



NextGen: the Key to Unlocking Diversity and Inclusion in the Nuclear Weapons Policy Field

The Diversity and Inclusion Working Group

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The Problem - A Lack of Diversity in the Nuclear Weapons Field

In recent years, a debate has emerged in the nuclear weapons field about the need to diversify its practitioners and perspectives.³³ We understand diversity both in terms of the demographic characteristics of the actors who shape nuclear policies, and in terms of the perspectives which practitioners use to

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33 NSquare (2019). Greater Than: Nuclear Threat Professionals Re-imagine Their Field. Washington, DC: December 2019); Korda, M, 2019. At Nukefest, We Asked All the Wrong Questions. Inkstick; SGS Statement on Countering Systemic Racism and Other Structures of Exclusion and Domination. Available at: <https://sgs.princeton.edu/news-announcements/news-2020-07-20> [Access 21 June 2021]

approach nuclear issues. The former understanding, pertaining to demographic characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and age heterogeneity, is more commonly recognised within discourses on diversity, equity and inclusion, and is often the focus of significant policy interventions. However, the latter, ideological diversity, is equally important to ensure that the nuclear weapons field is infused with new thinking. Our policy brief is designed to encourage practitioners working on nuclear policy issues to improve their strategies for the inclusion of both marginalized perspectives and groups.

Perspectives: Nuclear policy debates would benefit from the inclusion of feminist, post-colonial and youth perspectives. Feminist perspectives encourage the replacement of national security concepts with human security lenses.³⁴ They also promote the development of sustainable initiatives for the inclusion of women and other under-represented groups in the nuclear community.³⁵ Postcolonial perspectives provide tools for practitioners to acknowledge the racist foundations of discourses and negotiations,³⁶ highlight the importance of marginalized communities throughout the history of decisions to develop and/or disarm nuclear weapons,³⁷ and emphasize how industrial processes related to nuclear weapons' production and testing have been pursued through the exploitation of specific regions of the world.³⁸ Youth perspectives reflect the interests of generations whose futures are determined by present nuclear tensions and urge policymakers to be open-minded about strategies for nuclear policy change that could lead to a safer and more sustainable future for all generations.³⁹ All of these perspectives enable practitioners to design more inclusive nuclear policy proposals.

Demographic: The groups that debate and implement nuclear policies need to become more inclusive. A 2019 report by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research found that in non-proliferation and disarmament forums with more than 100 delegates, individuals identifying as women make up only 32 percent of individuals present. In forums with fewer than 100 delegates, only 20 percent are women, on average.⁴⁰ This is despite numerous gender parity initiatives throughout the last few years, such as the Gender Champions in Nuclear Policy programme.⁴¹ Few, if any, of these initiatives advocate for more inclusion of gender non-binary people or those who do not conform to socially constructed concepts of gender.⁴² There is also a stark lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the nuclear field. Ambassador Bonnie

34 Tickner, A. J. (2001). *Gendering World Politics. Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold-War Era*. New York: Columbia University Press; Enloe, C. (2014). *Bananas, Beaches and Bases. Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

35 Ouadraat, C. de J. and Wattenberg, J. (2021). A Gender Framework for Arms Control and Disarmament. *WIIIS Policy Brief*.

36 Scarry, E. (2020). *The Racist Foundation of Nuclear Architecture*. Boston Review.

37 Vincent, I. (2015). *African Americans Against the Bomb: Nuclear Weapons, Colonialism, and the Black Freedom Movement*. Stanford Nuclear Age Series.

38 Gabrielle, H. (2012). *Being Nuclear: Africans and the Global Uranium Trade*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

The Nuclear Sites Project of the Global Decolonization Initiative at Boston University examines the legal, political and social processes through which local populations at nuclear sites have suffered from nuclear weapons' testing and mining. Boston University, Global Decolonization Initiative. Information available at: <https://www.bu.edu/pardeeschool/research/research-initiatives/global-decolonization-initiative/> [Access 21 June 2021]

39 Carson, L. (2018). Why youth and feminist activism matters: insights from anti-nuclear campaigns in practice. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 30:2, p.261-69.

40 Hugo, T. G., Egeland, K., and Østern, G. (2020). Patterns of Participation in Multilateral Disarmament Forums. *Norwegian People's Aid*.

41 Gender Champions in Nuclear Policy Initiative. Information available at: <https://www.gcnuclearpolicy.org/about/#:~:text=Gender%20Champions%20in%20Nuclear%20Policy%20is%20de signed%20to%20augment%20and,of%20the%20nuclear%20policy%20sector> [Access 21 June 2021]

42 Commendable steps to expand the understanding of gender identities and sexuality in the nuclear field have been made by scholars and activists such as Ray Acheson, Catherine Eschle and Anna Feigenbaum. See for instance:

Jenkins, founder of the organisation Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security (WCAPS), for instance noted that “the very small representation of people of color in professional roles” has been a constant throughout her career in weapons of mass destruction policy.⁴³ Other sources highlight the systematic racism that Black and non-Black professionals of colour face in the nuclear community.⁴⁴ Youth activists reproach that “young people under the age of 25 make up almost half of the world’s population, but their voices are largely missing when it comes to political decision-making.”⁴⁵ UN Security Council resolution 2250 affirms the important role that youth can play in peace and security efforts;⁴⁶ and a multitude of next-generation (NextGen) initiatives reflects the realization that the voices of young people are missing in the nuclear community.⁴⁷ The EVN network itself has been created with the aim to promote collaboration, bridge-building and dialogue between next generation leaders, by providing an inclusive platform for youth experts to be heard on key nuclear issues and institutions, with a particular emphasis on engaging, empowering and connecting women and young people from the Global South.

Practitioners have already taken commendable steps to improve the diversity of people and perspectives in the nuclear weapons field: states, think tanks and NGOs have begun to address gender inequality in the nuclear weapons field with concrete action.⁴⁸ Some groups, such as the movement behind the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, have used feminist perspectives in the development of their campaigns.⁴⁹ Research organisations have committed to addressing the racial dimensions of nuclear policy discourses.⁵⁰ Yet, we propose that more can be done to improve current strategies to highlight and listen to NextGen perspectives. We believe that a more sustainable inclusion of the NextGen in nuclear policy processes can

Acheson R. (forthcoming). *Feminist Solution: Draw on Feminist, Queer, and Indigenous Theory and Experiences to Support Movements to End Nuclear Weapons*, in Megan Mackenzie (ed.), *Feminist Solutions for Ending War*; Eschle, C. (2013). *Gender and the Subject of (Anti) Nuclear Politics: Revisiting Women’s Campaigning Against the Bomb*. *International Studies Quarterly*, 57:4, pp. 713-24; Feigenbaum, A. (2010). *Now I am a Happy Dyke!: Creating Collective Identity and Queer Community in Greenham Women’s Songs*. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 22:3, pp.367-88.

43 Jenkins, B. (2018). Grand Challenge: Bringing a diversity of perspectives into nonproliferation policy. *Brookings Institute*. Information available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/06/08/grand-challenge-bringing-a-diversity-of-perspectives-into-nonproliferation-policy/> [Access 21 June 2021]

44 Turner, K. M., et al. (2020). A Call for Antiracist Action and Accountability in the US Nuclear Community. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*.

45 Carson, L. (2018). Why youth and feminist activism matters: insights from anti-nuclear campaigns in practice. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 30:2, pp. 261-69.

See also: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2013). *Enhancing Youth Political Participation Throughout the Electoral Cycle*.

46 United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015). Information available at: <http://unoy.org/wp-content/uploads/SCR-2250.pdf> [Access 21 June 2021]

47 See for instance: EU NPDC next-generation workshops: <https://www.nonproliferation.eu/activities/international-conferences/next-generation-workshop/> [Access 21 June 2021]; EU NPDC Internships: <https://www.nonproliferation.eu/evenement/eu-non-proliferation-and-disarmament-internships/> [Access 21 June 2021]; CSIS Nuclear Scholars Initiative/Next-Generation Nuclear Network: <https://nuclearnetwork.csis.org/apply/nuclear-scholars/> [Access 21 June 2021]; Events organised by the UK Project on Nuclear Issues: <https://rusi.org/projects/uk-project-nuclear-issues> [Access 21 June 2021]

48 See for instance: Working Paper submitted by Ireland: *Gender in the Non-Proliferation Treaty: recommendations for the 2020 Review Conference*, 7 May 2019, New York; Working paper submitted by Australia, Canada, Ireland, Namibia, Sweden and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research: *Improving gender equality and diversity in the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process*.

49 *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, A/Conf.229/2017/8* (New York: United Nations, July 7, 2017).

50 See for instance: SGS Statement on Countering Systemic Racism and Other Structures of Exclusion and Domination. Information available at: <https://sgs.princeton.edu/news-announcements/news-2020-07-20> [Access 21 June 2021]

not only increase the field's demographic diversity, but also further facilitates the inclusion of new perspectives, such as feminist and post-colonial visions to the betterment of nuclear policy and global security overall.

The Solution – The Next Generation as the Key to Unlocking Diversity

We use NextGen as an all-encompassing term meant to be inclusive rather than exclusionary. With it, we refer to individuals who are in the process of establishing themselves in the field, those with limited experience in policy and those who seek to advance a new, innovative, policy agenda. The next generation of practitioners working on nuclear policy issues can increase both the demographic and ideological diversity of nuclear policy by offering new perspectives from actors and social groups that are currently and traditionally underrepresented. In doing so, NextGen participation could facilitate the sustained and meaningful inclusion of feminist, postcolonial and youth perspectives on critical issues such as disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. NextGen representatives have the potential to challenge the status quo and to normalise considering and including novel, progressive and innovative solutions to intransigent challenges. In the early stages of their careers, these young professionals might be particularly “open-minded about different strategies for change.”⁵¹

There may also be value in less experienced professionals applying themselves to intractable challenges. Early-career professionals, while still learning to navigate the fault lines and political topography of the nuclear policy field, often bring policy dialogue back to the fundamentals, anchoring discussion on non-proliferation, for example, in the core mission of the work instead of the challenges and frustrations faced continually throughout a longer career. NextGen practitioners can bring fresh energy, enthusiasm and a passion for learning to bear on complex challenges, and may be better equipped to remove their thinking from some of the politics of nuclear policy, given the lower profile of their work. In short, having NextGen experts apply themselves to a challenge in nuclear policy could help reset and refresh stagnant, deadlocked debates.

Youth around the world have a clear interest in nuclear policy and identify themselves as stakeholders in the debates occurring today that will shape their future; this is best evidenced by the significant global membership of organisations like the CTBTO Youth Group,⁵² along with multiple regional and global nuclear disarmament youth networks and bodies.⁵³ NextGen inclusion is integral to updating how the nuclear field addresses issues that change over time and generations. For example, with the rise of new technologies, key concepts in nuclear security have morphed significantly to respond to new threats and opportunities. Practitioners must now consider the potentialities created by cyber capabilities as critical components of the international security landscape, for example, and how the increasing accessibility of space-based capabilities is complexifying arms control and nuclear risk debates. NextGen policymakers have grown up with a globalised understanding of security and diplomacy and have a clear vision of the potential impacts of technology on stability, warfare and nuclear risk.

51 Carson (2018), p, 266.

52 CTBTO Youth Group. Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. Information available at: <https://www.ctbto.org/specials/ctbto-youth-group/> [Access 21 June 2021]

53 See for instance: Abolition 2000 Youth and Nuclear Disarmament Working Group (A2K Youth Network): <https://www.abolition2000.org/en/working-groups/abolition-2000-youth-and-disarmament-working-group/> [Access 21 June 2021]; The Amplify Youth Network: <https://www.amplifyyouth.org> [Access 21 June 2021]; Student Young Pugwash: <https://britishpugwash.org/student-young-pugwash/> [Access 21 June 2021] or Peace Action New York State (PANY): <https://www.panys.org> [Access 21 June 2021].

To increase NextGen involvement, it is necessary to expand access to the nuclear policy field and to promote the retention of young, diverse experts. Adequate representation of NextGen perspectives in organisations, institutions, and other structures will facilitate the inclusion and active participation of younger experts in critical policy discussions and processes, including core decision-making, in the long term. Sustainable NextGen engagement could also help to avoid problems of ‘NextGen tokenism’ where a single NextGen representative is asked to speak on behalf of all NextGen and/or young people.⁵⁴ It will also establish a skilled cohort with whom established policymakers can engage and consult. Inclusion must be embedded in coherent and systematic policies both within organisations and the field in general to become standard practice rather than an exception. We identified four main areas in which practitioners can help to advance the inclusion and retention of NextGen voices in the nuclear weapons field.

Our Strategies: Practical Steps to Advance NextGen Participation in Nuclear Policy

Educational Opportunities

There are many educational opportunities in the field of nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control. Prominent examples include University of San Diego’s Public Policy and Nuclear Threat Boot Camp (PPNT),⁵⁵ the Wilson Center’s Nuclear History Boot Camp,⁵⁶ or the CSIS Nuclear Scholars Initiative.⁵⁷ These courses provide critical knowledge transfer from senior to junior colleagues while enabling NextGen individuals to build valuable professional networks. Low technical knowledge or a lack of official qualification in nuclear issues can be an impediment to NextGen actors advocating for themselves, and so education programmes in nuclear policy incentivise and enable NextGen actors to enter the field, while empowering young experts to voice their ideas in professional settings. At present, NextGen courses are often one-off events, and engagement with young participants is not sustained beyond the length of the course.

We propose three strategies to improve education programmes for NextGen community members. First, organisers should build alumni networks for participants to remain in touch with colleagues, exchange contacts, research, and ideas, and cultivate a greater sense of community. Second, educational programmes must include a focus on feminist, postcolonial and youth perspectives on nuclear policy to spark innovative thinking and dialogue from the very first steps in nuclear policymakers’ careers. Lastly, organisations should implement and be transparent about their diversity mechanisms, such as affirmative action, methodical consideration of structural and financial barriers to access, and offering reasonable adjustment options, throughout selection processes for education opportunities as well as possible financial support.

Internships and Employment Opportunities: Lowering Financial Barriers

Internships can provide a valuable stepping stone for young professionals to start their careers in nuclear policy, but financial barriers are a key obstacle in this area. Many internships at prominent organisations working on nuclear policy issues are unpaid or offer only a small stipend, and are often short-term, lasting just twelve, six or even three months. Opportunities in nuclear policy are often disproportionately

54 Carlson (2018), p. 267.

55 Public Policy and Nuclear Threat Boot Camp. Information available at: <https://igcc.ucsd.edu/training/ppnt/index.html> [Access 21 June 2021].

56 Nuclear History Boot Camp: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/nuclear-history-boot-camp> [Access 21 June 2021].

57 CSIS Nuclear Scholars Initiative: <https://nuclearnetwork.csis.org/apply/nuclear-scholars/> [Access 21 June 2021].

concentrated in certain locations – particularly New York, Washington DC, Geneva, Vienna and London – making them inaccessible to those not located in these areas or who are unable or unwilling to move there. Applying for internships, even unpaid positions, can be a time-consuming and lengthy process as well, some taking up to nine months, and typically requiring constant internet access which cannot be considered as a given for all candidates. These barriers are acutely challenging for young professionals from the Global South, for whom the costs of international travel and living costs in large, expensive cities may be insurmountably burdensome.

Furthermore, formal early-career employment opportunities in nuclear policy are both scarce and highly competitive, creating further financial barriers to retention. Many early-career positions are explicitly supported by fixed-term project funding, meaning that ongoing employment is not possible, and young professionals receiving inadequate remuneration while they are employed may struggle to sustain a longer period of job searching in a competitive market, after the end of an internship or fixed-term role. The high degree of competition for roles may even reproduce traditionally homogenous cohorts of young experts, when hiring managers feel unable to ‘risk’ employing young staff with diverse or unfamiliar backgrounds, qualifications and experiences.⁵⁸ A lack of formalised, professionalised pathways for career development in nuclear policy for NextGen professionals is also a significant barrier to retention, as many young people seek a sense of stability in their careers and clear steps for advancement as their professional goals and interests begin to crystallise.

Without adequate remuneration and employment opportunities, particularly for those from the Global South, early-career pathways reproduce traditional marginalisation within the nuclear policy community. Streamlining and demystifying application processes as well as providing application support will help to diversify candidate pools and the early-career cohort.⁵⁹ Beyond these resources, improving pathways for NextGen experts will require greater financial investment in entry-level opportunities.

Retaining NextGen Talent: Mentorship

In recent years there has been a marked growth in the number of structured mentorship programs focused on encouraging early career participation and advancement in international security, and specifically nuclear policy. Examples from Europe and North America include organisations such as Girl Security, Women in International Security (WIIS), Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security (WCAPS) and the joint programming of the Vienna Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP) and the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI).⁶⁰ This is a positive development; structured mentorship schemes reduce the not insignificant burden on NextGen individuals to identify willing, engaged mentors, and more particularly facilitate the inclusion of mentors and mentees from underrepresented groups. One way to improve mentorship in nuclear policy would be to couple NextGen education programmes with mentorship opportunities. In this way, education initiatives could become more sustainable by enabling participants to remain connected to the senior professionals they have encountered during educational courses.

58 Enright, E (2020). Addressing the ‘Leaky Pipeline’: Taking the Temperature of the UK’s Early Career Nuclear Weapons Policy Cohort. The 2020 UK PONI Papers. Information available at: https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/202011_poni_papers_2020_web.pdf [Access 21 June 2021].

59 A good example for events and workshops that help NextGen to prepare for interviews and applications have been recent events in the UK PONI Nuclear Café event series: <https://rusi.org/rusi-news/uk-poni-nuclear-café> [Access 21 June 2021].

60 Girls Security Mentoring Programs: <https://www.girlsecurity.org/become-a-mentor> [Access 21 June 2021]. Women in International Security Mentorship Programs: <https://www.wiisglobal.org/programs/mentor-and-professional-development-program/> [Access 21 June 2021] WCASP mentorship scheme: <https://www.wcaps.org/mentorshipprograms> [Access 21 June 2021]; VCDNP and IAI Young women in nuclear mentorship program: <https://www.iai.it/en/news/young-women-non-proliferation> [Access 21 June 2021].

Engaging NextGen Voices: Outreach in Nuclear Organisations

In the nuclear field, more could be done to take the messages, debates and discussions taking place in nuclear policy to NextGen actors. Firstly, organisations can develop strategies to employ, sponsor and create platforms for young experts, coordinate international youth engagement and skills development programmes, and disseminate the writing and research of members of underrepresented groups. Organisations could develop specific teams or projects aimed at increasing their focus on targeting messages and opportunities to NextGen actors. This could be done through the creation of subsidiary, youth-specific arms of organisations which could launch inclusive programmes, source funding opportunities and build a supportive, dedicated community to champion the development of new organisations. Online platforms can allow for virtual networking but can also serve as a database for organisations looking to engage the next generation: one salient example is the Brussels Binder,⁶¹ a platform for identifying and connecting leading women in European security. Similar platforms in global nuclear policy could be an asset for young people and organisations to share resources, advertise and find employment opportunities and build diverse professional networks. Establishing specific youth representatives in prominent NGOs would bring NextGen perspectives to the highest levels of nuclear policy problem-solving. Aiming to universalise the institution of youth representative positions at all major international organisations could allow for the standardisation and systemic inclusion of NextGen perspectives in nuclear policy and would signal commitment to championing diverse voices.

61 The Brussels Binder. Information available at: <https://brusselsbinder.org> [Access 21 June 2021]