

On Tuesday (20 October), WILPF held an internal workshop, “Mobilising Women: Localising Peace” with delegates from 9 countries to exchange experiences and build strategic collaborations for gender justice, peace and freedom. Participants joined from: Cameroon, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Lebanon, Netherlands, Nigeria, Spain, Sweden, and UK/Eritrea. Participants shared and discussed what is happening at the grassroots level; what are best practices in mobilising advocacy efforts on the ground; and what are the key challenges and opportunities to move from commitments to accomplishments on feminist foreign policy with local action for change.

WILPF PeaceWomen’s Abigail Ruane provided an overview of the recent fifteenth anniversary Security Council debate on Women, Peace and Security and global study launch. WILPF has been working with partners across the full month of October to build momentum for action, rather than allowing Spain’s change of debate fractionate civil society, and is calling for the feminist movement to raise the bar in leadership and mobilise across movements for action with local impact. WILPF PeaceWomen’s Ghazal Rahmanpanah highlighted key elements of UNSCR 2242 (2015), the 8<sup>th</sup> resolution on Women, Peace and Security, adopted on 13 October 2015. These include strong support for civil society including civil society briefings, an informal expert group in the Council to strengthen accountability, a broad approach to peacekeeping that also addresses issues such as climate, health, and extremism, calls for strengthened gender responsive funding, training analysis and programmes, and urging of gender as cross cutting issues in countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism discussions.

WILPF Reaching Critical Will’s Mia Gandenberger provided an overview of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) (2013) and other disarmament tools. While the ATT entered into force on 14 December 2014, there still is much that needs to be done, specifically with regards to utilising this key international mechanism for accountability against military spending and gender-based violence. Reaching Critical Will uses a risk assessment survey as a tool to show what states are being held accountable and identify what gender-based violence in the implementation of ATT means at the state level. Gandenberger noted that activists can use the ATT as a tool to gather data on the effects of the arms trade; this data collection is a critical tool for strengthening advocacy around limiting arms exports and their associated risks of sexual and gender based violence.

WILPF delegates discussed common challenges and good practice in addressing these challenges for action. Activists from Cameroon to Colombia highlighted the human security risks faced by women human rights defenders and peace activists who speak truth to power and address risky issues such as disarmament and women’s human rights. Violence against women and gender based violence – from domestic violence to elections violence and beyond – make it risky for activists to raise their voices due to threats both from state and non-state actors. Participants brought attention to the importance of recognising (rather than veiling) the peace work that grassroots women peace-builders are already doing on the ground, rather than pushing patriarchal strategies involving external interventions to “save” local victims. As one participant noted, “many projects have failed because these projects were looked as quick fixes to accomplish short-term goals.” WILPF Lebanon highlighted the challenges to women’s participation and rights when the context is a lack of legal framework on these issues.

Activists shared experiences about good practice and learned from each other from their different contexts. In DRC, activists are raising awareness of the ATT for ratification and action and linking this to development plans to strengthen action on gender, women and girls. In Nigeria, activists are investing in political economies of peace by building women's economic empowerment and supporting their local action for peace. In Spain, activists are working to hold their government accountable through shadow reports on CEDAW that highlights how government military spending fails to address commitments on CEDAW, UNSCR 1325 (2000), and the ATT. As WILPF-Spain Manuela Mesa stated, "we need to move from global to local to make women's perspective seen on an international level." WILPF Sweden shared their experiences in supporting learning exchanges among sister WILPF sections in Africa, and highlighted the importance of building relationships with key stakeholders such as minority governments when they are not in power so that activists can build on this when power shifts. WILPF-UK/Eritrea emphasised the need to work with diverse stakeholders including women's group and opposition groups outside, especially regarding issues such as Eritrean women in refugee camps. WILPF-Netherlands highlighted the importance of creating space to learn from each other as a general principle and to as to build on each other's political experiences for action.

The group explored different visions and paths to peace. Participants affirmed the failure of military security to provide women's human security, and explored what women's security looks like and strategies for achieving it. They emphasised the importance of linking short-term crisis response with long-term investment in women's human rights defenders and political economies of peace. They discussed tools for connecting the dots including short-term urgent action funds and long-term reduction of military spending; short-term crisis response protocols that facilitate international solidarity when women face threats and longest term capacity building for advocacy around policy and cultural change in line with the Convention on the Elimination for all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Arms Trade Treaty and Disarmament commitments, and UNSCR 1325 (2000) and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. They also explored how to push the envelope by reaching out to non-traditional stakeholders including media houses for change.