation within YPS spaces, suggesting that there may be more opportunities for young women in Asia to access the YPS agenda than their Pacific counterparts. This may be linked to the origins of the YPS agenda, which emerged within the context of countering violent extremism (CVE), a more pressing issue for Asia as multiple interviewees pointed out, as well as practical barriers, such as global convenings often taking place outside Pacific daytime hours.

## Limited funding

Declining development funding is having a direct impact on young women's work. One of the consequences is an increased risk of competition for limited resources between organisations. As one interviewee from the Pacific explained, this *'is not good for building relationships and solidarity.'*

This risk, particularly within the United Nations system is also highlighted in the literature, with **Helen Berents** and **Caitlin Mollica** emphasising the need to name and address the structures that create this dynamic to leverage the opportunities created by both agendas.<sup>39</sup>

Limited funding creates additional risks. As one interviewee noted, financial constraints facing women's rights organisations also threaten to *'increase the risk of failing to fulfil one's duty of care when seeking to engage and work with young people'*, which to do well, is a human resource heavy task.

Many interviewees reflected on the challenging funding landscape facing both the WPS and YPS agendas. They expressed frustration and a sense of missed opportunity, though some maintained cautious optimism, grounded in the progress their work has already achieved.

Victoria Kahla from the World YWCA reflected on both the risks and resilience within the sector:

*'The funding cuts are going to mean that the spaces to do this work are lost...[they] are going to mean that the new emerging leaders who would have taken up this work are not going to have opportunities to emerge. However, we will find ways. We always do. We always will... I am realistic about the situation we're in. I'm also realistic that hope is not an amorphous thing. It is more like a little sprout coming up through the concrete.'* **Victoria Kahla, Program Manager, World YWCA RiseUp! Asia Pacific.**

At the same time, interviewees underscored the urgency of investing in young women's leadership, highlighting the transformative potential of sustained and meaningful support. As Suchi Gaur noted:

*'We need to be bold about investing in young women's leadership from a very young age. Investment in the peace and justice agenda is often restricted to advocacy and research, not building the capacity of young women to lead these conversations from the get-go.'* **Dr. Suchi Gaur, Ph.D. Senior Director of Strategy and Operations, World YWCA**

This was echoed by Carolyn Kitione:

*'[There is] a lot we could contribute to the conversation around YPS/WPS given resources and provided an opportunity to do so.'* **Carolyn Kitione, Manager, Shifting the Power Coalition**

### 3. Despite these barriers and challenges, young women's leadership and activism continue

Across Asia and the Pacific, and in the face of stereotypes and intersecting forms of bias and discrimination, young women continue to step-up as peace builders and changemakers in their communities. As Erika Isabel Bulan Yague and Helen Berents note, young people are 'not waiting for permission to contribute to peace', despite the barriers they face.<sup>40</sup>

#### Young women as today's leaders

Young women across the regions are founding and leading organisations and playing vital roles in both building and sustaining national and regional networks of youth and young women activists.<sup>41</sup> Their work spans social cohesion and peace building efforts, locally led climate response and resilience, gender justice, demilitarisation and decolonisation, as well as supporting the leadership capacity of other young people. This leadership is not new, as young people, including young women, have long played critical roles in the social change at the local and national levels.<sup>42</sup> As the literature underscores, young people, including young women, are 'current leaders' and should be recognised as such.<sup>43</sup>

In the Pacific, the **Shifting the Power Coalition (StPC)** is actively challenging assumptions and increasing the visibility of young women's voices in humanitarian peace building initiatives. Rather than subsuming them under a broader "youth" category, which often centres young men, the Coalition intentionally uses the term 'young women' as opposed to 'youth' or 'youth representatives' in their work. As **Carolyn Kitone** of StPC explains, this is a way to '*reclaim language and emphasise young women's priorities and leadership.*' In this way, the StPC is working to change the narrative by drawing attention to the current contributions young women are making as leaders in their communities.

#### Young women's informal peacebuilding

Much of young women's peacebuilding work takes place informally, particularly in contexts where WPS NAPs do not exist. These significant contributions to 'everyday peace' are too often under-appreciated, under-reported and un-resourced.<sup>44</sup>

In 2018, UN Women identified a need for gender and age disaggregated data, as well as greater documentation of good practices, case studies and research that highlights young women's role in supporting inclusive peace.<sup>45</sup> While the body of research around this has certainly progressed since 2018, the most recent 2025 United Nations Secretary General Report on WPS notes that 'informal and community-level peace efforts led by women...remain under documented.'<sup>46</sup>

Research by Lynrose Jane Genon highlights how young women in the Philippines are strategically leveraging social media platforms such as Facebook and TikTok tools for peace advocacy.<sup>47</sup> By engaging local audiences where they are well positioned to affect positive change, these young women are contributing to 'everyday peace' through acts of 'digital peace-making,' using non-violent communication to 'create spaces for respectful disagreement and demand accountability from institutions' which is especially needed in a context where young people have been excluded in formal peace processes.<sup>48</sup>

As Genon explains, drawing on the work of Young Women+ Leaders for Peace–Philippines:

*‘Social media is where young women feel free to engage, where young women have agency – they do not need permission to be there...there are less roadblocks to engage online.*

*‘Young people are challenging the dichotomy between online and offline...these are not two different arenas, there is continuity between both...Some engagement is more fruitful online... in the Philippines, it can be safer, especially during elections where there may be sporadic or election related rifts. Engaging in person may require more time, resources and the farther the workshop, the less likely a young woman will be allowed by her parents or husband to go. **[For young women, working online] is intentional and strategic and not all face-to-face engagement is productive or generative.**’*

*‘Young women [online activists] also have a network of [support] offline, a safety net when [they are] attacked online...they are using unique, nuanced and relational ways to navigate online harms.’*

*‘In the Philippines, [where] Facebook is very prominent. Young women are using [it] to demand accountability. This is a strategy that is being used.’*

The important and strategic use of social media by young women was echoed by others, with one interviewee offering a regional perspective reflecting that:

*‘There’s a... significant increase in online accounts, like students, youth, young people, young girls, they make their own platforms and online advocacy through social media, usually Instagram, to...raise public awareness... [on] gender equality, tolerance PCVE, harmony, interfaith, there’s a lot of that, so social media is definitely one of the platforms that young people or young women are using right now to share their messages and stories.’*

Leading researchers on young women and WPS in Asia and the Pacific, Katrina Lee-Koo and Lesley Pruitt, offer recommendations to ‘recognise and support’ the informal leadership role of young women as peace builders, which they argue requires four changes: adopting a more expansive understanding of peace that embraces a social justice approach; ensuring spaces for young women to convene and develop their networks and leadership confidence; providing training both at the community-level but also externally to support young women’s leadership; and ‘a commitment to strong, intergenerational and gender-inclusive leadership.’<sup>49</sup> Lesley Pruitt has called for continued efforts to build the evidence base on gender and YPS in Asia and the Pacific, encouraging researchers to work closely with local communities to better capture and reflect this everyday peacebuilding work.<sup>50</sup>

Such recommendations strongly resonate with the interview findings and WPS Coalition’s approach, which embraces a broad understanding of peace and security.

#### 4. Engagement is often tokenistic, ad-hoc and inconsistent and can be unsafe for young women, while a lack of institutionalisation is limiting the contributions and impact that young women can make

Young women are pointing out poor practices and trends in youth engagement. While headway has been made, there remains significant opportunity for improvement. Young women's organisations themselves can offer important lessons for others to do better.

Many interviews identified opportunities to improve engagement and allyship with young women. Too often, it was pointed out, stakeholders are treating their engagement as an activity to be completed and where young women are engaged, it is often the same individuals. As a result, the breadth and depth of young women's experiences and expertise are not being captured in policy and decision-making discussions.

Young women are increasingly calling out this shortcoming in youth engagement. As one interview from the Pacific noted, stakeholders *'just want us to show face,'* underscoring that the issue is not addressed by merely *'allocating seats to young women but ensuring they can actively engage and contribute to outcomes.'*

This concern was echoed by other interviewees. As two interviewees reflected,

*'An issue is ... there is no safe space for young women to...engage in because their counterparts are not ready to actually engage them... it's a tick box exercise for them to be present within that space but not really heard and it's very common.'* Erika Isabel Bulan Yague, YPS Scholar-Practitioner

*'Right now, the engagements are just a one-off or ad hoc or still at the tokenism stage, which is very unfortunate, because this is not what the youth wanted. They want more consistent and more meaningful engagement and... those opportunities are very few and far in between. So, it's not effective and it's not sustained.'*

KII, Asia

Interviewees also emphasised that governments and other actors, including regional bodies and organisations, often lack connections to youth leaders and may be unsure how to consult or when. While long-standing actors in the WPS space are often well-known and engaged often, this is often not the case for young women, despite the significant work they are undertaking within their communities and beyond.

This highlights the important role that established WPS actors could play in supporting young women's network-building and increasing the visibility of their contributions.

Moreover, when young women do participate in regional or global spaces, they incur **risks to their personal safety** in their home country that are often not appreciated nor adequately mitigated, with one interviewee wondering: *'What [if any] protection mechanisms are available for young women?'* As interviewees reflected:

*'Protection is a growing concern, especially as young people want to engage but feel the space is more dangerous than ever. In the Asia-Pacific region(s), we are seeing new restrictive laws, weakening privacy protections, and growing reprisals. This is creating an increasingly hostile environment for human rights defenders.'*

KII, Asia and the Pacific

*'The issue is going back to their country and feeling safe after [speaking up]... one of the young people I work with, she is a Burmese activist in Myanmar...she was really outspoken about the Rohingya issues. She's able to speak on regional and global platforms on issues... but then when she gets home, she receives threats... [and] doesn't feel safe... there's no protection mechanism, and it gets forgotten... and this is a broader issue. It's not just young people who have these issues. It's all activists within this space.'* Erika Isabel Bulan Yague, YPS Scholar-Practitioner

Even where young people contribute to policy discussions, the natural question is, as another interviewee explained:

*'What's next? Where does this [information] go from here? After "entryways" have been identified, and a "collection of evidence" compiled, how will it be used to make an impact?'* Carolyn Kitione, Regional Manager, Shifting the Power Coalition

This concern was echoed by others:

*'[A young woman was] invited to join a discussion...[on] PCVE (Preventing and Countering Violence Extremism)...then they were invited to speak, and then after they spoke, they never got acknowledged or they never really got feedback...or reached out to after, and it was a very hostile environment where they also felt unsafe.'* Erika Isabel Bulan Yague, YPS Scholar-Practitioner

Within this context, young women want more meaningful and consistent engagement opportunities, yet this is rarely done well. For instance, while opportunities for young women's engagement have increased, participation is often voluntary or *'taken for granted'*. Yet, young women are eager to engage in policy spaces, whether within the framework of the YPS or WPS agendas. Many are seeking career pathways to do this work more sustainably in order to support themselves and their families. One interviewee expressed wishing they could spend more time on this work:

*'Being a peace builder is not an easy job... it's very mentally fatiguing, and I...I feel very privileged to say this in [our country's context] because our peace issues are relatively vague... our challenges in terms of security are... not seen by our eyes.'* KII, Asia

At the same time, a lack of formal roles where young women are provided decision-making power and accountability remains a significant challenge. One way to address this is through more institutionalised forms of engagement, a recommendation consistently echoed throughout the interview process.

As one interviewee underscored, such opportunities do not emerge organically but 'must be proactively created'. This includes developing more merit-based roles that recognise young women's expertise and contributions. Establishing steering committee and board positions for young women, alongside ensuring they are adequately supported to step into these roles, were identified as promising practices.

Organisations working with young women underscored that it takes time, resources and commitment to ensure this is done well and are prioritising the safety of the communities in which they work. As one interviewee from the Pacific explained, meaningfully engaging young women is a time and resource heavy task. Care is required to *'ensure that young women aren't exploited for their knowledge'* and to create spaces for young women to speak safely about the issues impacting them.

## 5. Young women are setting boundaries, demanding respect and strategically seeking authentic intergenerational allies and champions to advance their aims

To address these poor practices and challenges, young women are setting boundaries and demanding respect. As one interviewee explained, young women are *'putting up boundaries and [challenging] systems that have not enabled their participation,'* and are opting not to engage in spaces where tokenism, paternalism and a lack of meaningful engagement persist.<sup>51</sup>

Within this context, young women are seeking out and strategically 'navigating allies' to advance their aims within the WPS and YPS movements, but also climate and other adjacent spaces, where their contributions are recognised, enabled, and funding is available. At the same time, they are also seeking allies within governments and regional institutions to take on a leadership role to initiate cultural change and institutionalise better youth engagement. As one interviewee explained:

*'Creating a network is very important to lobby for the WPS/YPS agendas... [We] must engage with and build bridges with the government. It is essential to create structural change.'*

**Lynrose Jane Genon, Young Women+ Leaders for Peace-Philippines.**

WPS NAP drafting and review processes present important opportunities for civil society and government allies to work with and engage young people. Failing to meaningfully engage young people in this process is a missed opportunity. As one interviewee shared:

*'I was a part of the consultation, but it was fairly engineered already. It's like our inputs were just to validate what they have [already done] ...it's not a bad WPS NAP... it just could have been done... better.' Kil, Asia.*

However, as some interviewees pointed out, too often, those working with young people or in the youth sector, including in government, are no longer young people themselves. As they explained, without a 'regeneration' of the individuals working in this area, there is a real risk of older individuals speaking for and on behalf of young people. For this reason, a critical look internally at who is sitting on youth councils, chairing youth groups, or managing government departments and units focused on youth is urgently needed.

Young women are aware of these harmful dynamics and are intentionally managing leadership transitions as they age out of the 'youth' category. This presents a particular challenge for the YPS agenda, which lacks the same level of institutionalisation and longevity as WPS and is shaped by the inherent 'temporality' of age, which multiple interviewees noted. As one interviewee shared:

*'We were invited together as young women to [a Regional Ministerial Meeting]. Us being at the older side of young women and having younger women come with us... it was empowering for us to lead them but also empowering for them being given the opportunity. So as young women who are almost phasing out of the age group, I think it's about empowering each other before we phase out, so that these younger women can lead' Lucille Chute, Fiji National Hub Coordinator, Shifting the Power Coalition*

*'We also have young women who are actually leading their own organisations. It's very inspiring to see, and...it's always a good example for the rest of us young women, seeing this.... looking up to other young women who are phasing out of the young women age group,' Chute explained.*

## 6. Supporting intergenerational leadership and mentoring

### Advancing intergenerational leadership, instances of good practices and addressing gatekeeping

Across the regions, there are numerous initiatives supporting young women's leadership in WPS and fostering intergenerational learning and knowledge sharing. However, some interviewees noted that many of these efforts remain nascent, with implementation sometimes limited or existing largely on paper.

As one expert observed, these initiatives often operate across both the WPS and YPS agendas, though they are not always explicitly framed in this way. Recognising and showcasing this work as part of the WPS-YPS nexus was identified as an important opportunity to strengthen and amplify its impact.

While this work is being done, many individuals interviewed for this research project spoke of the importance of creating more opportunities for 'two-way mentorship,' 'co-leadership' and 'intergenerational dialogues.' Speaking of the importance of intergenerationality in WPS, one interviewee explained:

*'Intergenerational dialogue is essential because it supports power-sharing. With limited resources, creating space for new advocates is difficult but these dialogues help. Women currently engaged in these processes get to know the younger generation, understand their contributions, and are often more willing to open space and share power, especially in the development of national action plans. Instead of consultation alone, we need co-production, co-design, and co-leadership – a genuine partnership approach.'* KII, Asia and the Pacific

Critically, as one interviewee explained, such initiatives must ensure capacity building is reciprocal, recognising that older generations – including within women's organisations themselves – may lack skills to effectively work with young people. As one young women peacebuilder suggested, there is a need to consider more deeply *'what successful intergenerational practices look like,'* from the perspective of both young and older women.

### Acknowledging and dismantling structural barriers from within the WPS movement

While there are many instances of older women 'opening gates' and acting as strong advocates for young women, gatekeeping remains a challenge and is undermining intergenerational learning opportunities.<sup>52</sup> In some spaces, older women continue to speak for young women, which can alienate and deter them from working with key actors in the movement.

While interviewees emphasised a strong regard and respect for older feminist leaders, they underscored the need for two-way intergenerational learning; noting that *'sometimes the barriers are also within social justice movements themselves.'* As explained by Carolyn Kitone, Regional Manager, Shifting the Power Coalition, there is still a need for *'older women to trust young women with [their] vision' by 'enabling intergenerational spaces'.*

As another interviewee reflected:

*'WPS is a hard space to be a young activist in sometimes, because the older women are... never going away...and there's no space for that kind of [young women's] leadership...[young women have said that] YPS was a space where young women can actually have leadership and independent voices, and not just be asked to make the tea.'* Helen Berents, Griffith University

Some interviewees expressed hesitancy in engaging in regional WPS and peace building spaces due to gatekeeping by some groups and individuals, instead focusing on building allies across the climate movement instead. In some instances, young women are opting to work around experts in certain spaces, with one interviewee noting they *'don't want to share an agenda when being talked down to.'*

As another interview explained, there is also a need to consider who holds, and is willing to pass down, institutional knowledge to enable young women to stand in solidarity and help advance a more common agenda. Noting that unless structural barriers within the movement are named, ***‘entryways will continue to be blocked for young women’s leadership’***. As one interviewee suggested, it is important that those in the movement question their mandates to speak on young women’s priorities, especially ***‘if [they are not] opening up the space for others’***.

While gatekeeping was raised by multiple interviews, the support young women received from older mentors was noted. At the same time as young women are navigating gatekeeping, informal mentorship is also taking place within the WPS space with more experienced leaders helping young women navigate protocols and ***‘intentionally creating [and opening] spaces’*** for them.

Instances of young women transitioning from program participants into staffed roles were shared in various instances, with these initiatives often acting as the first step in a young women’s leadership journey. This was often done with the support and encouragement of older women in the movement.

A common practice recognised by those who spoke to this informal, intergenerational mentorship, was the value of inviting young women to accompany or shadow experienced leaders and the need to provide funding for this (for instance, to attend and participate in regional and global WPS opportunities as a team). As one interviewee who works closely with young women noted, ***‘this is empowering for us [as older women], and them too [young women],’*** noting the mutual benefits of intergenerational collaboration.

The importance of intergenerational leadership and challenges is also a theme in the literature. Drawing on research with youth and older peace activists in Myanmar, Nepal and Papua New Guinea/Bougainville, researchers Katrina Lee-Koo and Lesley Pruitt identify key barriers to ‘intergenerational peace leadership (IPL)’; including contested power dynamics and hierarchies between older and younger generations.<sup>53</sup>



**Intergenerational dialogue is essential because it supports power-sharing.**



**KII, Asia and the Pacific**

## 7. Opportunities and potential roles for the Australian Civil Society Coalition on WPS

### Supporting peace and security with young women in Australia

One theme that emerged during the interview process was the limited space within Australia for young people, particularly young women, to discuss peace and security priorities. Given its experience convening discussions on domestic WPS issues through roundtables and consultations, the Coalition was identified as well placed to help facilitate and guide this work.

As one interviewee explained:

*‘One thing Australia still needs to do when it comes [to] young people is...[ask] what does peace mean for young people in Australia and what does that look like?...How do we create this space for young people to talk about the meaning of peace?...Especially with the years of experience and the hard work that a lot of women-led groups have done in this space, there’s a lot of learning to also pass on to the generation of young people. Maybe this is the lens that is missing within the youth discussions within the space in Australia’ Erika Isabel Bulan Yague, YPS Scholar-Practitioner*

Interviewees highlighted that in contexts such as Australia, youth coalitions working on YPS have emerged to advance the agenda within their communities. The work of these groups often reflects broader understandings of peace and security, aligning with the WPS Coalition’s own advocacy, which emphasises the importance of addressing WPS domestically.

### Advancing both agendas

The research process also noted that the Coalition could further consider how, within its own context, it might strengthen support for both agendas moving forward. While distinct, there was a clear view that the WPS and YPS agendas can – and should – work more closely together.<sup>54</sup> As underscored in the research, the agendas are ‘complimentary’ and both play an important role in advancing more ‘inclusive peace.’<sup>55</sup> As explained by **Helen Berents** of Griffith University:

*‘youth are facing a double uphill battle of trying to gain legitimacy in the public sphere and leverage that legitimacy for government action, which is...where the allyship and intergenerational...engagement is really valuable and important and is the potential strength of where those two agendas overlap. We talked about young women falling through the cracks, but it’s **also that point of mutual investment across the agendas, where they can actually be used for greater effect together.***

This sentiment is also expressed by other experts in the field. As **Katrina Lee-Koo** and **Lesley Pruitt** argue, ‘for peace leadership to be truly inclusive and sustained, peacebuilders must find ways to bring these two tracks of the inclusive peace agenda together,’ offering a model for ‘intergenerational and gender-responsive...peace leadership’ to guide this work.<sup>56</sup>

Recent research by the **ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR)** also provides recommendations to ‘enhanc[e] Interlinkages’ between both agendas, emphasising their synergies ‘are crucial and should be strongly promoted especially in the context of ASEAN.’<sup>57</sup> The report provides valuable recommendations for ASEAN programs, policies and partnerships to advance *both* agendas.<sup>58</sup>

### **Elevating diaspora voices and engaging students**

The importance of including the needs, priorities and realities of young women from the diaspora in WPS discussions was also raised. As one roundtable attendee emphasised, these may differ, for example, among Pacific Islander young women residing in Australia or New Zealand and those individuals living in their home countries. It was also recognised that many young women activists are choosing Australia to pursue graduate-level studies on WPS and have strong networks and connections with young women peacebuilders and are often thematic experts on various WPS and YPS issues. There is an opportunity for the Coalition to work more closely with these young women.

### **Translating the WPS agenda from the local to the global, convening and inspiring young women**

The Coalition can also play an important role in connecting the work of young women in Australia and across the region to the WPS agenda. As a regional convener and leader, it is well placed to inspire and support young women to engage with the WPS community, as highlighted by Naomi Woyengu from HausKuk Initiative in Papua New Guinea.

This includes strengthening engagement at the local level, where young women should be provided with the space and opportunities to convene and contribute meaningfully to WPS efforts within their own contexts. Reflecting on the role of the WPS Coalition, Woyengu noted:

*“There’s definitely a role that the Coalition can play in terms of holding space for young people... there’s [also] a need for linking or connecting how WPS translates to other work that is being done...whether it’s working with the diaspora in Australia, or connecting the diaspora with the region and other networks of young people in Australia.”*



**There’s definitely a role that the Coalition can play in terms of holding space for young people.** ”

**Naomi Woyengu, HausKuk Initiative,  
Papua New Guinea**

# Section 6.

## Case Studies: Good Practices in Asia and the Pacific

The following section includes four case studies from Asia and the Pacific that highlight good practice and explore some of the issues raised in the research process in more depth, from the perspective of young women and allies.

They are a response to calls made for more evidence and stories of young women's peacebuilding efforts.

## CASE STUDY #1:

# Supporting young women's contributions to community-level peacebuilding in Bougainville

In Bougainville, young women are stepping up as local peacebuilders and are using their conflict analysis, negotiation and mediation skills to address long-standing tensions and strengthen social cohesion in their communities. In a fraught political context characterised by ongoing post-referendum violence, climate-related insecurity, and economic and social challenges, young women are making important contributions to community resilience and demonstrating why young women's meaningful inclusion in WPS is essential.

To increase young women's participation and influence during this critical moment for the region, eighty young women from the north, central and southern regions participated in an intensive peacebuilding programme through the Supporting Bougainville Women's Capacities for Peace Project. Implemented by Conciliation Resources in partnership with the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation (NCFR) and the Bougainville Women's Federation (BWF), the project strengthened young women's peacebuilding skills and leadership capacities while fostering intergenerational collaboration with peacebuilders from well-established women's organisations.

Young women who participated in the training are already applying these skills. In Torokina and Konnou, South Bougainville, they are mediating communal tensions and conflict. Leveraging perceptions that young women are more neutral or impartial negotiators because of their age, they are helping to bridge deep-rooted divides, and at the same time, challenging patriarchal and age-based customary and social norms that often limit their agency, leadership and participation. Despite

'not having any living memory of the conflict' and feeling sidelined by older women in the peacebuilding process as a result,<sup>59</sup> these actions demonstrate diverse ways young women are *already* contributing to sustainable and inclusive peace at the local level – contributions that, while vital, often go unrecognised.

By investing in the capacities of young women to learn from and alongside their older peers, the project provided an important space for the exchange of experience, knowledge, and perspectives between generations. It delivers structured intergenerational learning opportunities that centre and strengthen the capacity of young women to contribute to peace today. The project is a strong example of the type of initiatives that young women themselves have identified as a priority for work in this area, and the inclusion of young women in the country's peace processes is crucial for its legitimacy and durability.<sup>60</sup> Sustaining and scaling-up investments that recognise and foster young women's skills, capacities, leadership and agency in the peacemaking process in Bougainville are essential to sustaining and accelerating progress that has been made.<sup>61</sup>

## CASE STUDY #2:

# Bridging the WPS and YPS Agendas: The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and Young Women Leaders for (YWL+) Peace Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the Young Women+ Leaders for Peace (YWL+) Network is working directly with young Rohingya women in Cox's Bazar, the world's largest refugee camp, to support their roles as peacemakers within their communities.

Over one million Rohingya refugees live in Cox's Bazar, where a lack of access to formal education and threats against personal safety and security are impacting the daily lives of young women and girls – who make up the majority of the camp's residents.<sup>62</sup> Young women in the camp face heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse, early and forced child marriage and human trafficking, amongst other challenges.<sup>63</sup> In the face of these threats, the YWL+ network Bangladesh is working together with the Rohingya young women forming YWL+ Rohingya Refugee Chapter, which is creating a pathway for young women to come together in advancing and protecting their rights in a context where their leadership and agency are often undermined and overlooked.

Since its founding in 2018, the YWL+ Bangladesh has supported hundreds of Rohingya and Bangladeshi young women and girls by creating safe spaces to convene and delivering tailored initiatives to raise awareness, build their peacebuilding skills, and leadership capacity. Through addressing gaps identified by young women themselves – such as numeracy and literacy skills in Cox's Bazar – the YWL+ network is strengthening young women's decision-making and ability to access information in the camps.

As a result, young Rohingya women are gaining greater awareness of their rights and increased capacity to contribute to conflict resolution and social cohesion in their communities. YWL+ Bangladesh conducted over 100 workshops, supporting more than 1,500 Bangladeshi and Rohingya women and girls by increasing access to services and informal education in Cox's Bazar.

To foster the economic empowerment of Bangladeshi and Rohingya women and young women, the YWL+ network led knitting and crafting sessions. This training not only provided participants with skills but also resources and connections to the local market, enabling them to generate income. Participants shared that learning this craft would not only bring them economic independence but also dignity and respect – they will have a voice in their family and won't be mistreated.

The YWL+ Bangladesh Network is also responding to climate risks facing the country: Following devastating floods in 2024, the Network worked with young people to provide gender-responsive relief by distributing aid to vulnerable families including young women and girls in the Harbang Union of Cox's Bazar District – an area that is often neglected. It has also organised theatre performances in Ramu, Cox's Bazar- leveraging the role of art for social change to challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes and promote social cohesion and harmony.

The YWL+ Network in Bangladesh is an initiative of the GNWP. The broader program has received global recognition as an example of peacebuilding best practice by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his [first report to the Security Council](#) on Youth, Peace and Security.<sup>64</sup> Working across the nexus of the WPS and YPS agendas, the YWL+ networks are supporting young women in Asia and the Pacific to create and sustain peacebuilding networks and to respond to issues at the local level, working closely with stakeholders, especially local governments, to localise the WPS and YPS agendas.<sup>65</sup>

The Young Women Leaders+ for Peace Bangladesh network is helping to redefine leadership and participation by moving beyond tokenistic representation of young women, as explained by the Network: *'All of their initiatives, regardless of scale, confront inequality, transform communities, and inspire others... young women's voices should not only be heard but also placed at the centre of decision-making, because when women and young women lead, peace follows, making the world a better place for ALL.'*<sup>66</sup>

### CASE STUDY #3:

## Young Women Leading Peace and Humanitarian Response in the Pacific

Across the Pacific, the Shifting the Power Coalition (StPC), which is a regional alliance of 15 women-led organisations from eight Pacific Island Forum countries, is amplifying the leadership of young women in peace building and humanitarian response. Through its Young Women Leaders Network, StPC is investing in young women's self-esteem, confidence, and networks as well as acknowledging their crucial role as first responders when disasters strike and in building community resilience. In doing so, StPC is building a feminist humanitarian system, one that can respond to the Pacific's increasingly frequent and severe climate-induced disasters, while at the same time challenging patriarchal cultural and social norms that limit young women's agency.

With a model focused on peer support, intergenerational mentoring, and cross-regional learning exchanges, the StPC is providing its network of young leaders with opportunities to share their perspectives and expertise with their peers and older women, strengthening their role within the region's feminist movement. In this way, the StPC is helping to dismantle barriers that often hinder intergenerational collaboration – such as gatekeeping and a reluctance to make space for emerging leaders, which is a key challenge for the WPS agenda that extends beyond the Pacific.

Guided by feminist partnership principles, including mutual learning, valuing diversity, openness that builds trust, mutual benefit, and courage to spur innovation, StPC offers a strong example of best practice for centring young women within the WPS Agenda. Embodying many of the values that young women peacebuilders are calling for, the StPC highlights the substantial contributions they are already making through locally-led peacebuilding, inclusive humanitarian action and climate justice work – despite often not having decision-making power and being underrepresented in formal spaces.

This includes centring the voices of young women in all their diversity, ensuring the next generation of leaders reflects the full spectrum of lived experiences across the region. In humanitarian response and disaster-risk reduction, this means addressing the heightened risks facing young women with disabilities, ensuring their voices are included in decision-making on disaster preparedness at all levels, and reflected in policies created from the ground up.



**The lived realities of young Pacific women have changed much quicker than what WPS agenda can respond to.**



Carolyn Kitone, Regional Manager,  
Shifting the Power Coalition

## **Pacific Young Women's Peace and Security Priorities:**

Through their work with the StPC, women in the Young Women Leaders Network are expanding traditional understandings of peace and security to reflect the complex realities of their communities. As Carolyn Kitone, Regional Manager of the StPC explains, while conventional definitions often focus on military or defence, young women in the network are emphasising that insecurity also includes economic instability, climate change, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Climate insecurity is a particularly pressing issue, with displacement and relocation becoming increasingly common.

At the same time, the ongoing social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to affect young women. Many families are still recovering from pandemic-related disruptions, which are contributing to strained rural infrastructure, including access to drinking water, increased unpaid care responsibilities, and heightened economic pressure on young women. These factors, combined with regional labour mobility schemes which indirectly push young women and girls into living arrangements outside their familial homes, are heightening risks of gender-based violence, while limiting opportunities for young women to engage in policy and leadership spaces.

The Coalition believes it is important to ensure young women's voices are reflected in the WPS agenda, as they have unique experiences and understandings of peace and security that are often neglected when others speak for them, particularly in Asia-Pacific regional spaces, where young women from the Pacific are often under-represented or misrepresented by older counterparts.

For Lucille Chute, Fiji National Hub Coordinator for StPC, when identifying their priorities, young women consistently emphasise the human security dimension of the WPS agenda. They explain that when they cannot provide food for their households, ***'this is what causes violence for them... it's these small things that can cause violence if you don't have them in your home – basic needs such as food and safe drinking water.'*** Often discussions return to the topic of disaster-related insecurity, with young women focusing on their protection needs during humanitarian evacuations. These experiences differ significantly between urban and rural areas, noting that in rural settings, young women's access to information and participation are key issues, whereas in urban areas food security, education and health are significant concerns.

According to the Coalition, acknowledging these broader drivers of insecurity is needed so that the WPS and YPS agendas align with the experience of young Pacific women. This is at the heart of StPC's work: ***'to shift the focus to the practical realities of diverse women's lives and how policy frameworks are played out on the ground.'***

***'The lived realities of young Pacific women have changed much quicker than what WPS agenda can respond to'*** says Carolyn Kitone, acknowledging the incremental pace of the agenda over the last 25 years, which has been slow to respond to emerging issues – especially the climate crises – one of the most significant challenges facing the region.

## CASE STUDY #4:

# RiseUp! Empowering Young Women Leaders across Asia and the Pacific

Since 2010, over 7,000 young women have participated in RiseUp! Asia and the Pacific, a signature initiative of the World YWCA that fosters the agency, dignity, and leadership of young women in Asia and the Pacific. Embracing a *'feminist, progressive, community-based and intergenerational'* approach,<sup>67</sup> RiseUp! embodies values and best practices that are often overlooked when young women are engaged within the WPS agenda.

### Addressing intersectional forms of exclusion

Central to this approach is a commitment to ensuring that young women in all their diversity are included in the program. A recurring theme in the interviews was that initiatives targeting young women often fall short in reaching those from underrepresented and marginalised communities, especially young women with disabilities and those living in remote and rural areas. RiseUp! is working intentionally to centre these voices. Speaking on the theme of climate and WPS, a regional expert on inclusion explained,

*'Young people are often excluded and rarely given meaningful opportunities to engage with the links between climate, peace, and security – whether in formal spaces or informal conversations.*

*This exclusion is even more severe for youth from marginalised communities, and it deepens further when intersectional identities are taken into account. Young women with disabilities, including psychosocial and/or intellectual disabilities, those living in poverty, and those who are also part of the LGBTQI+ community are frequently left out entirely. As a result, the voices we hear most often tend to be those of more privileged youth. Ultimately, the more layers of discrimination a young woman faces, the less likely it is that her perspective will be included or heard.'*

Addressing this exclusion is at the heart of RiseUp! model. A recent example of this is efforts by the YWCA of India to support young women from hearing impaired communities in accessing information about their sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Through engagement with this community, it was clear that too often, these young women were accessing information at a much later stage than their peers, which undermines their decision-making and agency and puts them at greater risk.

### Co-Creation and Not Speaking for Young Women:

It is this emphasis on co-creation that distinguishes RiseUp! As a young woman involved in Rise Up!, Mathew explains: *'In most policy work, young women are seen as beneficiaries – policies are made without their engagement. What's beautiful about RiseUp! Asia Pacific, initiated with the support of the Australian government, is a space to co-create with young women.'*

The issue of others speaking for young women is a persistent challenge in WPS spaces. As one regional interviewee from Asia shared, it is not uncommon *'to have senior officials meeting on youth, who are not youth themselves – they are from the ministries of youth, youth unions or national youth councils...but their decisions and policies are designed by the youth of their countries.'*

RiseUp! is challenging this pattern by centring young women's voices. Although not explicitly focused on the WPS Agenda, by enhancing young women's agency, leadership, and participation, RiseUp! is directly addressing young women's WPS priorities. Participants gain skills to identify and tackle community challenges, including SRHR, menstrual health, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), child marriage and political representation. As one RiseUp! program coordinator emphasised, *'These are the issues that have come from the grassroots up.'* In March 2026, the World YWCA will be launching its new Peace and Justice RiseUp! Manual, increasing the organisation's focus on peace and justice and young women's WPS leadership.

In **Nepal**, RiseUp! participants are navigating online safety, human rights, child marriage, and citizenship issues, reflecting the broad security concerns impacting young women in the country. Although patriarchal norms and customs remain strong, progressive households are increasing their support for young women to participate in leadership initiatives offered through the program.

In the **Solomon Islands**, RiseUp! participants are using their skills to address national issues – advocating for reforms to the country's child marriage law, which permits marriage as early as fifteen in some contexts.

Reflecting on her own experience in the program, a RiseUp! participant from the Solomon Islands shared: *'RiseUp! really built me up... I was shy and not confident. After the program, I often talked with male leaders or my father. Now, I am working to change others' perspectives on young women and gender equality. People see me differently – as one of the young women leading the community.'*

### **Good Practice: Mentorship and Fostering Intergenerational Leadership**

Many RiseUp! participants continue their engagement with the YWCA beyond the program. Some alumni have joined as staff members or taken leadership positions, benefiting from sustained mentorship within the organisation. This reflects the World YWCA's commitment to ongoing leadership support, recognising that *'leadership skills and attitudes that are cultivated over a period of time' and that the journey 'is not prescriptive or linear.'*<sup>68</sup>

The YWCA's youngest National Secretary General, **Dhiya Ann Mathew, YWCA of India** credits her own leadership success to the intentional and ongoing mentorship she received through the organisation.

*'I see myself as a product of intergenerational leadership. Right after my postgrad I joined the YWCA as a junior staff...then I became general secretary in one of the YWCA Local Associations in Kerala. I had many leaders that I looked up*

*to who tried to bring me into the YWCA system. I've been in the system for 14 years now. I am in this position not because of one instance – I've grown with the organisation. That was possible because of leaders who were there before me. They mentored me and brought me to this level... when I reflect on that point... the key here would be two-way mentorship,'* a model that recognises that both older and younger generations have knowledge and expertise that each group can benefit from.

This is reflected in the [Intergenerational Triangle: A Guide to Shared Leadership](#), which guides the World YWCA's in implementing this approach. The World YWCA is also intentionally including young women in decision-making roles – a clear call from the young women interviewed for this report – who emphasised the need for more opportunities to hold decision-making power. As explained by **Mathew**:

*'We have taken an intentional decision to bring young women as decision makers on our board. Thirty percent of board members must be young women. They come in as presidents, vice presidents, and stakeholders, making decisions for a larger group. We are trying to break down past factors that favoured ages or genders.'*

Again, this reflects the World YWCA's long-standing reputation as a leader in young women's engagement, recognising the important role of the sector itself in pushing for systemic change.



**We have taken an intentional decision to bring young women as decision makers on our board.**

**Dhiya Ann Mathew, YWCA of India**

# Section 7.

## Recommendations

At the virtual roundtable participants were invited to consider *‘what needs to be done differently or change for young women to lead on the WPS Agenda?’*

These recommendations reflect the responses through the roundtable and interviews. Together, they provide a roadmap for stakeholders to work collectively to support young women’s recognition and leadership in the WPS agenda and more broadly.

## 1. All Stakeholders

### 1.1 Advance the WPS and YPS agendas together

Continue to advance the WPS and YPS agendas across Asia and the Pacific. As one interviewee explained, both agendas can be implemented in tandem, and it is not necessary to *‘work on WPS first.’*

### 1.2 Support strengthened cross-regional solidarity amongst young women peacebuilders

Create spaces and fund opportunities for young women in both regions to share strategies, exchange knowledge and build solidarity across both agendas, including grassroots and informal networks of young women.

Extra care and effort must be taken to ensure such networks do not reinforce exclusionary practices that can occur in WPS spaces. Establishing a Community of Practice or network of young women working on WPS/YPS in both regions was recommended, although again, engaging ‘beyond the usual suspects’ in bringing this group together is crucial.<sup>69</sup> It is also important to anticipate and seek to mitigate inequality that can arise across ages in spaces for young women. Many interviewees expressed concern that young women at the upper end of the youth spectrum often speak for and on behalf of all young women, excluding the voices of younger women.

### 1.3 Facilitate and fund intergenerational knowledge exchanges across regions

Build bridges between generations by intentionally creating spaces and funding opportunities for ongoing intergenerational dialogue, mentoring and collaboration between WPS organisations and young women-led groups and movements across Asia and the Pacific.

### 1.4 Institutionalise and implement best practices in youth engagement that support young women’s roles as decision-makers

Adopt best practices in youth engagement to end tokenism and other poor practices identified in this report. This requires meaningful, consistent and institutionalised engagement and a commitment to creating more opportunities for young women to exercise decision-making roles and hold accountability.

### 1.5 Elevate young women’s diverse and informal leadership

Elevate the work of young women-led organisations and activists in the region and resist homogenising young women.<sup>70</sup> As one interviewee explained, this requires engaging beyond the usual suspects in both YPS and WPS spaces, which is needed to *‘grow and legitimise both agendas.’* As the same individual explained, it means taking seriously who is, and is not, represented in a space and/or discussions.

### 1.6 Take stock of the progress of both agendas and address the accountability gap between NAPs on paper and implementation

While many WPS NAPs may be strong on paper, implementation remains a challenge. One of the ways that this can be improved is through working with civil society to bridge silos across government and other stakeholders.

Civil society organisations such as the **GNWP** are seeking to address this by working with governments at the national and local levels to advance both the WPS and YPS agendas. This work includes convening relevant stakeholders, including youth and women leaders, the media and journalists to form local steering committees that work together. As Ahmed explained, *‘this work begins with local implementation, which is then shared nationally.’*

Ensuring civil society actors can fulfill their important role in holding governments accountable for their delivering on WPS commitments that target young women, but also more broadly, including in implementation of WPS/YPS NAPs and RAPs is vital. Young women must be included in these monitoring and accountability mechanisms. The WPS Coalition, who for many years has undertaken a shadow-reporting function and hosted government-civil society dialogues, can play a role in supporting this inclusion.

## 2. Australian and other Governments

### 2.1 Sustainably fund young women and regional WPS initiatives to engage young women

Invest in initiatives led by young women and ensure funding reflects the nature of young women's work. This is often informal and 'fluid' yet at the same time *'reflect[ive] of young women's ability to adapt to and navigate constraints,'* as one attendee at the virtual roundtable explained.

As the same interviewee added, young women are often part of *'informal networks rooted in solidarity and rapid response.'* These unregistered and hybrid collectives *'provide a critical bridge to and are 'most responsive to local needs,'* yet often face pressure to register and institutionalise in order to access funding, which may make them more vulnerable to government surveillance. In response to this, funding mechanisms should recognise the strength of digital organising, which extends the visibility and reach of young women's work while allowing them to mobilise across borders and build online communities.

Ongoing funding for entities such as the **ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR)**, who play a crucial role at the regional level in advancing WPS and connecting governments with civil society networks, is also recommended. ASEAN-IPR is well placed to support strengthening the young women's role in WPS and in supporting member states in implementing these recommendations.

### 2.2 Support contexts where WPS NAPs do not exist

Countries in Asia and the Pacific with a strong track record in WPS, including Australia, should consider how to support countries who may be sceptical or reluctant to develop WPS NAPs. As explained by **Shadi Rouhshahbaz, founder of Peace Mentors (Iran) and researcher,** while some states agree with WPS, without a NAP, there may be limited opportunities for civil society organisations to hold these governments accountable. This is especially complicated where countries are isolated or not part of regional organisations, as **Rouhshahbaz,** points out, adding that individuals from these contexts are *'completely marginalised and excluded from all WPS agenda conversations.'* There are opportunities for civil society organisations to work with more closely diaspora communities, including in Australia, to advance the WPS and YPS agendas within such contexts.

## 3. Regional organisations and bodies

### 3.1 Elevate young women in WPS and YPS to a regional priority

Multiple interviewees identified the Philippines as a key WPS and YPS ally and with its forthcoming role as chair of ASEAN, it is a strategic opportunity to elevate the profile and role of young people in peacebuilding, especially young women, and formalise their engagement in policy and decision-making spaces. With one interviewee noting that, *'it is a decision of leaders to help elevate good young people to higher levels and be heard... a decision-by one person could change this system.'*

This opportunity was noted by various interviewees, who regarded the country as a strong example of intergenerational leadership on WPS, noting that older generations have 'opened the doors' for young women to lead more so than in other contexts.

### 3.2 Connect young women's expertise to regional policy actors

There is an opportunity to connect young women's expertise to policy and institutional actors to support their influence and networking building. Efforts to include young women within regional bodies as policy experts and decision makers must be institutionalised, as opposed to one-off, ad-hoc engagements, which are too common.

As one interviewee reflected, it is not only the role of women's organisations to do this work:

*'[A] lot of women's organisations are the ones actually...doing mentoring and creating ... space...[I remember] this young person asking... why are we always putting the burden on women when it should be institutionalised within systems already?...It's a really good point, why should women's organisations take the burden to...care for or mentor young people, when it actually should be within systems to act to have their voices within?'* Erika Isabel Bulan Yague, YPS Scholar-Practitioner

### 3.3 Provide more regional opportunities for young women peacebuilders

Provide more opportunities for young women to have their voices heard at the regional levels. One clear example raised in the research process was to resource and support young women to attend and speak at regional and international events alongside older activists. However, this also requires addressing barriers to participation, including critical gaps in protecting young women's safety and other barriers.

## **4. Women's rights organisations and civil society allies**

### **4.1 Embed intergenerational approaches**

Support and encourage older women in organisations and movements to make space for young women's leadership. Resources such as the [World YWCA Intergenerational Triangle: A Guide for Shared Leadership](#) can provide guidance on how to undertake this work.

### **4.2 Advocate for greater accountability and focus on young women in Australia**

Advocate for a greater focus on young women across Australia's WPS and YPS efforts and encourage Australia to fund initiatives that drive both agendas, including domestically.

### **4.3. Increase engagement with the YPS agenda, young women and youth groups in Australia and across Asia and Pacific through the WPS Coalition**

There are opportunities for the Australian Civil Society Coalition on WPS to work more closely with young women and youth-led movements working broadly on peace and security issues domestically and across both regions. As Erika Isabel Bulan Yague, YPS Scholar-Practitioner noted, countries including Canada, Finland and Italy have YPS Coalitions and Germany is starting one and if youth are not engaged in YPS work, it may be due to a lack of 'institutional space' to do so. This can be achieved by fostering greater collaboration and cohesion across both regions YPS and WPS networks. The Coalition is also well placed to help elevate regional peace and security issues facing young women at the global levels, for instance through spaces like the Global Coalition on Youth Peace and Security.

## **5. Universities and researchers**

### **5.1 Document and highlight young women's peacebuilding leadership and expertise**

The importance of continuing to build the evidence base on young women's contributions to peacebuilding and humanitarian work in Asia and the Pacific was also highlighted. However, it is crucial that this work is guided by feminist research and consultation methodologies and best practices in youth engagement, including youth-led research.

# Section 8.

## Conclusion

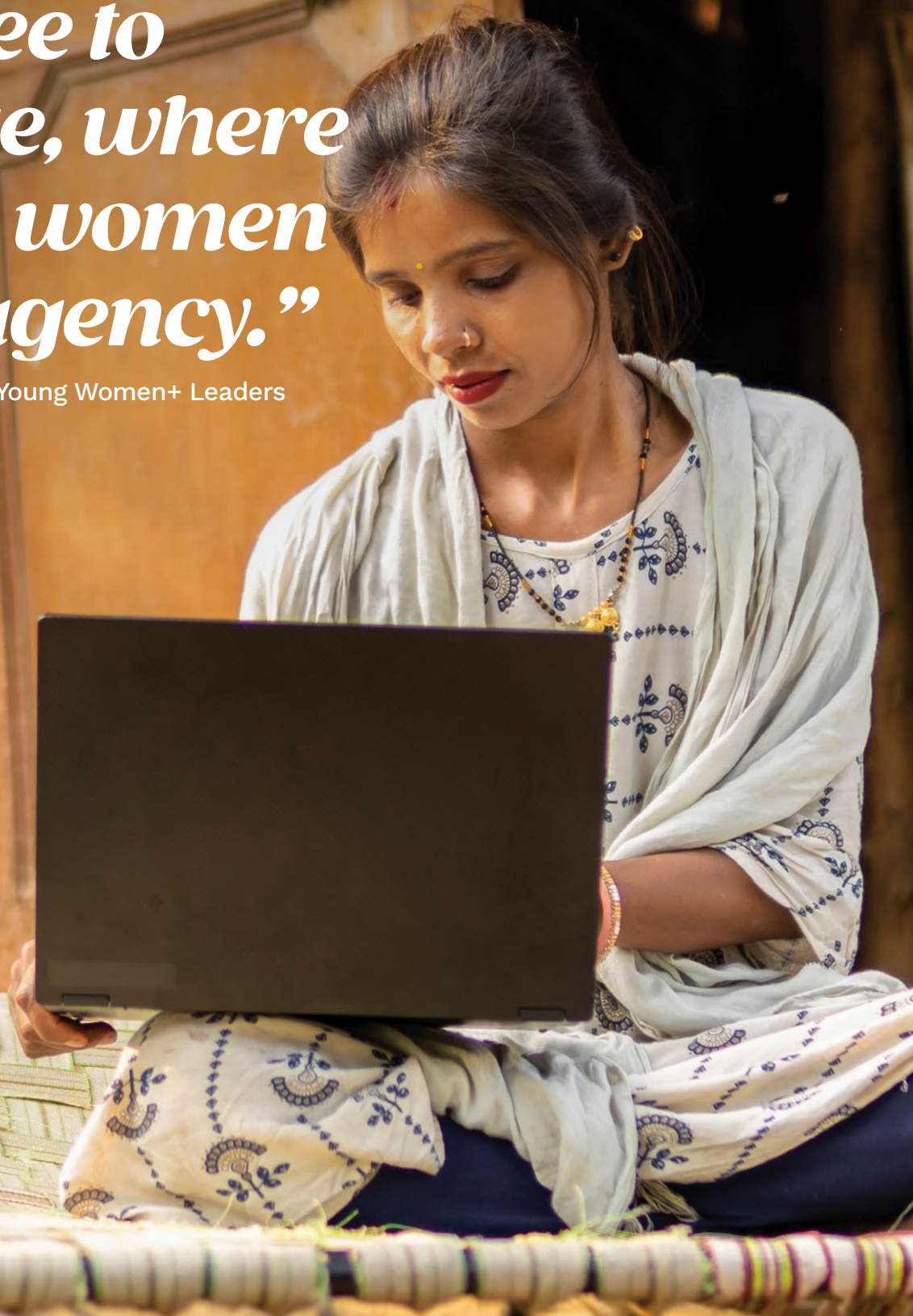
This report has sought to build on the efforts by the WPS community of practitioners and scholars who have drawn attention to the lack of inclusion of young women in the WPS agenda, and more recent concerns that young women are also being left behind in the YPS agenda.

It has drawn attention to persistent challenges and poor practices that are creating barriers to young women's inclusion in WPS, while also showcasing that despite this, young women's peacebuilding work continues and is having a positive impact in communities across Asia and the Pacific.

Ultimately, it is a celebration of young women's efforts – their resilience, persistence, and innovation offer a sense of optimism at a time when their voices are needed more than ever. Amid significant global upheaval, ongoing gender backlash, the rollback of rights, and funding cuts that threaten to undo decades of progress achieved since UNSC 1325, elevating young women's leadership remains critical for the future of the WPS agenda.<sup>71</sup> This report provides a roadmap to help further this important work.

***“Social media  
is where  
young women  
feel free to  
engage, where  
young women  
have agency.”***

Lynrose Jane Genon, Young Women+ Leaders  
for Peace-Philippines



# Section 9.

## Acknowledgements

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This report would not be possible without the significant body of exceptional research on youth and young women, peace and security in Asia and the Pacific regions, which provided the foundation for this work. The thought-leadership of professors and researchers Katrina Lee-Koo, Lesley Pruitt, Helen Berents, Caitlin Mollica, Erika Isabel Bulan Yague, Lynrose Jane Genon and Katrina Leclerc have been crucial in bringing much needed attention to this topic and the issue of young people and the WPS and YPS agendas more broadly. This report draws on, brings together and hopes to highlight and build upon their substantial efforts.

The Coalition also recognises with thanks funding received from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for this project.

# Endnotes.

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- 3 Lee-Koo, K. (2023). *Young women and the Women, Peace and Security agenda*. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 1-17.
- 4 Lee-Koo, K. (2023). *Young women and the Women, Peace and Security agenda*. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 1-17.
- 5 Lee-Koo, K., & Pruitt, L. (2024). *Prospects for intergenerational peace leadership: Reflections from Asia and the Pacific*. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 60(2), 1-21.
- 6 This came across strongly in the interview process and is also reflected in the work by Lee-Koo, K., & Pruitt, L. (2024), cited above.
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- 18 A flexible approach was also followed by UN Women, [Young Women in Peace and Security: At the Intersection of the YPS and WPS Agendas](#). *Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* (New York, April 2018), 1.
- 19 Pruitt, L. (2021). *Youth, peace & security: Gender matters in Asia and the Pacific*. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 33(3), 241-257, 244.
- 20 Lee-Koo, K., & Pruitt, L. (2026). *Young women and peacebuilding in Asia and the Pacific*. In H. Berents, C. E. Bolten, & S. McEvoy-Levy (Eds.), *Youth and sustainable peacebuilding* (pp. 204–216). Manchester University Press, 212. As the authors note, this is echoed in other research.

- 21 As identified by Brown, K. (2020). Young women in UN peace and security policy: At risk or in the lead? In L. Pruitt & K. Lee-Koo (Eds.), *Young Women and Leadership* (1st ed. 99-119).
- 22 Lesley Pruitt (2014) The Women, Peace and Security agenda: Australia and the agency of girls, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 49(3) 486-498, 489 (emphasis original).
- 23 Lee-Koo, K. (2023). Young women and the Women, Peace and Security agenda. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 1-17, 6 citing Berents, H., & Mollica, C. (2022). Reciprocal institutional visibility: Youth, peace and security and 'inclusive' agendas at the United Nations. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 57(1), 65-83. 68. See also: Yague, E. I. B., & Nong, L. (2025). Young People Shaping Southeast Asian Peace. In Leclerc, K., Yague, E. I. B., & Berents, H. (Eds.). (2025). *Youth Leading Change: Emerging Sites of Knowledge in Peace and Conflict*. Palgrave Macmillan (pp. 133-146), 135-6 and Pruitt, L. (2021). Youth, peace & security: Gender matters in Asia and the Pacific. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 33(3), 241-25, 242.
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- 28 See UN Women (2018, *ibid*) as the seminal piece on the topic and more recently, Pruitt and Yague (2025) Lee-Koo (2023), Lee-Koo and Pruitt (2024) all cited previously in this report, amongst others.
- 29 Pruitt, L. (2021) Youth, peace and security: Gender matters in Asia and the Pacific. *Global Change, Peace & Security* 33(3) 241-257, 247; Yague, E. I. B., & Nong, L. (2025). Young People Shaping Southeast Asian Peace. In Leclerc, K., Yague, E. I. B., & Berents, H. (Eds.). (2025). *Youth Leading Change: Emerging Sites of Knowledge in Peace and Conflict*. Palgrave Macmillan, (pp. 133-146).
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- 32 Pruitt, L. (2014) The Women, Peace and Security agenda: Australia and the agency of girls, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 49(3) 486-498, 488.
- 33 *Ibid*, 488.
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- 40 Erika Isabel Bulan Yague and Helen Berents, '[The Paradox of Youth Engagement in Southeast Asian Peace and Security](#),' [The Diplomat \(Web Page, 8 August 2025\)](#).
- 41 *Ibid*, and also reflected in the interview process for this research process.

- 42 Speaking of youth's involvement broadly in Asia in democracy, human rights and anti-colonial movements as highlighted by Yague, E. I. B., & Nong, L. (2025). Young People Shaping Southeast Asian Peace. In Leclerc, K., Yague, E. I. B., & Berents, H. (Eds.). (2025). *Youth Leading Change: Emerging Sites of Knowledge in Peace and Conflict*. Palgrave Macmillan (pp. 133–146). See also Yague and Berents (2025), *Ibid*.
- 43 See ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation. (2025). Regional study on youth, peace and security (YPS) in ASEAN; Lee-Koo, K. (2023). Young women and the Women, Peace and Security agenda. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 1-17; Lee-Koo, K., & Pruitt, L. (2024). Prospects for intergenerational peace leadership: Reflections from Asia and the Pacific. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 60(2), 1-21; Leclerc, K. (2025). Bridging the generational divide: Youth inclusion in Canada's women, peace and security commitments. *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, 1-24.
- 44 *Ibid*, see also: Pruitt, L. (2021) Youth, peace and security: Gender matters in Asia and the Pacific. *Global Change, Peace & Security* 33(3) 241–257, 241–25 and Lee-Koo, K., & Pruitt, L. (2024). 11 Young women and peacebuilding in Asia and the Pacific. In *Youth and sustainable peacebuilding*. Manchester University Press.
- 45 UN Women, [Young Women in Peace and Security: At the Intersection of the YPS and WPS Agendas. Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security \(New York, April 2018\).](#)
- 46 United Nations Security Council. (5 September, 2025). [Women and peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General \(S/2025/556\). United Nations. p.6/37 para 17.](#)
- 47 Genon, L. J. D. (2025). 'Young Women's Everyday Digital Peacebuilding in the Philippines' in Leclerc, K., Yague, E. I. B., & Berents, H. (Eds.). (2025). *Youth Leading Change: Emerging Sites of Knowledge in Peace and Conflict*. Palgrave Macmillan (pgs. 11–29).
- 48 *Ibid*, Genon (2025) defines 'everyday peace as: "the capacity of ordinary people to disrupt violent conflict and forge prosocial relationships in conflict-affected societies" at 12, citing Mac Ginty, R. (2014) *Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies*. *Security Dialogue* 45(6) 548-564.
- 49 Lee-Koo, K., & Pruitt, L. (2024). 11 Young women and peacebuilding in Asia and the Pacific. In *Youth and sustainable peacebuilding*. Manchester University Press, 214–5.
- 50 Pruitt, L. (2021). Youth, peace & security: Gender matters in Asia and the Pacific. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 33(3), 241–257, 254-5. Pruitt refers to Altiok, 'Meeting Report: Youth, Peace & Security in Asia and the Pacific: A Regional Consultation', 21, and recommends methods used by critical feminist research approaches (at 255, footnote 80).
- 51 This was raised during the research process. Tokenism is also discussed in the research on YPS. See: Berents, H., & Mollica, C. (2022). Reciprocal institutional visibility: Youth, peace and security and 'inclusive' agendas at the United Nations. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 57(1), 65–83.
- 52 The literature has identified issues such as power struggles between generations within women's peace movements: Lee-Koo, K., & Pruitt, L. (2025). Prospects for intergenerational peace leadership: Reflections from Asia and the Pacific. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 60(2), 369–389.
- 53 Lee-Koo, K., & Pruitt, L. (2024). Prospects for intergenerational peace leadership: Reflections from Asia and the Pacific. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 60(2), 1-21, 1.
- 54 As recommended in the interview with Leclerc, and others and also discussed in: Leclerc, K. (2025). [Policy Brief: Overlapping Pillars, Missed Opportunities: Building Coherence across WPS and YPS. Research Network on Women, Peace and Security: UN Women, Young Women in Peace and Security: At the Intersection of the YPS and WPS Agendas. Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security \(New York, April 2018; ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation. \(2025, July\). ASEAN-IPR regional study on youth, peace and security \(YPS\) in ASEAN.](#)
- 55 Berents, H. and Mollica, C. (2022) Reciprocal institutional visibility: youth, peace and security and 'inclusive' agendas at the United Nations, *Co-operation and Conflict*, 57(1) 65 -83; the relationship of both is also discussed in UN Women, [Young Women in Peace and Security: At the Intersection of the YPS and WPS Agendas. Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security \(New York, April 2018\), 25.](#)
- 56 Lee-Koo, K., & Pruitt, L. (2024). Prospects for intergenerational peace leadership: Reflections from Asia and the Pacific. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 60 (2) 1-21, 3.
- 57 ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (2025) *Regional Study on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) in ASEAN*, 86-90, see also Box 8.
- 58 *Ibid*, ASEAN-IPR, 88.
- 59 As described this way and reflected in research by Lee-Koo, K., & Pruitt, L. (2024). Prospects for intergenerational peace leadership: Reflections from Asia and the Pacific. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 60(2) 1-21, 10.
- 60 On gender and Bougainville's transition to independence: Kirkham, A., Close, S., & Yousuf, Z. (2018). [Gender in political transition: Bougainville's peace process \(Accord Spotlight\). Conciliation Resources](#)
- 61 Thank you to Conciliation Resources, who provided content for and reviewed this case study.
- 62 UN Women. (2025, 17 June). [For ALL women and girls: "Work with us, not just for us", urges Rohingya activist.](#)
- 63 *Ibid*, UN Women (2025).

- 64 Global Network of Women Peacebuilders. Young women leaders for peace program.
- 65 Global Network of Women Peacebuilders. Inputs for the Zero-Draft of the Pact for the Future (United Nations submissions), Dec. 29, 2023.
- 66 Pahima Ahmed, GNWP Program Officer for Bangladesh, who provided content for and reviewed this case study.
- 67 World YWCA: RiseUp! Manual 2022, 7 as reflected in the RiseUp! Guide for Young Women's Transformative Leadership, a framework that guides facilitators who implement the program at the local level through national YWCAs.
- 68 World YWCA: RiseUp! Manual 2022, 23.
- 69 The importance of engaging with diverse women is also echoed elsewhere, see UN Women, Young Women in Peace and Security: At the Intersection of the YPS and WPS Agendas. Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security (New York, April 2018) 27.
- 70 Cautions against 'homogenising' those from marginalised communities including youth in formal UN peacebuilding processes was raised by Berents, H., & Mollica, C. (2022). Reciprocal institutional visibility: Youth, peace and security and 'inclusive' agendas at the United Nations. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 57(1), 65-8, in UN Women, Young Women in Peace and Security: At the Intersection of the YPS and WPS Agendas. Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security (New York, April 2018) 2 and 5, and during interviews for this project.
- 71 As underscored by Lee-Koo and Pruitt (2024) 'For peace to truly take hold, it needs to be sustained – equally – across generations,' at 215, in Lee-Koo, K., & Pruitt, L. (2024). Young women and peacebuilding in Asia and the Pacific. In H. Berents, C. E. Bolten, & S. McEvoy-Levy (Eds.), *Youth and sustainable peacebuilding* (pp. 204–216). Manchester University Press.

## About us

The Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security ('the Coalition') is a non-partisan and independent coalition of civil society organisations, networks and individuals working to advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Australia, Asia and the Pacific region and globally. The Coalition brings together activists, feminists, practitioners, humanitarian actors and those with first-hand experience working in the frontline on issues relating to women, peace and security. Coalition members have wide ranging expertise in gender and peace.

For more information:  
[www.wpscoalition.org](http://www.wpscoalition.org)



