

# We Are Still Not Enough: Getting More Women's Voices Into Peacebuilding

Southeast Asian Women Peacebuilders Network



# Introduction

The Southeast Asian Women Peacebuilders Network (SEAWP) made its debut with a regional summit in May 2020. A platform for women in civil society organisations around the region, acting as activists, negotiators, lawyers and peacebuilders, the network was created to showcase the work these peacebuilding experts and practitioners do, as well as forwarding the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

SEAWP's first seven months beginning May 2020 has been impressive: its webinars have reached a wide set of audience and the speakers have been a good mix of well-known experts and lesser known ones, with a breadth of experiences among them. These webinars have also featured young women working within the security and conflict areas as researchers and other significant roles.

In September 2020, SEAWP began its second series of webinars and come to the realisation that it has been challenging during these unprecedented times. In embracing the new normal, the increasing number of webinars have taken over the lives of many, and people, including peacebuilding experts, are either too busy or have over committed themselves to other panels, hence the limited number of webinars as was originally planned. The second series of activities was supported by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Japan.

The regional webinar in February 2021 saw the actors in Women, Peace and Security discussing the next steps for Southeast Asia, aligned with the following criteria:

- The Joint Statement on Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN adopted at the 31st ASEAN Summit in Manila in November 2017, recognizes that peace and security are essential to the achievement of sustainable development and are interconnected and vital to the future of ASEAN, emphasizing women's equal, full, and effective participation at all stages of peace processes given their indispensable roles in the prevention and resolution of conflict, peacebuilding and peacekeeping.
- Recognising the CEDAW GR 30's agenda on the importance of conflict prevention for women's rights notwithstanding, conflict prevention efforts often exclude women's experiences as not relevant for predicting conflict, and women's participation in conflict prevention is low. The Committee has previously noted the low participation of women in institutions working on preventive diplomacy

and on global issues such as military expenditure and nuclear disarmament. In addition to falling short of the Convention, such gender-blind conflict prevention measures cannot adequately predict and prevent conflict. It is only by including female stakeholders and using a gendered analysis of conflict that States parties can design appropriate responses.

- That women's participation in the peace process is crucial: addressing Gender Based Violence (GBV) in a conflict setting, recognizing the leadership of, and supporting women's organizations at the grass-root level.

SEAWP aims to be a leading regional network and collective of women peacebuilders in Southeast Asia.

**Today, you can find SEAWP at the following channels:**

Website: [www.seawomenpeacebuilders.com](http://www.seawomenpeacebuilders.com)

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/seawomenpeacebuilders/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/seawomenpeacebuilders>

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# Executive Summary

**T**his policy paper highlights the involvement of various women actors from different backgrounds in creating peace and security, by identifying the different categories of women in need of platforms to amplify their voices. The paper comprises detailed research findings and discussions output from the webinar session and conference held by the Southeast Asian Women Peacebuilders Network (SEAWPN) partnered with the LEAD Institute, a Malaysian think tank that promotes unity, stability, and democracy. They emphasise the importance of actors in tackling non-traditional issues with engagement on peace-related issues such as climate change, poverty, and other sustainable development goals (SDGs) in efforts of reconciliation.

## Summary Research Findings:

1. The passage of time has redefined security from being predominantly focused on the nation-state to being evolved into individual security, emphasising the need to ensure the individual's safety from threat, based on seven categories: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security.
2. Intersectional and cross-sectoral feminist approaches that highlight women's various experiences and identities in peace processes will go beyond the

traditional gendered framework of peacebuilding, to a more gender-inclusive approach. There has been greater understanding and comprehension of intersectionality that has also influenced the rise of political agency.

3. Women's strong interaction and involvement within their community positions them as the main actor to voice their concerns, experiences, and needs. They have become savvier about implementing gendered perspectives in discussions surrounding controversial issues, including decentralization and security sector reform. Women have begun to invest in becoming subject specialists in order to have an edge over their male counterparts. The media has also been integral to furthering women's issues, and providing women with the platform to speak up and voice their concerns. Young women are also part of community movement, for example as members of the youth-led demonstration in Thailand, against the autocratic regime, and the unfair treatment of the public by the nation's elites. Initiated by students, the protests started on campus, and was dubbed 'the student movement.'
4. Actors of WPS discussions are not only limited to physical space but have since shifted to the digital space via social media and other communications tools. This took into account factors like the pandemic, and the increased use of online platforms. Media, both traditional and electronic, has the power to shape public opinion, and can determine social narratives. Thus, they have the power to either perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes, or use their respective roles in society to promote women's contribution as leaders and peacebuilders. The rise of media utilisation in reporting, and documenting protest and demonstration against autocratic governments have become critical in giving people voice. The media has been able to cover the peace process while also adding a more gendered perspective to specific conflicts, for example within Myanmar's borders. However, it is uncertain how long online media can be sustained due to frequent internet shutdowns.

## Webinar recommendation

1. Peacebuilders need to champion greater use of gender lenses, and utilise a feminist approach to analyse conflicts in order to create a genuinely inclusive approach to peacebuilding, and this goes beyond demanding female representation in peace efforts.
2. The intersectional approach will enable women peacebuilders to go beyond quotas and understand the structure barriers, norms and practices that contribute to the marginalisation of women's experiences and needs in times

of conflict. Adopting an intersectional and intersectoral approach will shift peace processes from a male-dominated peace structure towards investing and amplifying current existing women-led spaces that recognises the different roles that women hold.

3. There is a need for advocacy to provide specific resources to assist women peacebuilders with their responsibilities from their various backgrounds. Many women peacebuilders are burdened by familial responsibilities, while the youth need to have a platform to be included in wider discussions. By harnessing unique and innovative means through their social media skills, the youth have contributed by leading political movements and campaigns that speak for future generations.
4. International donors and national institutions should create more programmes that can provide women with financial and childcare support, thus enabling them to participate as part of the meaningful discussions.





# Background of the Policy Paper

The concept of security in international relations is traditionally associated with military power and states as the referent object (that must be protected from threats). In the 1990s, however, the principles of security were ‘extended’ to cover four primary forms, as described by Emma Rothschild:<sup>1</sup>

1. The extension goes downwards. The concept of security is extended from the security of nations to individuals.
2. It is extended upward from the security of nations, the international system, or a supranational physical environment.
3. The concept of security is extended horizontally, from military to political, economic, social, environmental, or ‘human’ security.
4. The responsibility to maintain security is diffused in all directions from nation-states, including upwards to international institutions, downwards to regional or local government, and sideways to NGOs, the public, media, and the market.

There are increased non-traditional security issues that Callabero-Anthony understands as “challenges to the survival and well-being of peoples and states that arise primarily

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1 Emma Rothschild, “The Quest for World Order”, 124, 3 (1995), pp. 53-98

out of non-military sources.”<sup>2</sup> Such a phenomenon is closely related to the concept of ‘human security’ as first defined in the 1994 United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Human Development Report. This idea emerged because it is perceived that the concept of security has long been interpreted too narrowly. The emphasis is on nation-states and not people. The report broadly describes the term as safety from seven categories of threats which are: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security, and composed of two elements of ‘freedom from fear and freedom from want.’<sup>3</sup> In particular, climate change, water and food security, transnational issues, increased militancy, social media, and dis(mis) information have become part of emerging global issues.

However, tackling these issues and creating a lasting and sustainable peace requires many actors in the field, including women’s participation. The adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 has shown the importance of women as a vital component in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. Thus, under the women, peace and security agenda, efforts to protect women in times of conflict, and to engage women in conflict prevention and resolution efforts, and decision-making and leadership positions, should be further enhanced. Intersectional and cross-sectoral feminist approaches highlighting women’s various experiences and identities in peace processes will move peacebuilding beyond the traditional gendered framework to a more gender-inclusive approach. Such approaches will recognise women as autonomous actors and their various roles in conflicts as mediators, humanitarian responders, and even combatants on the field.

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2 Caballero-Anthony, M. (ed.). *An Introduction to Non-Traditional Security Studies – A Transnational Approach*. (London: Sage Publications), 6.

3 UNDP, 1994, “Human Development Report New Dimensions of Human Security”, 24-25



# Findings and Discussions

## Women Peacebuilder

In times of conflict, women are greatly impacted by war. However, women have continued to be excluded in formal peacebuilding processes. In Patani, Southern Thailand, approximately 7,000 people of the Malay rebel groups have died in the past ten years from the self-determination movement against the Thai Government.<sup>4</sup> As a result of these violent conflicts, and unlawful detainment and torture, the men have often fled to Malaysia. Consequently, villages in Patani are now run predominantly by women. The migration of the male population has left women and children with the double burden of looking after their households and also to act as providers, as well as ensuring the welfare and livelihood of their community. These women's strong interaction and involvement within their community have positioned them as the main actor, in which they voice their concerns, experiences, and needs. Therefore, it is essential to involve these women, and support their ability to participate in peacebuilding efforts.

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4 International Crisis Group. Jihadism in Southern Thailand: A Phantom Menace. November 2017

Despite inclusive practices becoming more widely accepted in peacebuilding, these efforts still pivot around the idea of having ‘armed groups’ at the negotiation table. Moreover, gender inclusion is still often tokenistic and number-centred (for example, making sure a certain number of women take part in negotiations). Thus, the responsibility falls upon activists and members of the public to be savvier about how to implement gendered perspectives in discussions surrounding controversial issues, including decentralisation and security sector reform. Women have been forced to be more circumspect because their meaningful participation has been impeded by patriarchal violence. Consequently, women should invest in becoming subject specialists, thereby making the men view them more seriously in peace negotiations.<sup>5</sup> The more non-traditional issues are, for example, decentralization, economic reform, infrastructure, the more women can finally gain an advantage over the male peacebuilders whom are often less qualified in their roles.

Moreover, the limitations placed upon WHRDs have also raised concerns regarding the implementation of the WPS project. Concerns about technocracy, and how the WPS agenda is becoming more and more technocratic, have since arisen. The more technocratic nature of WPS initiatives has invited more interventions, and projects became conflict insensitive, failing to consider the implicit power dynamics which could exacerbate tensions.<sup>6</sup> This heightened technocracy also has activists becoming increasingly wary of becoming professionalised peacebuilders as many creative and innovative peace programmes invariably would be lost amidst all the professional procedures.

Nevertheless, despite all the doom and gloom, there are reasons to remain optimistic. For one, there is a greater understanding and comprehension of intersectionality, and the public has become more attuned to the concept and the practice. This greater understanding, especially among the younger generations, have seen the rise of political agency among the young, be they men, women, minorities (for example, the role of young people in the Myanmar civil disobedience movement), heralding a shift from the rhetorical to the operational.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, peacebuilding actors must ensure space creation and conduct proper preparation for the youth to maximise their role. It is hoped that the WPS agenda and the youth movement can work together hand in hand, going forward.

It is also critical to address challenges of the feminist agenda with a more modern political outlook, constantly questioning the agenda’s trajectory, and whether it boosts progress. Investments in feminist movements are not just investment in feminist organisations. Therefore, peacebuilders cannot and should not be hyper-fixated on projects and activities

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5 Cate Buchanan. 2021. Women Inclusion in Peacebuilding: Reflections and Its Future. Women Inclusion in Peacebuilding: A Framework for Continued Sustainability, 19 February 2021.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

for the sake of having projects and activities. Instead, peacebuilders should be more cognizant of whether a change is occurring in the political sphere or not. Women are often viewed as victims in times of conflict, and are often exposed to their vulnerability, without any acknowledgement of their strength and ability to recover and rebuild their community. Women inclusion in peacebuilding is vital for sustainable peace. It has been proven that gender inclusivity in peace processes have resulted in long-lasting peace after the conflict, as women fight for justice and reparations for themselves and future generations.<sup>8</sup>

## Youth

The rise of political urgency amongst the younger generation has created an intersection of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda with Women, Peace and Security. Most peace and security agendas that target the ‘youth’ prioritise young men but omit young women’s participation, such as in the Philippines, where males dominate youth peace organisations.<sup>9</sup> However, recent events in Thailand’s pro-democracy demonstrations with protestors demanding constitutional reforms, have shown youth, both male and female, leading a nationwide movement. The current wave of protest is amongst the biggest in recent times and is driven by the youth.

The SEA Women and Peacebuilders Network (SEAWPN) partnered with the LEAD Institute, a Malaysian-based think tank that promotes unity, stability, and democracy to hold a webinar session to discuss recent events in Thailand. Mass protests demanding constitutional reforms have been ongoing for several months in Thailand, with youth on the frontlines. The panel consisted of three speakers who was an academics, a practitioner and a student activist in Thailand. The following core questions drove the discussion:

1. A brief update of what was happening – was it an uprising?
2. What were the key demands of the protest?
3. Was the protest limited to Bangkok, or have sentiments reached rural areas as well?
4. Was there a generational conflict?
5. Has the Hongkong protest been an influence?

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Miriam Coronel-Ferrer. 2021. Women Too Often Omitted from Peace Processes: Lessons Learnt from the Philippines Women Inclusion in Peacebuilding: A Framework for Continued Sustainability, 19 February 2021.



The panellist stated that the movement had become a nationwide movement. However, Bangkok, the capital, had garnered the most media attention. The protests initially started on campus in February 2020, initiated by students, which is why it was dubbed ‘the student movement.’ However, starting in July 2020, it spread to other intersections like town halls. It involves various other groups in Thai society. In Chiang Mai, for example, lecturers have also begun to join in.

Nevertheless, it was noted that organising off-campus demonstrations outside Bangkok is more complex, particularly in Southern Thailand, which is under strict military control.<sup>10</sup> Academics in restricted areas have found alternatives to show their solidarity, such as creating seminars and discussions to encourage people to engage in current events, and share knowledge and ideas, amongst scholars and practitioners.<sup>11</sup> During the pandemic, these discussions have also since shifted to the digital space through social media and other communications tools. The movement’s identity has also become more heterogenous, extending to the LGBTQ and Muslim communities in Thailand. This invites solidarity in the fight for justice in Thailand as both the LGBTQ and Muslim communities have been victims of repressive policies by the Thai government for years. In aligning with the movement, the group hopes to demand democracy to achieve more freedom and liberty, particularly at the social level.

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<sup>10</sup> Janjira Sombatpoonsiri. 2020. Young Blood and Democratic Reform in Thailand, 22 October 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Baimon. 2020. Young Blood and Democratic Reform in Thailand, 22 October 2020.

At its core, this is a political conflict that means everyone is involved in fighting for justice. However, there is notably a generational gap between the youth and their elders. The older generation tends to see the monarchy as an important symbol of the country. They disagree with the younger generation's views on the need for drastic change. Due to their great respect and devotion to the monarch, the older generation perceives the youth's way of communicating grievances through mass protests as outrageous. However, the younger generation has spent more time under military dictatorship than the older generation. Having experienced being subject to the government's control and restrictions such as school systems' moral and cultural policies, the younger generation felt suffocated and repressed by the regime. The student activist claimed that not only is the role of the monarchy is being questioned but also the wealth it has accumulated, and its involvement with many human rights violations, considering the alarming number of disappearances in recent years.<sup>12</sup> The authoritarian climate has raised concerns among the youth and has driven them to take action.

The movement is not a conflict between the youth versus the older generation. It is a political issue in which everyone is fighting against injustice. However, as most young people are at the forefront of the movement, and are its key initiators, the movement's goals and ideals represent the young people of Thailand.<sup>13</sup> The student activist panellist claimed that the youth's active involvement in the Hong Kong protest greatly inspired the Thai youth to voice their concerns and initiate the movement. The Hong Kong protestors' creativity and innovative approach in reaching out to the government has inspired the Thai youth to create their demonstration-style through acts of non-violence.<sup>14</sup>

Although the pandemic did not trigger the movement, the government's restrictions and control over the public were the catalyst for them to start the movement. The demonstration resulted from repressions experienced by their society for years under the autocratic regime, which had treated the public unfairly on behalf of the nation's elites. One of the underlying issues is the complex system of privileges that Thai elites have enjoyed under the current political regime. Such a condition is evident from the elite's increase of wealth. The youth have claimed that their movement reflects the structural problems inherent within Thai politics and society.

Thailand's education system is one of the most conservative in the region. However, young people seek information beyond their school by accessing progressive books by Thai authors and social media like Twitter. For the most part, there is more freedom on campus than in high school, and lecturers are more critical than others. The high school curriculum is more conservative than that of junior high. Although it is supposed to indoctrinate

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12 Baimon. 2020. Young Blood and Democratic Reform in Thailand, 22 October 2020.

13 Janjira Sombatpoonsiri. 2020. Young Blood and Democratic Reform in Thailand, 22 October 2020.

14 Baimon. 2020. Young Blood and Democratic Reform in Thailand, 22 October 2020.



students, there is an unintended effect that motivates them to find knowledge outside of the formal education system.

The Hong Kong model has a significant influence on the current Thai movement. In mobilising the youth, particularly high school students, the internet and media play a huge role. Simple social media posts like why students must wear the uniform have sparked an interesting and progressive discussion that is critical of the system. These discussions have prompted the youth to create alliances to demand change from the government.<sup>15</sup> The movement was not initiated by a single incident but is a result of cumulative grievances from a series of events, topped by the government's restrictive policies during the pandemic. The government's normalisation of their repressive acts, and treatment of the people as second-class citizens compared to the treatment enjoyed by the elites, have worn down the people, especially the youth.

## Media Worker

Modern technologies can provide different opportunities. Media workers can play a key role in implementing women, peace, and security agendas, and contribute to building a society that is equal, peaceful, and respectful towards human rights principles. The media has the power to shape public opinion, and to determine the social narratives. Thus, they have the power to either perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes, or to use their role in society to promote women's contribution as leaders and peacebuilders. However, such responsibilities also bear risks for media workers, especially in light of the rising number of autocratic regimes, particularly in Southeast Asia.

For example, with the enactment of severe press restrictions through media censorship and regular internet shutdowns, social media has become a critical platform in Myanmar.<sup>16</sup> It has become particularly integral to furthering women's issues and providing women with the platform to speak up and voice their concerns. After 2015, journalists and activists in Myanmar have become increasingly aware of issues faced by women, in part due to the role played by social media. Consequently, CSOs have begun pushing for better female representation within the Myanmar peace process, which began in 2011, with many CSOs calling for 30% of the peace delegation to be women.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, since 2012, two years after democracy was reintroduced to Myanmar, social media also became the leading platform to train new journalists and peace actors.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Tin Zar Aung. 2021. How Media Can Be an Instrument for Peace. Social Media and Its Impact on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding, 19 February 2021.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



However, in 2020, Myanmar's experienced a democratic backslide, ranking at 139th place on the Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index, which is one position lower than 2019, when Myanmar was ranked 138th.<sup>18</sup> With the recent coup on the 1 February 2021, Myanmar's ranking would likely only slide further downwards. Journalists in Myanmar are officially prohibited from covering the protests. The government has banned the use of the word 'coup' in news reporting. This restriction has led Burmese citizens to turn towards social media to voice their opinions and concerns. Fortunately, the complete internet shutdown on the day of the coup has been lifted. The internet shutdown has now been limited to between 1 a.m. and 9 a.m.

Only a few newspapers in Myanmar are still publishing daily issues, including the '7 Day News Daily'. The '7 Day News Daily' covered the coup in an edition published on the 2 February, a day after the coup. The Myanmar military implemented restrictions preventing the newspaper from publishing anything. For five days after the coup, '7 Day News Daily' covered the protests and the current predicament of the country's detained senior leaders. Despite the military explicitly banning media outlets from covering the protests, '7 Day News Daily' has continued to cover the protests.

However, '7 Day News Daily' is not the only media outlet defying the military's ban. Online media outlets are especially active in covering the protests. 'DVB TV News,' for example, was able to live-stream protests in Yangon from 18 February. 'The Irrawaddy' covered the arbitrary arrests of civilians by the police in the capital of Naypyidaw, with videos captured by citizens being sent to online media outlets<sup>19</sup>. Local citizens sending videos to online media outlets is reflective of the rise of citizen journalists/reporters in Myanmar amidst the coup and the ensuing protests.

As mentioned, besides being banned from covering the protests, media sources are banned from using the word 'coup' when writing about the country's current situation. The Myanmar military argues that the current situation is constitutional, and in fact, a state of emergency. Nevertheless, media outlets that are still active have since refused this order and the previous order, and have continued to cover and live-stream the protests. These media outlets are also joined by the increasing number of social media influencers that have sprung up in recent years. Social media influencers' Facebook posts regarding the coup and the protests have since gone viral, and become more and more critical in ensuring media coverage of the protests are comprehensive. Many other social media influencers

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> The Irrawaddy. 2021. Myanmar Military Detained 220 Political Prisoners Since Coup: AAPP. <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-military-detained-220-political-prisoners-since-coup-aapp.html>

have taken on these new responsibilities, and joined online and offline campaigns to raise awareness globally. Despite all this, a general sense of uncertainty over what might happen next remains. Many are worried that the internet would be shut down once again, or media actors will be reprimanded for their activities. The media have been able to cover the peace process while also adding a more gendered perspective to specific conflicts within Myanmar's borders, though for how much longer remains uncertain.



# Policy Recommendations

**F**rom the findings and discussions of the SEAWPN webinar series and conference, the participants recommended several approaches to enhance women's engagement in creating peace and security, and to identify which women's groups in society require comprehensive platforms.

Historically, women have always been omitted from peace processes. However, the recent shift in policies has led to greater inclusion of women in peace processes such as in the Philippines, and points to even possible future trajectories for women's roles in peace processes. Women peacebuilders need to champion greater use of gender lens and utilise a feminist approach in analysing conflicts. In doing so, women peacebuilders can help create a genuinely inclusive approach to peacebuilding. This must go beyond demanding female representation in peace efforts, because simply inviting women into the negotiation tables does not necessarily lead to an inclusive peace process. Therefore, an intersectional approach will enable women peacebuilders to go beyond quotas and to understand the structural barriers, norms, and practices that challenge women's experiences and needs in times of conflict.

Moreover, women's limited resources and capability to participate in peacebuilding due to their familial responsibilities, and even lack of access to funding, are often the main barriers to their lack of participation. Therefore, it is recommended that international donors or national institutions create more programmes that can provide women support

in these areas, thus enabling them to participate in meaningful discussions.<sup>20</sup> Programmes such as the Rapid Response Fund by USAID in Myanmar have provided funding that helps cover certain costs of travel and childcare, among others.<sup>21</sup> This programme helps to ensure that women are invited to attend or be speakers at specific key meetings, no matter what the conditions may be.

Therefore, in advocating for women peacebuilders, the need to advocate for the provision of specific resources to address women peacebuilders' familial responsibilities is also recognised.<sup>22</sup> Their responsibilities and their lack of resources have contributed to women's limited involvement in peacebuilding efforts. Recognising these responsibilities and providing them with the necessary resources can help enhance women's role in peacebuilding. The importance of pooling resources, in addition to the importance of women helping one another in strengthening women peacebuilders' collective power, cannot and should not be ignored. Adopting an intersectional and intersectoral approach will shift peace processes from a male-dominated peace structure towards investing and amplifying current existing women-led spaces that recognise the different roles that women hold.

It is also crucial to provide a platform for youth, and include them in discussions as they represent the future generation. On several occasions, millennials and Generation Z members have shown their ability to help amplify people's voices, mainly through the usage of social media. This approach has proven how the youth can advocate for democracy, and how influential the youth has been in this endeavour by spearheading the most critical social media campaigns. Therefore, regardless of their age or lack of agency, youth should not be underestimated for their involvement in social causes. Examples in Thailand and Myanmar show youth's dramatic leading role with their unique and innovative means to protest against the government, such as through paintings and murals, in addition to wearing costumes.<sup>23</sup> All of these extravagant ploys were meant to garner greater international attention.

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20 Cate Buchanan. 2021. Women Inclusion in Peacebuilding: Reflections and Its Future. Women Inclusion in Peacebuilding: A Framework for Continued Sustainability, 19 February 2021.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Tin Zar Aung. 2021. How Media Can Be an Instrument for Peace. Social Media and Its Impact on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding, 19 February 2021.



# Conclusion

**I**n the journey to create lasting sustainable peace, various women actors contributed greatly. These actors work within a wide range of fields and sectors of society, and engage in peace-related issues to create peace. However, in Southeast Asia, women's participation in peace processes is still minimal. Women are still largely excluded from official peace processes in conflict areas, despite the expertise and advantages women have brought to informal peace efforts.

Nevertheless, through various means and alternative pathways, women have continuously sought ways to become involved and participate in discussions. The persistent involvement of women has resulted in greater understanding and comprehension of intersectionality, leading the public to become more attuned to the concept and the practice. Women's participation has also influenced the involvement of youth through the establishment of their political agency. In Thailand and Myanmar, the youth-led protests have debunked the old myth that they are too young to be involved in politics.

The youth have become the most informed generation. Thai youth now demand that their voices be heard, and they actively participate as a crucial stakeholder in designing their future. With their unique approaches, such as through digital spaces and peaceful protests, the Thai youth are actively demanding change. Although the youth uprising is limited to Thailand, it will serve as an example to other countries. The Thailand example shows that people power can still, and will bring change, despite repressive regulations of an autocratic regime. These achievements of female peacebuilders bear evidence of the bright future that they are poised to own.





Steering Committee SEAWP

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