

# WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR **PEACE & FREEDOM**



## **Event Summary: “Ensuring that No One is Left Behind: Financing Gender Equality and Stable and Peaceful Societies for Effective Implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda”**

*By Madison Chapman*

On July 11, 2016, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), PeaceWomen and sponsors hosted a Side Event to the High Level Political Forum entitled “Ensuring that No One is Left Behind: Financing Gender Equality and Stable and Peaceful Societies for Effective Implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda.” The side event served as a follow up to the Women, Peace, and Security Workshop convened the previous week, and brought together experts from the security and development sectors to continue mapping financial flows, analysing the opportunity cost of militarisation, and identifying opportunities for moving the money from economies of war and militarisation to economies of peace and gender equality. The event provided a space for attendees to analyse a broad range of measures to make that possible – from gender-responsible budgeting, to increased member state financing National Action Plans, to changing the rules that govern military spending, to pushing for feminist domestic and UN policies.

The event also built on focus group discussions and a Women, Peace and Security financing survey carried out by WILPF, as well as the 2015 Global Study on Implementation of UNSCR 1325 (“Global Study”) and 2015 Civil Society Survey. Attendees from the Netherlands, Uruguay, United States, New Zealand, Spain and Austria were present, as was the Ambassador to Uruguay. Expert panelists included Mavic Cabrera-Balleza of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), Isabelle Geuskens of the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP), Emilia Reyes of Equidad Genero, Abigail Ruane of WILPF, PeaceWomen, and Daisy Tourne of the Parliament of Uruguay. The session was facilitated by Nahla Valji of UN Women.

Ms Nahla Valji opened the session by noting that as an international community, we spend “pennies on peace and pennies on conflict prevention, but we spend over USD 14 trillion on conflict and violence.” Financing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda was, she noted, one of the primary messages that emerged from the 2015 Global Study on UN Resolution 1325. As a result of this focus, UN Women and civil society organizations have worked diligently to catalyse new funding sources, creating the Global Acceleration Instrument (GAI) and building toward achieving the 15% target for funds intended toward peacebuilding efforts and prevention of impending security threats. According to Ms Valji, ensuring that funds continue to implement gender equality policies and empowering women in peacebuilding organizations is a crucial step toward increased financing for women, peace, and security initiatives on the international and grassroots level.

Ms Isabelle Geuskens continued the discussion by highlighting key points from the WPS Financing Workshop. She especially focused on the knowledge generated at the workshop about shrinking civil

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society space and strict bank lending regulations that curtail funding for small, grassroots organizations that lack the capacity or capital to complete extensive regulatory and security audits. As a result, women's groups often encounter bureaucratic obstacles in securing funding, leading women to use creative measures, such as carrying cash, to circumvent strict counter-terrorism regulatory measures. However, the use of such strategies only bolster the impression that these women are engaging in illicit activity.

Ms Cabrera-Balleza then explained how National Action Plans remain “the most concrete expressions of government commitments to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.” She warned, however, that there is often a gap between state rhetoric and what is actually being done. For example, there are 67 NAPs across the globe, but only 12 have dedicated budgets. Cabrera Balleza encouraged states to localise their NAPs, since localisation programs provide an opportunity to bring multiple stakeholders together to work on community development plans in contexts that are often gender or peace blind.

Ms Reyes continued the discussion by underscoring that moving the money from economies of war to economies of peace does not necessarily mean seeking out new funds, but means the reallocation of existing funds and the effective, targeted use of funds. A shift in planning methodologies and willingness to address issues with militarisation in Member States is the crucial step in permitting this landslide change to occur.

Finally, Uruguayan Parliamentarian Ms Daisy Tourne spoke about the need for transparency and accountability around military budgets. She gave an example from her own national context, pointing out that during the Uruguayan dictatorship, secrecy surrounded the location of military funds. More recently, laws been introduced to ensure increased transparency, to democratize parts of the military branch, and to empower civilians to become involved in political decisions in Uruguay.

In sum, the Side Event to the 2016 HLPF, “Ensuring that No One is Left Behind: Financing Gender Equality and Stable and Peaceful Societies for Effective Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda,” set priorities for moving forward in a shared determination to move the money from militarisation to peace and gender equity. It clearly identified crucial areas of engagement for civil society and Member States, and emphasised the need for not only concrete strategies to #MoveTheMoney, but a strong coalition and critical will within national governments to do so in order to promote peace, gender equity, and fair and stable societies so that no one is left behind.