



IPI MEETING BRIEF

New York Seminar

The importance of engaging youth to create resilient and inclusive societies was recognized in Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace, and security of December 2015. This resolution has led to the commissioning of the UN's first Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, which is assessing the nature and extent of young people's engagement with or alienation from local, national, and multilateral institutions.

Following these developments, the International Peace Institute's 2017 New York Seminar focused on the role of youth around the world in building peace, preventing violence, and working toward equitable economic and social development. The annual seminar, held this year on June 21st at IPI and supported by the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations, explored the implications of the renewed focus on youth for the work of civil society organizations, national governments, the UN system, and various intergovernmental entities. The following are some of the main insights and conclusions:

- All **global issues today are “youth issues.”** The current generation of youth is the largest in human history, with almost half the world's population under the age of twenty-four.
- The category of youth incorporates vast diversity, including of ideas, affiliations, and interests. What all youth share is an interest in a sustainable future, and **the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a youth agenda:** it cannot be achieved without youth participation and leadership.
- Stereotypes of youth are highly gendered, with young women facing “double discrimination.” These **stereotypes tie young people to identities organized around conflict**, leading to a “policy panic” that tends to associate youth with violence, instead of recognizing young people as a repository of resilience and as agents of peace, development, and social cohesion.
- To overcome the exclusion and mistrust that characterize the experiences of youth, UN and national **agencies and institutions must change their mindset and see youth as legitimate political actors and partners.** Addressing the violence of exclusion is the best strategy for preventing violent conflict.
- In particular, **Sustainable Development Goals 16 and 17 offer channels for youth participation** in all aspects of the UN system's work, across conflict-affected and peaceful contexts.
- Such participation cannot consist of “including” some young people to implement or (allegedly) benefit from predetermined projects. Inclusion begins with in-depth analysis of the needs, capacities, and experiences of youth in a given context. It then requires asking “**why should youth engage with us?**” and working with them to design interventions and policies that respond to those needs and values and to strengthen their capacities.
- As with analysis and design, **monitoring and evaluation frameworks must also reflect this emphasis on youth agency and leadership** in all development and peacebuilding work. The UN system must develop the habit of listening to youth, responding to their feedback, and advocating for the recognition of their agency in their own communities and political systems.

- Ameya Naik