



**WHAT MEMBER STATES CAN
DO TO ENSURE WOMEN'S
MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION
IN THE UN SYSTEM**





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What Member States can do to ensure women's meaningful participation in the UN system

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This year, the foundation and purpose of the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) was compromised and challenged by the travel ban introduced by the US Administration on 27 January 2017, which sought to ban entry to the US for people from Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. In addition to the ban on these countries, women from other countries in the Middle East (not subject to the ban), from countries in Central and South America, and from some countries in Africa, were also denied visas. They were thus denied the opportunity to let their voices be heard at CSW61 in New York. These unilateral actions by the US as the host state had a major impact on the ability of the UN to uphold the principles enunciated in the UN Charter, in human rights law, and indeed in the CSW. The situation vividly illustrated the vulnerability of UN processes to external decisions and shone a light on the absolute necessity of ensuring the meaningful and safe participation of women in the multilateral system more broadly. All this was, however, only the tip of the iceberg.

The shrinking space for civil society has been an issue for a long time. The travel ban compounded this, and to illuminate the seriousness of this issue, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) held a Convening in April 2017. More than 150 women's rights and peace activists from around the world gathered to discuss how to make the UN more inclusive and help it live up to the founding principles of its Charter. CSW61 was an eye-opener that illuminated a serious structural problem.

That structural problem is exemplified by the election of Saudi Arabia to the CSW. Saudi Arabia cannot promote women's rights globally, when it severely discriminates against women at home. Such absurdity endangers the credibility of the system. The UN was set up as a peace organisation and one that would promote respect for human rights, but that purpose has been subordinated to the geo-political concerns of its strongest members.

This booklet, **What Member States can do to ensure women's meaningful participation in the UN system**, draws from the discussions that took place during the three days of WILPF's Convening. It is designed specifically for Member State representatives and provides recommendations ranging from supporting women human rights defenders and women's organisations to what the UN Member States can do to improve women's participation in the UN system.

With growing nationalism, populism and militarism worldwide, and 46 recognised ongoing conflicts around the world, now is the time to make changes and rethink our current multilateral system.

>> 2 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. AVENUES FOR TIMELY, ADEQUATE AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION

State representatives should:

- >> Provide women activists' visas—to allow them to access the UN—easily and expeditiously, by following consistent, non-discriminatory, transparent procedures for visa applications, and prioritise holding meetings in accessible spaces at the UN that are open to civil society with early indication of these events for planning.
- >> Ensure the composition of delegations to the UN reflects the diversity, perspectives and interests of the people at home.
- >> Decline to elect governments which severely discriminate against women in their own territory to human rights bodies, and join civil society demands in removing Saudi Arabia from CSW.

2. LONG-TERM SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

State representatives should:

- >> Support the Grand Bargain's target to provide 25 % of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020 and to increase multi-year funding.
- >> Substantially increase financial resources for grassroots women human rights defenders and peace activists, including through aid dedicated to advancing gender equality, and civil society inclusive funds. Funding should be geared directly towards women's political work for peace instead of channelling funds through International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) or UN agencies. This includes supporting participation and advocacy efforts of local women's leaders in the international human rights procedures, and paying particular attention to marginalised women's groups.
- >> Consult with local organisations on developing the best and most secure ways to channel funding for civic and humanitarian activism into conflict areas instead of using anti-terror laws as a pretext for not send funding to local organisations working in highly militarised environments

3. ENSURING IMPLEMENTATION OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

State representatives should:

- >> Develop and implement National Action Plans, submit national reports to human rights mechanisms on time, and ensure that national legislation is harmonised with ratified instruments.
- >> Ensure access to all information needed by civil society organisations to engage in country reviews by UN mechanisms and work with women's civil society organisations to act on recommendations by human rights bodies, and develop effective strategies on improving this approach.

4. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT THAT VALUES WOMEN'S CIVIL SOCIETY WORK

State representatives should:

- » Encourage and value women's participation and contribution as providers of expert knowledge in peace processes, humanitarian spaces and national and international decision-making fora.
- » Ensure safety, and no reprisals against women human rights defenders and peace activists by their government.
- » Ensure strong partnerships and real and meaningful dialogue with women's civil society on the ground and be trained on gender and harmful concepts of masculinity.
- » Ensure women's leadership from the beginning in peace processes, including by establishing explicit procedures for women to impact the decision-making process and by establishing regional and national advisory bodies of women's peace leaders.
- » Provide regular monitoring and follow-up to transparently share impact and rationales for decisions taken.
- » Provide effective gender budgeting on all aspects of national and international foreign policy by including gender impact assessments.
- » Re-consider militarism as the only response to security, and recognise women human rights defenders as the true bearers of the peace mandate—not the military.
- » Ratify, accede to, and implement the Arms Trade Treaty, along with other arms agreements, and conduct transparent, comprehensive gender and human rights impact assessments before transferring weapons.
- » Design alternative opportunities for livelihoods and jobs that do not incentivise proliferation and use of arms for economic security, and prioritise women's participation in disarmament policies.
- » Rethink neoliberalism as an economic approach to fragile post-context situations and ensure that peace processes embody democratic inclusion, support for human rights and non-discrimination, including by rejecting neoliberal structural adjustment and investing in gender reparations, social safety nets, and gendered transitional justice.

At WILPF's Convening [the Convening], participants from 40 countries discussed how to reclaim the UN as a peace organisation and bring it back to its Charter. A large number of women's groups and civil society organisations (CSOs) were represented, and participants shared their insights, experiences and ideas for a path forward. The discussions during the Convening resulted in a number of recommendations useful for Member State representatives.

Women's experiences during and after war and conflict differ from those of men. Women's real and meaningful participation in the debates within the UN system is therefore a necessity in order to obtain a nuanced and correct picture of what is needed to prevent and resolve conflicts, rebuild society post-conflict, and ensure sustainable peace.

However, it is also important to remain aware that women are not a homogeneous group. Needs, issues and experiences vary depending on the context, culture and country, and having an inclusive approach is therefore crucial.

Women human rights defenders face serious risks

"We need to transform violent masculinities to end patriarchy and advance peace."
– Anna Möller Loswick,
Sweden

Patriarchy has no specific religion or culture. It appears in all nations and cultures and affects political processes and decision-making at all levels. Patriarchal oppression is amplified during conflict, and militarism imposes and strengthens negative masculine identity. This increases the risks women face during conflict due to the emergence of various forms of violence, often including organised sexual violence and the use of gender-based violence as a tactic of war.

Challenging patriarchal values, inequality, gender stereotypes and sexism is not an easy task, and it often comes with high personal risks for peace activists and human rights defenders on the ground. Participants at WILPF's Convening report that women activists' morals, independence and legitimacy are often questioned. Many women who work within the field of peace building and conflict resolution face certain risks and obstacles solely because of their gender. They are likely to experience gender-based and sexual violence, harassment, pressure and attacks. It is common to experience hate speech and threats, and many women's organisations have had their websites hacked or closed down. One participant also recounts that because women activists are often described as dishonourable, their children have been taken away.

Barriers to meaningful participation in decision-making

"So often in conflict women are 'instrumentalised' but their voices are not heard."
– Laila Alodaat, WILPF

Women human rights defenders and peace activists operate in a domain that historically has been seen as male. Unfortunately, it is still perceived as such. The idea that men are the protectors and women are the victims is still strong in narratives and discourses about conflict, its prevention and resolution. Instead of being considered as experts or knowledge providers, women are seen as tokens or only allowed to participate in processes where they have no real influence and where the agendas have been decided on beforehand. They have to constantly prove themselves to be "qualified" to participate in political fora.

A further obstacle to women's meaningful participation is the prevalent stereotype that all women have one voice. The assumption that there is a monolithic women's rights position leads to one woman being assigned to represent one salient identity characteristic. This approach justifies having few women in decision-making fora, as these few are considered to be a representation of all women.

Stereotypes of women as victims and uncritical advocates for peace, combined with a strict division of labour in the public and private spheres, prevent women from entering official peace and post-conflict reconstruction processes.

Women's meaningful participation is essential to achieving sustainable peace

Excluding women from peace processes, peace agreements and post-conflict reconstruction efforts has severe consequences—not least because it prevents the realisation of real and sustainable peace. Research shows that there is a strong connection between the inclusion of women in peace processes and a more stable, longer-lasting peace. Today, we see a tendency to give women symbolic roles in internationally driven processes, such as adding a woman to the peace table, or engaging women outside the formal peace talks, such as in the recent Yemen talks, without any formal role or follow-up. This looks good on state representatives' records, but it has no real impact. Women need to be actively contributing members of the peace process. As stated by the participants at WILPF's Convening: It is not 'political correctness' for women to participate; it is common sense.

In a time when there is compelling research documenting that women's participation is crucial in achieving real and sustainable peace, it is more important than ever for Member States to take concrete actions to ensure women play the fulsome role that is demanded, by women, by law and by common sense. It starts with recognition of agency and the vital roles played by women in-country; it needs to be reflected in the political processes nationally and internationally, and means full and effective inclusion in peace processes, in peace agreements, and in post-conflict governance structures. It is incumbent on states to insist that the UN mediators ensure this happens.

"In a survey of 1,200+ people, we found that different groups had different security issues. Women are not all the same."

– Hajer Sharief, Libya

"There will never be proper peace unless there are women at every step of the way."

– Julienne Lusenge, DRC

When women are included in peace processes there is a 20% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting 2 years. There is a 35% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years.

– UN Women

>> 4

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STATE REPRESENTATIVES

4.1 AVENUES FOR WOMEN'S TIMELY, ADEQUATE, AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE UN SYSTEM

Women activists' freedom of movement from the Global South is restricted, including denial of visa

The issue of activists being denied visas, lately brought into the spotlight by the US Administration, extends far beyond the US. For instance, the Secretary General of WILPF Cameroon could not attend WILPF's Convening in Geneva, Switzerland, as she was denied her visa without being given any rational explanation.

Multilateral fora provide an opportunity to bring local voices to the international level, and allow activists to exchange experiences and build lasting relationships amongst each other, with State representatives and with UN officials. Preparations to attend these fora, including the visa application process, are both resource- and time-consuming.

Procedures followed by embassies of the same country are sometimes inconsistent.

Denial of visas marginalises and isolates human rights defenders, as it effectively prevents them participating at the international level.

Travel bans, imposed by host countries, such as by the US Administration and women's activists' home countries in the MENA region, pose further obstacles to women's freedom of movement and ability to participate.

Recommendations

State representatives, working in Permanent Missions, should:

- >> follow consistent, non-discriminatory, transparent procedures for visa applications.
- >> ensure that women's participation and engagement in UN mechanisms and forums can be facilitated rapidly and efficiently.
- >> reflect on how passport privilege keeps local voices out of the UN.

State representatives should:

- >> ensure that visas are granted to women human rights defenders that allow them to participate in UN and other multilateral fora.
- >> prioritise holding meetings in accessible spaces at the UN that are open to civil society with early indication of these events for planning.

Good practice

- » Participants report that the United Nations Development Group facilitates visa applications. For instance, the Women's Major Group of women civil society vouches for each other to enhance visa access
- » The European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders set out that Permanent Missions should receive and support human rights defenders and ensure their visible recognition through the use of, inter alia, invitations.
- » State representatives, including representatives of Permanent Missions, should seek to develop guidelines to protect women human rights defenders in their home countries and to ensure their facilitated access to international fora, similar to Norway's guide to support human rights defenders or the Swiss Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders.

State representatives are disconnected from women activists' perspectives

In many countries, civil society actors do not have easy access, or have no access at all, to State representatives in their own country. Yet, representatives may be more accessible outside the country, in UN fora. However, even in international meetings, particularly at the UN in New York, civil society faces difficulties in accessing UN rooms and delegations. Participants at WILPF's Convening report that meetings are held in UN facilities inaccessible to civil society, or which oblige civil society to leave after 6.00 pm. Furthermore, participants observe disparities between political and policy positions held by State representatives in-country and those of Permanent Missions to the UN. According to the participants, there is, however, often a shared lack of interest by State representatives and delegates for including gender and grassroots perspectives into their work, or a lack of knowledge about how to do so.

Such disconnect between representatives of countries and the experience and analysis of women NGOs prevents the realities of women's lives being brought into the international domain and undermines the stated objectives of the institutions.

Good practice

- » In South Africa, the NGO Sonke Gender Justice regularly offers—and is sought out to provide—capacity building opportunities to government counterparts. As a key partner, the government supports Sonke's MenCare Campaign to promote gender-equitable parenting and allows gender-transformative fatherhood groups to operate in many state health facilities across the country. Government leaders have spoken publicly in support of the campaign.

"UN needs an upgrade – we need to adapt to current situations on the ground, remove barriers and acknowledge crucial actors."
– Global Network of Women Peacebuilders

Under Resolution 1996/31, the NGO Committee is obliged to meet with ECOSOC accredited organisations before each of its sessions and at other times when necessary.

Recommendations

State representatives in-country should:

- » be willing to meet with civil society on a regular basis and should be ready to listen and to hear people's perspectives and experiences.
- » ensure strong partnerships and meaningful dialogue with civil society.
- » request women's civil society organisations to provide information directly to States when they are undergoing the review under international human rights mechanisms.
- » provide regular monitoring and follow-up to transparently share impact and rationales for decisions taken.
- » ensure that government staff are trained on gender and on traditional and harmful concepts of masculinity.

Members of Permanent Missions and State representatives should:

- » ensure the composition of delegations to the UN reflect the diversity, perspectives and interests of the people at home.
- » push to allow civil society organisations to vote in the election of important human rights bodies' committees or commissions, such as the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) or the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
- » ensure, and advocate for, facilitated access for civil society to UN facilities and delegations.
- » refrain from electing States to the NGO Committee which curtail civil society work.
- » put themselves forward as candidates for the NGO Committee only if they have a strong commitment to defend civil society's work.

4.2 LONG-TERM SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

Lack of sustained funding impacts women activists' ability to engage with the UN system

Engaging with UN human rights mechanisms, such as submitting a shadow report to the CEDAW Committee, requires financial and human resources. Participants state that because of scarce funding, they are often faced with the choice of preparing reports to UN human rights mechanisms, or continuing their day-to-day work. Moreover, the travel costs associated with participating in a UN meeting are often unaffordable to grassroots activists.

Such challenges are heightened for marginalised groups, or groups that face multiple forms of discrimination, such as indigenous women and LGBTQI individuals. Participants also point to regional disparities with respect to funding. For instance, trans- or intersex advocates living in Western Europe are underfunded, as donor countries perceive them to live and work in “generally” privileged and safe regions.

Recommendations

State representatives should:

- » demonstrate political will to ensure women's meaningful participation by supporting (financially and otherwise) the participation and advocacy efforts of local women's leaders in the international human rights procedures, paying particular attention to marginalised women groups.
- » ensure access to all information needed for civil society organisations to engage in country reviews by UN mechanisms.

Lack of sustained funding poses obstacles to the work of women's organisations

According to the participants, there is a serious lack of funding for organisations working on the ground. Available resources are disproportionately channelled towards state or UN agencies or International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), and tend to focus on service delivery. The UN receives funding, allows for sub-granting to other UN agencies, and finally distributes smaller sub-grants to actors on the ground delivering the services. This system is ineffective and inefficient, creates barriers, and (indirectly) questions local organisations' capacity to absorb funding and resources.

Furthermore, participants note that their own governments do not provide sufficient funding for civil society organisations, and women's organisations remain under-funded at best.

According to research conducted by the Global Actions for Trans Equality (GATE), trans groups in high-income countries report ineligibility for funding.

*“In Syria, 75 % of the humanitarian work is being done by local organisations, but they only receive 1 % of the foreign aid funding.”
– Rola Hallam, CanDo*

There is a lack of trust in the skills and expertise of grassroots organisations. The donor community also tends to provide short-term grants which are restricted to six months or one year. Such “compartmentalised” funding prevents long-term, strategic thinking and political commitment, as grassroots organisations have to spend long hours writing project proposals and project narrative reports instead of focusing on their actual work.

Policies linked to counter-terrorism agendas, including Countering Terrorism Financing, and increased militarised security, have had a catastrophic impact on grassroots organisations around the world. These rules have been designed and implemented in a way that fails to take account of the challenging settings under which grassroots organisations in conflict countries need to survive and operate. Moreover, the rapid response to humanitarian crises and lack of contextualisation of humanitarian policies mean that work for women's rights is underfunded and de-prioritised.

Recommendations

Under the “Grand Bargain”, 22 member States and 28 UN agencies or international organisations have committed to provide 25 % of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020 and to increase multi-year funding.

State representatives of countries that have not committed to the Grand Bargain's target should:

- » push to commit and support this initiative.

State representatives of donor countries that have committed to the Grand Bargain's target should:

- » ensure the target is achieved and continue to work to have grassroots organisations recognised for their contribution and financially supported by other States.

- » directly fund local organisations that holistically address the needs of women on the ground.

- » substantially increase funding for grassroots women human rights defenders and peace activists instead of channelling funds through INGOs or UN agencies. This should include aid dedicated to advancing gender equality and civil society inclusive funds. It should comprise a two-part approach that includes gender assessment prior to the project, and involving women in the design of any project.

- » be willing to be trained by local organisations on local priorities, and adapt funding priorities accordingly.

- » consult with local organisations and communities on finding and developing the best and most secure ways to channel funding for civic and humanitarian activism into those conflict areas instead of using anti-terror laws as a pretext for not send funding to local organisations working in highly militarised environments.

Funding for women's income-generation activities is not empowering

Participants report that foreign programming for women is often based on stereotypes and low expectations, mostly concerned with small projects teaching women to knit and sew, or start-ups of small business or agricultural production. Participants explain that the end product of such funding is the increase of few individual women's household income. Yet, it does not enable economic empowerment for women as a group, and further perpetuates patriarchal power structures.

Child care and the resulting structural inequality remains an issue left out of policies on women's economic empowerment and participation in the formal sector.

Recommendations

Donor countries and State representatives, ministries and local authorities should:

- » fund programmes which train women on financial and project management.
- » prioritise investments in accessible, affordable and quality social infrastructure and essential services that reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care and domestic work, and that enable their full participation in the economy.
- » ensure adequate budgetary allocation to ensure social safety nets and innovative social protection floors.

4.3 WOMEN'S UNIQUE ROLE IN SECURING SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Women's participation in peace processes is not valued

Successful, sustainable peace depends on the degree of political will, social mobilisation and inclusivity. Inclusivity entails the meaningful engagement of civil societies and local communities in the peace process, framing countries' national priorities through regular consultations.

The implementation of a peace agreement requires meaningful and qualified participation of the whole population. Peacekeeping missions and other programmes and policies in-country are not adapted to the population's wishes and needs, report the participants from countries with peacekeeping missions and operations.

When female participants speak about their experiences of participating in peace processes or in other decision-making fora, they quote men's responses in these fora: "no time for your gender analysis"; or "you are welcome to engage – but not here". Women's inclusion is almost always met with indifference, or even resistance.

The overwhelming conclusion drawn by the participants is that if women are physically present in decision-making processes, they are merely included for political point-scoring. This is the case both nationally and internationally. Furthermore, participants specify that "consultations" with women for programmes, policies or peace agreements, which national governments and UN agencies often pride themselves on having had, are in fact pseudo-consultations. Firstly, the mechanism of consultation lacks effective transfer strategies that would systematically communicate results to relevant stakeholders. Secondly, consultation as a notion is not participation. The concept undermines any opportunities for real, sustained and meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes, programmes and policies that affect them.

Recommendations

Donor countries and governments in transitional contexts should:

- » ensure that peace processes reflect national priorities which are informed by individuals' experiences and perspectives on the ground through institutionalising procedures for regular exchange with civil society and leaders within the community.
- » implement a mechanism to ensure the population's qualified and meaningful participation in the peace agreement's implementation.
- » ensure that every civil society actor has access to tools and information, including training programmes on the content of the agreement, dissemination of informative videos, booklets and the like, including to rural and remote areas of the country.

» support existing local women coalitions and organisations and ensure their real meaningful participation in peace processes and beyond, without them being associated with militarised sides, including by establishing regional and national advisory bodies of women's peace leaders.

» support establishing an explicit procedure for women to impact peace processes, as their leadership will set the conditions for their leadership in a political economy post-conflict.

» to that end, acknowledge women as experts and knowledge providers, and recognise them as peace activists and women human rights defenders who have a mandate for peace.

» break the stereotype that all women have consensus, and instead acknowledge their diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives, and make sure to represent those in decision-making fora.

» ensure that women are not only at the table in peace negotiations, but also in political governance, in international processes, and in negotiations with International Financial Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

» provide effective gender budgeting on all aspects of national and international foreign policy by including gender impact assessments and by including women in project design, implementation and follow-up.

Member States of the Security Council should:

» clearly define Peacekeeping Operations mandates: purpose, mission, duration.

Neoliberal policies do not address conflicts' root causes

The political economy of peace processes is complex and must be understood in the context of both the political and economic actors, and their influence on decision-making, participation and gender relations. This includes understanding the consequences of the strong influence of a neoliberal economic agenda in post-conflict recovery processes.

Participants note that the neoliberal economic model used in macroeconomic reforms and transition processes entails deregulation, austerity measures and a reduction of social services, among other things. These reforms often perpetuate structural inequality and decrease the ability of the government to fulfil its human rights obligations, and can therefore become a cause for continued conflict and an inherent obstacle to sustainable peace. For example, in Bosnia, the reform agenda has turned social ownership into private ownership, with no transparency or public participation in the process. These trends are recognised to be occurring across the globe and are specifically pronounced in countries declared to be "post-conflict".

"DRC is the site of the largest UN peacekeeping operation. 20.000 men have been in the country for 20 years at a cost of around \$1 billion per year. These efforts have shown no result and have not succeeded to prevent war. Now is the time for the contributing countries to evaluate and change their approach."
– Julienne Lusenge, DRC

Participants see the lack of a human rights based approach to economic reforms in peace agreements and transition processes as a serious threat to peace. In fact, the notion that free-market and neoliberal models can “fix” peace is widespread, and neoliberal policies do not account for the distinct impact they have on women. Participants emphasise that participation in post-conflict recovery cannot only revolve around political aspects. Liberal peace and neoliberal approaches assume that you can divide the political and the economic, and that issues such as gender inequality and obstacles to sustainable peace can be addressed separately. At the international level, there is currently no alternative to neoliberalism, and there is very little room to challenge neoliberal programmes.

Short-term projects created for women, but within a neoliberal agenda, do not create any change in the underlying structural inequalities. Such neoliberal projects effectively prevent civil society, and even governments, envisioning and planning an alternative political and economic model that addresses the interconnectedness of institutional rules, policies and inequality, including gender inequalities.

A feminist political economy analysis argues that socio-economic inequality is the basis of political inequality in terms of access and participation, and that these inequalities concentrate political power of the few, sustaining systems of gender inequality and exclusion, and favouring patriarchal values. Such analysis would allow scrutiny of the interrelationship of political and economic power and decision-making and how it impacts structural norms, values and institutional practices.

Recommendations

State representatives, representatives of Permanent Missions, donor countries and State representatives in transitional contexts should:

- » analyse the current dominant strategies and policy frameworks for economic reform and their role in perpetuating structural inequalities.
- » support international, national and locally-driven movements and platforms dealing with gender and economic justice and peace.
- » re-channel and increase resources to fund more policy-oriented research on Women, Peace and Security in an attempt to understand the economic drivers of conflict and peacebuilding.
- » transform peace processes from their current project-based approach to a long-term, inclusive and gendered processes.

State representatives seeking or receiving International Financial Institutions' (IFIs) funding should:

- » conduct gender and human rights impact assessments before accepting conditionalities, and always adopt a rights-based approach when implementing economic re-structuring.

“In Bosnia, we see that creating peace from a neoliberal framework means an absence of a conflict analysis. The international community's idea that austerity and privatisation magically cures all is blind to effects of war.”
– Nela Porobić, Bosnia and Herzegovina

State representatives, including those in IFIs, should:

» ensure a women, peace and security perspective is included and demand IFIs' gendered impact analysis of macro-economic reforms, especially the impact on conditionalities.

4.4 WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION IN HUMANITARIAN SPACES

Women's contribution in humanitarian contexts is not recognised

Women do not receive the recognition or financial and resource support to participate formally in humanitarian contexts. Women are predominantly perceived as victims or “passive beneficiaries,” say the participants, and highlight that such a notion could not be further from the truth.

If women's agency is acknowledged, participants address the dangerous trend that women are being praised for their 'resilience'. In doing so, stakeholders exploit such discourse to shy away from providing any recognition and support to women's work, which poses serious risks to women's physical and mental well-being. Women are at the frontline providing humanitarian support, yet they do not fall into the “typical” notion of a humanitarian due to their informal participation.

In summary, the participants state that women's work and contribution in humanitarian contexts is unrecognised, unappreciated and underfunded.

Recommendations

Donor countries and State representatives should:

» re-think humanitarian action beyond the boxes of classic humanitarian sectors (e.g., food, shelter) to recognise the holistic contribution of women-led organisations to humanitarian assistance and protection.

» challenge the depoliticisation of peace work with a gender lens to ensure women's meaningful participation in humanitarian spaces.

» re-imagine who is a humanitarian in order to re-balance the distribution of resources for humanitarian purposes.

» factor support for women-led organisations into humanitarian funding under the Grand Bargain.

“Women are addressing peace and security issues, breaking siege, mobilising convoys to ensure supplies, addressing violent extremism. Women identify early warning signs of radicalization, they are first responders and provide medical support, yet they are not trusted with the necessary space for participation and resources to develop and continue their work.”

– Rasha Jarhum, Yemen

“In Syria, out of 2,000 individuals at senior positions in humanitarian organisations, only 25 of them are women, despite women's massive participation at the informal level.”

– Rola Hallam, CanDo

4.5 REVISITING WOMEN'S SECURITY

Arms proliferation is a major obstacle to peace and to women's participation

Participants are concerned about heightened militarisation and power politics within the Security Council and among States, and about the Security Council's lack of neutrality. The budget for peace processes or humanitarian aid is dwarfed by expenditure on the arms industry, which, in turn, is a cause of the need for humanitarian aid in the first place. Arms trade and arms proliferation has a distinct impact on women's rights and safety, and affects women's ability to participate in the public sphere. Yet States preach peace but continue to buy and sell weapons; militarism is seen as the only response to security.

Moreover, participants highlight that donor countries and national governments do not prioritise disarmament, as they believe such thing is neither feasible nor realistic. Participants raise that if states use the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine (R2P) to intervene, interventions, such as in Libya, prioritise militarisation over the doctrine's other pillars of prevention and protection of civilians from the abuse of sovereignty.

Recommendations

State representatives of States exporting arms should:

- » “walk the talk”; ratify, accede to, and implement the Arms Trade Treaty, along with other arms agreements, and conduct transparent, comprehensive gender and human rights impact assessments before transferring weapons (this includes instances, amongst others, where there is a high prevalence of gender-based violence, reported cases of child soldiers etc.).

- » stop exporting weapons to non-state actors, and in the long-term, stop producing and selling arms altogether.

- » fundamentally reframe security away from militarised approaches to one based on human rights, sustainable development and equality.

State representatives, including of Permanent Missions and Member States of the Security Council, should:

- » publicly name and shame countries that supply arms to countries in conflict, with fragile contexts or with a high prevalence of gender-based violence, and pressure them to stop doing so.

- » recognise women human rights defenders as the true bearers of the peace mandate—not the military.

- » States should make use of R2P doctrine, and introduce a feminist perspective into the implementation, including shifting the emphasis into the pillars of prevention and protection, instead of intervention and militarism.

“The elephant in the room is arms trade: people are profiting from war. Until the international community connects the dots from arms to violence and takes action, we will not have peace.”
– Madeleine Rees, WILPF Secretary General

» to that end, ensure sufficient funding, exercise political pressure, and use the developing doctrine R2P to achieve protection and justice for civilians.

Widespread perception that women's participation in disarmament is unnecessary

Across many types of weapons, the impacts on women are either disproportionate or differentiated. Yet this is not always properly taken into consideration in the design, development or implementation of disarmament programmes and policies.

Although they are beneficiaries, women and their experiences are often excluded from these activities, largely because, on a national level, arms are considered as a tool of protection and intimately linked to masculine identities, therefore fundamental in highly volatile security settings. As such, they tend to fall short in adequately addressing women's needs or experiences with arms.

Participants report that in national and multilateral fora, there is a common perception that arms and disarmament is the "realm of men", and so women are rarely included in any discussions.

Furthermore, participants address underlying economic factors and lack of employment opportunities that incentivise men and women to participate in conflict-related income-generating activities.

Recommendations

Donor countries and all governments, including in transitional contexts, should:

- » increase or re-channel funding, both in building capacities around disarmament issues and around local initiatives that seek to foster peace based on human rights.
- » design alternative opportunities for livelihoods and jobs that do not incentivise proliferation and use of arms for economic security.
- » enable better participation of women in their delegations to disarmament meetings or in related programmes.

Donor countries should:

- » enhance women's role in disarmament, and prioritise women's participation when funding disarmament programmes or developing policies.

Of 693 diplomats registered for the UNGA First Committee meeting in 2015, around 70% were men and 30% were women. Similarly, at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in 2015, 901 of the 1.226 registered diplomats were men (73.5%) and 325 women (26.5%).

4.6 IMPLEMENTING WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

State representatives are inconsistent in promoting and protecting women's human rights

"Your statements do not prevent women from dying."
– Activist, Libya

States' lack of implementation of international human rights treaties remains a significant concern, including because of its impact on women's meaningful participation. States do not act upon treaty bodies' or Charter bodies' recommendations, and fail to submit national reports in time. Participants highlight States' double standards, publically proclaiming to be advocating for women's rights, and ratifying international conventions, but not implementing any of these obligations, or taking actions, such as promoting militarised approaches, which run against promotion of women's rights.

Participants urge to move from diplomacy to action.

Recommendations

State representatives should:

- » develop and implement National Action Plans and submit national reports to human rights mechanisms on time.
- » ensure that national legislation is harmonised with ratified instruments.
- » work with women's civil society organisations to act on recommendations by human rights bodies and develop effective strategies on improving this approach.
- » name and shame other States who do not implement ratified treaties, and marginalise the voices of regressive States and hold to account progressive States.

WILPF'S CONVENING IN GENEVA

As a matter of principle, WILPF decided not to participate formally in the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61), which took place in New York, US, from 13-24 March 2017.

On 26-28 April 2017, WILPF therefore held a convening on women's meaningful participation in the UN system as a response to the exclusion of women advocates and activists.

The Convening took place inside the UN and at Palais Eynard, Geneva, and more than 150 people participated. Participants included women's rights and peace activists, civil society organisations, and representatives of Member States and UN agencies.

All the open sessions at the Convening were live-streamed through WILPF's Facebook-page in order to make the knowledge, recommendations and shared insights accessible to a broader audience. As a way to make the Convening more inclusive, the moderators at the panel discussions included questions asked by live-stream viewers, and people unable to attend the Convening thereby had the opportunity to engage in and contribute to the discussions.

List of countries:

<i>Australia</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Palestine</i>
<i>Benin</i>	<i>Iraq</i>	<i>Senegal</i>
<i>Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Serbia</i>
<i>Canada</i>	<i>Jordan</i>	<i>South Africa</i>
<i>Chad</i>	<i>Kenya</i>	<i>Sweden</i>
<i>Colombia</i>	<i>Kosovo</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>
<i>Croatia</i>	<i>Kyrgyzstan</i>	<i>Syria</i>
<i>Democratic Republic of the</i>	<i>Lebanon</i>	<i>Turkey</i>
<i>Congo</i>	<i>Libya</i>	<i>UK</i>
<i>Denmark</i>	<i>Macedonia</i>	<i>Ukraine</i>
<i>Egypt</i>	<i>Malaysia</i>	<i>USA</i>
<i>France</i>	<i>Morocco</i>	<i>Yemen</i>
<i>Germany</i>	<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>Zimbabwe</i>
<i>Ghana</i>	<i>Nigeria</i>	

"WILPF is known for its unique capacity and expertise in analysing the root causes of conflict through gender lenses and in accompanying feminist movements in their action for peace and justice for all."

– Michael Møller, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva

"The voices of the people on the ground have been missing. Especially the voices of women."

– Hajer Sharief, Libya

"We must #ReclaimUN. For all its problems and failures, it is still all we have got to uphold universal human rights norms and standards."

– Everjoice Win, Zimbabwe

WILPF is the oldest women's peace organisation in the world. With offices in Geneva and New York, and active national sections on every continent, WILPF brings together women from all around the world to work for peace and non-violent conflict resolutions, to end discrimination, and to promote political, economic and social justice for all.

WILPF was founded in 1915, and in 1948, the women-led organisation became one of the first NGOs to be granted consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Since its inception, WILPF has acted as a bridge between the UN and women's organisations around the world. WILPF has always seen it as an inevitable requirement to the multilateral system that it shall be guided by the people and the realities on the ground.

This access to ECOSOC is crucial for WILPF's advocacy as it allows the organisation to influence decision-makers at the highest international level by delivering statements, participating in negotiations and holding side events at the UN. Through the ECOSOC status, WILPF assists its sections and partners in bringing their experience and advocacy to the highest level. WILPF sees it as its finest duty to mediate global and local efforts in order to implement a holistic and transformative approach to human rights, gender equality and disarmament.

WILPF is, and has always been, a strong supporter of the UN, but only a UN which upholds its Charter and Human Rights law. A UN which builds and maintains peace. A UN which works for the people.

WILPF believes that an important missing ingredient for the UN to fulfil its Charter is women's meaningful participation. Women's voices, experiences and insights need to be both heard and acknowledged in decision-making processes. It is not just about counting women; it is about making women count.

NOTES

In 2017, the newly elected US Administration's—a UN host state—travel ban on people from first seven, then six, named countries led to the exclusion of several women advocates and activists at the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61), taking place annually in New York.

The shrinking space for women's voices at the UN has been an issue for a long time, and the happenings around CSW61 illuminated a serious structural problem. In order to guide the UN away from a slippery slope and back to its Charter, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) gathered more than 150 women's rights and peace activists from around the world in April 2017 to discuss how to make the UN more inclusive and make women count within the UN system.

This booklet is an outcome of the discussions that took place during the three days of WILPF's Convening in Geneva.

