

“A Girl’s Place is On the Agenda: Incorporating Youth in Peace and Security Efforts”

Lesley Pruitt⁵

Abstract

Why do girls remain the most marginalized group when it comes to peace and security efforts? After all, they can and should play significant roles in implementing the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, especially on the platforms of prevention and participation. Drawing together primary and secondary research, this article assesses the ways gender norms influence young people’s experiences of peace and conflict and highlights some key factors contributing to girls’ exclusion. Despite these barriers, girls are still active in a number of ways, though they often receive little recognition. A series of cases are presented and analyzed, including individual and collective efforts by young women at the grassroots and global level. These cases highlight the various ways in which girls already participate. Better incorporating girls in the WPS agenda will require not only applying a gender-sensitive approach to youth initiatives, , but also applying an age-sensitive approach to initiatives aimed at gender-inclusion. Likewise, the article proposes a number of actions Australian policymakers might take to ensure girls’ views and needs are included in advancing the WPS agenda through global efforts, such as Security Council initiatives, and local efforts, such as actions supporting young Australians’ input into peace and security in ways that advance gender-inclusiveness. Doing so will require broadening our understandings of political participation to include the ways many young people, especially girls, are already involved, and altering existing frameworks for action to make them more inviting for young women who might not have previously considered participation.

⁵ University of Melbourne, Melbourne, AUSTRALIA