

Building and Sustaining Peace

For a Feminist Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security Agendas



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The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agendas are often seen as **technical** fields, disconnected from **current crises** and reserved for experts. This is not the case. They already offer concrete responses to security challenges; if readjusted, **recentred on gender justice, and repoliticized**, they could even drive the **structural changes needed** for sustainable peace.

Since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, the WPS agenda has **recognized the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution**. It paved the way for new policy frameworks, dedicated funding, and increased attention to women's participation in peace processes, through around ten subsequent UN Security Council resolutions. More recently, in 2015, UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on YPS continued this momentum, **highlighting the role of young people in peacebuilding**. Yet twenty-five years after the adoption of Resolution 1325 and ten years after Resolution 2250, **implementation remains largely depoliticized, technocratic, and instrumentalized**.

As **security crises** and **systemic inequalities** persist worldwide, there is an urgent need to **repoliticize these frameworks**. This is not just about including more women or young people in existing systems, but, as feminist movements have long argued, about challenging systems of **domination**, dismantling **militaristic logics**, and building **just and lasting peace**.

We call for a feminist, decolonial, and transformative reclaiming of these agendas, grounded in local realities, social movements, and the voices of women and youth.

KEY FINDINGS

In the **Sahel** and other parts of **West Africa**, as well as in **Europe** and the **Middle East**, populations are facing **intensifying multidimensional crises**: political instability, growing militarization, gender-based violence, food insecurity, weak health systems, forced displacement, and socio-economic inequalities.

The **Women, Peace and Security** and **Youth, Peace and Security** agendas are often seen as disconnected from these realities. Yet, if recentred on gender justice and structural change, they offer **concrete paths** to address **security challenges** and envision **sustainable peace**.

A deeper analysis of these crises highlights issues linked to **human rights** and **gender equality** on a global scale.

The conclusion is clear : these crises disproportionately affect women, girls, and youth — especially the most marginalized due to their origin, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or displacement.

Discrimination reduces access to **fundamental rights**, including healthcare, education, food, housing, and even nationality.

Resolution 1325 — the result of decades of activism for peace by civil society, feminist academics, and gender equality advocates — marked a historic **turning point** in recognizing **women's role** in peace processes, conflict prevention, and post-crisis reconstruction. It introduced an **inclusive, multidimensional approach to security**, finally recognizing **sexual and gender-based violence** as a political issue of peace and security. Since then, a corpus of **ten resolutions** has **shaped the WPS agenda**, reinforcing pre-existing normative frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). As of 2025, 113 countries have adopted National Action Plans (NAPs) on WPS, including 33 in Africa (14 in West Africa) and 37 in Europe (Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network, 2025). Many international, regional, and national peace and security frameworks refer to Resolution 1325.

The **African Union** has adopted a **Continental Results Framework for WPS implementation**. The **European Union** has developed a **policy framework including the 2018 Council Conclusions on WPS, its WPS Action Plan, the 2019–2024 Action Plan, and the 2022 Council Conclusions** (European External Action Service, 2024).

However, this apparent commitment hides a **low level of concrete achievement**. **Progress** remains **largely symbolic**. Nearly 25 years after its adoption, Resolution 1325 still struggles to produce **tangible results on the ground**. In 2023, women made up only **9.6% of negotiators, 13.7% of mediators, and 26.6% of signatories to peace agreements and ceasefires** (UN Women). These figures clearly show that peace processes remain **deeply masculinized**.

Despite the development of monitoring indicators, regular reports, and NAPs, major **gaps persist**: lack of sustainable funding, marginalization of local feminist organizations working for peace and security, poor coordination among stakeholders, and limited state accountability. UN resolutions still struggle to translate into **effective and transformative public policies**, especially in countries most affected by conflict or crises.

Fifteen years after Resolution 1325, the UN Security Council adopted **Resolution 2250 on YPS** (2015). It recognized for the first time the key **role of young people** in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and promoting sustainable and inclusive development. This resolution responded to the calls of a generation mobilized for peace, social justice, democracy, human rights, and climate action. Since then, **four additional resolutions** have strengthened this agenda, laying solid foundations for the **recognition, funding, and inclusion of youth** in peace and security policies and programs, especially in the Global South.

Yet here too, international commitments have only marginally translated into tangible change.

Youth is still too often viewed through a **security lens** – criminalized, seen as a group to be managed rather than political actors in their own right. Young people, especially young women, face **multiple marginalizations**: they are excluded from **decision-making, funding mechanisms, and power spaces**, while being the **first targets** of restrictive **security policies, sexual and gender-based violence, and political repression**, with little attention to their **specific needs**. Their access to participation spaces is often conditioned by age or social status, reinforcing **existing inequalities**. Youth-led initiatives – especially by young women – are rarely recognized, poorly supported, and often isolated. Despite monitoring efforts, **few countries** have adopted **YPS NAPs**, and the agenda remains little known, including among local stakeholders. It lacks strong political ownership, particularly in West Africa, despite its **youthful, mobilized population**.

The **complexity of these crises** requires **systematically integrating a transformative gender approach** – or even a **feminist one** – into projects aimed at **defending the rights of women and girls in conflict-affected areas**.

WHY A FEMINIST IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WPS AND YPS AGENDAS?

In today's security contexts, **women, youth, and especially young women** are too often seen only as "**victims**" or "**targets to protect**." This **essentialist view** erases their role as agents of change and **reinforces patriarchal security policies** instead of promoting rights-based, care-centered, and socially just solutions – all essential to sustainable peace.

The WPS and YPS agendas have opened **opportunities for advocacy, action, and recognition** for women's and youth organizations. Yet their **implementation** often remains **technocratic, siloed, or reduced to token participation** by a few women and young people, without questioning existing **systems of domination**.

Too often, these agendas fail to consider gendered power relations or the structural roots of conflict.

Resolution 1325 intended to reposition women as peace and security actors. Yet this positioning risks confining women to **pre-existing gender roles** (victims or peacemakers) and reinforcing the idea that they are "**naturally**" **peaceful** while men are "**naturally**" **fighters**.

Feminist analyses highlight the **limits of current approaches**: dominant frameworks remain shaped by **militarized and patriarchal logics** that **reproduce power relations instead of transforming them**. As long as these logics are not challenged, there can be no just and lasting peace. **Violence against women and girls does not begin with war and does not end with peace** – it is rooted in a **patriarchal system** that persists through all periods and maintains **deep gender inequalities**. Feminist organizations from the Global South have also warned about the **instrumentalization of the WPS agenda by some states**, using it to legitimize security policies or military interventions while continuing to **marginalize women's voices on the ground**.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We, Equipop, alongside our partners in West Africa and beyond, promote a **feminist, intersectional, and decolonial approach** to the WPS and YPS agendas, centered on transforming **power relations** and concretely implementing **human rights**.

To bring about **structural change** in the implementation of the FPS and JPS agendas, we **call** on States, international institutions, technical and financial partners to:

RECENTER THE WPS AND YPS AGENDAS ON GENDER JUSTICE

- Build synergies between the WPS and YPS agendas.
- Reject the instrumentalization of WPS and YPS to legitimize securitized and militarized policies.
- Recenter the agendas on a feminist vision of peace grounded in rights, social justice, care, and sustainability.
- Repoliticize WPS and YPS by tackling the structural causes of violence and inequalities: patriarchy, systemic racism, militarism, capitalism.
- Deconstruct traditional gender roles in peace interventions, rejecting the “men as warriors / women as peaceful victims” dichotomy.

ADOPT A FEMINIST, INTERSECTIONAL AND SITUATED APPROACH

- Value plural and realistic narratives of those directly concerned in the implementation of WPS and YPS.
- Recognize the diversity of women’s experiences beyond victimization narratives.
- Support the empowerment of women and youth in crisis settings, especially through direct, flexible, and sustainable funding.
- Fully include feminist organizations in developing, implementing, and monitoring WPS and YPS NAPs through transparent and democratic mechanisms.
- Integrate an intersectional analysis of violence, conflict, and resistance.
- Address the continuum of gender-based and sexual violence, beyond the binary of “peace” versus “war”.
- Promote locally rooted, context-specific analysis and reject technocratic or standardized approaches.
- Support participatory feminist research, co-created with and for those directly concerned.

STRENGTHEN THE POWER AND AGENCY OF FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS AND YOUTH MOVEMENTS

- Amplify the voices, knowledge, and resistance of women and youth on the ground, particularly in crisis and conflict settings, and in national, regional, and international decision-making spaces – including multilateral forums.
- Support the empowerment of women and youth through direct, flexible, and sustainable funding.
- Ensure the full and effective inclusion of feminist organizations in the development, implementation, and monitoring of WPS and YPS NAPs, through transparent and democratic mechanisms.

Equipop is a feminist international solidarity association. Equipop is driven by feminist values and a vision of a world where all human beings, regardless of their sex and gender, have their rights respected, including their sexual and reproductive rights, and have the opportunity to participate actively in just and sustainable societies.



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