

The Global Coalition for Youth, Peace, and Security (GCYPS): A Case Study of Transformative Leadership

As youth voices are increasingly prioritized in the agencies and systems of the United Nations, many mechanisms have been put into place in order to facilitate youth participation. One example can be found in the Global Coalition for Youth, Peace, and Security (GCYPS), a platform promoting the involvement of youth within international spaces, thus playing a large role in moving the international community toward a more peaceful and secure world. The GCYPS has demonstrated elements of transformative leadership in the UN system.

Initially, the Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding (WG-YPB) was created in 2012 to guide and support youth advocating for peacebuilding. With the passing of Security Council Resolution 2250 in 2015 and the subsequent publishing of *A Missing Peace*, the Working Group was renamed to the Global Coalition for Youth, Peace, and Security.¹ The platform is premised on promoting peacebuilding through multifaceted approaches: human-rights based, economic, socio-political, and socio-cultural. Furthermore, it promotes nine principles (such as sensitivity toward gender dynamics, enhancing capacities of young people, and valuing young people's experiences) to facilitate the effective, inclusive participation of youth in UN spaces.² This structured guidance plays a large role in transforming the ability of youth to work toward peace, placing responsibility on both youth and pre-existing systems, thus calling for a twofold shift in patterns of thought and action.

The passing of Resolution 2250, a major accomplishment of GCYPS (at the time WG-YPB), is a representation of the advocacy by and for young people and the rapid acknowledgment of their contribution by UN systems. Key facets of this resolution were the identification of five pillars for action (participation, protection, prevention, partnerships and disengagement, and reintegration), the request for the Secretary-General to conduct a report on young people's contributions to peacebuilding, and the encouragement for Member States to elevate the voices of young people in decision-making processes.³ Universal participation and the investment of all stakeholders in a common goal are key elements of transformative leadership. In the case of peacebuilding, GCYPS has promoted collaboration and participation between Member States, UN systems, and youth themselves in order to strengthen the five pillars for action amongst and between these stakeholders. This leaves space for each stakeholder to take leadership and initiative in the areas in which they specialize.

The Coalition's current co-chairs, composed of a UN agency (the United Nations Populations Fund) and two civil society organizations, one of which is youth-led (Search for Common Ground and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders), has allowed it to stay connected to key actors across the YPS sector. Its operational structure, with regular participatory monthly meetings, open and flexible working groups, and the production and wide dissemination of key information, operational tool guides, and manuals, has made the Coalition an indispensable source of community,

¹ https://youth4peace.info/About_GCYPs

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https://youth4peace.info/system/files/2016-10/Guiding%20Principles%20on%20Young%20People's%20Participation%20in%20Peacebuilding_1.pdf

³ <https://youth4peace.info/UNSCR2250/Introduction>

support, and accompaniment for any organization, individual, or youth interested in implementing the YPS agenda.

Trust is a prerequisite for any successful initiative of social transformation. The GCYPS has become recognized by many as a trusted partner that aims to ameliorate the relationship between the UN and young peacebuilders. Through its structure and mechanisms, it works to overcome the barriers young people face in their efforts to contribute to peacebuilding processes. This culture of trust permeates the collaboration structures within the Coalition, thus spurring forward patterns and norms of transformative leadership.

Common conceptions of leadership place an individual at the head of a group or organization, exercising control of its activities. Transformative leadership promotes an alternative framework, seeing each person instead as a protagonist for fulfilling a group's purpose. Three hallmarks of an efficient group are the continual progress toward its purpose and goals, the strengthening of unity among its members, and the constant development of the capacities of its members. Any person contributing to these functions can be considered a leader. GCYPS clearly delineates its purpose and goals, thus allowing young people to have a clear vision about their purpose within the Coalition and its activities. This shared leadership develops capacities within young peacebuilders, reinforcing a sense of ownership and responsibility to each participant.

International governance structures have historically been dominated by hierarchies of power and power-building. GCYPS works to create a shift in this pattern, promoting transformative leadership and focusing instead on creating spaces for empowerment. As youth come into decision-making and decision-influencing positions at the UN, their inherent capacities for peacebuilding and innovation, their ability to bring many voices and perspectives to the table, and their profound desire to contribute to change will deeply strengthen the endeavors of the international community.