

Women and the Making of Global Peace: Between the International Normative Framework and the Faltering of Actual Representation

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Abstract

This paper examines the evolving role of women in the making of global peace, tracing the development of the international normative framework — from the United Nations Charter and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and its successor resolutions — governing women's participation in peace and security processes. It analyzes how conflicts and wars disproportionately affect women, drawing on United Nations and UNHCR data concerning poverty, illiteracy, unpaid care work, political under-representation, and refugee status. The paper reviews national action plans adopted by the United Nations, Nepal, and Sweden to operationalize the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and identifies the principal obstacles that continue to constrain women's substantive participation in peace negotiations — including limited representation, divisions among women, the narrow scope of their participation, logistical obstacles, political co-optation, and the weakness of feminist civil society. It concludes by proposing mechanisms — education, economic empowerment, and context-sensitive engagement in crises — for strengthening women's future role in achieving comprehensive and sustainable peace.

Keywords: Women, Peace and Security; UNSCR 1325; Peacebuilding; Gender Equality; National Action Plans; Peace Negotiations; Conflict; Women's Political Participation

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the world has arrived at a full and qualitative conviction — evidentiary before being quantitative, and objective before being promotional — that empowering women is a principal step toward resolving political, social, economic, and cultural problems, and a fundamental pillar in building peace, promoting tolerance, and leading change toward a safe and sustainable future. Practical experience has confirmed women's success across numerous fields and the imprint they have left: women are the vital nerve behind the success of any institution — indeed, more precisely, behind the success of states in achieving genuine national development and in realizing global peace. Women achieved this through efforts exerted across many domains, driven by a determination to prove themselves independently of those who falsely claim that doing so contravenes custom, tradition, or religion. In their cooperation and complementarity with their male counterparts, women have offered a model for achieving progress amid a clear degree of tolerance and a sincere desire on both sides to realize pluralism without belittlement, exclusion, or vilification — for all are building blocks in the edifice of humanity, which must be preserved and developed.

The role of women in peace has become a matter of concern to the entire world, as growing research on women's role has shown that states with higher levels of gender equality — political, social, and economic — are less likely to resort to the use of force in their dealings with other states. Likewise, inequality faced by women within a state is associated with a less tolerant foreign policy toward other states and a greater likelihood of conflict.

This issue is the focus of this paper, which seeks to address a number of themes:

- The history of women's role in preserving international peace and security, and how this role has evolved
- The impact of conflicts and wars on the status of women around the world
- The most significant challenges facing women in today's world that may prevent them from fulfilling their role in establishing comprehensive peace
- The future of women's role in achieving peace

I. The History of Women's Role in Preserving Peace and Security

Women's role in achieving peace and security in the world is the product of more than a century of effort by peace activists working on behalf of women at the international level. The earliest manifestations of this role emerged with the rise of what became known as the global civil-society movement for women's peace, which organized numerous protests against the vast destruction wrought by the First World War. Decades of organizing later, women peace advocates from across the world gathered for the first time at the International Congress of Women held in The Hague on 28 April 1915, determined to study the causes of war, expose them, and eliminate them. One outcome of that congress was the founding of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which remains active to this day as a pioneer of the women, peace and security movement.¹

This gave rise to numerous international and regional legislative frameworks that sought to codify women's vital role in achieving peace in the world, in order to protect them from the ravages of wars in whose decision to wage they had no part. The most important of these instruments include the following:

- The 1945 Charter of the United Nations.²
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.³
- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).⁴
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both issued in 1966.⁵
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979).⁶
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).⁷
- The World Conference on Human Rights, held in 1993.
- The Beijing Conference of 1995.⁸

¹Background: Women and Gender Equality Conferences, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/ar/conferences/women>

²Charter of the United Nations (1945), <https://www.un.org/ar/about-us/un-charter/full-text>

³Universal Declaration of Human Rights, <https://www.un.org/ar/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

⁴Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), <https://cutt.ly/iXLiwUu>

⁵International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

⁶Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

⁷Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

⁸Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/arabic/BeijingDeclPl.html>

Women's efforts to strengthen their role in establishing peace in the world were crowned by Resolution 1325, which established the Women, Peace and Security agenda in 2000. The resolution addressed the role of women in peace and security processes, marking the first time the Security Council affirmed that women's participation in making and sustaining peace is essential. The resolution urged the Security Council, the Secretary-General, member states, and all other parties to take the necessary measures on matters relating to women's participation in decision-making and peace processes, to mainstream gender in training and peacekeeping, to protect women, and to integrate gender considerations into all United Nations reporting systems and programme-implementation mechanisms.⁹

The Council followed this resolution with eight successive resolutions on women, peace and security: Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, and 2467. These resolutions emphasized the importance of enabling women's leadership and effective participation in preventing and resolving conflicts and in addressing the effects of sexual violence, and encouraged the development and use of measures and standards to monitor the mandates entrusted with respect to women, peace and security, together with training and capacity-building to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women, peace and security within peacekeeping forces. They also emphasized more comprehensive engagement with civil society and a deeper understanding of the gender dynamics of conflict.¹⁰

Yet these international and regional laws and legislative instruments did not prevent women from being affected by conflicts and wars more than their male counterparts — conflicts in whose outbreak they had no part in deciding — which brings us to the second theme, concerning the impact of conflicts and wars on the status of women in the world.

Table 1. Women's Representation in Negotiations and Its Relationship to the Conclusion of Peace Agreements¹¹

Women's Influence on the Process	Negotiations Ongoing	No Agreement Reached	Agreement Reached / Not Implemented	Agreement Reached / Partially Implemented	Agreement Reached / Implemented	Agreement Reached / Implementation Ongoing
Weak / Nonexistent	Aceh (1999–2003)	Croatia–Serbia (1998–2002); Turkey–PKK (2008–2011); Georgia–Abkhazia (1997–2007); Moldova (1992–2005); Cyprus (1999–2004)	Rwanda (1992–1993)	Israel–Palestine, Oslo (1991–1995); Mali (1990–1992)	Tajikistan (1993–2000)	Kyrgyzstan (2013–present)
Medium	Turkey–Kurds (2009–2014)	Egypt (2011–2013); Sri Lanka (2000–2004)	Eritrea (1993–1997)	Somalia I (1992–1994); Somalia II (2001–2005); Darfur (2009–2013); Somalia III (1999–2001); Togo (1990–2006)	Solomon Islands (2000–2014); Macedonia (2001–2013); Nepal (2005–2012)	Afghanistan (2001–2005); Benin (1990–2001); El Salvador (1990–1994)

⁹ Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325: Key Messages, Findings, and Voting Record, <https://cutt.ly/kXLi1nq>

¹⁰ Scope of Our Work – Peace and Security, UN Women – Arab States, <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/ar/what-we-do/peace-and-security/scope-of-our-work---wps>

¹¹ Marie O'Reilly, “Women's Participation and a Better Understanding of the Political Dimension,” in Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, New York, 2015, p. 42.

Women's Influence on the Process	Negotiations Ongoing	No Agreement Reached	Agreement Reached / Not Implemented	Agreement Reached / Partially Implemented	Agreement Reached / Implemented	Agreement Reached / Implementation Ongoing
Strong	Fiji (2006–2013)	—	—	Guatemala (1989–1999); Mexico–Chiapas (1994–1997); Burundi (1996–2013); Northern Mali (1990–1996)	DR Congo (1999–2003); Kenya (2008–2013); Liberia (2003–2011); Northern Ireland (2001–2013); Papua New Guinea (1997–2005); Somaliland (1991–1994); South Africa (1990–1997)	Yemen (2011–2014)

Source: Adapted from Marie O'Reilly, “Women's Participation and a Better Understanding of the Political Dimension,” in *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325*, New York, 2015, p. 42.

II. The Impact of Conflicts and Wars on the Status of Women in the World

Women have always been participants in conflicts, assuming various roles — as peacemakers, combatants, breadwinners, political figures, or activists — and they are frequently harmed by conflict more than men. Women have a fundamental human right to participate in decision-making processes that affect them, but the inclusion of women in peace processes is also a strategic necessity, because adding a broader range of perspectives can produce a more sustainable peace. Despite the international efforts made to protect women in times of war and conflict and to strengthen their role in peace negotiations and the signing of peace agreements, women around the world continue to face numerous problems. Some reports cite statistics indicating the modest achievements realized on the ground with respect to women's role in achieving peace. In a study issued by the United Nations, researchers analyzed forty peace processes since the end of the Cold War and found that, in cases where women were able to exert strong influence on the negotiation process, the likelihood of reaching an agreement increased significantly compared with cases in which women's groups exerted weak influence or none at all — an agreement was reached in nearly all cases where women had strong influence. The same study found that a peace agreement in which women participate is 20 percent more likely to last at least two years, and 35 percent more likely to last fifteen years, while the likelihood of a peace agreement failing decreases by 64 percent when women's civil-society representatives take part.¹²

Nevertheless, at the practical level, there remain numerous facts and figures concerning manifestations of inequality and discrimination against women — in both developed and developing countries — that are reflected in women's role in achieving, or participating in the making of, peace. For example, women constitute approximately 70 percent of those living in poverty on less than one US dollar a day; women make up about 66 percent of the world's illiterate population; and women bear approximately 70 percent of total unpaid labour performed to provide care for their families — work whose value is estimated at around 11 trillion dollars. Other manifestations of discrimination against women include their low rate of participation in administrative positions, which does not exceed 33 percent in developed countries, 15 percent in Africa, and 13 percent in Asia and the Pacific — figures that are twice what they were twenty years ago in Africa and Asia-Pacific — while the proportion of women holding ministerial posts worldwide does not exceed 7 percent.¹³ In addition, a study conducted by UN Women in 2012, covering 31 peace processes between 1992 and 2011, revealed the

¹²UN Women, Violence against Women in Iraqi Society, n.d., <https://cutt.ly/oXLpL9m>

¹³See: Women in an Insecure World Report (Violence against Women: Facts, Figures and Statistics), 2007, p. 390.

extent of this marginalization of women: only 4 percent of signatories, 2.4 percent of chief mediators, 3.7 percent of witnesses, and 9 percent of negotiators were women.¹⁴

Moreover, reports from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees indicate that the number of female refugees in 2021 reached 8,810,985 out of a total of 21,327,285 refugees, representing 41.3 percent of the world's refugees¹⁵ — a proportion that illustrates the scale of suffering endured by women, particularly in host countries, where female refugees generally receive maternal and child health services at lower rates than women in the host country. This situation is further compounded when it comes to access to prenatal care, which is affected by factors such as migration status and educational attainment. The data confirm that refugee and migrant women are at greater risk of suffering during pregnancy and childbirth.¹⁶

III. National Action Plans to Strengthen Women's Role in Peacemaking

On 31 October 2002, the Security Council called on United Nations member states to develop national action plans to implement the aforementioned Resolution 1325. These plans refer to documents containing guiding principles that national governments are expected to adhere to in order to achieve the resolution's objectives. The first national action plan was issued in 2005 by the Kingdom of Denmark, and the number of UN member states that have since launched national action plans has exceeded 90 — including countries experiencing armed conflict, such as South Sudan and Mali; countries in post-conflict transition, such as Bosnia and Nepal; and countries not experiencing such conditions, such as Sweden. These plans have led many countries to place a larger number of women in foreign-policy decision-making circles, to the point that 34 countries now have a woman as foreign minister, 84 countries have a woman serving as minister of trade, and 20 countries have a woman serving as minister of defence.¹⁷

It is nonetheless observed that most of these plans lack mechanisms to ensure their monitoring and to measure their effectiveness. Moreover, most of the states that have responded by drawing up such plans are not states experiencing armed conflict or that have just emerged from one, and few states have allocated a budget for implementing these plans — only 28 states have done so.¹⁸ The following section reviews some international and national plans aimed at activating women's role in peacemaking.

Examples of International and National Plans to Activate Women's Role in Peacemaking

1. 1. The United Nations

According to United Nations documents, two departments — the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Operational Support — support gender equality and the empowerment of women, peace and security through various means, the most important of which are:

- Strengthening the administrative capacities of leaders and accountability mechanisms with respect to implementing gender equality and the empowerment of women, peace and security across all aspects of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

¹⁴Kristin Lund, "Preventing Crises and Conflicts: The Role of Women in Ongoing Peace Processes," UN Chronicle, <https://www.un.org/ar/chronicle/article/19964>

¹⁵UNHCR Refugee Statistics, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=lddZf8>

¹⁶UNHCR Refugee Statistics, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=lddZf8>

¹⁷Makki Maamari (trans.), from Foreign Affairs, Al Emarat Al Youm, <https://www.emaratalyoum.com/politics/weekly-supplements/beyond-politics/2020-03-12-1.1318756>

¹⁸Twentieth Anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325, <https://cutt.ly/xXKYunH>

- Strengthening progress-monitoring systems and mechanisms and producing evidence-based progress reports, and building the capacities and knowledge of all personnel — civilian, police, and military — to advance gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping operations.
- Strengthening the engagement of United Nations peacekeeping operations and their partnerships with other United Nations entities and other partners, both at headquarters and in the field.
- Deploying women's-affairs advisers across all multidimensional peacekeeping missions to ensure gender mainstreaming across all peacekeeping functions, so as to guarantee that women's voices, needs, and priorities are incorporated into all peacekeeping operations.¹⁹

2. 2. The Kingdom of Nepal

The armed conflict in the Kingdom of Nepal between government security forces and the Communist Party left more than 14,000 dead and 200,000 displaced, with an especially devastating impact on women and girls. Women's participation in the conflict was high — 30 to 40 percent of Maoist combatants were women — and women played a strong role in ending the conflict. Nevertheless, Nepalese women were ultimately absent from the formal peace negotiating table.

In 2011, however, following intensive calls from the Nepalese women's movement and the United Nations, and under the leadership of the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, the government of Nepal launched its national action plan based on Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820. The process of developing the plan was highly participatory, extending from the national level down to the district level, and included the participation of executive ministries, civil society, women's organizations, and external development partners. Most importantly, the process included extensive consultations with women and girls directly affected by the conflict, carried out through networks of non-governmental and civil-society organizations that enjoyed trust and strong relationships with women at the local level. These organizations provided long-term support to women's groups and helped encourage women's participation in identifying their social, economic, and other development needs as a basis for consultations on the national action plan. In addition, to strengthen oversight, a working group on the resolution was established to monitor and follow up on implementation.

The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction and the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development, in partnership with local civil-society organizations, also developed guidelines for localizing the national action plan in 2013, aimed at integrating direct activities into local networking processes. This led to the incorporation of Resolutions 1325 and 1820 into school curricula and into the training of the army and police. On the financing side, the joint presence of the Nepal Peace Trust Fund and the United Nations Peace Fund was important for launching implementation through the executive ministries, as the two funds complemented one another in the process of localizing the national action plan. Both funds supported coordination committees at the district level and local peace committees, including the application of gender-sensitive policies to district-level planning processes.²⁰

3. 3. The Kingdom of Sweden

Sweden has adopted numerous measures and policies aimed at strengthening women's role in political life in general, and in foreign policy in particular. Sweden was the first country in the world to have a self-declared

¹⁹Promoting Women, Peace and Security, United Nations Peacekeeping, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/ar/promoting-women-peace-and-security>

²⁰Marie O'Reilly, "Actors for Women, Peace and Security: Monitoring and Accountability," op. cit., pp. 244–245.

feminist government, in October 2014, when the number of women ministers reached 12 out of 22, with women's representation exceeding 54 percent. Sweden has adopted a number of measures to support women's role in achieving peace, the most important of which include:

- A pledge to intensify efforts to develop long-term strategic measures to achieve full gender equality; within this framework, the government established a national gender-equality-policy agency, issued a ten-year strategy aimed at eliminating violence against women, adopted a precise gender budget, and announced a Feminist Foreign Policy.
- Adopting the strategic goal of pursuing a feminist foreign policy that seeks to achieve gender equality and enable women and girls to enjoy the full range of human rights. To this end, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs developed an action plan, updated annually, addressing six long-term sub-goals: full enjoyment of human rights; freedom from sexual, psychological, and physical violence; participation in peace talks; political participation; economic empowerment; and sexual and reproductive rights.
- Increasing financial support to UN Women, which reached 134 million Swedish kronor (more than 15 million dollars) in 2018, and providing support to the World Bank to study and monitor discriminatory legislation against women in 173 countries.
- Paying particular attention, in its foreign policy, to work for sustainable peace and development, making clear that one of its central goals is to ensure the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.
- Adopting a national action plan specific to women, peace and security, and seeking to support similar plans in 12 countries, including Syria, Mali, and Colombia — thereby helping to strengthen women's participation in peace talks and security discussions in these countries; forming a network of women peace mediators to increase women's influence on peace processes; and supporting the building of similar networks in Africa, the Mediterranean basin, and the Middle East.²¹

Overall, a study on national action plans concerned with integrating women into peacemaking and peacekeeping processes noted the following observations²²:

- The majority of governments have not allocated stable funding for developing national action plans.
- Funding sources for implementing and sustaining national action plans vary considerably, particularly with respect to balance in tracking, monitoring, and accountability.
- Many governments fund the implementation of their national action plans on the basis of shifting national priorities and do not adequately fund all components.
- Mechanisms for tracking and monitoring the financing of national action plans are usually absent or inadequate.
- While many governments use gender-sensitive criteria, the specific approach used varies, and funding for implementing the national action plan is usually not guaranteed.

²¹“Adopted by Sweden, Canada and Mexico: ‘Feminist Foreign Policy’ – Why Did Implementation Fall Short of the Name?,” <https://cutt.ly/GXKWCWv>

²²Marie O'Reilly, op. cit., pp. 244–245.

- The critical role of civil society — particularly women's rights organizations, networks, and movements — in shaping and implementing the national action plan does not receive sufficient support, resources, or recognition.
- There is clear interest on the part of stakeholders in contributing financially to the implementation of the national action plan.

IV. Challenges Facing Women in Peacebuilding

Women face numerous challenges in proving their worth and their capacity to achieve peace, out of a concern to be among those who benefit from its fruits if its negotiations and dialogues are well managed. These challenges have indeed affected the extent to which women have been able to help peace agreements succeed in general, as noted above. The most significant challenges facing women in playing a strong role in the peace process can be summarized as follows:

Modest participation of women in settlement processes: Women's representation in formal conflict-settlement processes remains at persistently low levels, as the exclusion or marginalization of women continues, whether in peace talks generally or when they do participate — their influence typically faces obstacles due to their small numbers and to the negotiating mechanisms themselves, which may confine their participation to marginal negotiating committees. Failing to prioritize the inclusion of women in peace negotiations affects the overall approach of the negotiations.²³

Division among women over key issues: Some states tend to increase the number of women on general and specialized negotiating committees to preempt any claim of modest participation. In practice, however, this has produced only a modest degree of influence over the course of negotiations, as women are often unable to influence proceedings and outcomes owing to divisions among women over key issues or the absence of a collective voice — though more often it is because a small group of male leaders makes all the important decisions, even when the process is nominally open to include women's groups.

Confinement of women's participation to specific issues in negotiations: Women's participation tends to be confined to a limited time frame during negotiations. Rather than continuing from the preparatory stages of peace talks or political transitions, through the follow-up and implementation stages, and up to the stage of outcomes, women's participation tends to appear only in the ceremonial or protocol dimension, without extending to other levels — a pattern that applies particularly to national dialogues.²⁴

Logistical obstacles: Logistical obstacles that hinder women's participation cannot be overlooked — for example, they may need to arrange childcare, may lack the funds necessary for travel, or may require protection to attend meetings, particularly in the volatile conflict zones of Africa and some parts of Latin America and Asia.

Political corruption: Women's participation in peace negotiations is often based on selectivity by political leaderships within these states or groups — for instance, a tribal or party leader choosing his wife and daughters to participate in various stages of negotiations — which results in their representation becoming merely another form of male-dominated negotiation, in which the woman is simply another voice for the man, who tends to

²³Fadia Kiwan et al., op. cit., pp. 8–11.

²⁴“Preventing Crises and Conflicts: The Role of Women in Ongoing Peace Processes,” UN Chronicle, <https://www.un.org/ar/chronicle/article/19964>

represent his own interests and those of the people he represents, without taking into account women's gender-specific interests and socio-political vision.²⁵

Weakness of feminist civil society: In most countries, particularly developing ones, women typically suffer from the absence of non-governmental platforms through which to express their political views in conflict-management and peace-agreement-signing processes. This affects the ability to formulate a unified vision for women in any peace negotiation — whether in its preliminary, intermediate, or final stages — since effective civil-society organizations can help shape a unified vision for women in crises that takes into account ethnic and tribal differences, as well as differences between urban and rural women or between the centre and the periphery.

V. The Future of Women's Role in Achieving Peace

The status of women in the world generally, and in areas of conflict and war in particular, is entirely bound up with the extent of the role women can play in their society. This is not at all a matter of a symbolic, performative contest, but rather one that concerns the extent to which women actually benefit from activating this role in real, lived practice. It will be difficult for women to link the strengthening of this role to waiting on supranational agendas that may not be sufficiently aware of the particularities of women in every country and every society. Advancing women is the first link in the chain of strengthening their role in areas of conflict and dispute, and this can only be achieved by eliminating all forms of degradation of female human dignity — by securing full citizenship rights for women and ensuring they enjoy human rights on an equal footing with men — through expanding the range of choices available to women and raising their level of productivity, especially as the state's role in economic decision-making recedes. Women's role must not be limited to that of a passive recipient of assistance that secures comfort and prosperity for them; rather, women are an active and effective agent of change and a powerful driver of social transformation. This can be achieved through the following mechanisms:

4. 1. Education

Education is one of the most important mechanisms for empowering women and girls in confronting the many forms of violence — and consequently poverty — that they face. It is therefore essential to identify all the obstacles that hinder girls' and women's access to education, which calls for a focus on the need to establish programmes to support the advancement of women and improve their conditions. Access to continuous education for females must be improved, and educational policy must be formulated by working to achieve equal opportunity and eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination in education, along with prioritizing the eradication of female illiteracy, especially in rural and informal areas. In addition, projects should be developed and training programmes designed to equip women with the knowledge and skills needed to enter the labour market and production, thereby contributing to processes of development and progress within society in a way that helps achieve an adequate standard of living for women.

5. 2. Economic Empowerment

The economic dimension of empowerment focuses on the importance of facilitating women's access to employment opportunities in society, enabling them to earn an adequate income sufficient to meet their basic needs. This requires, at the outset:

²⁵Ibid.

- Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and establishing policies aimed at removing the structural constraints on women's ability to benefit from broader market opportunities, particularly given their relative lack of access to education and necessary skills.
- Improving basic labour standards — including preventing all forms of discrimination through the principle of equal pay for work of equal value — and creating working conditions that include the right of all workers to social-welfare services.
- Reviewing legislative and legal frameworks, as well as administrative practices, with a view to ensuring equal rights between men and women in society and in the workplace.

6. 3. Empowering Women in Crises and Conflicts

This can be achieved through the following measures:

Regular, context-sensitive dialogue: It is essential to reach out to and consult regularly with diverse women and women's organizations. Women do not constitute a homogeneous group in any country, given ethnic, religious, linguistic, and other identities, and all women should not be expected to hold the same mindset. For example, the views, concerns, and needs of professional women in urban areas are likely to differ from those of farmers and small-business owners in rural areas — their opinions, perspectives, needs, and concerns will not always be the same, just as is the case among men. Moreover, in many conflict-affected countries there are local women's peace initiatives — often not based in the capital but in the affected regions — and it is important to reach out to and consult with these local women's efforts.²⁶

The need to include women in the preliminary-consultation stage prior to negotiations: Women are frequently excluded from the talks and agreements at the preliminary-consultation stage prior to negotiations, which is often highly confidential. As a result, women become unable to put forward their needs and concerns during these preliminary consultations, meaning the various problems women face are not incorporated. In this way, the talks and agreements at the pre-negotiation consultation stage constitute a major challenge for women.

In conclusion, an interactive role for women on an equal footing with their male counterparts in establishing comprehensive peace across the world has become something whose importance can no longer be denied, and which must be activated in a manner that reflects not only on women themselves but on the mechanisms of dialogue and interaction across the entire world — thereby contributing to the building of a tolerant society whose motto is peace and justice, far removed from the language of extremism and radicalism that has scorched the world for many decades. This is what this study affirms and calls for, and it is something that can easily be achieved if efforts are combined and intentions are sincere, far from those defeatist and reactionary views that see women as nothing more than dependents or as having “broken wings.”

²⁶Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Women, Peace and Security – The Role of Institutions in Times of War and Peace in the Arab Region, Beirut, United Nations, 2017, pp. 1–15.

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