TRANSFORMING POWER TO PUT WOMEN AT THE HEART OF PEACEBUILDING

A COLLECTION OF REGIONAL-FOCUSED ESSAYS
ON FEMINIST PEACE AND SECURITY

FEMINIST PEACE AND SECURITY

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Cover photo: From left to right: Huda Shafig, Safa Adam, Samah Jamous and Alaa Salah in New York City lobbying decision makers on the importance of women's inclusion in the transitional government in Sudan. © Susan Schulman/Oxfam

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TRANSFORMING POWER TO PUT WOMEN AT THE HEART OF PEACEBUILDING

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'Since the end of a 10-year armed conflict [in Bougainville Island, Papua New Guinea], more than 30 years ago, women walked into the jungles and brokered peace with armed combatants, in whose name peace was brokered, weapons collected, political agreements adopted. They have been sustaining peace, providing recommendations for a sustainable approach to development, and a shift from gender-based violence to gender justice.'[1] S. Bhagwan-Rolls and A. Evans. (2020). Feminist Peace and Security in the Pacific Islands (see p.52 below)

On the eve of the twentieth anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) – a landmark resolution on women's role in peacebuilding – progress on women's rights and leadership in peace and security decision making continues to fall short. Many legal and normative frameworks to secure the rights of women are being consistently undermined and the universality of human rights denied. An analysis of major peace processes between 1992 and 2018 shows that women constituted only 13% of negotiators, 3% of mediators and 4% of signatories.[2] OECD data showed that in 2016-2017, only 1% of all gender-focused funding went to women's organizations.[3] While many states claim to champion gender equality and women's empowerment, and 84 UN member states[4] have developed National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), their actions rarely match up to the rhetoric.

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

To build on the emerging discipline of Feminist Peace and Security, Oxfam commissioned a series of regionally focused essays from women's rights activists and academics working in the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific to reflect on the state of the WPS agenda. The authors were asked to consider the following questions:

1. Why, despite the stated commitment to the WPS agenda, has progress been so slow?

2. Why are women – who often suffer the brunt of violence, have experience as first responders in crises, and who commonly serve as grassroots mediators – so often excluded from formal peace talks and political processes?

3. If women are invited to the peace table, which women?

4. What needs to happen to 'shift the power' to women and communities most affected by crises and conflict so that they shape the decisions that affect their lives?

5. What would a Feminist Peace and Security agenda look like?

The resulting essays highlight both the specificities of each region and the common challenges of realizing the full implementation of the WPS Agenda. We held a series of webinars to reflect on and respond to the reports, and the learnings from those discussions have been incorporated into this introduction. This series of essays has been a collective endeavour, bringing together a wide range of expertise, knowledge and experience.

The authors expose how mainstream conceptions of war and peace block both women's meaningful participation and sustainable peace.

The essays place the struggle to realize women's rights in each region within their historical context. Despite the regions' very different histories and traditions, the essays show remarkable similarities in terms of the key trends and problems faced by women around the world in some of the most challenging contexts. Using feminist analysis to critique the structures and institutions that constitute the WPS agenda, the authors expose how mainstream conceptions of war and peace block both women's meaningful participation and sustainable peace. They explore the interplay between colonialism, militarism, displacement, poverty and patriarchy – power in its many guises – and how these have become institutionalized within the peacebuilding agenda. As a result, the very institutions and policies that are responsible for safeguarding and delivering the WPS agenda become barriers to meaningful progress, leading us to question whether any agenda which is safe guarded by inequitable institutions could ever be transformative. The essays challenge us to see beyond UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions, and to focus our gaze on women's action, agency and lived realities. In doing so they illuminate the original intent of the agenda; a feminist vision for peace and security.

Arish district in the southeast of Aden, where many houses were destroyed by aerial bombardments. This area was the scene of intense fighting between the two sides to the conflict due to its strategic location at one of the entry points to the city. The people who were living here had to flee. Photo: Pablo Tosco/Oxfam

Principles of Feminist Peace and Security

Feminist Peace and Security uses a post-colonial and anti-racist lens to recognize and seek to understand all power and how it is exercised. It should challenge social norms, practices and intersectional power relations as well as gender norms and binaries and acknowledge that toxic masculinity affects the whole of society and not just women. Feminist Peace and Security seeks to tackle and eliminate the root causes of the violence women experience before and during conflict and in so-called peacetime, because the most dangerous place for a woman is often in the home. It understands violence as spanning the public and the personal, the community and the home.[5] While acting as leaders in their community, in addition to their 'formal' work, women usually shoulder the responsibilities of domestic and unpaid care work. The stress of dealing with the trauma of war and crises while being responsible for keeping their families and communities together puts unacceptable pressure on women. Feminist peace recognizes these multiple roles and creates appropriate support mechanisms – childcare, economic empowerment, psychosocial services and access to self-care – to ensure that women are supported and can share the burden with men.

Feminist Peace and Security recognizes that peacebuilding is intersectional and active[6] and needs to put at its centre those who are most affected by the crisis. This means that women and marginalized groups from all sections of society, particularly at the grassroots, must be at the heart of decision making at all levels. To be truly inclusive and transformational, a Feminist Peace and Security agenda and its champions must facilitate local women's peace and human rights organizations to generate their own conflict-resolution and peace-making initiatives and support these, rather than merely adding women into existing structures and processes.[7]

Feminist peace recognizes that violence and insecurity take many forms, including economic violence[8], and are experienced differently by different groups. Poverty and inequality are forms of violence, as are the exploitation of natural resources, vested interests and failure to address climate change and natural hazards. Multi-dimensional security requires a proper systems analysis to understand intersecting dependencies and the interventions needed. For people in crisis and extreme poverty, acting on single issues is not enough. Insecurities must be tackled together, comprehensively.[9] Where states pursue the goal of state security, a feminist peace and security agenda should not be co-opted to these ends. It must not be not be instrumentalized or depoliticized, because it is inherently political.

A FAILURE OF GLOBAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE WHEN IT'S NEEDED MOST

The United Nations Security Council is mandated by the UN charter to protect international peace and security.[10] Yet too often it has failed to live up to its responsibilities. From Yemen to Syria to Myanmar, geopolitical interests are barriers to finding solutions to global crises. According to David Baldwin, state interest and security is associated with traditional conceptions of power, whether defined in material or normative terms[11]. Emblematic of this consolidation of 'hard power' is the veto, which enables

From Yemen to Syria to Myanmar, geopolitical interests are barriers to finding solutions to global crises.

any one of the UN Security Council's five permanent members (the P5) to prevent the adoption of any 'substantive' draft Council resolution, regardless of its level of international support. As of December 2019, the veto had been wielded 293 times since 1947 to stop action on matters of international importance.[12] As described by the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, 'Such a monopoly on authority is a core characteristic of traditional security that ignores the root cause analysis of violence and further traps conflict-affected people as prisoners of power competition.'[13]

A stark illustration of the system's failure was the UN Security Council response to the UN Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire in March 2020 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. UNSC permanent members (China and the US) threatened to wield their veto, and three months of bickering, political point scoring and geopolitical posturing took place before the resolution was passed. This is a reflection of the ways conflict between two global powers can hijack an agenda that is of importance to the world. Without decisive action, the violence continued in places such as Yemen, Burkina Faso and Myanmar, people continued to suffer and die needlessly, and the virus continued to spread.

THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

For years, women's rights and feminist organizations across the world have campaigned for recognition of women's contributions to preventing conflict, building peace and delivering relief and recovery. Twenty years ago, UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) [14] called on member states and other key actors to do just that. Since UNSCR 1325 (2000), the UN Security Council has passed nine additional resolutions, developing and expanding the focus, creating what is now known as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.[15]

Women's participation in political processes is not only one of the main pillars of the WPS agenda but is one of the keys to building and sustaining peace. Evidence shows that women's participation in peace processes leads to a higher chance of reaching an agreement, and that the resultant peace will last on average 15 years longer than if women are excluded[16] and have influence over the process. As one commentator puts it, 'Women at the negotiating table raise issues that are vital for sustainable peace, expanding peace process agendas. They also more often advocate for excluded groups and the need to address underlying causes of conflict, such as development and human rights issues.'[17]

Sadly, the promises of UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent resolutions have not managed to close the gap for women's meaningful participation in peace and security decision making, nor have they led to greater investment in conflict prevention. Rather than directing energy, resources and political will to addressing the root causes of conflict and ensuring that women are at the heart of the agenda, building security apparatus for its own sake and 'hard security' remain the priority – with increased investment in arms, counter-terrorism initiatives and militarization.

In addition, security sector governance policies and mechanisms need to redefine processes of engagement that do not simply rely on women's invitation 'to the table' but instead take bold steps at the regional and

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national levels to invest in peace; such as the example used later by the authors of the Pacific essay to create a new, inclusive space that integrates faith and indigenous practice into local, national and regional development processes and frameworks.[18]

This is why Feminist Peace and Security needs to be the new orientation of the agenda. These essays offer a fresh perspective on what transformative change will require and why feminist peace and security framing is so critical to the women, peace and security agenda.

Yemen – a failure to include women

Over the past five years, war in Yemen has killed thousands of civilians, devastated communities and infrastructure, and brought untold suffering. Women and girls have been disproportionately affected because of negative gender norms, a discriminatory legal system and economic inequality which has compounded their vulnerability to violence.[19] For instance, exposure to sexual violence increased from 9% before the escalation of the conflict to 30% by 2018.[20]

Despite these challenges, women in communities in Yemen have continued to show great leadership in their work to 'counter radicalization, [and to] advocate for releasing detainees, humanitarian relief and early recovery, demilitarization of schools, reintegration of child combatants, and social cohesion'.[21] Women are engaged in conflict resolution on multiple levels by promoting peace and providing security when possible.[22] They have been organizing within Yemen and outside of the country, and have come up with clear recommendations for decision makers.[23]

The creation of the UN-sponsored Yemeni Women's Pact for Peace and Security[24] and a stated commitment to include at least 30% of women in all peace negotiations should have secured women's inclusion. However, women have been noticeably absent from many of the formal UN processes and events. At the Yemen peace talks in Stockholm in December 2018, only one woman was invited to participate out of either delegation.[25] Such poor representation puts unacceptable pressure on the few women who are present to 'represent all women', as remarked by Rana Ghanem, the single woman delegate at the Stockholm talks.[26]

In March 2019, over 100 Yemeni women gathered at a conference in Jordan to discuss the role that women can have in the formal consultations and in local groups to work towards peace in Yemen, and their inclusion in the peace negotiations in Yemen. Despite the topic being women's inclusion, the conference itself had no women speakers on the first day.[27] This was a disappointing outcome from the stated commitment to ensure women's participation.

WHO IS AT THE TABLE?

One criticism which emerges in all the essays is that the existing WPS paradigm categorizes women as a homogeneous group. They are viewed as 'peacemakers' with similar needs, interests and agencies, simply because of their gender. This overlooks all the other intersecting factors that shape women's needs and expectations such as class, religion, ethnic or racial background, political orientation or geographical place of residence.[28] The system also often excludes the most marginalized women – displaced women, migrant domestic workers, women working in the informal economy, rural women, indigenous women, women living with disability – which in turn keeps their issues, their struggles and their solutions out of the discussion.

As Bhagwan-Rolls and Evans state in their essay, 'there must be full awareness of power relations and disadvantages caused by unequal international structures and opportunities. A one-size-fits-all approach may create divisions and exclude certain groups and perspectives that do not fit in the WPS framing.'[29] In places such as the Pacific, the lack of infrastructure and transport makes it costly and challenging to travel, further disenfranchising certain groups. Kaya notes that in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), the institutions developing the instruments to implement the WPS agenda, such as the National Action Plan (NAP), only include urban, professional and largely secular women, and have excluded women active in Islamist political parties and internally displaced women.[30]

This exclusion of large groups of women on the 'margins', who are not seen as 'qualified' to engage in peace and security issues is a weakness of the current system because it means that its instruments and processes only capture the experience of women who have access to power and/or resources. This lack of diversity has meant that the narrative or 'story' of women, peace and security is only partially told.

The system also often excludes the most marginalized women.

COLONIALISM AND CORRUPTION AS ROOT CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN AFRICA

Helen Kezie-Nwoha uses a post-colonial and feminist lens to deconstruct why the African continent has continued to be a site for conflict in the 21st century. Long-running wars have had devastating impacts on populations, and particularly on women, young women and girls. She argues that most of the conflicts can be blamed on the nature of transitions from colonialism, and the absence of transparent democratic processes and corruption leading to lack of delivery of social services and huge spending on the military.

Her essay claims that states across the continent of Africa have never managed to detach themselves from the legacy of colonialism and connects the violent and militarized nature of these newly formed states to this legacy. Colonialism reinforced gender norms and marginalization, militarized masculinities and binaries, and endorsed a patriarchal hierarchy of knowledge. In addition, Kezie-Nwoha illustrates how the liberation movements that overthrew colonial powers ultimately reinforced the same norms that continue to impact nations to

Colonialism reinforced gender norms and marginalization, militarized masculinities and binaries, and endorsed a patriarchal hierarchy of knowledge.

this day. For example, the victorious movements generally excluded women from positions of authority; only those who led and fought were awarded posts in the new governments, ensuring that men occupied most of the seats of power. This trend continues in the institutions of nearly all African nations today.

Kezie-Nwoha's essay also shows how colonial patriarchal structures have been replicated in the building of peace and security institutions such as the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities. These were created mainly by men, and men have dominated their leadership, ensuring that the male perspective of the world and of conflict resolution is the lens through which all peace and security interventions are mediated. Finally, she argues that the limited understanding of the WPS agenda on the part of foreign diplomats who are commissioned to lead peace processes in Africa has been detrimental to the agenda's progress. From the United Nations Security Council to the African Union and Regional Economic Communities and States, the understanding of the WPS agenda is far from the transformative agenda that feminists conceived or hoped it to be. Kezie-Nwoha shows how in spite of the limitations, the African women's peace movement has made efforts to ensure that the WPS agenda is pushing the boundaries for transformative peace.

Ibaado, an active leader in the IDP camp. She works with women groups and vulnerable people. Photo: Petterik Wiggers/Oxfam

Women defying patriarchy

Across Africa, women activists and women's movements have worked to dismantle patriarchal tendencies. The Liberian women's peace movement drove warring parties into signing an agreement; Burundian women forced their way to the peace table and influenced the agreements outcome. More recently, South Sudanese women secured a 35% quota in the Revitalized Agreement on the resolution to the conflict in South Sudan, to enable women's meaningful representation in the transitional government structures, yet although the agreement requires 35% participation in the transitional Government, there just nine women ministers (or 26%) and one woman deputy minister (or 10%) were appointed.[31] Finally, Sudanese women have played a critical role, leading the revolution that ended a three decades long dictatorship. However, despite these impressive successes, the civic and political space for women peace activists remains deeply constrained and women's exclusion remains the default position. For example, Sudanese women's participation in the ongoing peace talks remains minimal in spite of their leadership in the revolution.

THE MILITARIZATION OF THE WPS AGENDA IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

In her essay, Zeynep Kaya observes the tensions within the WPS agenda in the Middle East and North Africa region. Given that the agenda emerged from UNSCR 1325, the framework and structures cannot help but replicate the 'hard power' and agendas of the member states:

'It is an agenda with one foot planted in traditional security conceptions and structures and the other in transnational and feminist peace activism. It is caught between an urge to reflect existing international power structures and normative frameworks and the desire to eliminate, or at least reduce, gender inequalities and include women in peacebuilding.'[32]

Kaya identifies that the UN Security Council's tendency to associate peace with 'security' has led WPS to also be framed within security and war frameworks and defined in terms of masculinities that emphasize militarism and power.[33] As a result, the WPS agenda has moved away from an anti-war and rights-based agenda to one for making wars 'safer' for women and using military measures to protect women from sexual violence. In many contexts, the international community has too often substituted 'peacebuilding' for 'peacekeeping'.

Her essay applies a critical perspective to the WPS agenda and focuses on issues in which 'gender-sensitive' international frameworks are inadvertently leading to contradictory outcomes for achieving Feminist Peace and Security. The politicization of donor's channelling funding through the WPS funding streams but conflating it with the preventing or countering violent extremism agenda, leads to the risk of women's rights

Colonialism reinforced gender norms and marginalization, militarized masculinities and binaries, and endorsed a patriarchal hierarchy of knowledge.

organisations being instrumentalized and being forced to adopt this agenda if they want to access funding. In other contexts, depoliticization of the agenda by the adoption of a 'resilience or development approach' to peacebuilding or humanitarian funding also thwarts progress to realising real peace. International policy approaches such as 'resilience' put the onus on individuals and communities to find solutions instead of on the states and international politics that sustain existing inequalities and create conflict in the first place.

Finally, Kaya argues that adopting a feminist analysis can offer multiple advantages over the current securitized approach, including: a potentially genuinely transformative vision of peace and security; a gendered understanding of the root causes of conflict and the continuum of violence through peace and conflict; and a nuanced and context-sensitive approach that safeguards against future conflicts, with women peacebuilders at its heart.

'SHIFTING THE POWER' IN PEACEBUILDING IN THE PACIFIC

Women across the Pacific face many challenges: intercommunal violence, negative gender norms which exclude women from formal decision-making spaces, and very high rates of gender-based violence.[34] Alisa Evans and Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls use a feminist analysis of Pacific regional WPS mechanisms to highlight Pacific feminist peacebuilders' efforts to localize regional peace and security policies through gender-transformative peacebuilding practices.[35]

Their essay shows how Pacific peacebuilding networks operate through traditional and customary systems and engage with faith leaders in efforts to prevent the resurgence of armed conflict. The authors illustrate the importance of understanding the different community structures that influence the status of women across the Pacific Islands, from traditional leaders to the police and security forces as well as local-level government. Engaging with the national government remains a challenge because of the islands' distance from the national capital, and the fact that all government structures are male-dominated and difficult for women to access.

Finally, the essay highlights how feminist approaches such as working through and building coalitions and community-based women's movements can genuinely 'shift the power' to create real and sustainable change. Since the late 1980s, women have led collaborative advocacy campaigns on peace and security, including responses to armed conflict, political crises and gun violence in Bougainville, Fiji and the Solomon Islands. This approach to organizing can bridge the existing gap in women's leadership roles within formal mechanisms that are focused on responding to climate change and national disasters.

Engaging with the national government remains a challenge because of the islands' distance from the national capital, and the fact that all government structures are male-dominated and difficult for women to access.

East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea: Dorothy Sengi in her village, where a water tank and other WASH infrastructure is providing clean water and improved hygiene. Photo: Patrick Moran/ OxfamAUS

Lilly Kolts Be'Soer

Lilly Kolts Be'Soer is a women's human rights defender and advocate for the political, economic and social empowerment of women in her native Papua New Guinea. She believes that the personal is political: 'We experience all these inequalities [and] discrimination... We need to bring solidarity, build the network to collectively work together to make the change ourselves. We need to get into positions of decision making.'[36]

Lilly believes that power can be transformed so that women's voices matter in their families and communities as well as at local level and in national government. Working in solidarity with international campaigns such as #IMatter, she brings women together to collectively access power and decision-making and economic resources, and to develop communities without the risk of violence: 'We have to get ourselves into those positions.... We have to work together.'[37]

CONCLUSION

For the authors in this collection, peace and security for women and other marginalized groups cannot be achieved if it is defined exclusively within the frame of war and militarism. Feminist Peace and Security addresses insecurity before, during and after conflict and understands violence as something that spans from the home to international fora. These essays challenge us to see structural inequalities, including extreme inequality, racism, neo-colonialism and misogyny, as forms of violence. For all four authors, only 'human security' – a multidimensional view of security which acknowledges the whole system of inter-dependencies and intersections, and addresses the challenges to the safety, survival, livelihoods and dignity of people[38] and the environment they live in – is real security.

The essays force us to acknowledge that transformative change rarely comes from within the system. Rather it often comes from outside: from the disruption by protest, and from women, youth, local and grassroots movements who are leveraging their power, even though formal channels appear to be closed to them. Women have been finding ways of organizing themselves in coalitions and collectives to make substantial and real change. It is their relentless, often invisible and undervalued work which makes peace and conflict transformation possible.

Feminist Peace and Security requires those with power to decolonize and to share that power. Institutions and elite women close to the centre of decision making must acknowledge their privilege and build bridges to women at the grassroots to enable them to shape the decisions which affect their lives. There must be recognition that access to resources is itself a form of power; that every vibrant society has an active, well-funded civil society; and that women's rights organizations and LGBTQI+ activists are a critical piece of this civil society and need to be able to set their own agendas, with flexible and consistent funding going directly to grassroots organizations.

Finally, shifting the power in a permanent and meaningful way will require constant vigilance. Fights we thought we'd fought and won cannot be taken for granted. Control over our own bodies, acknowledgment and legislation to criminalize intimate partner violence, and access to opportunities outside the home can all be undone. Derogations from international conventions and legal frameworks are now widespread. The overused phrase 'building back better' cannot return us to business as usual but better, but needs a whole paradigm shift – starting with a fairer economic system and transforming our peace and security architecture so that it represents the world as it is, not as it was, such that its mission is to achieve real peace, not manage conflict. Feminist Peace and Security is that bridge to building a peaceful and sustainable future for all.

These essays challenge us to see structural inequalities, including extreme inequality, racism, neo-colonialism and misogyny, as forms of violence.

Women have been finding ways of organizing themselves in coalitions and collectives to make substantial and real change.

DEFINITIONS FOR FEMINIST PEACE PAPER

TERM	DEFINITION	SOURCES
Security	Security was traditionally understood in terms of the state, its power and military capacities, and preservation of its national borders: 'power is thought to be the route to security: the more power (especially military power) actors can accumulate, the more security they will be' (P.D. Williams. (2013). Security Studies. In: P.D. Wiliams (ed). (2013). Security Studies – An Introduction. Second edition. London: Routledge, p. 6.)	P.D. Williams. (2013). Security Studies. In: P.D. Wiliams (ed). (2013). Security Studies – An Introduction. Second edition. London: Routledge, p. 6.
Traditional security, hard/military security, state security	'The traditional concept of national security, which had dominated the Cold War era, was mainly geared towards the security of states and aimed at protecting their sovereignty and territorial integrity from military threats.' (D. Trachsler. (2011). *Human Security: Genesis, Debates, Trends*. Zurich: Center for Security Studies. https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSS-Analysis-90-EN.pdf, p.1)	D. Trachsler. (2011). *Human Security: Genesis, Debates, Trends*. Zurich: Center for Security Studies.
Human security	As noted in General Assembly resolution 66/290, 'human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people.' It calls for 'people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people.' 'Human security encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and healthcare and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her own potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment – these are the interrelated building blocks of human- and therefore national security.' (Kofi Annan, cited in: DCAF/ISSAT. (2012). SSR in a Nutshell: Manual for Introductory Training on Security Sector Reform. Retrieved: https://issat.dcaf.ch/Learn/Resource-Library/Tools/SSR-in-a-Nutshell-Level-1-Training-Manual, p.1)	General Assembly resolution 66/290 Kofi Annan, cited in: DCAF/ISSAT. (2012). SSR in a Nutshell: Manual for Introductory Training on Security Sector Reform D. Trachsler. (2011). *Human Security: Genesis, Debates, Trends*. Zurich: Center for Security Studies H. Hudson. (2005). 'Doing' Security as Though Humans Matter: A Feminist Perspective on Gender and the Politics of Human Security. Security Dialogue, Vol 36, No 2,
Feminist understanding of security (IR scholars)	While a traditional understanding of security focuses on the security of and threats to the state, 'many IR feminists define security broadly in multidimensional and multilevel terms – as the diminution of all forms of violence, including physical, structural, and ecological. According to IR feminists, security threats include domestic violence, rape, poverty, gender subordination, and ecological destruction as well as war. [...] Most of their analyses of security start at the bottom, with the individual or the community, rather than with the state or the international system.' (p.213)	J. A. Tickner and L. Sjoberg. (2013). Feminism. In: T. Dunne, M. Kurki, and S. Smith (eds.). (2013). International Relations Theories – Discipline and Diversity. Third Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Inclusive security	'Inclusive security can be broadly defined as the active and meaningful participation and structural inclusion of citizens, vulnerable groups, women and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in policies, structures and mechanisms for addressing basic security and protection.' (p.3)	Oxfam/J. Kamminga and A. Zaki. (2016). *Women, Peace and Security in Afghanistan after Brussels and Warsaw: Setting the Scene for a Technical Research Agenda.* Bayan II Discussion Paper.
(structural) violence	'Structural violence has four basic components: exploitation which is focused on the division of labor with the benefits being asymmetrically distributed, penetration which necessitates the control by the exploiters over the consciousness of the exploited thus resulting in the acquiescence of the oppressed, fragmentation which means that the exploited are separated from each other, and marginalization with the exploiters as a privileged class with their own rules and form of interaction' (M. Caprioli. (2005). Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict. International Studies Quarterly (2005) 49, 161–178, here p. 164.) Structural violence = 'the violence done to people when their basic needs are not met. This includes the effects of malnutrition, domestic violence, gender subordination, poor education, poor health care and so on.' (T. Dunne, M. Kurki, S. Smith. (2013). Glossary. In: T. Dunne, M. Kurki, and S. Smith (eds.). (2013). International Relations Theories – Discipline and Diversity. Third Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 358.)	M. Caprioli. (2005). Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict. International Studies Quarterly (2005) 49, 161–178 T. Dunne, M. Kurki, S. Smith. (2013). Glossary. In: T. Dunne, M. Kurki, and S. Smith (eds.). (2013). International Relations Theories – Discipline and Diversity. Third Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press
(hard) power	'Feminist theorists have called for a reconceptualization of power from what has been labelled the *traditional* [sic] sense of 'power over' or 'power as dominance' (p.71-72) Feminist '[...] reconceptualizations of power move from the conception of power as a zero-sum game involving individuals where some are winners (the powerful) and others are losers (the powerless), to a variable-sum game involving individuals and collectivities where all can be winners (empowerment).' (p.72).	Salla. (2001). Women & War, Men & Pacifism. In: I. Skjelsbæk & D. Smith. (2001). Gender, Peace and Conflict. London: Sage Publications.
Women, Peace and Security	Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR1325), was unanimously adopted by United Nations Security Council on 31 October 2000. SCR1325 marked the first time the Security Council addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women; recognized the under-valued and under-utilized contributions women make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and peace-building. It also stressed the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security. Since the original UNSC res. 1325 (2000) there have been 9 subsequent; 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019). These resolutions make up the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. They guide work to promote gender equality and strengthen women's participation, protection and rights across the conflict cycle, from conflict prevention through post-conflict reconstruction	http://www.peacewomen.org/why-WPS/solutions/resolutions

FEMINIST PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

Helen Kezie-Nwoha

INTRODUCTION

The African continent has continued to be a site for conflict in the 21st century, hosting some of the longest wars in recent history that have had devastating impact on the population, particularly women, young women and girls. Most of the conflicts could be attributed to the nature of transitions from colonialism, a lack of transparent democratic processes, corruption leading to lack of delivery of social services, and huge spending on military. These combined factors have impacted grossly on development in Africa. With regards to peace and security norms and their impact on women and girls, the African continent has taken a leaf from the international community by adopting most of the international women's rights and women, peace and security frameworks to ensure the protection of women during and after conflicts as well as ensure their participation in peacebuilding processes.

One of the basic principles of these efforts is the recognition that peace and security cannot be achieved without the meaningful participation and leadership of women. However, while the Africa Union (AU) recognizes that any efforts to build good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice, the rule of law and a peaceful and secure Africa must integrate the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda,[39] the adoption of these frameworks has not necessarily led to action in reality beyond the rhetoric. While the AU has been keen on advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, there remains lack of commitment on the part of its member states to translate these principles into opportunities for women's empowerment and gender equality at country level. The AU's latest campaign on 'Silencing the Gun' is a case in point, as will be discussed later.

The African continent has taken a leaf from the international community by adopting most of the international women's rights and women, peace and security frameworks to ensure the protection of women during and after conflicts as well as ensure their participation in peacebuilding processes.

Diane Perpetire ADOUM, conducting a training class against GBV at Bimbo 5, in the Canaan community Bangui, Central African Republic. Photo: Susan Schulman/Oxfam

This paper explores a transformative feminist vision for peace and security and analyses its intersection with existing frameworks on women, peace and security (WPS) in Africa and globally. An approach to feminist peace recognizes that peace and security are active and intersectional issues, the responses to which need to be built by the people they are meant to serve. This response must span the public and the personal, the home and the community.

The paper begins by providing an overview of regional and global women's rights and WPS frameworks; highlighting their scope and deficiencies at national, continental and global levels. It further discusses the challenges of the implementation of the WPS agenda at these different levels, critiquing the limitations of the WPS frameworks to deliver sustainable peace due to the failure to address the role of patriarchy in conflict, structural violence, and the disconnect between the feminist vision for peace and the articulation of the UNSCR1325. The paper ends with reflections on what feminist peacebuilding in Africa could look like and shares case studies of what has worked for women in peacebuilding.

BACKGROUND

Following the liberation movements that saw many countries in Africa gain independence, most countries have never really detached themselves from their colonial legacy. The continuing relationship with Western powers has resulted in the persistence of neo-colonial conditions[40] that still linger on the continent. In addition, the assumption of Western cultural superiority continues to be expressed in what and who defines development and the standard of measurement of development. The same applies to promoting democratic governance and peacebuilding. This state of affairs continues to perpetuate injustice in Africa, including marginalization of ethnic minorities, women and people living in poverty, electoral processes that are not transparent, unequal access to resources, lack of job opportunities for young people, and governments staying in power through constitutional changes against the wishes of the majority. This has given rise to uprisings and many armed groups, which are often supported by external powers in order to remove the sitting governments from power, while in other contexts, ongoing conflicts between groups are fueled and instrumentalized to contest political power and access to resources.

Significant numbers of countries in Africa are currently either in conflict, experiencing post-war tensions, or are in post-conflict reconstruction processes.[41] Conflicts emerging since the end of the cold war have often been referred to as ethnic conflict, social conflict and international social conflicts.[42] Some of the conflicts are due to a crisis of governance and the failure of African Institutions to mediate conflict effectively. In Africa, regional and sub-regional institutions have taken up the role of mediating conflicts, such as the African Union and the regional economic communities (the East African Community and The Economic Community for West Africa, among others) respectively. Most of these institutions have peacebuilding mandates. However, the increasing number and changing nature of conflicts in Africa that involve non-state actors (that are only vaguely understood as their main agenda is not clearly defined), has made interventions difficult. Most of the conflicts which are identity based, reflecting tribal, religious and ethnic cleavages are deeply enshrined

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in societies and would require conflict management at the community, social institutions, national and political levels[43] and not necessarily by regional institutions. Further, the majority of the frameworks developed for peacebuilding by these institutions have been developed from the perspectives of men, who dominate leadership of these institutions.

The changing nature of conflicts where war has moved from the battlefield to the communities has also led to increased impact on civilian populations, with women and children bearing the brunt. While men are generally understood to be impacted by war, women, who undertake the triple roles of production, reproduction and community work are also significantly impacted in these various roles.[44] These changing dynamics require new approaches to responding to conflicts in order to build sustainable peace. Conflict management approaches have failed to lead to sustainable peace in Africa due to the patriarchal nature and conceptualization of peacebuilding.[45] This is mainly because many of the root causes of conflict are embedded in patriarchal practices that focus on mediating power struggles among political male elites. Unfortunately, most institutions for peacebuilding replicate patriarchal structures themselves so that even when women do participate in them they are hindered in their ability to create change.

Within the context of Africa, the WPS movement has made significant effort to dismantle these patriarchal tendencies. The numerous examples include the Liberian women's peace movement forcing warring parties into a resolution, they blocked the doors and windows and prevented anyone from leaving the peace talks;[46] the Burundi women insisting on their place at the peace table and influencing the outcome; more recently the extraordinary performance of South Sudanese women in ensuring the inclusion of a 35% quota in the Revitalized Agreement to enable women's representation in the transitional government structures[47]; and finally the role of Sudanese women in leading the revolution that ended a three decade long dictatorship.

Despite this progress, the civic and political space for women peace activists continues to shrink,[48] as has been observed in their struggle to engage with these structures while being continuously met with resistance. For example, despite the role of Sudanese women in the liberation, their participation in the ongoing peace talks in Juba remains minimal. This exemplifies that approaches to peacebuilding in Africa have adopted wholesale imported Western ideologies of who should be at the table and the content of what should be discussed. In most cases, men with military inclinations are usually prioritized, excluding women and community/religious leaders who also have influence and a deep understanding of conflict dynamics. The dominance of Western approaches is inevitable as Western actors are usually the first responders in the largest humanitarian crises, fund majority of the peace processes, and hold many of the senior positions in peace and security institutions, and so replicate their own patriarchal structures and norms.

Although the majority of these processes rhetorically adopt the WPS agenda as a guiding principle, its translation in practice is mostly militaristic in nature.[49] In a patriarchal world there is no such thing as peace times, since patriarchy itself is violent and ultimately produces behaviours that are termed armed conflict or war. The feminist agenda for peace is to dismantle these forms of patriarchy and its militaristic manifestation in everyday practice of war and conflict. These perspectives are not taken into account in peacebuilding processes, even

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though these were some of the fundamental foundations of the WPS agenda. A transformative agenda is one which ensures all forms of social, political and economic inequality and exclusion are eliminated.[50]

There is also limited understanding of the WPS agenda on the part of foreign diplomats who are commissioned to lead peace processes in Africa, through and within the regional and sub-regional institutions for peacebuilding. These multilateral institutions are patriarchal in their own right, having been created by a majority of men, ensuring their perspective of the world and conflict resolution is the lens through which interventions are built. From the United Nations Security Council to the African Union and Regional Economic Communities and States, their understanding of the WPS agenda is far from the transformative agenda that feminists conceived or hoped it to be. The fundamental objective of the WPS is to ensure peace processes deliver transformative change in the lives of women and girls in conflict and post-war situations. However, women representatives and women's organizations from conflict-affected contexts are continuously overlooked in these processes, despite the recognition that their meaningful participation is essential to realizing peace.[51] The Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan is a good example of the suggestion that when women participate in peace processes, agreements are more likely to focus on women's and girls' needs and concerns. Women at the negotiations pushed for 35% women's representation in the Executive,[52] called for refrain from acts of sexual violence, gender-based violence including sexual exploitation and harassment,[53] and protection of the needs of women, girls and those of other groups with special needs.[54] Such provisions are only possible when women are at the table, so the importance of the representation and contributions of women cannot be overemphasized.

Chega Village, where women engage in making baked goods, stoves and more. Photo: Susan Schulman/Oxfam

The majority of the National Action Plans for the implementation of the WPS agenda in Africa have focused on participation in political decision making and sexual and gender-based violence, both addressing the participation and protection pillars of UNSCR 1325 (2000). However, the most transformative aspects of the resolution that relate to prevention of conflict and recovery in terms of humanitarian response have been missed. Weak or non-existent monitoring and evaluation frameworks have contributed to a lack of accountability for implementation. Furthermore, many of the indicators developed for monitoring the WPS frameworks at different levels use a quantitative approach and count numbers involved but do not allow for qualitative measuring of transformative changes; further, they do not take into account the limitations of peacebuilding approaches used by international organizations in Africa, with too many frameworks and a limited focus on prevention. The debate on what is needed to achieve transformative peace for women and girls in Africa has prompted the increased recognition that a feminist approach to peacebuilding may hold the keys to unlocking the potentials of the WPS agenda to achieve transformative peace.

Transformative approaches to peacebuilding entail actions and programmes geared towards addressing the gendered power structures which are at the heart of unequal relations between women and men that lead to the exclusion of women from peace processes. Transformative approaches address the root causes of conflict including marginalization, discrimination based on ethnicity, religion and sex, and addressing inequalities at social, economic and political levels. Although feminist peace activists and local women's peace groups have continuously highlighted this approach, there is a disconnect between this understanding and the interpretation and application of the WPS agenda by the mainstream institutions. A critical analysis of the WPS agenda from a feminist perspective allows us to deepen our understanding of the transformative vision of peace and security, critique current practices that are situated within power structures and institutions that fail to address the root causes of conflict, and articulate approaches that will safeguard against future conflicts – with women at the heart of peacebuilding.

WHY EXISTING FRAMEWORKS FOR PROMOTING THE WPS AGENDA LACK IMPACT

From the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) (CEDAW)[55], to the Beijing Platform for Action (1995)[56] and the landmark UNSCR 1325 (2000),[57,58,59] African institutions and states have focused on developing frameworks and plans/ policies and implemented them from their mainstream understanding of peace and security, with little or no attention to the role of women or its impact on the lives of women and girls in Africa. The lack of implementation of these (and previous) resolutions remain a cause of concern for women peace activists. These shortcomings might be attributed to the fact that the implementation has typically been through military means – for example, it is believed that to stop wars, peacekeepers – who are in fact, soldiers – must be deployed to conflict zones. However, the sending of troops to war areas has not ended wars or conflict-related sexual violence; conversely, those peacekeepers have often been perpetrators of violence. In Sudan,

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UNAMID[60] has been present for 13 years, yet the conflict has continued; and in fact, new conflict has emerged from their presence as in 2014 peacekeepers were accused of raping approximately 200 women and girls.[61]

The African Union has made progress in promoting the recognition of the WPS agenda, and have called for its implementation by building on the landmark UNSCR 1325 (2000) and related resolutions, to ensure its policies and programmes adopt the provisions of the WPS agenda.[62] However, this progress has primarily related to policy development rather than to accountability of itself or states. In 2014 the AU Department of Peace and Security launched the Gender, Peace and Security programme (2015-2020), a continental framework for the AU, Regional Economic Communities, member States and CSOs to work collaboratively towards the effective implementation of Resolution 1325 and related resolutions. Subsequently in 2016 the department rolled out the African Peace and Security Architecture Road map for 2016-2020 that specifically calls for gender mainstreaming in its implementation, and also includes aspects of humanitarian response.[63] Most significant at the beginning of the decade was the campaign 'Silencing the Guns 2020: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development,' which was launched by the African Union Heads of States and Assembly during the OAU/AU 50th anniversary Solemn Declaration of African Heads of State in 2013 to promote peace and stability across the continent. Since we are now in 2020 the initiative has been renamed, 'Silencing the Guns Beyond 2020,' with the same objectives as the original campaign which aimed to eradicate all wars, including civil and ethnic conflicts, sexual and gender-based violence and preventing genocide in Africa. The campaign has been unsuccessful as the Heads of State failed to publicly criticize member states found to violate the principles set for the implementation of 'Silencing the Gun' campaign because it was not in their own geopolitical interests.

AU commitments have also been adopted in regional instruments and policy frameworks. The Southern African Development Community have placed emphasis on women's participation in decision making.[64] Article 28 of the SADC Gender Protocol focuses on peacebuilding and conflict resolution including the prevention and elimination of human rights abuse against women and children during armed and other conflicts.[65] The East African Community, the Economic Community for West African States and the Intergovernmental Agency on Development have all developed regional action plans for the implementation of UNSCR1325. Another regional body that has made great strides in promoting the WPS Agenda is the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) which has two protocols that address sexual violence in conflict; the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence Against Women and Children in 2007, and the Sexual and Gender Based Violence Declaration in 2011.

At the core of these efforts is the recognition that peace and security cannot be achieved without the meaningful participation and leadership of women. From all indications within the African Union there is a recognition that efforts towards silencing the guns, enhancing good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice, the rule of law and a peaceful and secure Africa must integrate the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda for them to be successful (AU, 2019).[66] However, women's participation in these processes remains limited, particularly in formal peace processes, and the impact of these processes on events unfolding beyond policy circles remains in

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question.[67] While the African Union has been keen on advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, there remains lack of commitment on the part of its member states to translate these principles into opportunities for women's empowerment and gender equality at country level.

At the country level, 25 states in Africa have developed National Action Plans (NAPs) for the implementation of the WPS Agenda, and most countries have included provisions of UNSCR1325 in their national legislations and policies, including national development plans where they do not have NAPs. For example, Sudan has a National Gender Policy and Action Plan with a specific chapter on peace and security.[68] The AU recognizes that most countries have focused mainly on participation and sexual and gender-based violence[69] when it comes to the implementation of Resolution 1325. The challenge with the implementation of the NAPs is the lack of political will on the part of governments to ensure adequate resources to guarantee their implementation. Of late there have been calls to ensure that Ministries who contribute to the different aspects of the 1325 are involved in the implementation of NAPs are involved right from the development stages of the NAP to ensure they budget for aspects that fall within their portfolios. With many countries developing their second and third NAPs, the extent to which these international frameworks for peacebuilding have led to transformative peace for women in Africa remains questionable, as does the manner in which governments have implemented these strategies within a militarized context with shrinking civic spaces. This also raises the question of who 'owns' the implementation of NAPs, and the extent to which delivering on the WPS agenda through such mechanisms is meaningful without being steered by civil society.

Continuously, many African leaders are focused on changing constitutions to remain in power, conducting violent elections that discriminate and marginalize women, and using state military machinery to attack opposition and dissenting voices mostly from civil society organizations. In countries that lack strong and coordinated opposition political parties such as Uganda and South Sudan, civil society organizations become the alternative that then become victims of state repression. The militarized nature of states has led to more attacks on civil society organizations including women's organizations, and increased abduction and killing of women. For example, the recent violence in Uganda where several women were killed,[70] the attacks on women and girls during the Sudan revolution, and attacks on female politicians as seen in Rwanda.[71]

With regards to humanitarian action, most of the frameworks follow the guiding principle of Resolution 1325 that calls for the incorporation of women's and girls' needs in all humanitarian interventions. However, the often fast-paced nature of humanitarian action means that interventions often fall short of adequately taking into account the needs and concerns of women and girls. This is important because during conflicts and in emergencies, pre-existing gender inequality and discrimination can worsen, as a result of changes in gender roles and relations. Research by UN Women (2015)[72] indicates that when women are involved in prevention and crisis response, it produces better outcomes such as gender responsive actions, lower risks of sexual violence, and increased protection of women and girls in humanitarian settings.

In the following section, I look at the challenges of the implementation of these frameworks for the achievement of the WSP agenda.

The militarized nature of states has led to more attacks on civil society organizations including women's organizations, and increased abduction and killing of women.

CHALLENGES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FRAMEWORKS FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE WSP AGENDA

One of the achievements of the African Union and its member states is the development of frameworks and policies to ensure the WPS agenda is achieved. A major challenge is that the majority adopt a vision of what peace looks like for women from the perspective a state-centric approach, that focuses on combatants 'silencing the guns' and sending peacekeepers to war zones. Even though the African Union itself has been promoting a new paradigm of African solutions to African problems, this has not sufficiently been translated into the WPS agenda in Africa.

Participation: Counting numbers is not enough

What all these frameworks have in common is the focus on measuring women's participation by counting the number of women in decision making. It is significant to note that most countries with increased numbers of women in decision making, particularly in parliament, have been those recovering from conflict e.g. Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda. This has been achieved mostly due to changes in constitutional provisions that require affirmative action for women. However, this increased participation has not translated to a reduction in gender-based violence in these countries and

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neither has it led to improved socioeconomic status of women and girls. For example, in Uganda, despite having 33% women in parliament, a 2011 survey by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics shows that 62.2% of women aged 15-49 reported experience of physical or sexual violence (by any perpetrator) at least once since the age of 15, and 58% of the same age group believe that 'wife beating' is justified.[73] The concentration on numbers alone limits the transformative potential of the WPS. The idea of increasing women's participation in decision making is aimed at ensuring that women's needs, and perspectives are adequately addressed in decision making processes. However, in most countries in Africa, to be appointed into any decision-making position you must be a member of a political party. Political parties are rarely are rooted in the communities, and so their candidate reflects the views of the party in decision making and not those of the community or women they represent. The women's movement has been pushing for a deeper understanding of what counts as participation, but these advocacy efforts have not been addressed by researchers. Meanwhile, some women politicians view women activists as potential competition and so will often tow the party line to secure their positions. The inclusion of higher numbers of women does not necessarily mean that women are better represented, unless women who understand the needs and concerns of women and are able to position these issues in policy making processes are included in decision making at all levels.

In conclusion, a quantitative approach is not a feminist approach; a feminist approach usually draws on the lived experience of women and their communities; and further, a focus on numbers usually does not translate into transformative change, which is the core principle of feminist peace.

Limitations of peacebuilding approaches by multi-lateral institutions and INGOS

The approaches used by multi-lateral institutions and donor governments to build peace in Africa has limitations; the go-to approach has been to send peacekeepers to war zones. That this has not been successful is evident from the many unresolved conflicts in Africa including in Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The UNAMID-UN-AU Mission in Darfur and the MONUSCO-UN Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo are the two oldest and most expensive UN peacekeeping missions in the world, but both missions are far from achieving their objectives.[74] The approach of sending peacekeepers to stop conflicts has never led to sustained peace, yet so much resource has been spent on these missions. In 2017, the DRC was the target of the most expensive peacekeeping mission in Africa with more than 16,000 troops and police and more than 3,000 civilian staff deployed, with a budget of about $7.3 billion (since 1960). This is followed by South Sudan with about 13,000 troops and a budget of about $1 billion (since 2011). South Sudan is closely followed by the Central African Republic with 12,000 troops and a budget of $920 million (since 2014), while 12,000 troops have been sent to Mali. In these same countries the level of conflict-related sexual violence remains high. In 2018, in South Sudan, allied militias raped women and girls as part of a campaign to drive opponents out of Southern Unity State. In Tanganyika Province of DRC, warring Twa and Luba militias violated women, girls and boys in their communities.[75]

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In such situations women's organizations become the first responders to support women survivors – not peacekeepers. The majority of the organizations working at the local level to point light on these violations and respond to addressing the needs of victims of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) are women's organizations, yet this crucial work is not seen as peacebuilding or articulated by Resolution 1325, and neither are adequate resources made available for such organizations to carry out the important work they do. While the frameworks articulate that protection and prevention of sexual violence is achievable by deploying peacekeepers and putting in place laws and policies, a feminist perspective requires that the social norms, practices and gender power relations – which are the root causes of the violence women experience – should be eliminated both during conflict and in so called 'peace time'. Until impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence is ended and women are adequately compensated for crimes committed against them, peace will not be achieved. The 'protection of civilians' framework focuses on creating order through peacekeeping, yet what is required for sustainable change is a just society in which women's human rights are respected; what is referred to as gender justice.

Humanitarian responses by UN Agencies and INGOS have mainly involved responding to the needs of refugees and displaced persons as a form of giving support to helpless people; their perspectives are not given due consideration, and neither is planning for their return an option. This means that humanitarian response acts as a sticking plaster at best. The short-term nature of humanitarian action does not provide for adequate time to respond to the various needs and concerns of women and girls. International humanitarian interventions in Africa are usually unrealistic in their objectives since most of the conflicts are long term and protracted, and most do not focus on sustainable and transformative change in the lives of women – the short term nature of interventions makes it impossible to make impact or change the status of women and girls. Women's organizations that work with refugees have greater potential to work beyond the mandate of humanitarian organization but have limited access to humanitarian funds. Many donors would rather give funds to mainstream organizations who are usually the first responders when conflict happens, since they have better infrastructure and resources to respond than women's organizations who are on ground.

Limited focus on prevention

Many have observed the limited focus of those working to implement the UNSC Resolution 1325 at regional and country levels on the prevention of conflict from happening. The vision of the women's peace movement when supporting the development of 1325 is that conflict should be prevented by all means, but the UN has shown a different vision of peacebuilding through prioritizing peacekeeping and security. The UN Security Council therefore integrated the pillars of Resolution 1325 into its own work in peacekeeping, which is the reason that indicators in measurement of success have focused on counting how many women go on peacekeeping missions, in security sector reforms, and in other security institutions. These numbers have never translated to more safety for women in conflict and post-conflict setting. The debate must shift from protection (peacekeeping) to prevention. Women and women's organizations have critical role to play in prevention as this happens at the local level. The African Union, RECs and some States have developed early warning and response mechanism as an approach to prevention of violence.

The short-term nature of humanitarian action does not provide for adequate time to respond to the various needs and concerns of women and girls.

Ibaado Mohamed is chair of various committees within the IDP camp. She has three camps under her management. Photo: Petterik Wiggers/Oxfam

FEMINIST APPROACHES TO PEACEBUILDING

This section reviews what feminist approaches to peacebuilding would look like. It illustrates what the women's peace movements in Africa have done using case studies to showcase women's way of building peace that argues for the promotion of women's organizing both at the formal and informal levels.

Militarism and violence against women

Feminists and particularly African feminists have highlighted the need to pay attention to militarism and the way this has continued to impact on the human rights and protection of women during violent conflict and so-called 'peace times' and how this impacts on their participation. Militarism as an ideology creates a culture of fear and supports the use of aggression, violence and military intervention for dispute resolution. Militarism privileges violent forms of masculinity, which has serious consequences for the safety and security of women and girls. The relationship between structural violence such as that resulting from patriarchy and the physical violence of war must be recognized; this awareness should be reflected in the way we seek to build peace.[76] To prevent conflict and promote gender equality and peace, failed modes of militarized conflict resolution must be rejected. What is required is valuing and investing in non-violent and gender equitable alternative forms of building peace.[77]

> What is required is valuing and investing in non-violent and gender equitable alternative forms of building peace.

At the moment the United Nations is the main body responsible for intervening in conflict situations and their approach is to send in peacekeepers. To address the critical issue of CRSV by peacekeepers training focused on behavioural change is needed. Such training is critical to addressing sexual violence against women by the military and peacekeepers, to raise their consciousness and increase their understanding of women's rights and gender inequality. Within this frame, a code of conduct can be set for peacekeepers, such as the one developed by MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This will help to deter peacekeepers from committing gender-based crimes as codes of conduct codify punishment and sanctions. It is also paramount to reduce government expenditure on military hardware; instead such funds should be channeled to improve social services, which could lead to more peaceful environment. The proliferation of arms provides a conducive environment for sexual violence against women in societies in Africa. Women's rights organizations could support gender training for the military and also run campaigns against increased military spending. In addition, all perpetrators should face the law and appropriate punishment in countries that contribute troops to deter others from committing sexual related crimes.

Redefining what constitutes a peace table

It is also important to pay attention and be guided by the perspectives of grassroots women who have, over time, built peace informally and kept communities intact when men have been away fighting. Grassroots women provide practical support to communities such as food, shelter, healthcare services, education, and economic empowerment, and ensure victims of sexual and gender-based violence receive psychosocial support and medical treatment.[78] These activities contribute to meaningful peace for women. In South Sudan, women worked across religious and tribal lines to hold prayers, conduct silent marches, and established peace committees in internally displaced people's camps to build peace.[79] These perspectives are not reflected in the international frameworks that detect how peace is built. Further, the way that women's informal peacebuilding is accounted for is problematic because it does not fit the description of the formal peace tables and peacebuilding itself. If we must improve on the current low percentage of women at the peace tables, we need to redefine the peace table to take into account women's informal peacebuilding efforts. For example, we may want to count the number of conflict incidences that women peace committees mediate at community level, or the number of meetings held with conflicting groups and the outcomes of such meetings. In so doing we may be able to account for higher numbers of women in peacebuilding and mediation than is currently being recorded.

Invest in building a movement of women peace activists

Supporting movement building on WPS in Africa will enable the convergence of the different perspectives of women who can act collectively to profile the needs and concerns of women and girls affected by conflict. The example of the Liberian and South Sudanese women's movements shows what happens when women speak collectively. In both cases women worked across religious and tribal lines to develop a common agenda and mobilize support to ensure they influence the peace process. The women of Liberia Mass Action for peace engaged in nonviolent protest that included sit outs, prayers and a sex strike, and they forced the men to remain in the room until a peace deal was signed,

It is important to pay attention and be guided by the perspectives of grassroots women who have, over time, built peace informally and kept communities intact when men have been away fighting.

even when many attempted to escape through the window. At the end of the war the women's movement established the women peace huts at the community level to sustain advocacy and prevent violence against women under the leadership of women. The peace huts are safe spaces for women to address issues of violence against women and girls and to resolve conflict in the household and community. In the aftermath of the South Sudan failed peace agreement (2015) over forty women's organizations came together and established the South Sudan Women's Coalition, as a platform for women to effectively engage with the revitalized IGAD led peace process. Similar to the Liberian Women's Mass Action for Peace, the South Sudan Women's Coalition worked across ethnic, age and religious lines, that enabled them to be invited to the peace table. They created a technical working group that supported those at the table with analysing documents and writing the women's position at the different levels of the process as well as engaging in 'corridor advocacy' to push the women's agenda. Ultimately, the coalition was a signatory to the peace agreement. They continue to engage with implementation of the peace process, as many are members of the different implementation mechanisms including the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission of the revitalized peace agreement. Both approaches are nonviolent, involved large numbers of women's organizations – both formal and informal – and put the needs of women and girls at the forefront of their campaigns. Women organizations have shown that in organizing differently they can contribute to building peace. Many of such movements for peace had been established in Burundi, Ivory Coast and the West African Region.

Women and young women's participation in decision making at all levels and in all peacebuilding processes

The peace process consists of both informal and formal activities. Informal activities include protests, inter-group dialogue, the promotion of intercultural and interethnic tolerance, and the empowerment of citizens. Formal processes include early warning, preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, peace-making, peacebuilding and disarmament involving activities like conflict resolution, peace negotiations, reconciliation, reconstruction of infrastructure and provision of humanitarian aid.[80] Women and young women should be supported to participate in these processes. However, to achieve equal participation there is need to address gender power relations within households, the community and institutions, as well as interrogate the use of power and masculinities that perpetuate inequalities and normalize the abuse of women. All these different forms of inequalities make it impossible for women to participate equally.

Build on indigenous methods of peacebuilding

African Feminist Peace must build on indigenous methods of peacebuilding. The African Indigenous knowledge is characterized by the fact that the acquisition of knowledge is collective and community oriented. In peacebuilding, various traditional methods have been advanced in traditional African societies including mediation, adjudication, reconciliation, arbitration and negotiation. Indigenous methods of peacebuilding are largely informal. Among the Issa and Gurgura communities of Somalia, women play dual roles in times of conflict, as promoters of conflict and as stabilizers of conflict situations. Women capitalize on their nurturing roles using songs and proverbs to socialize their children to build peace. They also play significant roles in the formation of social capital

To achieve equal participation there is need to address gender power relations within households, the community and institutions.

through marriages and kinship relations. Women are integral to sustaining peace through marriages that brought together and cemented two different and distant clans. However, their roles in decision making remains limited.[81]

CONCLUSION

The WPS agenda has weaknesses that makes it difficult to translate its provisions to achieve transformative peace. Africa continues to contend with protracted conflicts and emerging forms of conflict both within its borders and those instigated by external actors, in spite of the large number of African countries with national action plans for the implementation of UNSCR1325. Progress has been made in the areas of participation in decision making, specifically in the number of women in national parliaments, however, women's participation in peace processes and protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence continue to lag behind. More attention must be paid to increasing women's participation in informal and formal peace processes, specifically in prevention through early warning and response mechanisms to ensure violence does not happen in the first instance.

What is required is to change the focus on frameworks and instead to adopt strategies used by grassroots women to build peace. Such approaches will contribute to feminist peace by addressing the root causes of conflict and inequalities at social, political and economic levels. To achieve a feminist vision for peace, the WPS agenda must take an intersectional approach to ensure that the needs and concerns of distinct and vulnerable groups are adequately taken into account at all levels. Furthermore, regional and member states of the AU must ensure increase financial support for women's rights organizations to take leadership and provide expertise and guidance at all stages of peacebuilding and humanitarian response. This includes ensuring the needs and concerns of women and girl survivors are reflected in programmes and planning to ensure they are effectively addressed.

What is required is to change the focus on frameworks and instead to adopt strategies used by grassroots women to build peace.

Below: Nadia Ibrahim Mohammed, at her market stall in Chega village Darfur. Photo: Susan Schulman/Oxfam

FEMINIST PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Dr Zeynep Kaya, London School of Economics

INTRODUCTION

Conflict has escalated in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) on a dizzying scale since the 2011 Arab uprisings. The region has witnessed conflicts between states, between states and non-state actors, and conflicts in which international actors play a major role. These conflicts are best seen as a form of the 'new wars' that emerged globally after the end of the Cold War, in which non-state actors are increasingly influential and civilians are affected by conflict ever more directly and in multi-faceted ways. Most notably, terrorism has become the most significant cause of violence as a new generation of violent non-state actors has emerged. Conflicts that originated in particular parts of the region have spread to other parts, drawing in regional and international actors along the way. The power and security vacuums that emerged due to the chaos of war and weak state institutions, especially in the fields of security and the rule of law, have been filled with increasing numbers of local, national, regional and international actors. Nowhere is this more evident than in the transformation of the Syrian war into something more akin to an international proxy war; although the current conflicts in Libya, Yemen and Iraq also display these hallmarks. The net effect is a heightening of local tension and conflict between actors and a rendering of the resolution of the conflict even more complicated.

Terrorism has become the most significant cause of violence as a new generation of violent non-state actors has emerged.

Women celebrating a political victory of Naima Hammami, 60 years old, the first elected woman in the executive board of UGTT National Trade Union Centre of Tunisia. Photo: Ons Abid/Oxfam Novib

It is within this context that several issues have become more prevalent which challenge women and women's rights activism: including the role of widespread patriarchal values which institutionalize militarized masculinity; the proliferation of arms; a lack of accountability; and an enabling environment for exploitation and violence. Conflict-related displacement, both internally and externally, has become pervasive across the region and this has gender-specific impacts. Occupation in Palestine, the protracted humanitarian crisis in Yemen, heightened militarization in Iraq, the absence of the rule of law in Libya and the highly complex Syrian war, among others, are all conditions that directly or indirectly induce sexual, gender-based and other forms of violence that impact women disproportionately and prevent their effective and meaningful participation in preventing and resolving conflict.[82]

As such, women's organizations in the MENA region face not only the challenge of conflict, but also the gender-based discrimination and violence that inevitably is exacerbated in the context of this conflict. This is further compounded by the fact that dominant international discourses of peace and security have become increasingly militarized, and prioritize ending conflicts rather than preventing them, hindering genuinely transformative feminist peace and security. This is even the case with the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, which many initially hoped would be transformative and empowering. Instead human rights, and women's rights in particular, have become issues of lower priority when it comes to discourses of peace and security. So far, three states in the region have developed National Action Plans to implement the WPS agenda: Iraq, Palestine and Jordan. But international humanitarian and development work is typically carried out within particular (securitizing) frameworks, and most of the time implemented with a one-size-fits-all approach.

There has been an increase in the number of external international donors, which has changed the landscape of local feminist and women's rights activism. In recent years such donor activity has come to be seen by many as instrumentalizing women's empowerment and reducing it to something that is pursued mainly in the name of conflict reduction rather than for its own sake. It can also be seen as reinforcing securitizing trends through the rise of ideas like countering and preventing violent extremism (CVE, discussed in more detail below). In some cases, local activist groups have jumped on board with this donor-led agenda and have reframed their agenda in line with donor expectations; often doing so in order to win funding and ensure their survival. Thus, while the political and security contexts differ in each country, there is nevertheless a clear similarity in how global policies and international responses are manifesting locally, as well as how they are disproportionately affecting women in general, and women-led local civil society and human rights defenders in particular. There are specific overlaps, clashes and tensions between international frameworks and local women's activism.

Adopting a feminist lens allows us to critique power, structures and institutions, and to posit a more holistic vision of peace and security that is truly people-centred. A feminist analysis can offer multiple advantages over the current securitized approach, including: a potentially genuinely transformative vision of peace and security; a gendered understanding of the root causes of conflict and the continuum of violence through peace and conflict; and a nuanced and context-sensitive approach that safeguards against future conflicts with women peacebuilders at its heart.

Adopting a feminist lens allows us to critique power, structures and institutions, and to posit a more holistic vision of peace and security that is truly people-centred.

Raghda stands in Mosul University Library. After living under ISIS for more than two years Raghda and her family were displaced to Hassansham camp where they lived for several months until their east Mosul neighbourhood was retaken, and they could move back home. Photo: Charlotte Sawyer/ Oxfam

This paper explores feminist transformative discourses and visions of peace and security and analyzes their intersection with dominant international frameworks on women's rights in fragile and conflict contexts in the MENA region. The paper begins by providing an overview of the nature of existing international frameworks on gender, peace and security, with a focus on the WPS agenda and how and why it overlaps and differs from the more comprehensive feminist conceptions of peace and security internationally and locally. In her most recent book, Cynthia Enloe made the point that the patriarchal form of masculinity and patriarchy is persistent, and despite the progress made in challenging patriarchal structures and gender discrimination, patriarchy finds ways of creeping back. She suggests strategies, skills and feminist self-reflection to find ways in which we sustain patriarchy.[83]

The rest of the paper applies a critical perspective to the WPS agenda and focuses on issues in which 'gender-sensitive' international frameworks are leading to inadvertently contradicting outcomes for achieving feminist peace and security: responses to sexual violence in conflict; instrumentalization of WPS through CVE; the politics of donor funding and the resilience policy that is being increasingly adopted in humanitarian and development work.[84] These issues perpetuate the traditional military, colonial and patriarchal mentality that perceives women as victims; they overlook the underlying inequalities and imbalances of power at national and global levels and they put the responsibility to solve problems/overcome difficulties on the 'underdeveloped'. This is despite the fact that women are often the first responders in a crisis, or are involved in grassroots mediation. Women who could promote women's interests and have a history of campaigning for women's rights

Women who could promote women's interests and have a history of campaigning for women's rights and participation are often overlooked in formal national and international peacebuilding processes.

and participation are often overlooked in formal national and international peacebuilding processes. There is a lack of robust analysis and examination of both small- and larger-scale efforts and initiatives by women to promote peacebuilding in fragile and post-conflict contexts.

CRITICALLY APPRAISING THE WPS AGENDA

The Women Peace and Security agenda while appearing to have emerged from decades of women's rights activism, has the potential to be truly transformative; but by being the product of a number of UN Security Council resolutions it has become part of the very system itself. There has been an increase in more inclusive global and transnational platforms when it comes to security and conflict; but the systems and international peace and security institutions which are in place are more rigid and harder to transform. UN Security Council decisions with regards to conflict, security and war are still typically dominated by the interests of powerful states and dominant normative discourses and mentalities. Conceptions and practices of international security are historically constructed based on the behaviour of men in positions of power. State interest and security is associated with traditional concepts of power, whether defined in material or normative terms. There has been a post-war consensus on an increased emphasis on the role of soft power, ideas for shaping international relations and institutions, and an emphasis on global and multilateral negotiations for resolving issues. However, security and war are still defined in terms of masculinities that emphasise militarism and power. It could be argued that increasingly there appears to be a return by some of the nations with the biggest armies to using 'hard power' as a means of resolving disputes, and this has resonated through the UN Security Council by the repeated use of vetoes by some states to UNSC resolutions. This is an aggressive form of masculinity that perceives survival in the conflictual international system as possible through war-capable states and heroic masculine warriors as protectors and defenders and this has resonated through the UN Security Council by the repeated use of vetoes by some states to UNSC resolutions. This is an aggressive form of masculinity that perceives survival in the conflictual international system as possible through war-capable states and heroic masculine warriors as protectors and defenders.[85]

Women, Peace and Security is as much a part of global normative discourses and power structures as it is the product of transnational women's rights activism in the 1990s and preceding decades. The WPS agenda is composed of seven UN Security Council Resolutions; it is part of the international normative agenda on women and it incorporates some core feminist principles into its framing. WPS's first resolution 1325 is a pioneering commitment that recognizes the importance of women and gender issues to peace and security. This relies on the ideas that gender equality is a value in itself and that women are naturally predisposed to peace, and thus a stronger force for resolving conflicts. The WPS agenda makes gender equality, women's empowerment and representation central to processes of conflict, conflict-prevention, post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding processes. Its resolutions on women's empowerment emphasise the need for women's increased participation in formal conflict resolution and peace processes. They also recognize the importance of the conflict resolution and peacemaking work done by local

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women's organizations and advise consulting them. SCR 2122 specifically urges consultations with socially or economically excluded groups of women. WPS resolutions also encourage increasing the number of women in police and military peacekeeping missions. They bring new openings for women's participation, increase pressure to reduce conflict-related sexual violence and highlight the importance of the peacebuilding work done by local women.[86]

But the WPS agenda also embodies some key tensions which undermine its potential. It is an agenda with one foot planted in traditional security conceptions and structures and the other in transnational and feminist peace activism. It is caught between an urge to reflect existing international power structures and normative frameworks and the desire to eliminate, or at least reduce, gender inequalities and include women in peacebuilding.

Although the WPS agenda is widely welcomed by feminist scholars and activists, it does not represent feminist peace and feminist security, mainly because of its dual position of being both an agenda for feminist women and for the UN Security Council. The UNSC's tendency to associate peace with security has led WPS to also be framed within security discussions. This led the WPS agenda to move away from an anti-war and rights-based agenda to one for making wars safer for women and using military measures to protect women from sexual violence. Its provisions have come at some cost to key feminist goals such as strengthening women's meaningful participation, conflict prevention and disarmament. Its goals on women's participation have also remained mostly unimplemented. Even its empowerment dimension is primarily protective rather than giving women agency.[87]

The WPS agenda has also been selective and ritualistic in its engagement with the feminist perspective. The agenda is limiting, in that it reduces the spaces and opportunities for influential and transformative actions. WPS's conceptual underpinnings rely on a liberal feminist paradigm rather than a wider spectrum of feminist approaches and conceptions of peace. It excludes the anti-war approaches and feminist critiques of military solutions.[88] There is no homogenous or commonly accepted form of feminist peace and security, and feminism can take different forms or focus on different issues across the world. Moreover, there are divisions over certain issues, such as on whether feminism should advocate for women's inclusion in security forces. However, most feminists adopt more comprehensive definitions of peace and security that see violence as a continuum and consider economic and social justice crucial for peace and security.[89] They put emphasis on human security rather than militarized and traditional security.
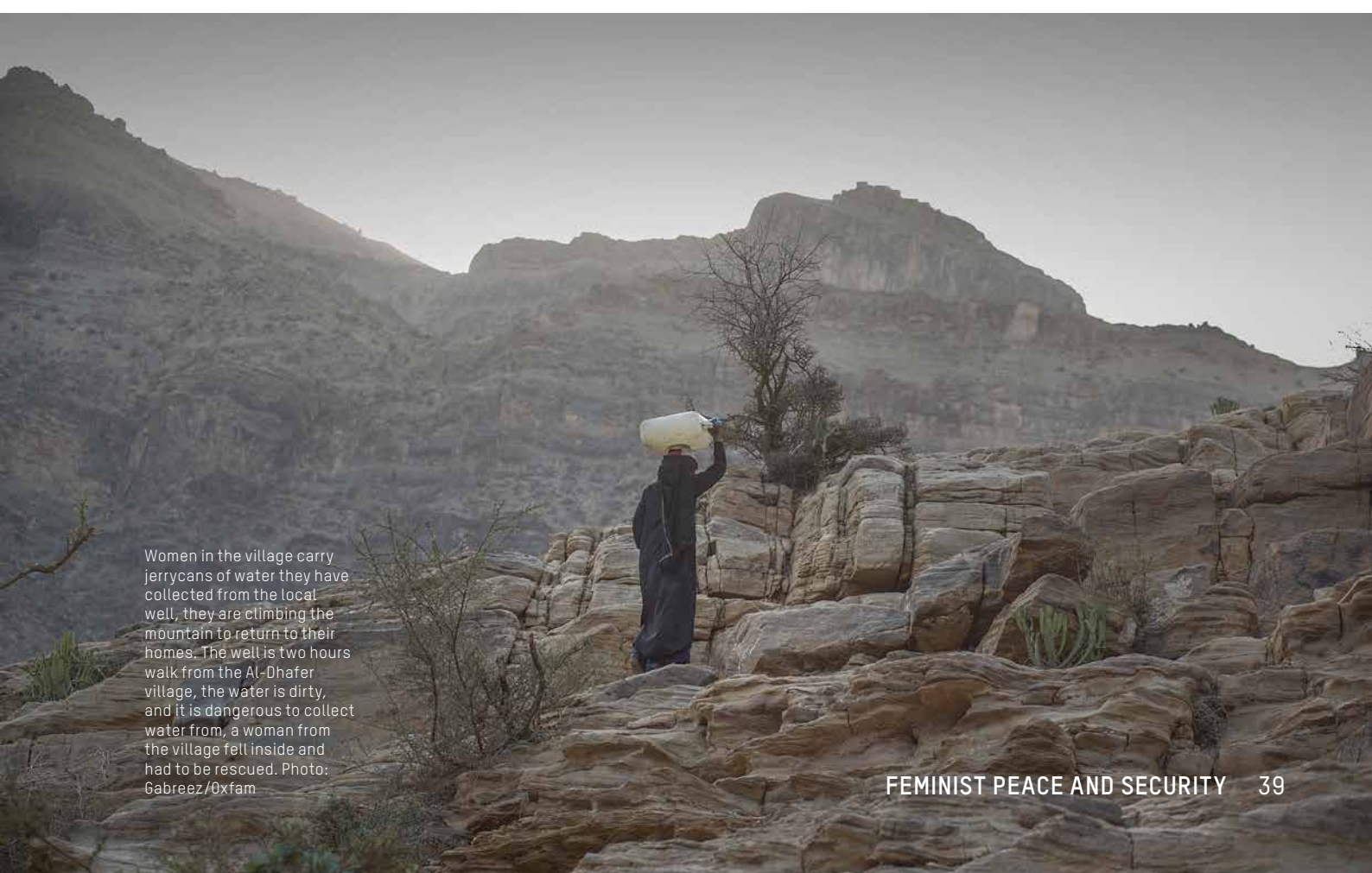
The net effect is that WPS's selective approach and its underpinnings in militarized security negatively affect local civil society organizations by making them re-frame their existing work on women's rights to fit with the international security agenda. Western donors adopted the feminist perspective, albeit a liberal one, through WPS and have used their money to promote and implement it. In this work, the security concerns of the UN Security Council and the donor states have led to specific forms of WPS being implemented and pursued locally and these forms generally reflect the framing of the UN and dominant states. They ensured that money is available for certain kinds of work prioritized in their agenda. Implementers and civil society organizations chose to and/or were forced to carry out that kind of work in order to gain vital international support and funding. There can be little doubt that this has led to an increased focus on

The agenda is limiting, in that it reduces the spaces and opportunities for influential and transformative actions.

more women in the security sector, greater women's political participation and women's protection from sexual violence. But these developments have come at the cost of limited understandings and interpretations of peace and security in general and WPS in particular. This is a limited understanding because it overlooks the feminist agenda that incorporates actual inclusion, meaningful participation, conflict prevention through disarmament and transformative change, as explained below.

Inclusion

Despite its emphasis on the participation of women in conflict resolution and peacemaking processes, the WPS agenda can be exclusionary and weak in intersectional analysis. It mainly focuses on adding women into existing structures and processes; however, it fails to take women's responses to and conceptions of conflict and peacebuilding seriously. For instance, in the case of Palestine, some women's agency can be informed by a logic of violent or non-violent resistance against unequal power structures and the occupation, not by a liberal peace model based on dialogue. The National Action Plan (NAP) to implement WPS in Palestine was developed by women who were urban, professional and largely secular, and excluded women active in Islamist political parties and internally displaced women. In Iraq, the preparation of the WPS national action plan was not an inclusive process either. It was led by a limited number of women's rights organizations and did not carry out consultations with women from different walks of life or incorporate their different needs and expectations. For instance, displaced women were entirely excluded, not only during its preparation but they were also not discussed in the NAP itself. Local women engaged in conflict resolution were not included; they wrote letters to international actors requesting their inclusion, but they were duly overlooked.

Despite its emphasis on the participation of women in conflict resolution and peacemaking processes, the WPS agenda can be exclusionary and weak in intersectional analysis.

Women in the village carry jerrycans of water they have collected from the local well, they are climbing the mountain to return to their homes. The well is two hours walk from the Al-Dhafer village, the water is dirty, and it is dangerous to collect water from, a woman from the village fell inside and had to be rescued. Photo: Gabreez/Oxfam

Such practices lead to some women's experiences and voices being silenced and they exacerbate fragmentation and rivalries between woman activists on the ground. The WPS agenda views women in their totality as a unitary group. It has a particular framing of gender, peace and security that leads to disconnection between pre-approved solutions and complex local realities.[90] The existing WPS paradigm categorizes women as a singular group, viewed as peacemakers as a whole, with similar needs, interests and agencies simply because of their gender. This overlooks other intersecting factors that shape women's needs and expectations, such as class, religion, ethnic or racial background, political orientation or geographical place of residence.

This shows the necessity of adopting an intersectional approach to inclusion, to ensure that women with different backgrounds and perspectives are included in a full awareness of the disadvantages caused by unequal international structures. A one-size-fits-all approach may create divisions and exclude certain groups and perspectives that do not fit in the WPS framing. Instead, WPS should facilitate local women's peace and human rights organizations to generate their own conflict resolution and peacemaking initiatives, and support these. This is essential for being able to truly transform the international peace and security agenda, rather than merely adding women into existing structures and processes.[91]

A similar picture is evident when it comes to women's engagement in peacemaking processes. The emphasis of WPS on including women in peacemaking processes tends to be reductionist, and frames women's inclusion in an instrumental light. Leaving aside the quality of their participation, even in terms of the volume of women's engagement, the WPS agenda has not been particularly successful. The number of women in peace negotiations has not increased significantly since the first WPS resolution was adopted. The SCR 2242 in 2015 made a push for women's meaningful participation, but this may not make a difference because the underlying factors in the WPS approach that hinder such participation are still there, such as the top-down and UNSC-led nature of the WPS agenda. Each implementing state or international agency interprets the principles of WPS in a way that suits their interests, often making token references to women's participation and seeking to include women in existing processes, rather than rethinking. That is not to say that the effort to include women in such processes is not a positive development, but this should not be done in a selective way. The WPS agenda should be able to adapt to local needs and demands, and different women's agendas should be allowed to change the existing peacemaking processes. Locally driven processes may be a way to help deliver more inclusion, as the local level can be more open to influences from the non-military and non-elite, and can be more inclusive towards women's organizations.[92]

The main discourse on the roles of women in peacebuilding among the donor community focuses on women's descriptive participation (presence in politics) rather than substantive participation (promotion of women's perspectives and interests). In Syria and Yemen, women are included in formal peace processes, but they are expected to speak with one voice and to only represent their gender. The efforts to include women in peace processes in Libya have been disappointing because the UN and state have not ensured the meaningful participation of women. In Iraq, formal peacebuilding often relies on tribal hierarchy, religious leaders and the established political actors – restricted spaces for women's involvement. To be involved, women often have to rely on partisan support and thus become an extension of their sponsor. In 2006 the

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Iraqi government adopted a national reconciliation programme and formed a National Reconciliation Commission to promote the values of tolerance, non-violence and rule of law. Women were not included in the formation of the programme and were instead given the Office for Women in the National Commission, which was weak and had no real programme or intent to activate the role of women in reconciliation. In July 2017 UNAMI in collaboration with UN Women and GoI National Reconciliation Committee, Office of the PM's Women and Gender Affairs Department, organized a meeting with leading Iraqi women to discuss women's participation in Iraq's National Reconciliation process. But no real progress has been made.

In Israel, and Palestine, with the Intifadas, a reaction to the occupation emerged and advanced alongside a challenge to the prevalent norms in Israel that excluded women from public affairs, especially when it came to security and conflict. This led to the development of the women's peace movement in Israel and cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian women. For instance, the Women in Black movement facilitated women with different political views to participate in peace activism. The feminist peace movement in the 1990s evolved into one that does not impose one single perspective, and instead highlights the differences between participants and strives to ensure equal participation for different groups (Palestinian, Ashkenazi and Mizrachi women). In this way, it represented a co-existence of different concepts and experiences of feminism together and sought to facilitate dialogue between them. It also gave each group agency, and empowered them by giving them a voice. Clearly the division of these groups along identity lines is somewhat problematic, mainly because it essentializes and tribalizes identity constructions and creates monolithic groups,[93] but crucially the movement does not push for a uniform voice and in so doing empowers women's agency. However, this changed after the second Intifada. The collapse of the peace talks and deepening of divisions between Israelis and Palestinians also deepened divisions among women activists. Many Palestinian women's organizations began to focus on their unique challenges that emerge from occupation, distancing themselves from their Israeli counterparts.

The state of feminist peace activism in Israel today shows that a feminist peace critique of the Israeli policy of occupation is situated on a fragile political platform imbued with sensitivities, resentments and occupier/occupied tensions, which render local activism challenging. Inclusion must not ignore the root causes of the conflict, or the impact on the peacebuilding processes. The challenge facing WPS when it comes to inclusion is that embracing a role as 'peacemakers' renders it hard for women to express critical and anti-militarist views under the WPS agenda.[94] Indeed, Jewish women's organizations, such as Machsom Watch, have an established history of monitoring and highlighting violations of women's human rights by the Israeli security forces and resisting these practices.[95] What is more, both Israeli and Palestinian women have engaged in Peace Marches since 2014, not only to promote a peaceful agreement between Palestine and Israel but also for a right to gender-equal participation in developing a resolution. The marches are organized by Women Wage Peace, which defines itself as a non-ideological and non-affiliated organization that brings a diverse group of people for a shared goal of peace. Yet, several Palestinian and civil society organizations criticized the march in 2017, claiming that it actually promoted a normalization of the occupation without acknowledging the severe injustices it causes, and many Palestinian women activists feared they were being used by Israeli women in this process.

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Tunisian women's rights organisation LET (Ligue des Electrices Tunisiennes) conducts political coaching sessions. Photo: Oxfam/ Mirada Production, Ghassen Oueslati

Disarmament and preventing conflict

The international conferences that preceded the adoption of SCR 1315, such as the 1985 Nairobi and the 1995 Beijing conferences, emphasized the importance of working towards disarmament and fostering a culture of peace. Therefore, the aim was not simply to resolve conflicts, but to actually prevent them in the first place. However, WPS resolutions are completely silent about this long-standing feminist goal of disarmament and demilitarization. Disarmament in WPS only comes up in relation to post-conflict environments, referring to the different needs of ex-combatant women and girls and women's protection from violence in DDR processes.

The very states that are sponsoring resolutions and declare a commitment to the WPS agenda are also signatories to the Arms Trade Treaty.[96] Sadly, this all too frequently overlaps with those states selling arms to perpetuate conflicts in countries such Yemen and the violence committed against women and girls, who are suffering disproportionately in conflict settings.

Moreover, rather than preventing conflict, the focus is on making wars 'safer' for women. There is a heavy focus in WPS on the protection element with regards to women's position in war, and protecting them through military force and securitization. The 'protection' language with regards to women and children victimizes women, thus reinforcing gendered structures of military

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and security. These references appear to confirm the view of women as a vulnerable group needing, in particular, protection from sexual violence. WPS has reinforced the idea that securing international peace relies on military strength and securitized states. Instead of pursuing feminist goals for permanent peace, the WPS limited itself to women's participation in existing conflict-resolution processes, disarmament in post-conflict communities and protection of women during conflict.[97] Moreover, SCR 2242 not only reifies the securitized responses but also calls for the use of WPS in CVE, a highly securitized policy. Instead of focusing on the root causes of conflict and preventing conflict, the WPS agenda has focused on including women in ongoing processes. Although this is desirable based on the principle of gender equality, it has weakened feminist opposition to war, strengthened the view that women need protection, and made WPS an instrument of military and securitized ways of thinking.[98]

Seeing gender inequality as a cause of war and conflict and a threat to international security may feed into the western discourses that represent 'southern' or 'non-western' women in the 'global south' as universally victimized and in need of external support. Discourses about the need to 'save' these women risk provoking a local backlash against women's activism in conflict and post-conflict contexts. In such contexts, such as in Iraq, women become associated with 'foreign' interventions and 'foreign' military agendas and are therefore violently targeted by local actors.[99] This threat was prominent during the sectarian violence but has not abated. In 2018 a series of high profile killings took place including a well-known women's rights activist, Soad Al-Ali, and a beauty queen visible in social media, Tara Fares. A key underlying reason for these attacks is that Islamist militia groups and conservative sections of the society perceive women who advocate women's rights as importers of western values that 'contradict' social and religious norms in Iraq. Such a view entirely overlooks long-term Iraqi women's rights activism. What is important is that the anti-western ideologies and movements use this rhetoric and violence as a mode of control and suppress freedom of expression and civic activism in Iraq.[100]

Transformative change

Clearly, it is important to understand the specific ways in which violence against women continues in peace and conflict. Understanding continuities in violence beyond a 'peace process' and into 'peace time' helps tackle the root causes of both gender inequalities and conflict. It is essential to understand the existing causes of violence in the specific context of each country, as conflict amplifies existing trends. Indeed, for many feminist scholars it is only through this process that genuine transformation is possible and that 'positive peace' for women beyond just the elimination of violence can be achieved. Peace is not just an absence of armed conflict, but it is also being able to exercise one's social, economic and political freedoms without fear of violence, backlash and discrimination. Therefore, many feminist approaches argue that a narrow understanding of peace and security should be challenged to ensure the promotion of social justice, elimination of violence and to generate transformative change.[101]

Indeed, the feminist perspective offers a different conception of peace and security that undermines traditional assumptions and that can create a more just, lasting and equal peace. Now that WPS is part of the international normative agenda on women, potentially this can be used to change the

What is important is that the anti-western ideologies and movements use this rhetoric and violence as a mode of control and suppress freedom of expression and civic activism in Iraq.

security mentality that sees peace as an absence of violence. However, at the moment this potential is not being realised, in part because the WPS agenda tends to divide feminists who focus on women's participation based on the equality principle, and feminists who believe in the same principles but also seeks to carry out anti-militarist work.[102] While WPS increases women's participation based on equality, this does not guarantee positive peace. In fact, as it is currently conceived, it is more likely to lead negative peace rather than genuine transformation.

There is a need, therefore, to reintegrate feminist conceptions of positive peace into the WPS agenda and to push it beyond its short-term security focus. According to feminist peace and security, conflict prevention can be possible though disarmament, creating the right conditions for women's empowerment and women's meaningful participation. This requires listening to local defenders of women's rights and human rights and benefiting from their experience. These actors can offer accurate and insightful information on the diverse needs and requirements of the people to better understand the causes and drivers of conflict. Creating other institutional spaces to think outside the frames of war can lead to transformative anti-militarist and post-colonial cultures and practices of peace. Gender, conflict and peace are in complicated and context-specific relationships, and creating circumstances for positive peace requires more than ritualistic tokens or protection mechanisms. It is important to overcome the stereotypes that women are victims, to acknowledge that men can also be victims of sexual violence and that peace should be both for men and women, should be multi-gendered and focus on gender. There is an urgent need to reframe 'peace as the creation of conditions that would make the response of violence unintelligible and nonsensical'. In this, women as full and equal participants 'in conflict-related processes should also be able to question militarism and promote the positive peace'.[103]

Gender, conflict and peace are in complicated and context-specific relationships, and creating circumstances for positive peace requires more than ritualistic tokens or protection mechanisms.

Fatima, 37, and her child sitting outside their tent exposing themselves to the sun light to try and keep them warm. Huth camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Photo: Mohammed Al-Mekhlafi/Oxfam

KEY ISSUE AREAS

This section illustrates, through specific examples across the MENA, how and why gender-sensitive international frameworks are leading inadvertently to contradicting outcomes for achieving feminist peace and security. The issue areas in focus are preventing sexual violence in conflict; instrumentalization of WPS through CVE; the politics of donor funding; and the resilience policy framework.

Protection vs prevention

In order to achieve transformative feminist peace, a shift from protection alone to the prevention of conflict needs to take place. In some cases, international frameworks even utilize the protection principle to justify the use of force.[104] Equally, protection is used to instrumentalize women's participation in security forces, such as employing women in peacekeeping to provide better protection for local women and children against sexual violence.

The prioritization of protection over prevention reinforces a general sense of the Security Council's 'fortitude and dependability' as a protector of vulnerable civilians.[105] This promotes the symbolic importance of the Security Council's masculinized military methods as crucial to ensuring security. Its focus on sexual violence also diverts the attention of the Security Council members away from the failure to attend to the underlying structural causes of armed conflict; in particular the inequitable distribution of global power and wealth. Wider normative political, economic and social structures that play a larger role than assumed in leading to gender-based and sexual violence in conflict are overlooked. Sexual violence in conflict is part of a spectrum of gender-based violence caused by normalized and systemic discriminative and unequal structures shaping women's everyday lives and sanctioning male aggression.[106]

Justifications for the use of violence and experiences of violence are typically intersectional, meaning multiple identity-related or structural factors intersect to make certain groups more vulnerable. Militant radical groups such as ISIS use specific gender norms in connection with perceived religious or sectarian identities in order to morally justify and organize violence. ISIS reinforced gender norms that perpetuate patriarchy and men's control over women to organize the lives and behaviours of its recruits and the people under its control. ISIS's sexual violence against the Yazidis is part of a continuum of violence, and is related to structural gendered inequalities in society in general, specifically ISIS's gender norms and the wider inequalities in Iraq. Moreover, their religious identity and minority position intersected with their gender to make Yazidi women and girls targets of sexual violence. Specific ethnic or religious constructions of identity intersect with gender, leading to the targeting of minorities, which may be based on ethnicity, religion or political affiliation.[107] ISIS's ideological propaganda documents not only justify violence but also normalize and institutionalize it; and do so in the context of very specific identity-based claims that intersect with explicit commodification of women from minority communities.

Attempts to challenge this narrative have proved largely futile to date. Recent WPS resolutions that emphasise improving women's socio-economic conditions (including education and health services) and take a holistic view to peace,

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including politics, security, human rights, the rule of law and justice, are overlooked in favour of a focus on sexual violence in conflict. There can be little doubt that the primary aim is to make conflict safer for women rather than preventing conflict.

The further instrumentalization and securitization of WPS through CVE

The counter extremism framework in SCR 2242, which was particularly focused on responding to rising extremism in the MENA region, directly linked the WPS agenda to CVE. SCR 2242 seeks women's participation in countering extremism, and seeks to benefit from the work of women's rights organizations in developing and implementing strategies. Once again, although the engagement with women's organizations is welcome, this has a significant unintended consequence: it has led to the instrumentalization of the WPS agenda whose role is now to strengthen CVE efforts without increasing women's agency. There is, and should be, a fundamental disconnect between the CVE and WPS agendas. The WPS agenda is the outcome of a movement for demilitarization, while CVE is a security-focused policy implemented by armed or police forces. Dialogue and cooperation between the two agendas demand compromises and risks, undermining the foundations of WPS. Indeed, it should be questioned whether it is possible, or desirable, to bring WPS and CVE together in the name of making the latter more effective.

As already noted in the case of the UN Security Council, security-related decision making takes place in a highly masculinized culture and in male-dominated and exclusionary spaces. But this is also evident beyond the UN and it is now clearly evident in CVE too. The 2016 EU Foreign Policy Strategy reveals a patriarchal and exclusionary foreign policy, adopting a 'hard' security approach by placing counter-terrorism and CVE at the heart of its strategy for protecting citizens from terrorist threats.[108] The masculinized culture in these platforms continues despite efforts to enhance women's voices and diversification in the composition of stakeholders participating in policy making in recent years. The short-term national security objectives of CVE policies are often at odds with the long-term feminist peacebuilding goals of tackling the root, structural causes of armed violence. Integrating CVE work into WPS risks overlooking WPS as a standalone goal and reduces it to a means to achieve a securitized aim.

Another incompatibility between CVE and WPS is that CVE programmes reinforce gender stereotypes and contradict the idea of empowering women. Heteronormative thinking presumes that women and men have natural roles in life, and such thinking is implicitly evident in CVE. Women are portrayed as innately peaceful, as peacebuilders or community organizers. CVE programmes focus on women as victims of violent extremism and reduces them to their roles as mothers, sisters and wives of terrorists or future terrorists. Typically, gender stereotypes mean that both women's role as supporters or perpetrators of violent extremism, as well as men's role in preventing or countering violent extremism are absent from CVE programmes.

Furthermore, women who are involved in CVE activities are often praised for their personal involvement rather than their political agency, thereby confirming rather than challenging prevailing gender norms. Many such programmes assign a disproportionate responsibility to women in preventing or countering violent

Women who are involved in CVE activities are often praised for their personal involvement rather than their political agency.

extremism. This may over-estimate their influencing power and put them at risk; or, conversely, may negate the work they do outside a CVE framework, only recognizing their CVE contribution.

The impact of linking CVE and WPS on feminist peace activism in the MENA region is highly worrying. The policy specifically targets MENA countries and huge amounts of funding are allocated by states and the UN for this policy, reducing funding for other non-security issues that are perceived as less important. This could undermine or contradict much of the groundwork done by women's organizations and force them to shape their agenda and goals to fit CVE to receive funding. The way CVE was incorporated in the Jordanian NAP (2018-2021) is a case in point. The plan was co-prepared by the Jordanian National Commission for Women and UN Women, and in collaboration with UNHCR. The Plan specifically addresses CVE by highlighting the role of civil society and women as key partners in preventing and countering violent extremism. It has been said that the Plan was informed by extensive local consultations. However, the decision to incorporate CVE into the plan was taken by the drafters unilaterally without consultation or conversations with women and women's organizations. It shows that seemingly grassroots activity is undermined by the top-down imposition of CVE work to enlist women's involvement in the implementation of this policy.

Relatives embrace after they were reunited at Hassansham camp, around 50km east of Mosul. Hundreds of families from Mosul city and surrounding areas started arriving at the camp every day as Iraqi forces recapture areas from ISIS in early November. Photo: Abbie Trayler-Smith/Oxfam

Donor/funder politics – how local work is influenced

The work of women's rights organizations and women activists has had to transform in order for organizations in countries affected by conflict to survive. They are constrained by a particular context in which funding is often only available for certain international policy agendas. Women's rights organizations in MENA reallocate their resources, goals and expertise to fit with an international agenda with a typically short-term, often humanitarian focus which can sometimes undermine years of women's rights gains in a national context. This also has long-term implications for these organizations and can undermine the work for women's and girls' rights that they were established to carry out. Organizations end up having to repackage their existing work under the WPS umbrella to be eligible for funding. If they do not use the language of the resolutions, they are overlooked and discredited. Moreover, financial rules imposed on civil society organizations lead CVE funding to be assigned to multilateral organizations or INGOs rather than directly to grassroot organizations. Financial rules and regulations designed to reduce the risks for funders negatively affect the resources and operating capacity of the organizations on the ground. The trickle-down effects from large organizations to smaller local organizations do not necessarily benefit the latter in carrying out their own agendas on enhancing women's rights and contributing to conflict resolution and peace processes.[109] This restricts the space for grassroots feminist change.

For example, since the displacement crisis further escalated across the Middle East, donor funding has been channelled to humanitarian projects focusing on IDPs and refugees. This was important and necessary; however, it came at the expense of a sudden shift in the focus of local organizations' project work in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, Turkey and other conflict-affected and refugee-receiving countries in the region. According to a study carried out at the American University of Iraq-Sulaimani in 2018, women's rights organizations had to stop their projects concerned with shelters for women, female genital mutilation and sexual and gender-based violence. Instead the donors come with ready-made projects with pre-set aims, budgets and of (very short) duration. Local organizations reported experiencing powerlessness and stated they were not consulted when it came to setting the agenda despite their intimate knowledge on the ground. They felt obliged to accept the terms of the funders as otherwise they would not survive. A representative of one of the organizations stated that they would prefer for funders to be willing to take advice and treat them as partners rather than subordinates, which she believed would lead to more sustainable and productive outcomes.

Donors' security concerns push civil society organizations from rights-based agendas to securitized agendas as seen in the CVE and stabilization work in the MENA region. CVE programming has significant financial implications for the rights of women and girls.[110] Donors increasingly direct their funding to civil society organizations that are conducting CVE programmes. The CVE policy in the MENA region has demanded a change in the day-to-day work of civil society groups in conflict-affected contexts, pulling them away from work on women's and girls' rights. Civil society organizations are thus tempted to re-label their peacebuilding activities in terms of CVE. This leads to issues, capabilities and advocacy work being framed in terms of the objectives of funders, in line with those of policy makers. What is more, the tendency to focus on short-term security objectives rather than long-term peacebuilding efforts decreases the funding opportunities for organizations working in low-level long-term conflicts.

Local organizations reported experiencing powerlessness and stated they were not consulted when it came to setting the agenda despite their intimate knowledge on the ground.

My research on Yazidis and sexual violence in conflict in Iraq also drove similar conclusions. During my fieldwork, the director of one of the women's rights organizations pointed to the prevalence of short-term securitized international responses that do not consider long-term impacts. She emphasised that the focus is on eliminating ISIS without addressing the root causes; therefore ISIS or some variant of it will come back. As a result, international actors and funders channel significant amounts of money for specific projects in a short period and then withdraw, creating obvious challenges for building sustainable grassroots activism.[111]

Resilience policy: shifting responsibility to women

Resilience interventions consider vulnerabilities mainly as embedded in societal practices, and aim to reduce vulnerabilities through empowering individuals and communities.[112] Their emphasis on human capacities, the ability of individuals and communities to cope with challenges and even come out of it stronger, sound intuitively appropriate. This kind of bottom-up approach, combined with the idea of responding to a long-term need for resilience, also fits with the aim of generating sustainable and peaceful societies. As such, few would fault its underlying aspirations.[113]

The assumptions implicit in the resilience policy framing, however, mean that this approach is not well-suited to respond to all types of humanitarian or development issues.

First, resilience policies make communities the site of solution for problems that are not necessarily created at community level. This is clearly seen in Iraq and Syria today. Existing resilience policies in response to displacement in these contexts, despite their effort to include women and a gender perspective in their programmes, remain limited in their potential to address gendered impacts of displacement. For instance, the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) 2016-2017 for Iraq and Syria states that 'The Resilience component of the 3RP, led by UNDP, is aimed at addressing the longer-term self-reliance of individuals and communities'. The plan emphasises cultural norms in resilience strategies but overlooks the specific rules, regulations, laws and practices within the societal, economic and political context that underlie, generate and exacerbate vulnerabilities in these countries. Yet, such an approach is necessary to understand the underlying economic, political and societal factors that render women and men vulnerable to the impact of displacement. This is necessary to identify appropriate responses to addressing the gendered impacts of displacement.

A resilience approach is essentially apolitical, which is the opposite of feminism. It rarely explores or addresses the political crisis which could be driving fragility and completely fails to use a political economy lens. Putting the responsibility on women and communities to be resilient to what is happening to their lives and adapt to the situation perpetuates the colonialist interventionist mentality and overlooks underlying causes. It shifts the responsibility from those who caused the conflict and instability (both national and international actors), to communities, and this is unfair. The idea that through developing the resilience of individuals and communities, such as by economically empowering women, these cultural impediments can be overcome is unrealistic, because such a view overlooks the more crucial

Putting the responsibility on women and communities to be resilient to what is happening to their lives and adapt to the situation perpetuates the colonialist interventionist mentality and overlooks underlying causes.

barriers that create gendered vulnerabilities for women in the first place. These barriers and challenges derive from institutional, procedural and legal practices implemented by national and international authorities in Iraq and Syria, in refugee-receiving countries. The authoritarian nature of these regimes also do not allow for civil activism, public debate and societal pressure on the governments to initiate institutional change. These regimes have benefited from the perpetuation of the existing structures and inequalities.

Resilience policy also overlooks the historical responsibilities of the international actors that render certain parts of the world poorer or insecure. The vulnerability of women in conflict-affected contexts in MENA is significantly caused by long-term economic deprivation, political instability, lack of government investment in infrastructure, conflict and war.

CONCLUSION

A feminist approach to peace and security has the potential to deliver genuine conflict transformation in MENA, placing the emphasis on securing positive peace and eliminating long-term structural drivers of conflict and drawing attention to the need to eliminate intersecting factors that render particular groups especially vulnerable and disempowered.

However, existing discourses and frameworks that seek to draw on feminist approaches primarily do so through the WPS agenda. The current framing of WPS embodies a number of limitations which greatly inhibit its transformative potential, place the focus on short-term securitization at the expense of long-term inequalities, reduce the agency of women, and reinforce masculine frameworks in many instances. What is more, this approach to WPS is often imposed on local communities in the MENA region through external donor–local actor relations that sit within a wider long-term context of global inequalities and western self-interest.

For the current failures to be tackled and the potential of feminist approaches to be fully realized, a number of measures need to be addressed, all of which are highlighted by applying a feminist lens to conflict in the region. The intersection of identities must be acknowledged, and the reinforcing effect of multiple factors needs to be acknowledged and tackled. The WPS agenda must be seen as a rights-based and long-term process that seeks to fight underlying structural drivers of conflict rather than reducing it to a securitizing framework. Women and girls should have their agency restored, and genuine empowerment should be pursued. International donors and actors should have long-sighted and sustainable solutions. Donors, INGOs and states should focus on supporting locally driven and inclusive solutions. A bigger role falls to INGOs in challenging the donor framework, in building new processes and creating new spaces. The current WPS framework limits the ability to influence and carry out advocacy in this regard. Therefore, Oxfam could put more effort into challenging the current donor framework.

Indeed, there is a minority of isolated but notable examples that are challenging the dominant limiting approach to WPS in the region and seeking to shift the focus from militarized security to a more comprehensive conception of security that involves socio-economic rights, everyday liberties, access to

A feminist approach to peace and security has the potential to deliver genuine conflict transformation in MENA.

basic services and enjoyment of rights. In Palestine, women's meaningful participation is increasing due to the work of civil society organizations that help build capacity and raise awareness of women's rights. In Libya, women-led organizations share experiences of other women in conflict. In Yemen, women have been calling for establishing a Joint Investigation Commission to ensure accountability and facilitate bringing justice to victims. International organizations and donors should seek to support this work rather than undermining it with the imposition of their own agendas, which ultimately have the consequence of inhibiting a feminist peace, even though they may well be striving to achieve this.

The transnational and complex nature of international relations today provides more opportunities for creative strategies that link different feminisms and that facilitate the co-existence of different conceptions of empowerment and different forms of cooperation. Seeing the world in this way offers more possibilities for those who seek transformative change towards meaningful inclusion and positive peace. The entry points for initiating and supporting change have multiplied in this more complex and transnational world. Long-term historical inequalities that are result of previous structures of dominance continue to shape contemporary relations; they have not disappeared. But they manifest themselves in multifaceted and less obvious ways, although they are also less robust. This means that feminist peace activists can think in creative ways to infiltrate through the cracks and transform the existing structures. Encouragingly, gender is now an official component of international normative and political frameworks, and increasingly more states are adopting the WPS agenda. The WPS agenda has several limitations, as discussed in this paper. But rather than rejecting the agenda completely, the agenda could be re-defined and its assumptions could be challenged by drawing attention to its negative impacts on the ground and by highlighting local demands for feminist peace.

This work should put more effort into building more grounded processes through amplifying and enhancing voices from the ground. The process should be inclusive and reflect the diversity of experiences. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's work in this regard is notable.[114] Another example is the challenge posed by the joint work of the LSE Centre for Women Peace and Security and GAPS to the UK government's inclusion of CVE in its WPS programming. Even though CVE remains a part of UK's WPS agenda, UK government officials at least verbally highlighted their increased awareness of the contradictions of this programme and committed to attempt a more nuanced and careful approach in their work in the MENA region. The hope for transforming the WPS agenda to its feminist roots should be maintained, and more feminist agendas should be adopted by women's rights activists and organizations.

FEMINIST PEACE AND SECURITY IN PACIFIC ISLANDS

Sharon Bhagwan Rolls and Alisia Evans

Goroka, Papua New Guinea: Bilum bags being sewn by (L-R) Janeth Timothy.Elly Thomas and Erina Eric, during a visit by Oxfam to film skits for the 2018 Comedy Gala. Patrick Moran/OxfamAUS

OVERVIEW

Pacific island nations are scattered across 30 million square kilometres of ocean – or one third of the earth's surface – while their combined landmass is less than 2% of this total.[115] The remote and often archipelagic geography of Pacific nations presents unique challenges, particularly in the face of climate change and natural disasters.[116] However, like other regions in the world, the Pacific is also dealing with a difficult and diverse set of law enforcement, governance and security challenges.[117] Successive regional security treaties adopted by Pacific Island Forum Leaders have reiterated the need for security and stability.[118] Pacific leaders have also made several commitments to advancing gender equality.

Pacific feminist peacebuilding has its roots in the 1960s and 1970s.[119] Since the nuclear free and independent Pacific campaign in the 1980s, women have led collaborative advocacy campaigns on peace and security, including responses to armed conflict, political crises and gun violence in Bougainville, Fiji, and Solomon Islands in the late 1980s to early 2000s, and pro-democracy riots in Tonga in 2006.[120]

Since the nuclear free and independent Pacific campaign in the 1980s, women have led collaborative advocacy campaigns on peace and security.

At the time of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in 1995, much focus was given to women's role in moving from armed conflict towards achieving peace and security.[121] The women, peace and security (WPS) agenda has since expanded, particularly following the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 which placed women's participation as central to conflict prevention and resolution efforts. Now, in 2020, is an opportune time to look back at the nature of women's activism in the Pacific:[122] to acknowledge and delve deeper into what local women activists have continually said of the reality of being activists in a geographically diverse region, and the barriers to their ability to participate in political institutions and implement national and regional WPS mechanisms. Localising WPS commitments in the Pacific context has seen peace activists working with indigenous and faith leaders not only out of respect to traditional structures, but also out of necessity. In a region where poor transportation and communication infrastructure is a daily reality, local women actors are mobilising in innovative and creative ways, particularly in conflict prevention, recovery and humanitarian response efforts. Yet despite such demonstrated ability to participate in the peace and security field, regional mechanisms in the Pacific have not adapted to incorporate women's leadership and skills.[123] An assessment of security sector governance policies and mechanisms shows there is a clear need to redefine processes of engagement that do not simply rely on inviting women 'to the table' but instead take bold steps at the regional and national levels to invest in peace and security.[124]

This paper uses a feminist analysis of regional WPS mechanisms to draw greater attention to Pacific feminist peacebuilders' efforts to localize regional peace and security policies across the region through gender-transformative peacebuilding practices.[125] The paper first looks at women's agency and capacity to participate and engage in political institutions across the Pacific.[126] It then shows how Pacific peacebuilding networks are working through traditional and customary systems, as well as engaging with faith leaders, to prevent the resurgence of armed conflict. The paper moves on to describe how women human rights defenders use peacebuilding approaches in addressing gun control issues and contributing towards ending the proliferation of small arms in the Pacific. Finally, the paper highlights how feminist approaches to addressing climate change and women's role in relief and recovery can bridge the existing gap in women's leadership roles within mechanisms focused on responding to climate change.

Overall, this paper argues that greater recognition and support is needed of the efforts and role of community-based women's movements. By looking at the rich and complex 'herstory' of women's activism in the Pacific can we find important clues to addressing the challenges women peace activists continue to face in localizing regional and national WPS mechanisms. Moving beyond simply commemorating the twentieth anniversary of UNSCR 1325, there is an opportunity for states and inter-governmental systems to consider a multi-actor consultative framework that enables women peacebuilders to participate in national and regional dialogues on the peace, development and humanitarian nexus, address the root causes of conflict, and bring about long-term conflict prevention and social transformation so that all women and girls can claim their right to peaceful societies.[127]

An assessment of security sector governance policies and mechanisms shows there is a clear need to redefine processes of engagement that do not simply rely on inviting women 'to the table' but instead take bold steps at the regional and national levels to invest in peace and security.

INTRODUCTION

'As a woman human rights defender, I am trying to protect another woman. It is very challenging, it is very risky: it is costly too.' Lilly Kolts Be'Soer, Papua New Guinea.

Lilly Kolts Be'Soer is a women's rights defender and advocate for the political, economic and social empowerment of women in her native Papua New Guinea (PNG). She hails from Jiwaka Province in the highlands of PNG, and is the founder and director of Voice for Change, a provincial NGO based and working in Jiwaka. Voice for Change focuses on ending violence against women and girls, and building alliances with communities and the provincial government to advocate for safer communities and an end to all forms of violence. Be'Soer has assisted in facilitating mediation among the parties in tribal conflicts and wars. In January 2012, she coordinated a peace reconciliation process to resettle about 500 internally displaced families and helped set up a committee to address sorcery-related violence. Be'Soer is part of the regional network of women's human rights defenders and the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women. She is also a member of the UN Women Asia Pacific Civil Society Advisory Group; a member of the Jiwaka Provincial Committee on Budgeting and Planning; Chair of the Family Violence Support Group in South Whagi District of Jiwaka Province; and received the 2010 Pacific Human Rights Defenders Award.[128]

The personal is political for Be'Soer: 'We experience all these inequalities [and] discrimination, and these experiences mean we have to make the change ourselves. We need to bring solidarity, build the network to collectively work together to make the change ourselves. We need to get into positions of decision making.'

Be'Soer has experienced the cost of armed conflict, including being displaced. She has faced threats while looking down the barrel of a gun. But she has also leveraged her traditional role, as the daughter of a chief, and her access to education, to persist in her work to bring an end to violence, including gun violence: 'I was given the space to engage in conflict resolution and peace mediation. But what realized is that we are not addressing the issues of arms.'

Gun ownership is almost normalized and is a symbol of security: 'We are talking about peace resolution, reconciliation, we are bringing people to peace, resettling them, organising compensation, but we are not talking about the arms [guns].'

At the local level she works with the provincial police commander to enhance gun control and the confiscation of illegal arms not only to enhance peacebuilding in local communities, but also to improve gender equality and women's rights:

'Women are threatened when they are looking for food, they cannot access healthcare or the market. It has taken us a long time, but we have been able to successfully resolve three cases [of such gender based violence].'

A feminist peace is inter-generational

'We produce the next generation of our tribe and families' says Be'Soer.
'We are also working with the young women to try and make them realize
the important role women play in our families and in our communities.'

A key message of the #IMatter campaign is exactly that – women are
important. The campaign coordinated by Oxfam aims to build and strengthen
an intersectional movement that works with women and girls in crisis and post
crisis contexts, recognizing the universality of the struggle's women experience.

But the challenge is that younger women need a lot of convincing if change
is to happen: 'The young women are holding guns and knives. They are the
children we bore. We need a strategy to bring them in. Even with awareness
programmes, women were threatened by their own children and young men.
We have a difficult society. We need to consider a new strategy.'

Tackling power

It is important to understand the different structures that influence the status
of women, from traditional leaders, the police and security forces, as well as
local-level government. Engaging with the national government remains a
challenge, not just because of the distance between Jiwaka and the national
capital of Port Moresby: 'We do not have a voice in there. It is male dominated.'

When power is determined by access to and ownership of natural resources,
including land, men hold this power: 'All the resources are owned by our families
and our brothers.'

But Be'Soer believes this power can be transformed to bring about a voice
for women in their families and communities, as well as at local and national
government levels. Working in solidarity with campaigns such as #IMatter, she
strives to bring women together to collectively enable access to power and
decision making, to economic resources, and to be able to live in communities
without the risk of violence: 'We have to get ourselves into those positions.
To take ourselves in and make decisions for women. We have to work together.'

PARTICIPATION

'The situation of rural women also requires particular attention in the Pacific
as they are especially vulnerable given their lack of access to basic services.
We need to acknowledge women's vulnerability, enhance their access to
education, health, and economic opportunities, and realize their participation
as decision makers in peacebuilding processes in post-conflict situations.
In short, rural women must benefit from gender-equality initiatives and be
specifically considered in all planning and budgeting processes.' Lisa Horiwapu,
Vois Blong Mere, Solomon Islands.[129]

The Pacific region has witnessed and continues to be affected by armed
conflict, civil unrest, tribal fighting, and local-level conflicts over resources,
increasing violent crime, and political crises.[130] It is in this dynamic context that

Pacific women are 'uniting in new and creative ways' in a 'gathering of force' that can transform the fabric of Pacific societies.[131] Since the nuclear free and independent Pacific campaign in the 1980s, women have led collaborative advocacy campaigns on peace and security, including responses to armed conflict, political crises and gun violence in Bougainville, Fiji, and Solomon Islands in the late 1980s to early 2000s, and pro-democracy riots in Tonga.[132] Yet despite these efforts to engage in peace and security, women's participation in formal conflict prevention, management and post-conflict recovery efforts remains a challenge. This is symptomatic of a broader problem in the region related to women's absence from political decision making at all levels of society and continued high levels of sexual and gender-based violence.[133]

Noraida Abo, Peace advocate, who heads the women's rights organization United Youth of the Philippines-Women (UnYPhil-Women) based in Cotabato, urges 'Moro women to continue the struggle for genuine and lasting peace in the Bangsamoro homeland.' Photo: Vina Salazar/Oxfam

Women's participation in political fora has brought a level of dialogue that contribute to the culture of non-violence but are often unrecognized in formal post-conflict peace processes.[134] In Fiji, women's NGOs collaborating with the Ministry of Women's Affairs met with the Fiji government's National Security and Defence Review Committee as part of its review process in 2003. The NGOs raised critical issues around the way in which the review process was being conducted, who was being consulted, and which issues were being identified

as security threats. Women provided recommendations on how international standards and norms, including UNSCR 1325, could be incorporated. As a result, two submissions were made to the Committee, including recommendations for the permanent appointment of the Minister of Women's Affairs on the National Security Council, and representation of women on provincial and district-level security committees. The representation of the Minister for Women in the National Security Council was formally adopted in 2007.[135]

In Bougainville and Solomon Islands, women leaders from the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency (LNWDA), mothers from the Bougainville Women's Movement, and the Women's Human Rights Defenders Network met and organized together, led mediation, walked into jungles, held negotiations across crocodile-infested rivers, brokered peace with armed combatants, and ultimately brought an end to the 10-year armed conflict and restored peace to the islands.[136] It was these Pacific women leaders who informed the adoption of UNSCR 1325.

The adoption of the Regional Action Plan on Women Peace and Security by Pacific Island Leaders (2012-2015) was a legacy of women's peace activism and focused on women's contributions to peacebuilding and security sector reform.[137] Yet the action plan has been criticised for failing to demonstrate how Pacific island women can legitimately enter debate on regional security within the 'architecture of entitlements' that is deeply rooted in Pacific island politics.[138] Pacific island legislatures have some of the world's lowest numbers of female elected representatives, at only 8.6% of all representatives as of January 2020.[139]

Women's media networks in the Pacific, like femLINKpacific, have tracked the continual under-representation of women in politics since the early 2000s, providing evidence of the consistent challenges faced by women entering the political arena. During the first Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) elections, five years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325, there was a need for greater political education to ensure more women in parliament. According to Agnes Titus, who contested the women's seat in the Northern Region:

'I wish that women had understood that they could have contested the constituency seats because I feel that is where more women could have entered politics. But maybe they did not understand that fully. While I am happy that we have three guaranteed seats for women at [the] regional level I realize now that those [of us] organizations who advocate for the advancement of women, we still have a lot more work to do now to get the information out, get the women to understand that 'yes' you can contest the local constituency seat. They are not made for men only.'[140]

Campaigning for political seats in Pacific parliaments is not easy.[141] In their campaigns for regional seats, women candidates in the ABG elections had to traverse wide rivers and terrible road conditions just on the mainland alone. To be successful, women candidates must fundraise to reach local communities on atolls or outlying islands hundreds of kilometres away. Very few can afford the airline service or long trips via outboard motorboats. Ruby Mirinka came second to the Central Regional candidate Magdalene Toroansi in the elections. Toroansi attributed her success to the areas she had visited personally while overcoming Bougainville's poor and outdated transport system:

To be successful, women candidates must fundraise to reach local communities on atolls or outlying islands hundreds of kilometres away.

'So, I learned a lesson that in the future I must have good plans, for networking and committees, coordination, assessing and reporting. Not having that made it hard to reach out.'

Pacific women like Ruby Mirinka and Agnes Titus still struggle to be heard at the negotiating table in leadership roles and are not given sufficient recognition and resources to do their work.[142] This is despite the Pacific Island Forum Leaders' endorsement and adoption of the Gender Equality Declaration in 2012, Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012–2015) and, more recently, the endorsement of the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights (2018–2030) by the Pacific Ministers for Women in 2017. Their experiences highlight that it is essential to ensure women's activism from the local to global levels is resourced, including improving women's political agency to contribute to governance structures. There is also need to ensure that representation is more than just one woman. Mirinka was the sole female member of the Bougainville Referendum Commission. The referendum, which came 18 years after the 2001 peace agreement which ended the decade-long civil war was signed, remains subject to ratification by the national government. This will require Bougainville activists and women leaders to remain engaged in both provincial and national peacebuilding politics. According to long-time activist Helen Hakena, increasing women's participation in Bougainville politics is the main goal following the autonomous PNG region's resounding vote for independence.[143]

This is the essence of UNSCR 1325. However, the Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325[144] identified that while resources have gone into formulating state-centric national action plans and increasing women in parliament and the military, women's needs at the local level have largely gone unmet. A number of obstacles remain that limit the action plan's effective implementation, preventing human security from being a reality for women of all diversities and their communities. They include:

- A focus on action planning rather than actual action and implementation;

- Endurance of a militarized concept of security;

- An emphasis on reaction rather than conflict prevention;

- A lack of resources to support women's participation in enhancing prevention strategies or in advancing a human security agenda.[145]

At the regional level it is also worth considering how the Track II diplomacy facilitated by the Political Division of the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, between 2006–2011 resulted in collective action for the adoption of the Human Security and Conflict Prevention Frameworks as well as the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012–2015).[146] Between 2006 and 2011, the Forum Secretariat responded to Pacific island countries' request to broaden the concept of security in regional policy making, to include: the importance of women's role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding; enhancing the oversight and accountability of security institutions; and recognizing that sexual and gender-based violence is a security threat in the region. The adoption of a human security framework was linked to research on the drivers of conflict, including migration from rural to urban areas and poorly planned urbanization, inter-group tensions, and the mobilization of grievances

There is also need to ensure that representation is more than just one woman.

and (mis)perceptions.[147] In December 2010, as part of the tenth anniversary commemorations of UNSCR 1325, a Pacific Regional Working Group on WPS was established with members from the Pacific Island Forum, Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP and UN agencies, and civil society. In June 2011, the Forum Regional Security Committee gave the group the task of developing a regional action plan on WPS. This was subsequently supported by Pacific Women's Ministers in August 2011.

This commitment to collaboration and inclusivity is also clearly stated in the Pacific Islands Forum's Principles of Security Sector Governance, which emphasizes its mechanisms should be 'inclusive through gender equality, participation of youth, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups, and consideration of traditional culture and governance structures'.[148] This reflected the recognition that civil society, including women's rights organizations, must be empowered to proactively engage with military and state officials to open a pathway to free elections and a return to democratic rule in post-conflict settings.[149] However, since the institutional reform within the Pacific Islands Forum, civil society no longer has a clear channel to engage with Forum Regional Security Officials. This further marginalizes women.

Despite these gaps in resourcing and implementing regional mechanisms on women's participation in security sector reform, women's organizations continue to transform and localize UNSCR 1325 into practical strategies, drawing on documented qualitative and quantitative evidence and the lived experiences of women leaders.

Since the institutional reform within the Pacific Islands Forum, civil society no longer has a clear channel to engage with Forum Regional Security Officials. This further marginalizes women.

East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea: Molie Pasalau (C), a cluster leader and a member of her local WASH committee, particiaptes in a WASH meeting in East Sepik Province. Photo: Patrick Moran/OxfamAUS

Women's participation in political processes provides the key to building and sustaining peace. Security sector governance policies need to redefine processes of engagement that do not simply rely on inviting women 'to the table' but instead take bold steps at the regional and national levels to invest in peace, such as creating a new inclusive space that integrates faith and indigenous practice into local, national and regional development processes and frameworks.[150] Additionally, inter-group conflict, while having many triggers and underlying causes, is intimately connected with inequitable gender relations, structures and agency. The ability to bring about change and see peace normalized not only requires women agency but some shift in the 'male-dominated structures which often inhibit their collective action'.[151] Further, women's potential for collective solidarity to redress men's power must confront the divisions 'created by kinship, generation, language, religion, ethnicity and class'.[152]

Peacebuilding in the Pacific region requires balancing traditional and customary practice with modern governance, including accountability to the culture of human rights, by engaging with indigenous leaders and church leaders as well as creating a sustainable space for peace education, peacebuilding dialogue and mediation that challenge and transform patriarchal practices to enable women and youth of all diversities to access decision-making spaces. It should be noted that throughout the Pacific there is a strong tradition of Christian leaders speaking out against violence and well as providing contextual theological guidance, such as to support government directives and medical advice on Covid-19. Furthermore, theological engagement and resourcing is being used to address more taboo impacts, such as the exclusion and stigmatization of vulnerable groups and family violence, which has increased globally during the pandemic restrictions.[153]

Pacific members of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) have identified the need for distinct strategies to enhance engagement with men and boys as allies and counter deeply entrenched stereotypes of men solely as perpetrators of violence. There is a need to raise awareness that only by working with both men and women can we contribute to women's meaningful participation in prevention and protection from all forms of violence, and their subsequent access to justice resources. These processes require addressing notions of masculinity and tradition that perpetuate harmful gender norms acting as barriers to achieving our collective goal. Therefore, by mainstreaming gender into conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes, GPPAC aims to eliminate the root causes which allow unequal power relations to persist and instead provide transformative solutions. As introduced in GPPAC's gender policy document, GPPAC Pacific members aim to adopt a gender transformative approach to change the attitudes, behaviours, and norms that lie at the very core of unequal power relations and gender inequality.

Dedicated resources must be allocated to national and local women's rights actors, to strengthen agency, amplify voice, and build on collaborative opportunities (including women-led coalitions and feminist practices) to enable a shift from funding crisis-reaction measures to gender-responsive peacebuilding and preventative action. This can enable women's leadership across the peace cycle, from immediate response and assessment through to recovery measures. There must also be sustained resourcing of inclusive and innovative peacebuilding practice and leadership, including wider civil society and social movements such as traditional systems and faith communities.[154]

Dedicated resources must be allocated to national and local women's rights actors, to strengthen agency, amplify voice, and build on collaborative opportunities.

PREVENTING THE RESURGENCE OF ARMED CONFLICT

'If post-conflict reconstruction is carried out without looking for the root causes of conflict, recovery will only be superficial. Reconciliation is important to heal spiritual and psychological wounds, prevent hatred, distrust, and warmongering, and to encourage forgiveness and unity.' Josephine Tankunai Sirivi, Bougainville.

The Pacific region has witnessed varying levels of instability, from armed conflict, civil unrest, tribal fighting and local-level conflicts over resources, to increasing violent crime and political crises. Peace is still fragile in numerous Melanesian countries, including Solomon Islands, and among the tribes in the highlands of PNG as well as Bougainville. While globally, feminist peace politics and women activists have been advocating for a more comprehensive vision of security – or human security – for well over a hundred years,[155] the increased militarization of Pacific states perpetuates a narrow understanding of national security and is a growing threat to peace and security in the region.[156]

In these fragile contexts, women have been security providers rather than victims.[157] During the Bougainville crises in the late 1980s to early 2000s, using their traditional role as peacemakers women like Helen Hakena, then coordinator of the Catholic Women in Buka, organized an Air Niugini plane to fly to Buka to take a group of women to attend the Catholic Women's Federation Conference in Port Moresby. This was at a time when no planes were flying to the province. On 8 September 1994, Hakena boarded the plane with 105 other women, including Monica Samu, Sister Lorraine Garasu, Celine Kiroha and other executive members of the Catholic women's network. As a result, a delegation of women were present at the conference and also sought an audience with the PNG Prime Minister, to petition him on the need to maintain a PNG Defence Force presence on the island, as even though this was a form of occupation, at the same time it was also providing protection for many of the citizens.

As Rhonda Siro, an independent candidate for the women's seat in the Northern Bougainville Region ABG elections in 2005, explained, 'We have those [traditional] lines, the clans behind us and when we talk, we've got power to talk and whatever we say, the boys, the husbands they do whatever we say. So, to bring peace and reconciliation back the woman has to stand and talk. And that's when those big reconciliations have taken place, because of us the women.' Agnes Titus agreed: '… here in Bougainville, you tie the land to the woman and many times conflicts arise over land, but who is the land, it is the woman who is part of the land.' While Bougainville is an example of how matrilineal societies can provide more opportunities for women to have a voice, this is in stark contrast to the predominantly patriarchal social constructs in other parts of PNG.[158]

More recently, GPPAC Pacific members use 'multidimensional definitions of security' to prevent the resurgence of armed conflict. They do this by working through traditional and customary systems and engaging with faith leaders. Network members also use peacebuilding tools including cross-gender dialogue to enhance engagement with men and boys as allies, and to counter deeply entrenched stereotypes of men as solely perpetrators of violence. In Fiji, where cultural militarism is still evident in contemporary society, organizations like Transcend Oceania advocate for gender, masculinity and non-violence through engaging men and boys as partners in the prevention of violence

In these fragile contexts, women have been security providers rather than victims.

against women.[159] By employing cross-gender dialogue, men are trained on peace education and understanding conflicts, power and violence 'to work hand-in-hand with men to prevent violence against women and girls', according to Adivasu Levu, Executive Director of Transcend Oceania.[160]

The Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) focuses on three core pillars of work: self-determination in West Papua, New Caledonia and Solomon Islands, ecumenism, and stewardship. Through its national council of churches, PCC works with indigenous and faith leaders to confront real, growing and interconnected issues affecting indigenous communities, including environmental degradation, weak political governance systems and high levels of social injustice. Its Reweaving the Ecological Mat project will engage multiple stakeholders from churches, civil society, academia, communities and governments to address the ecological crisis from a theological, biblical and indigenous perspective, and will lay the foundation for an ecological framework for development that will complement existing regional development frameworks.

East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea: Molie Pasalau (C), a cluster leader and a member of her local WASH committee, particiaptes in a WASH meeting in East Sepik Province. Photo: OxfamAUS

Women have also been vital in sustaining peace efforts in Bougainville. Following the conflict, women leaders like Agnes Titus and Sister Lorraine Garasu created the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation (NCfR), which in turn established four safe houses and two men's hubs that provide trauma healing and mediation support to heal the psychological wounds. NCfR also established a network of women's human rights defenders, male advocates, and a school-based peer education programme dealing with out-of-school youth. In October 2018, NCfR hosted a week-long forum in local villages, catalysed by the network. These women's human rights defenders were able to invite and initiate face-to-face dialogue with key ministerial representatives, including the President and Vice-President of the Autonomous Government of Bougainville.

In December 2010, a long-anticipated, but non-binding referendum in the autonomous PNG region saw a resounding 97.7% vote for independence. Helen Hakena, of the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, revealed that as part of the campaign for women's rights in Bougainville, priorities following the referendum include economic security for women, and increasing safety and security from gender-based violence.[161]

In order to make progress in these areas, women needed to be included in political decision making in Bougainville, Hakena outlined. The 2020 Autonomous Bougainville Government elections provided an opportunity to achieve this: 'Women should be participating fully in the political processes that are happening now. So, our priority at this time is to field more women, to put more women in the constituencies available here and not to race for the three regional seats. So that is the priority for us.'[162]

The result of the non-binding referendum and the vote for independence now need to be negotiated between leaders from Bougainville and PNG, with the final say resting with lawmakers in the PNG Parliament. Agnes Titus stated that, while the process of becoming a separate nation could take years to achieve, a key message is the need to sustain and uphold the peace.[163]

Since the end of the 10-year armed conflict, more 30 years ago, women who walked into the jungles and brokered peace with armed combatants, in whose names peace was brokered, weapons collected, and political agreements adopted, have been sustaining peace, providing recommendations for a sustainable approach to development: a shift from gender-based violence to gender justice. While the Autonomous Bougainville Government has adopted a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, the process of political transition, including political negotiations, needs to be more accountable to the WPS agenda, including ensuring the protection of women's rights. This requires investment in a gender-inclusive engagement roadmap on Bougainville's political transition that is accountable to women's participation, protection and human security.

Ultimately, prevention requires both a short-term approach which includes monitoring women's participation and gender-based violence as part of early warning measures, as well as longer-term structural approaches to address the root causes of conflict, including inequality, and address new sources of conflict, including the impacts of climate change and natural resources.[164] The efforts by Pacific peacebuilding networks aim to build alliances with traditional and faith leaders to achieve a collective goal, and demonstrate how local actors can mainstream women's rights into conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes.

In order to make progress in these areas, women needed to be included in political decision making.

Prevention requires a new multi-actor consultative framework for regional peace and security that supports community representatives who can localize and operationalize women's participation in peacebuilding and prevention including: implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty's provision on gender-based violence; prioritizing the consultation and participation of women in the implementation, monitoring and accountability of the SDGs; adopting gender-responsive budgeting practices as a strategy to address, highlight and mitigate militarized state budgets and their destabilizing impact on international peace and security and women's rights; including women's participation and gender-responsive indicators in all early-warning processes, conflict prevention and early-response efforts; working in partnership with affected women and girls when designing, implementing and monitoring climate change and natural resource-related strategies; and providing financial, technical and political support, to strengthen the capacity of women's civil society to organize and play a greater role in national and community-led violence prevention, dispute resolution and mediation initiatives, and wider preventive diplomacy work.[165]

PROTECTION OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

'Us women we don't need to be taught to protect anyone. It's instinct – we are born with it. So, we take into consideration everyone, not just our family but also our community and society as a whole.' Vanessa Heleta, Talitha Project, Tonga.

According to Nario-Galace,[166] the proliferation of weapons is often overlooked as an enabling and sustaining factor in armed violence and conflict. Weapons play a central role in putting women's security at risk in particular, and in tearing down peace and promoting insecurity in general.

The UN Secretary General's 2019 report on Women, Peace and Security, is a key reminder that despite the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 and of 10 security council resolutions dedicated to the WPS agenda, there are record levels of political violence targeting women human rights defenders and peacebuilders.[167]

The Pacific is not immune to these issues. In the recent past, the region has witnessed and continues to be affected by armed conflict.[168] The Pacific region also has some of the highest rates of violence against women in the world – twice the global average, with an estimated two in every three Pacific women impacted by gender-based violence.[169]

In PNG, previous traditional sanctions under which fighting men should not have sex before battle, as well as other sexual prohibitions, may have prevented the widespread use of rape as a weapon of war. These prohibitions are apparently declining, with reportedly more incidents of women and girls being deliberately targeted.[170] In addition, mercenaries are allowed sexual access to girls and women since their presence is seen as necessary for protection or to win the conflict; however, research has shown mercenaries may have multiple partners, increasing the likelihood of sexually transmitted infections.[171]

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Pacific women are 'waging peace' to allow effective responses to the complex and multifaceted threats and challenges to human security, which require partnerships that support local women's considerable initiative and capacity. Women are not just passive victims of violence and inequality, but also provide security during conflict.[172]

In PNG, where the most consequential impacts of ethnic conflict are felt at the local level, women are instrumental in providing security to affected communities.[173] Women and girls displaced by conflict and living on other people's lands are at risk of being sexually abused. Displaced wives may not have their husbands or sons to help protect them or their daughters, and as refugees they have a low status.

Agnes Titus, Program Coordinator for the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation, shared: 'Addressing gender-based violence … contributes to achieving personal peace. Once personal peace is there, we can find family peace, community peace, and the overall regional peace.'

Lilly Kolts Be'Soer has brought attention to the situation in her province through networks such as the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), and the Centre for Arms Violence Reduction, engaging in arms control and gender issues including gender-mainstreaming policies, programmes, and actions against small arms trafficking and misuse.

Be'Soer is mindful that improving accountability to women's rights and WPS commitments requires her relying on the police, while monitoring conflict situations and identifying entry points for mediating and resolution: 'We always bring this to the attention of the police. There are always the police, the peace mediation team involved. I personally cannot do it because it is risky.'

Women's human rights defenders are putting their lives on the line daily to prevent violence as well as mediate in community-level conflicts. Pacific governments must therefore create and enforce normative and legislative frameworks, including in local governance and traditional mechanisms, to grant the safety and security of women's human rights defenders, including the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Additionally, all national peace and security strategies must protect women's human rights defenders and women's organizations by ensuring the safety and protection of diverse peacebuilders in public and online spaces, as well as enhancing the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence by strengthening legal frameworks as well as prevention measures particularly in crisis situations.[174]

On 2 April 2013, UN member states passed the Arms Trade Treaty. By the end of 2013, the US and more than 100 other states had signed this global treaty; of these, nine states had also ratified the instrument. However, in the Pacific island region, the PNG government is yet to ratify the treaty.[175]

But the priorities of the treaty are being localized by women's human rights defenders and for Voice for Change it is critical to track and influence the implementation of the Jiwaka Provincial Gender Based Violence and Strategy, which is based on the national government strategy. According to Be'Soer:

Women's human rights defenders are putting their lives on the line daily to prevent violence as well as mediate in community-level conflicts.

'I am working on a baseline survey across the whole of Jiwaka to show the presence of SALW in our community. We will document case studies and show what is happening when these get into the hands of young men and how they terrorise women and children. The report will inform our advocacy strategy.'

RELIEF AND RECOVERY

According to Adivasu Levu, the Executive Director of Transcend Oceania, the Pacific regional secretariat of GPPAC, a founding network of the Shifting the Power Coalition (StP Coalition): 'One thing to take into account is that – we are currently at a phase of global transitional change because of COVID-19. There are probably going to be some major changes as we're currently experiencing. We might return to normal and it may be a new normal. The question is, 'How can we ensure that women are part of the decision making of policies that depict the new (normal), and ensure inclusivity in the changes?' These are just my thoughts and may we pay close attentions to all discussions and meetings.'

Levu provides important guidance to the Secretariat and Programmes team of the StP Coalition. She reminds us that the Covid-19 pandemic adds another layer of challenges to the persistent inequalities that women in the Pacific continue to struggle against – where women in communities and villages are still waiting for government gender equality commitments to transform their lives with inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and agricultural programmes.

The Pacific island region is recognized as one of the most vulnerable to the consequences of the ongoing global climate crisis, including environmental disasters, intense variations in temperatures, and extreme storms. Successive Pacific Island Forum and Pacific Small Island Developing States country statements during open debates on UNSCR 1325 provided early warnings of the reality of climate change at the global level.

In addition, Pacific peacebuilding networks such as GPPAC Pacific advocated for the peace, human security, development and humanitarian nexus in the 2015 Global Study on UNSCR 1325, ensuring two significant words were included in UN Security Council Resolution 2242 which seeks to fast-track UNSCR 1325 implementation: 'climate change'. This resolution reminds UN member states of their responsibility to bring about a gender-inclusive shift from reaction to prevention, within the climate change agenda.

The Regional Action Plan on WPS (2012-2015) demonstrated how UNSCR 1325 could be used to protect women's human rights and provide women and girls with access to health, psychosocial and legal protection in times of humanitarian emergency. It had the foresight to recommend that humanitarian action must take into account pre-existing gender inequalities and discrimination faced by women, and ensure that these are not further magnified or exploited during humanitarian crises. However, George[176] is critical of the plan's 'relative silence on the growing regional challenge of gender and environmental insecurity'. This reflects the broader trend across the Pacific region of women's low levels of representation in decision making, and cultural norms that exclude women from public life. Indeed, despite increased attention to and investment in women's leadership in decision making across the region, women are still notably absent from visible leadership roles in mechanisms

The question is, 'How can we ensure that women are part of the decision making of policies that depict the new (normal), and ensure inclusivity in the changes?'

focused on responding to climate change and resulting disasters. Growing climate crisis insecurities at the local and national levels have seen current political strategies allude to military responses and the 'securitization' of the climate crisis. This is indicative of True and Hewitt's[177] assessment of relief and recovery being the most 'under-developed, under-researched and misinterpreted of the four WPS pillars', further stating that 'advocates and scholars often refer to prevention, protection and participation, leaving off R&R'.

When approaching the difficult issue of how best to respond to the climate crisis, ecologically just approaches to locally driven solutions must align and be accountable to the gender equality, just peace and human security agendas. The issue of environmental security calls for a gendered analysis.[178] Without women's adequate representation in discussions around relief and recovery, the default approach can be – and often is – techno-centric and ignores the realities for women, which include the changing burden of unpaid work, increased prevalence of gender-based violence, further loss of their reproductive health rights, food insecurity, and the institutionalized marginalization of women's voices and leadership. Diverse women's needs are marginalized through one-size-fits-all gender approaches that presume all women have the same experiences in disasters. Additionally, for young women and girls to be able to be actively engaged in determining prevention and recovery measures, requires a social, political and economic infrastructure that not only supports their access to education, but also ensures these are safe spaces. It also requires greater accountability by governments to prevent gender inequalities and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including harmful traditional practices.

Lessons learned from humanitarian responses to Tropical Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu in 2015 and Tropical Cyclone Winston in Fiji in 2016 reveal how the large influx of international and regional humanitarian actors duplicated relief and recovery efforts on the ground and even silenced the longer term development agenda within the response and recovery interventions, due in large part to little complementarity between the humanitarian response and longer-term development outcomes.[179] These outside actors often arrive with little understanding and knowledge of local contexts and can prove detrimental to local humanitarian efforts, even de-legitimising the agency, expertise and experience of local women leaders and first responders during crises. As Mary Jack, a woman leader from Vanuatu and Provincial Coordinator of ActionAid Vanuatu recalled: 'I still remember standing after two weeks when the flights were allowed to go back to Tanna. I stood there looking at all the humanitarian agencies coming in and going out. There was no space for women.'[180]

Recognising that 'coalitions are more likely to challenge gender norms directly or indirectly and promote transformational change', in 2016 the GPPAC Pacific network contributed to the establishment of the StP Coalition, forged by 13 diverse Pacific women and women's organizations from Fiji, PNG (including Bougainville), Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Australia, and the Pacific Disability Forum. As a unique, women-led mechanism, the feminist coalition draws on its members' capacity and collectively aims to enhance the capability for organizations to engage nationally and regionally in the humanitarian sector and climate change movement from a women's rights and feminist approach. As noted by Lanieta Tuimabu, representative of the Fiji Disabled People's Federation which is a member of the coalition, 'Women's rights simply mean to me: my right as a woman with a disability in accessing information,

The issue of environmental security calls for a gendered analysis.

communication, and accessibility to facilities, services ... I think gone are the days that we work in silo. Once we are working together, our issue becomes stronger.'

Since the formation of the StP Coalition, Pacific Forum Leaders have adopted the Boe Declaration (2018), which broadened the definition of security to include human security, humanitarian assistance, environmental security, and regional cooperation. The declaration reflects successive Pacific Forum statements during previous open debates on UNSCR 1325 that amplified the need to address the growing climate crisis. This expanded notion of peace and security is a welcome development, and an opportunity to enhance a peace, development and humanitarian nexus approach for the Boe Declaration Action Plan in line with the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012-2015). At the national level it means women peacebuilders can bring their specific knowledge and expertise on security provision and diverse women's needs. This is not about 'taking the power but balancing it', as Mary Jack put it, and giving rise to the democratization of security sector governance. Local women actors can also ensure that oversight is comprehensive and responsive to communities by supporting the development of conflict prevention measures, such as early warning and early response systems, within a human security and development framework.

> At the national level it means women peacebuilders can bring their specific knowledge and expertise on security provision and diverse women's needs.

In 2019, StP Coalition messages reached the UN Climate Change Summit as well as a panel convened by the Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund coinciding with the nineteenth anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325. Together the messages have been clear on participation, prevention and financing:

- Strengthen the capacity and accountability of the humanitarian sector to ensure the protection of women's rights in times of crisis in a meaningful way: with women's rights organizations involved as key stakeholders.

- The prevention of all forms of violence, and ensuring the protection of women's rights should be central to any humanitarian planning response. It must be integrated into early warning, response, recovery and resilience building.

- Ensure equitable allocation of resources towards the strengthening of women's networks and coalitions that support women leaders to take up leadership and coordination roles alongside other national actors in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

Through the StP Coalition, network members are building on each other's areas of expertise, including the adaptation of the inter-operable Women's Weather Watch information-communication system, as well as the application of peace education and dialogue to address the persistent underrepresentation of women in local government and governance structures and their lack of responsiveness to women's security needs.[181]

Such feminist approaches to addressing climate change provide opportunities for greater levels of participation and agency of women and girls in renegotiating peaceful societies not just in humanitarian crises, but as part of longer-term development strategies.[182]

The adoption of the Boe Declaration by Pacific Forum Leaders expands the concept of security with an increasing emphasis on human security, including humanitarian assistance and environmental and resource security. The realization of this agreement at national and local levels must put greater emphasis on the development and adoption of gender-inclusive early warning mechanisms and conflict prevention strategies by ensuring all planning and implementation measures meet the specific and diverse needs of women and girls, as well as ensure women's capacities to act as agents in relief and recovery are reinforced in humanitarian crises and conflict and post-conflict situations. The implementation of the Boe Declaration Action Plan requires a new multi-actor consultative framework for regional peace and security that structurally includes and supports civil society representatives who can prioritize, localize and operationalize women, youth and civil society peacebuilding, prevention and participation frameworks as equal partners.[183]

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