CSSF Women, Peace and Security Helpdesk

State of the Evidence on Gender in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States

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WPS Women, Peace & Security Helpdesk

The Women Peace and Security Helpdesk, managed by Saferworld in partnership with Conciliation Resources, GAPS UK, University of Durham and Women International Peace Centre (WIPC), was established in December 2021 to increase capability across the UK Government on WPS policy and programming in order to make its work on conflict and instability more effective. If you work for the UK government and you would like to send a task request, please email us at wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk. If you do not work for the UK government but have an enquiry about the helpdesk or this report, please email us at enquiries.wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk

Experts: Sarah Smith, Elena B. Stavrevska and Evelyn Pauls

Direct Audience:
OCSM and the Gender, Children, and Conflict team in the OCSM

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Findings and Analysis

Scale of issues, current debates, and trends

Women's marginalisation and exclusion is a driver of the current scale of conflict

There are now more violent conflicts globally, and of increased complexity, than at any time in the last 30 years, with the world also facing the largest forced displacement crisis ever recorded.[1] Rising inequality, lack of opportunity, discrimination, and exclusion are all fuelling perceptions of injustice and thus conflict. These issues interlink with climate change, demographic change, illicit financial flows, digital transformation, and violent extremism. The evidence is clear that tackling gender inequality is necessary for both preventing and resolving conflict and that advancing **gender equality and inclusion would make a significant difference to global peace, security, and stability**. However, 22 years after the establishment of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, implementation remains slow and the global picture bleak.

It is not possible to build peace or stability without gender-responsive policies, ones that are age aware and inclusive of other marginalised groups, including those based on gender identity, sexuality, religion, (dis)ability, and ethnicity.

Gender inequality has been shown to be a determining factor for instability and conflict, and, as such, the WPS agenda and gender-inclusive conflict prevention and response are more essential now than ever. The deterioration of gender equality markers – socially, economically, politically – precedes fighting and conflict. An increasing amount of research and evidence shows that what is needed is a holistic approach to violence prevention, one that recognises the needs, vulnerabilities, and exposures of differently situated men and women, boys and girls. Violence and insecurity also need to be understood in broad terms, taking account of environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and mass displacement. **Economic inequalities, including disparities in the control of resources,** between men and women, and where women have greater responsibility for care of others, increases vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse, including by external actors such as peacekeepers and international staff.

Sexual and gender-based violence continues unabated

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) remains pervasive, during and after conflict. A wealth of global policy has arisen to combat this issue: the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court made forms of SGBV recognisable as war crimes and crimes against humanity; the WPS agenda in national, regional, and international implementations has preventing SGBV in conflict as a core pillar; the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative continually reiterates the urgent need for the global eradication of sexual violence in conflict. Despite all of this, what has changed the most is that we know more about SGBV in conflict, why it occurs, against whom, and with what devastating consequences, but little progress has been made towards reducing its occurrence. Importantly, SGBV doesn't 'appear' in conflicts – gendered

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[1] World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence, 2020-2025,
https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/publication/world-bank-group-strategy-for-fragility-conflict-and-violence-2020-2025

violence is present prior to conflict and SGBV in conflict is deeply connected to levels of sex-based inequality before conflict erupts.

SGBV in conflict is perpetrated against women and men, girls and boys. It is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men, in families, communities, fighting forces, and security services. Women and girls are overwhelmingly their targets, though it is perpetrated against men and boys too, to a lesser extent. Discrimination further compounds vulnerability to violence: people who are displaced, from marginalised ethnic, religious, or racial groups, or identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, or non-binary are especially vulnerable. Evidence shows that children are at nearly ten times the risk they were in 1990, with figures assessed as grossly under-counting the scale of sexual violence against children in conflict due to lack of reporting and poor data collection.[2]

Women's participation leads to better peace deals

There is now broad recognition that **when women participate in peace processes, the resulting agreement is more durable and better implemented**.[3] Whether in formal or informal efforts, women's participation contributes to reaching lasting peace agreements and ones that contain provisions that respond to the vast experiences of women in conflict, whether as civilians or combatants. Other research shows that peace agreements have the potential to "generate shifts in societal norms and practices" and can be used to strengthen women's rights after war when their contents are gender-inclusive.[4]

Yet despite the evidence showing us that peace processes are more durable when women participate, they still remain underrepresented in peace negotiations, especially in track 1 efforts, and indeed 2021 saw a decrease from 2020 figures: women's representation in conflict party negotiations in 2021 was 19 per cent compared to 23 per cent in 2020.[5] Other figures are more promising: 32 per cent of peace agreements reached globally in 2021 included provisions relating to gender, an increase from 26 per cent in 2020. More detailed gender provisions could also be found in local agreements. For example, the Lou Nuer-Dinka Bor-Murle Action for Peace agreement in Jonglei, South Sudan, where provisions seem to be more contextually rooted in the community mediation processes preceding them.[6]

The peace agreement reached in Colombia in 2016 is perhaps the best-known example of gender-inclusive provisions and has been heralded as the most gender inclusive in history. However, in implementation those gender provisions have not been prioritised and have been subject to a backlash against gender inclusion, **reaffirming the need for consistent funding and prioritisation beyond the negotiating table**.

The spread of WPS policy in national and regional policy structures demonstrates state commitments to the agenda; however, this has not markedly improved implementation or violence prevention. While they may not, in themselves, make a direct difference, instruments that focus attention, strategy, and resources towards gender equalities contribute to greater accountability, and in combination with other interventions, provide leverage towards substantive change. Over 100 states globally have **now adopted National Action Plans** (NAPs) on WPS and there are also 12 regional and sub-

[2] Save the Children, '1 in 6 children living in conflict zones at risk of sexual violence by armed groups', 2021. https://www.savethechildren.net/news/1-6-children-living-conflict-zones-risk-sexual-violence-armed-groups

[3] Council of Foreign Relations, 'Women's participation in peace processes', 2020. https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes

[4] Zulver J, Weber S, and Masullo J, 'As the ELN resumes peace talks with the Colombian government, women's participation is more important than ever', LSE Centre for Women, Peace & Security blog, 2022. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2022/12/01/as-the-eln-resumes-peace-talks-with-the-colombian-government-womens-participation-is-more-important-than-ever/

[5] UN Women, 'Facts and figures: women, peace and security', https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures#_Womens_participation

[6] Ibid.

regional organisations that have adopted regional action plans or strategies. This trend of operationalising WPS in domestic policy agendas is continuing, with the United States (US) adopting a **WPS act** in 2017, codifying its commitment to WPS and recognising the centrality of WPS alongside its Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability, and the Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent and Respond to Atrocities.[7] It is suggested that the UK is also considering such an approach, which can be effective if paired with sufficient budget, resources, and monitoring to implement. As of August 2022, nine countries—Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden—have developed or announced a **feminist foreign policy**.

These achievements have been made despite a **global rollback on gender and women's rights**. Reproductive rights for women have been diminished in a number of countries, including the US, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Poland. There is increased mobilisation of what is often referred to as 'anti-gender movements', movements that specifically challenge gender equality, gender mainstreaming, access to abortion, and the rights of LGBTQI people.[8]

State of play in selected conflicts

Ukraine: a September 2022 United Nations policy paper found that Russia's war in Ukraine has widened gender inequalities in food insecurity and malnutrition, and increased gender-based violence in Ukraine. Moreover, because of the price hikes associated with the war, there have been global gendered impacts felt in both food security and energy access. These global gender impacts have been compounded by climate change, environmental degradation, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nigeria: children continue to pay a high price in conflict-affected states in North-East Nigeria. In the three years leading up to 2020, there were 5,741 grave violations against children verified. Children were abducted, killed, maimed, recruited and used, and endured sexual violence with the main perpetrators remaining Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups. The highly volatile security situation has posed significant challenges to the protection of conflict-affected children.

Afghanistan: one year since the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban, the rights of women and girls remain under significant attack and women are systematically excluded from public life, with escalating restrictions on their movements and activities. Stripped of their rights, and under constant threat of violence, Afghan women and girls are relentlessly carrying on with their lives. For some, that means forming new civil society groups to address community needs; for others, it means re-opening their businesses and going back to work.

Ethiopia: northern Ethiopia is experiencing a massive humanitarian crisis, with more than 2.6 million displaced by fighting in the region, and insecurity compounded by drought, floods, and the impacts of COVID-19. Women and girls' needs have soared as a result of violence, insecurity, and climate shocks at the same time as their access to basic services, including sexual and reproductive health care, has been severely disrupted. The availability of maternal health care, including emergency obstetric care to address life-threatening pregnancy complications, has been critically compromised, and protection systems, including medical care and psychosocial support for survivors of gender-based violence, have been eroded. Across the country, approximately 13 million people are in need of emergency health assistance and more than 8 million women and girls need protection services.

These examples demonstrate that ideas about gender, the role of men, women, and children in society, are fundamental drivers and characteristics of conflict, instability, and fragility.

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[7] The White House, 'Fact Sheet: US Government Women, Peace and Security Report to Congress', July 18, 2022. https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/18/fact-sheet-us-government-women-peace-and-securityreport-to-congress/#:~:text=The%20Women%2C%20Peace%2C%20and%20Security,%2C%20Peace%2C%20and%20Security%20Agenda

[8] Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, 'Countering anti-gender campaigns'. https://centreforfeministforeignpolicy.org/countering-antigender-campaigns

State of the evidence: gender, inclusion, and SGBV in conflict and fragility

Conflict response and prevention

Significant research shows that higher levels of gender equality in a country are associated with a lower propensity for both inter- or intra-state conflict.[9] In addition, a gendered approach plays a crucial role in conflict prevention and response in at least two ways:

- through women's participation in conflict prevention, and
- through the integration of a gender lens in early warning systems.

Women play a key role in preventing and responding to conflicts

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and subsequent WPS resolutions have emphasised the important role women play in conflict prevention and response. The viewpoints and experiences of women are crucial in stopping conflicts and their revival. While historically women contributed mostly to addressing structural issues that prevented conflict from resurfacing, they have also played an increasingly important role in operational aspects of conflict prevention, such as early warning and de-escalation.[10]

Depending on the national context, their socio-economic status, level of education, and/or legal and cultural entitlements to participation, women play a range of roles in conflict prevention. Their central roles in many families and communities, as leaders, educators, providers, and advisers, offer them a unique vantage point to recognise concerning patterns of behaviour and signs of imminent conflict, such as arms mobilisation. In many cases, women are the first to voice concerns over young men amassing weapons and training, even when no adequate reporting systems are in place to record and learn from such insights.[11] Yet, too often these voices and concerns are not taken seriously, and, furthermore, there are rarely mechanisms in place through which women can raise their concerns.

Evidence also shows that including women in initiatives to counter violent extremism (CVE) helps mitigate radicalisation. Traditional efforts to combat violent extremism and radicalisation have involved work with religious leaders, who are predominantly men. However, countries such as Morocco have also been able to successfully train

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[9] Hudson VM, et al., 'The heart of the matter: The security of women and the security of states', *International Security* 33, no. 3, 2008/2009, pp. 7–45; Caprioli M, 'Primed for violence: The role of gender inequality in predicting internal conflict', *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 2, 2005, pp. 161–178; Melander E, 'Gender equality and intrastate armed conflict', *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 4, 2005, pp. 695–714; Hudson VM, et al., *Sex and World Peace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Fearon, JD. 'Governance and civil war onset', Stanford University, August 2010.

[10] Conaway CP, and Anjalina S, *Beyond Conflict Prevention: How Women Prevent Violence and Build Sustainable Peace*, New York: Global Action to Prevent War, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 2005.

[11] Hill F, 'Women's contribution to conflict prevention, early warning and disarmament', United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 2003.

women preachers, also known as Mourchidates, who have played an important role in the country's CVE efforts.[12] Several countries have followed this example to include women as prominent actors in their CVE programmes, while different organisations have supported women-led global CVE initiatives. For instance, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe has invested in the Sisters Against Violent Extremism project, one of the first women-centred anti-extremism platforms and training programmes.[13]

Gender inclusive data collection and early warning indicators provide better systems of warning for conflict

Early warning is an essential prerequisite for effective conflict prevention and response. While useful in predicting episodes of violence or a conflict before it breaks out, "early warning information has also been used to predict a resurgence or escalation of conflict and violence".[14] Nevertheless, despite the paramount role women play in conflict response and prevention, there is a notable lack of early warning information gathering "from and about women" on the ground.[15]

In its system-wide action plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, as part of conflict prevention efforts, the UN identified the necessity to "develop effective gender-sensitive early warning mechanisms and institutions."[16] A few years earlier, International Alert developed a framework on how to 'engender' early warning and signs of conflict, proposing a list of gender-sensitive early warning indicators and recommendations for action.[17] Nearly two decades later, research shows that early warning systems have by and large been gender-blind in their analyses and have failed to include women in these processes.[18]

The significance of the violence experienced by women in conflict-affected societies has been emphasised as an indicator of the need for gender analysis in early warning systems. Specifically, **research has found that countries with high levels of violence against women and girls (including, for instance, household violence, female infanticide, and sex-selective abortion) are more likely to experience armed conflict than those which do not.[19]** Additionally, indicators on gender norms that drive violence and conflict more broadly, such as violent forms of masculinity, archetypes of manhood rooted in violence and clashes, and social norms and structures that disempower and disenfranchise women may be particularly useful for early warning.[20] At the same time, gender-

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[12] Couture KL, 'A gendered approach to countering violent extremism: Lessons learned from women in peacebuilding and conflict prevention applied successfully in Bangladesh and Morocco', Foreign Policy at Brookings, 2014. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/women-cve-formatted-72914-couture-final2.pdf.

[13] United States Institute of Peace, 'Charting a new course: Women preventing violent extremism', 2015. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/files/Women-Preventing-Violent-Extremism-Charting-New-Course.pdf

[14] United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 'Women's contribution to conflict prevention, early warning, and disarmament', 7 February 2011. https://www.peacewomen.org/node/90224.

[15] The PeaceWomen Team, 'Editorial', Women in Conflict Prevention, 21 February 2006. http://www.peacewomen.org/e-news/women-conflict-prevention

[16] 2008-2009 UN System-Wide Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) On Women, Peace And Security https://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/taskforces/wps/actionplan20082009/pdfs/OHCHR%201%202008-2009%201325.pdf

[17] Schmeidl S, and Piza-Lopez E, 'Gender and conflict early warning: A framework for action', International Alert, Swiss Peace Foundation, 2002. https://www.international-alert.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Gender-Conflict-Early-Warning-EN-2002.pdf

[18] Wright H, and Lyytikainen M, 'Gender and conflict early warning', Saferworld, May 2014. https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/810-gender-and-conflict-early-warning

[19] Herbert S, 'Links between gender-based violence and outbreaks of violent conflict', GSDRC Applied Knowledge Services, 2014. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a089a5ed915d622c000325/hdq1169.pdf; Saferworld, 'Gender and conflict early warning: Results of a literature review on integrating gender perspectives into conflict early warning systems', Briefing Note 2014. http://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/gender-and-conflict-early-warning.pdf

[20] Wright H, and Lyytikainen M, 'Gender and conflict early warning', Saferworld, May 2014. https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/810-gender-and-conflict-early-warning

sensitive early warning indicators must be context specific, based on research at the local level that identifies the conflict-driving factors.[21]

Given the above, gender-sensitive conflict prevention must start from both a recognition of existing inequalities that drive violence and conflict, and a recognition that due to those inequalities, as well as the existing architecture of international response, women's voices and concerns are not taken seriously as an early warning. This despite **experience suggesting that participation by a broad cross-section of society ensures a richer understanding of conflict and potential responses, and therefore better and more effective conflict prevention.**[22]

Mass atrocities and their prevention

Current state of play on mass atrocity prevention and WPS agenda

Despite a global commitment to prevention, especially pronounced after the Holocaust and genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s, mass atrocities remain a feature of conflict and violence. Recent examples include suspected crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by Russia in its war in Ukraine; and the implication of armed actors in war crimes in Ethiopia's civil war in Tigray.[23] **Atrocity prevention should be understood as distinct from, yet complimentary to, conflict prevention.** Where conflict prevention and resolution focus on mediating between armed actors, atrocity prevention requires a deeper view of social, cultural, economic, and political fractures and the factors that amplify them, all of which are deeply gendered.

The need for integrating the WPS agenda into atrocity prevention is increasingly recognised: the UN's 2020 report on the Responsibility to Protect focused solely on women[24]; the UK has made explicit that its work on the WPS agenda and its Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative must interconnect and be integrated into its work to prevent mass atrocities[25]; the US has worked to integrate its Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017, the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2018, the Caesar Civilian Protection Act of 2019, and the 2019 Global Fragility Act.[26] In May 2021, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) released a global framework to advance efforts to strengthen gender-responsive early warning systems.[27]

Preventing mass atrocities must include indicators on gender inequality

Early warning systems for atrocity prevention that do not monitor gender-based human rights violations risk overlooking micro-level events stemming from negative gender norms which could lead to earlier warnings of

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[21] Ibid.; International Foundation for Electoral Services, 'Gender-sensitive indicators for early warning of violence and conflict: A global framework', May 2021. https://cepps.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ifes_gender-sensitive_indicators_for_early_warning_of_violence_and_conflict_a_global_framework_may_2021.pdf

[22] Wright H, and Lyytikainen M, 'Gender and conflict early warning', Saferworld, May 2014. https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/810-gender-and-conflict-early-warning.

[23] House of Commons International Development Committee, 'From Srebrenica to a safer tomorrow: preventing future mass atrocities around the world', p.8, 2022. https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/30270/documents/175201/default

[24] UN General Assembly 2020, 'Prioritizing prevention and strengthening response: women and the responsibility to protect: report of the Secretary-General'. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3879072?ln=en

[25] House of Commons International Development Committee, 'From Srebrenica to a safer tomorrow: preventing future mass atrocities around the world', 2022. https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/30270/documents/175201/default/

[26] Ibid, p. 16.

[27] IFES, 'Gender-sensitive indicators for early warning of violence and conflict: a global framework', 2021. https://www.ifes.org/publications/gender-sensitive-indicators-early-warning-violence-and-conflict-global-framework

conflict, atrocity crimes, and/or violent extremism. Evidence has consistently demonstrated that any systematic approach to atrocity crime prevention requires strong gender-sensitive analysis, indicators, and sex-disaggregated data to i) identify threats facing women and girls and other vulnerable groups, and ii) enhance the capacity of monitoring and atrocity prevention systems more generally.[28] Similarly, **research in the Asia Pacific region demonstrates that "hostile sexism and support for violence against women are the factors most strongly associated with support for violent extremism."**[29]

However, efforts to integrate gender-sensitive indicators and analysis into mass atrocity prevention efforts have remained ad hoc and inconsistent. When gender-specific indicators are integrated into atrocity prevention, they predominantly focus on long-term structural indicators such as the number of women in parliament or relate specifically to monitoring narrow aspects of gender-based violence. This is contrary to **evidence that any systematic approach to atrocity prevention requires strong gender-responsive data, in both collection and analysis, in national and regional early warning systems.**

Evidence supports the use of a number of broad gender-responsive indicators in preventing mass atrocity, for example:

- Security indicators: prevalence of SGBV; increase in trafficking in women and children; prevalence of physical violence; prevalence of domestic violence; impunity for perpetrators of SGBV; existence and quality of legislation on SGBV.

- Economic indicators: sex disaggregated labour; sex work (forced or voluntary); access for women and men to productive and economic resources.

- Political indicators: women's representation in parliament; laws promoting gender equality; threats to politically active and visible women, their children, and families.

- Social indicators: ratios of boys and girls in education at different levels; maternal mortality rates; reproductive rights and fertility rates; life expectancy of boys and girls at birth.

Without gender inclusion in mass atrocity prevention, policy responses risk being formulated in ways that fail to identify the differentiated needs of women and girls most vulnerable to conflict, SGBV, and/or violent extremism. Failing to recognise women's needs means they will be targeted for violence in the course of atrocities and suffer particular gender-based harms as well as the general violence inherently associated with mass atrocity crimes. It is not possible to prevent mass atrocities without preventing the specific violence that women are targeted for. In addition, local women and women's organisations working on peacebuilding, prevention, and social cohesion risk being excluded from the development and monitoring of community-level early warning systems, which undermines their equal right to participate in prevention policy making and discounts their vital perspectives, knowledge, and solutions.

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[28] UN General Assembly 2020, 'Prioritizing prevention and strengthening response: women and the responsibility to protect: report of the Secretary-General'. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3879072?ln=en

[29] Johnston M, and True J, 'Misogyny and violent extremism: implications for preventing extremism', 2019. https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Publications/2019/10/ap-Policy-Brief_VE_and_VAW_v6_compressed.pdf

Peace processes and negotiations: from counting women to meaningful participation

Does women's inclusion in peace processes matter?

Women's inclusion leads to more durable peace agreements

Research has clearly shown that including women in peace processes leads to more durable peace agreements.[30] Specifically, including women as negotiators, mediators, signatories, and witnesses increases the likelihood of a peace agreement lasting at least two years by 20 per cent and the likelihood of it lasting a minimum of 15 years by 35 per cent.[31] There has been a move in recent years to move 'from counting women to meaningful participation'. This is supported by evidence. So does the quality of women's participation in peace processes matter?

Women's quality participation can increase the probability of reaching an agreement

An in-depth study of 40 peace processes over 25 years shows that when women's groups strongly influenced negotiations, a peace agreement was *always* reached. Even when their influence was limited, agreements were still mostly reached. Without the involvement of women's groups, significantly fewer agreements were reached.[32]

Women's quality participation increases the probability for implementation of a peace agreement

Signing a peace agreement is only the first step, and implementation is often a greater challenge than reaching the deal in the first place. Stalled or failed implementation of agreements can lead to recurring cycles of violence. Research shows that when women's groups strongly influenced the agreement, the chances of it being implemented were much higher.[33] This is mainly due to these groups' continued engagement post-agreement, and the fact that they have strong connections on a community level where most implementation takes place and where international actors, who might have supported the peace process at negotiation and agreement stage, have limited reach. Additionally, established women's groups often hold the government or implementing actors to account and can apply pressure in case of stalling implementation.

Peace processes do not only take place at the track 1 negotiation table, although that is where a lot of the attention lies. Women's inclusion is important at all stages and levels of the peace process, in pre-negotiation stages,

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[30] Council of Foreign Relations, 'Women's participation in peace processes', 2020. https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes

[31] Krause J, Krause W, and Bränfors P, 'Women's participation in peace negotiations and the durability of peace', 2018, *International Interactions*.

[32] Paffenholz T, 'Making women count – not just counting women: assessing women's inclusion and influence on peace negotiations', 2015. https://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/research/Making_Women_Count.pdf

[33] Paffenholz T, 'Broader participation project' Briefing Paper. Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding. Geneva: The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, 2015. http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/ccdp/shared/Docs/Publications/briefingpaperbroader%20participation.pdf

ceasefire negotiations, consultations, national dialogues, track 1.5 and 2 dialogues, public decision-making such as referendums, and of course implementation and monitoring of the agreement.[34]

Not all women's interests are the same

Women's quality participation also means diverse participation. Not all women's groups have the same perspective or demands. There are significant overlaps of different layers of oppression and discrimination, including socio-economic background, race and ethnicity, gender and sexual identity, and disability. The intersections of these makes it necessary to include diverse women's voices, such as civil society activists, refugees and IDPs, ex-combatants and victims, young women, women with disabilities, and women of various ethnicities and sexual identities to ensure a sustainable peace agreement.

It is essential to note that the previous research quoted shows the positive effects of *women's groups' quality participation, not that of individual women.* When individual women are included at the peace table, without broader constituencies behind them, they are mostly not able to meaningfully participate as they are not seen as legitimate actors.

Women's inclusion leads to better peace agreements

The contribution of women's groups to peace processes is not only essential for the likelihood of reaching an agreement but also for what is covered by it. Cases such as the Good Friday Agreement, the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement in Sudan and, as a negative example, the 1994 peace negotiations in Lusaka show that when peace processes include a significant level of women's participation, they are more likely to address issues such as land rights, key provision of social services, sexual violence and abuses by government and rebel security forces – all of which are crucial to building sustainable peace.[35] A study of 34 peace agreements since 1989 shows that agreements without female signatories included more provisions on military issues, while agreements with female signatories included a majority number of provisions on political, social, and economic reform.[36]

Increasing the number of women in peace processes and negotiations is not enough, it is the ability to influence the process that matters.

Which factors encourage quality participation of women in peace processes?

The design of peace processes, often influenced by international actors, plays a significant role in whether quality participation of women is possible. **Gender quotas both for mediators and negotiating parties** (conflict parties and third parties, such as civil society) are important. While long-term support for building the capacities of women's groups is ideal, even **short-term funding and support for women peacebuilders to make targeted interventions in the negotiation or implementation process is highly effective**. It is crucial here to support women's groups in the preparatory work for participating in these processes, so they come in with an agenda, clear objectives, and an idea of how the process is supposed to work, including different formats (e.g., being at the main table vs in a gender sub-commission). If the women who do take part have specialised and technical expertise that the male negotiators are lacking, for example, in transitional justice, disarmament demobilization reintegration (DDR), or security sector reform (SSR), their perceived legitimacy to have a seat at the table is strengthened even further. Working with and

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[34] Dayal A, and Christien A, 'Women's participation in informal peace processes', Global Governance: A review of multilateralism and international organisations, 2020.

[35] GNWP, 'Gender sensitive provisions in peace agreements and women's political and economic inclusion post-conflict', 2020. https://gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/GNWP-NYU_ResearchReport2020-final-web.pdf; O'Reilly, M. 2015 'Why Women? Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies' Inclusive Security https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Why-Women-Brief-10.12.15.pdf

[36] Krause, J, Krause, W, and Bränfors, P, 'Women's participation in peace negotiations and the durability of peace', International Interactions, 2018.

connecting to existing women's groups and networks in the country, rather than forming them ad hoc for the peace process, is most likely to lead to their perception as legitimate actors in the process (rather than groups formed by external actors) and to lead to their sustained engagement post-agreement. In addition, it lays the groundwork for the meaningful representation – and participation – of the constituencies they represent.

Every (conflict) context is different and has significant influence on the peace process, especially the level of ongoing violence, power and elite politics, regional and geopolitics, and public buy-in.[37] Challenges to women's meaningful participation in peace processes also include the difficulty of travel due to **unpaid caring responsibilities, mobility restrictions, insecurity, and targeted attacks**. The **lack of access to reliable information** about peace processes and the digital divide are further constraints.[38] Supporting women's quality inclusion must always encompass strategies for violence reduction, include regional and international actors, and secure buy-in from local power holders.

Security and stabilisation (including DDR)

Women peacekeepers increase performance, effectiveness, and credibility of the mission

Peacekeeping is a key part of international stabilisation efforts and women's inclusion has largely focused on increasing the number of women deployed. This includes targeted training to match the skillsets of their male counterparts, building new facilities, creating support networks, and instituting quotas.

UNSC 2538 in 2020[39] on the role of women in peacekeeping operations emphasises the importance of women in improving the performance, effectiveness, and credibility of UN peacekeeping missions.[40] The evidence supports this claim: UN peace operations with increased female participation are overall more effective, due to better protection of civilians, especially women and children.[41] Female peacekeepers' better outreach to local communities leads to more effective mandate implementation and a better understanding of conflict drivers.[42] Note that the important factors here are not only gender but also the ability to speak the local language and respect for the local culture.[43] They also provide better assistance to victims of SGBV and encourage more reporting of this abuse.[44] Female peacekeepers may also contribute to challenging traditional gender roles about 'what women can do' and boost support for women's rights by acting as role models. Emerging research supports the premise that more female peacekeepers result in greater attention being given to gender issues in the mission itself, for example, there is a correlation between the presence of women's protection advisers in a UN mission and a higher probability of adopting a legal framework and political strategy on preventing SGBV.[45] The results of a

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[37] Paffenholz T, 'Results on women and gender', Briefing Paper. Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding. Geneva: The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, 2015. http://graduateinstitute.ch/files/live/sites/iheid/files/sites/ccdp/shared/Docs/Publications/briefingpaperbroader%20participation.pdf

[38] Fal-Dutra Santos A, 'Towards gender-equal peace: from 'counting women' to meaningful participation', 2021. https://www.africaportal.org/publications/towards-gender-equal-peace-counting-women-meaningful-participation/

[39] UN Security Council resolution 2538, http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2538

[40] Olsson L, and Tejpar J, 'Operational effectiveness and Un Resolution 1325: practices and lessons from Afghanistan', 2009. http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/1325_PracticeLessonsAfghanistan_SDRA_May2009_0.pdf

[41] Osland K, Nortvedt J, and Røysamb M, 'Female peacekeepers and operational effectiveness in UN peace operations,' 2020. https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25749#metadata_info_tab_contents

[42] Sharland L, 'Women, gender and the A4P agenda', 2019. https://www.challengesforum.org/paper/policy-brief-20197-women-gender-and-the-a4p-agenda-an-opportunity-for-action/

[43] Heinecken L, 'Are women "really" making a unique contribution to peacekeeping?', 2015. https://brill.com/view/journals/joup/19/3-4/article-p227_2.xml

[44] Puechguirbal N, 'Gender training for peacekeepers: Lessons from the DRC, *International Peacekeeping* 2003; Pruitt L, *Women in the Blue Helmets*, University of California Press, 2016.

[45] Karim S, and Beardsley K, *Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping,* Oxford University Press, 2017.

survey among security personnel who have served in UN peacekeeping operations stress the importance of training and the presence of enabling systems to realise this potential.[46]

Increased recruitment of female peacekeepers must be accompanied by institutional and structural changes in missions

There is also some evidence that the presence of women peacekeepers can reduce the occurrence of sexual exploitation and abuse by (male) peacekeepers. This applies both to the behaviour of the troops in the context in which they are deployed and, as with all military and security forces, internally. However, as long as the top management of missions remains overwhelmingly male and often tolerates sexual violence offences, this is not a sustainable solution. Peacekeeping missions, like state militaries and non-state armed groups, are highly masculinised environments, which contribute to a culture of impunity when it comes to sexual harassment and violence both internally and externally. Rather than just hoping that an increased number of women will fix peacekeeping's sexual abuse problem, accountability mechanisms need to be established.[47]

Gender-sensitive DDR is necessary for sustainable and inclusive peace

Women constitute up to 40 per cent of many non-state armed groups in active combat roles and so-called support roles, such as porters, cooks, nurses, spies, translators, camp leaders, or sex workers/slaves.[48] Some join voluntarily for political, economic, and personal reasons, others are abducted. Some are so-called female dependents, who are part of combatants' households without having a clear role in the conflict. Many become part of armed groups as children. One survey of female ex-combatants in Liberia showed that 20 per cent of them were willing to take up arms again for material incentives compared to only 10 per cent of male ex-combatants.[49] This, as well as the importance of more gender equality for sustainable peace, are key factors to make sure female ex-combatants are well-integrated into post-conflict society. Rather than seeing female combatants exclusively as perpetrators of violence or as victims, particularly when they were forcibly recruited, their diverse experiences should be recognised when planning for reintegration activities, through DDR and the more long term. As a large majority of female combatants not only will have experienced SGBV within the armed group they were in but also will continue to experience it after returning to the community, their needs as survivors must be taken into consideration throughout.

Gender-sensitive DDR can contribute to transformation of gender roles

It is well documented that first-generation DDR programmes were problematic for women and girls who went through them. If they acknowledged female fighters at all, they reinforced traditional gender roles, for example, by providing only very gendered skills training such as sewing, hairdressing, or soap making for women, and in the worst-case scenario exposed women to more harm, for example, by not offering gender-separated living and hygiene facilities. Beyond skills training, reintegration programmes also focus on re-shaping violent (gender) identities into peaceful identities, for example, through psychosocial support. This has divergent gendered effects, with some male fighters feeling like they are losing their identity as fighters and protectors and some female fighters feeling pressure to re-conform with traditional gender roles and losing the 'freedom' they may have had in the armed group. This dynamic is one contributing factor to higher domestic violence rates in post-conflict settings. There are, in addition, different dynamics for women as combatants and as part of fighting forces; they may also

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[46] Osland K, Nortvedt J, and Røysamb M, 'Female peacekeepers and operational effectiveness in UN peace operations', 2020. https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25749#metadata_info_tab_contents

[47] Simić O, 'Does the presence of women really matter?', *International Peacekeeping*, 2020.

[48] Darden J, Henshaw A, and Szekely O, *Insurgent Women,* Georgetown University Press, 2019.

[49] Gade B, 'When women take up arms and what that means for DDR processes', Polis Blog, 2019. https://polis180.org/polisblog/2019/01/18/when-women-take-up-arms-and-what-that-means-for-ddr-processes

have been exposed to SGBV *within* their groups and, as such, need to be understood as both combatants and survivors within programming design and interventions.

In terms of long-term reintegration, former female combatants face much more stigma than their male counterparts, both for having been part of the rebels and also for stepping out of their prescribed gender roles by taking up arms.[50] Community stigmatisation becomes particularly strong when women return with children from the conflict. Support for female ex-combatants and their children should always be matched with support for the wider community so as not to foster (perceived) inequalities in access to funding and services.[51]

Inclusion of women's groups beyond combatants ensures long-term success of reintegration programmes

Including women's groups beyond female combatants in designing DDR programmes can further improve their effectiveness. Women's organisations have successfully (self-) organised many initiatives to disarm fighters and remove small arms from communities across different contexts, using their experience.[52] In terms of reintegration, local women's organisations often step in to provide care work, economic opportunity, and psychosocial support for male and female ex-combatants and their children alike. All of this experience should be built upon.

Operational benefits of women's inclusion in SSR

DDR is a key part of SSR and stabilisation efforts in post-conflict settings with other key aspects being other security institutions, such as the police and justice institutions. Often, there is still a lack of awareness of the operational benefits of women's inclusion for the long-term success of DDR, SSR, and other stabilisation efforts.

Recruitment drives for female members of police and military institutions are often unsuccessful, and the candidates that are admitted have a low retention rate. Similar to peacekeeping operations, women are often only deployed in support, clerical, noncombat, and other less prestigious roles.[53] They also face high levels of sexual harassment and violence within these masculinised environments, contributing to the low retention rate.

Cross-national evidence supports the premise that women are more likely to report crimes to female police officers and that the presence of women in the police leads to more gender awareness and sensitivity as well as counters male-dominated police culture. They are also less likely to use excessive force.[54] Also, how women are included makes the difference: both from the top, for example by contributing to policy design in leadership positions or having oversight of security and justice provisions, and from the bottom, for example through dialogues with women's community groups or vertical cooperation between central government and local level institutions. Female ex-combatants should have the option to join peacetime armed forces and other security institutions, such as intelligence services, border police, customs, immigration services, and other law-enforcement services.

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[50] Henshaw A, 'Female combatants in postconflict processes: Understanding the roots of exclusion', *Global Security Studies* 2020.

[51] Hills C, and MacKenzie M, 'Women in non-state armed groups after war', in *The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military,* Palgrave Press, 2017.

[52] O'Neill J, and Vary J, 'Allies and Assets: strengthening DDR and SSR through women's inclusions', *Inclusive Security,* 2011. https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/publication/allies-and-assets-strengthening-ddr-and-ssr-through-womens-inclusion

[53] Ibid.

[54] Miller AR, and Segal C, 'Do Female Officers Improve Law Enforcement Quality?, UBS Center Working Paper, no. 9, 2014. https://www.ubscenter.uzh.ch/static/83514883f6174931681b964c348d28a6/WP9_Do_Female_Officers_Improve_Law_Enforcement_Quality.pdf

An integrated approach with formal and informal actors is necessary to sustain gender-sensitive reforms in the security sector

Violence against women (VAW) is higher in post-conflict settings, and so specific training for all levels of personnel should be included in police and justice reform programmes, including training in interviewing survivors of rape and human trafficking as well as how to prevent and respond to GBV in a survivor-focused manner. Training must be accompanied by institutional changes, such as policies, procedures, adequate budgeting, and continual monitoring to be effective.[55] Specialised judicial and police units to deal with crimes related to VAW should be established. Research shows that it is most effective to take an integrated approach to gender-sensitive reform and include formal as well as informal actors at all levels, for example, traditional justice institutions, community elders, and customary norms, especially as these are often the institutions which are most powerfully upholding patriarchal norms and any progress achieved within formal institutions will not take full effect without sustained attention to informal processes.[56]

Humanitarian response in conflict

Conflict has unequal humanitarian impacts on women, children, and vulnerable groups

The establishment of the WPS agenda in 2000 was a response to evidence of the **disproportionate impact of conflict on women, children, and other vulnerable groups.** WPS is therefore fundamental to any humanitarian response to conflict, including social and economic impacts on civilian groups and the vulnerabilities exposed and compounded through displacement. In addition, conflict, fragility, and instability have only become increasingly protracted and complex since the inception of WPS. There is increasing recognition of how conflict links with issues of environmental degradation, climate change, and food insecurity, and how these in turn feed into armed conflict.

Areas impacted by conflict in general have higher poverty rates, lower growth rates, weak human development indicators, and high gender inequality. In 2021, the **Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS-HA) Compact** was launched at the Paris Generation Equality Forum, which now has over 190 signatories, including civil society groups, regional organisations, UN entities, and states.[57] WPS-HA seeks to drive a global inter-generational movement to implement commitments on both WPS and humanitarian action and is based on evidence demonstrating the **mutually reinforcing nature of WPS and humanitarian action**.

Evidence shows an association between recent conflict with higher rates of under-5 child mortality, malnutrition, and maternal mortality.[58] However, post-conflict responses, especially in affected states, tend to spend disproportionately on military and defence infrastructure rather than on health and education.

SGBV during and after conflict has only increased since the establishment of the WPS agenda. Structural gender inequalities mean that women and girls in conflict are at increased risk of human rights violations and sexual and reproductive violence. **Failure to adopt an inclusive humanitarian response means conflict-affected women,**

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[55] Valasek K, and Johannsen A, 'Guide to integrating gender into SSR training', Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, 2009. https://www.dcaf.ch/guide-integrating-gender-ssr-training

[56] ODI, 'Assessment of the evidence links between gender equality, peacebuilding and statebuilding', 2013. https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/8767.pdf

[57] UN Women, 'Facts and figures: women, peace and security'. https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures#_Womens_participation

[58] O'Hare B, and Southall B, 'First do no harm: the impact of recent armed conflict on maternal and child health in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine,* 2007. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0141076807100012015

displaced women, minority women, and children are at greater risk of both experiencing violence and being prevented from access to the necessary psychosocial and health services that should be available to victims.

Including women in socio-economic responses leads to more effective conflict recovery for communities

In conflict and crisis, women need economic security and access to resources and other essential services. Long-term response and recovery processes that do not respond to the needs of conflict-affected women **undermine the ability of communities to recover from conflict and hinder sustained peace and recovery.**

The economy has a better chance to grow and be resilient to crises if women and men have equal rights and access to opportunity. Women's economic empowerment post-conflict is essential. Peace processes are more durable where women meaningfully participate, and this is also true of the economy. Though women's participation in the labour market increases during conflict, this is more often limited to low-skilled, underpaid, and informal sectors, and then decreases in the wake of conflict.[59] As conflict also impacts gender relations, this can also weaken women's socio-economic status, further demonstrating the need for gender-responsive relief and recovery. This includes access for youth to education. Gender-responsive socio-economic recovery and women's economic empowerment post-conflict produce better outcomes for families and communities, as evidence shows that women invest income in and support their families and broader communities, improving education and health indicators. Moreover, economic empowerment is a highly protective factor for women and girls against SGBV, exploitation, and abuse.

SGBV response and prevention

Sexual violence can significantly exacerbate armed conflicts and threaten international peace and security

SGBV includes acts of sexual, physical, psychological, mental, and emotional abuse that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed gender differences.[60] SGBV poses a global challenge that is triggered and exacerbated in situations of conflict and humanitarian crises. **The systematic use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as a means of war has been observed in many conflicts**, perhaps most notably in the last few decades in the Yugoslav wars, in Rwanda and Burundi, in Sierra Leone and Liberia, in Darfur, Sudan, and in the Democratic Republic of Congo.[61]

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, globally one in three women will experience physical or sexual abuse in her lifetime, while **one in five internally displaced or refugee women living in humanitarian crisis and armed conflict have experienced sexual violence**.[62] In 2021, the UN verified almost

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[59] Justino P, 'Violence conflict and changes in gender economic roles: implications for post-conflict economic recovery', *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Conflict,* Oxford University Press, 2017; Klugman J and Mukhtarova T, 'How did conflict affect women's economic opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa?', 2020. https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/How-Conflict-Affects-Womens-Economic-Opportunities.pdf

[60] OCHA, 'Gender-based violence: a closer look at the numbers', 2019. https://www.unocha.org/story/gender-based-violence-closer-look-numbers

[61] UN Women, 'Gender and conflict analysis, 2nd Edition', 2012. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2012/10/WPSsourcebook-04A-GenderConflictAnalysis-en.pdf

[62] OCHA, 'Gender-based violence: a closer look at the numbers', 2019. https://www.unocha.org/story/gender-based-violence-closer-look-numbers

3300 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, 800 more than the previous year; one third of the verified cases were documented in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.[63] Additionally, sexual violence against children continued to increase in 2021, by over 20 per cent, with 98 per cent victims being girls.[64]

Through the WPS agenda, the UN Security Council has stressed that sexual violence can not only significantly exacerbate armed conflicts but can also threaten international peace and security. Besides the UN, the EU, the G7, the African Union, and other international and regional organisations have signed up to various declarations, initiatives, and frameworks that aim to do more in preventing SGBV in conflict.[65] However, as indicated above, the numbers continue to increase, which points to the need to improve prevention mechanisms, to say nothing of the shortcomings of response mechanisms.

Survivors are often faced with a lack of adequate services, shelters,[66] and trained staff, as well as with societal stigma. It is critical to stress that despite the public attention the issue of SGBV has received, the work on response and prevention remains heavily underfunded. By some estimates, **less than 1 per cent of "funding to UN humanitarian plans supports GBV prevention and response activities."**[67]

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[63] UN Women, 'Facts and figures: women, peace and security'. https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures#_Womens_participation

[64] Ibid.

[65] Davis E, and Loft P, 'Conflict related sexual violence and the UK's approach: research briefing', House of Commons Library, 2020. https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9577/CBP-9577.pdf

[66] Amnesty International, 'Afghanistan: survivors of gender based violence abandoned following Taliban takeover – new research', 2021. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/12/afghanistan-survivors-of-gender-based-violence-abandoned-following-taliban-takeover-new-research

[67] OCHA, 'Gender-based violence: a closer look at the numbers', 2019. https://www.unocha.org/story/gender-based-violence-closer-look-numbers

Emerging best practice/What works/What are the challenges to implementation

This section highlights the best practices and challenges to implementation that have arisen from engagement with the evidence in each of the six priority areas. It also identifies a number of key obstacles that have prevented the implementation of the WPS agenda to-date.

Best practices and challenges

Conflict response and prevention

Best practice from this area shows the necessity of women's participation at the grassroots level in conflict early warning processes, not only as information sources but also as leaders and peacebuilders. Another best practice indicates that **gender inclusive data collection and early warning indicators are not just better for women but provide better systems of warning for conflict generally**. Data collection that is locally grounded and context-specific has proven to be most useful. Gender inclusive data and early warning indicators contribute to more robust conflict and atrocity prevention systems that holistically assess the potential for violence *and* provide sound data for preventative action in the multilateral system.

The main challenges to implementation of this practice as it relates to both priority areas – conflict and mass atrocity prevention – include:

- Need for specific training on gender relevant data collection *and* analysis;
- Need for robust methodologies for gender-sensitive warning systems; and
- Lack of gender data at regional and sub-regional data.

Mass atrocities and their prevention

IFES and others recommended expanding integration of gender specific indicators. The need to expand the most commonly used gender-specific indicators also reflects the warning issued by the UN Secretary General in 2019 that **sudden and extreme restrictions on women's rights are among the earliest signs of the spread of violent extremism.**

IFES recommends a five-step process to support expanded and better integrated gender responsiveness in atrocity prevention: 1) conducting a gender analysis to understand local norms and dynamics, and how these relate to

potential outbreaks or escalations of violence and conflict; 2) identifying applicable gender-sensitive indicators from the global framework and adapting them to local contexts; 3) developing safe and gender-sensitive data collection strategies based on the methods available; 4) analysing the data in a gender-sensitive way; and 5) ensuring gender-sensitive policy responses.

Peace processes and negotiations

Best practices in this domain include peace processes that are driven by local actors, with significant international support. Local and international actors have been instrumental in instances where a gender-sensitive approach has been introduced in the peace process; be that as an approach applied to the whole peace process or specific aspects of it. Equally importantly, a **best practice in peace negotiations entails a meaningful participation of women's groups and women leaders with the backing of civil society organisations.**

The main challenges to implementation of best practices in this area include:

- Lack of interconnectedness of levels, whereby the additional processes do not feed into the main negotiating table;
- Lack of flexible and targeted funding;
- Dominance of power politics and elite resistance;
- Dynamics of different regional and geopolitical contexts;
- Existing levels of violence;
- Public buy-in, especially if the conflict is among ethnic lines, when women's inclusion is perceived as less important;
- Inclusion is often only successful after massive lobby efforts, usually with the support of external actors, without which there might be a lack of buy-in from the conflict parties; and
- Lack of long-term support for women's groups, in the run-up to and during peace processes.

Security and stabilisation (including DDR)

When it comes to best practices for recruitment and training of peacekeepers, in order to facilitate meaningful participation of women and encourage a more diverse intake of peacekeepers in general, both the UN and troop contributing countries should:

- Update their recruitment criteria to include broader skills beyond physical fitness, such as inter-personal and communication skills, and the ability to work in an international environment;
- Update their deployment criteria, to equally deploy women in parts of the mission, such as operational and combat roles, that traditionally deploy men;
- Acknowledge care work as a workplace issue;
- Address issues regarding the safety of women within peace missions, as well as gender norms that make women particularly vulnerable to SGBV; and
- Establish more effective gender trainings across the mission, ensuring that men as well as women staff members attend from different ranks.

In terms of best practices for gender-sensitive DDR programmes, research has highlighted the following key factors for a successful, gender-sensitive DDR programme:

- Women and girls who will be involved in DDR programmes are part of designing the process at the peace negotiation stage;

- Flexible eligibility criteria, for example, not needing to present a gun;
- Female peacekeepers/staff who are contact points;
- Context-appropriate, gender-separated spaces, for example, living and hygiene facilities;
- Listening to already existing expertise by local women's groups on how best to design reintegration programmes; and
- Conduct thorough and gender-sensitive market analysis before deciding on skills training, which applies to offers for both male and female ex-combatants.

In regard to SSR, on the other hand, some of the best practices include:

- Targeted recruitment drives for women into the police and military. This is made possible by profiling a variety of roles in advertising, offering childcare, removing barriers to women's recruitment, for example, unnecessary physical fitness tests;
- Introducing policies that support retention of female staff, for example, equal pay, paternity policies, mandatory sexual harassment training for all staff, deploy women not only in support roles or domestic violence units but also across different departments, career advancement support;
- Addressing the issue of women's safety inside the police and the military, and tackling gender norms which underlie women's vulnerability to SGBV within these institutions;
- Focusing on women's inclusion at all levels, especially in high-level decision-making roles;
- Training all state security institution staff on VAW, including interviewing survivors of rape and human trafficking and responding to GBV with survivor-centred approaches;
- Training that is accompanied by internal policy and institutional changes; and
- Establishing specialised judicial and police units to deal with VAW.

Humanitarian response to conflict

In terms of best practices in humanitarian responses to conflict, **it is essential to involve women in emergency relief planning**. Also, if sensitisation for men about the benefits of both gender mainstreaming and gender-targeted initiatives, including for families and the economy, is not undertaken, male resistance is inevitable and can involve GBV and harassment. For this reason, it is also important to engage men – especially decision-makers and opinion-leaders or peer educators – as visible and engaged champions for gender equality and women's empowerment.

In terms of challenges, in the immediate humanitarian phase of crisis response, participatory methods and analytical processes (e.g., gender analysis and needs assessments) may not be given the prominence they should be due to concerns about expediency or because of limited time and resources.

SGBV response and prevention

Best practices in the domain of SGBV response and prevention include making available life-saving services, such as safe shelters, psychological crisis support, and age-appropriate SGBV-related health services, with post-rape care to adult and child survivors as a priority (including post-exposure prophylaxis and emergency contraception),[68] from the start of the conflict or the crisis, and providing survivors with livelihood support, mental health and psychological support, healthcare (including sexual and reproductive health services), legal support, and access to justice. The continued implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women as

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[68] UNICEF, 'Gender-based violence in emergencies: Operational guide', 2019. https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Gender-Based-Violence-in-Emergencies-Operational-Guide-May-2019.pdf

well as the Istanbul Convention are also part of the best practices in terms of responding to and preventing SGBV. The introduction of survivor-centred programming and reparation schemes for the survivors of SGBV in conflict is another best practice that should be emphasised. When it comes to prevention specifically, the main challenges in this area echo some of the challenges from other priority areas and include:

- Lack of funding to support SGBV response services;
- Lack of shelters for survivors;
- Lack of training of military and legal personnel in regard to preventing and responding to SGBV; and
- Insufficiently developed or in some cases implemented policies and legal frameworks to prevent SGBV and protect the survivors.

Obstacles to WPS implementation

Twenty-two years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, the first WPS resolution, many of the challenges that led the advocacy for 1325 in the first place remain, even though there has undeniably been progress too. Some of the main challenges include:

- Despite the notable increase in women's participation in peace and security processes, progress has been incremental, and women continue to be vastly outnumbered by men, especially at the highest level (be that peace talks or the security sector);

- Even when invited to join the table, restrictions and sexist practices impose barriers to women's meaningful participation;

- The lack of predictable and sustainable funding, be it at the national or the international level, represents one of the most significant obstacles to the implementation of the WPS agenda;

- States' failure to implement the national action plans, even if one disregards the shortcomings that exist within such plans, is another critical challenge;

- The symbolism of the slight backsliding within the agenda through the 2019 resolutions (whereby references to "sexual and reproductive health" were removed from the text of the resolution along with the objections to the language around women's human rights defenders) has also presented a challenge in terms of the agenda's wider buy-in.

Annex I: Summary crib sheet with highlights

Thematic priority area	Evidence	Best Practice/What works
Conflict response and prevention	• Higher levels of gender equality are associated with lower chance for inter- and intra-state conflict • Women have unique perspective to recognise patterns of behaviour and signs of imminent conflict, e.g., mobilisation of people and arms • Gender-sensitive early warning and monitoring systems and indicators are still underdeveloped and underutilised • Without inclusion of gender indicators, needs of women and girls most vulnerable to conflict, SGBV, and/or violent extremism will not be identified	• Necessity of women's participation at grassroots level in conflict early warning systems, as leaders, peacebuilders, and information providers • Gender-inclusive data collection and early warning indicators provide better systems of warning for conflict overall • Specific training on gender-inclusive data collection and analysis is necessary • Improve quality of gender-inclusive data at regional and sub-regional level
Mass atrocities and their prevention	• Early warning systems that do not monitor gender-based human rights violations risk overlooking micro-level events stemming from harmful gender norms which could lead to earlier warnings of atrocity crimes or violent extremism • Sudden and extreme restrictions on women's rights are among the earliest signs of the spread of violent extremism • Hostile sexism and support for VAW are strongly associated with support for violent extremism	• Mirroring conflict prevention, include local women and women's organisations working on peacebuilding, prevention, and social cohesion in development and monitoring of community-level early warning systems • Conduct gender analysis on local norms and dynamics and how they might relate to outbreak and escalation of violence • Identify applicable gender-sensitive indicators • Develop safe and gender-sensitive data collection strategies • Analyse data in a gender-sensitive way and ensure a gender-sensitive policy response
Peace processes and negotiations	• Women's inclusion in peace processes and negotiations leads to more durable peace agreements • Women's quality participation can increase the probability of reaching an agreement and implementing it • Peace agreements are more likely to address issues such as land rights, provisions of social services, and SGBV when women's groups participate in the negotiation process • Challenges to women's quality participation in peace processes include insecurity and targeted attacks, mobility restrictions, lack of	• Foster meaningful participation of women's groups and women leaders with backing of civil society through peace process design • Design clear transfer strategies vertically (between different tracks) and horizontally (between different issues) • Institute women's quotas for negotiating parties and mediators • Provide targeted and flexible funding, especially long-term, to women's groups in the run-up, during, and after peace processes • Ensure diverse representation of women's groups in peace processes, including civil society, refugees, ex-combatants and victims, young

	access to reliable information, unpaid caring responsibilities, and lack of buy-in from powerholders	• women, women with disabilities and women of various ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds and sexual identities • Make peace processes accessible by providing travel assistance, care support, and reliable and accessible information
Security and stabilisation (including DDR)	• The presence of female peacekeepers increases the performance, effectiveness, and credibility of the mission • Female peacekeepers have better outreach to local communities, leading to more effective mandate implementation and understanding of conflict drivers • Female peacekeepers provide better assistance to victims of SGBV and encourage more reporting – this also applies to female police officers. They also encourage more gender-sensitivity of the mission overall • Women constitute up to 40 per cent of many non-state armed groups in combat and non-combat roles and need tailored DDR programmes to reintegrate well after demobilisation • Long-term reintegration of female combatants is hindered by community stigmatisation, especially when they return with children • Women's organisations can provide essential local expertise on disarmament and reintegration • Aiming for more gender-equal security services post-conflict requires targeted recruitment drives and internal policies to promote female staff retention and job satisfaction	• Update recruitment and deployment criteria, include care work provisions and establish effective gender trainings across all levels to recruit and retain more female peacekeepers and female security personnel and help their career progression • Focus on women's inclusion at all levels, including high-level decision-making roles • Involve women's groups and female combatants in the planning of gender-sensitive DDR programmes • Implement flexible eligibility criteria for DDR programmes, establish female staff as contact points and create context-appropriate gender-separated spaces • Conduct thorough and gender-sensitive market analysis before offering skills training • Create specialised judicial and police units to deal with VAW, train all state security institution staff on survivor-centred approaches, and implement internal policy and institutional changes to address VAW within and by the security forces
Humanitarian response in conflict	• Conflict has a disproportionate impact on women, children, and other vulnerable groups. Conflict leads to higher child and maternal mortality, and SGBV during and after conflict has increased over last 20 years • Economies grow better and more resilient if there is equal access to opportunity for both men and women • Conflict weakens the economic status of women (although it might increase their participation in the labour market in the short term) and reduces access to essential services, which are mostly accessed by women. Girls education is often the first victim of families facing economic hardship • Gender-responsive socio-economic recovery and women's economic empowerment post-conflict produce better outcomes for families and communities as women invest income in and support their families and broader communities, improving education and health indicators	• Involve women in emergency relief planning, implementation of humanitarian action and evaluation • Ensure that data collection and needs assessments are gender and age-disaggregated. Prioritise prevention, response, and mitigation of GBV as a life-saving priority • Pre-empt male backlash and create buy-in especially by male power holders by sensitising men about the benefits of gender mainstreaming and gender-targeted initiatives • Ensure access to sexual and reproductive health services with appropriately trained staff

SGBV response and prevention	- According to the UNSC, sexual violence not only exacerbates armed conflicts but can also threaten international peace and security - Systematic use of rape and other forms of sexual violence has been and is being used by a variety of state and non-state actors across contexts - Sexual violence against children has increased by over 20 per cent in 2021, with 98 per cent of victims being girls - Lack of funding, adequate services, shelters, and trained staff coupled with societal stigma hinders recovery of survivors	- Availability of life-saving services from the start of the conflict or crisis, including healthcare (including sexual and reproductive health), legal, livelihood, mental health and psychological support, as well as access to justice - Fund SGBV response, prevention, and reparation initiatives (including civil society-, women-, and survivors-led initiatives) - Strengthen policy and legal frameworks and their implementation to improve prevention and protect survivors
Across all	- Continued implementation of international standards and conventions - Sustainable, predictable, and flexible funding at national and international levels - Include (affected) women in decision-making, design, and implementation of programmes - Training is important but must be accompanied by policy and legal frameworks and institutional changes	