



20 YEARS OF GRASSROOTS WOMEN BUILDING PEACE

ACHIEVEMENTS, GOOD PRACTICES,
CHALLENGES AND THE DESIRED
WAY FORWARD



Please address all correspondence to:

The Executive Director

Women's International Peace Centre (The Peace Centre)
Plot 1, Martyrs Garden Road B, Ntinda
P. O. Box 4934, Kampala – Uganda

Tel: +256-414-543953

Email program@wipc.org

Web www.wipc.org

Editorial Team:

Diana Oroma, Project Officer

Mary Aemo, Field Officer

Christine Dranjowa, Field Officer

Evelyn Birungi, Communications Assistant

Sandra Tumwesigye, Advocacy and Communications Coordinator

Rapporteur: Sheila Magero

ISBN 978-9970-29-042-0

Copyright November 2020

© Women's International Peace Centre

All Rights Reserved

20 YEARS OF GRASSROOTS WOMEN BUILDING PEACE

ACHIEVEMENTS, GOOD PRACTICES,
CHALLENGES AND THE DESIRED
WAY FORWARD

13th-15th October 2020
Kampala, Uganda



TABLE OF CONTENTS

○	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Background	1
	Opening Remarks.....	2
	The Grassroots Women Peacebuilders.....	3
○	HEALING THROUGH RITUALS: WELLNESS SESSION.....	4
○	UNSCR 1325 AND UGANDA’S NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON UNSCR.....	7
	Recap of UNSCR 1325.....	7
○	REFLECTING ON IMPLEMENTATION OF UNSCR 1325.....	12
○	MEETING AND PRESENTING RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE AFRICAN UNION SPECIAL ENVOY ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY.....	22
	Presentation of Outcome Document to AU Special Envoy.....	23
	Response from the AU Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security.....	25
○	WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES OF MEDIATION AND PEACE BUILDING IN PRACT...27	
	Stories of mediation and peace building.....	27
	Advice, lessons learned and way forward.....	35
○	GENDER, PEACE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT.....	36
○	CLOSING REMARKS.....	37
○	APPENDICES.....	39
	Annex 1: Outcome Document of Recommendations Presented to the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security.....	39
	Annex 2: Gains, challenges at the continental level and recommend- tions.....	42
	Gains.....	42
	Challenges at the continental level.....	43
	Recommendations.....	43
	Annex 3: List of participants.....	44



Background

2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and is a significant year for driving progress and pushing for gains in implementing the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. 2020 is also the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which is significant for the WPS agenda with its prioritization of women and armed conflict as a critical area of concern for gender equality and women's empowerment. It is a critical year to reflect on progress, setbacks, challenges and opportunities to advance the women, peace and security agenda, and to leverage the anniversary to accelerate implementation of key commitments and WPS frameworks. The COVID-19 outbreak has had various political, social and economic effects, and a disproportionate impact on women and girls who have experienced increased diverse forms of gender-based violence. COVID-19 has also demonstrated the important roles of women, especially in communities, where they are first responders and have taken lead in championing prevention while continuing their usual peace building work.


20 Years of Grassroots Women's Peace Building and Resilience

Women's International Peace Centre brought together 45 women peace builders from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Uganda, living as refugees in Uganda, living in host communities and in districts affected by violent and cross-border conflict, to:

1. Reflect on the past 20 years of implementing the women, peace and security agenda focusing on progress, challenges, and opportunities to advance implementation moving forward, in a way that address the priorities of displaced women.
2. Exchange practical experiences, good practices and strategies to support the work of women mediator networks of Adjumani, Yumbe and Kotido
3. Document the voices and impact stories of women, including young women, who are taking leadership in advancing the women peace and security agenda and contributed to COVID-19 response
4. Equip women peace builders for their wellness and with tools to centre their wellbeing as they sustain their peace activism

This was organised within the context of a series of commemorative activities by the Office of the African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, in partnership with the AU Directorate on Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD), the Gender, Peace and Security Programme (GPSP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). The convening was made possible by the support of FOKUS, UN Women and Cordaid.

OPENING REMARKS

A woman with short black hair, wearing a black and white striped shirt and a heart-shaped necklace, is speaking into a black microphone. She is seated at a table with a laptop in front of her. The laptop lid features a colorful logo with a stylized orange figure and the text 'Grassroots Women Building Peace'.

Ms. Juliet Were, Deputy Executive Director at the peace centre welcomes the women peacebuilders into the learning space

Juliet Were, the Deputy Executive Director of Women's International Peace Centre, opened with a keynote address that traced the women, peace and security agenda from the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 to date. She highlighted the value of the Beijing conference, which galvanized women to organize themselves and speak up about their issues at the community and national level including the persisting challenge of armed conflict in Africa.

Ms. Were reflected on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (31 October 2000) and its four pillars of Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery. She noted that this landmark resolution had created the space for civil society to highlight the issues impacting women and girls in armed conflict for example by documenting the realities of women in situations of conflict. Ms. Were stressed that it also links gender equality and the maintenance of international peace and security, recognizing women's participation as key to resolving conflict and securing peace. Bringing it home to Africa, she shared the seven aspirations of the African Union's Agenda 2063 a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the continent within 50 years. Ms Were described the path defined for a peaceful and secure Africa, with all guns falling silent by 2020.

She wrapped up by noting that 2020 is a significant year for the women and the peace agenda with 25 years of the Beijing Platform for Action, 20 years of adoption of UNSCR 1325, and the year that marks the African Union's campaign on Silencing the Guns by 2020. "These are signposts that present an opportunity for women working on issues of peace and security to reflect on the gains achieved thus far as well as the challenges that remain to be overcome" Ms. Were said of these key moments.

Ms. Juliet Were concluded her remarks by thanking the women peace builders for their work towards peacebuilding and their continued commitment even when the context in which they work is difficult.

The Grassroots Women Peace Builders



Healing Through Rituals;

Sustaining Wellbeing during COVID-19

The Women's International Peace Centre recognizes that the world is undergoing unprecedented disruption due to the Covid-19 pandemic and that it is important that its women activists remain alert to their wellbeing and that of their organizations during this period.

Hope Chigudu, a gender equality activist and organizational development expert introduced women peace builders to Healing Through Rituals: Guide for Sustaining Wellbeing and Activism. This guide focuses on the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and relational or intimate wellbeing both at the individual and organizational levels.

Ms. Chigudu facilitated a practical session and dialogue with the peace builders on their physical and mentally wellness, particularly with the on-going pandemic. Some women described the emotional impact of the pandemic, the feelings of panic when they hear about new cases and increased number of Covid-19 deaths. They reported that the lockdown had seen a rise in incidents of gender-based violence in refugee settlements, and a general rise in tension in the community including stressed mothers beating their children and being physically aggressive. Food supplies had become inadequate and many women were affected by the loss of business income.

Ms. Chigudu reminded them that there is a connection between emotions and our bodies, and stressed that if Covid-19 finds you in a weak state, it is difficult to fight it. Similarly, the community peace building work becomes difficult when one is in a poor state of mind.



Hope Chigudu practicing wellness exercises with the women peace builders



She advised the peace builders to take the following steps to guard their wellbeing:

- *Before going to bed, ask yourself what state of mind you are taking to bed.*
- *When you wake up what do you do? One can pray, sing, lay the bed, sit on the bed and gather energy, exercise, do body stretches.*
- *Take a little time to reflect on your body, scan it, is it happy, is it sad? When you do this, you get to know how you are feeling. Ask why you have a headache or stomach ache, and ask your body to support you and find what needs to be put right.*
- *Practice gratitude – write down what you are grateful for every day.*
- *Make a list of the things you are going to do.*
- *Stretch your whole body.*

Hope Chigudu noted that in the participants' introductions they had not only described their desire for peace in their communities and countries but had also talked about wanting peace within themselves and their families. This opened a discussion about various emotional challenges, including harbouring anger against unfair treatment, community conflict, and relationship issues.

Ms Hope gave the participants tools and tips to get rid of toxic emotions, reminding them that African cultures have many symbolic rituals that are done repeatedly because many challenges are not overcome in one go. For example,

- *Forgiveness exercises like role-playing to express anger can be done over and over.*
- *Connecting with nature is important for releasing toxic emotions like anger.*
- *Taking a break from everything.*
- *Physical exercise, prayer, de-cluttering and beautifying living or working spaces.*
- *Creating healthy boundaries.*

Ms Chigudu reminded the women that as peacemakers they are often seen as role models for dealing with conflict and maintaining calm so they must work on healthy ways of handling offense. She encouraged them to read the Healing Through Rituals Guide and learn tools to help them prioritize their wellbeing.

Uganda's National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325

Diana Oroma, a Project Officer at the Women's International Peace Centre facilitated a recap session with the previously trained women peace mediators who are familiar with Uganda's National Action Plan (NAP) III on UNSCR 1325. The session also focused on how women can participate in monitoring its implementation at different levels from an informed point of view in order to get the desired attention and action.

Reflecting on Implementation of UNSCR 1325 within Refugee settlements, Host Communities, Urban Refugee Settings and Armed Conflict Context

In small groups, the women peace builders scanned their environments for the key challenges associated with advancing the women, peace and security agenda, highlighted the support that exists to address the gaps and proposed specific solutions.



01 KARAMOJA

Challenges	Proposed Solutions
1. Limited involvement of women in sub-county and district level in peace committee structures	1. Women's engagement in local shrines
2. Inadequate women representation in peace building activities like peace meetings.	2. Increased involvement of women in peace committee structures at all levels and in peace meetings
3. Cultural norms, beliefs and practices e.g. local shrines are not accessible by women.	3. Community dialogues with elders
4. Limited women representation in leadership positions especially top leadership ones.	4. Inter-district or cross border peace dialogues with more involvement of women
5. Limited support from fellow women e.g. in elective positions	5. Advocacy and capacity building on leadership skills
6. Low self-esteem	6. Community dialogue on women's rights, property ownership
7. Few female constables to address women issues.	7. Follow up of cases reported to police and FIDA on different issues affecting women
8. No property ownership for women and girls	
9. Widow inheritance or forced marriage	Available support
10. Rape during raids	1. FIDA Uganda supporting women facing different problems
11. Loss of lives and property	2. Enhancing the capacity of women electorate (UN Women and UWONET)
12. Polygamy	3. Conflict monitoring, reporting and referral (NARWOA)
13. Communal accommodation for girls making them vulnerable to rape	Peace building trainings, facilitation of peace meetings (WIPC)
14. High maternal mortality rate due to poor health facilities	5. Peace dialogues on armed conflict by the Catholic Diocese justice and peace office
15. Negative attitude towards women in development	6. Strengthening women structures at all levels on peace building leaders, business
16. Alcoholism	
17. High rates of GBV	
18. Existence of illegal arms in the community	

02 YUMBE- REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS

Challenges	Proposed Solutions
1. Land conflict over land for cultivation	1. Continuous dialogue on land issues for refugees and host countries by Office of the Prime Minister, Implementing Partners, Local Government and UNHCR.
2. Conflict in resource sharing e.g. firewood, poles, water, grass	2. Provision of land for cultivation by refugees by OPM

3. Language barrier in communication between host and refugees	3. Recruitment of refugees in humanitarian work
4. Challenges in health facilities especially in referral hospitals	4. Continuous sensitization
5. Early marriage and teenage pregnancy	5. Encourage women and girls to join women centres and youth corners for awareness sessions.
6. Poor support for referrals e.g. SGBV survivors who don't have support from legal and WPE (partners) like World Vision/ IRC/Save the Children	6. Strengthen the SGBV referral through follow up and support from legal partners to avoid more harm to the survivors
7. Inadequate support from actors to persons with special needs e.g. single mothers, elderly, orphans	7. Equal support in form of resources should be given regardless of age, gender, ethnicity and tribe
8. Women and girls face challenges in leadership because of having little children while away from home	Lactating mothers and girls should be given opportunities to participate in leadership and vocation training even if they have babies.
9. Some partners don't allow women to participate in leadership roles which are unpaid over a paid job	
10. Sexual exploitation to get favours like jobs or money	
11. Zero participation of refugee women in the peace processes of their country of origin (South Sudan) especially women leaders in Uganda.	
Increased gender based violence especially among married couples	

03 KAMPALA

Challenges	Available support
1. Urban refugee women's voices are not considered in the decision making process at community, national and international level	1. NGOs on board put in place vocational training but there is lack of follow up for positive impact
2. Domestic violence, poverty, child marriage and teenage pregnancy	2. Health facilities lack drugs and appropriate services for women)
3. Misconception about women's contribution i.e. women are vulnerable or a supplement instead of positive contributors and agents of change.	3. Police does not deliver on SGBV against urban refugee women
4. Women's contribution towards the peace process is not appreciated	4. Women led initiatives that offer services to fellow women including counselling, entrepreneurship, mental health services, financial trainings, agricultural training, anti-SGBV, anti-child marriage and vocational training.
5. Harmful cultural beliefs	5. Community policing installed by women
6. Patriarchal institutions	Community mediation

7. Lack of self-confidence and self esteem
8. Women are not involved in the design and implementation of policies concerning them
9. Lack of proper communication structures
10. Lack of support from other successful women, women led organization locally and internationally
11. Lack of protection and limited access to justice
12. Insufficient technical support capacity building and strengthening women participation in leadership, peace building, and conflict
13. Limited education opportunities e.g. scholarships
14. Lack of women centred programmes addressing women's challenges
- Lack of income generating activities

04 ADJUMANI REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS

Challenges	Available support
1. Inadequate sanitary pads	1. Vocational skills training provided by other implementing partners including Norwegian Refugee Council, Lutheran World Federation, FAWE Uganda, Windle Trust, Juris Relief Services, Refugee Law Project.
2. Food reduction that affects women and children especially during Covid-19	2. Adult literacy provided to women and girls including school drop outs by Finnish Refugee Council.
3. Inadequate capacity building for women's participation in decision-making	3. Promotion of girl child education by Windle Trust and Jesuit Refugee Services
4. Domestic violence that targets women and girls	4. Education Accelerated Learning Programme supported by Save the Children, War Child Canada
5. Rise in teenage pregnancies	5. Training of women in leadership on peace mediation, dialogues and reconciliation by Women's International Peace Centre
6. Forced or early marriages	6. Training of women leaders in leadership skills and roles by OPM
7. Loss of lives during conflict	7. Training of women and provision of nutrition services by Palm Corps
8. Displacements	8. Provision of health services to women and girls by Medical Teams International
9. Difficulties in accessing reproductive health for women and girls	9. Distribution of goats (livelihood scheme) and cash grants for vulnerable women and unaccompanied children for self-reliance strategy

10. Environmental degradation

10. Provision of financial support to lactating mothers and breast-feeding babies by Action Against Hunger

11. Land conflicts between host communities and refugees (resource sharing)

12. Disasters (floods, drought, etc)

13. Poor follow up of cases by partners

14. Cultural beliefs

15. Rape and defilement

16. Low levels of income

05 ADJUMANI AND YUMBE- HOST COMMUNITIES

Challenges	Proposed Solutions
1. GBV	1. GBV
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Family and child neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Counselling and sensitization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Conflict mediation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rape	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Community dialogue
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Physical deformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reconciliation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Defilement	2. Land
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Divorce and separation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Community sensitisation on land laws
<ul style="list-style-type: none">High dropout rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Involving women in decision making
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Suicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Economic empowerment of women in income generating activities
1.2. Land	3. Involvement of women in leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Denial of land ownership rights for women	1. Affirmative action
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Non-involvement of women in decision making	2. Enforcement of laws
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Negative cultural practices	3. Women should stand up for their rights (develop courage and confidence)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Poverty	Male involvement in advocating for women rights (role model men)
3. Low involvement of women in leadership	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Intimidation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial constraints	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Husbands denying their women permission to contest for elective positions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lack of education	

The women peace builders also reflected on progress and limitations in implementing UNSCR 1325 following which they made recommendations for its full implementation issues

Women's Roles and Needs in Delivery of Humanitarian Support	GAPS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Low education	• Denial of equal opportunities and participation	• Scholarships
	• Limited skills	• Adult Education (Functional Adult Literacy)
	• Life skills	• Vocational skills
	• No exchange visits	• Sexual education at all levels
Limited exposure	• No skills and gadgets	• Funding of exchange visits
Limited 21st century skills and gadgets	• Weak judicial institutions to support cases (lack of capacity to handle SGBV)	• Training and gadgets
Sexual and Gender Based Violence		
Types of SGBV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defilement • Rape • Attempted rape • Marital rape • Female genital mutilation 	• Limited resources e.g. financial, human resource, female police officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen judicial systems to handle cases. • Enforcement of laws.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor and outdated referral pathway for refugees and host communities. • Inadequate follow up of cases 	• Role model men and male involvement in handling SGBV case management
	• Limited recognition of women's efforts in leadership	
	• Negative cultural practices that limit women's participation in peace building	• Clear communication and feedback from women in leadership e.g. women in IGAD
	• Stigmatisation of survivors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive planning and programming involving women at all levels

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intimidation of female employees by male supervisors. • Unfriendly work environment. Codes of conduct not observed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness creation of SGBV/peace and security issues in accordance with resolution UN 1325
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low representation of women in high level decision making and planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of materials and financial support to survivors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural norms and beliefs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for continuous provision of psychosocial support to survivors PSN with extreme vulnerability
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic chores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of women spaces and safe corners at all levels
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superiority complex of men and exclusion of women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include women in decision making at community (grassroots), national and international level
Women's Participation in peace building and conflict resolution		
Low level of women's Participation in peace building and conflict resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of women representation in the Peace committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructure the Peace committees at all levels
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information flow e.g. lack of awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create awareness on the UN Security council 1325 through: media, radio stations, radio talk shows, IEC materials
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise of SGBV cases and teenage pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide protective environment for women and girls on SGBV cases.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High illiteracy rate and language barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building through formal and informal education

Contributions of Refugee Women and Grassroots Women Peace Builders to Peace and Security

In small groups, the women peace builders share their activities and achievements in building peace over the past months.

ADJUMANI REFUGEE WOMEN PEACE MEDIATORS NETWORK

Maaji II, Maaji III, Agojo and Nyumanzi Refugee Settlements



Activities

1. Mediated a tribal conflict between the Nuer and the Dinka that had led to the death of two people.
2. Mediated over 300 gender based violence cases.
3. Mediated land conflicts and borehole conflicts.
4. Participated in mediation of the conflict between the host and refugees in Nyumanzi that had caused the death of four people.
5. Contributed to awareness creation on Covid-19 and SGBV.
6. Carried out community dialogues on issues of resource sharing and peaceful coexistence.

7. Provided counselling to internally displaced persons from Rhino Camp
8. Raised awareness on hygiene at the water source areas.
9. Created awareness on children and women's rights.
10. Helped unaccompanied minors to get services.
11. Requested for women spaces
12. Lobbied for public security lights that have been provided in Maaji 3 settlement.
13. Lobbied for labour rooms for delivery by pregnant women.
14. Lobbied for ambulances for the women in case of referral to the hospital for further management

Achievements

1. There has been more peaceful resource sharing between hosts and refugees.
2. Cases of GBV have reduced.
3. Peaceful co-existence between the Nuer and the Dinka.
4. Peaceful co-existence between refugees and host communities.
5. Security lights provided as requested by the mediators.
6. Women spaces provided by other implementing partners like Care International as a safe place where women support women.

KOTIDO WOMEN PEACE MEDIATORS NETWORK



Activities

1. Peace dialogues on cattle raids. Women peace mediators and analysts joined forces with the Police, and Army in Rengen, Panyangara, Nakapelimoru, Kacheri and Lolelia sub counties in seven meetings

2. Participated in cross border meetings with the communities of Turkana, Bokora, Matheniko and Jie ethnic groups. 3 meetings tackled issues of armed cattle raids, killing of women and children, use of guns among armed communities both in Karamoja and Kenya's border districts.

3. Rape cases were identified by peace mediators and reported to police and health units. These include cases in Rengen subcounty of 2 girls, in Kotido central 1 girl was raped by

soldiers, and 1 woman was raped in Nakapelimoru by Turkana raiders.

4. 1 gun was recovered through the network of women in Panyangara.

5. Guidance, counselling and psychosocial support for grieving families affected by raids, SGBV, death etc.

6. Reporting cases to different stakeholders when identified in the communities before they escalate. For instance in Kotido Central division peace mediators reported to the RDC and police the death of 2 casual labourers in a septic tank of a business.

7. Sensitising communities on land disputes.

Achievements

1. An estimated 500 animals recovered from different sub counties.
2. Raids have reduced from 10 to 1 per week.
3. Follow-ups and referrals of survivors made to respective stakeholders. 3 rape cases were reported to health units and police and followed up.
4. Counselling and guidance for reconciliation of families.
5. Reports regularly shared with District Peace Committee and feedback is given to the aggrieved communities or families.
6. Peace prevailed in families and communities due to the peace dialogues, counselling and guidance by women.
7. Second phase of disarmament is ongoing due to peace meetings and advocacy done by peace mediators, women's groups, network and other stakeholders. Women are working together with police, security officials and other stakeholders.
8. Land disputes resolved in Panyangara sub county to avoid widowed women and children from being landless.
9. Communal sleeping has reduced. Police through the community liaison officer has played a key role in ensuring compliance.

YUMBE WOMEN PEACE MEDIATORS NETWORK

Bidi Bidi Settlement



Activities

1. After training on peace mediation by the Peace Centre, women introduced themselves to their communities and leaders.
2. Women identified and mediated cases of conflict in the community before they escalate into active violence.
3. Formed 7 village saving groups where women where they meet to save weekly and pass peace massages across the 5 zones of Bidibidi refugee settlement. Peace mediators
- tracked and shared conflict cases to with the groups and has a result, there is now no more fighting in Bidi Bidi.
4. Community sensitisation on Covid-19.
5. Participated in South Sudan conference in Adjumani in March 2020, to discuss the peace process in Sudan. Women can now express themselves very well since we know about the South Sudan Peace Agreement and network with others.

Achievements

1. Mediated and settled 65 cases of domestic violence.
2. Held 6 radio talk shows about peaceful co-existence and teenage pregnancy.
3. Women peace mediators are now role models in the community. Women run to mediators for help with domestic violence, to settle conflicts with neighbours, to manage the cases or refer them.
4. 20 women groups have been formed and are participating in village savings and passing peace massages in weekly meetings.
5. Peace mediation has cause women to win the trust of community members due to handling issues with confidentiality.
6. Trained by Women's International Peace Centre and are now proud members of the Women Peace Mediators' network.
7. Lobbied for a women's centre in Ariwa II where we shall begin training led by the United
- South Sudanese Women Association in Ariwa II. 82 women will be trained on catering, tailoring, soap making and business ownership.
8. The district security meeting and district Covid-19 Task Force meeting acknowledged sensitization by women peace mediators for the fact that there were no new positive Covid-19 cases in the settlement after the initial 5 cases.
8. GBV activists wrote a petition to RDC for female constables to be recruited to handle GBV cases.
9. Advocated for a peaceful demonstration on the poor state of Kotido health centre IV and expressed concern especially about the high number of maternal deaths.
10. Sensitised communities to avoid communal accommodation for girls to minimise cases of rape.

ADJUMANI AND YUMBE WOMEN PEACE MEDIATORS

Host Communities Achievements in Adjumani (Town Council, Ciforo, Dzaipi, Pakele) Achievements in Yumbe (Town Council, Kululu sub County, Romogi Sub County)

Activities

1. Mediated conflicts.
2. Created awareness of peace mediators' roles. Local Council 3 and 5 leader as well as community members are aware of women mediators. Mediators introduced and presented themselves for leadership at all levels.
3. Formation of women peace mediation network that connects women from host and refugee committees.
4. Formed village saving and loans associations with women mediators in Adjumani and Yumbe. Each group includes 25 members and has opened a bank account.
5. Encouraged and mentored women to take over leadership. Formerly fearful women are now empowered and taking part in leadership. In Adjumani many women stood for elections.
6. Encouraged peaceful political campaigns during NRM primaries. Talked to women who are ready to contest and they were peaceful despite opposition from men.
7. Encouraged women to contest against men. One of the mediator's mother in Yumbe managed to contest for MP and came fifth.

Achievements

1. Invited to mediate conflicts - people invite them to resolve cases.
2. Peace mediators are recognised by the district leadership who call on them to help solve conflict between host and refugee communities.
3. Women mediators have been given public platforms by district leadership and other stakeholders. Presented 8 women peace and security concerns on radio (Peaceful Coexistence, GBV, teenage pregnancy, COVID 19, street children)
4. Women mediators now promote economic empowerment through savings groups and providing loans for women.
5. Women picked up interest in election primaries and contested with men. Some of them won.
6. Monthly meetings were held to share experiences as peace mediators in the host and refugee communities.
7. Follow up and psychosocial support in cases of women abused during COVID 19.
8. Election monitoring to minimise violence during the party primaries.
9. Women mediators have helped to reconcile some couples.
10. Women peace mediators hosted a radio talk show to discuss issues of women peace and security. These included brutality of police and conflict over hosts taking over land hired by refugees.
11. Participation in the district peace committees enabled women to present key issues to the district leadership. Women peace mediators were given airtime by OPM and district leadership to host 8 talk shows. Peace Centre has committed to support them in future to have the talk shows

URBAN REFUGEES

BURUNDI Refugees in Kampala



1. Created groups for savings and loans named Together we Can Win and Fly as well as United all the Burundi.
2. The groups went to UIRI to get vocational skills to start businesses including baking, tailoring, and soap making.
3. Created partnership with NGOs and companies that sponsor scholarships for urban refugee children e.g. TRANSCO Education Foundation.
4. Trained women and men on gender in small groups. Men are now involved in these groups and support the women.
5. Women have joined others in the diaspora to engage in peace building through a movement of women advocating for peace and security in Burundi called Inamahoro which means women source of peace and security.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Refugees in Kampala and Kyangwali Refugee Settlement

Activities

1. Formed a CBO that is a women refugee led initiative along with refugee women support groups for specific categories such as Muslim women, women with disabilities and the elderly.
2. Carried out peace mediation within the community among women, between women and men and with the youth, in order to have a peaceful community.
3. Conducted two radio talk shows on Radio Sapentia, wrote peace promotion messages on banners and flyers.
4. Organised women's annual dialogue on peace and conflict resolution.
5. Document, assess and refer cases to UNHCR, the Police and other relevant authorities.
6. Provision of counselling and masks at the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak.

Achievements

1. Community awareness reached 70 women.
2. After training the women and girls, they have been groomed to be agents of peace and peace mediators. But due to lack of funding, it requires refresher trainings on the modules. We provide SGBV survivors with skills training e.g. in tailoring as way of building peace and comforting them.
3. Partnership with other women initiatives to mutually strengthen capacity as women peace mediators.
4. Creating savings groups and microfinance in partnership with HOCW to equip women with financial management skills.
5. Creation of income generation activities to help the women GBV survivors in their recovery.

Meeting and Presenting Recommendations to the Special Envoy of the Chair of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security

The women peace builders through several sessions worked in groups to discuss the status of women, peace and security agenda progress in their diverse contexts. They also identified what gaps exist in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and suggested recommended actions. This was all put together in an outcome document that also highlighted the persisting challenges for women and girls and recommended actions for governments, development partners, and continental and regional bodies to address these challenges and support the work of grassroots peacebuilders. The outcome document was presented to Her Excellency Mme Bineta Diop, Special Envoy of the Chair of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security.

In her introductory remarks, H.E. Mme Diop saluted the assembled women and acknowledged the impact of war and insecurity created by men on their bodies and their right to live decent lives as African women.

She lauded them for their resilience, courage, and determination in the face of these hardships. She acknowledged the women peace builders for “continuing to fight and take action to transform their lives and lead the transformation of our continent.”

She told the women that she was at the AU as a Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security to fight their cause, her cause and our cause. “It is a long road with some gains”, she said, “There are still a lot of challenges down the road, but no doubt we will win”. H.E. Mme Diop discussed the needs of refugee women and referred to the need for integration in host communities, access to ID cards and passports, for freedom to travel, to access capacity building and education for their children, to access jobs, enjoy freedom to open businesses and use land in a conducive environment.

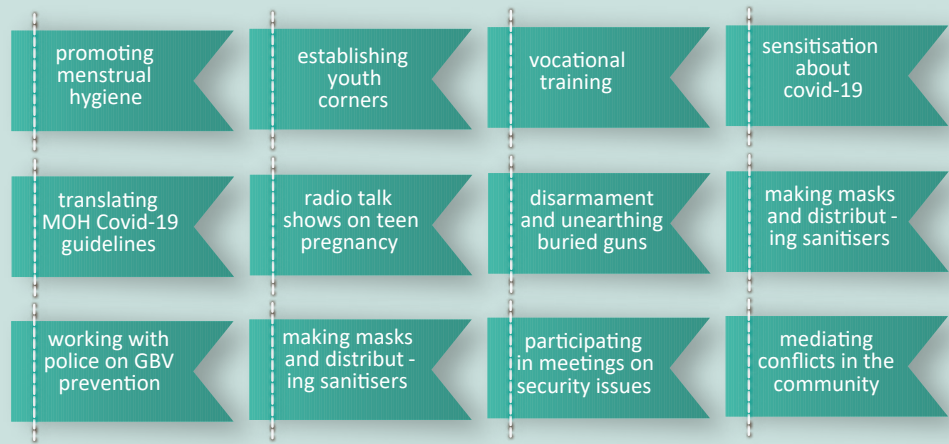
The Special Envoy also noted that she had been following the work of the women during the Covid-19 pandemic, noting how they were distributing masks and complying with social distancing. She applauded their resilience, stressing that they were not merely victims nor survivors but real agents for change.

The outcome document was presented to the Special Envoy by six representatives from Burundi, DRC, South Sudan and Uganda including Mary Guma, Representing Women Peace Mediators from the Host communities of Yumbe and Adjumani; Ataa Jesca Ruth, representing Kotido Women Peace Mediators; Akandu Jesca, from Bidibidi Refugee Settlement Yumbe; Noella Kabale an Urban Refugee from Kampala; Elizabeth Yuol Bech and Rebecca Arual, from Nyumanzi Refugee Settlement Adjumani.

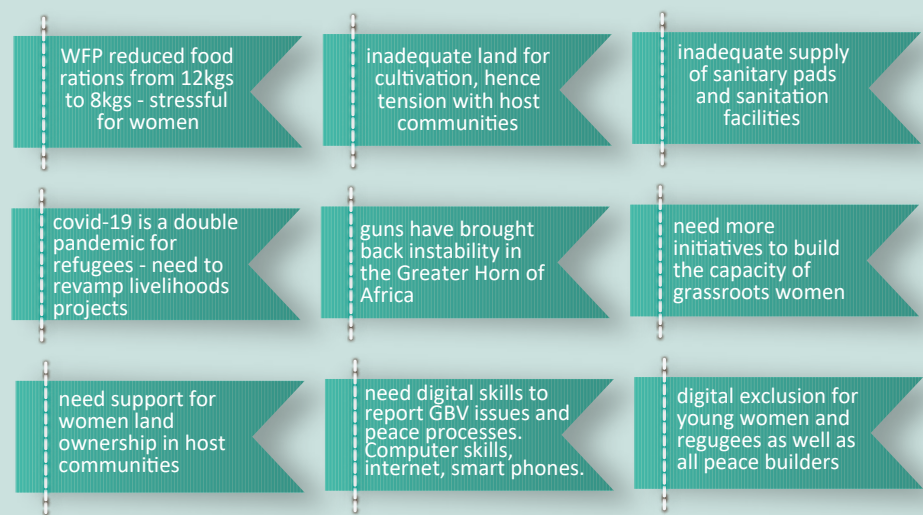


After presenting the outcome document of recommendations, the women shared brief summaries of the work they are doing in their communities and some of their concerns and urgent needs.

What women peace builders are doing in their communities



Challenges and Needs



A close-up portrait of Her Excellency Mme Bineta Diop, Special Envoy of the Chair of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security. She is wearing a teal headwrap, black-rimmed glasses, and a large earring. The background is a solid teal color.

RESPONSE FROM THE AU SPECIAL ENVOY ON WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY

*Her Excellency Mme Bineta Diop,
Special Envoy of the Chair of the African
Union Commission on Women, Peace
and Security.*

In response to their presentations Mme Diop commended the peace builders from Uganda, South Sudan, DRC and Burundi for their resilience and work in their communities. She praised the mothers who attended the session with their babies for juggling their community roles with care for their families.

She reflected on the following key elements:

1. **Accountability of Member States** who committed to implementing UNSCR 1325 to protect women, prevent violence, make sure women participate in peace building, and ensure the reconstruction of body and mind. However, in all the countries represented, political will for the national action plans has been expressed without the action and finances needed to implement them. We need to recognize that as a first step.
2. The **Continental Results Framework for Monitoring and Reporting on Women, Peace and Security** as a critical framework for accountability with indicators that enable reporting even on the situation of women refugees in host countries. Africa is the only one that has this mechanism to hold member states accountable for inaction.
3. On **Sexual and Gender Based Violence**, the Special Envoy noted it as a priority and highlighted that rape is still rampant in countries such as South Sudan and violence in homes and communities is still ongoing. She cited harmful traditions that affect women and the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns access to education for girls all of which increases their vulnerability to early marriage.
4. The Special Envoy urged refugee women and grassroots women peace builders to join other African women leaders by **representing their communities in regional networks and the wider women's movement**. Mme Diop gave the example of the African Women Leaders' network with former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as its patron. "We need women refugees and women leaders in peace building talking to heads of states, and directly addressing them about what they want. We may not be a homogenous group but once women agree on an agenda they stick with it" she said adding that the Peace Centre can work with the AU to create space for this.
5. On protection, she stressed the need to advocate for **one stop centres in refugee communities and conflict-affected countries** as safe spaces to report violations and not risk being attacked, receive legal support, psychosocial support, and assistance in bringing perpetrators to justice. She recounted how she had visited South Sudan and found a small centre in a hospital set up by UNFPA but this was not enough, there should be one in each district.
6. For the issue of preventing conflict by **Silencing the Guns**, she affirmed the call for women to lead on this, stressing that they already have the skills to peacefully resolve conflicts and solve problems. She highlighted the need for leaders to be held accountable for buying and selling arms on the continent.
7. On digital skills and access to digit tools, the Special Envoy advised women peace builder to engage the private sector for which it makes business sense to support this access that will **minimise the digital divide**.

The Special Envoy committed to share the recommendations from the peace builders in the Peace and Security Council and use them as part of the annual monitoring exercise. She stated that the recommendations on disarmament are timely and would be discussed during the upcoming summit on Silencing the Guns. She committed to continue advocate for women affected by conflict, and encouraged them to continue to raise their voices. Additionally, she advised the peace builders to harness the support of boys, men and traditional leaders in peace building as well as moving away from stereotypes that promote violence. Mme Diop concluded by calling on the women to continue to demand justice, accountability and the full enjoyment of their rights.

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF MEDIATION AND PEACE BUILDING IN PRACTICE

Women peace builders shared good practices and lessons learned in their mediation and peace building work within their communities. They reflected on what worked well and what did not, what helped them to succeed and what made them fall short, and what they learned about themselves and their environment.



Elizabeth Yuol,
Nyumanzi refugee settlement, Adjumani

"My attitude has changed. I am now polite, calmer and can handle cases which I could not handle before. Recently when someone tried to take over leadership of a committee without the proper procedures, the elders stopped the meeting and called peace mediators to resolve the issue. We held negotiations until the right procedures were followed and the post of Chairman was filled with the rightful person."



Yarwel Ajuoi Mary,
Nyumanzi refugee settlement, Adjumani

"I used to avoid all conflict and ignore cases brought to me, and I especially feared cases involving men. After doing the peace building training I can now solve cases. For example, there was a thief in the market who caused a confrontation between some market women over beans. When the woman who had been accused of stealing the beans was about to be beaten, I called the police. The peace mediators calmed the women down and they are now at peace. The situation could have led to a bigger conflict because even their fathers were about to fight each other."



Rosemary Napio
Kotido municipality

“Last month, my brother lost a son who fell into a septic tank on the property of a prominent business man in Kotido. This caused so much tension that police was involved in the burial. Because I was worried about revenge killing, I encouraged my brother to calm down and sit down for talks with the property owner. This man explained that carbon monoxide poisoning had occurred during the cleaning of the tank and the death was not intentional. The problem was resolved when my brother accepted the explanation and compensation from the business owner who gave cash and cows to take care of the deceased’s family.”



Rebecca Arwal,
Nyumanzi refugee settlement, Adjumani

“In December 2019, there was a violent conflict that happened between the refugee and host communities in Nyumanzi. It led to the death of my neighbour. When I saw that people had started to burn houses, I warned those women who had locked themselves inside the huts with their kids to run and gather at a place, which had been secured by the community youth. Even though I was scared for my daughter, I left her in the care of my sister and ventured out to see what was happening on the ground. I approached the soldiers who had been sent to diffuse the situation and updated them on who had been injured and got help to take them to hospital. It was a bad scene having to watch people die. I participated in talking to the leaders and youth to calm down and use peaceful means to solve the situation.”



Halima Gift,
Adjumani

“I have been involved in settling conflicts between Nuers and Dinkas. I have also made sure that the youth are formally introduced in the camp. Before the peace building training I used to fight all the time, for example at the borehole, but now I am much more peaceful, even with my husband. I have become more responsible.”



Mary Guma Kentembwe,
Ciforo Sub County, Adjumani district

“During the recent NRM party primary elections for women and directly elected MPs, supporters of two rival candidates ended up in a serious fight. I intervened to stop the fights, and advised two of the youth that while they may fight over different women candidates that morning, the afternoon may find them supporting the same directly elected candidate. Indeed, this is what happened. When their candidate emerged victorious, they shared with me their appreciation for resolving their fight.”



Alice Asio,
Adjumani host community

“During the NRM party primary elections in September, a conflict arose at one of the polling stations. When one woman saw that people from another village were registering illegally to vote, she almost knocked down one of them, a pregnant woman. Both of them were taken to the police station because of the fighting. I approached the Officer in Charge of the Station and the women were released. However, the husband of the pregnant one was so upset because of her arrest that he wanted to chase her away from home. I got their families involved and mediated between them and the issue was resolved.”



Jane Kiden,
Yumbe Bidi Bidi refugee settlement

“I intervened in a conflict in a VSLA savings group. I took statements from the members and realized that the problem arose from not reconciling their saving records and their farming record book. On checking the record, it was found that one of the women had not been saving. I also went through their bylaws and found that they had not followed them hence the conflict. We resolved the issue and they carried on their operations normally.”



***Jessica Akandu,
Yumbe Bidi Bidi refugee settlement***

“I have a book with which I fled with from South Sudan, I write my dreams in it. I have always wanted to be a woman councillor and solve issues in the community. Now my home is constantly approached by people who want my help to solve their issues. My name is always put forward for important positions. I am no longer fearful. For example, when a woman recently disappeared from the camp and was found dead, I was called to identify the body. I urge women to have strong hearts. During the COVID 19 lockdown, there was a lot of defilement and rape. I helped victims to fill in Police form 3 and made sure their medical needs were attended to especially access to PEP.”



***Mary Killa,
zone 3, Bidibidi settlement, Yumbe***

“I intervened in a case where a schoolgirl was raped while visiting a friend in the settlement. When she reported to a family member, the relative accused her of bringing the attack upon herself and also raped her. When I found out about it I involved the police but the girl’s mother had a negative attitude and blamed the girl. I got her PEP and followed up on the case. The rapist was arrested for defilement and is still in prison. The girl was taken to live with the father and I am advising the mother to let her come back home. Before the training, I would have been emotionally involved in such a case brought to her but I have learned to listen objectively to both sides before giving advice. Since then, I have managed 10 cases, five of them during lock down, including defilement, rape and domestic violence.

***Gertrude Naibok ,
Conflict Analyst Rengen Sub County, Kotido***



“One of the VSLA groups was formed to empower vulnerable women affected or infected by HIV experienced conflict. I was invited to resolve the issue in my role as Field Assistant. I found that one of the women had been facing violence from her husband. The woman had a drinking problem and had turned to sex work. She had been using her husband’s money to contribute to the savings group. I offered her money to wash clothes and encouraged her to make and sell cassava chips as an alternative. Up to now the husband appreciates my role in resolving their issue and has asked me to empower more women. I have learned that peace training can help to resolve GBV cases.”



***Akello Vicky
Kotido***

"I used to be so fearful but thanks to capacity building from the Peace Centre, when I hear gunshots I can now approach the RDC or DISO who keep me informed of what is going on and what they are doing about it. Recently, when members of my community raided cattle, they brought them near my home, which is near an Elders shrine. As they collected thorns to make an enclosure for the animals, they destroyed my garden. I was placed in a risky situation because the owners of the cattle from a neighbouring district sent threats to come and fight for their animals. I requested for help to remove the kraal and threatened that I would organize the women in the community to do it. The men listened to me and removed it. My fellow women and I have learned to be on standby to prevent escalation of conflicts."



***Wilent Mugisha,
Kyangwali Refugee Settlement***

"I have been living in Uganda for 21 years. I have changed how my community views young mothers and school dropouts. They used to have the perspective that a young mother has no future. When I got pregnant, I was abandoned by my partner and my father constantly expressed his disappointment about my spoilt potential. I secured a scholarship to study catering and hotel management, however refugees are not allowed to work outside the settlement. Desperate to earn an income, I started to sell snacks and even employed five other girls. Despite initial stigmatisation against the young mothers by the community, we have grown the business into the best restaurant in Kyangwali. We offer skills training in tailoring, catering and mushroom growing and have received the support of the American Refugee Council which constructed a building for us. I am constantly being invited to give talks to young girls because I can relate to their situation, and advise them on family planning to prevent unplanned pregnancies. My experience sharing has taken me as far as London and Geneva."



***Ayero Vivian,
Kotido***

“It used to be difficult for women to express themselves, they would suffer and even die in silence. Women are now able to express themselves and contribute to decision making because of Peace Centre training. After I received peace mediator training in August, there have been a lot of incidents in the village but I had challenges making incident reports. For example a pregnant woman was killed by a group of men who had been targeting her husband.”



***Sabina Kapel,
Kotido***

“In September 230 inmates escaped from Moroto prison, killed soldiers and stole guns from the armoury. Members of the community were happy that their brothers had escaped with guns. When the district officials compiled a list of the fugitives, many of them came from my sub county. This created a tense situation and at the end of it all a mother of a toddler was shot dead, the District Internal Security Officer’s house was set on fire, and a pregnant lady was killed. This caused anger in the community and threats were made against members of the peace committee. As a peacemediator, I worked with the Army Brigade Commander, the Local Councils, RDC and DISO to cool down tensions, verify the facts on the ground and mediate for compensation for the lives of those who had been killed.”



***Catherine Majok,
Bidi Bidi refugee settlement***

“I have been emotionally affected after hearing about killing of women. I have mentored many women and they are now empowering others including one of the participants in this workshop. I call on the Peace Centre to train more peace builders, the field is big and workers are few, and there is still too much killing, rape and defilement. We need to figure out how to reach arrogant communities who continue with violence.”



***Rosemary Igira,
Kotido***

“During the peace mediation initiative described by Jessica, I led and drove the team of women to Moroto. Because the LC3 Chairman of Rupa sub county in Moroto district had been killed as revenge for the raid of animals, there was fear and tension about going to that district. However, since Moroto is the administrative hub of the region, we could not avoid engaging with them. I asked the Army Division Commander to provide security for the meeting. During the talks, we discussed what had gone wrong and what had caused it. We decided to hold the talks in the open air because there was too much tension in the meeting room. This enabled the discussion to be broadcast to the public. The talks went on overnight until the community was convinced to release the stolen animals.

This experience really showed me the importance of women in peace building. They expressed their pain about the effects of conflict, widowhood, loss of children. The team sang, told stories, and shed tears, which affected the men and got their attention. The women even made local brew so that the men could relax after the meeting sessions. I realised the importance of staying objective, and even though my own family’s animals had been raided I stayed focused on mediating for peace. We also emphasised to the women to stop telling their husbands that they are useless without their animals as this fuels conflict and revenge actions.”



***Jane Lokol,
Panyangara Sub County, Kotido***

“I have been LC1 chairperson for 15 years but this year I went through as a directly elected council member. I have helped to monitor learning activities and school grants. Sometime back we had a conflict over UPE grant funds at one of the schools. Because most of the members of the School Management Committee were illiterate the head teacher had managed to make an unauthorised withdrawal of 3.8m UPE funds. When teachers complained that the money had not been used at the school, I called for a joint meeting of the Parents and Teacher Association, the School Management Committee, supporting staff and invited District Education Officer and Inspector of schools. The head teacher brought the money back.”



Jane Aleju,
Yumbe Host community

“I found out that girls from my district were being trafficked to Oman to work as house girls and being mistreated and put to work as sex workers. I encountered two girls who were about to be taken and stopped it. I asked the District Khadi for radio airtime and talked to the community about this issue, the responded by reporting more girls who were about to be taken. As a peace mediator in Yumbe district I am going to do more work on this issue with the local government. I am also concerned about the increased number of rape and defilement issues. Uganda has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in Africa. 24% of girls aged 15-19 years are either pregnant with their first child or have had a baby (UDHS 2016). Teenage pregnancy: Yumbe Context, according to Yumbe

District Health Information System, between March-May 2020 the Districted registered 3556 (19%)/ 18,536 Nationals 2529, Refugees 1027 ANC Contacts/Visits by girls between 15-19Yrs (Odravu Sub county had 610 (392 Nationals, 218 Refugees), Kululu Sub County had 438 (152 Nationals 286 Refugees, RomogiSubCountyhad421(177Nationalsand286 Refugees), Kochi Sub County had 342 (National 162=180 Refugees and Kei Sub County had 346 Nationals.

In the month of March-May 2020 the District recorded 692 out of 3687(19%) Deliveries (15-19Yrs) Midigo-159 (118 National and 41 Refugees), Odravu 87) (61 Nationalsand 26 Refugees, YTC 84 Nationals, Kei 63 (54 Nationals = and 9 Refugees, Lodonga 58 Nationals. In the month of June to July 2020, a total of 13,380 pregnant mothers visited the health centres for antennal services of which 2,598 were teenage mothers (1939 Nationals –and 659 Refugees).

The leading subcounties included:Odravu 414 (260 Nationals, 154 Refugees), Kululu-334 (119 Nationals and 215 Refugees, Romogi-275 (136 Nationals and 139 Refugees), Kei - 257 Nationals and Yumbe Town Council -224 Nationals. I am going to work with partners on finding livelihoods support for these girls.

Susan Grace Duku,
Arua Rhino camp settlement



“I intervened in two conflicts. One involved a fight between Nuer and Dinka youth after a football match. Five lives were lost and there was tension between the two communities, not even wanting to fetch water together. Peace mediators approached the elders in each community and identified those who wanted to reconcile and they bought them together for a dialogue that ended the conflict. Another incident involved Nuer youth stealing items from a market in the Equatoria community. I called the police when violence broke out. I involved the elders and explained how such conflict will create a bad impression on the host community. The errant youth accepted to pay for what they stole and the communities forgave each other.”



“After the disarmament process ten years ago, there has been peace in the Karamoja region. However the recent conflict involving the Jie from Kotido and the raiding of cattle by warriors from Moroto brought back tension in the area. I approached the RDC Moroto and told him about the availability of peace mediators to help resolve the conflict. As chairperson of the security committee, he convened a meeting of 130 peace mediators. I coordinated with Rosemary from the Catholic diocese to secure facilitation by the Bishop. Following this we organised an initiative to encourage the women to persuade their husbands and sons not to go back and raid animals from another district. I organised vans, fuel and refreshments to facilitate a trip to Moroto by the women. We carried out negotiations to get the stolen animals back. Peace mediation has really changed our lives and will change Uganda and the world.”

Lessons Learned

- ① Having listened to the experiences shared by different women peace builders’ participants highlighted the main lessons they have learned as follows.

- ② Informing the Resident District Commissioner about peace initiatives is key, as their influence cuts across the whole region. For instance in Karamoja even when the Peace Centre organises activities in Kotido, it is the RDC who issues the invitations to convene the peace committee and specific development partners.

- ③ Working with the district leaders has been instrumental in achieving success. From the Yumbe experience, the leaders helped to introduce and explain the role of peace mediators in every zone, solidifying their legitimacy.

- ④ As peace mediators, always build your capacity, learn the best approach for your work and find out the most important stakeholders who will support it, and have the influence over the issues of concern.

- ⑤ Do not take sides when mediating and always conduct a proper analysis of the situation. You must have confidence in the decisions you make.

- ⑥ Attend district forums that bring different partners together for mutual strengthening and partnership for instance Kotido has district coordination meetings.

- ⑦ Lobby for and give logistical support to peace mediators so that they can move quickly and address conflicts before they escalate.

- ⑧ Be careful not to go too fast when carrying out mediation. In the example of the UPE funds issue, even though the issue was eventually resolved it would have been good to talk to the teacher, DEO, head teacher, and others before convening a meeting to demand accountability. Such an approach ensures that all sides are heard.

- ⑨ Plan your success so that it lasts longer when you find information and triangulate it, you come to a longer-lasting solution.

GENDER, PEACE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT

Susan Nkinzi, Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at the Women's International Peace Centre presented the findings of a research study on the intersection between gender, peace and environmental conflict for validation. The research focused on women and girls' realities of climate insecurity as environmental conflicts including Floods, prolonged dry spells, strong winds, pollution poor waste management and environmental degradation.

Ms Nkinzi also discussed how environmental conflicts affect peace and gender relations. The participants' comments validated the findings with one from Yumbe acknowledging that the issue of waste disposal and hygiene management is a real challenge. With no specific partner on the ground to promote awareness of waste management issues, she suggested that peace mediators should take this on as one of their roles. This discussion led to further elaboration of the role of central government, represented by OPM, in resource management and providing support to the poor and vulnerable within refugee hosting districts. One of the participants confirmed that Yumbe district has actually developed and benefited from the presence of refugees. She noted that Yumbe district has done some work on environmental protection, for example tree planting and forest regeneration but not much on waste management. Since 2016, Yumbe district local government has been the implementing partner for UNHCR in undertaking environmental work.

CLOSING REMARKS

“

The work you are doing has really demonstrated the value of investing in women and makes us as Women's International peace Centre proud of the work you do

”

Helen Kezie-Nwoha, Executive Director of the Women's International Peace Centre

The 3-day convening was wrapped up with three speakers representing the partnership that had brought the women peace builders together.

Elizabeth Yuol Bech from Adjumani refugee settlement gave a vote of thanks on behalf of her fellow participants, expressing what a great honour it had been for her to interact with older, more experienced women as well as her age mates building peace in their communities. She acknowledged how special it was for their roles in the community to be validated by the Peace Centre as women at the grassroots are not often recognised. She committed to practice what has been learned and asked for support as they push their work to higher levels.

Helen Kezie-Nwoha, Executive Director of the Women's International Peace Centre told the peace mediators that their work has really demonstrated the value of investing in women and makes her organisation proud of the work they do. She observed that women are good at coming together to see change in communities. Ms Kezie-Nwoha recognised the importance of maintaining an intergenerational approach as she encouraged the younger women to maintain their focus. She informed the peace builders of the launch of Women's Situation Room, as an Africa wide mechanism to facilitate women working with youth to promote peaceful elections in Uganda and the continent. She thanked the Peace Centre team for the high energy they always bring to activities.

Allen Ankunda from UN Women expressed her gratitude at being present to hear the women peace builders' achievements and connect to the people behind the stories in the organisational reports. She passed on the appreciation of UN Women for the women's work which as we mark 20 years of UNSCR 1325 gives them hope that we will achieve the set targets., She also encouraged the women to contest during elections and also support those who are going to advance the issues concerning women and girls.

Draleru Joselyn representing the Office of the Prime Minister offered her appreciation to women from the host communities, thanking them for managing the issues that affect women and for cooperation with the refugee communities. She highlighted that Uganda's refugee population is projected to rise to 1.8million if there is more conflict, increasing the need for the work of the peace mediators in ensuring the limited resources available are shared peacefully. Ms Draleru thanked all partners stressing that humanitarian work relies on partnership and coordination with all stakeholders on board.

APPENDICES

Annex 1: Outcome Document of Recommendations Presented to the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security

20 YEARS OF THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA: 20 YEARS OF GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S PEACE BUILDING LEADERSHIP AND RESILIENCE

13th to 15th October 2020
Eureka Hotel, Ntinda, Kampala

RECOMMENDATIONS

We, women peace builders from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, living as refugees in Uganda along with women peace builders from Karamoja and West Nile, Uganda, meeting from 13th to 15th October 2020 in Kampala, Uganda to reflect on grassroots women's contributions and vision for peace in our communities and countries of origin;

THANK the Government of Uganda for its generosity in hosting us and guaranteeing the rights of refugee women to access land, education, health services, employment, free movement and to live in Uganda with dignity.

COMMEND the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development of Uganda for incorporating the protection and participation of internally displaced and refugee women in conflict prevention, resolution, relief and recovery as a key emerging issue in the third National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2020-2024).

RECOGNISE the on-going review of the South Sudan National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and Related Resolutions (2015-2020) by the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare of South Sudan, which aimed to enable the broad participation of women, including displaced women, in peace negotiations and all mediation processes.

APPRECIATE the solidarity and support of the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security in championing the priorities and agency of women and girls affected by conflict, including young, displaced and grassroots women, in continental peace and security efforts.

ACKNOWLEDGE the critical role of the Office of the AUC Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security in developing the Continental Results Framework on Women, Peace and Security and supporting national and regional actors to monitor and report on implementation of the WPS agenda.

SEIZE the opportunity of the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and the start of the African's Women's Decade on Financial and Economic Inclusion for African Women to call for accelerated implementation of the WPS agenda from the perspective of young, grassroots and displaced women peace builders.

On the status of implementation of UNSCR 1325 in refugee settlements, within host communities, in cross-border and pastoral conflict settings, we highlight the following persisting challenges for women and girls;

- The situation of women and girls in these settings is affected by high levels of physical and psychological gender-based violence including rape, defilement, family and child neglect, physical deformation, stress, divorce and separation, suicide. This is worsened by limited legal and psychosocial support to SGBV survivors; social stigma; high number of male police who are not equipped to handle court cases with sensitivity and confidentiality; delays in processing cases and perpetrators going unpunished.
 - Due to COVID-19, food rations for refugee women and children have been reduced, there is a rise in teenage pregnancies, forced or early marriages, domestic violence and new cases of internal displacement. The COVID-19 situation has also caused fewer women and girls to report SGBV cases and has highlighted the continued need for psychosocial and material support to survivors and persons with chronic special needs.
 - Other challenges include limited access to reproductive health services, low levels of income and education among refugee women as well as conflicts between refugees and host communities over land and resources such as firewood, water or grass, worsened by language barrier.
 - Refugee women and girls within settlements are excluded from formal peace processes and our voices are not considered in post-conflict reconstruction efforts in countries of origin, for instance in the 2018 South Sudan peace in the process and current governance decisions by the revitalised transitional government of national unity.
 - Refugee women and grassroots women peace builders who play key conflict prevention and resolution roles at local levels are under-represented in continental peace and security efforts such as the Silencing of the Guns initiative. Weak exchange of information and feedback between local, national and continental policy levels limits the reach of our voices.
 - Women are not meaningfully involved or well represented within peace or security committee structures at sub-county and district level, in districts without organised women mediator groups. Cultural norms and practices still limit women's access to key decision-making spaces like the Elders' shrines in Karamoja. Urban refugee women are often not consulted or involved in the design and implementation of policies that concern us.
 - The contributions of refugee women and grassroots women peace builders are not recognised or made visible. They are depicted as 'vulnerable' even when they are making tangible change in the communities. Women leaders in political spaces within and outside the refugee settlements are making significant contributions to peace and security. However, they are also intimidated, targeted by men in the community with false accusations; denied permission by husbands to participate in leadership, face sexual harassment from male superiors in their work; are limited by financial constraints and their levels of education. We urge the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security to consider and amplify our recommendations as follows;
1. Call for all Governments and Development Partners to create a protective environment for women and girls affected by conflict, to strengthen judicial and medical responses to SGBV, to provide direct psychosocial and material support to survivors, raise awareness among men and tackle the negative norms and practices sustaining this violence.

2. Call on Governments and Development Partners to directly support the conflict prevention and peace building work of refugee and grassroots women's groups, caucuses and community-based organisations; to 'do no harm' and equip local women to sustain their work and its positive impact.
3. Request the AUC Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security to promote the creation of safe spaces for conflict-affected women at all levels and to support the inclusion of refugee women and grassroots women peace builders at the highest decision-making tables on peace and security in their host countries and countries of origin.
4. Call Upon the IGAD Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism to drive the restructuring of district and sub-county level peace committees to have 50% of their members as women.
5. Request IGAD, the Government of South Sudan and RJMEC to ensure that South Sudanese refugee women participate and their voices are heard in national peace building processes.
6. Request the AUC Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security to facilitate the participation of refugee women and grassroots women peace builders in continental peace and security efforts, particularly in silencing the guns to which we are victims. We call on other women's rights organisations, development partners and governments to equip grassroots women to participate in the digital world, with the skills and tools required for our exposure and our voices to be included.
7. Call on the African Union Commission and Member States to prioritise the economic empowerment of women and girls affected by conflict, including refugee women, in all the plans of the upcoming African's Women's Decade on Financial and Economic Inclusion for African Women. This should address the education.

Annex 2: Gains, challenges at the continental level and recommendations

Gains

1. Women's voice and the agency has grown. They can organize around the issues that affect them within homes, clans, villages, sub-counties, districts, countries, and within the African Union and on the global stage. We can take advantage of these increased numbers to continue agitating for the issues that matter to us.
2. There is now more legislation regarding women. Laws and regulations have been designed at all levels - district, national, AU, and UN - regarding the protection of women, prosecution of sexual offenses, ensuring women's participation in leadership, access to financing, protecting the human rights of women, etc. There is now a big body of policies and laws to enhance the rights of women in different fields. It is important for women to take advantage of this, as they continue to identify the remaining gaps and update existing legislation to address current contexts. There has been progress in filling in quotas for participation of women in leadership spaces. There is no reason why this should not be reflected in refugee settlements
3. Access to education has improved. Affirmative action policies have helped to increase the number of girls in higher institutions of learning. Women are benefitting from programs like adult literacy, workshops and other spaces to enhance knowledge and articulate issues. They are able to build their capacity to engage with important issues, articulate their concerns and improve their wellbeing.
4. Even though UNSCR 1325 recognized that women are critical players in peace processes, it is men that are the majority of actors. When few women are involved in a significant capacity the result is peace processes that do not adequately reflect the issues and concerns of women. To address these women in leadership have become more active in coming together to ensure that women's presence is felt in peace processes, for example, FemWise-Africa is working to strengthen the role of women in conflict prevention and mediation as well as peace-making and post-conflict reconstruction. They have played a key role in mentoring young women that can build a base for women's participation.
5. Women have continued to be active in community-level peace-making and created peace mediator networks all over the African continent. Because of their advocacy, South Sudan had five women participating in peace talks and three women were signatories to the peace agreement. There is a need to continue to build the capacity and visibility of such networks.
6. In the area of prevention and protection, achievements have been realized after continued agitation and amplification of voices around issues of sexual violence in conflict. For example, such advocacy in the Great Lakes region resulted in the Goma declaration on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity in the Great Lakes. Additionally, in response to sustained demand for programming around issues of sexual violence, a regional training facility based in Kampala has been established to train police, prisons, social workers, lawyers, and judges to understand issues of sexual violence. Trainees discuss issues of prosecution, legal text harmonization, and the setting up of special courts for victims so that they are not re-victimized.

Challenges at the continental level

1. Despite the goal of Silencing the Guns by 2020, conflict continues on the continent. In 2019 there were 21,600 incidents of armed conflict on the continent and they continue to emerge.
2. Sexual and gender-based violence including rape continues in conflict zones and communities.
3. The nature and mode of elections continue to keep women from participating in politics. Money and violence are used to intimidate women, keeps them from joining in political contests, and forces out those who cannot withstand the hostile environment.
4. Many nations have not prioritized UNSCR 1325 at the national level and have not allocated adequate budgets for their National Action Plans.
5. New and persistent environmental disasters like floods, locusts, long periods of drought, famine have emerged as key peace and security issues for women.
6. Youth unemployment has resulted in young women being trafficked to Arab and Asian countries, with unclear modalities of employment, leaving them vulnerable to violations and marginalization.
7. Economic injustice is seen by the fact that the majority of women have low income and have poor knowledge of Economic policy. Additionally, there is inadequate financing for programmes that address the issues that make life difficult for women.

Recommendations

1. National and regional action plans should be fully financed and all programmes that have been designed should be prioritized.
2. Women should be actively involved in peace initiatives by governments and the African Commission in the road map for Silencing the Guns and promotion of disarmament across borders.
3. Leaders should be accountable for peace agreements and violators should be prosecuted.
4. There should be continued enhancement of the capacity of women leaders, and support provided for their networks. Women should support one another when they speak out about peace issues.
5. There should be support for girls in our communities especially during crisis periods like the Covid-19 pandemic which has exposed many girls to pregnancy and sexual abuse

Annex 3: List of participants

NO.	NAME	POSITION	LOCATION
1.	Tumwesigye Sandra	Peace Centre	Kampala
2.	Sheila Magero	Rapporteur	Kampala
3.	Aemo Mary	Staff – Peace Centre	Yumbe
4.	Akullu Fivi	Settlement Com-mander – OPM	Yumbe
5.	Draleru Joseline	Community Based Services. OPM	Adjumani
6.	Dranjowa Christine	The Peace Centre Staff	Adjumani
7.	Alejo Jane	Peace Mediator	Yumbe
8.	Adnan Sarah	Peace Mediator	Yumbe
9.	Munduru Zumura	Peace Mediator	Yumbe
10.	Maka Joyce	Peace Mediator	Yumbe
11.	Jane Kiden	Peace Mediator	Yumbe
12.	Akandu Jesca	Peace Mediator	Yumbe
13.	Celina Lingo	Peace Mediator	Yumbe
14.	Killa Mary	Peace Mediator	Yumbe
15.	Catherine Kwaje	Peace Mediator	Yumbe
16.	Suzan Grace Duku	Peace Mediator	Arua, Ofua Zone
17.	Rebecca Arual	Peace Mediator	Nyumanzi, Adjumani
18.	Elizabeth Yuol Bech	Peace Mediator	Nyumanzi, Adjumani
19.	Akuol Leek Deng	Peace Mediator	Nyumanzi, Adjumani
20.	Yar Wel Ajuoi	Peace Mediator	Nyumanzi, Adjumani
21.	Mesiku Night Kassium	Peace Mediator	Agojo, Adjumani
22.	Ayoo Janet Kelly	Peace Mediator	Maaji 3, Adjumani
23.	Halima Gift	Peace Mediator	Maaji 3, Adjumani
24.	Kentembwe Mary Guma	Peace Mediator	Ciforo, Adjumani
25.	Asio Alice	Peace Mediator	Adjumani T/C
26.	Akello Vicky	Peace Monitor	Kotido Central
27.	Lokol Jane	Peace -Mediator	Panyangara, Kotido

28.	Ayero Vivian	Peace Mediator	Rengen, Kotido
29.	Awilli Filda	Conflict Monitor	Kotido Central
30.	Igira Rosemary	Peace Mediator	Kotido North
31.	Napio Rosemary	Conflict Analysts	Kotido Central
32.	Naibok Gertrud	Peace Analyst	Rengen, Kotido
33.	Sabina Kapel	Peace Analyst	Kotido South
34.	Akol Grace	Peace Mediator	Nakapelimoru, Kotido
35.	Ataa Jesca Ruth	Peace Mediator	Kotido
36.	Elithabeth Kitwanda	Urban Refugee Peace Builder	Kampala
37.	Fanny Iusangu	Urban Refugee Peace Builder	Kampala
38.	Noella Kabale	Urban Refugee Peace Builder	Kampala
39.	Willent Mugisha	Refugee Peace Builder	Kyangwali Refugee settlemtn
40.	Atuzuyo Joanita	Urban Refugee Peace Builder	Kampala
41.	Lena Chelsey	Urban Refugee Peace Builder	Kampala
42.	Cecladine Yaka	Urban Refugee Peace Builder	Kampala
43.	Limda Mulega	Urban Refugee Peace Builder	Kampala
44.	Oroma Diana	Project Officer	The Peace Centre
45.	Juliet Were	Deputy Executive Director	The Peace Centre
46.	Hope Kigundu	Wellness Facilitator	Consultant
47.	Suzan Nkinzi	M&E coordinator	The Peace Centre
48.	Allen Ankunda	M&E Specialist	UN Women
49.	Helen Kezie-Nwoha,	Executive Director	The Peace Centre
50.	Her Excellency Bineta Diop	the Special Envoy on WPS	African Union

ISBN 978-9970-29-042-0



ISBN : 978-9970-29-038-3

© Women's International Peace Centre

November 2020, All Rights Reserved