In year 2000, the groundbreaking resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was adopted by the UN Security Council. A landmark victory for the women's movement. 20 years down the road, this study showcases women's championship for building feminist peace, and identifies the potentials and shortcomings of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

A RIGHT NOT A GIFT

WOMEN BUILDING FEMINIST PEACE

KVINNA KVINNA

"

If women are not included, the peace process will look the same as it has for the past 30 years – broken.

PARTICIPANT FROM NAGORNO-KARABAKH

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation has defended women's rights since 1993. For every woman's right to be safe and to be heard. Together with over 100 partner organisations across 20 countries, we work directly in areas affected by war and conflict to achieve lasting peace by strengthening women's influence and power. Together, we are change.

CONTENT

Participants in a CRTD. A workshop in Lebanon.
Photographer: Christopher Herwig

THE VOICES OF WOMEN BUILDING PEACE

Supporting women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders is the very heart of The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation. Today, we support 149 women's rights organisations in 20 countries affected by violent conflict. Since the 1990s we have fought for the voices of women rights activists to be heard in the rooms and halls were decisions are made about people's lives and futures, rooms from which women are often excluded.

That is why we performed one of the first ever gender analyses of a peace agreement – a contributing document to the negotiations resulting in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Kvinna till Kvinna 2000). And that is why we have produced this report, 20 years down the line of working with the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

During the past two decades we have witnessed contradictions; progress and set-backs, globalisation and nationalism, glass ceilings breaking and women being held back. What we know is that when women's participation and rights are advancing, it is thanks to feminist movements tirelessly fighting, challenging power structures and not taking no for an answer.

So, in advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and actually realising the commitments made 20 years ago, why not ask the women who live with violent conflict every day how it should be done? In a time of backlash, militarisation, pushback on women's rights and increasingly complex wars, it is time to place women peacebuilders at the front and centre. Hard times are not the time to give up, but to provide support to those who need it most. This is also where we can find hope for the future.

In this study, for which we interviewed 91 women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders, we find that resolution 1325 has indeed meant something for women building peace. They have used it to mobilise and build coalitions among women, and to raise awareness in their communities on women's rights. It has given women a tool to speak up and participate, and they have then advocated and campaigned for decision-makers to grant them this right. And all this, while facing backlash, discrimination and insecurity. If we provide women peacebuilders with the conditions to meaningfully participate in peace processes, just imagine what they will do!

Our findings show us that critical policy areas are missing from the WPS agenda. Women's economic rights in conflict including housing, land and property rights, as well as shrinking civic and democratic space and violent extremism are all in need of more attention.

A feminist peace requires key shifts in the current paradigm, prioritising inclusion of the now excluded majority, local ownership in diplomatic processes, and women's leadership in economic recovery efforts.

The accounts of women set out in this report are compelling, sincere, sad, frustrating and courageous. These women are making a difference to the lives of their families, their communities and their nations with whatever they can, some even risking their own safety. These women are building peace one day at a time.

This is our message, but foremost, it is the message of women peacebuilders.

Petra Tötterman Andorff
Secretary-General of Kvinna till Kvinna

Photographer: Viktor Gårdsäter

INTRODUCTION

Between 1990-2017, women's participation in major peace processes was low with just 2% as women media-tors, 5% as witnesses and signatories, and 8% as negotiators. Despite the historic achievement of the women's movement securing nine UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security between 1990 and the end of 2018, only 19.7% of peace agreements, relating to more than 150 peace processes, included provisions addressing women, girls or gender. In 2018, of 52 agreements across a range of issues included in the Peace Agreement Database, only four (7.7%) contained provisions relating to gender, down from 39% in 2015 (United Nations 2019a).

In 2015, the Global Study on implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 found that the international community needs to look at "politics" and "peacemaking" differently; not only as a set of actors around a negotiation table, but as a comprehensive process within a society that is inclusive, diverse, and reflective of the interests of the whole society (UN Women 2015). This suggests rethinking the support to women's participation in the political architecture and civil society across the range of processes, mechanisms, and practices as an accumulative interlinked and co-dependent effort.

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation's 25 years of experience in conflict-affected countries suggests that what is in the agreement shapes the standards for post-conflict processes politically, economically, and socially. The exclusion of women from political processes, in particular peace and transition processes, which beyond being a rights issue, also means that women's specific perspectives and priorities for renegotiating social contracts are not considered, results in post-conflict political orders cementing rather than transforming gender inequalities. Kvinna till Kvinna understands feminist peace as a state of sustained peace characterised by the absence of all levels of structural violence, where all individuals can thrive and enjoy a state of human security in an inclusive gender equal society.

There is still a gap in the overall approach to how we can better support women's participation in the political architecture and civil society to build and sustain peace, making best use of the WPS agenda, particularly UNSCR 1325, 1889, 2122, and 2242, as they focus on women's role in building and sustaining peace. Understanding women's practices and experiences can show us how to provide support to women's participation more effec-tively and how to capitalise on the nexus between the YPS agenda (YPS) and WPS, particularly UNSCR 2250, and the participation of young women peacebuilders.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
EU	European Union
FBIH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
GBV	Gender-based violence
GCA	Government-controlled areas
GONGO	Government non-governmental organisation
HLP	Housing, Land and Property
IDP	Internally Displaced People
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual
NGCA	Non-government controlled areas

Women's meaningful participation goes beyond representation – it means ensuring that women's diverse interests and rights are fully reflected and included through sincere efforts to address the machinery of exclusion represented in the set of patriarchal and structural obstacles women are faced with (Kvinna till Kvinna 2012). This requires paying close attention to fostering an enabling environment for women to contribute and co-own spaces for contribution in peace processes.

Structures are stronger than individuals, and much of the current push for a short-term results agenda leads to ignoring the nuanced and slow progress as well as the invisible obstacles to women's meaningful participation to building and sustaining peace.

The WPS agenda should not be understood as a strict set of resolutions or principles, dictating how duty bearers should act with regard to issues on peace and security. The agenda is constantly being negotiated by states, organisations and other actors. This has resulted in national and regional action plans, further resolutions, funding modalities and practices for civil society as well as armed actors.

This study is a contribution to the WPS field and aims to put women who build peace at the forefront and centre. What are their views and perspectives on peace and security? And how do they think we can approach building and sustaining peace differently? Though at the centre of this policy agenda, such questions are seldom asked.

To this end, Kvinna till Kvinna conducted an extensive empirical study with 91 participants in 2019 on how the WPS agenda can play an active and effective role in building sustaining peace.

The objectives of the study are:
- To bring a body of learning from women's practices into the WPS agenda, leading to the creation of an open tool of women in peacebuilding practices.
- To inform full operationalisation and contribute to the continuous improvement of the WPS agenda.

NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSE	Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria
P/CVE	Preventing and countering violent extremism
RS	Republika Srpska
SCR	Security Council resolution
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WHRD	Women Human Rights Defender
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST LENS

Kvinna till Kvinna identified a number of conflict and post-conflict contexts considering various phases and intensity including: on-going armed conflicts, frozen conflicts, disputed territories, and post-conflict contexts where the organisation has presence and partnerships with women's rights organisations. The contexts covered are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Syria and Ukraine.

91 **women contributed their experiences to this report.[1]**
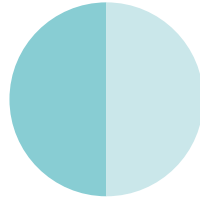
Key informant interviews and focus group discussions: We conducted key informant interviews with haft of the participants (mainly in person and a few virtually), and focus group discussions with the other half.

Location: Key informant interviews and focus group discussions took place in Yerevan, Baku, Kyiv, Tuzla, Bijeljina, Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Erbil, Istanbul and Beirut, with participants originating from many villages, towns and cities of the respective conflict-affected area.

1. It should be noted that 20% of these were not partners of Kvinna till Kvinna, i.e.they receive no direct support from Kvinna till Kvinna, financial or otherwise.

7%
under 30 yeras

42%
31–40 yeras

27%
41–50 years

13%
51–60 years

9%
61–70 years

2%
over 70 yeras
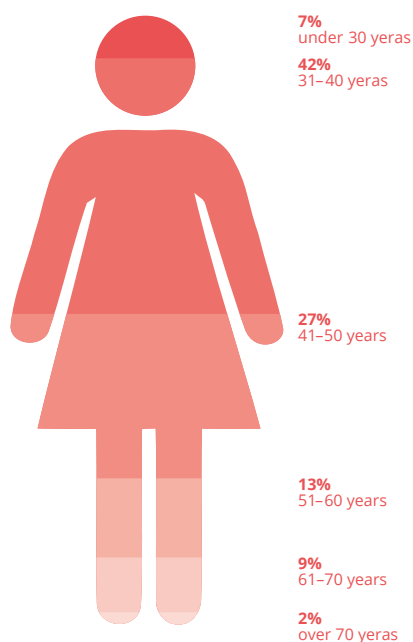
AGE
7% of participants were aged under 30;
42% were aged 31–40; 27% were aged 41–50;
13% were aged 51–60; 9% were aged 61–70;
2% were aged 70+.

> 70%
post high school

10%
PhD
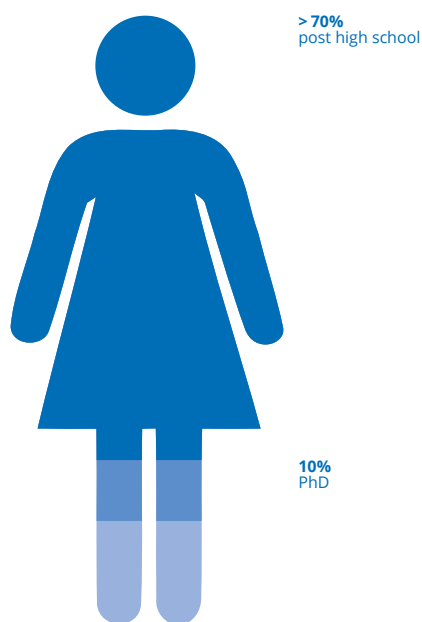
EDUCATION
More than 70% of participants were
educated beyond high school;
10% of participants had PhDs.

33%
single

53%
married

7%
divorced

5% widows

2%
in partnership
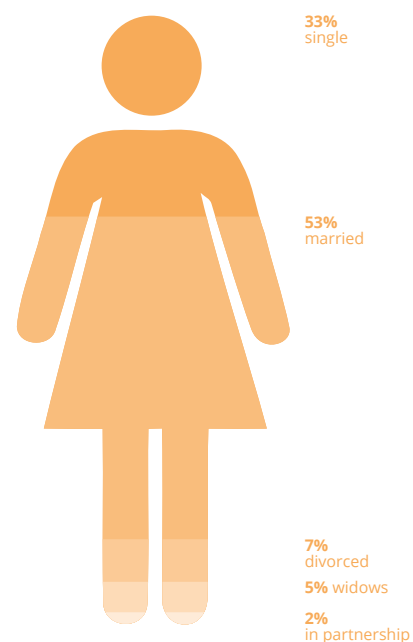
CIVIL STATUS
33% of participants were single; 53% were
married; 7% were divorced; 5% were widows;
and 2% were in partnerships.

33%
minorities
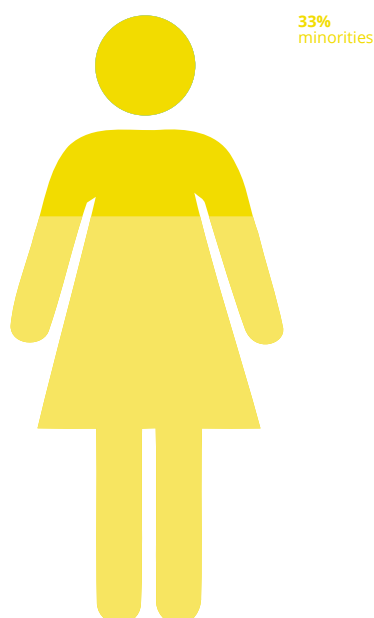
MINORITY COMMUNITY
33% of participants (with more than half of
the participants from Ukraine and Bosnia and
Herzegovina) described themselves as belong-
ing to minority communities, with minority
communities ranging from belonging to "minor-
ity" religions and ethnic groups, being women,
feminists, lesbians and/or LGBTI activists; and
in the case of Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzego-
vina "being normal and not like the rest".

7%
diaspora

4%
returnees
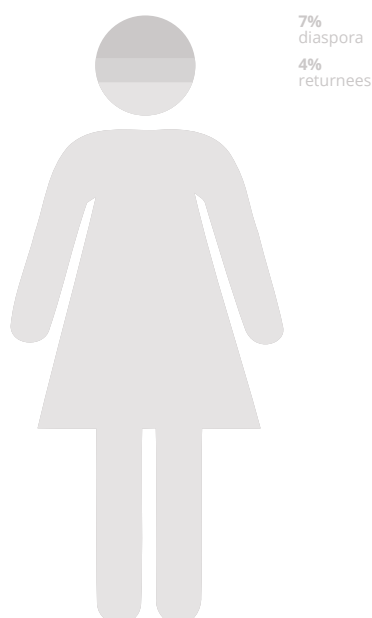
DIASPORA/RETURNEE
7% of participants described themselves
as diaspora (all of whom were Syrian women),
with 4% describing themselves as returnees
(to Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina
and Iraq).

13%
physical

20%
norms

10%
war related
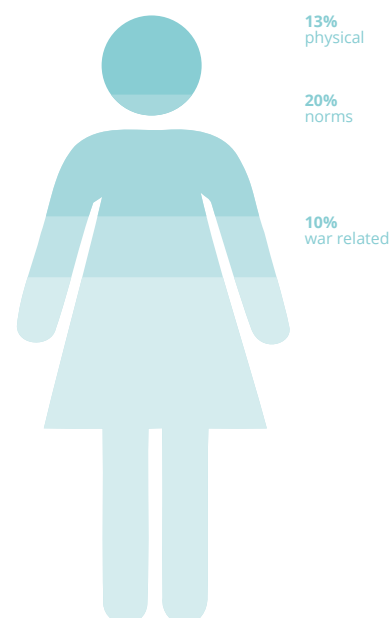
DISABILITY
13% of participants described
themselves as feeling disabled (largely eye
problems), 20% of Iraqi participants identified
gender norms and prevailing masculine
leadership as causing disabilities, and
10% of Bosnian participants identified the
war as causing disabilities.

Profile of study participants: Roles and identities

It is both impossible and simplistic to classify the women who participated in the study into single categories – their experiences, as well as their past and current identities and roles make any such categorisation inherently reductive. It is important to flag the multiple, often overlapping, roles that the women play in building and sustaining peace.

Community members

Community mobilisers

Peacebuilders

Civil society activists

Family members***

Peace activists

Lawyers

THESE ROLES WERE IDENTIFIED BY THE PARTICIPANTS AS RELEVANT IN BUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE EFFORTS.

Women's rights activists

Politicians**

Women's human rights defenders

Political actors*

Leaders of women's organisations

Social entrepreneurs

Academics

---

* Political actors, i.e. as part of civil society.

** Politicians, i.e. members of political parties, parliament, local councils, feminist and/or women's political movements.

*** Family members of those who may or already have resorted to violent means to resolve conflict or otherwise engage in various types of violent behaviour at home and beyond.

The study participants described a variety of identities that both shape and reflect their intersectional experiences, perspectives and viewpoints as women. They described themselves as young women, middle aged women and older women; rural and urban women; single, partnered, married, divorced and widowed women; women who consider themselves to be from minority communities, comprising women from ethnic, religious, linguistic and political minorities, feminists, lesbians and/or LGBTI activists; diaspora and returnee women; and women with disabilities, comprising both physical and other disabilities (20% of Iraqi participants cited gender norms and prevailing masculine leadership as a cause of disability, and 10% of Bosnian participants named the war as a cause of disability).

Limitations

The empirical work was concluded in June 2019, which implied that women's participation in the civic uprising in Iraq was not covered. The research was carried out before the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic.

70% of the interviews were conducted using interpretation. The main limitation in terms of demographics was not being able to hold a focus group discussion with Armenian women – there were only meetings with five women in Yerevan, compared to nine women from Azerbaijan.

There were difficulties in accessing some of the study contexts, particularly in Iraq and Syria. Interviews for Iraq were conducted in Erbil and over the phone, while interviews for Syria were conducted in Istanbul and Beirut, as well as over the phone.

REPORT STRUCTURE

The report is comprised of an executive summary and three main chapters. The executive summary outlines the key findings and presents the recommendations extrapolated from the study participants and findings.

Chapter 1: 20 Years of the Women Peace and Security Agenda, presents the meaning of peace and security to women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders in today's conflicts. It then looks at the evolution of the WPS agenda since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, the extent to which it reflects women's understanding of peace and security, and the ways in which it understands and promotes women's participation peacebuilding. The chapter closes with an overview of women's familiarity with the WPS agenda, the way in which they see its relevance to their work and lives, the diversity of the practical application of the WPS agenda to building and sustaining peace, and the persistent obstacles to the full and effective implementation of the WPS agenda.

Chapter 2: Seeking Change Here and Now, demonstrates key areas to which the WPS agenda should pay closer attention in order to achieve a transformative impact. The chapter then details the importance of those areas and the gendered roadblocks women are faced with when it comes to women's economic rights in conflict including housing land and property rights, the shrinking space and violent extremism.

Chapter 3: Imagining a Feminist Peace, makes the case for women's participation and presents practical ways of ensuring women's participation is enabled and recognised. The chapter closes with uplifting recommendations to help us all imagine a new peacemaking paradigm with ingredients for investing in the majority of people normally excluded from peacemaking, and for investing in an environment that is conducive for achieving feminist peace.

The report concludes by recognising the expertise and body of knowledge that our study participants generously shared with us, and offers a first step in our commitment to making the WPS agenda accessible to practitioners.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"Women need to know that participation is a right and a duty towards her country and not a gift given by men."
Participant from Syria

This report investigates 20 years of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent resolutions comprising the WPS agenda in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, Ukraine, Syria, and Iraq, through 91 interviews with women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders. While only 7% of our participants were young women (aged under 30), other respondents highlighted the importance of intergenerational work in peacebuilding and the need to put more emphasis on young women's participation, as they overlap both circles of constituencies that are largely ignored in peacebuilding – women and young people.

The findings of the report show us that there have been serious efforts from the international women's movement to accelerate the evolution of the agenda at the Security Council in a way that resonates with a range of women's needs and priorities for participation in building and sustaining peace.

Many participants use the WPS agenda, mainly UNSCR 1325, strategically in order to build peace. They do the following:

1. Mobilise, organise and build coalitions among women;

2. Identify and prioritise women's needs and rights in conflict and post-conflict contexts, and develop strategies to advance women's needs and rights;

3. Strengthen women's potential to build peace;

4. Raise awareness among the broader community to support women's rights and women's potential to build peace;

5. Create policy to implement and monitor women's rights and gender equality; and

6. Advocate with local, national and international actors to implement the WPS agenda.

However, the WPS agenda still falls short of presenting itself as a consolidated agenda. The majority of the study participants were only familiar with UNSCR 1325. This poses a question to international non-governmental organisations working with peacebuilding and women's rights actors regarding the extent to which sufficient efforts have been made to familiarise local actors with the WPS agenda resolutions, their meaning and their use in boosting women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders efforts on the local, regional, and national level. There is a clear gap in the interpretation of the agenda and those who claims the role as interlocutors to make this policy framework more viable for local actors. This also includes the ability of such actors to hold their governments and the international community accountable towards the provisions of the WPS agenda. With the majority of the participants not aware of the agenda as a whole, there is also a deficiency in local ownership of the agenda by women in conflict contexts.

Persistent obstacles to women's participation
The study investigates the impact of the WPS agenda on women's participation in building and sustaining peace. A set of six persistent obstacles remain in putting the agenda to a transformative use.

1. The agenda is implicit on the diverse creative ways in which women are building and sustaining peace.

2. There is a lack of political will by national and regional actors to meaningfully implement the WPS agenda.

3. There is a lack of international accountability mechanisms for the WPS agenda.

4. Statehood-related obstacles for contexts with de-facto governments.

5. Patriarchal systems and gender discrimination.

6. Gender-based violence.

7. Security.

Several of the identified obstacles have a far-reaching impact on women's participation. Statehood-related obstacles call for a clear recognition of the specific needs of women under de-facto authorities. Patriarchal systems and gender discrimination necessitate an integrated approach to women's participation making use of the plethora of policy frameworks on women human rights, gender equality, as well as the WPS agenda. Furthermore, the question of security, or the gendered experience of security, requires constant analysis regarding norms, physical insecurity, legal insecurity, and the insecurities created and exacerbated by lack of data. The obstacles hit hardest in areas related to women's economic rights in conflict, including housing, land and property rights, and shrinking space and violent extremism.

Imagining a new peacemaking paradigm
Understanding the gendered complexity of experiencing conflict, and the gendered obstacles to meaningfully participate in building and sustaining peace, is key for any policy framework to have a transformative impact. The same goes for the WPS agenda. The study participants were clear – the current peacemaking paradigm does not work. It is constructed along patriarchal power structures, at best attempting to end violence. It is not possible to think of ways to reform it as there is so little confidence in the current peacemaking paradigm. There is a need to dare to imagine a feminist peace. Only a serious act of deconstruction and reimagining of peacemaking informed by people's priorities and visions can lead the way in transforming how to engage in building and sustaining peace. The study participants conclude the following: For this transformation to happen, two types of investment are needed: Investing in the excluded majority,[2] and investing in an inclusive environment to achieve feminist peace.

March 8 demonstration in Skopje, North Macedonia.
Photographer: Maja Janevska Ilieva

2. This refers to women, LGBTQIA+, and youth in building and sustaining peace processes.

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC RIGHTS IN CONFLICT

- The lack of women's economic power coupled with corruption is an underlying challenge to women's protection from violence, inclusion in decision-making, political participation, and participation in building and sustaining peace at large.

- The economy is weaponised in conflicts, for example in withholding social benefits for certain groups and shrinking the economic space for civil society. Economic migrants can also be used as a pressure force on their home country by denying them protection status, making them vulnerable in their political choices and their security.

- Invisible economic violence against women in conflict, such as the feminisation of poverty and exclusion from the labour market exacerbates women's poverty, marginalises women from the public sphere, and excludes them from influencing economic policy. Gender-blind economic recovery processes increase women's poverty through inadequate access for women to land, property and relevant infrastructure.

- Women waiving their housing, land and property rights to male family members is a traditional expectation across the study contexts. Women's lack of access to their HLP rights also intersects with financial, security, and corruption constraints.

- HLP rights can have a direct impact on local democracy-building in conflict contexts when forced displacement is used to create demographic changes in a way that disrupts the local power balance to serve actors involved in the conflict.

- In frozen conflicts, focus on economic development and democratic reform as an area for win-win solutions to build common ground.

Recommendations:

- **Women should be meaningfully included in economic processes,** including economic reform and recovery plans. Facilitate spaces for women where they can develop their own economic reform visions and recommendations.

- Donors' partnerships with local governments on **infrastructure reconstruction** should have meaningful inclusion of women and women's labour in rural areas as a as a requirement to addressing control over resources.

- **Women's housing, land and property rights need to be explicit in the WPS agenda** as a structural discrimination and exclusion factor against women, which is heightened in conflict contexts and hindering women's protection.

- **Strengthen women's competence around their housing, land and property rights** and how they intersect with their economic and human rights.

- Institutions supporting women's economic activities should **offer targeted support to women agricultural engineers and farmers** as a strategic entry point for normative and economic transformation.

- The international community's **funding to states for service delivery should be conditional to locally identified needs** for service delivery, where women's needs and priorities are directly investigated.

- The international community must **demand and incentivise statistics on women** across all sectors.

- Women's economic empowerment **efforts should not only include short-term trainings.** Efforts must be directed also at normative changes in society that can create long-term transformation.

- **Women should be supported to organise in trade unions,** where applicable, as an additional space for organising and influencing women's economic rights.

- The full implementation of the WPS agenda is systematically hindered by budget limitations. At the same time, women are largely excluded from economic decision-making. Therefore, we propose **a UNSCR resolution on women's economic rights, leadership and participation.** This is of great importance to address the underlying challenge to the full implementation of the WPS agenda.

For detailed information see page 41–47.

WPS policy resonance: UNSCR 1325 para. 8(a), UNSCR 1889 para. 1, 9, 10, 11, UNSCR 2122 para. 7, UNSCR 2250 para. 17.

SHRINKING SPACE AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

- The absence of a legally binding definition of violent extremism puts many human rights groups and activists at risk of indiscriminate persecution.
- Violent extremist groups across ideologies target young people when recruiting.
- The impact of violent extremism on women and communities is manifold; destruction of intercommunity trust, stigmatisation of victims, legal and socioeconomic impacts of proving lineage, and the shrinking space for women's rights and activism.
- Women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders work with the prevention, early warning, and response to violent extremism at the community and individual level.

Recommendations:

- **Support WHRDs and women peacebuilders in their proactive efforts** to address violent extremism by cooperating with the global human rights and women's rights movements.
- The donor community and IFIs should **develop safe financial channels for civil society** so that peacebuilders and activists can continue to be supported also in challenging contexts.
- **Support people's peaceful income** resourcing as a constructive alternative to militarised livelihoods. This can contribute to a preparedness for peace, and mitigate violent extremism.
- **Recognise, resource, and support women and young women's leadership** in the implementation of UNSCR 2242 and UNSCR 2250.
- **Develop contextually relevant localisation plans for UNSCR 2242 and UNSCR 2250,** through which progress can be monitored and measured.
- Peacebuilders and women human rights defenders may be exposed to threats, both from state authorities and from violent extremist groups. **Analyse and mitigate gender-specific risks in engagement with P/CVE,** as requested by UNSCR 2242.[3]

For detailed information see page 48–53.

WPS policy resonance: UNSCR 2242 para. 3, para 11, para. 12, para 13, UNSCR 2250 para. 1, para. 11, para. 13, para. 16.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES

- Women's experiences of discrimination and gendered impacts of conflict on their lives and their families and communities, bring significant perspectives to efforts for building and sustaining peace.
- Peace at the national level is made up of the various contributions on peacebuilding that women make at the individual and local level.
- At the individual level, confident, resilient and empowered women can manage their immediate family and community relationships through defusing tension within the family and preventing intra-community violence.
- Exchange activities conducted by networks of women human rights defenders and peacebuilders across the conflict lines build trust and develop resilient and socially cohesive communities which help to maintain national cohesiveness at times of stress.
- Recognising and enabling women's participation beyond numbers is a precondition for building sustaining peace.

3. UNSCR 2242 (2015) requests UN entities to conduct research on the drivers of radicalisation for women, and the impacts of counter-terrorism strategies on women's human rights and women's organisations, in order to develop targeted and evidence-based policy and programming responses.

Five keys to increase women's participation beyond numbers:

- Allocate an independent fund for women in peace processes. Recognise women's political groups and make independent funds available for women's political organising.

- Form a cross-sectoral thematic task force of women. Create spaces where women can collectively strategise on all issues, including in male-dominated sectors.

- Encourage a quota of ideas by women. Do not only measure the number of women included in a peace process, but their qualitative contribution.

- Document, collect, and recognise women's data. Document women's histories and put more emphasis on what women are doing on the local level to build and sustain peace.

- Support networking and women's rights movement building. Facilitate cross-sectoral networking of organisations, women business leaders, politicians, grassroots activists and labour unions. This is imperative to attain women's rights in conflict contexts, without which sustaining peace will not be possible.

Recommendations:

- International actors, in particular relevant IGOs, funds and programmes, as well as international women's NGOs, should **develop monitoring frameworks and processes that more accurately measure progress and regression** in women's participation and its impact.

- Strengthen the connection between policy and practice through developing **indicators drawing on the everyday peace indicator** to connect local knowledge with the broader WPS initiatives supporting women's participation (everydaypeaceindicators.org).

- The WPS agenda should **provide guidance for an operational framework on country-level, beyond National Action Plans,** that can apply to conflict contexts where unrecognised de-facto governments are in power.

- Invest in **research on the experience of young women's peacebuilding practices** to identify the challenges they face and the support that is required. This will enable a better understanding of the inter-generational dynamics and structural obstacles to women's ability to access decision-making.

For detailed information see page 57–64.

WPS policy resonance: UNSCR 1325 para. 2, para. 8(b)9, UNSCR 1889 para. 1, UNSCR 2122 para. 1, para. 2, para. 6, para. 7, UNSCR 2242 para. 1.

IMAGINING A NEW PEACEMAKING PARADIGM

Investing in the excluded majority:[4]

10 key elements for investing in the capacities of people, focusing on inclusion, intersectionality and investing in local competence.

1. **One size does not fit all.** Inclusion modalities should be responsive to the specific context and provided where people and their needs are.

2. **Language is power.** Be mindful of the exclusionary or inclusive power of language, in terms of terminology, jargon, context suitability, etc.

3. **Timing matters.** The timing of bringing different groups together and of introducing topics can be detrimental to the engagement of people, and to progress.

4. **Broaden the outreach** to non-urban, non-central areas. Conflicts have different pockets of violence with different intensities. Work with pockets of peace and weave them together.

5. **More people, different people.** Develop a range of modalities geared towards the participation of different women, e.g with different mobility levels (due to travel bans, insecurity, disability, etc.)

6. **Engage the diaspora** in solution development while employing a Do No Harm approach. Capacities for conflict and peace are carried with people beyond the direct geography of conflict.

4. This term refers to women, LGBTQIA+ and youth in building and sustaining peace processes.

7. **Actively engage youth** by supporting them to develop their vision for the peace process and the future of their context with equal weight to other actors. Root this in research on the experience of young women peacebuilding practices, challenges, and support required, as well as better understanding of intergenerational dynamics.

8. **Support inclusive leaders** in formal and informal decision-making spaces. This includes political leadership, tribal leadership, community leadership to allow incentivise new political will to emerge.

9. **Invest in political literacy,** especially in contexts hit by political repression. E.g. invest in electoral literacy and informed voting as a foundational stone for democratic participation.

10. **Invest in women's capacities** to be effective political actors and influencers at the peace table through responding to their expertise and providing technical support.

Investing in a conducive environment
– 5 key shifts for a conducive environment for feminist peace:

1. People's priorities in focus

- Create a hotline to collect needs at the grassroots level that would not otherwise make it into the peacemaking table.
- Support local analysis groups.
- Invest in the national capital of gender-equal feminist mediators.
- Support regional committees for dialogue.

2. Adopt a coordinated approach to people's and international diplomacy

- Multi-tracks of diplomacy is seen by WHRDs and women peacebuilders as a necessity for building sustainable peace. While agreements are signed in Track I, they are sustained in Track II and III.
- Recognise community organisers outside the usual NGO framework.
- Invest in and make use of the range of people's diplomacy practices of women peacebuilders, including cultural diplomacy, intergenerational people-to-people meetings, individual visits across conflict lines and spaces for emotional empathy to broaden engagement for peace, cultivate common ground, and break isolation of both people and narratives.
- Invest in regional and international people-to-people mentorship. Local, regional and global women's mediators' networks are valuable resources for such mentorships.

3. Recognise the power in and of diverse spaces for change

- Invest in safe spaces for reflection and learning away from the pressure of delivering quick results – quality over quantity.
- Invest in women-only spaces that allow for non-mainstream perspectives and ideas to emerge, and offer a space for dissent from patriarchal ridicule, hegemony and exclusion.
- Pay attention to language as a space. The way we label issues, use words and frame questions are influenced by and influence the power dynamics in a conflict context.
- Use digital spaces to counteract shrinking physical space – as a space for shared experience, organising, protesting, and debate. Be aware of the algorithmic bias, which further discriminates who accesses what information and creates information bubbles.

4. Recognise education's centrality for economic recovery

- Invest in access to education, it is key to enhance access to economic opportunities, participation in economic recovery, and contributions to building and sustaining peace.
- Invest in education reform in contexts where education is perceived as militarized – fueling grievances, stereotypes xenophopia and other antagonisms.

5. Approach accountability as a two-way process – enhance civil society's independence

- Election monitoring. When authorities reject official monitoring missions, resort to shadow monitoring by the civil society. Listen to the grassroots.
- CSOs can have a monitoring role during conflict and during peace processes across thematic clusters. Introduce a regional "buddy system" of accountability, for prisoner exchanges, service delivery, etc.
- Invest in the legal and technical literacy of the accountability architecture in civil society, in order to maximise its impact. This is particularly important for CSOs working in areas that intersect with legal work, and working in response to victims and survivors.

WPS policy resonance: UNSCR 1325 para. 1, para. 15, UNSCR 1889 para. 1, UNSCR 2122 para. 4, UNSCR 2242 para. 1, para. 5, para. 13, UNSCR 2250 para. 2, para 12.

Chapter 1:

20 YEARS OF THE WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

From understanding to practice

The year 2020 marks 20 years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325. We investigated the meaning of peace and security and the relation between the two for 91 WHRDs and women peacebuilders. Women's views on peace and security are indeed rarely heard. Unless we know what peace and security mean for those most affected, how can we hope to achieve either or even be sure what we are striving for? We must challenge our definitions in order to challenge the status quo.

Chapter 1 presents this understanding and gives an overview of the evolution of the WPS agenda. It also explores how the participants in the study understand the agenda today, and the ways in which they practically use it in their daily work, as well as the obstacles to the full implementation of the agenda in contemporary conflict contexts.

WOMEN'S UNDERSTANDING OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED CONTEXTS

In this section, we explore 91 women human rights defenders' and peacebuilders' understanding of peace and security. How do they perceive the relation between peace and security, and how do peace and security manifest themselves in their daily lives.

A prevalent perspective among participants who consider that they live in highly militarised environments, including in Iraq and Ukraine, is that a minimum level of security is a prerequisite for peace. A Ukrainian participant commented that "a minimum requirement for peace is physical security. Otherwise, you are preoccupied with survival, not about building peace". This approach tends to reflect the WPS policy framework that peace requires an integrated approach based on coherence between politics, security, development, human rights, including gender equality, and rule of law and justice related activities (preamble to UNSCR 2122).

Yet other participants, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina where the militarisation of society is not experienced in the same way as in Iraq and Ukraine, for example, consider that where there is peace, there is security – in this light, security is the outcome of peace.

KEY FINDINGS:
- The study participants understand peace as a basic right comprising multiple freedoms, existing at the personal, family and broader societal level in a state of sustained peace.
- The study participants understand security within the parameters of human security, not to be overridden by national state security.
- The study participants consider inclusive development as central to preventing conflict and ensuring sustainable peace and human security.

Peace

"One can dream about the future, peace is a journey not an end." Participant from Syria

The participants' understanding of peace aligns with the WPS policy framework of peace as more than the absence of war: peace must be sustainable. Yet participants' understanding of peace extends beyond the WPS policy framework; women human rights defenders and peacebuilders believe peace is a basic right, comprising the exercise of multiple freedoms, existing at the personal, family and broader societal level. The participants' understanding of peace comprises the following elements:

Normal/Simple/Basic. Participants describe peace as a basic right and need. *"Peace is like air, a mandatory requirement which gives life, security, and the opportunity to grow and develop"* (participant from Ukraine). Yet the quality of peace also connotates an environment in which people have the basic right of "normalcy" where *"I can just read a book without being disturbed by breaking news"* (participant from Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Living with multiple freedoms. Participants describe peace as enabling freedom to live with all their identities – as women, feminists, peacebuilders, activists, and also not being punished, marginalised or excluded because of what they say, think or look like, and who they are. Freedom also comprises the freedoms of choice, communication and movement.

Levels of peace. Participants experience peace at different "levels". This refers to the levels of peace which together lead to real peace: personal peace – the peace inside yourself, our soul and mind; peace within the family; and a broader peace within the community, society and beyond, built upon openness and sharing values with each other instead of categorising and dividing. It also refers to the quality of peace experienced geographically – *"The country is like the body – if one part is sick, the whole body is sick."* (participant from Ukraine).

Peace must be sustainable. Across the study contexts, participants are clear that peace is more than just the absence of war. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a participant explained that although *"we live in a country where the war officially ended more than 25 years ago, we still don't have peace because our political scene constantly breeds fear, which means that every day we wonder if we will wake up to war".*

Security

"Security means that nothing worse will happen tomorrow. That you know what is going on....
Actually, when I think about it, I realise that I am not secure." Participant from Ukraine

The study participants regard security as an inclusive process and outcome, dependent upon the fulfilment of mutually reinforcing elements. This includes physical, psychological, political, governance and justice, economic, social, access to services, and environmental aspects. Such an approach reflects ongoing international policy discussions on the concept of "human security" as opposed to "national", "state" or "hard security". Yet the international WPS policy framework does not deconstruct and contextualise security from the perspective of women living in conflict and post-conflict contexts. As with "peace", the way that women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders perceive "security" in conflict and post-conflict contexts is broader than the understanding set out within the international WPS policy framework.

Many women human rights defenders and peacebuilders across the study contexts expressed difficulty in imagining themselves as feeling secure. Some considered security to be an *"unattainable dream"*. Participants described two aspects of security; national or state security, and inclusive or human security. The challenge, identified by a Ukrainian participant, is to see *"how these two aspects of security should interact with each other: I do not believe that one (state security) should violate the other (human security)."* Across the study contexts, participants experience and perceive a broad, self-reinforcing multidimensional definition of security, not limited by understandings of conventional security. This reflects the analysis of feminist political scientists that security cannot be achieved without gender justice and the empowerment of women in all their various roles as security providers (Tickner 2018). The multidimensional definition of security includes the following elements:

Everyday physical security – the absence of physical threats. This occurs when the state security apparatus is doing its job and militias are not threatening to the population. *"I am able to go out to my street without fearing something bad could happen to me as a woman because society now considers violence as undesirabl."* (participant in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Psychological security. This factor refers, in the words of an Azerbaijani participant, to eluding *"the sense of war as always hanging over my head like a Damocles sword"*. Psychological security enables participants to plan for the future, to know their children have a future and, in the case of Syrian refugees living in surrounding countries, to know that they are safe from the threat of deportation.

Political security. Political security encompasses many elements including citizens' trust in state institutions, the absence of extra-constitutional powers, and freedom from political persecution. Political insecurity grows in the absence of accountability, access to justice, and space for freedom of expression and political diversity.

Governance and justice security. Insecurity arises from weak governance, justice and the rule of law, and pervasive corruption. A participant from Bosnia and Herzegovina explained how corrupt politics had cascaded from the top political level down to the bottom, creating a way of living that not only touches the political elite but all of society, thereby creating resistance to its reform.

Social security. Social security arises when citizens enjoy secure social status without discrimination or marginalisation, where women exercise equal rights and enjoy equal access to opportunities, where young people are valued and respected for their roles in generating solutions, and where social and community solidarity prevails.

Economic security. Economic security, enabled through dignified economic opportunities and livelihoods, as well as decent and affordable housing, is an intrinsic element of security.

Access to services security. Access to services such as education, administrative or civil documents, and health, including sexual and reproductive health, especially for women living in rural areas, are essential to feeling secure.

Environmental security. Ukrainian participants were particularly articulate about the need for environmental security, especially in Donetsk due to underground mine contamination.

Security to return in dignity and safety. Internally displaced participants (IDPs) explained their specific understanding of security as including the ability to return home in dignity and safety.

The impact of the conflict cycle

Participants understanding of conflict, peace and security evolves considerably during the cycle of conflict. This evolution in thinking and perspective arises largely from deconstructing and understanding the impact of propaganda and polarising narratives on individuals and society, and specifically understanding how, as citizens, they are manipulated by political leaders to react and respond in predetermined ways. This new awareness and understanding arises, for many women human rights defenders and peacebuilders, as a result of meeting women from the other side or otherwise hearing their stories.

Many participants across the study contexts revealed that they experienced a strong sense of physical security and stability before the outbreak of violent conflict. Yet they also recognise that this security and stability was not enjoyed by all citizens, especially those harbouring political views opposing the regime. As the conflict turned increasingly violent, some participants got pulled into the narratives stoked by nationalist leaders and may themselves have experienced aggressive feelings about others. At this point, peace was often understood in binary terms as the absence of fighting. As the conflict progressed, many women began to recognise the militarisation of society. Yet it was only with continuing conflict that participants discerned the nationalist propaganda and polarising narrative of state and state-allied militia aimed at instrumentalising citizens to react and respond in a specifically aggressive manner towards others. Women also came to realise that focusing their energies on responding to a common enemy absolved the state from investing in the alleviation of domestic socio-economic hardships, which, in turn, worsened the daily lives of ordinary people.

At the point of reaching this greater understanding of the machinations, motivations and manipulation of conflict, many participants were exposed to women from the other side through dialogue and trust-building processes or by hearing their stories otherwise. For many women, individual contact with others encouraged them to become "real peacebuilders": *"I learned to look at conflict from the other perspective and to open up to an alternative. Having heard their stories, I now understand what it means to walk in their shoes. With age, experience and exposure to the other side, my outlook on conflict, peace and security has changed."* – Azerbaijani participant

Some participants, especially those from Bosnia-Herzegovina, explained that they were not feminists before and during the war. It was only when they saw the impact of the war on society that they learned how to articulate feminism and a feminist approach to peace. Other participants, however, including some from Iraq and Ukraine, noted that they approach the conflict from a feminist perspective and see the tentacles of patriarchy, nationalism and militarism in initiating, prolonging and profiting from the conflict. In regards to whether conflict has in some ways "improved" the opportunities and lives of women, a Syrian participant summarised the subjectivities at play as follows: *"Over the past eight years, women have become more politicised – we are active and aware. Some women have experienced a sense of empowerment. But they and others have also experienced destruction – from outside and from within. Their stories depend on where they live and what they have experienced. Whether conflict has improved Syrian women's lives is entirely subjective."*

The peace, security and development nexus

Participants understand that inclusive development is central in preventing conflict and ensuring sustainable peace and human security. This understanding is in line with recent developments within the WPS policy framework, the YPS policy framework and the international sustainable development, preventing conflict and sustaining peace agendas. While none of the participants mentioned the Sustainable Development Goals or the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a number of participants either explicitly stated that "development" would lead to sustainable peace and inclusive security, or noted that certain conditions are required to be in place to sustain peace, such as the rule of law, secure economic and social status for women, and trained and productive young people. Those conditions are directly aligned with SDG 5 and SDG 16.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

This section provides an overview of the evolution of the WPS agenda, exploring how it covers the following elements:

- Women's experience and understanding of peace and security
- The rationale for women's participation in peace and security issues
- The nature of women's participation in peacebuilding
- Obstacles to women's participation in peacebuilding
- International support to women's participation in peacebuilding

From this overview, we can conclude that although it took 15 years to elaborate, the rationale for women's participation, including young women, in conflict-prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding has been acknowledged and spelled out in clear terms by the Security Council, with considerable – and sustained – pressure, direction, and guidance provided by local and international women's organisations over the years.

UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, adopted in 2000 following global advocacy by local and international women's organisations, articulates the international WPS policy framework relating to the participation of women in building and sustaining peace (United Nations 2000). A number of subsequent UNSCRs on Women, Peace and Security, notably, UNSCRs 1889 (United Nations 2009b), 2122 (United Nations 2013b), 2242 (United Nations 2015c), as well as UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (United Nations 2015d), further elaborate and expand the international policy framework applicable to the participation of women in building and sustaining peace. UNSCR 2250 is deliberately included as part of the policy agenda framing this study in order to promote a more coherent, intersectional approach to the practices of women in resolving conflict, and building and sustaining peace. The remaining resolutions on WPS (UNSCRs 1820, 1888, 1960, 2106 and 2467) largely focused on conflict-related sexual violence and make limited reference to women's participation (United Nations 2008;2009a;2010;2013a;2019b). As such, the conflict resolution and peacebuilding experience, practice and obstacles facing women across the six conflict-affected contexts within this study are analysed largely

against the international policy framework set out within UNSCRs 1325, 1889, 2122, 2242 and 2250, though where relevant other WPS resolutions are also drawn upon. Since before 2000, local and international women's organisations have played a central role in bringing the rights, experience and perspectives of women in conflict and post-conflict contexts to the attention of the Security Council and other interested member states. They have also illuminated, facilitated and supported the development of appropriate international responses to promote women's participation.

Reflecting women's experience and understanding of 'peace' and 'security'

Security Council resolution 1325 does not explicitly set out how women experience and perceive "peace" and "security". Indeed, the preamble of UNSCR 1325 merely refers to the *"consequent impact of targeting civilians, particularly women and girls, on durable peace and security"*. UNSCR 2122, adopted 13 years after UNSCR 1325, was a result of the continuing information advocacy efforts of local and international women's organisations towards the Security Council on women's lived experience of conflict and post conflict-contexts. This resolution somewhat advanced the understanding of how women experience peace and security in conflict and post-conflict settings through reference to the then-evolving concept of sustainable peace. Specifically, the preamble of UNSCR 2122 states that *"sustainable peace requires an integrated approach based on coherence between politics, security, development, human rights, including gender equality, and rule of law and justice related activities"*. UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, adopted in 2015, went a step further in linking development to peace and security through inclusion, by recognising in its preamble that *"inclusive development as a key for preventing conflict and enabling long-term stability and sustaining peace and the importance of identifying and addressing social, economic, political, cultural and religious exclusion, intolerance, as well as violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, as drivers of conflict"*. As such, through its consideration of the WPS and more recently the YPS agenda, the Security Council has incrementally come to view inclusive development as key to prevent conflict and sustain peace.

The rationale for women's participation in peace and security issues

The Security Council's elaboration and expansion of the WPS agenda during its first 15 years suggests a gradual understanding on the part of the Security Council of the rationale of women's participation in peace and security issues and the consequences of not including women in preventing conflict and peacebuilding. While UNSCR 1325 notes that women can *"significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security"*, it took sustained efforts by local and international women's organisations, supported by a handful of Security Council members and other supportive states, to recognise the promotion and empowerment of women and women's organisations and networks as essential to *"consolidate peace"* in UNSCR 1888. One year later, in 2009, the Security Council acknowledged the *"vital role"* of women "in the prevention and resolution of conflict and peacebuilding", that the *"marginalisation of women can delay or undermine the achievement of durable peace, security and reconciliation" and, most significantly operative paragraph 14 refers to "women's empowerment as an integral part of post-conflict peacebuilding"*. Four years later, in 2013, again steered by local and international women's organisations, the Security Council moved on to recognise that in addition to women's and girl's em-powerment, *"gender equality are (sic) critical to efforts to maintain international peace and security"* in UNSCR 2122.

Following the three high level UN peace and security reviews conducted in 2015, and their consideration of women's participation in formal peace processes and peacebuilding (UN Women 2015; United Nations 2015b, 2015a), the Security Council highlighted the *"substantial link between women's meaningful involvement in efforts to prevent, resolve and rebuild from conflict and those efforts' effectiveness and long-term sustainability"* in UNSCR 2242 that was adopted in the same year. In the same resolution, the Security Council expresses concern regarding *"the frequent under-representation of women in many formal processes and bodies related to the maintenance of in-ternational peace and security.... the lack of support for women's leadership roles in humanitarian settings, insufficient financing for women, peace and security, and the resulting detrimental impact on the maintenance of international peace and security"*. Also in 2015, the Security Council explicitly addressed the *"important role youth can play in the prevention and resolution of conflict and as a key aspect of the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peace-keeping and peacebuilding efforts"* noting that the marginalisation of youth is *"detrimental to building sustainable peace in all societies"* in UNSCR 2250. Though it took 15 years to elaborate, the rationale for women's participation, including young women, in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding has been acknowledged and spelled out in clear terms by the Security Council, with considerable – and sustained – pressure, direction, and guidance provided by local and international women's organisations over the years.

The nature of women's participation in peacebuilding

Over the course of the first 15 years of the WPS agenda in practice, the Security Council has elaborated and expanded upon the ways, mechanisms and fora in which women should participate in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This also reflects broader dynamics and trends within international peace and security. For instance, UNSCR 1325 urges member states to *"increase the representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict"* and calls upon all relevant actors to *"support women's local peace initiatives, indigenous processes for conflict resolution and measures that involve women in implementation mechanisms of peace agreements"*. UNSCR 1889 adopted nine years later in 2009, expanded upon the call for women's participation to go from increasing numbers to improving actual participation: member states are encouraged to take measures to *"improve women's participation during all stages of peace processes, particularly in conflict resolution, post-conflict planning and peacebuilding"* and the Secretary-General is directed to *"improve the participation of women in political and economic decision-making from the earliest stages of the peacebuilding process"* and to encourage *"the full participation of women"* in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Support Office.

In UNSCR 2242, adopted in 2015, the Security Council sets forth a wide range of activities in which women should start to participate. These include *"the meaningful participation of civil society organisations at international and regional peace and security meetings"*, encouraging the *"hosts of such meetings to give due consideration to facilitating a cross representation of civil society participants"*, and calling upon member states to *"further integrate the women peace and security agenda into their strategic plans [...] through broad consultation, including with civil society, in particular women's organisations"*. UNSCR 2242 also urges member states and the United Nations system to *"ensure the participation and leadership of women and women's organisations in developing counter-terrorism and violent extremism strategies"*. This was the first time the Security Council called for the participation and leadership of women and women's organisations to develop peace and security-related strategies. Likewise, for the first time and following adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty in 2013, women are encouraged to *"participate in the design and implementation of efforts related to the prevention, combating and eradication of the illicit transfer and misuse of small arms and light weapons"*. Over nearly 20 years of practice, the Security Council has expanded the breadth of peace and security-related issues in which women's participation is expected, encouraged and supported. Likewise, the Security Council has expanded the various mechanisms, processes and fora in which the diversity of women and their participation is now encouraged and expected.

Obstacles to women's participation in peacebuilding

The Security Council resolutions relating to WPS set out a number of persistent obstacles to women's full involvement in the prevention and resolution of conflict and participation in post-conflict public life. These obstacles are set out in UNSCR 1889 and include *"violence and intimidation, lack of security and lack of rule of law, cultural discrimination and stigmatisation, including the rise of extremist or fanatical views on women"*. Other obstacles include socio-economic factors, such as *"the lack of access to education, as well as the lack of adequate recognition or financing"* of women's capacity building, and the *"focus on women as victims and not as actors in addressing and resolving situations of armed conflict"*, also set out in UNSCR 1889. UNSCR 1820 recognises that these obstacles erode women's capacity and legitimacy to participate in post-conflict public life and that this, in turn, has a negative impact on durable peace, security and reconciliation, including post-conflict peace building. UNSCR 2122 goes a step further in noting that *"the economic empowerment of women greatly contributes to the stabilisation of societies emerging from armed conflict"*.

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I didn't know about the role of women in peacebuilding. UNSCR 1325 gave me an understanding that we can and should participate in peacebuilding. It educated me.

PARTICIPANT FROM IRAQ

FROM UNDERSTANDING TO PRACTICE; RELEVANCE AND PERSISTENT OBSTACLES

"The international women, peace and security agenda is a fortress for women's actions."
Participant from Bosnia and Herzegovina

KEY FINDINGS:

- Most participants are familiar with UNSCR 1325 and use it to support their conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts.
- Most participants are not familiar with the other WPS resolutions and do not necessarily perceive the set of resolutions as a consolidated agenda.
- Participants view UNSCR 1325 as comprising a vision of women's rights, needs and priorities in conflict and post conflict contexts, a roadmap to demand women's rights, gender equality and sustainable peace, and an accountability framework for states and international actors.
- Participants largely agree that the most significant aspect of UNSCR 1325 lies in its international legitimisation of women's rights, aspirations and spaces to participate in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.
- Participants are divided as to whether the overall direction of the WPS agenda is driven by local women actors and needs on the ground, or by INGOs and women removed from the realities of women in conflict contexts.

Familiarity with the WPS and the YPS resolutions

Nearly all participants knew of UNSCR 1325 and its general message. Some participants, particularly those engaged in developing UNSCR 1325 national action plans, were highly familiar with the contents of the resolution. Most participants familiar with UNSCR 1325 – though not all – reported that they use it to support their peacebuilding activities. However, not all participants were familiar with UNSCR 1325, particularly those participants located in more rural locations and/or those not part of established women's organisations.

Beyond UNSCR 1325, most participants were not familiar with the other relevant WPS UNSCRs – indeed many had not heard of them. A small number of participants were familiar with UNSCR 2242 – often those working with women in countering terrorism and violent extremism. Similarly, a few participants, mainly young women, were familiar with UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security.

The relevance of the WPS agenda to women in conflict contexts

There is significant common ground in how women from across the study contexts understand the WPS agenda. Common characteristics of this understanding include the following:

Reflects a vision of women for women. UNSCR 1325 puts forward a vision to respond to women's rights, needs and priorities in conflict and post-conflict contexts, developed by women from across the globe.

Conveys international recognition to women's rights. As a representation of international political will at the highest global political body, UNSCR 1325 wields a force, weight and authority that national legislation does not. As a document expressing international standards, UNSCR 1325 helps women and national and international actors to understand that women's claims for their rights have a strong legal base.

Conveys legitimacy to claim the space for women's rights. Women require spaces where they can be active and where they can participate. These are both physical and mental spaces and opportunities. The WPS agenda recognises the need for such spaces and provides legitimacy and protection to women, especially within their communities, to claim the space.

Acknowledges women as drivers of peacebuilding processes. Previously, women were told by national and international actors that "peace is too difficult – it's not a 'woman's issue'". UNSCR 1325 recognises women as a driver of processes to resolve conflict and build and sustain peace – the WPS agenda helps women to reimagine themselves as subjects and not objects of the peace process.

Provides a roadmap with something for everyone. UNSCR 1325 sets out a roadmap with structure and steps to demand women's rights, gender equality and sustainable peace. The agenda tackles the daily life of women across a breadth of issues. This enables everyone to work on what they want to focus on.

Offers an accountability framework. UNSCR 1325 national action plans enable women to demand action and support from national and international actors and to hold them accountable for the implementation of international obligations.

Tool for awareness raising of women. UNSCR 1325 is a tool for women activists to make other women aware of their rights and to help women to both recognise and play a peacebuilding role in their communities.

To some extent driven by local women. Participants who were familiar with how UNSCR 1325 came about, stated that the WPS agenda was driven largely by local women and responded to locally identified needs and priorities, usually identified by women and women's organisations. In a few cases however, such as in the development of the Ukrainian UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan, there was a lack of agreement among participants as to whether the plan had largely resulted from the impetus of international actors or local women's organisations. Participants who were less familiar with the history of the development of the WPS agenda viewed it as a top-down tool for exerting pressure, particularly on national governments that are viewed to be more receptive to anything that comes from Security Council.

Organising and bridgebuilding tool. The WPS agenda can help to build bridges across ideological differences among women, and help women and women's organisations come together, discuss problems and organise their responses around shared interests.

Facilitates sharing of women's experience. Many women experiencing conflict consider theirs to be a unique experience that no one else has gone through before. Through sharing women's experiences and practices from other conflict and post-conflict contexts, women understand that they are not alone. They discover that other women have worked through similar obstacles, which provides them with inspiration and motivation to continue.

Fosters national and international solidarity. The WPS agenda provides an opportunity for the development of local, regional and international networks and their exchange, thereby fostering both national and international solidarity.

SIX WAYS IN WHICH WOMEN PRACTICALLY APPLY THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA TO BUILD AND SUSTAIN PEACE

"Participation in building peace is the soul of Security Council Resolution 1325." *Participant from Iraq*

Many participants use the WPS agenda, mainly UNSCR 1325, strategically in order to build peace.

1. Mobilise, organise and build coalitions among women;
2. Identify and prioritise women's needs and rights in conflict and post-conflict contexts, and develop strategies to advance women's needs and rights;
3. Strengthen women's potential to build peace;
4. Raise awareness among the broader community to support women's rights and women's potential to build peace;
5. Create policy to implement and monitor women's rights and gender equality; and
6. Advocate with local, national and international actors to implement the WPS agenda.

1. Mobilising, organising and building coalitions among women

Women use UNSCR 1325 as a tool to mobilise, organise and build coalitions among women individuals and organisations at the local, national, regional and international level. At the local and national level, organising may focus around formal processes, such as joint reporting on the implementation of UNSCR 1325, as in the case of Azerbaijan. At the regional level, women referred to their experience in setting up or participating in various regional UNSCR 1325 platforms, including the South Caucasus Network of Women Mediators, comprising two women from each of the following contexts: Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The purpose of the

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The women, peace and security agenda can bridge some of our ideological differences by bringing organisations together and discussing our common problems.

PARTICIPANT FROM AZERBAIJAN

network is to build upon common obstacles faced by women in the South Caucasus. A regional UNSCR 1325 WPS platform comprising all the former Soviet states has also been set up to exchange information and to take preventative action. Internationally, women from Bosnia and Herzegovina have shared experiences on the impact of the failure to include women in peace processes, and the post-conflict political settlement with Ukrainian women and Iraqi women are active within global peacebuilding networks. Women from all study contexts work "in tandem" with international women's organisations as part of the global women's rights and feminist movement, wherein international women's organisations adopt an advocacy role with national and international actors, especially in multilateral for a, and provide technical and financial support directly to local women's organisations.

2. Identifying women's priorities and developing strategies

"We never thought we could. UNSCR 1325 makes me see, feel and realise that our priorities, needs and rights are of value." Participant from Armenia

Women use UNSCR 1325 as a tool to collectively identify and collate women's priorities in conflict and post-conflict contexts. These priorities are then analysed and integrated into strategies to advance women's participation in peace and security-related issues. In five of the study contexts covered – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq and Ukraine - UNSCR 1325 national action plans had either been developed and implemented (though largely not implemented in practice) or were in the process of development. Participants described the UNSCR 1325 national action plans as processes that – to varying degrees – reflect the prioritisation and strategic efforts of local women's organisations.

3. Strengthening women's potential to build peace

"Women need to know that participation is a right and a duty towards their country and not a gift given by men." Participant from Syria

Many women human rights defenders and peacebuilders have brought together their work on UNSCR 1325 with other relevant international tools to maximise their efforts to raise awareness of their rights to participate among women. This includes the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW 1981), the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe 2011), the Beijing Platform (United Nations 1995), and to a much lesser extent the Universal Periodic Review process. Raising awareness takes place through trainings, round tables, the publication of reports on UNSCR 1325, and bringing women from different communities together as a form of people diplomacy. Syrian women, who are not activists or women with political experience, attend community leadership workshops. A total of 8 workshops lasting 3–4 days each, take place in Syria and the neighbouring countries over a period of 8 months (to allow for family commitments). The workshops introduce women to various concepts, such as gender equality, and then the women work on analysing and understanding their own experience from the perspective of UNSCR 1325 and CEDAW. Women join these workshops because they want to develop new skills and improve their family situations.

Awareness raising is tailored to young women so that they can learn about their rights and make their own decisions. In Armenia, this includes watching films about the lives of other young women, followed by group discussions. In Iraq, young women use sports to build the self-confidence of young women. Young women can go and swim at a local women-only pool where they feel safe. The young women are taught to swim by other young women. Over time, the new swimmers feel more relaxed and confident, as they have a break from family life and they have a new skill that they enjoy. For these young women, sport is a life-changer – sport allows women to relieve stress and to gain a new perspective on their lives. In turn, the behaviour of the men in their families changes as a result of the change in the women's minds, outlook and behaviour.

4. Awareness raising of the broader community on women's rights

Women also carry out awareness raising efforts among the general population, including children, male religious, tribal and community leaders, and the media. These efforts focus on building a culture of peace and tolerance among children and youth, promoting women's rights among male elders, and educating and challenging the media to tackle prevailing gender (and other) stereotypes including through sharing women's stories and experiences. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, women activists sent open letters to the general public, attaching copies of UNSCR 1325 and CEDAW, explaining that some women who had been voted in as parliamentarians had been replaced by men from their political parties. They called on voters to demand these newly appointed men to be removed.

5. Create policy to implement and monitor women's rights and gender equality

Women human rights defenders and peacebuilders use the WPS agenda to create policy to implement and monitor women's rights and gender equality, including women's participation in peacebuilding. This includes contributing to the development and adoption of laws, such as the Law on Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the establishment of institutions, such as the Agency for Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Gender Centres in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska; and the development and adoption of relevant strategies and plans, such as the Bosnian UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan and various municipal action plans.

6. Advocating with local, national and international actors to implement the WPS agenda

Women expend considerable effort, time and resources in advocating with local and national actors to implement UNSCR 1325 beyond the adoption of related policies. In Ukraine, women's organisations arranged roundtables in 7 oblasts (regions) in 2017. Oblast officials came together to discuss their responsibilities under UNSCR 1325, CEDAW and the national plan on gender equality. These roundtables were an important step towards the regional implementation of UNSCR 1325, including the adoption of local UNSCR 1325 action plans.

Likewise, women's organisations lobby for international actors to implement UNSCR 1325. Irvine refers to this as the "double boomerang effect", which involves mobilising local support through grassroots campaigns and regional networks in order to force the United Nations and other international actors to comply with their own resolutions concerning women, peace and security (Irvine 2013). In Armenia, a UNSCR 1325 Monitoring Group, comprised of 8 civil society organisations, received training on monitoring UNSCR 1325 and, since 2014, has published reports on the status of implementation of UNSCR 1325. The UNSCR 1325 Monitoring Group has organised roundtables with interested states and international organisations, including the OSCE, to discuss the report and to lobby the OSCE to push for implementation of the recommendations outlined in the report. The Armenian Government's response to the report is unknown, as is the follow up, if any, by international actors on national actors regarding the report.

> **The overall shortcoming is that the 'Women, Peace and Security' is rather general and unfocused on the challenges and opportunities that affect our daily lives.**

PARTICIPANT FROM BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

SEVEN OBSTACLES TO THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

The participants identified a set of 7 persistent obstacles that remain a challenge in putting the agenda to a transformative use:

1. The agenda is implicit on diverse creative ways in which women are building and sustaining peace.

2. There is a lack of political will by national and regional actors to meaningfully implement the WPS agenda.

3. There is a lack of international accountability mechanisms for the WPS agenda.

4. Statehood-related obstacles for women in contexts with de-facto governments.

5. Patriarchal systems and gender discrimination.

6. Gender-based violence.

7. Security.

1. The WPS agenda does not adequately reflect women's rights, priorities and peacebuilding practices

Women human rights defenders and peacebuilders consider the WPS agenda to be silent on the many diverse creative ways in which women are building and sustaining peace, including developing intercommunity dialogue, promoting inclusion mechanisms in peace processes, and using digital and intangible cultural heritage practices. Similarly, the WPS agenda does not effectively recognise and support the contributions of different women to peacebuilding, including young and older women, secular and religious women, displaced and returnee women.

   Likewise, women human rights defenders and peacebuilders believe that the WPS agenda fails to adequately reflect the evolving obstacles to the exercise of women's rights in conflict and post-conflict contexts, and specifically to women's peacebuilding efforts. Foremost, these obstacles are the relationship between the political economy and women's participation. The WPS agenda does not adequately analyse and acknowledge the impact of women's limited economic power on their ability to exercise their right to participate in building and sustaining peace (see Chapter 2). Corruption in conflict and post-conflict contexts, and its corrosive excluding influence on women's participation in public life, particularly within formal politics, also remains unaddressed in the WPS agenda, notwithstanding its ubiquitous and entirely expected incidence in conflict and post-conflict contexts. The WPS agenda also fails to highlight obstacles to women's ability to access justice, such as difficulties in exercising HLP rights (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina), and in accessing administrative documentation (e.g. Syria), which in turn impinges upon women's ability to participate in peacebuilding. Equally, the WPS agenda does not reflect and respond to the current threats facing civil society and to women's rights and women's organising specifically (see Chapter 2). Put simply, a number of women human rights defenders and peacebuilders consider that the WPS agenda does not apply to their lives and that it does thus not lead to an improvement in their lives. As a Syrian participant explained, if women don't know how to use the contents of the WPS resolutions and navigate the relevant policy architecture, then the international community would have unintentionally created a system of inequality by placing the agenda in the Security Council.

2. The lack of political will on the part of national and regional actors to implement the WPS agenda

"How can you say there is political will to implement the UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan when hardly any local and central authorities know about and understand the national action plan?" Participant from Ukraine

The lack of political will on the part of national and subnational actors to implement the WPS agenda, and specifically to support women's participation, is a key obstacle to women's efforts to build and sustain peace. This refers to the lack of will, interest and support on the part of those exercising and holding formal political power, as well as those wielding informal political power especially at the community level, such as religious, tribal, community and economic leaders, the vast majority of whom are men across all study contexts. The monopolisation of political will by men from the highest to the lowest rungs of decision-making encapsulates the patriarchal challenge facing women and society more broadly.

   Iraqi and Ukrainian women human rights defenders and peacebuilders cite the lack of political will to promote women's participation as evidenced by the motivation behind the official adoption of UNSCR 1325 national action plans. In both cases, women believe that the motivation for their adoption was not to improve the rights of women. Instead, the adoption of the national action plans was a "displacement tactic", designed to improve

the standing of the central Government of Iraq and the Kurdish Regional Government and the Ukrainian Government respectively in the eyes of the international community. The adoption of the UNSCR 1325 national action plans enabled governments to "show" proactivity while expecting international actors to pick up the costs of implementation.

3. The lack of international accountability of the WPS agenda

Despite the fact that Article 25 of the UN Charter says all members of the UN should "agree to carry out and accept the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the present Charter", many women human rights defenders and peacebuilders perceive the WPS agenda as a set of non-binding resolutions. This is specifically so due to the failure of international actors to hold national actors accountable to their WPS obligations. This failure in accountability is seen as the most significant obstacle to effectively use the WPS agenda to advance women's efforts to build and sustain peace. Armenian and Azerbaijani participants drew attention to the lack of consultation by the OSCE Minsk Group engaged in supporting resolution of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh with the independent Minsk Group comprised of civil society in Armenia and Azerbaijan, including some women's organisations. Not only does the OSCE Minsk Group meet infrequently with civil society, participants contend that the OSCE Minsk Group pays very little attention to civil society's suggestions, with the implication that the OSCE has not understood the rationale for women's participation in the peace process.

Otto explains this *"disconnection between repeated international commitments and the continuing reality of women's exclusion from the formal process of international peace and security"* as a form of "ritualism", whereby states subscribe to institutionalised rituals that repeatedly affirm certain goals, despite having little or no commitment to their substantive realisation. Ritualism may have become the anchoring point for international legal and institutional engagement with women's participation, underscoring the enormity of the challenge to change this pattern (Otto 2016).

Participants also drew attention to the structures, practices and mindsets of international actors, ostensibly engaged in supporting women's participation, as actually limiting transformative political and programmatic support to women's participation, referring in particular to the lack of women at senior levels within UN entities, where even the Secretary-General has acknowledged the *"entrenched gendered power relations and institutional culture of the Organisation"* (SG WPS 2018). Likewise, referring specifically the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, though equally applicable across all study contexts, Walsh notes that overcoming the *"masculinised structures of the OSCE Minsk Group"* in which traditional diplomacy – *"in other words elitist, opaque and state-centric"* – has failed to yield security. It requires political will to include women's groups *"as a priority and not a side show"* and a deeper understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects of women's participation in peace processes, which the major actors appear happy to leave off the agenda for now (Walsh 2014). It is important to be mindful of the normative structures on gender produced by international institutions that continually reproduce gendered subjectivities that are invested with the gender expectations of the institution (Heathcote 2018).

4. Statehood-related obstacles

"Given the nature of our state, to whom do international actors leverage pressure on to comply with the women, peace and security agenda?" Participant from Nagorno-Karabakh

The contexts considered in this study reveal obstacles impacting women's participation which result directly from the nature of the specific legal, and de facto political and governance arrangements, prevailing in each context. Participants living in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region note that though some women are familiar with UNSCR 1325, they are, in fact, uncertain as to whether UNSCR 1325 is applicable to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh given the contested nature of its status where "state" officials do not confirm whether they are using the agenda. The question arises as to how women can use the WPS agenda and hold the "government" accountable while they live in an internationally unrecognised territory that has not formally confirmed its adoption of UNSCR 1325? In Bosnia and Herzegovina, participants articulated specific harmonisation obstacles arising from the existence and competences of the two entities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, and the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This means that though Bosnia and Herzegovina has a UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan, much of it remains unimplemented, largely because of the specific political system and the challenges this presents to working together at the national level.

Participants in Iraq, Syria and Ukraine identified similar obstacles resulting from the lack of central state authority and control over all territory of the country which, in turn, impacts the ability to develop and implement comprehensive strategic approaches to advance women's rights. In Iraq, the UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan is to be implemented jointly by the central Government of Iraq and the Kurdish Regional Government, adding another layer of complexity – in an already complex context – to the coordination, implementation and monitoring of the plan. In Ukraine, who is to be held accountable for implementation of the WPS agenda in the non-government controlled areas? Likewise, in Syria, where different governance arrangements are in effect in government, non-government controlled areas and the Kurdish region, who is responsible for the agenda?

5. Patriarchy and gender stereotyping

Deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and discriminatory gender stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family, which perpetuate women's subordination within the family and society, are the principal originators and drivers – the original source – of the various obstacles facing women's access to resources and opportunities, and specifically women's participation in peacebuilding. Huber, writing in reference to the Syrian context, notes that issues that traditionally challenge women are compounded by the impact of conflict (Huber 2015), while others commentating on the situation in Ukraine state that the conflict has led to the return to more traditional gender roles and patriarchal models of marital relations as a survival strategy during crisis (UCSR 2015).

Local culture and traditions are the primary originators and drivers of the patriarchal attitudes and practices that constrain, restrain, and prevent women's participation in building and sustaining peace. Significantly, participants from all study contexts cited the use of religion by religious leaders, institutions and political parties to entrench domination of the male religious-political elite. An Iraqi participant stated that this included *"demanding that woman should stay as victims of early marriage, without humanity, she should feel that she is not very important, that she is without value or rights: a very marginal thing, subsidiary thing"*. The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) describes male political and social spaces in Iraq as affected by *"an excessive influence of religious leaders, which in turn often results in the exclusion of women and secular groups from social interactions which could have potential for conflict transformation"* (EPLO 2017). Likewise, the societal perspective of politics as "dirty business" also facilitates women's exclusion from the political space (Kvinna till Kvinna 2012; Kozloff 2018). Having internalised these views, attitudes and mindsets, some women, in turn, *"accept the prevailing notion that they are inferior to men"* (USIP 2019) and perpetuate patriarchal attitudes, questioning women's abilities, qualifications and place in the public sphere.

Even in contexts where gender equality policies and regulations have been adopted, Simic notes that the contrast between what is "on paper" and what is "in reality" with regard to gender relations in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina is striking (Simic 2015). This gap is not a simple "delay" of society in responding to the objectives of gender equality. It is in fact a deep structural resistance and the exact depth of the gap between "normative and real" that is the major challenge for gender equality (Hughson 2014).

"

For 100 years, our Government will not implement SCR 1325 unless there is a global green light telling them that they must do so...

PARTICIPANT FROM IRAQ

6. Gender-based violence

Across all study contexts, much has been written about the gender-based violence experienced by women in conflict and post-conflict contexts. However, there appears to be a gap in the literature with regard to the impact of gender-based violence on women's capacity and opportunities to participate in building and sustaining peace. Participants also touched upon the impact that gender-based violence has on women's ability to participate outside the home.

Women are constrained, restrained and prevented from participating in the public sphere, which includes building and sustaining peace because of gender-based violence. This can involve domestic and intimate partner violence, early marriage and trafficking, and is often intertwined with the economic dependence of women on men. Writing about the so-called "post-conflict" experience facing Bosnian women, Berry and Rana highlight that the continuing high levels of economic dependence of women often lead to women deferring to men within the home, regardless of the positions they have taken on in their communities during the conflict, in order to reduce the level of domestic violence. This shows that for women in particular, violence takes many forms beyond those on the battlefield (Berry & Rana 2016).

7. Security

Participants from all contexts referred to the impact of insecurity on their ability to participate in peacebuilding. This refers to the intimidating and isolating environment shaped by the general clampdown on civil society and the specific attacks on women and women's rights (see Chapter 2). Insecurity also refers to the sense of increased physical insecurity resulting from ongoing armed conflict in Iraq, Syria and Ukraine, as well as generalised levels of violence against women, including domestic violence in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which conspire to limit women's physical movement and women's psychological sense of security. Participants also raised threats to digital security, such as in Syria where unreliable internet connections considerably reduces participants' ability to work with women inside Syria and requires ongoing information security management processes. In Iraq, psychological pressures emanating from the lack of self-confidence and internalisation of patriarchal values are exacerbated by the ongoing insecurity. This results in women being less able to leave their homes and therefore causes them to experience an increasing sense of isolation in their homes with a consequent debilitating effect (Parry & Aymerich 2018).

> **The enforcement of gender norms – of masculine norms whereby a man holding a gun is considered to look good – results in the enforcement of feminine norms – where I have to stay at home, because it's not safe to go outside.**
>
> PARTICIPANT FROM SYRIA

Maritta Sislian from Lebanon participates in a workshop on young women's activism and peacebuilding.
Photographer: Kvinna till Kvinna/Karin Råghall

Chapter 2:

SEEKING CHANGE HERE AND NOW

Three key areas to enhance the transformative impact of the Women Peace and Security agenda

Visit to Kvinna till Kvinna's partner Najdeh in Lebanon.
Photographer: Christopher Herwig

The Women, Peace and Security agenda has to some extent changed the discourse on peace and security, focusing on Participation, Prevention, Protection, Relief and Recovery. But the reality lived by our study participants show us that crucial policy areas are missing from the WPS conversation. To get a full picture of how women are affected by violent conflict, we need to integrate perspectives on women's economic rights including housing, land and property rights, and shrinking space and violent extremism into the analysis.

AREAS FOR A TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

The six obstacles presented in Chapter 1 are exacerbated in three key areas in the study contexts. Namely, women's economic rights in conflict, women's housing land and property rights, and the shrinking space and violent extremism. The study participants believe it is highly valuable to create change within those areas in order to enhance the WPS agenda's transformative impact.

While the agenda references violence, intimidation, discrimination, culture and socio-economic factors as impacting women, these factors are not analysed in depth individually, or seen as part of an overall structure and system that keeps women excluded. The extent to which economic power plays an enabling role – or rather largely disabling role – in women's efforts to participate is both enormous and fundamental. However, women's access to economic power is not sufficiently reflected, analysed and acted upon in international policy and practice, and is instead largely siloed off to "economists" instead of being understood as intrinsic to being and acting politically. Further, we see that the obstacles are not viewed as interdependent – e.g. the relationship between women's lack of education, lack of access to property rights, the prevalence of corruption and how these combine to make women more vulnerable to gender based violence, which then further excludes women from participating in the public sphere.

Over 35% of the study participants cited the economy and conflict nexus as a key area where the WPS agenda can enhance its role in supporting women's efforts to build and sustain peace. Some 30% of the study participants highlighted the shrinking space and violent extremism. The majority of participants working with internally displaced communities emphasised women's rights to housing land and property.

> **Women with economic empowerment have their own identity and personality. Women's economic power endows them with economic, political and moral power in the community.**

PARTICIPANT FROM SYRIA

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC RIGHTS IN CONFLICT

KEY FINDINGS:

- The lack of women's economic power coupled with corruption is an underlying challenge to women's protection from violence, inclusion in decision-making, political participation, and participation in building and sustaining peace at large.
- Weaponising the economy in conflict manifests in withholding social benefits, exerting pressure through economic migrants, and shrinking the economic space for the civil society.
- Invisible economic violence against women in conflict exacerbates women's poverty, marginalises women from the public sphere, and excludes them from influencing economic visions in their contexts.

In September 2019, protests spanned five continents in places such as London, Hong Kong, Iraq, Lebanon and Chile. These protests were largely grassroots and leaderless with a strong and visible participation of women, some organised by unions or opposition groups, and reflected the disproportionate distribution of power and wealth as a global phenomenon (Ehrenreich 2019). Even a genuine gendered approach, as understood by the UN and other peacebuilding community actors, could fail to build sustainable peace as it does not adequately address structural inequalities, power dynamics, and the fundamental economic inequalities created by the global neoliberal macroeconomic structure that also perpetuate violence and conflict (Speake 2013). The distribution of power and wealth in conflict and post-conflict contexts – and specifically limitations on women's political and economic agency (power and rights) and the relationship therein – gravely impacts women's ability to participate in public life and particularly to build and sustain peace. The lack of women's economic power, which can manifest in economic decision-making, and access to and control over economic resources and assets, as well as challenges in exercising their economic rights, impacts women's participation in peacebuilding in several interconnected ways. However, socioeconomic rights are not at all operationalised in peacebuilding processes to create economic opportunities for women (True et al. 2017).

Feminist critique of the international political economy

Feminist research within social science and particularly in development studies[5] was recognised during the 1980s and flourished during the 1990s.[6] The origins of feminist macroeconomics[7] can be traced to three lines of inquiry.

One thread emerged in the 1980s, exploring the impact of macroeconomic policies in the form of structural adjustment programs on women's absolute and relative (to men) wellbeing and made a gender impact "mapping" of macro-level policies, previously believed to be gender-neutral. The second line explores the care economy or social reproduction, which forms one pillar of a society's material resources essential for improving living standards and the quality of life. Care labour has largely been performed by women and has been long ignored in national income accounts and rendered invisible with women who performed it being labelled as "unproductive." The third area has highlighted the "black box" of intrahousehold resource allocation. Earlier mainstream theory had assumed the household to be a unitary system, with resources equally distributed among household members. It demonstrated that although households are cooperative "enterprises", they also have conflicts and competition for resources with outcomes influenced by the relative power of household adults. This implies that macro-level policies that differentially benefit men or women also change power dynamics within the household, affecting the degree of gender equality in the performance of labour and access to resources. The feminists won the debate over the intrahousehold resource allocation and most mainstream economists, including at the World Bank, are today reflecting the gender differences in bargain power within the household and its wider impacts.

These three research areas collectively led to a re-conceptualisation of the boundaries of economic activities, drew attention to the role of gender power differentials in influencing distribution, and resulted in recognition of the effect of gender norms, stereotypes, and roles in mediating the impact of macro-level policies. Since then, feminist economists are to explore the reverse causality, that is, the impact of changes in gender (in)equality on

5. The Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex and the University of Manchester in the UK has been and remains a strong source for feminist research led by several pioneers including Diane Elson, Naila Kabeer, Sylvia Chant, Ruth Pearson and Susan Jokes.
6. The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing commissioned a large amount of research. This was also a good period for funding and explorative actions both within research and civil society. Women's Eyes on the Bank was a campaign that monitored and scrutinised the World Bank's gender perspective (or lack of it). This helped contribute to get an expert group of feminist researchers and participants inside the bank.
7. Stephanie Seguino at the University of Vermont in the US has written extensively on feminist perspectives of macroeconomics, institutions and policies.

the micro-level or as Seguino (2012) states: *"from micro-level gender relations to macro economy and back again in theory and policy"*. However, the struggle over the social reproduction and care economy has yet not come that far, perhaps because it is at the very core of capitalism in regard to the concept of labour and its implications for policy-making and gender politics.

Evidence suggests that while liberalisation has expanded women's access to employment, the long-term goal of transforming gender inequalities remains unmet, and is unreachable without regulation of the market, and a reorientation and expansion of the state's role in funding and providing social protection and a safety net.

A gender equitable economy requires policies to achieve several important goals. Feminist research contains a number of arguments. First, equitable access to jobs is required through the elimination of discriminatory employment barriers. Second, equity in earnings is needed, with both women and men able to earn living wages – wages sufficiently high to permit women and men to adequately provide for their households. Provisioning for households requires relatively secure income sources. This is particularly necessary for women who are the sole breadwinners in their households, but it is also a prerequisite for women who are part of two-adult households, as it represents an important means to improve women's power to negotiate an equitable distribution of household resources and unpaid labour.

A further requirement is fair distribution of state resources that can contribute to a closure of gender gaps in economic and social wellbeing, such as access to health, education, basic infrastructure, and other public goods, and to redress market and social gender inequalities.

Political economy and women's participation

Without economic power, the first priority is survival. Women living in conflict and post-conflict contexts, especially internally displaced persons and refugees, are usually focused on survival for themselves, their family and their communities. With a focus on survival and unpaid care work, there is little time and energy for the "luxury" of reflecting on peace and how to build it. As such, not only does unpaid care work contribute to women's poverty, it keeps women busy and unable to participate in processes that could impact and improve their lives and opportunities.

With economic power, women have more knowledge and self-confidence. Women with economic power are perceived as more likely to engage in peacebuilding. With economic power, women have more mental space, time, knowledge, self-confidence and interest to spend on activities beyond survival. In addition, because they are doing well, women want this prosperity to continue for themselves, their family and their communities. They are more motivated to contribute to the conditions to sustain peace.

When women have economic power, they become independent. When women are economically free, they can – without fear of losing something from a husband or father – speak their minds freely. As an Azerbaijani participant explained: *"She (a recipient of the women's economic empowerment project) can say 'I don't see Armenians as enemies' – whereas she was unable to say this before."*

Society recognises women with economic power. Women's economic power creates a different perception within society of what women are capable of. At the community level, they are no longer considered to be weak women. Instead, they are considered as strong, serious leaders, managing their business and financial capabilities, and capable of being part of decision-making processes.

The economic side to women's political participation. Political participations require economic resources because:

- Political campaigning requires funding. Women's political participation is often perceived as volunteerism, and unrealistic expectations are put on women's ability to campaign with little to no access to economic resources.
- Travel to meet with constituencies, which is important for legitimacy, requires funding.
- A woman-owned political agenda requires independent economic resources. Women in politics are either en couraged to give up their political seats in return for long-term employment or are forced to echo party politics unquestionably to retain their position.

Therefore, women who do make it to decision-making positions in politics often come from privileged economic backgrounds, and thus tend to be distant from the priorities of poor women. Thus, women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for overcoming political elitism and diversifying the political scene.

Lack of economic power renders women vulnerable to gender-based violence, such as sexual harassment and abuse, forced marriage, and forced prostitution. It also means that some women are less likely to be able to move out of abusive and violent relationships because they lack the self-confidence, which economic opportunities can provide, to leave and create a new life.

Corruption hinders women's participation in building and sustaining peace

"Looking at the reconstruction allocation for Anbar, it should be Las Vegas today (…) but people are still living in tents." Participant from Iraq

Pervasive corruption in conflict and post-conflict contexts constitutes an intractable obstacle to women's efforts to build and sustain peace. Corruption ranges from financial, institutional, administrative and relational corruption, such as who gets invited to meetings and which civil society organisations receive funds. In Iraq, corruption is described as so widespread and deeply entrenched that its impact is considered by participants to rival that of ISIS. An Iraqi participant explains: *"Corruption is no less malevolent than terror because it destroys values. Corruption has created a way of living that not only touches the political elite, but all of society. And so, there is resistance to change. People are afraid to challenge corruption, because of the accountability that they would themselves would have to face."*

Corruption impacts women and women's participation through perpetuating and exacerbating existing power dynamics, which serve to keep women excluded, and unable to challenge and change the rules of the game. Firstly, women generally lack the political and economic resources to participate in corrupt practices. This results in women being unable to, for instance, bribe their way into the higher ranks of political parties. Excluded from decision-making positions, women are unable to change the system from the inside. Secondly, corrupt practices reinforce the political and economic power in the hands of a few, usually men, and increase the dependency of women on kinship ties. Corruption creates a parallel system of transactional economic and administrative interdependency that co-opts the majority of citizens who cannot otherwise perform daily errands. In such parallel systems, women are at a greater disadvantage in terms of access and transactional power. Therefore, not only is women's ability to building and sustaining peace undermined, but women are also exposed to economic and physical insecurities.

> ## All the right resources at the wrong time and wrong place will not get you the right outcome.
>
> PARTICIPANT FROM SYRIA

Weaponising the economy

The instrumentalisation of pension and social benefits as a tool of war occurs when formal and informal authorities bestow or withhold benefits to inflict economic sieges in order to coerce civilians in a certain political direction. It can also involve benefits being distributed on a preferential categorisation of civilians' status during conflict. These may include the process of determining those who qualify as IDPs based on lengthy administrative procedures, which are often not accessible to all civilians or are based on political loyalties. This exacerbates the risk and vulnerability women experience in conflict contexts, i.e. in households where men were the primary contact persons with authorities.

The instrumentalisation of migrants as a pressure force on their home country in conflict contexts has a particularly high impact on families in frozen conflicts and post-conflict contexts as those migrants do not enjoy a 'protection' status or freedom of movement. This makes them vulnerable in their political choices, as well as with regard to their and their families' physical and economic security.

The shrinking economic space for civil society

The Kvinna till Kvinna study Maintaining a Role for Women's Organisations in International Development Finance (2019) elaborates the impact of international economic instruments on the shrinking space for the civil society. There are four major ways in which civil society's ability to operate and receive funding is affected by strict financial rules and granting modalities:

1. Banks apply a blanket freeze on foreign transactions and remittances, complying with state-imposed rules and regulations.

2. Economic sanctions, impact by further shrinking the space for the civil society, manifesting in difficulties to transfer payments to context under sanctions, and inability for civil society actors to access safe financial routes. International financial institutions lack effective compliance mechanisms and tools to address state corruption.

3. Corrupt governments want to monopolise funding to CSOs, which risks decreasing civil society organisations due to corruption in funding distribution. This undermines the independence and function of the civil society, and can lead to the mushrooming of GONGOs.

4. The current funding modalities do not account for the economic dichotomy between men and women. The challenge here is twofold; one related to poverty and access to economic opportunities in conflict contexts, and the other related to women's access to and control over economic power in those contexts. Women-led organisations and women's rights organisations are required by key international donors to have 10–30% of their own funds, not taking into account their economic marginalisation.

The invisible economic violence against women in conflict

"Perhaps someone requires us to be poor (…) that is why we are in this state" Participant from Armenia

• Women's access to the labour market can increase due to necessity in times of conflict, but the work conditions and types of work available to women remain a challenge to the quality of access. Access to the labour market does not guarantee the control over economic resources, which can result in an additional burden to the already unaccounted for unpaid care work of women. The women peacebuilders and WHRDs also highlighted the risk of the patriarchal hijacking of the discourse around women's access to the labour market by linking it to the increased marital appeal of women who surrender their income to their spouses. In other cases, the shut-down of factories in conflict contexts can force women back home, stripping them of some their acquired economic power and rights and pushing them out of the public sphere and the perceived "dirty" business of politics.

• A pre-conflict form of invisible economic violence women face is ageism in the labour market. Women are either still in the reproductive age and therefor viewed as temporary workers who will soon start a family and quite the job, or as too old (40+) compared to the young cheaper labour. This can have a devastating impact on women headed households.

• Poverty is a form of structural violence setting barriers to women's equitable access to and control over resources, knowledge, and opportunities, which are bases for women to protect their rights. Poverty is feminised in a number of the study contexts. In Iraq for example, the 87% of women are not in the labour force (World Bank 2011). Corruption in relief and recovery efforts as well as in reconstruction exacerbate women's economic vulnerabilities.

• The exclusion of women who organise politically from economic opportunities is a key dilemma facing women in conflict. Women who organise politically face exclusion from or tokenised inclusion in formal political structures. For a political or negotiations party to be able to receive political funding, it needs to be recognised. This recognition is extended to the very same exclusionary structures, leaving women who organise politically in a legal limbo with no independent access to funding as they are neither a political party/entity, nor a civil society organisation.

• The exclusion of women from economic recovery processes risks undermining the preconditions necessary for women's access to economic opportunities in post conflict. It further hinders women's economic leadership and ability to articulate women grown visions about financial resourcing and management.

For practical recommendations on how to address the above-mentioned challenges, see page 16–17. The recommendations include references to WPS UNSC resolutions that can be activated in responding to these challenges.

WOMEN'S HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS IN CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT CONTEXTS

KEY FINDINGS:

- Women waiving their housing, land and property rights to male family members is a traditional expectation across the study contexts.
- Gender-blind economic recovery processes increase women's poverty through inadequate access for women to land, property and relevant infrastructure.
- Complex administrative processes weaken women's access to their HLP rights, as they intersect with financial, security, and corruption constraints.
- HLP rights can have a direct impact on local democracy-building in conflict contexts with high demographic architecting, putting women in a complex web of exclusion.

The EU-UN Partnership on Land, National Resources, and Conflict Prevention[8] is indicative of the increasing focus on HLP as a prerequisite for the rule of law, and therefore also a key component in conflict prevention (UNHCR 2005). The recommendations coming out of the high-level reviews on peace operations and peace-building architecture also recognise the right to housing and mediation of land conflicts, including family land conflicts, as cornerstones for building and sustaining peace.

Abuses and violations of women's HLP rights pose a direct threat to women's safety and security from gen-der-based violence. It also hinders their economic power and participation. HLP, however, can intersect with security, economic empowerment, and participation as an opportunity for sustaining peace.

The study participants, particularly those working with the return of IDPs, and/or at the contact line areas, have identified a number of challenges regarding gendered impacts of HLP rights to women living conflict contexts. The study participants believe the WPS agenda can be more explicit in paying attention to tackle the normative, economic, administrative and legislative challenges facing women in conflict contexts with respect to their HLP rights.

Harmful informal and traditional practices

In Syria and Iraq for example, land and property in some rural and urban communities are not officially registered. Tradition dictates that property is transferred through the male lineage. It is very difficult to prove ownership in such cases, and for women to claim their rights to the land and property.

In the case of available land and property records and deeds prior to the conflict, the practice was to push women to give up their property rights to men in the family. Those deeds and records therefore move through the male lineage, exacerbating women's physical and economic vulnerabilities, and if men get killed or detained, they leave the women with no property security. An additional layer to the challenge of women's HLP rights is the lineage question of male foreign fighters' wives and children both in Syria and Iraq and in their country of origin.

In the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina women waived their rights to register state-built apartments to their husbands during relief and recovery.

Economic recovery and HLP

In Iraq and Ukraine, the interviewees pointed out the challenge of ruralisation on norms, with regard to the ability of rural communities to uphold their agricultural activities on their land and the impact of a rural influx into cities. Therefore, the study participants believe women's participation in recovery processes is a central question to women's HLP and socio-economic rights. Economic recovery requires access to land, property, and infrastructure that supports the agricultural and industrial production relevant to the context. Recovery processes do not only affect the economy and women's poverty, but are also important routes for addressing militarisation and recruitment to armies and armed insurgencies.

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8. For more information see https://www.un.org/en/land-natural-resources-conflict/

"Property rights are not about love, they are about women's physical, mental, and economic security.

PARTICIPANT FROM BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Agricultural development political agenda (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
"Just after the war began, I was engaged in politics and was elected president for a party that advocated for the development of agriculture. We prioritised this agenda seeing that sons of politicians and rich people have left the country, while the sons of farmers were mobilised as soldiers to wage the war by ethno-nationalist groups. Our main focus was to attract those men away from militarism through agricultural development and offering an alternative to militarised livelihood."

Administrative challenges

Overwhelming administrative procedures and corruption are obstacles facing women's access to their HLP rights. For example, in Ukraine's non-government controlled areas (NGCA), documents are difficult to obtain if at all. This is particularly the case for the IDPs from NGCA; women IDPs cannot claim their HLP rights or sell their properties when and if they wish to due to four main constraints:

1. Security constraints:

Men can face conscription if they go back to NGCA, so women are asked to make the trips, and expose themselves to security and reputational damage at check points. They also risk meeting old friends who remained and being viewed as traitors by them.

2. Financial constraints:

Women cannot afford the extensive trips back and forth to follow the lengthy bureaucratic process, even if they are able to travel and do not fear for their security.

3. Administrative corruption constraints:

If women did obtain the means to do the trips, they faced the challenge of restoring documents from records. Documents get "lost" and the process becomes endless.

4. The economic challenge in government-controlled areas (GCA):

Women IDPs are faced with an increased risk of poverty. Housing is significantly more expensive in GCA than NGCA, and finding shelter in displacement is a tenacious challenge.

In Syria, on the other hand, harmonisation and recognition of civic registration issued in NGCA, as well as recognising the informal practices, is crucial for transitional justice and for women to be able to claim their HLP rights in post-conflict Syria.

Legislative challenges

A number of the study contexts witnessed forced displacement to construct demographic changes in a way that disrupts the local power balance to serve actors involved in the conflict. People's relation to their land and property, as well as their access to housing, are perceived to be closely linked to identity, status and dignity. It is also a question of local democracy-building. In the cases where IDPs retain their voting rights, they are faced with forced voting out of fear of persecution. In cases where there is no direct security repercussion to voting, IDPs struggle to put their priorities on the agenda of the local representatives and be able to access local politics.

Law 10 – the space between the legal and the legitimate
Law 10 in Syria (adopted in April 2018), allows the confiscation and redevelopment of informal settlements through land adjustment (Human Rights Watch 2018). The law has been largely enforced in opposition majority areas, a step that has been viewed as an attempt to curb and further alienate political opponents. The most complex aspect of this law for the population in general, and for women in particular, is that any residents with no records in the land registry are required to present evidence of their rights in person within a year. For displaced people and refugees, either with limited financial resources or at risk of persecution and detention, this is an impossible condition. This seemingly administrative challenge, deepens women's inability to access their HLP rights, and has far reaching ramifications on women's security and even local political participation.

SHRINKING SPACE AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The threats that violent extremism pose to women and women's rights are manifold. Ideologies used by violent extremist groups tend to promote traditional binary gender roles, which are rigid for both men and women. With this comes hostility and sometimes attacks on women human rights defenders and those who disrupt gender norms, such as LGTBQI people. Destructive ideas about masculinity and its linkages to violence and power are often reinforced and exacerbated in times of conflict. Many women's organisations state that counter-terrorism measures have had an adverse impact on work for peace, women's rights, and gender equality generally. Women human rights defenders are often caught between being targeted by terrorist groups and state-led counter-terrorism measures (Duke law International Human Rights Clinic & Women Peacemakers Program 2017). In a survey, women's organisations stated that the emerging issues of concern were violent extremism and counter-terrorism (UN Women 2015). UNSCRs 2242 and 2250 call for the integration of women's and girls' participation, leadership and empowerment as core to preventing violent extremism interventions. Lessons from the women's rights and peacebuilding community inform the need to have an in-depth intersectional gender analysis of violent extremism both to understand the gendered causes and effects, as well as the roles played by different women and different men, and therefore developing gender sensitive approaches to preventing recruitment into and disengagement from violent extremist groups (London-Couture 2014).

KEY FINDINGS:

• The absence of a legally binding definition of violent extremism puts many human rights groups and activists at risk of indiscriminate persecution.

• Violent extremist groups across ideologies target young people when recruiting.

• The impact of violent extremism on women and communities is manifold; destruction of intercommunity trust, stigmatisation of victims, legal and socioeconomic impacts of proving lineage, and the shrinking space for women's rights and activism.

• The study participants work with the prevention, early warning, and response to violent extremism at the community and individual level.

The conceptual challenge

The study participants highlighted the necessity of having a consensus on the legal understanding of violent extremism. Therefore, in this section, we draw briefly on some of the complexities in approaching this question. While the increased activity of Islamist violent extremist groups has received much attention, violent extremism also acts in the name of racist, anti-Semitic, or extreme far right and far left ideologies. One of the key challenges in operationalising P/CVE is that there is neither an agreed nor a legally binding definition of violent extremism. This opens up for interpretation and politicisation by different actors.

Drivers of violent extremism are categorised into push and pull factors. Push factors include the lack of socioeconomic opportunities; marginalisation and discrimination; poor governance, violations of human rights and the rule of law; and radicalisation in prisons. Prolonged and unresolved conflicts are also listed among the structural "push" factors, or what the United Nations calls the *"conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism"*. Pull factors, on the other hand, represent the individual motivations and processes, which play a key role in transforming ideas and grievances into violent extremist action. These include individual backgrounds and motivations; collective grievances and victimisation stemming from domination, oppression, subjugation or foreign intervention; distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies and ethnic and cultural differences; and leadership and social networks (UNODC 2018).

Economic and livelihood factors were identified as key push factors in the study contexts, while witnessing or experiencing extreme violence against your community, and the offer by extremist groups of agency and ability to do something about the atrocity, was identified a pull factor. A number of women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders identified the vacuum of power and service delivery created by the withdrawal of the international community and government institutions (in cases where the government has not been viewed as a driver of extremism) in conflict contexts as a condition conducive for the spread of violent extremism by creating a state of fragility for extremist groups to fill.

Definitions of what being radical or extreme is shift over time and are contextual. In the domestic contexts of EU member states, extremists are defined to be working against the core values and pillars of democratic systems, including the respect for universal human rights. However, historically, feminists were also labelled radical and extreme. The world has recently witnessed a trend of labelling environmental activists and organisations as extremist. The labelling of ideologically or politically motivated groups as violent extremists or terrorists (Human Rights Watch 2019) is often contested and can be used as a political tool to delegitimise opposition. Governments, and more systematically authoritarian regimes, have used anti-terror legislation to effectively curb not only violent opposition groups but also political opponents, civil society and women human rights defenders.

Across the iterations of extremist ideologies, narratives draw on "family values", "sacred religious values", and "nationalist supremacist values". Those groups simultaneously uphold and reinforce prevalent gender constructions through the reproduction of conventional cultural standards, keeping women from meaningful empowerment.

According to the study participants violent extremism manifests itself in four primary forms:

1. Violent fundamentalists

2. Anti-gender equality radical movements manifest themselves as ultra-right and nationalist parties in contexts where nationalism meets militarism, creating an environment of systemic nationalism, where nationalist parties strive to promote traditional values, and to control of women in the family and the political space. Nationalist parties with roots in supremacist movements campaign by polarisation and coerce votes through fear.

3. Far-right regional and global alliances.

4. Radical right-wing parties with links to violent extremist groups partnering with the religious authorities to normalise their extremist views by weaponising the institutional framework of the state to cement supremacist views and binary normative roles in society.

All four types of groups have one target in common; **young people.**

"

Many right-wing extremist movements are produced by militarisation and hybrid wars; they think we are strong actors so they attack us.

PARTICIPANT FROM UKRAINE

Women empowerment is a means of community mobilisation and fostering resilience to violent extremism

Young women who face specific obstacles in conflict and post-conflict contexts are involved in and contribute to tailor-made peacebuilding practices. These practices are generally not framed or inspired by UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, but instead result from young women's understanding of peace and security and what is required to build peace amongst young people.

In Iraq, young women are invited to attend awareness-raising events, sometimes with family members. The attendance of family member at these events helps to build their confidence in the young woman, which, in turn, encourages and facilitates the young women's sense of empowerment. Over time, family members themselves undergo changes resulting from the messages and information that the young women bring home; indeed, the brothers of young women may change their attitudes towards their sisters as they learn to see them as role models and capable women. These young men, in turn, bring their learning, particularly relating to violence against women, to their male spaces and specifically to discussions with male elders. A chain of influence is formed from young women to older men, whereby community resilience to violence and respect to the value of human life contribute to denouncing violent extremism.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, young people live under a very strong narrative from nationalist political parties and their families (ancestors). To support young women in more fully understanding the past and to create the conditions for sustainable peace, young women from both the FBiH and RS were brought together by women's organisations to discuss their needs. The young women from both sides quickly realised that they face the same problems. The young women thereafter drew up separate action plans, which were exchanged and thus helped them realise that they share the same goals. Each group then lobbied the political representatives in their local community to adopt youth strategies, which were subsequently adopted by the local assembly. While there is no cross-entity "national" youth policy, youth networks have been built across the two entities. This in itself is a good foundation to counter polarised narratives and sentiments, providing fertile soil for extremist groups.

The impact of violent extremism on women and communities

Violent extremist groups committed atrocities that range from assaulting LGBTQI celebrations and women's rights manifestations, to slaughter, slavery, and rape. The impact of violent extremist groups on communities outlive the existence and presence of those groups and require accountability, reform of the legal framework and long-term healing processes.

> **You are considered a national security threat, if you speak about breaking gender stereotypes.**

PARTICIPANT FROM ARMENIA

Destruction of intercommunity trust
Violent extremist groups thrive on polarising ideologies and black and white thinking, a process through which the other side is dehumanised. Those extreme ideologies and the accompanying violence often make it difficult for communities outside the grip of those groups to understand that people can live in areas controlled by those groups and not subscribe to their values. For example, in Iraq, intercommunity trust was fractured, especially with the inability to access ISIS-controlled areas physically or by means of information and the media. One Iraqi participant who works with intercommunity dialogue expressed the impact of the dialogue initiative and the change it incurred brought about: *"I cannot believe that I feel trust towards you even though you are from Mosul! I thought you were all IS sympathisers, but you suffered just like us."*

Stigmatisation
The stigmatisation of victims, and the lack of response mechanisms for the protection and reintegration of victims in the society, is seen by WHRDs and women peacebuilders as a WPS issue. The stigma in Iraq and Syria, for example, was that people who lived under ISIS are pro-ISIS or that the women victims of rape were tainted by ISIS for carrying their babies or being violated by their men. The Yezidi women in Iraq have suffered tremendously, but the government response fell short of supplying the basic provisions for a speedy verification of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, such as providing women psychologists in camps and police forces. There are other women who were enslaved by ISIS, but they did not dare to speak up due to the associated stigma, and their suffering and rights are therefore not recognised. The burden of documentation is another challenge of stigmatisation that falls on the shoulders of the victims.

WHRDs and women peacebuilders in Iraq stated that women are forced to divorce their husbands if he is suspected of being a member of ISIS, thereby often leaving the women in poverty as there is no economic protection for women from either the family or the state in such cases.

WHRDs and women peacebuilders in Iraq stated that women who were members of violent extremist group households, such as ISIS, are being harassed or sexually exploited by security forces, with threats to report their young children as being affiliates of violent extremist groups.

> **Transformation as an empathetic process**
> *"In Baghdad, before 2242 was adopted, we were working on preventing and countering violent extremism. I lobbied 10 Sunni scholars to issue fatwa to criminalise joining Al-Qaeda. I have studied the cases of 20 women who formerly lived in ISIS households, 10 of whom were pushed to join because of destitution. The general perception, even among some local academics, is that women of ISIS are terrorists, and that we should kill them and their children. We need to change the general perception towards families of ISIS. Women in ISIS are young, they still have a chance to change their lives. They have learned a hard lesson through the lived reality of losing family members, disillusion, hunger, and displacement. If we allow those women to have opportunities, they'll grab them. They are at a ripe moment for change and can play a significant role in rehabilitation."*

Lineage
Lineage is a women's protection and security issue as much as a children's rights issue, which exists in the overarching patriarchal structure where women's rights are dependent on male relatives. Women who were raped and impregnated by ISIS fighters, either local or foreign, face tremendous challenges in proving the children's lineage due to a lack of documentation and a reluctance to recognise Sharia court marriage certifications in cases where they exist. In other cases where documentation exists and is recognised, but the foreign fighter has been stripped of their foreign citizenship, the children are at risk of becoming stateless. This is because fighting female ISIS cadres who have lost their nationality often have no alternative to pass on, and the local wives or women enslaved for sex by foreign fighters cannot pass their own nationality to their children either. Lineage is also a challenge to women's ability to access their inheritance rights, see page 45.

🙶

When you challenge gender roles, you are challenging a key tenet of what the state and nationhood are built upon.

PARTICIPANT FROM ARMENIA

The shrinking space for women's rights and activism

Violent extremism is remerging in an environment of global regression on women's rights and gender equality. The rising incidence of attacks on women's rights and gender equality, including online and in-person abuse and violence against women human rights defenders and women's rights organisations, has a severe impact on the global climate of support to women's rights.

In Armenia, participants spoke about *"non-homogenous nationalist, militaristic and anti-gender individuals and movements"* coming together to target women's civil society organisations because of their work on WPS and LGBTI rights. Nationalists allege that women's organisations do not want Nagorno-Karabakh to be Armenian, while anti-genderists claim that women's organisations are "ruining family values". Both nationalists and anti-genderists converge in their propaganda that "women are traitors because we speak about women and peace". In Ukraine, participants referred to mass advocacy campaigns against gender equality, including demands that Parliament delete gender and gender equality as a concept in legislation and school textbooks. These campaigns are led by two sectors of civil society: a group focusing on the preservation of conservative social and religious values, including religious civil society organisations allied with the Church, and ultra-right nationalist groups, with mainstream conservative groups reflecting a polarisation around competing visions of moral values (Shapalova 2018).

There is a clear linkage between the anti-gender movement and the nationalist, militaristic movement. Nationalists are committed to upholding the greatness of the fatherland. This requires strict compliance with traditional gender norms, whereby men are soldiers who protect the fatherland and women are to be valued for breeding soldiers, particularly during war when national sovereignty and nationhood is undermined. In this paradigm, women should put up with being at the receiving end of domestic violence from returning husbands – military heroes – and they should care for their wounded husbands. Those who criticise these gender roles are seen as ruining the traditional roles of men, women and family. They are also considered to be implicitly attacking the fatherland and the structures and institutions – nationalism, militarism, militarisation – required to uphold the greatness of the fatherland. An Armenian participant explained: *"Countering gender norms and touching the military warrior who is glorified as a hero makes you a traitor in their eyes. They accuse you of going against the national interest and breaking what the state and nationhood is built upon."*

Nationalist, militarist, anti-gender movements – all violent extremist movements – have gathered around and against what they understand as a "liberal agenda" of women's rights, LGBTI and transgender issues, peace, and peacebuilding. The impact of these attacks is multifaceted and profound, leading to the blackmailing, silencing and stigmatisation of women's human rights defenders and peacebuilders, with Forst suggesting that women can be stigmatised for the very same actions for which men are honoured (Forst 2019). Some women human rights defenders and peacebuilders have become more cautious in public. With reference to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Deiana notes strong social pressure to silence and publicly discredit women and feminists who dare to openly critique the correlations between the current status quo, the nationalist grip on power and the gender inequalities underlying nationalist politics (Deiana 2016). Other women are increasingly reticent to publicly describe themselves as feminists – even in women-only spaces. Yet, there is also growing anger on the part of some women with respect to the ongoing backlash on gender ideology, which may yet galvanise women to respond to these attacks. On the whole, however, the backlash has led to increasing stigmatisation of women human rights defenders, many of whom feel fearful, alienated and experience a shattered sense of wellbeing, thereby considerably impinging upon their confidence, capacity and security to build and sustain peace.

Women human rights defenders' and women peacebuilders, response to violent extremism

Many of the P/CVE approaches were originally designed as responses to security challenges in Europe and the US to tackle far-right extremism and later other types of extremism. This comes with challenges for application in contexts characterised by fragility and malfunctioning systems of governance, as the structural push factors differ immensely.

In contexts with rising rates of radical nationalism, WHRDs and women peacebuilders were wary of sharing too much about their strategies to counter radicalisation that leads to violent extremism. This is both an indicator of the WHRDs' and women peacebuilders' courage and the increasing insecurities they face in their daily lives, exacerbated by the need for confidential work while at the same time needing visibility and recognition as an alternative form of protection and a prerequisite for accessing resources. It is important to note here, that for WHRDs, community resilience to violence, resisting divisions, and working together is a lifestyle, not a donor activity.

Prevention and early warning

- Community policing: Monitoring incident rates of hate speech and hate crimes in the community manifested as graffiti, hooliganism, ethnically segregated cafés, etc.
- Looking out for signs of militarisation in society, e.g. parents dressing up their children in military outfits.
- Promoting alternative constructive narratives to violent extremism via social media, including alternative religious narratives and religious literacy.
- Claiming the space at sites of recruitment to violent extremist groups and offering alternative paths responding to the pull and push factors in a community.
- Training teachers on fostering a culture that denounces violent extremism in the education system and the community.
- Training of trainers on peacebuilding and preventing violent extremism for women community leaders in areas that suffered from violent extremism.

Response to direct threats

On the individual level: Facing threats by exhibiting threats through posting screenshots on Facebook as a tool to raise public awareness, and understanding the seriousness of those threats. Public solidarity is understood to be of high importance for women targeted by violent extremist groups and radical nationalist groups.

On the community level: Regaining social cohesion by offering psychosocial support to former captives under violent extremist groups as a first step towards empowerment and reintegration in the community. The power of stories shared by the former captives creates a space for empathy, understanding, and regaining of trust in the community.

Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Relief and Recovery

In a camp in Syria, a women's rights organisation works with the deradicalisation of women who subscribe to the ISIS ideology. Fear has been a key driver for those women. By offering psychosocial support and investing in creating a sense of safety for those women, the organisation has been able to start a deradicalisation and reintegration process for those women. The organisation considers the WPS agenda to be a great framework for covering the complexity of what women face in times of war and conflict. In such a context, relief and recovery is seen to be highly relevant to engaging with P/CVE, which requires a multi-agency approach comprising CSOs and local authorities.

Governments and donors have recently begun to gradually emphasise the importance of gender sensitivity in efforts to respond to violent extremism. The peacebuilding community has for decades contributed in many ways to the prevention of violence, including extremist violence, through programs designed to prevent conflict, strengthen the rule of law, and promote peace, tolerance, and resilience (USIP 2013). Clearly, women's rights and peacebuilding efforts are crucial to effectively address the underlying structural inequalities that provide fertile ground for violent extremism, among other human security threats.

Chapter 3:

IMAGINING A FEMINIST PEACE

Unlocking the impact of women's participation

Women peace activists in 2014, holding a manifestation for peace in Syria, in the Swiss city of Montreux. Photographer: Maria-Christina Travaglio/Oxfam

Women's participation in peace processes is both a reality, with women defusing tensions and preventing violence everyday, and an area in need of fundamental restructuring. In this chapter we outline the specific mechanisms of women's participation, what impact it gives, and suggest five keys to unlock its further potential. We also present two sets of recommendations from the participants for achieving feminist peace:

• Investing in the excluded majority[9]

• Investing in a conducive environment

In this chapter, we present a collation of the 91 participants' perspectives on what needs to be in place, and what needs to change, in order to achieve a sustainable feminist peace. The research team asked the following questions:

• Why should women participate in building and sustaining peace?

• How do you imagine a new peacemaking paradigm? What does a feminist approach to peace mean in practice? What needs to be in place and how do we need to approach peacemaking differently?

Participants described the objective of peacebuilding is to build understanding, trust, tolerance, and social cohesion, based upon equal citizenship, respect for human rights and political diversity.

"

Meeting women from the other side has been very helpful in changing women's views. We focus on building commonalities: on what is connecting us instead of what is dividing us. We recognise that Dolma belongs to us all!

PARTICIPANT FROM AZERBAIJAN

9. This term refers to women, LGBTQIA+ and youth in building and sustaining peace processes.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES

"You don't applaud waking up. In the same way, we shouldn't be applauding the basic right of women's participation. We should be ashamed that women's participation is not a normal everyday practice."
Participant from Syria

KEY FINDINGS:

- Women's participation in building and sustaining peace matters due to the different experiences and perspectives that women bring to those processes. Women's differential experience due to their toolbox of tackling the underlying discrimination and gendered impacts of peace and conflict on their lives, the lives of their families and communities, bring significant perspectives to any efforts for building and sustaining peace.

- The study participants believe women's participation in building and sustaining peace can strengthen the chances of sustaining peace and inspire women's participation in the broader society.

- Peace at the national level is made up of the various contributions on peacebuilding that women make at the individual and local level.

- At the individual level, confident, resilient and empowered women can manage their immediate family and community relationships through defusing tension within the family and preventing intra-community violence.

- Exchange activities conducted by networks of women human rights defenders and peacebuilders across the conflict lines build trust and help develop resilient and socially cohesive communities which, in turn, help to maintain national cohesiveness at times of stress.

- Recognising and enabling women's participation beyond numbers is a precondition for building sustaining peace.

This section presents the arguments for women's participation to help better operationalise the WPS agenda stipulations with regards to women's participation. The arguments are a collation of the study participants' lived realities and views on the gendered experience of conflict and participation.

THE CASE FOR WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN BUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

"Inclusion is about intersectionality – It's not just about your gender. It's about who you are as a person."
Participant from Syria

Women human rights defenders and peacebuilders across the study contexts articulated numerous arguments for women's participation in building and sustaining peace:

Women's equal right to participate. As women make up 50% of society, they have a right of equal opportunity to participate in all spheres of public and private life, including 50% of decision-making power. *"Without 50% of the population, we cannot build a democratic society"*, explains a Syrian participant.

Women's connection with and understanding of grassroot communities. Women are considered to be closely connected to grassroots communities, their priorities and the conditions to build and sustain peace. This is often because men have disappeared, been forced to flee, have left to fight, or have been injured or killed during battle. As such, the rights of women to participate are derived or given worth because of their contribution and value in relation to achieving peace, and are accordingly described as "contributor rights" by Gibbings (Gibbings 2011).

Women's specific experience of marginalisation. As women are often marginalised in society, it is essential that they participate in peacebuilding and formal politics in order to be able to counteract the practices and structures that hold them back.

Women's gendered conflict and peace experiences and perspectives. While men in power often initiate conflict, the consequences of conflict often fall largely on women's shoulders as fighting men, or those who defect and flee, are often away from home. These consequences include caregiving responsibilities, both of family members and others within the community, and multiple traumas. This different experience of living and coping with conflict and its consequences, referred to as "special treatment rights" by Gibbings (Gibbings 2011), provides women with a different perceptive of what is required to reconcile individuals and communities, and to build and sustain peace.

Women's gendered post-conflict experiences and perspectives. Men may not come back from war or exile, and if they do, they may return with significant psychological difficulties and can experience considerable obstacles in adjusting to the post-conflict context. Often, the state fails to support the reintegration of returning men in a way that is conducive to men, their families and the broader community. This results in women having to deal with the consequences of post-conflict reconciliation at the community level.

Women's strengthened leadership skills. In many contexts, it is assumed that conflict only has negative impacts on women and their situation. Yet, the conflict may serve to identify, develop and strengthen the leadership skills and roles of some women. This may refer to women who head households following the loss of male family members, or internally displaced women who develop new skills and abilities by taking on the role of family breadwinner.

The impact of gender norms on women's perception of their predisposition to peace. A number of participants, and much of the literature reviewed including Otto (Otto 2016), suggested that women consider that they are different to men in various ways, and that these differences make women more suited and equipped for peacebuilding than men. These gender essentialist notions posit that men are warlike, ambitious, scheming and guided by logic only, without any appreciation of the value of peace. Women, on the other hand, are sincere, empathetic and empathise with others, even on the other side of conflict. Since women are mothers, and carry out other caregiving responsibilities then men, they are able to find the extra strength to listen to what the other side wants, and think about the alternatives to war and make the compromises necessary for peace.

"

Whilst male politicians talk about peace and then say 'if necessary we will have war', women say 'I am ready for war; now let's negotiate!'

PARTICIPANT FROM ARMENIA

What happens when women participate in building and sustaining peace?

"Without women being real participants in building peace, Iraq will not be reconstructed again."
Participant from Iraq

Across all study contexts, women human rights defenders and peacebuilders understand the multifaceted and critical impact of women's participation in building and sustaining peace.

Participants noted that women often bring issues to the peace negotiations table and to peacebuilding processes that are otherwise ignored by male actors present at the table or supporting them from behind. These issues commonly reflect the daily realities that women face during conflict, often addressing the root causes and drivers of conflict. They also tend to promote justice and accountability for crimes and human rights violations committed during the conflict. Without the participation of women at the peace negotiations table and in peacebuilding processes, and the inclusion of these issues, "peace" will be shallow, fragile and unsustainable, because the root causes, drivers and consequences of conflict will not be addressed.

"

Women participating in peacebuilding gives confidence to women in the broader society.

PARTICIPANT FROM SYRIA

Participants also acknowledged that women's participation in building and sustaining peace – specifically meaningful participation where women have the ability and space to influence as opposed to their mere tick-box presence – inspires other women to become informed, educated and engaged in peacebuilding. Likewise, women's participation raises the public visibility of women, which in turn normalises women's rights, perspectives, capacities and presence in society more broadly. Women's participation in building and sustaining peace should be viewed not merely as an end, but as providing a strategic opening to advance women's rights in all outcomes and agreements (MADRE and WILPF 2014).

The literature is clear on the longitudinal impact of the absence of women's participation in peacebuilding processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many of the problems that have arisen in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina could have been avoided had there been serious political engagement – involving women's civil society representatives and gender-competent advisers – in the peace process (Mlinarević, Isaković and Rees 2015). Instead, the focus on ethnicity and the exclusion of women's participation and gender issues has led to both a "peace gap" (Bjorkdahl and Selimović 2012) and justice gap with highly limited accountability mechanisms and limited collective obligations (WILPF 2018). Indeed, the marked absence of women from the Dayton Peace Agreement has entailed that women as a group have not been recognised as agents of change in later political processes. Moreover, the exclusion of civil society that started with the peace process has continued (Deiana 2016) within new structures and processes such as those relating to constitutional reform and accession to the European Union (WILPF 2018). Berry goes a step further, suggesting that there has been a revitalisation of patriarchy in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the war (Berry 2018).

What is the impact of women's peacebuilding at the individual, community and national level?

Women human rights defenders and peacebuilders from all study contexts believe that peace at the national level is made up of the various contributions on peacebuilding that women and other peacebuilders make at the individual and local level. At the individual level, women become aware of their rights and concepts such as tolerance, coexistence, and social cohesion; they develop new skills and networks; and feel confident, resilient and empowered. This enables women to manage their immediate family and community relationships by diffusing tension within the family and preventing intra-community violence. With this confidence and practice, women come together with women from different backgrounds. Exposure to women from the other side helps women human rights defenders and peacebuilders build trust with the other. Over time, this trust helps to develop resilient and socially cohesive communities – "small islands of temporary stability" (Swisspeace et al. 2016) – which, in turn, helps to maintain national cohesiveness in times of stress. In Dohuk, Iraq, participants spoke about how many different ethnic and religious communities live together, whether at school or at university, or coexist within different political parties. This had led to increased acceptance of the other groups, Thus, in 2014, following the arrival of ISIS in many parts of Iraq and the subsequent flight of various communities to the safer locations of Dohuk, internally displaced persons were accepted by the host community. *"We women help to build resilient communities so that we are insulated from the instrumentalisation of religious leaders, politicians and foreigners"* (participant from Iraq).

Women peacebuilders and WHRDs also impact peacebuilding at the national level when they come together to demand change**.** In Iraq, in 2017, women peacebuilders helped to ease tensions between the central government of Iraq and the Kurdish regional government by bringing the two governments together, first in Baghdad and then in Erbil, to discuss the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan.

"If I enable a woman to open a hairdressers salon in local village, then we directly help this woman to make a living. We then ask the state to build a school and playground. The woman then has more time to become engaged in local associations or local community politics. She then enters politics at the cantonal level. And then we have a gender equality revolution and sustainable peace.

PARTICIPANT FROM BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

FIVE KEYS TO INCREASE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION BEYOND NUMBERS

The question today is no longer *Why should women participate?* but rather *How should women participate?* Women's capital should be recognised where it is and invested in as a strong driver in building and sustaining peace. The facilitation of the conditions for women's participation includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Supporting the development of domestic constituencies that support women in the peace process, through delivery of grassroots analysis and concerns, and political advocacy for women's participation at the local level;

- Political support and advocacy, substantive and technical assistance, and the moral heft of the national and international women's or feminist movement, in particular to support the development of a sustainable realisable platform for action to advance women's rights through the peace process.

- Expanding the understanding of the political by valuing domestic household spaces as political spaces for discussion, and generating collective solutions at the local level.

**Five keys to unlock the impact of women's participation
according to women peacebuilders:**

Independent fund for women in peace processes

Recognise women's political groups and make independent funds available for women's political organising. Take women's political work seriously – it is not just a pastime or a volunteering project.

Women thematic task force

The views and priorities of women are often absent from certain taskforces that are perceived to be "men's business" such as the economy, security and military questions. Where it can be argued in a given context that there might be virtually no women in the aforementioned sectors, they actually greatly affect women on a daily basis, and women contribute to them in various ways. Spaces for women to strategise collectively across the sectors can offer an opportunity for the emergence of new views and options beyond the hegemony of the male-dominated mainstream.

A quota of ideas by women

A quota for women's ideas in peace processes allows for attributing ideas to women, ensuring that women speak, and facilitates tracking women's impact on the process. This also signals the value of women's ideas. The invisibility of women's qualitative contribution in peace processes poses a challenge to generating substantive evidence on its impact.

Worthiness of women's data

Documenting women's histories means they cannot be edited out from the collective memory. History is recorded by the powerful and we conduct much of our analysis using data that does not reflect women's histories and contributions. Women in tech is a good example of this (Sydell 2014). Despite the pioneering role of women in tech, the image that most often comes to mind when people think about a software developer is a young male.

More emphasis is needed for the ongoing research by local women's organisations, supported by international women's organisations, with more nuanced understanding of participation to adequately collect and analyse what women are doing at the local level to build and sustain peace. This analysis should be shared and discussed with women from conflict-affected contexts so that they might work together to share, learn and analyse different peacebuilding practices and tools. This analysis should also be used to inform and shape national peacebuilding processes.

Understanding that sustaining peace requires women's rights.

There was a wide consensus among the study participants that it is not possible to sustain peace without the full acquisition of women's rights. The nexus between exclusion and instability has been emphasised by the UN-World Bank Pathways for Peace study. The degree to which women are included in political, economic, and social life is a key factor influencing a society's propensity for conflict. Drawing on the WomanStats database, Hudson et al. (2012) compares indicators of gender-based violence with macro-level indicators of peace and stability, as well as legislation protecting women's rights. They find that the higher the level of violence against women, the more likely a country may be not to comply with international norms and treaty agreements, and the less peacefully it will operate in the international system (United Nations & World Bank 2018). Therefore, specific support to networking and movement building is imperative to preserving and attaining women's rights in conflict contexts. A women's critical mass for engagement in building and sustaining peace can be boosted through facilitating a cross-sectoral track for women's rights organisations, women business leaders, women in politics, women grassroots activists, women in labour unions, and women achievers in their area at large.

Why monitoring, evaluation and learning matter – from numbers to transformation

"The international patriarchal community gives some 'pieces of cake' to shut women up (…) in 1994, for instance, we had the Beijing Platform; in 2000, we had UNSCR 1325 and then we had SDG 5 on gender equality (…) every 10 years or so, there is a diversion of energies, attention, money and political support to women where we are thrown a bone to shut us up and to show that 'we, the international community, care about 'you' – women' (…) but no one in the international community cares about the results of these high-profile events, or what we have achieved, and why we didn't achieve…" Participant from Azerbaijan

There is a general perception among WHRDs and women peacebuilders that that IGOs and INGOs lack serious commitment to monitor and evaluate for the purpose of learning.

Monitoring and evaluation matter for the quality of participation and therefore the quality of peace achieved. WHRDs and women peacebuilders want to see change in their lives and the lives of other women. Yet this is not happening fast enough. Participants referred to three related aspects of the impact of monitoring on their peacebuilding work.

1. Participants noted that, generally, international actors are not interested in monitoring how their money and support is impacting the lives of women on the ground. Because of this the same women participate in workshops and meetings on the same topic convened by different donors with the same findings articulated in the meeting reports. In the words of Iraqi participants: *"International actors are disconnected from reality; there are so many workshops. The international community is more talk than action: in many meetings both inside Iraq and outside, we have the sense that international organisations are talking – but they are saying the same thing that they said before to the same local women and men that they invited before. This is a waste of money, effort and time. The international community should be more serious about monitoring impact. Otherwise they are doing more harm than good. When we ask the international community why is it supporting the government and not civil society they say that 'we are building government institutions'. But they are not doing any monitoring and evaluation, assessment of impact and consequences. How does anyone know what impact this work is having?"*

2. Participants noted that when monitoring takes place, the focus is on quantity: the number of workshops/meetings/participant/publications produced per diem. At the same time, little effort is made to understand the women behind these numbers and the actual change(s) in their lives resulting from peacebuilding and the impact of the substantive and structural obstacles on their participation efforts.

Instead, participants identified the need for longitudinal monitoring evaluation and learning of the impact of the WPS agenda at the individual, community and national level. Such an approach would use highly participatory qualitative methods to monitor attitudinal and behavioural change at the individual level of women, as well as qualitative monitoring of group (women, men, mixed) attitudinal and behavioural change, triangulated with objective quantitative monitoring. Longitudinal monitoring also shows non-changes and allows for a nuanced understanding of change that captures and tracks reversals or "holding the line". Negative changes, resistance, and backlash are key elements to monitor for the WPS agenda to enhance relevance and effectiveness.

3. Participants highlighted the challenge of attribution in the absence of unified data per country/context, and suggested women can provide statistics about women's challenges and progress in an open source tool in local languages. In relation to this, "What data?" is an important question to consider in terms of whose gaze on the data is in focus. What and who marks what is worthy of monitoring is still perceived to be largely influenced by a hierarchal colonial residue that fails to understand the cyclical nature of exclusion women in conflict contexts face in their daily lives. Monitoring challenges affecting women's everyday lives such as services, water supply, electricity, cellular connection, etc., indicates the level of cross-sectoral exclusion of women. Furthermore, monitoring the evasion tactics and strategies towards women's rights obligations, help the development of better responses. Participants also identified monitoring the perception and shifts with regards to feminism in society as another important area for data collection.

IMAGINING A NEW PEACEMAKING PARADIGM

"Peace is about making sure that when we make priorities, people are okay with the priorities, and that the choice is not only made by those with power" Participant from Ukraine

The current mode of peacemaking that is supported, facilitated or mediated by international actors, specifically the UN and OSCE for the purposes of this study, is hierarchical and tailored to include only a limited number of (male) warring conflict parties together with their (male) (political and economic) international backers. These peace processes represent a fundamentally flawed approach to building sustainable peace. The focus of international efforts is not on improving those processes through making them more inclusive so that they include the people, perspectives and issues that create, drive and prolong conflict. This is because to do so is practically, conceptually and politically highly complex and challenging, requiring time, commitment and the strategic coordination that the international community lacks. So, while these negotiations may inevitably lead to the signing of an elusive peace agreement, they are unlikely to lead to a sustainable political settlement and sustainable peace.

The combined negative impact of the structures, systems and patterns of inequality on women and women's participation is not fully recognised, analysed or valued. The lack of focus within the WPS agenda on the structures that seek to maintain power in the hands of an elite (largely male) necessarily mean that in reality the agenda is not equipped with the required ingredients for success.

Inclusivity is at the heart of imagining a new peacemaking paradigm as described by the study participants. It requires deconstructing the normative powers that cement exclusionary practices and spaces by placing the excluded majority[10] at the centre. There are persistent challenges to inclusivity, related to transforming the stereotypes in society and within the self around women in politics and women's participation at large. This section serves to start discussions and provide practical steps for imagining a new peacemaking paradigm by investing in the excluded majority's capacities and competence, and in an inclusive environment for peace.

Investing in the excluded majority

The following are 10 key elements identified by women peacebuilders and WHRDs for investing in the capacities of people, broadening the understanding of people affecting conflict and affected by conflict, as well as going back to the basics of inclusion.

Inclusion "back to basics":

1. One size does not fit all. The exclusion of women is often only exacerbated by conflict. To design meaningful inclusion modalities, examine the structures of exclusion in the context prior to the conflict. Inclusion modalities should be responsive to the specific context and provided where people and their needs are.

2. Language is power. Be mindful of the exclusionary or inclusive power of language, in terms of terminology, jargon, context suitability, etc.

3. Timing matters. The timing of bringing different groups together, and the timing of introducing topics can be detrimental to the engagement of people, and therefore also the progress of a process or the buy-in of a topic.

Investing in intersectionality:

4. Broadening the outreach. Design peace processes with an outreach to non-urban, non-central areas which are often most affected by conflict. Conflicts have different pockets of violence with different intensities. A responsive inclusion approach that creates suitable linkages allows post-conflict work to begin with each respective side already on a closer footing. Work with pockets of peace and weave them together along the way.

5. More people, different people. Develop a range of modalities geared towards the creation of fora for the participation of different women. For example, women have different mobility levels (due to travel bans, insecurity, disability, etc.)

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10. This refers to women, LGBTQIA+, and youth in building and sustaining peace processes.

6. Engaging the diaspora in solution development while employing a Do No Harm approach. Capacities for conflict and peace are carried with people beyond the direct geography of conflict.

7. Active engagement of youth by supporting them to develop their vision for the peace process and the future of their context with equal weight to other actors. This engagement should be rooted in researching the experience of young women peacebuilding practices, challenges, and support required, as well as better understanding of intergenerational dynamics and structural obstacles to women's ability to access decision-making.

Investing in local competence:

8. Inclusive leaders should be supported in formal and informal decision-making spaces. This involves including political leadership, tribal leadership, community leadership to allow for and incentivise a new political will to emerge.

9. Investing in political literacy, especially in contexts hit by political repression. This is a key criterion for the quality of inclusivity. For example, invest in electoral literacy and informed voting as a foundational stone for democratic participation. Regard the diaspora as an integral target group.

10. Investing in women's capacities to be effective political actors and influencers at the peace table through responding to their expertise and providing technical support.

Investing in a conducive environment to achieve feminist peace

"Sometimes international actors have book knowledge, but not human knowledge, and they take the 'cookie cutter' approach and experience from other contexts." Participant from Iraq

In order to activate the capacities of the excluded majority to contribute to building and sustaining a feminist peace, key shifts in the environment in which they operate need to take place. WHRDs and women peacebuilders have identified 5 key shifts to support a conducive environment for peace with actionable recommendations that can help actualise those shifts.

1. People's priorities in focus

Negotiations, mediation, and dialogue interventions design should work towards narrative transformation and a balance of interests, which are intersectionally rooted in people's priorities. Peacebuilding actors and WPS actors can collaborate in drawing on the following points:

• Create a hotline to collect needs at the grassroots level that would not otherwise make it into the peacemaking table.

• Support local analysis groups.

• Invest in the national capital of gender-equal feminist mediators.

• Support regional committees for dialogue.

2. Adopt a coordinated approach to people's and international diplomacy

International diplomacy must be coherent with people's diplomacy drawing on local resources and enhancing local ownership. Peacebuilding actors and WPS actors can collaborate with various sectors including, but not limited to, the arts and culture in drawing on the following points:

• Multi-track diplomacy: The need to work across the tracks of diplomacy is seen by WHRDs and women peace builders as a necessity for building a sustainable peace and moving away from a mere cessation of hostilities, a ceasefire, or an end of armed violence. It is understood as a foundation for transforming the moods of war and creating a critical mass to drive a sustainable peace that draws on the multitude of resources and reflects the diversity of priorities, rights, and needs of all groups in the conflict context. While agreements are signed in Track I, they are sustained in Track II and III.

- Support a diplomatic solution-building movement snowballing long-term visions – recognise community organisers outside the NGO framework.
- Cultural diplomacy within and across the different conflict actors' contexts. In Ukraine, constitutional theatre is used to broaden citizens' engagement and understanding. In Armenia and Azerbaijan, professional exchanges in medicine, psychosocial support, agriculture, etc., are believed to facilitate starting points for cultivating common ground. Furthermore, collaboration with artists across the conflict lines is also used to prepare new spaces for envisioning peace. In Syria and Azerbaijan, artistic expressions in films and audiovisual materials on accountability, and portraying the shared experience of conflict for communities who do not have any other means of meeting or communication otherwise, has been crucial for breaking the isolation of people and narratives.
- Cultural heritage as a carrier of the collective identity is an undermobilised resource in building and sustaining peace. Rely on contextual resources that bring people together, while being aware of the politics of memory and propaganda economy in instrumentalising cultural heritage.
- Intergenerational people-to-people meetings on reviving the shared living experience in the collective memory is believed by women human rights defenders and peacebuilders to foster preparedness for peace.
- Territorial access for emotional value – visiting the graves of loved ones across the conflict lines can create a space for empathy.
- Break the isolation through travel grants for people to meet across the conflict lines in a neutral space.
- Broad envisioning exercises of peace and of the future. Start from people's visions and work backwards in the design of dialogue, negotiations, and peacebuilding processes at large.
- Invest in regional and international people-to-people mentorship breaks the geographic and narrative isolation. Local, regional and global women's mediators' networks are valuable resources for mentorship.

3. Recognise the power in and of diverse spaces for creating change

The understanding of spaces should be multi-dimensional and informed by power analysis in every engagement. This shift is the individual and collective responsibility of all actors involved in building and sustaining peace efforts. The following is guidance on to consider space and power:

- Invest in spaces for reflection and learning away from the pressure of delivering quick results – quality over quantity. This should include spaces for reflection on shifting priorities in ongoing conflicts.
- Invest in women-only spaces that allow for non-mainstream perspectives and ideas to emerge, and offer space for dissent from patriarchal ridicule, hegemony and exclusion.
- Safe spaces to practice empathy and foster the ability to develop a shared vision for peace.
- Language as a space: Pay attention to the importance of articulation and narrative-building for the people concerned. Unarticulated issues/needs/interests cannot be addressed. This does not only go for the ability of people to articulate in their native tongue, where investing in local analysis groups is a strong asset, but it also goes to the terminology and framing. The way we label issues carries an implicit value, for example, when a government calls a ministry or a committee "the committee of family, children, and women", it paints a familial image and emphasises motherhood as the value in the public eye. This often leads to a simplistic understanding of what 'women's issues' are or are not, where women's rights are curbed or even violated in the name of family values. Similarly, the word "peace" can imply giving up territory, and therefore leads to people positioning themselves against it, before engaging with what it means to them. Lastly, framing questions using jargon often leads to getting ready-made answers that are believed either to satisfy the mainstream political views or the donor. Being aware of the power dynamics in the context, and between those asking and those answering, is essential to get to the underlying needs and priorities for people.
- Use digital spaces to counteract shrinking physical space – as a space for accentuating shared experience, organising, protesting, and stirring debate. One key underlying power manifestations in the digital space is the algorithmic bias, which further discriminates who accesses what information, creating bubbles that can constrain the circles of debate dissemination and thus the impact on social change (Council of Europe 2018).

4. Recognise education's centrality for economic recovery

In its contribution to sustaining peace, economic recovery should account for the preconditions necessary to optimise women's access to economic opportunities, not least through education. Access to education and peace education is a key link to enhance access to economic opportunities, participation in economic recovery, and contributions to building and sustaining peace.

Education is an essential tool for human development and the eradication of poverty. The loss of education opportunities is not just a loss to the individual, but a loss of social capital and the capacity of a society to recover from conflict (Smith and Vaux 2003). Education is also a fundamental factor for development as an investment in the human capital. There is mounting empirical evidence pointing to education's contribution to economic growth (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964; Psacharopoulos, 1984). Unequal education tends to have a negative impact on economic efficiency and social consistency (Ozturk 2001).

- Invest in access to education, it is key to enhance access to economic opportunities, participation in economic recovery, and contributions to building and sustaining peace.
- Invest in education reform in contexts where education is perceived as militarized – fueling grievances, stereotypes xenophopia and other antagonisms.

5. Approach accountability as a two-way process – enhance civil society's independence

The accountability architecture must enhance the civil society's monitoring role and ability to navigate its instruments. Liberating accountability from market values and approaching the relationship between the donor community and civil society in the way we approach a social contract, can give civil society actors a more equal negotiating standpoint in relation to donors, and therefore more influence over supporting their role and contributions in their context. The study participants raised three points of priority, which need negotiation for support in their contexts:

- Election monitoring. When authorities reject official monitoring missions, resort to shadow monitoring by the civil society. Listen to the grassroots.
- CSOs can have a monitoring role during conflict and during peace processes across thematic clusters. Where possible, introduce the "buddy system" of accountability at the regional level to understand the bigger picture. This can apply to prisoner exchanges, service delivery, etc.
- Legal and technical literacy of the accountability architecture for the civil society working in areas that intersect with legal organisations' work, particularly those working in response to victims and survivors, in order to maximise the use of the accountability framework.

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When you find a safe space to express yourself and meet the other side safely, you can start reflecting; you feel like someone is holding your hand.
You can reflect and get to know the other side, while still being yourself and allowing the other side to be who they are. This is like the butterfly effect.
I am a change-maker in my own small community.

PARTICIPANT FROM SYRIA

Vedrana Frašto from Fondacija CURE during a demonstration in Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina 2011.
Photographer: Imrana Kapetanović

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This report was realised thanks to the women peacebuilders and human rights defenders who have contributed with their experiences and their insights, never ceasing to believe that they have a voice, that one day this voice will be heard, and that what is said will receive due attention. As so eloquently put by an Iraqi participant, one day she and Amin will not only have the same voice, they will also be equally included in making decisions. With this report, we intend to trigger discussions and reclaim the WPS agenda. It is our obligation to analyse the policy framework and to use it coherently.

"

Me and Amin have the same voice, but if Amin whispers, he is heard. I have to shout.

PARTICIPANT FROM IRAQ

Kvinna till Kvinna would like to extend a warm thank you to the 91 women who took the time to talk to us, who expressed that they still believe in change, and who showed that patriarchal power structures will one day be no more. We would like to thank these 91 women for identifying concrete and necessary steps to make the WPS agenda more useful and holistic – by including issues linked to women's economic rights in conflict including HLP rights and to shrinking civic space and violent extremism. We would like to thank them for showing us where and how the implementation of the agenda has failed to be effective, how the WPS agenda needs to be made accessible for women peacebuilders and human rights defenders on the ground, and to a much greater extent than it has been up till now. It also needs to find ways to include women peacebuilders working in contexts of de-facto governments. Kvinna till Kvinna has developed an Feminist Peace Practice Map based on the practices compiled during the empirical study. You can access the map on www.kvinnatillkvinna.org. We hope that the interactive map can be a source of inspiration to women practitioners in various conflict affected contexts. We also wish that the map will offer the donor community, governments and international non-governmental organisations practical examples of how to support women's peacebuilding work.

Most of all, we would like to thank these women for showing us that giving up is never an option, that taking no for an answer is never the way forward, and that a new peacemaking paradigm with the capacity to achieve feminist peace is possible. Much has happened during the past 20 years since the ground-breaking UNSCR 1325 was adopted. Much more needs to be done in the coming 20 years. It is reassuring that there is such a wealth of experience and insights that people can rely on and listen to.

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The current peace-making paradigm does not work. It is constructed along patriarchal power structures, at best attempting to end violence. There is a need to dare to imagine a feminist peace.

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