

News coverage and community engagement focused on global peace and security. Learn more about us.

FOLLOW US   

[Topics](#) ▾ [Executive Summaries](#) [Articles](#) [Community & Insight](#) [Talks](#) [Background](#) [Search](#)

[About](#)

FUNDING PEACE

ARTICLES

GENERAL

Share

Tweet

JOIN US

Sign in

Share via Email

# To Achieve Lasting Security, Invest in Young Peacebuilders

Young people are often among the most affected by conflict. But to engage with them solely as victims or perpetrators of war obscures the vital role they play in peacebuilding, writes Ghazal Keshavarzian of Elevate Children Funders Group and Catherine Thompson of Peace and Security Funders Group.

**Never miss an update.**



Sign up for our newsletter to receive weekly updates, special reports and featured insights as we cover one of the most critical issues of our time.

Enter your email address

First Name

Last Name

WRITTEN BY

PUBLISHED ON

READ TIME



José Rodríguez, better known as Jackson, celebrates his Emerging Young Leaders 2018 Award in a public ceremony at the U.S. State Department on May 2, 2018, together with nine others for their efforts in building sustainable peace. ALINA DIESTE/AFP/Getty Images

One in every four children around the world – about 535 million – currently live in a country impacted by conflict or disaster, according to the [United Nations](#). Some have been [recruited](#) to fight in armed groups, others have been [injured](#) by land mines or attacks on civilian infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals.

Often, youth in conflict are seen only as collateral damage to the political games of adults. Rather than just thinking of children as victims, it is also necessary to engage with them as potential partners in peacebuilding. In order to sustain peace across

Job Title

Organization

✓ SUBSCRIBE

News Deeply will use the information you provide to send you newsletter updates and other announcements. See our [privacy policy](#) for more.

## Related Articles

**What Peacekeeping Can Learn From Peacebuilding**

July 5, 2018

**Lessons From Guinea Could Improve the U.N.'s Focus on Prevention**

June 20, 2018

**The Case for Funding Peacebuilding**

May 21, 2018

**Recruiting the Next Generation of Peacebuilders in Pakistan**

July 20, 2018

**Without Long-Term Solutions, Peace Will Remain Elusive in Mali**

July 9, 2018

generations, funders must invest in youth by incorporating them as key participants of peace processes and peacebuilding strategies.

Historically, U.N. member countries have tended to waver between the “empowerment” of youth or their radicalization, totally missing a young person’s critical role as a peacebuilder. In April 2018, the independent, agenda-setting Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security was presented to the U.N. Security Council, which may have finally changed this narrative.

In December 2015, the Security Council took one step in that direction by adopting the first resolution to “recognize the important and positive role young women and men play in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.” As part of the resolution, the U.N. secretary-general requested a study that looks into youth’s “positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution.”

This was one of the first times the U.N. Security Council discussed young people as part of the solution for peace and security, not only as perpetrators or victims of violence, terrorism and unrest. The study found that gender stereotypes play into this decreased agency of young people – think



**Why Syrian Women Could Be the Key to Successful Peace Talks**

June 19, 2018



**A Seat at the Table: The Evolving Role of Afghan Women Peacebuilders**

Aug. 17, 2017



**Peacebuilding Should Be Central to the E.U.'s Global Strategy**

June 15, 2018



**Women in Peacekeeping: A Status Report**

Aug. 17, 2018



**Deeply Talks: Unarmed Civilian Protection and Peacebuilding**

June 28, 2018

## Most Popular

1



**In Syria, Rebel Integration Promotes Conflict Not Peace**

“boy with the gun” and “girl as the victim.” It also refuted assumptions that the “youth bulge” is leading to increased violence, that global migration is leading to increased terrorism and that most young people are associated with violence.

The study is based in part on in-person consultations with over 4,000 youth across 27 countries, including Burundi, Congo, Thailand and Syria, as well as gangs in Chicago and young immigrants in Sweden. It highlights the important contributions youth-led civil society organizations have made in devastated and conflict-affected societies as well as in those enjoying relative peace.

Such contributions, according to the report, include intercommunal dialogue to prevent electoral violence, promoting peace education among young school-aged children, peer-to-peer dialogue in conflict-affected communities, documenting human rights violations during conflict and participation in formal and informal peace processes.

While their work has proven to be effective, these youth-led organizations and groups continue to be restrained by limited funding and support. For this reason, funders and donors should take a page from the Progress Study and follow suit by investing in youth-led peace initiatives.

Post-conflict integration of former combatants into national armed forces is not a new reconciliation strategy. The Syrian government, however, is doing this before the war ends, which will only prolong the conflict, according to Syria researcher Haid Haid. [Aug. 10, 2018](#)

2  **Fear Dampens Hope Among Eritrean Refugees in Ethiopia**  
[Aug. 17, 2018](#)

3  **Smashing the Patriarchy and Sustaining Peace in Sudan**  
[Aug. 2, 2018](#)

4  **How Women Reclaimed Their Island From the Sri Lankan Navy**  
[Aug. 6, 2018](#)

5  **How Enterprises Can Help Build Peace in Afghanistan**  
[July 30, 2018](#)

REPUBLIC THIS  
ARTICLE

At \$351 million, peace and security funding makes up less than one percent of total philanthropic giving, with funding for children and youth an even smaller percentage. The Progress Study calls for \$1.8 billion in investments by 2025 – equal to \$1 per young person globally.

Clearly, the funding gap is wide and this is an aspirational, but not impossible, call for funding. Foundations can fund riskier and longer-term investments and play a unique role in engaging local youth groups and activists in a way that U.N. agencies and government cannot. They should step up and do so.

The youth, peace and security agenda is in its infancy, so funders have an opportunity to shape this burgeoning field. If funders truly want to create long-term change, start by identifying ways to bring youth into funding strategies. After all, youth are already shaping tomorrow's world. ■

*The views in this article belong to the authors and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Peacebuilding Deeply.*

### *About the Authors*

#### **Ghazal Keshavarzian**

DIRECTOR, ELEVATE CHILDREN FUNDERS GROUP

Ghazal Keshavarzian is the director of the Elevate Children Funders Group.

#### **Catherine Thompson**

PROGRAM DIRECTOR, PEACE AND SECURITY FUNDERS GROUP

Catherine Thompson is a program director at the Peace and Security Funders Group.

### *Most Popular Stories*

#### RELATED

**What  
Peacekeeping**

#### RELATED

**Lessons From  
Guinea Could**

#### RELATED

**The Case for  
Funding**

**In Syria, Rebel  
Integration Promotes**