A CIVICUS GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES LAB EVENT

WOMEN, YOUTH AND PEACE
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INSPIRING YOUNG WOMEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF PEACEBUILDING

MODERATOR
ALEJANDRA GUTIÉRREZ : CIVICUS Youth Ambassador; MY World Mexico

PANELLISTS
YOUSRA MSHMSH : Youth Peace Ambassadors; Peace First & Activist
MUZNAH SIDDIQUI : PyeongChang Youth Peace Ambassadors
CHRISTINA WILLIAMS : Commonwealth Peace Ambassadors; EU Youth Sounding Board
LANI ANAYA : UNAOC Young Peacebuilders LAC; Juventudes por la Paz
REV. KATIE SEXTON-WOOD: Executive Director Arizona Faith Network

REPORT WRITTEN BY
JOANNA MAKHLOUF

EDITORS
ELISA NOVOA
LERATO PAGIWA

Women, Youth and Peace
BACKGROUND

Young women remain largely excluded from peace processes as they face double discrimination patterns due to their age and gender. Women are active agents of peace in armed conflict and bring different perspectives to peacebuilding, yet their role as key players and change agents of peace has been largely unrecognised.

This panel discussion event aimed to shed light on the specific role, needs, opportunities and barriers faced by young women as peace builders. The panel provided the space for young women peacebuilders to highlight the importance of their work and explore solutions and mechanisms to facilitate young women’s meaningful participation in peace processes.

PANEL HIGHLIGHTS

(1) The panellists identified kindness, respect and treating others with humanity as the foundation of peacebuilding. Finding humanity in each other is the cornerstone of avoiding conflict.

(2) On the conceptual meaning of peace, the panellists shared a consensus that peacebuilding is both personal and global. Building peace starts by identifying conflicts in one's life and community and addressing them through dialogues, setting a collective action in motion.

(3) The panellists shared that based on their experience, they realise the extent of intimidation young women in peacebuilding face and consequently, they actively ensure through their platforms to amplify the voices of fellow young women peace builders in their communities.

“IT CAN BE INTIMIDATING STILL TO HAVE YOUR VOICE VALUED AS A WOMAN [...] WHAT I LOVE ABOUT YOUNG WOMEN IS THE PASSION, CONTINUOUS FAITHFULNESS AND QUESTIONING OF WHAT IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE NORM. AND [THIS] HELPS US MOVE FORWARD AS SOCIETIES, COUNTRIES AND THE WORLD.”

– REV. SEXTON-WOOD –
**DID YOU KNOW?**

- Femicide statistics are alarmingly high. More than 5 women and girls were killed every hour in 2021 by a husband, partner or other relative, according to the UN.
- Women and girls are particularly and increasingly targeted in wars and are disproportionately affected in both conflicts and post-conflict societies, says the OHCHR.
- UN Women statistics indicate that women’s participation in major global peace processes between 1992 and 2019 was under 15% of all peacebuilders.
- Women are paid 20% less than men, according to the ILO.
- The Security Council has adopted multiple resolutions, including RES 1325 and RES 2250, acknowledging the crucial role young women play in conflict prevention.

**CHALLENGES**

*(1)* Although young women play key roles in social transformation and peacebuilding in their communities, cultural and social norms often attempt to undermine women’s capacity. All of the young activists shared that one of the major challenges has been the constant need to prove themselves as competent females and capable youth.

“How is it that women support and are even the cornerstones of peacebuilding movements, but in terms of formal structures the formal leadership is usually men, and that in a way reduces the legitimacy of women as the head of peacebuilding movements.”

— Christina —
(2) Lack of meaningful participation of women in decision-making, lack of meaningful political representation of women nationally and globally, and the gender pay gap are all mounting factors that jointly work to curtail young women's peacebuilding efforts and abilities.

“Lately we [see] many campaigns, including conferences and panels that are focusing on [female inclusion] in the peacebuilding approach. [The issue seen in many cases] is that we are including females but not meaningfully engaging them.

- Yousra -

(3) Another challenge identified by the panellists and which is confirmed by the UN statistics is gender inequality in leadership.

Women work often on the ground and lead the change within their communities and are often the ones disproportionately affected by conflict and war. Yet, power imbalances are most evident in leadership, which is usually enjoyed by men.

“I remember this time I was working on the child support project with the UN. I was introduced to one of the [male] managers and the first question [he] asked me was ‘why is a Latin American girl like you working [...] here? I had to prove myself so much to this [male leader] because I was a young female.

- Lani -
RECOMMENDATIONS

MEANINGFUL INCLUSION
Gender equality in terms of pay and meaningful political participation nationally and abroad is key to supporting young women in peacebuilding. The inclusion of women who are most affected by violence and conflict in the decision-making process is key to peacebuilding.

INNOVATION
Innovative tools play an important role in empowering young women and amplifying their roles such as the arts, blogs and publications.

WOMEN ARE VERY TYPICAL PEACEMAKERS, THE PEACE CHANGERS IN THE FAMILY WHO TAKE THE LEAD [AND] INITIATIVE TO GET FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER AND BE MEDIATORS. [..] THAT’S A PROCESS THAT CONTINUES ON FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION.

– MUZNAH –

PEACE EDUCATION
Building conflict resolution skills for children and youth so they can engage in peacebuilding in their communities and abroad.

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT
Popularising entrepreneurship opportunities, especially for young peacebuilder women who could not complete their education.

DIVERSITY OF PARTICIPATION
Panellists emphasized the necessity for women and men to collaborate jointly for sustainable peacebuilding.