



The Women, Peace and Security Agenda A Journey towards Inclusive Security

GCSP Inclusive Security Policy Brief Series

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, was a landmark resolution following decades of civil society activism to pressure the international community to move away from an overly militarised approach to security that framed women as victims of armed conflict, and to recognise women as key stakeholders with the right to a place at any negotiating table and key agents and partners in efforts to build peace in all contexts.

Seeking to address centuries of discrimination against women, which led to their marginalisation and exclusion from peacemaking and peacebuilding processes, the resolution called on all stakeholders to take action to increase the participation of women in and incorporate a gender perspective into all peace and security efforts.

The resolution was passed unanimously by the UNSC¹ and laid the groundwork for the development in subsequent years of the **Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda**², which has four key pillars:

Prevention: Conflict in general should be prevented and specifically all forms of violence against women and girls should be prevented in conflict and post-conflict situations. Prevention since became a priority of the UN Secretary-General in 2017.

Participation: The representation of women should increase at all levels of decision-making in peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts, including in UN missions. This principle applies to all judicial, security and political institutions of whatever kind.

Protection: Parties to conflicts should fully respect international law; take special measures to protect women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence; and end impunity for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

Relief and recovery: Parties negotiating and agreeing peace agreements should adopt a gender perspective and take into consideration the specific needs of women and girls in these agreements, and specifically women's capacity to act as agents of relief and recovery and thus make the keeping of these agreements more likely.

Resolution 1325 also called for research on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls and gender mainstreaming progress in **peacekeeping missions. Nine subsequent resolutions** have more specifically addressed sexual violence in conflict as well as accountability, sexual exploitation in peace operations, and women's roles in countering violent extremism and terrorism.³

The WPS Agenda has been specifically linked to women's human rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (**CEDAW**). CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations links the agenda to multiple related areas, including gender-based violence; trafficking; access to education, employment and health; rural women, refugees and asylum seekers; displacement; nationality and statelessness; marriage and family relations; security sector reform and the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants; constitutional and electoral reform; and access to justice⁴.

Implementation: Accelerating action

UN peacekeeping missions now routinely have gender advisors and incorporate gender mainstreaming and sexual violence prevention into their work; however, male personnel participating in such missions have been implicated in sexual violence, abuse and exploitation cases, often with few consequences. While the number of women participating in peacekeeping missions has increased, they are still very much a minority. Canada launched the **Elsie Initiative** in 2017 to identify and overcome the barriers preventing women from participating in peace operations.

Since 2005 some UN member states have actively implemented the objectives of the WPS Agenda through **National Action Plans (NAPs)**. Additionally, there are currently 11 Regional Action Plans in place headed by institutions such as the African Union. As of August 2020, however, only 85 of 193 UN member states (44 per cent) had adopted NAPs relating to UNSC Resolution 1325. Many NAPs lack sufficient funds for full and proper **implementation, monitoring or accountability**, and lack coordination across government bodies and with civil society.

Many civil society actors continue to argue that women's peacebuilding work continues to be unrecognised, marginalised and under-valued. A number of women's **mediators networks** have developed in recent years to try to build connections between local and global peacebuilding efforts, as well as increase the inclusion of women in Track 1, 1.5 and 2 peace processes.

In June 2020, UN Women, France and Mexico launched the **Global Compact on Women Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action** in the context of the Generation Equality Forum to put into practice the many policy frameworks applicable to the WPS Agenda.

¹ UNSC (United Nations Security Council), Resolution 1325 (2000), S/RES/1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000, <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/res_1325e.pdf>.

² Resolution 1325 does not contain the expression "Women, Peace and Security Agenda", but laid down the approaches and principles that would form the basis of this agenda.

³ UNSC resolutions 1820 (2009), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2010), 1960 (2011), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019) (PeaceWomen, "The Resolutions", n.d., accessed 12 October 2020, <<http://www.peacewomen.org/why-WPS/solutions/resolutions>>).

⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, "General Recommendation No. 30 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict and Post-conflict Situations", CEDAW/C/GC/30, 1 November 2013, <<https://www.refworld.org/docid/5268d2064.html>>.

Making women count?

Women's political representation at the national level has increased around the world, including in peace processes;⁵ however, there is still a long way to go to achieve parity. Tension has also emerged between the notions of "counting women" (i.e. simply increasing the number of women participating in various processes, etc.) and "making women count" (i.e. giving women participants real power to influence the processes in which they are participating). A rights-based approach to women's participation makes clear that women should not have to justify their place at the negotiating or decision-making table and should have equal access and participation.

The impact of women's participation in and influence on peace processes has been monitored, leading to arguments that women should be included in peace processes because their inclusion makes them more lasting and successful.⁶ There is a danger of instrumentalising women, and at the same time a strong need to recognise the value of women's perspectives and a gender-responsive approach. This '**better peace tool**', a short video by the International Civil Society Action Network, indicates how to more meaningfully include women in peace processes.

WPS Agenda gaining recognition: Nobel Peace Prize laureates advancing the agenda

- **2003: Shirin Ebadi** (Iran) for her efforts to increase democracy and human rights, focused especially on the struggle for the rights of women and children.
- **2004: Wangari Muta Maathai** (Kenya) for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace.
- **2011: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee** (both from Liberia) and Tawakkul Karman (Yemen) for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and girls and for women's rights to full participation in peacebuilding work.
- **2014: Malala Yousafzai** (Pakistan) and Kailish Satyarthi (India) for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education.
- **2017: International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons** (Switzerland) for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons.
- **2018: Nadia Murad** (Iraq) and **Denis Mukwege** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) for their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict.

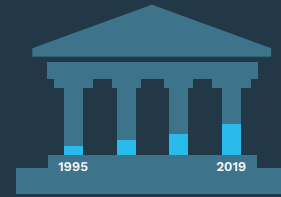
What can we do?

We can all work towards addressing the underlying gendered norms and unequal rights, access and resources that contribute to discrimination against women and to their marginalisation and exclusion from key areas of human activities. On the specific issue of the WPS Agenda, many policies are in place; now we need the practices. These include the following recommendations:

1. **Gather disaggregated data – with an intersectional gender lens;** see the GCSP's **Inclusive Security Policy Brief No. 4**.
2. Adopt **quotas that make women count**. Setting benchmarks and understanding why they are not reached are critical to seeing the barriers preventing women's full, meaningful participation.
3. Develop stronger **NAPs for designing domestic and foreign policy** in consultation with civil society.
4. **Raise awareness and train institutions working in peace, security and justice to be gender responsive;** for relevant resources, see www.dcaf.ch.
5. Dedicate **human and financial resources** to advancing the WPS Agenda and supporting people working on it.

⁵ J. Bigio et al., "Women's Participation in Peace Processes: Colombia", Council on Foreign Relations, 15 December 2017, <<https://www.cfr.org/blog/womens-participation-peace-processes-colombia>>.

⁶ T. Paffenholz et al., Making Women Count – Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women's Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations, Geneva, Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, April 2016, <<http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/Making%20Women%20Count%20Not%20Just%20Counting%20Women.pdf>>.



Worldwide women's representation at the national parliamentary level rose from 11.3% in 1995 to 24.3% in 2019.



Only 19 of 193 countries have a woman as a head of state or government.



Just 4 countries have achieved at least 50% representation of women in their national legislatures.

<https://www.cfr.org/article/womens-power-index>

Conflict zones still have high levels of sexual violence, for example 50% of women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo having experienced sexual violence at home.



<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>



Roughly 95,000 police and military peacekeepers are deployed around the world today, of which 10.8% and 4.7%, respectively, are women.

<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/women-peacekeeping#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20out%20of%20approximately,units%20in%20UN%20Peacekeeping%20missions>

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Police_court_and_prison_personnel_statistics

Women and girls make up 72% of trafficking victims worldwide.



<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>