



Outside the Box:

Amplifying youth voices and views on YPS policy and practice

Youth as Guardians of the Future Sustaining Climate, Peace and Security in an Urbanising World

Sharmaarke Abdullahi and Mathieu Lohr

The views are those of the author and don't necessarily reflect the view of Interpeace or of the Government of Ireland.

Youth as Guardians of the Future

Sustaining Climate, Peace and Security in an Urbanising World



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Introduction

As climate-related security risks converge with other global pressures, including the COVID-19 pandemic, population growth, uncontrolled urbanisation, increased demand for resources, environmental degradation, uneven economic development, and inequality, fragile communities and cities are becoming less resilient and more vulnerable. The countries that are urbanising most rapidly are often those that are most fragile in terms of climate and conflict. Sustaining and building peace has become more complex because the world's people, and the majority of its burgeoning youth population, are increasingly concentrated in cities.¹ While climate-related security risks may not be the primary cause of conflict, they can act as a risk multiplier, exacerbating underlying vulnerabilities and compounding grievances.

All these issues require an engagement with 'climate justice', which is central to the demands of youth movements globally. As guardians of the future who will inherit the consequences of present climate policies, the needs and demands of youth

must be given due attention. Climate change, environmental degradation, and climate justice have become critical factors influencing national peace processes, peacebuilding more generally, and the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict in societies across the globe.

Yet specifically *urban* manifestations of peace and conflict cycles remain largely under-considered by the sustaining peace agenda.² The urban dimensions of peacebuilding and the urban dimensions of climate change clearly intersect, but policymakers have not yet engaged with them systematically or in an integrated way. As a result, policies are blind to the historically unprecedented reality that 68% of the world's population will be living in urban settings by 2050.³ Cities have also become the preferred havens for internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees; 80% of IDPs and 60% of refugees now live in urban settings.⁴ The challenge at hand is to prevent the emergence of fragile cities that can neither meet the needs and demands of local populations nor manage the risks

1 For example see: <https://fragilestatesindex.org/global-data/> and <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/>.

2 Plänitz, E. (2019). *Neglecting the urban? Exploring rural-urban disparities in the climate change–conflict literature on Sub-Saharan Africa*. *Urban Climate*, 30, 100533–. doi:10.1016/j.uclim.2019.100533.

3 UN-Habitat (2020). *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*.

4 United Nations, Chief Executive Board for Coordination. *UN System-Wide Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development*. CEB/2019/4/Add.4 (26 April 2019).

of climate-induced population shocks and urban conflict.

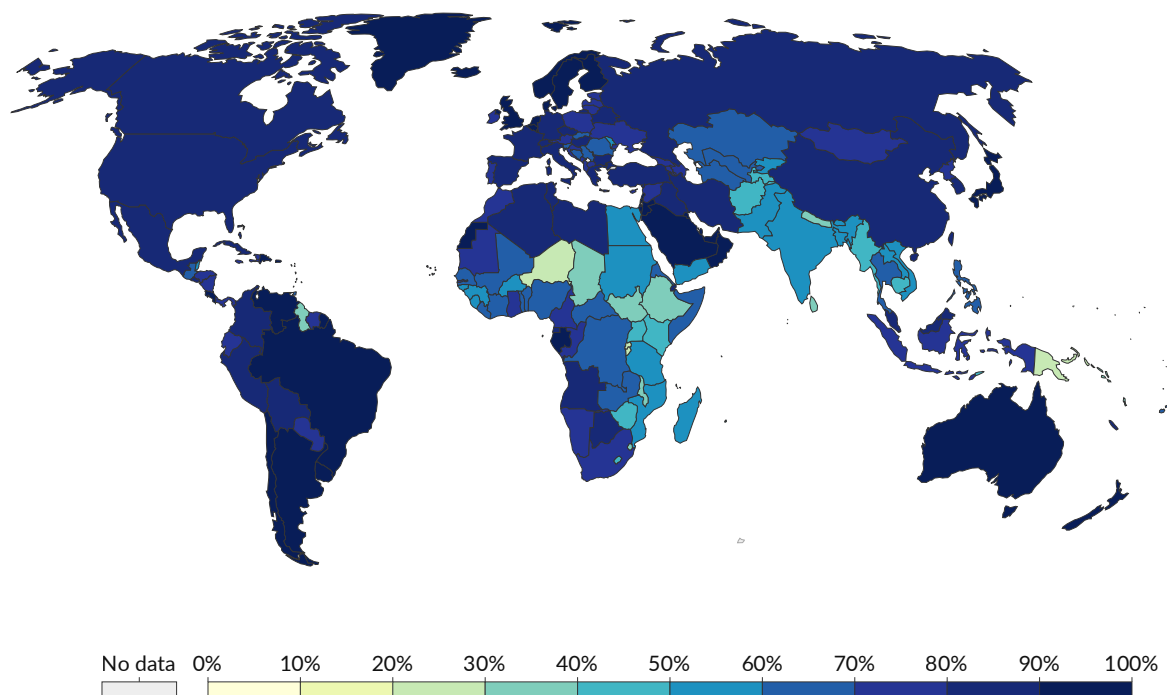
Conflict and security dynamics are evolving under the influence of climate change, and cities will be at the centre of efforts to deal with the human impacts of the climate crisis. Yet conflict and violence are not inevitable consequences of scarcity in burgeoning urban centres; it is more accurate to describe them as risks associated with a combination of mismanagement and over-exploitation of constrained urban resources, and urban exclusion.

The populations of most cities in Europe and North America will age. However, urban populations in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia will both increase dramatically and remain youthful. According to recent

statistics, by 2030 60% of the global urban population will be less than 18 years old.⁵ This will create a massive demographic divide between countries and urban populations that are ageing, and countries and urban populations that continue to become younger. The divide will create new challenges for adaptation and mitigation mechanisms that deal with the climate crisis, severely test state governance systems, and generate new or transmuting forms of civic conflict and potential violence.⁶ Because these issues are central to the concerns of young urban populations, who are critical actors in building, maintaining, and implementing sustainable peace, policy-makers should prioritise the intersection of the Youth Peace and Security (YPS) agenda and the climate change agenda, to realise an urban youth peace dividend.

Share of the population living in urban areas, 2050

Share of the total population living in urban areas, with UN urbanization projections to 2050.



Source: OWID based on UN World Urbanization Prospects 2018 and historical sources (see Sources)
 Note: Urban areas are defined based on national definitions which can vary by country.

OurWorldInData.org/urbanization • CC BY

⁵ UN-Habitat (2020). *World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization*.

⁶ Urban violence is influenced by political, institutional, social and economic variables. Climate change generates multidimensional impacts that will reinforce and reconfigure these, and will also introduce new variables to the mix.

Youth, and young women in particular, have been at the forefront of the global climate movement.⁷ Through their activism, young people have become a powerful constituency calling for local and global climate action, and transformative change. The *Fridays for Future* youth movement has mobilised young people and allies across the globe and forced climate change on to the agenda of both governments and the multilateral system.⁸ The movement generated a series of high-level youth and climate change meetings, and made climate action a core theme of the 74th UN General Assembly. Similarly, young people were at the forefront of demanding action to protect their future at COP26. Young people's activism has been cross-cutting and intersectional. They have highlighted the interconnections between individual and societal peace and security and the fate of the environment on a warming planet. Young women and men are pushing for representation and leadership in multilateral forums and all the policy spaces that deal with climate change; they are moving youth from protesting on the street to participating in decision-making. As such, they represent a growing capacity – and arguably the best prospect – for meeting the climate challenge from a local, bottom-up perspective.

The linkages between sustaining climate peace and the YPS agenda are becoming ever more evident. In part this is because both agendas traverse

the silos and pillars of humanitarian action, development, and peacebuilding (also referred to as the triple nexus). The substantive intersection of these two policy agendas, as well as their shared transversal relevance, provide a unique opportunity to address the multidimensional impacts of climate change and recognise the work that young leaders already do on climate security and environmentally-related peacebuilding. Most importantly, this impact is not youth-specific but is relevant societally, being intergenerational in nature.⁹ Youth activists are reframing what is needed for adaptation, but also for transformative resilience, and they offer solutions to which institutions seldom give sufficient attention. Learning from youth will allow us to go beyond the concept of climate change as a 'threat multiplier' and engage with the structural causes and drivers that underpin violent conflicts.

To illustrate more specifically the urban intersections of the climate change and YPS agendas, this Policy Brief examines the urban dimensions of climate change and peacebuilding, and how youth and the YPS policy agenda can creatively intersect with humanitarian, developmental, and peacebuilding challenges in urban contexts. It goes on to discuss an intergenerational approach to climate security, in which youth are acknowledged as guardians of the future, who will assume responsibility for addressing the impacts of climate change and sustaining peace.

7 Simpson, G. (2018). *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*.

8 Fridays for Future (2021). "Fridays for Future –Strike Statistics". At: <https://fridaysforfuture.org/what-we-do/strike-statistics/>.

9 International Peace Institute (2020). 'Youth, Peace, And Climate Action'.



Climate shocks, resource strains and exacerbated conflict in urban settings

Climate change will exacerbate the potential for conflict by stressing local governance structures and basic infrastructure at city level.¹⁰ Urban resilience will be dramatically challenged by flooding, lack of fresh water, and health hazards. On current trends, for example, half the residents of Santiago, Chile, and 30-49% of the residents of Cape Town, South Africa, will lack access to adequate fresh water by 2050.¹¹ Climate change will increase the intensity of droughts, storms, and flooding. One consequence will be conflict over land and land-ownership, especially in informal settlements, which are often built on urban land that is subject to floods.

By 2050, most of the world's 2.5bn new urban dwellers will be concentrated in slums and informal settlements; the number of slum dwellers is expected to rise from 1bn to 3bn.¹² Climate refu-

gees to and within cities are likely to experience intra- and inter-group conflict with 'host' communities, as pressures on resources and governance combine to exacerbate grievances and exclusion. Violence is already concentrated in informal settlements and medium and large-scale cities that are urbanising quickly.¹³ Both the planned and unplanned nature of urbanisation have the potential to entrench or diffuse the social and material impact of climate change, and hence inequalities within and between communities. To diffuse these dynamics it will be important to involve youth in urban planning and governance. Their standing as guardians of the future means that their expertise and capacity as first-responders should be recognised when urban communities take steps to make themselves secure from the many impacts of climate change.

10 Herrero, A. C., Rojas, F., Lanfranchi, G., Fernandez, J. E., Trostmann, K. (2018). [Enhancing Climate Resilience through Urban Infrastructure and Metropolitan Governance](#). Think 20 Engagement Group.

11 Ibid.

12 UN-Habitat (2016). [World Cities Report 2016: Urbanization and Development - Emerging Futures](#).

13 Ibid.

Slum dwellers will be especially exposed to climate hazards because poor infrastructure and access to services limit their ability to adapt.¹⁴ To make matters worse, growth will be concentrated in small- to medium-sized cities (up to one million inhabitants) which generally receive less attention and enjoy fewer resources. These complex problems will be further complicated by shortages of food and insecurity. To keep up with the pace of urbanisation, by 2050 global agricultural production needs to increase by 50% to meet expected urban demand; however, current projections estimate that production of key crops will fall by 10%, which will either cause supply shortages or raise food prices for 2.5bn urban residents.¹⁵

Cities are not inherently more violent, nor does resource scarcity create violent conflict by itself. Inclusive forms of city governance that make it possible to voice and resolve grievances without violence will be key to sustaining peace.

Recent research has examined the importance of key political, institutional, and other contextual variables. It suggests that, when water scarcity, food shortages, or rural-urban migration reach certain tipping points, conflicts between stakeholders may become openly violent.¹⁶ If confirmed, this will create unprecedented governance and infrastructure challenges for residents, city authorities and nation states. However, most research retrofits a symptomatic climate or environmental analysis on past conflicts. Few conflict analyses explicitly consider the unprecedented effects and scale of climate change. An adaptation and mitigation calculus may list technical challenges to financing, governance and infrastructure, without recognising that these may simply become unmanageable given the magnitude of the impacts.

Urban challenges will therefore be unprecedented and are probably underestimated. Most predictions of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions assume that the world will warm by 1.5°C to 2°C, but current

climate pledges and climate policies in fact imply warming of 2.1°C to 3.9°C.¹⁷ This is especially problematic when the difference between 1.5°C and 2°C may lead to a threefold, fourfold or larger increase in the average number of months of drought in certain regions.¹⁸ A warming of 'only' 1.5°C would create serious water scarcity and create other climate pressures for agricultural systems that must feed urban populations in the future.

Conflict resolution and prevention mechanisms must deal with grievances over resource-sharing and socio-economic marginalisation within and between urban groups. Cities are not inherently more violent, nor does resource-scarcity create violent conflict by itself: it is the triggers of violence, and slow-onset dynamics, that must be attended to. Inclusive forms of city governance that make it possible to voice and resolve grievances without violence will be key to sustaining peace. They require decision-makers to engage with political processes and constituencies that are traditionally excluded from decision-making, and in particular with the largest urban youth generation in history. Their aim should be to empower youth, as guardians of the future, to build forms of positive peace that pre-empt the likelihood that conflicts will become violent.

Youth will play a central role in any effective response to the conditions that are now emerging, not just because they are a major demographic, but because they are the inheritors of current policy decisions and their social and material consequences. However, to involve them adequately, decision-makers will need to address the specific urban dimensions of climate change and the governance and infrastructure challenges they generate for residents, city authorities, and States. Their ability to do this will determine the capacity of cities to adapt to the many intersecting ecological, social, and economic pressures that will test their ability to provide inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable urban environments.

14 UN-Habitat (2019). [Addressing the Most Vulnerable First - Pro-Poor Climate Action in Informal Settlements](#).

15 Aggregated numbers can hide regional disparities. See C40 Cities, '[Food security - A Summary of The Future We Don't Want](#)'.

16 Østby G. (2016). '[Rural-urban migration, inequality and urban social disorder: Evidence from African and Asian cities](#)'. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 33(5):491-515. doi:10.1177/0738894215581315.

17 Climate Action Tracker. At: <https://climateactiontracker.org/>.

18 See Carbon Brief, [The Impacts of Climate Change at 1.5C, 2C and beyond](#).

The youth, peace and security agenda and the power of youth

Youth are a unique, transitory and multidimensional demographic that eludes narrow definition in terms of age or social status.¹⁹ A core strength of the YPS agenda is that it engages with youth's diversity. In doing so, it enriches and widens perceptions of security and peace, well beyond notions of political settlement that merely freeze armed conflict. The adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) on YPS, and the YPS Progress Study *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* (henceforward, *The Missing Peace*),²⁰ emphasised that young women and men play an important and positive role in promoting and maintaining international peace and security as well as effective alternative pathways to peace that invest in youth's resilience and their inclusion in decision-making. UNSC resolutions 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) underlined the contributions that youth have made to international peace and peacebuilding, in Colombia, South Sudan and many other situations.²¹ Through its intersectional approach, the YPS agenda steps beyond a narrow concern with youth as a demographic and highlights the transversal role of youth in peacebuilding at all levels of society.

Whilst the YPS agenda demands that Member States meaningfully engage and integrate youth in peacebuilding processes, climate-related security risks and the urban dimensions of peacebuilding have not been interrogated thoroughly.

A more holistic approach to youth-led and youth-based peacebuilding offers many doorways into climate security issues. *The Missing Peace* de-

scribed young people's experience of exclusion from social, political, economic, and cultural realms, as well as forms of structural, psychological, and physical violence, and advised the YPS agenda to address this "violence of exclusion". In the context of climate change and associated security concerns, this understanding should be extended to include the transformative peacebuilding power of young people to address the humanitarian, developmental and peacebuilding challenges presented by climate change.

Whilst the YPS agenda asks States to meaningfully engage with and integrate youth in peacebuilding processes, its intersection with climate security has only been recognised recently, and the *urban* dimensions of the peace-climate change nexus have largely been unconsidered.²² Given that YPS is mostly implemented nationally, it is critical to ensure that YPS national roadmaps include programmes that focus on cities and the urban spaces in which climate security issues have such significant impact.

Voluntary local reviews (VLRs) offer one promising way to address the structural violence associated with climate change in the YPS agenda, where appropriate. They complement and deepen the information on YPS implementation that national governments provide in their voluntary national reviews (VNRs). They also help local governments to share their progress, experiences, and practices on YPS, and assist communities to 'localise' the YPS agenda in a transparent and accountable way.

19 No definition of 'youth' has been agreed, including within the UN system. International organizations adopt a range of definitions. UNSCR 2250 defines a youth as a "person of the age of 18-29 years", but notes the "variations of definition of the term that may exist on the national and international levels". For a broader discussion of the difficulty of defining youth and 'youth-hood', see *The Missing Peace*, Section 1.1.

20 Simpson, G. (2018), *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* (UNFPA).

21 See UN Security Council (2020). Youth and peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General (2 March 2020). At: <https://undocs.org/en/S/2020/167>.

22 This is partially because 'climate security' has only recently been listed on the agenda of the UN Security Council. See: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2021-02-23/secretary-generals-remarks-the-security-council-addressing-climate-related-security-risks-international-peace-and-security-through-mitigation-and-resilience-building>.



YPS during unprecedented urbanisation and climate stress

Both the YPS and climate security agendas need to engage more proactively with the fact that rapid urbanisation is occurring on an unprecedented scale and is increasingly associated with climate stressors, many of which are youth-specific. By 2030, 60% of urban residents in developing countries will be under the age of 18;²³ by 2050, the proportion will rise to 68%.²⁴ Yet, historically, the perspectives and needs of youth have been absent from urban planning and governance. This omission has caused an important data gap, as well as missed opportunities to prepare for future adaptation.²⁵ Critically, both climate change and rapid urbanisation will disproportionately impact low- and middle-income countries (specifically in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia), where the population includes a high proportion of young people and has

limited experience and capacity to respond adequately. Already, many cities and city governments are unable to accommodate their growing populations; they are at risk of forfeiting their prospects of development to a combination of climate stress, historical and present-day planning shortcomings, and conflict.

Most urban growth occurs through rural-urban migration. In conditions of climate change, the consequences of unplanned urban growth will be felt first, and potentially most dramatically, in the informal settlements and urban slums into which migrants move. Today, about one billion people live in such environments but by 2050 as many as three billion may do so – about half of all urban residents.²⁶ Their informal and unplanned character

23 Goldin, N., and Green, S. (2021). *Cities of Opportunity - Drivers and Priorities for Urban Youth Economic Inclusion*. Making Cents International. At: <https://www.citigroup.com/citi/foundation/data/MakingCents.pdf>

24 UN-Habitat (2020). *World Cities Report*. At: https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/10/wcr_2020_report.pdf

25 Friesen, J., and Pelz, P. F. (2020). 'COVID-19 and Slums: A Pandemic Highlights Gaps in Knowledge about Urban Poverty'. *JMIR Public Health and Surveillance*, 6 (3): e19578. doi:10.2196/19578.

26 United Nations Secretary-General (2021). Secretary-General's Remarks to the Security Council - On Addressing

create specific climate risks and hazards that translate into specific forms of physical and social insecurity for their primarily young inhabitants.²⁷ Such settlements are typically characterised by high levels of crime, informal economies (reflecting high rates of relative deprivation and inequality), poor infrastructure, deficient public services, and few or no state services. (When these are present, they are often securitised.²⁸) Growing urban populations or urban ‘youth bulges’ do not by themselves create violence or instability, even in the context of increased resource competition. However, they are likely to do so if state responses target or marginalise certain populations and where actors seek to channel or profit from discontent.²⁹

The COVID-19 pandemic showed clearly how much poor governance and historic exclusion from services and infrastructure matter. In Dharavi, Asia’s biggest slum, the infection rate was 57% compared to 16% in formal settlements,³⁰ In São Paulo, mortality rates in poor areas were 10 times higher than in wealthy ones.

As countries and cities become younger, and informal urban settlements extend, those most vulnerable to climate stressors will be differentially affected. A study of three informal settlements (in Uganda, Kenya, and South Africa) showed that women between 20 and 34 years old were 50-75% more exposed than men to risk from environmental hazards, income insecurity, and lack of access

to basic services and infrastructure.³¹ The risks for young women compared to young men were even higher.³² The COVID-19 pandemic showed clearly how much poor governance and historic exclusion from services and infrastructure matter. In Dharavi, Asia’s biggest slum, the infection rate was 57% compared to 16% in formal settlements.³³ In São Paulo, mortality rates in poor areas were 10 times higher than in wealthy ones.³⁴

While ‘the right to the city’ is meant to afford everyone equal opportunities and access to urban resources, services and goods, the future of urban growth is still largely unplanned and resource-constrained. Anticipatory preventive responses to climate-related security risks, including environmental peacebuilding, can help to strengthen the resilience of cities and local communities, especially women and youth, and help to climate-proof governance, deliver basic services, and strengthen peace and security efforts.³⁵

Climate change will add stressors to rural-urban migration, that, if they are not addressed, might irreversibly threaten urban coping mechanisms.³⁶ Climate-induced migration to cities will both be conditioned and exacerbated by physical and social structural inequalities. These will sharpen contests over space, make governance even more difficult for States and local authorities that lack the capacity to effectively service and control city areas, and undermine social resilience and commu-

Climate-Related Security Risks to International Peace and Security through Mitigation and Resilience Building.

At: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2021-02-23/secretary-generals-remarks-the-security-council-addressing-climate-related-security-risks-international-peace-and-security-through-mitigation-and-resilience-building>.

27 UN-Habitat (2019). [Addressing the Most Vulnerable First - Pro-Poor Climate Action in Informal Settlements](#).

28 UN-Habitat (2016). [Slum Almanac 2015-2016](#).

29 Menashe-Oren, A. (2020). ‘Migrant-Based Youth Bulges and Social Conflict in Urban Sub-Saharan Africa’. *Demographic Research*, 42: 57-98. doi:10.4054/demres.2020.42.3. Also: Kyed, H. M. (2017). [Urban Insecurity, Migrants and Political Authority](#). Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS).

30 UN-Habitat (2021). [Cities and Pandemics - Towards a More Green, Just and Healthy Future](#).

31 Kovacic, Z., Musango, J. K., Ambole, L. A., Buyana, K., Smit, S., Anditi, C., Mwau, B., Ogot, M., Lwasa, S., Brent, A. C., Nsangi, G., Sseviiri, H. (2019). ‘Interrogating differences: A comparative analysis of Africa’s informal settlements’. *World Development*, 122(), 614–627. doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.06.026.

32 Patel, A., Lotia, H., Malik, A. A., Mundt, M. D., Hyunjung Lee, and Rafiq, M. A. (2020). ‘Gendered Impacts of Environmental Degradation in Informal Settlements: A Comparative Analysis and Policy Implications for India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan’. *Journal Of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, 1-17. doi:10.1080/13876988.2020.1829454. See also: Azcona, G., Bhatt, A., Duerto, S., Uteng, T. P. (2021). [Spotlight on SDG11: Harsh Realities: Marginalized Women in Cities of the Developing World](#). UN-Women.

33 UN-Habitat (2021). [Cities and Pandemics - Towards a More Green, Just and Healthy Future](#).

34 Ibid.

35 United Nations, Climate Security Mechanism. [Toolbox – Briefing Note](#).

36 Herzer Risi, L., Burkett, B. (2020). [Reorienting Perceptions of Climate Change, Migration and Displacement](#). Wilson Center, 21st Century Diplomacy.



nities' ability to manage political, social, economic, and environmental shocks. Cities can easily become 'fragile' when the social contract is subject to such strains.³⁷ Inclusive governance, particularly of young urban residents, is critical to mitigating these impacts.

Putting the YPS agenda at the heart of efforts to build resilient cities in the context of climate change makes sense because youth play such a central role in the urban environment. This should be self-evident, since some cities are actually more dangerous than active conflict zones.³⁸ The important question remains: how can cities and their decision-makers proactively prepare for the additional impact of climate change on urban conflict?

The Missing Peace made clear that young peacebuilders work across different spectrums and typologies of violence and conflict, and engage structural and immediate causes of violence. Young people understand only too well that it is vital to connect the private and public spheres; to build peace at the most local neighbourhood lev-

el but also nationally and even internationally; and they work across different phases of conflict with different sectors and institutions.³⁹ Their participation or exclusion directly impacts the durability of peace processes as well as the quality of transformative resilience for peace.

Its transversal relevance is a key attribute of the YPS agenda, and also of youth-led and youth-based peacebuilding. As climate change becomes an increasingly important variable in the evolution of conflicts (especially urban conflicts), influencing their potential to become violent, young women and men are perhaps uniquely placed to monitor the effects, link up with formal institutions, and add their legitimacy and expertise as local actors to higher-level policy-making. If young women and men are not directly involved, if their agency and leadership are disregarded, policy discourses are much more likely to reinforce patterns of victimisation and exclusion, and expect young people to assume the burdens of the climate crisis while failing to draw on their potentially transformative contributions to peace, resilience, and violence prevention.

37 Muggah, R. (2014). 'Deconstructing the Fragile City: Exploring Insecurity, Violence and Resilience'. *Environment and Urbanization*, 26 (2): 345-358. doi:10.1177/0956247814533627. Also: Fragile Cities (2021). *Explorable Visual Analytics (EVA)*.

38 "Of all victims of lethal violence, 83% lived outside of conflict zones." OECD (2016). *States of Fragility*. See also: Pathfinders. 'Peace in Our Cities'.

39 Simpson, G. (2019). 'Youth, Peace and Security: Addressing the Violence of Exclusion'. *Accord*, No. 28.

Barriers to the meaningful inclusion of youth

However, attempts to include youth are often tokenistic or manipulative or seek to co-opt youth into predetermined agendas without allowing them to meaningfully debate or influence decision-making.⁴⁰ At neighbourhood, municipal and global levels, this generates alienation, but in addition it fails to address the “violence of exclusion” in systems of governance and development that young women and men experience, as described in *The Missing Peace*. Tokenised or symbolic inclusion of young people may do more harm than good, especially where policy arenas tend to paint youth (and young men in particular) as a danger to society. Policies to ‘counter or prevent violent extremism’, for example, often restrict civic space, impair the human rights of young people,⁴¹ and constrain their transformative potential. This does the opposite of encouraging potential ‘youth dividends’ in conflict-affected societies.

The same is true of urban development and youth programming policies that primarily consider young people to be an urban threat, or a source of violence. Such approaches are counter-productive because they disable young people from engaging meaningfully in the urban policy spaces that impact their lives. By contrast, if they are able to participate as equals, young people can both inform and transform conflict dynamics that generate violence –

perhaps especially in urban spaces that are poorly understood. Nowhere is this more true than of policy and strategy discussions about the impact of climate change on urban development and planning.

One in four young people is affected by violence or armed conflict.⁴² Yet most youth are peaceful and do not engage in violence. Even though violence is becoming more urban, its forms and causes are associated first with group grievances and marginalisation, rather than youth bulges or unemployment.⁴³

The effects of climate change are such that we need to reimagine our ideas of human security, urban governance, and peace. To do this, we will have to take account of the views of youth, because they are the guardians of the future and stand at the heart of the global climate justice movement. Yet, partly because they are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change in urban settings – and usually excluded from formal decision-making bodies – young women and men often find it is difficult to participate. Their lived experience and expertise are seldom acknowledged or accredited. In both policy and practice, urban youth are usually ignored, or treated as highly gendered stereotypes – victims or perpetrators of diverse forms of urban violence.⁴⁴ As a result, they are largely invis-

40 Kamruzzaman, Palash. 2020. ‘Exploring The Nexus Between Participation And Empowerment’. *Journal of Development Policy and Practice* 5 (1): 32-53. doi:10.1177/2455133320909926.

41 Street, J., Atiok, A. (2020). ‘A Fourth Pillar for The United Nations? The Rise of Counter-Terrorism’. *Saferworld*.

42 Hagerty, T. (2017). ‘Data for Youth, Peace and Security: A Summary of Research Findings from the Institute for Economics & Peace’. Institute for Economics & Peace.

43 *The Missing Peace* and research on urban violence repeatedly stress that the attention given to youth bulges is misplaced and that hard security policy responses are counterproductive. For analysis of trends in urban violence during rapid urbanisation, see Raleigh, C. (2015). ‘Urban Violence Patterns Across African States’. *International Studies Review*, 17, No. 1: 90-106.

44 The term ‘gendered violence’ acknowledges that the forms violence takes in urban spaces, and its effects, are conditioned by gender and sex. The effects are intersectional and therefore, for example, pose particular challenges for non-binary people, who are traditionally overlooked. Efforts to disaggregate the gender impact of policies continue to have a blind spot because they tend to equate ‘gender’ with ‘women’. Owusu, M., Nursey-Bray, M., and Rudd, D. (2019). ‘Gendered perception, and vulnerability to climate change in urban slum communities in Accra, Ghana’. *Reg. Environ.*

ble, except as a threat, undermining their potential to make positive contributions to efforts to address climate security issues.

In particular urban contexts or crises affected by climate warming, these trends may be exacerbated. For instance, recent research shows that men tend to become more violent towards female partners during disasters and similar stressful contexts, when food is short, work is not available, or housing is insecure. Such insecurity will increase as the effects of climate change spread.⁴⁵ Climate change will also aggravate the feminisation of poverty and the gendered structural barriers that women face, in accessing rights to land and property, obtaining secure work, etc.⁴⁶

The movement of young people from rural areas into cities is often a 'climate coping strategy' and tends to be gendered as well. Migrants are predominantly male,⁴⁷ which impacts the relationships of young migrant men to women in urban settings and also exposes young female migrants and refugees to specific risks, including various forms of gender-based mental, physical, and sexual violence. Girls and young female urban refugees also experience a range of other interpersonal and community-based security challenges.⁴⁸

The gendered dimensions of conflict and climate change in urban spaces reproduce insecurities and structural challenges that youth-based peace-building approaches must address.⁴⁹

In doing so, policies should move away from gender stereotypes that assume young men are intrinsically violent, or likely to become more violent, under circumstances of (climate-)stress. They should adopt a more intersectional understanding of young people's lived experiences, that integrates complications of class, race, ethnicity, colonialism, spatiality and other socio-economic and cultural variables. Understanding of masculinities, for example, should take into account how young urban men become violent in certain situations, but also that they may be victimised in other areas of public or private life; for example, young men are often excluded from social and economic institutions, or constrained by community, family or cultural expectations, etc.⁵⁰ If we used an urbanisation lens to restructure prevailing discourses on masculinity and gender-identity, we could engage more holistically with climate security. Too often, instead, we merely reinforce gendered youth stereotypes by marginalising young urban women as passive victims, and making young urban men the objects of security policies.

Change, 19, 13–25.

- 45 Logie, C. H., Daniel, C. H., Ahmed, U., Lash, R. (2017). ["Life Under the Tent is not Safe, Especially for Young Women": Understanding Intersectional Violence Among Internally Displaced Youth In Leogane, Haiti](https://doi.org/10.1080/16549716.2017.1270816). *Global Health Action* 10(2). doi:10.1080/16549716.2017.1270816.
- 46 Pickbourn, L. (2018). 'Rethinking Rural-Urban Migration and Women's Empowerment in the Era of the SDGs: Lessons from Ghana'. Dissertation for the School of Critical Social Inquiry, Hampshire College. At: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/10/4/1075/pdf>.
- 47 Long-term studies have found that climate-related migration for labour is a coping strategy that men rather than women tend to adopt. However, most academic research has focused on past and present climate shocks and changes. Less work has been done on the forms that climate migration will take in a world that is 1.50C to 20C hotter. One survey of the future can be found at: <https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2020/10/climate-migration-cities-preparing-mass-movement-people/>.
- 48 Exposure to climate risks and ability to adapt are often analysed in terms of economic inequalities. Women who are acutely vulnerable, for example, may be forced into survival prostitution, which in turn exposes them to physical violence and sexually-transmitted diseases. As climate change exacerbates such situations, it will be important to address the responsibilities of men as well as the vulnerabilities of women. See, for example: Logie, C.H., Okumu, M., Mwima, S., Hakiza, R., Irungi, K. P., Kyambadde, P., Kironde, E., Narasimhan, M. (2019). ["Social ecological factors associated with experiencing violence among urban refugee and displaced adolescent girls and young women in informal settlements in Kampala, Uganda: a cross-sectional study"](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-019-1411-1). *Conflict and Health*, Vol. 13: 60
- 49 Global Land Tool Network, UN-Habitat (2021). [GLTN Gender Strategy \(2019–2030\) towards Securing Women's and Girls' Land and Property Rights](https://www.unhabitat.org/global-land-tool-network-gltngender-strategy-2019-2030-towards-securing-women-s-and-girls-land-and-property-rights).
- 50 Gibbs, A., Jewkes, R., Sikweyiya, Y., Willan S. (2015). [Reconstructing masculinity? A qualitative evaluation of the Stepping Stones and Creating Futures interventions in urban informal settlements in South Africa](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-015-0411-1). *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, Vol. 17, Issue 2.



Building transformative resilience

As climate change continues to apply pressure on social and generational urban structures, and on the social contract between young people and urban institutions, those who have an interest in urban conflict and violence can take advantage. This is where the YPS agenda might creatively intersect and combine with urban policies to improve climate security. The mix could strengthen transformative resilience across policy and governance at a time when the peace and security of urban environments will be increasingly stressed.

An effort should be made to engage young people strategically, across their various urban identities, in the search for climate, peace and security solutions. In doing so, YPS and climate security pro-

grammes (as a nexus) must address the impacts of climate change, including its tendency to exacerbate the inequalities and exclusion experienced by urban youth. In supporting the resilience of young women and men and their communities to confront the impacts of climate change, programmes should not focus only on material or physical adaptation or absorption but also give attention to the psycho-social dimensions of resilience.

Climate-driven migration can dramatically increase vulnerabilities in cities when it stresses or undermines social, political and economic patronage networks, and pushes young people into informality.⁵¹ These are key issues, because the degree to which urban social cohesion is robust

51 Usamah, M., Handmer, J., Mitchell, D., Ahmed, I. (2014). 'Can the Vulnerable be Resilient? Co-Existence of Vulnerability and Disaster Resilience: Informal Settlements in the Philippines'. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 10: 178-189. doi:10.1016/j.ijdrr.2014.08.007.

determines communities' ability to cope with climate stressors and disasters, and will shape their long-term potential to achieve transformative resilience.⁵² Citizens in informal settlements have insecure land tenure; their political influence tends to be limited; this is especially true of youth. At the same time, their informal structures sustain them and insulate them from some of the effects of their vulnerable situation, and may provide a foundation for resilience. Research has also shown that these local capacities and networks should not be left to their own devices, or romanticised or assumed to be inherently benevolent, because they may take an anti-social form if they are not nurtured, invested in and harnessed for positive resilience.⁵³

Climate change is often recognised when environmental hazards (flooding, landslides, heatwaves) collide with urban planning in informal settlements. Even when other socio-economic factors are taken into account, women tend to be more vulnerable than men at similar exposure-levels.⁵⁴ Gender-differences influence access to information and how environmental hazards are prioritised, as well as resilience and the capacity to adapt.

There remains a danger that climate security can easily be reduced to a depoliticised argument over youth inclusion in infrastructure planning and technical adaptation at city level. Young peacebuilders have ambitions beyond concerns about physical safety and protection: they want to tackle the structural drivers of climate change. These are embedded, with inevitable consequences, in the relations that cities and societies, and their social and economic systems, have with ecosystems - of which they are part, and not apart. This is why young peacebuilders want to address the climate crisis in tandem with the YPS agenda. Their aim is to build more just societies, to engage with structural violence and invest in sustaining peace, not just end armed conflict.

The resilience approach helpfully integrates both spheres, and it is considered central to the climate justice movement as well as the YPS agenda. However, in both arenas, it is clear that merely absorptive or survivalist approaches to resilience will not suffice. If resilience is to be transformative, it is essential to address the underlying and structural underpinnings of the climate crisis and its consequences, as well as the inequality and exclusion that it exacerbates.

52 Chu, E., Kavya, M. (2018). 'Recognition In Urban Climate Justice: Marginality and Exclusion of Migrants in Indian Cities'. *Environment And Urbanization*, 31(1): 139-156. doi:10.1177/0956247818814449.

53 See: Simpson, G., Makoond, A., Vinck, P., and Phuong, P. (2016). *Assessing Resilience for Peace: A Guidance Note*. Interpeace, Harvard Humanitarian Initiative et al.

54 Owusu, M., Nursey-Bray, M., Rudd, D. (2019). 'Gendered perception, and vulnerability to climate change in urban slum communities in Accra, Ghana'. *Reg Environ Change*, 19, 13-25.

Conclusion

Young women and men have a unique claim as inheritors of the future consequences of the emerging climate crisis. Young people understand that their future depends entirely on what they do now. They make fundamental critiques of current governance and politics at the intersection of climate and conflict because these have generationally specific impacts on them. National and local governments and cities should not repress or spurn youth-led social movements but welcome their criticisms, from which they can learn. Engaging youth at all stages of the conflict cycle will require decision-makers to invest in prevention, by building new communication channels and platforms for participation, and by making room to hear and learn from the constructive criticisms and dissent of youth. As young people demand inclusion in official decision-making fora, so policymakers need also to interact with young people in *their* forums and spaces of expression.

Equitable adaptation for a liveable planet will serve to expand the YPS agenda, shifting it from a hard security orientation and traditional peacebuilding approaches towards the radical transformations of human systems necessary to reap a youth dividend, achieve climate justice, and face up to the challenge of the climate crisis.

In this spirit, UN-Habitat in partnership with the Nobel Peace Centre co-organized the Oslo Pax Summit in 2019, where young climate leaders were invited to reconcile peace with climate change.



Youth-leaders, representing young women and men from the global North and South, called for a commitment to meaningful participation of youth, acknowledgment of climate stability as a human right, and the maintenance of intergenerational equity principles (see Annex). The notion of 'equitable adaptation for a liveable planet' extends the YPS agenda, shifting it from a hard security orientation towards the transformation of human systems necessary to reap a youth dividend, achieve climate justice, and face up to the challenge of the climate crisis. It is rooted in the recognition that youth are guardians of the future. Given that the climate crisis will affect the majority of the planet's population, this has far-reaching political implications, not only for policy-making but for intergenerational relations in general, not least in urban centres.

Recommendations

1. Member States, city leaders and policy experts should recognise the transformative power of young people who call for action on climate change and peacebuilding. Documenting, assessing, and investing in youth resilience for sustainable peace with youth as co-decision-makers, based on climate justice, can reap a youth-based peace dividend for cities and wider societies.
2. Member States should integrate climate security priorities and YPS guidance in policymaking and local initiatives. Consultations should involve youth in cities and should make use of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) to include young urban dwellers. VLRs can raise awareness and foster local sustainability, increase synergies between strategies, identify policy gaps, and generate partnerships with a range of stakeholders.
3. National governments and regional bodies should champion spatial analyses that are city- and context-specific, disaggregated by age, and rooted in youth consultation and inclusive participation. In partnership with youth, they should also develop urban resilience assessments that include indicators on risk and resilience factors related to climate change.
4. The UN's [Climate Security Mechanism \(CSM\)](#)⁵⁵ should integrate guidance from the Youth Peace and Security agenda, drawing on UN Security Council resolutions 2250, 2419 and 2535 and *The Missing Peace*.
5. Member States, international financial institutions, and the UN Peacebuilding Fund should improve access to climate finance for youth in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, and invest in urban climate resilience based on youth-led, conflict-sensitive approaches to sustaining peace.
6. Policy analysts and Member States operating at international level should avoid 'policy panic' in which climate, peace, and security initiatives become overly securitised. A youth-inclusive, nature-based, holistic approach is required that meets the needs of diverse youth groups and capitalises on existing resilience efforts in the fields of peacebuilding, youth, gender, human rights and urban/rural dynamics.

⁵⁵ Established in 2018, the CSM is a joint initiative of the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP),

Annex

Oslo Pax: Our Call for Action on Peace and Climate Change

Young climate leaders, activists and experts call on the Member States of the United Nations, governments, international organizations, and representatives of the private sector to:

1. Recognize climate stability as a human right.
 1. Establish and uphold a constitutional right to a stable climate system capable of sustaining human life.
 2. Establish an international tribunal for the environment to hold perpetrators of conflict-related environmental impacts accountable.
 3. Uphold intergenerational equity principle.
 4. Protect the atmosphere as a public trust resource for current and future generations.
2. Acknowledge climate change as a threat to international peace and security through the adoption of a United Nations Security Council resolution.
3. Provide people being displaced involuntarily by climate change with a safe homeland.
4. Rethink financial structures to reflect the need for sustainable economies based on growth with ecological and human integrity.
5. Provide carbon footprint transparency on all consumer products in order to facilitate more informed consumer choices.
6. Ensure women and girls of all ages world-wide participate equally in decision-making processes and labor markets and fully contribute to climate-related planning, policy-making and implementation.
 1. Improve policies and services related to health and address all forms of gender-based violence and exploitation.
 2. Advance gender-disaggregated data and policies around budgeting.
7. Commit to meaningful participation of Youth.
 1. Promote community-led solutions to climate change and job creation to help prevent and resolve social tensions that may otherwise lead to conflict.
 2. Invest in young people's capacities, agency and leadership on climate action, through substantial funding support for network building and capacity strengthening.



Interpeace

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION
FOR PEACEBUILDING

Interpeace Headquarters

Maison de la Paix
2E Chemin Eugène-Rigot
Petal 5 (Building 5)
CH-1202 Geneva
Switzerland