

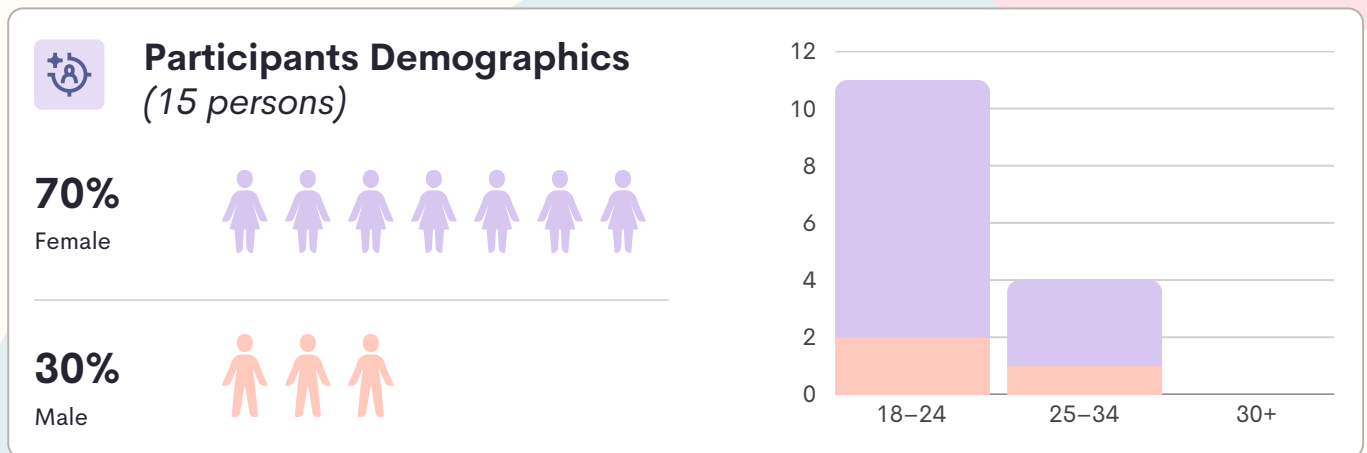
BUILDING THE FOUNDATION: SHAPING THE FIRST REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA

Youth Shaping WPS Agenda – virtual consultation in Kazakhstan, 28 July 2025

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Kazakhstan has developed a robust legal and programmatic framework on youth. The **Law on State Youth Policy** (2015, amended 2022) expanded the youth age bracket to 14–35 and introduced the Youth Development Index (YDI). Key strategies include the *State Youth Policy Concept 2023–2029* and the *Comprehensive Plan to Support Youth 2021–2025*, prioritizing employment and entrepreneurship, digital skills and education, civic engagement, support for talented youth, and regional development. A network of 231 Youth Resource Centers (YRCs) operates nationwide. Flagship initiatives include the *Bolashak scholarship*, *Zhasyl El*, *Youth Practice*, *With Diploma to the Village*, start-up grant schemes, and youth maslikhats/councils. Kazakhstan also advances the WPS and YPS agendas, having adopted its **first National Action Plan on WPS (2022–2025)**.



Prior to the consultation, the level of awareness of the WPS agenda varied among participants: **13% reported being well-familiar** with it, **33% were somewhat familiar**, and **53% had only heard of it but were not familiar**; none indicated that they were completely unfamiliar.

The group represented a diverse range of backgrounds, with the majority coming from NGOs and volunteer networks such as the National Volunteer Network and “Youth Sounding Board of EU in Kazakhstan.” A significant proportion were affiliated with universities and student unions, including KAZGUU University and the OSCE Academy, while others participated from local youth centers and civic NGOs. The group also included independent young professionals and entrepreneurs, reflecting a broad spectrum of youth perspectives.

MAIN CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED



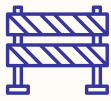
Limited involvement of youth in decision-making on peace and security; skepticism from older generations towards youth ideas.



Local tensions and risks of interethnic incidents, requiring focus on prevention within communities.



Low visibility of WPS/YPS agendas and insufficient information campaigns in state and independent media.



Gender and socio-cultural barriers (especially in more conservative regions) restricting young women's leadership.



Post-conflict reintegration challenges for women and children repatriated from conflict zones under Operation Zhusan*: stigma, need for psychosocial/educational support, and rehabilitation.



Lack of systematic peacebuilding and human rights literacy in schools and universities; need for safe spaces, psychosocial support, and non-violent communication skills.





* *Operation Zhusan* (2019–2021), a Kazakh humanitarian effort, repatriated over 700 Kazakh citizens—mainly women and children—from conflict zones in Syria and Iraq. Returnees continue to face stigma, psychosocial and educational needs, and long-term reintegration challenges.

MAIN PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED

- **Institutionalizing youth participation** through quotas and permanent seats in peace/security councils and commissions; support for youth initiatives via grants, mentorship, and legal assistance.
- **Peace and gender equality education:** integrating WPS/YPS, non-violent communication, human rights, and gender equality into school and university curricula; fostering debate clubs and tolerance programs.
- **Conflict prevention at the community level:** early warning mechanisms, dialogue platforms in multi-ethnic settings, media literacy, and counter-narratives.
- **Protection and support for women and girls:** access to psychosocial and legal services, confidentiality, trauma support, and referral pathways via YRCs and volunteer networks.
- **Reintegration of conflict-affected families:** anti-stigma campaigns, tutoring and “bridging” educational support for children, NGO and YRC coordination.

**WOMEN LEAD.
PEACE FOLLOWS.**

SOLUTIONS

<p>1. Participation</p> 	<p>2. Prevention</p> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce youth quotas and rotating seats in public and consultative bodies on peace/security, including at local (akimat) and ministerial levels. • Launch leadership programs for young women, especially in Western Kazakhstan, through YRCs and university centers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate peace education, WPS/YPS, human rights, and non-violent communication modules into school and university curricula. • Organize dialogue sessions in multi-ethnic communities and training on media literacy and counter-narratives.
<p>3. Protection</p> 	<p>4. Relief & Recovery</p> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand psychosocial and legal services for women/girls and young activists (including digital safety), with confidentiality and referral pathways via YRCs/NGOs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a youth volunteer pool for reintegration of families repatriated under <i>Operation Zhusan</i>: tutoring, educational support, anti-stigma campaigns, and service access.

SHORT TERM ACTIONS (YEAR 1 OF RAP WPS)

- **Communication campaign “WPS in Simple Words”** launched through state and independent media with youth ambassadors.
- **Pilot educational modules** in schools/universities (8–12 hours on WPS/YPS, non-violent communication).
- **Mini-grants (USD 5–10k) for NGOs/student clubs** to implement local participation/prevention projects; legal hotline for youth initiatives.
- **Dialogue sessions in “risk areas”** with participation of YRCs, elders, NGOs, and youth.
- **“Youth Volunteer for WPS” pilot program** via YRCs (231 centers): training, ethics of work with vulnerable groups, referral pathways.



Photo from the online Consultation

LONG TERM ACTIONS (2–3 YEARS OF RAP WPS)

- **Institutionalize youth participation:** quotas and consultation procedures enshrined in regulations of councils/commissions; annual reporting with YRC/NGO involvement.
- **Mainstream peace education:** systematic update of national curricula (WPS/YPS, human rights, media literacy, non-violent communication).
- **Enhance the Youth Development Index (YDI)** with indicators on women/youth participation in peacebuilding and access to protection/rehabilitation services.

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