



**Insights on  
the Gender  
Agenda  
20 years on  
Global Peace  
Champions  
UNSCR 1325  
Workshop**

# Introduction

Since the year 2000 when the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 affirmed the importance of women's contribution to peace and security as it relates to conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace-keeping, peace-making and peace-building, achievements and challenges have been experienced by nation states, civil society actors and by women to whom this resolution applies.

In the last twenty years of its existence, gender concerns have progressively seen their inclusion in peace efforts at the national and international levels with the Security Council adopting subsequent resolutions to support and strengthen UNSCR 1325. These are resolutions: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2008), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019). These instruments have expanded the understanding of the pillars of UNSCR 1325 and enabled the contextualization of the call to enhance gender sensitive approaches and mainstream women participation in peace and security.

To contribute to the discussions of the UNSCR 1325 and its challenges and achievements in its 20 years of existence, the Global Peace Champions Project set the stage for a discourse on diverse issues affecting women in areas of peace, conflict and security. By mobilizing women who have extensively engaged in conflict prevention and resolution, peace-keeping, peace-making and peace-building the project gathered the following key insights:

## Women and Participation in Peace and Security

Meaningful participation of women ensures that women are not only physically present in peace and security initiatives but that, as informed participants: they articulate their concerns, their concerns are heard and taken on board, and that a space that guarantees gender perspectives is provided. It provides an opportunity for women to shape peace processes through their contributions and expertise, and ensuring that outcomes are sensitive to the needs of women especially as differentiated from those of men.

While women's meaningful participation is an overarching objective towards creating conditions for inclusive and sustainable peace and security initiatives, the local dynamics of women's meaningful participation in conflict prevention, resolution, and management cannot be overlooked. Women are not a homogenous group and the gender interests, experiences and diverse cultural practices relating to women that create both common and uncommon experiences should be acknowledged.

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<sup>1</sup>This policy brief is a product of the research and virtual workshop under the Global Peace Program. It has been consolidated by Ms. Munini Mutuku, member of the Global Peace Champions, and Advocacy and Policy Advisor to the Project. The Project managers are Harun Mwandena and M. Zaman Khoshnam, supported by Research Assistants Ruth Atim, Nima N'zani Kassim and the Designer of the brief Simon Kaguru. September – December 2020

## Gender Focused Capacity Building Initiatives

To contribute to women's meaningful participation in peace and security, seminars, trainings, workshops, exchange programmes, have been identified as some of the platforms that support the exposure and building of capacity towards productive engagement.

The design and execution of such activities should be adapted to local needs and realities. They should take cognisance of the different categories of women and target both men and women. Targeting both genders provides a platform of interaction in developing strategies and addressing issues that affect the communities concerned.

Though, care has to be taken to avoid grouping 'unprepared women' with 'prepared' men. Experience has shown that women who are 'unprepared' or 'feel unprepared' are less likely to contribute to proceedings and are wanting in self-confidence. Often times they tend to concede their viewpoints to those of men and then take a back-seat and retreat to their submissive or domestic inclined roles which are familiar.

Experience has also shown that grouping 'prepared' women with men who are 'unprepared' exposes them to engagement with unwilling and un-accepting actors whose failure to appreciate the participation of women has created an environment that questions and undermines the women's efforts, thus viewing them as unworthy and undeserving to participate in peace and security processes.

Hence, the capacity to engage affects: how men and women are involved in supporting women's participation in peace and security processes, how

women and men are able to participate in processes that affect them and their communities, gender roles and responsibilities, the way roles and responsibilities are viewed, and the outcomes of processes relating to peace and security as they relate to both women and men.

The minimal participation of women in peace-building processes has been known to affect the impact of peace initiatives that are not engendered. Thus, it is of critical importance of any peace process to acknowledge and support the extensive and balanced involvement of both men and women.

## Strategic Engagement with Diverse Platforms and Actors

The existence of organizations and networks supporting women's participation is a factor that contributes positively to peace and security processes. Though, this have been noted to be minimal and thus challenges the existence of spaces and active platforms from where women can engage. For those that exist, challenges related to capacity and availability of facilitative resources have crippled the ability of this platforms to function and deliver on their stipulated mandates.

Organizations and networks are key platforms that provide critical support to incubate women's leadership and prepare them for the wider political environment. Though, the wider political spaces often times continues to perpetrate entrenched sexist attitudes which are often reinforced by discriminatory customary norms and negative social attitudes towards women leadership.

Women led platforms offer opportunities where women can have actual influence and design home-grown and context specific strategies from a gender specific lens. They are spaces of moral support where women can synergize and mobilize numbers, strengthen and consolidate their efforts towards lobbying and advocating for strategic peace and security issues and thus enable women to overcome barriers to their meaningful participation. Furthermore, in collaboration with men, such spaces offer opportunities and ideas to create gender sensitive strategies where they can create or tap into existing opportunities to broker strategic relationships and alliances in peace and security.

While such platforms are inclusive and welcome a participatory climate, they should guard against perpetrating the very practices and attitudes they work to restructure within society. Those of discrimination, domination and undermining gender specific aspects in peace and security. They should endeavor to reach all categories of women and be cognizant of the special peace and security needs of minority, physically challenged and young women within their midst.

This organizations and networks can further provide information, strategies, good practices to diverse actors who intend to work with the communities concerned on matters peace and security.

## Women in Mediation

Since time in memorial women have steered 'informal behind-the-scenes' peace initiatives at the family and community levels. Despite their minimal participation in public and formal mediation processes, their skills and knowledge had often been developed in the informal settings.

Their absence in formal settings that involve mediation and dispute resolution subsequently denied society this knowledge and skills.

Thus, the mediation processes that entails negotiations and drawing of peace agreements consistently became a preserve of men. The structures that worked to engage with such processes consciously and unconsciously failed to guard against the side-lining of women in public and political decision-making spaces appertaining to peace and security.

Hence, the need to create spaces for mentorship, design and adopt gender sensitive approaches, promote peer to peer support and continued engagement in local and other mediation processes is critical to ensure women participation. It is envisioned that women will bring diverse mediation styles and experiences to the talks at a time when fresh perspectives and approaches are needed to tackle new challenges like those posed by radicalization of youth, terrorism, organized gangs, amongst others. Engagement with actors and established processes will require that women enhance and polish their skills and knowledge through trainings, exposure programs and holding of strategic seminars to enhance their work in mediation and advisory processes. Though this will also mean that such actors and processes adopt gender sensitive approaches and open up to the participation and engagement of women.

The close collaboration and engagement of women actors is strategic for early warning and early response seeing that women are the constant actors involved in interactions at the various levels of society including the family, religious, cultural, and political levels.

# Gender Responsive ADR Mechanisms

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms which include traditional dispute mechanisms have often been the sole or the predominant means of dispute resolution in many societies. These practices enjoy significant legitimacy at the local level amongst both men and women seeing that they are the first port of call owing to their proximity, acceptance, minimal expense as regards resources and influence on cultural and social beliefs and practices. As restorative institutions they are known to restore balance in a community by promoting harmonious relations, providing more responsive settlements, and allowing community members to expedite any existing dispute.

Despite their wide acceptance in majority of communities in the world they have been known to often harbour patriarchal tendencies that have gender insensitive practices in their execution of justice. They have often failed to incorporate the different perspectives, knowledge and interests held by men and women as relates to the disputes in question. As traditional institutions they have often been guided by traditional practices which have not upheld gender sensitive approaches in resolving disputes thus undermining and discriminating the participation and opinions of women as relates to peace and security.

The outcomes of the decisions by these mechanisms are perceived to be biased against women due to the negative practices and perceptions of women as inferior to men in some respects. The lack of inclusion of women within these institutions which are traditionally patriarchal institutions, and the lack of expression of interest in being members of this institutions by women as they

consider and accept this to be male role's within the cultural heritage, have worked towards disregarding the meaningful participation of women in dispute resolution efforts.

Thus, the historical and cultural contexts informing gender biases as upheld by these institutions have to be unearthed and dealt with in the efforts to promote gender sensitive justice especially in reference to women.

## Bridging the Inter-Generational Gap

Women are not a homogeneous group. As it relates to age, the different age sets have diverse needs, experience conflicts in diverse ways, and attain leadership at different points in their lives. The need to work in partnership and collaborative efforts and not isolation calls on women and men to be mentors. Mentorship provides an appropriate and empowering engagement in building upcoming young women and men to becoming confident in articulating their needs and positions.

It calls on the more experienced actors to support the less experienced and upcoming actors by sharing their experiences, good practices, networks and by providing stepping stones for each other. It calls for gender sensitive approaches that enable the young boys growing up into men and the young girls growing up into women to adopt gender sensitive understanding of the world they live in and more so in enhancing peace and security.

In situations of conflicts, this differences in age are pronounced in the roles that women voluntarily play or are forced to play. While younger women tend to be taken as 'spoils of war' and wives of soldiers and rebels, the older women tend to be killed as they are viewed as unproductive for the mission at hand. If spared, they suffer the burden of under

resourced care takers as they take up the responsibility of children left behind by younger women and men who have either been killed in war or have left the homes as they flee conflicts. Younger women also bear the blunt of bearing children as a result of rape and suffer the trauma of living in sexually and physically abusive environments. Men, both young and old experience disempowerment and the devastation of lost meaning, livelihoods and families.

These dynamics should be factored in the design of relief and recovery programmes that seek to support a society emerging from violent conflicts in its transition towards peace and security. Psychosocial support that is gender sensitive is key if society has to balance back into peace both within its members and without in the larger context.

The participants further gave the following recommendations to various actors in society:

## Recommendations to the Women:

- ▶ Confidently take lead and take charge in steering peace and security processes at all levels. Women should endeavor to have their voices heard in the various platforms and through various channels.
- ▶ Leverage on the synergy generated by teams, coalitions and networks of like-minded actors in the peace and security sector. In the absence of such platforms, women should take the initiative to create such platforms with purpose.
- ▶ Design constructive ways of bringing both men and women on board the peace and security agenda.
- ▶ Act as mentors and offer peer to peer support to fellow women and young girls. They should endeavor to make spaces accessible and available to

others. They should also encourage young girls to become leaders and aspire to contribute to society at all sectors and levels.

- ▶ Take the initiative to develop themselves by seeking knowledge and building their capacity in the field of peace building and security.

## Recommendations to the Men:

- ▶ Promote the rights of women to participate in matters peace and security.
- ▶ Create and support platforms that encourage the participation, opinions and gender sensitive approaches in peace and security Review attitudes, practices and cultural norms that undermine gender sensitive and gender responsive initiatives that target the promotion of peace and security Offer genuine support to gender sensitive approaches within the peace and security sector.
- ▶ Engage in gender sensitive initiatives with the understanding that women have the capacity and ability to lead and contribute to peace and security matters.
- ▶ Acknowledge and appreciate that women are capable, able to deliver on their tasks independent of men.
- ▶ Sensitize young men and boys on the importance of gender sensitive approaches in all spheres of life. This should also be up scaled to the school curriculums and activities that are used in training.

## Recommendation to the Communities:

- ▶ Promote dialogue and discussions on patriarchal cultures and norms as they relate to women and their rights to participate in society, in activities that affect the community, and especially as they relate to peace and security.
- ▶ Create education and awareness raising platforms for its members on issues affecting the relations between men and women to promote peace and security amongst its members.
- ▶ Encourage all sectors within the community to engage in dialogues and discussions that promote peace and security.
- ▶ Encourage the participation and inclusion of women and girls in matters relating to the community especially those addressing peace and security.
- ▶ Embrace the informal structures of dispute resolution at the local level through community policing
- ▶ Devise gender sensitive strategies and programmes of reintegration and support for reformed members of the community who have been involved in breaching peace and security protocols

## Recommendation to the Civil Society Organizations:

- ▶ Undertake advocacy to influence policy and legal change and reviews towards promoting gender responsive and sensitive initiatives.
- ▶ Promote and facilitate awareness raising activities to educate the communities and influence dialogue towards gender sensitive attitudes and practices.

- ▶ Engage in strategic partnerships with Governments towards enhancing gender sensitive approaches to peace and security and influencing gender sensitive government operations
- ▶ Build national alliances at all levels of the society to enhance opportunities and increase platforms for the mainstreaming of programmes that are gender sensitive in peace and security.
- ▶ Promote peer to peer support and mentorship across the civil society organizations in the sector of peace and security to share good practices, support struggling institutions, share solutions and offer support to challenges, and collaborate in enhancing gender sensitive practices and attitudes.
- ▶ Generate data, evidence-based research and analysis on women, peace and security for easy accessibility and policy reference .
- ▶ Develop networks of women organizations, alliances and similar platforms that give space to the voices of those affected.
- ▶ Improve access to justice and necessary services including trauma healing to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.
- ▶ Support community and grassroots led efforts towards the design, review and implementation of gender sensitive policies.

## Recommendations to the Governments:

- ▶ Ensure that Government projects related to peace and security are gender sensitive, adopt a gender approach in the implementation and have monitoring and evaluation frameworks to monitor progress and achievements.

- ▶ Ensure peace and security projects are inclusive of the diverse categories of women including rural women, women living with disabilities and other special conditions and needs, women of diverse ages, and women from minority and marginalized communities.
- ▶ Adopt affirmative action where necessary to promote women participation in peace and security.
- ▶ Promote the formulation of policies to protect women who are working in the spheres of peace and security, which enhance gender responsive action and practices.
- ▶ Bridge the digital gap to ensure access of information and gender segregated data in peace and security.
- ▶ Enhance multi-sectoral working groups focusing on Gender Based Violence and women in peace building, and this should incorporate action plans, supportive budget and clear outcomes in the efforts to achieve their mandates.
- ▶ Engage communities and their related institutions at the legislative assembly levels to enrich Bill's and support the enactment of laws related to gender, peace and security.
- ▶ Enhance the education levels of girls and women by providing support through policy and legal provisions, scholarships to meet their needs, and education facilities that are gender sensitive to their education needs as women and girls.
- ▶ Undertake gender auditing for all peace and security related policies and activities within Government and the diverse related sectors.
- ▶ Develop gender sensitive peace and security participatory tools and strategies that can enhance democratic principles.

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