

HOW WILPF'S LOCAL-GLOBAL-LOCAL APPROACH WORKS IN SYRIA PROJECT

WILPF

As the world's oldest international feminist organisation, with an aim to ensure real and lasting peace and freedom by non-violent means, WILPF seeks to effectively support women's grassroots organisations in multiple ways. [WILPF's unique local-global-local approach](#), which forges strong linkages between international, national and local efforts, makes our engagement not only innovative but also thoroughly tailored for each local context.

This article, revolving around WILPF's latest advocacy work on Syria, is one of a series of articles showcasing different aspects of how the local-global-local approach works in reality.

In connection to the [32nd session of the Human Rights Council](#), WILPF International hosted a [delegation of Syrian women human rights activists](#) with a vast range of expertise in women's rights, law and justice, civil society and peace building, and humanitarian and crisis response.

This advocacy delegation is an impeccable reflection of how we adopt our unique local-global-local approach. When it comes to working with our Syrian partners, our collaboration distinctly follows WILPF's **cycle of unified action** through which we provide strong and articulate linkages between international and local efforts. WILPF, with the support of [Kvinna till Kvinna](#), facilitated for a number of events and meetings as part of this advocacy trip that include:

- Closed roundtable meeting with member states' representatives.
- Open Side-Event at the Human Rights Council's 32nd session.
- Public event at the Geneva Center for Security Policy at the Graduate Institute.
- Bilateral meetings with relevant UN special mandates and agencies.

WHAT SETS THE WHEELS OF OUR LOCAL-GLOBAL-LOCAL APPROACH IN MOTION?

Advocacy is key for WILPF, as it constitutes one of the most substantial mechanisms to recalibrating the political debates on conflict and crisis, and influencing how states conceptualise and address issues of gender, militarism, peace and security. Advocacy is one of WILPF's strategic tools because it provides Syrian feminist grassroots activists with the opportunity to

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convey a localised and gendered analysis of security developments to state representatives, diplomats, international stakeholders and the general public.

What makes the work of our partners extremely valuable is the fact that they all run or are part of localised networks in constant engagement and communication with activists inside Syria, either directly, cross-border, or remotely.

We facilitate their access to multilateral fora so that local partners in Syria are able to analyse before international stakeholders how the situation on the ground is affecting women, and for the international community to be informed about what the root causes of the violence and militarisation are, the needs of civilians in general and local women organisations in particular, and how can each state or institution provide adequate support.

WHY IS THE LOCAL-GLOBAL-LOCAL APPROACH IMPORTANT IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR WORK IN SYRIA?

As mentioned earlier, the wide-ranging significance of our unique approach is that it provides solid linkages between international and local levels, and thus harmonises the efforts being invested at both levels.

For instance, the main objective of the closed roundtable and bilateral meetings held between Syrian activists and international relevant stakeholders is building a constructive discussion with high-level officials, Special Rapporteurs, INGOs and other actors on the situation of women and the impact of the conflict on them. It also aims at lobbying States for a more gendered and civilian-centered policies and strategies in both humanitarian and political aspects. These meetings also sought to create a network of contacts in Geneva for the Syrian partner organisations.

As such, this is not to say that this approach comes without challenges. It requires enormous coordination, perseverance and long-term commitment especially since positive consequences not swiftly observed. However, the palpable change that results from these efforts, even if long-winded, makes them worthwhile.

LOCAL-GLOBAL-LOCAL APPROACH IS A CONSISTENT AND LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENT

Adopting a local-global-local approach constitutes a long-term advocacy strategy that necessitates not only continuous coordination and articulated efforts, but also consistent engagement at different levels and periods. In this context, this advocacy trip *per se* is only one step of a longer-term advocacy strategy on the impact of the conflict on Syrian women, and not an entire advocacy by itself.

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WILPF and Syrian partner women organisations have engaged in multiple activities in the past two years to address women's experience of the conflict, in pursuance of providing a gender conflict and human rights analysis, and giving concrete recommendations for the international community. The latest key collaboration that gathered ten Syrian women organisations is the drafting of a [summary report for the Universal Periodic Review of the Syrian Republic](#). The submission of a summary report constitutes only one part of a more targeted and long-term advocacy strategy, which requires consistent engagement at different stages: before, during and after the review process that is due on November 2016.

Similarly, this advocacy trip constitutes another advocacy component of this overall strategy. What makes this Local-global-local approach a successful one is therefore the consistency and continuity among different advocacy steps at numerous stages of the process.

LOCAL-GLOBAL-LOCAL APPROACH ALSO SEEKS TO RAISE AWARENESS

The delegation of Syrian human rights defenders also sought to raise awareness among different audiences around the disproportionate impact of the conflict on women and girls in Syria.

The main objective of the [side-event at the Human Rights Council](#) was to present the gendered analysis of the UPR summary report, put forward the carefully developed recommendations around the below main thematic approaches, and examine the roles of the different stakeholders in reinforcing protection of civilians. Discussions during the side-event critically addressed the distinct impact of the following phenomena on Syrian women: gender-based violence, detention, enforced disappearance, displacement, proliferation of weapons, and the indiscriminate targeting of health and educational facilities. The side-event targeted the international community in general, particularly diplomats, state missions, and activists who have access to the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The discussion in the [public event at the Geneva Center for Policy Studies](#) was very similar to the one in the side-event but targeted the general public who do not have access to the Council. The discussion addressed the impact of the conflict on women, the role they play on the ground today, the need for their real and effective participation in peace negotiations and decision-making, as well as how the general public in Europe and beyond can provide direct support.

COMMITMENT OF WILPF TO THE SYRIAN CAUSE

Hosting this delegation constitutes one part of a long-term commitment by WILPF to the Syrian cause and to the work of our Syrian partners. What

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WILPF is seeking to achieve through these numerous advocacy activities with the delegation is to strengthen the network between our Syrian partners and high-level officials, INGOs and other actors and to lobby states for more gendered policies vis-à-vis the conflict in Syria, as well as to support a feminist movement building.

It is equally important to note that this report is prepared to feed into the universal periodic review of the Syrian state, and therefore does not cover violations against women committed by other warring parties to the conflict in Syria.