



**Strengthening peace and security approaches through long-term prevention of conflict, human security strategies and documentation of local women's voices**

Paper submission to the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security

By GPPAC, April 2015

**Resources supporting this paper**

- Recommendations and country-specific analysis by GPPAC's regional Gender Focal Points, available in the online community [Taking Women Beyond 1325](#)
- GPPAC's publication [Empowerment and Protection - Stories of Human Security](#)
- GPPAC articles on gender & conflict prevention, funding for the development and the GPS agenda, people-centred security
- On-going [action research on normative obstacles to women's participation in peacebuilding](#) by GPPAC, WPP, and Cordaid (publication forthcoming late 2015)

**Conflict prevention focus of this paper**

The following recommendations of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) propose a **conflict prevention approach throughout the Global Study, in three priority areas**. We support our recommendations with examples on a country and regional basis, illustrating how **recommendations can be adapted to local realities**. While our input relates mainly to the Prevention chapter (VI) of the Study, it also addresses issues that are listed in other chapters (notably chapters II, V and VIII), as well as the theme of security which comes back throughout the Study.

**Our recommendations in brief:**

- 1. Provide long-term support to local civil society, and to women as agents within civil society movements.**
- 2. Adopt a Gender, Peace and Human Security strategy to implement the WPS agenda.**
- 3. Support access to and capacity building on communication and technology, enabling women to enhance their voices and document their perspectives in policymaking.**

Our recommendations are grounded in our global network of civil society experts and specifically in the perspectives of our regional **Gender Focal Points**, who have monitored the implementation of **UNSCR 1325** at the level of their countries and communities and through GPPAC activities around the

Resolution's anniversary in New York. We particularly welcomed the adoption of **UNSCR 2122**, which has mandated the Global Study, as well as the adoption of **CEDAW General Recommendation 30**, as two policies that outline very concrete steps on advancing women's active contributions and leadership in conflict prevention. The Global Study should provide the next stepping-stone, and ensure that UNSCR 1325 is perceived not only as a post-conflict resolution but also as an instrument to prevent conflict and the resurgence of violence, and to strengthen women's agency in both.

### **Key concerns and challenges related to conflict prevention**

Despite the advances in policies, our Gender Focal Points have repeatedly shared key concerns on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda from a prevention perspective. Those concerns have changed very little over the years. Our members highlight the **discrepancy** between available policies, their implementation, and real change for women on the ground. They observe that there are often **poor linkages between peace and development**, coupled with an **increasing focus on "hard" security** by states. A **preference for short-term projects** among donors makes it difficult to sustain long-term relationships, which are so crucial to building peace. Finally, in practice, **women continue to be addressed predominantly as (potential) victims of violence and passive recipients** of support, rather than as actors who shape their own reality. Many of these concerns relate to **deep-rooted obstacles to women's participation and leadership in peacebuilding**; an area in which GPPAC and partners are currently conducting further research to propose concrete action during this year's review of UNSCR 1325.

The key concerns of our members inform GPPAC's recommendations to the Global Study, which are grouped along **three priority areas** in order to submit targeted input. We support the recommendations with a number of **examples**, which illustrate the need to adapt the recommendations to specific country- and regional contexts, based on local civil society analysis.

### **Recommendations on conflict prevention for inclusion in the Global Study**

**1. Provide long-term support to local civil society, and to women as agents within civil society movements.** A truly preventive approach goes beyond conflict early warning: It requires investment in building long-term relationships and knowledge that help to prevent both new and resurgent armed conflict. It is informed by a gender analysis of conflict dynamics. It includes support to peace education and dialogue to foster tolerance, acceptance, and mutual respect. Conflict prevention initiatives are ideally locally-led and locally-owned, rooted in the knowledge of local civil society organisations.

We call on Member States, the UN, regional organisations and donors to:

**1.1 Create spaces to actively listen and gather inputs and recommendations from those affected by the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.**

**1.2 Respond to challenges as defined locally and ensure local ownership of solutions, rather than seeking "buy-in" from local partners.**

**1.3 Provide multi-year support to foster long-term cooperation among grassroots women, and to strengthen women's agency in broader peacebuilding movements.**

Specifically support peacebuilding organisations and networks that actively include a

gender, peace and security perspective, and women as members and leaders in these movements.

**In context: Nepal**

As in many conflict-affected countries in Nepal also, women are in a vicious paradox: while they were the main civilian victims of conflicts, they were powerless to prevent them, excluded from the negotiations when it comes to their resolution and confined to a marginal role in the post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation efforts. Women groups and networks are still playing an active role to accelerate the implementation of NAP 1325 and 1820. At community level, the women groups, and mother groups who are playing active role in preventing the conflict at micro level of the community.

**Concrete recommendations:**

- Support civil society to conduct a **gender-oriented budget analysis of humanitarian assistance and post-conflict reconstruction** to ensure that women benefit directly from resources mobilized through multilateral and bilateral donors.
- Adopt **constructive measures to guarantee women's socio-economic rights** including employment, property ownership and inheritance during post-conflict reconstruction.
- Provide **special legal and social support** to women in order to aid their reporting and prosecuting of perpetrators of war crimes and human rights abuses committed during and after conflict

**In context: Serbia**

Women in Serbia and the region of the Western Balkans represent a majority of actors involved in civilian peacebuilding and conflict prevention. During the wars in the 1990s, as well as in the present, women play a crucial part in two areas of conflict prevention: peace and conflict resolution education and anti-war activism. Building on the fact that a vast majority of primary and secondary school teachers in Serbia are women, they have taken a leading role in peace and conflict resolution education. With the reform of the security sector more women are joining the security structures which were previously and traditionally more male-dominated. At the same time, women from peacebuilding and conflict prevention NGOs themselves often do not recognise themselves as active actors and role models in peacebuilding. Therefore, the greatest benefit from this change would be if participation of women in the security structures was strengthened with the continuous support to peace and conflict transformation education. This is the field to which women in Serbia and the Western Balkans have contribute for over two decades, and their contributions to building peace in the region as teachers and peace education specialists need to be acknowledged and supported.

**Concrete recommendations:**

- In dealing with **countries currently in the EU pre-accession phase** and dealing with institutional reform, the emphasis/incentive tends to be for participation of women

in the military and police, previously a men-dominated domain. It is **crucial to recognise the value and significance of civilian peacebuilding and especially peace education as fields to which women have contributed greatly** and which represent the only continuous investment in the upbringing of future generations oriented towards peaceful conflict resolution.

**In context: Azerbaijan**

The conflicts in the South Caucasus are an underlying feature of the region's post-independence history. The unresolved political situations stemming from the armed conflicts of the late 80s and early 90s remain among the most serious impediments to long-term, just, inclusive and sustainable development for all of the peoples in the region. Today, hundreds of thousands of people have a direct connection to those times. They include internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees, war invalids, families with lost loved ones, as well as numerous communities that live in close proximity to the militarised borders that have fragmented the region and create a pervasive sense of insecurity and instability.

Unfortunately, rather than empowering women and raising them up in the eyes of their communities, their post-conflict burdens have tied them down more in the domestic domain and distanced them even further from public participation or political decision making.

Works with women activists in conflict-affected communities has shown that civil society development delivers concrete value to such communities by filling many of the vacuums that presently exist. Small, local level activist groups can contribute to building a sense of community, facilitate community decision-making, deliver reliable information, reach the most vulnerable groups and represent community interests with authorities. Such activities respond directly to people's social, informational, and in some cases physical isolation. In addition, the types of skills developed through such work respond precisely to the sense of marginalisation that people feel. The most effective community activists become proactive in engaging with authorities and the general population. They become effective communicators who are sensitive to and analytical about the needs of their communities.

**Concrete recommendations:**

- **Invest in gender expertise** that will allow them to deliver in a clear way the cross-cutting nature of **gender as an analytical tool that has a practical application in political, social and economic development** and that the mainstreaming of gender into their policy approach to the region be represented actively at the **political level**
- Put gender equality at the top of the agenda for **development and reform**, emphasising the **contribution of gender equality to social, political, and economic life**.
- Work within conflict-affected communities to **create a base of active citizens that act as an intermediary** between the people and the authorities.

**2. Adopt a Gender, Peace and Human Security strategy to implement the WPS agenda.** Effective human security strategies build on local citizen’s needs at the nexus of development, security and human rights. They can transform the citizen-state relationship, making the state more responsive, trustworthy, and accountable while empowering citizens to participate in governance and to address social conflicts. An effective, gender-responsive human security strategy also responds to the security challenges of women. Women face threats that uniquely relate to their social inequality, exposing them to greater security threats and simultaneously limiting their sources of addressing them. Women’s security can be strengthened by a focus on human security, as it focuses on local security needs. Similarly, women’s security can serve as an indicator to assess overall human security.

We call on Member States, the UN, regional organisations, security providers and donors to:

**2.1 Address the specific security challenges faced by women through a human security approach, building on locally identified security concerns and supporting measures to address them.** This includes women’s involvement in security sector governance and reform and in processes of combating the illicit trade of arms and the misuse of small arms and light weapons.

**2.2 Facilitate a human security strategy that incorporates the gender perspectives of both men and women.** In such a strategy, women and men should be equally involved and be able to support each other in negotiating gender relations, in order to leverage opportunities for change.

**2.3 Pioneer a human security approach in the practice of implementing UNSCR 1325.** This should focus on two specific aspects: first, taking a people-centred approach to implementation of UNSCR 1325, including through Action Plans at national and regional levels. Second, placing emphasis on empowerment *in practice*, based on a critical review of engagement policies and practice, and the norms underlying them.

**In context: The process to develop “Stories of Human Security”**

For GPPAC, and the peacebuilding practitioners in our network, the idea of human security - in the sense of people-centred security - is relevant because a society where people feel safe, secure and included, and where individuals feel empowered to realise their potential, is **more likely to be a peaceful society**. It is about recognising that there are **many dimensions to what feeling safe and secure means**, and that that will be different in each specific context.

In the process of the project [Empowerment and Protection – Stories of Human Security](#), GPPAC worked with local civil society organisations in six different countries and regions: **Afghanistan, Ukraine, Palestine, The Philippines, Zimbabwe and Mexico**. Part of our collective interest was to test whether the - often-academic - debate on human security had any relevance to the people and communities they work with in their conflict prevention and peacebuilding work. Three broad questions guided our research:

- *What causes insecurity/ what is a threat to your security*
- *What do you do to ensure you are protected against these threats (patterns of coping with insecurities)*

- *Who or what do you turn to, or rely on, to ensure your security (security providers)*

Key findings included that:

- The **state** was often central to the discussion on human security: it was an expected security provider; even in places where it was currently undermining rather than providing security. For example, in **Ukraine**, the issue of corruption in the state system was central, yet the expectation on the state to deliver was still there.
- **Rule of Law** was one the most highlighted types of security provision across the different contexts; people spoke of the need for trust in ‘the system’, accountability, and justice. For example, the existence of civic-government policy platforms has enabled **Mexican** citizens to become more powerful in their relationships with the state.
- Whilst **empowerment** has so far been a neglected part of the human security debate, the case studies demonstrated how we also need empowered communities to ensure the right kind of protection. For example, Indigenous Peoples in Mindanao, **the Philippines**, are lobbying for the Indigenous People’s Rights Act to be safeguarded in the framework of the new Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).
- The achievement of human security, or human security strategies, can be linked with situations where **security dialogues enhance the social contract between the state and citizens**; where the participants are all change agents and not simply recipients of protection. In **Zimbabwe**, local peace committees involve a cross-section of community members, local authorities and local service providers to discuss human security issues and mediate solutions ranging from community to domestic violence.
- Cultural and psychological barriers, particularly in traditional societies, often prevent **women** from participating in community decision-making or in disclosing their experiences of gender-based violence. Such obstacles reinforce the need for a people-centred approach and an emphasis on empowerment to ensure women’s participation. **The practical application of a people-centred approach in the security field can learn from the global efforts to address women’s specific security needs and the development of gender-sensitive approaches.** The UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 is built on a strategy of prevention, participation, and protection, which are key human security principles. **By emphasising consultative processes and women’s participation in formulating security policies, SCR 1325 is an opportunity to ensure women’s participation in public dialogue.**

#### **In context: Eastern and Central Africa region**

The biggest challenge in our region is the continuing perception that security is to do with military defence, which most often is led by men. When matters of building peace and security and conflict prevention come up, the leadership and participation is mostly male, especially when it comes to decision-making. If women come on board at all, it is only after a lot of lobbying, or they are “added on” as an afterthought and unable to have real influence on decisions taken.

#### **Concrete recommendations:**

- Support women-led as well as gender-sensitive initiatives to **address root causes of**

**many of the conflicts in this region, as identified by them**, such as poverty, greed and poor governance – especially in areas of skills building and financial support.

- Pay attention to **how UNSCR 1325 and related policy instruments are implemented** in practice by the very governments that sign and ratify them, which should also include **taking action to resource implementation and monitoring**.

**3. Support access to and capacity building on communication and technology, enabling women to enhance their voices and document their perspectives in policymaking.** Supporting the (self-) documentation of women’s voices, through technologies that can be made available in and adapted for use in local contexts, is an area that remains seriously under-resourced. Investments in research, media and ICT platforms created by and for women are crucial to ensure documentation and evidence in support of policy design, and to inspire and foster solidarity among women across regions. A truly effective use of communication technologies including community radio, video documentaries, and methodologies dealing with information surveillance, should also help foster the individual and collective security of women peace builders, while trying to minimize practices that endanger them and their networks.

We call on Member States, the UN, regional organisations and donors to:

**3.1 Support communication technologies, research, Media, and ICT platforms for in-country documentation by and for women.** This includes supporting different ways of documenting information (oral, written, art, etc.) and support to appropriate communication and technological infrastructures defined by local needs.

**3.2 Support comprehensive, activist-oriented research and dissemination of research results in accessible formats** such as short audio and video documentaries, tool kits, and short publications and/or in articles in the media.

**3.3 Support capacity building of women’s peace builders in using digital security tools to enhance their privacy and security.** This includes supporting hands-on workshops to enhance digital self-defence mechanisms to reduce and limit harassment, silencing, surveillance and targeting of women’s rights advocates in conflict and post-conflict countries.

**In context: Fiji**

Women's civil society in Fiji has a rich 'her' story when it comes to preventing conflict particularly through a range of approaches since the crises of 2000. This has included organising vigils, organising rural networks to enable women's participation and interactive dialogues with government officials particularly through the innovative use of community media including community radio. In the transition to parliamentary democracy women's rights groups have been working in partnership to enhance women's political participation.

**Concrete recommendations:**

- Availability of **specific resources for our regional women’s network** which was instrumental in the development and drafting of the Regional Action Plan on

Women, Peace and Security to progress the work – this would also include mentoring and participation of young women.

- In country **documentation, research and Media and ICT platforms** including the production of an annual Policy for Peace report.
- Resources to **mobilise with innovative campaigns** and policy advocacy.

**In context: Canada**

In Canada, women peace activists and researchers have been lobbying and advocating members of parliament in addition to inform the Canadian public about peacebuilding, conflict prevention and the important role women play in these issues. As the window for participation in policy making has been considerably reduced, Canadian women peace activists have been trying to join forces with other groups and institutions at home and from all over the world to foster ideas of peace and prevent conflicts. Among them is the creation of the Women, Peace and Security Network - Canada (WPSN-C) a loose network composed of Canadian individuals, NGOs, and scholars. First Nations women have also played a key role in bringing to the fore the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in Canada. Actions have involved: an attempt to document this scourge in creating databases, a request for a national inquiry into the missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada, campaigns such as Idle No More to denounce Canadian bills and/or laws, which are deemed to heighten the vulnerability of and encroach on the sovereignty of First Nations Peoples.'

**Concrete recommendations:**

- Support **capacity building and exchange on the effective and safe use of communication technologies**, especially for women human rights defenders and other groups at risk.
- Support **activist-oriented research** on both best practices and challenges of women in peacebuilding, including but also going **beyond academic research** to ensure broad access to results.
- Foster **solidarity and partnerships** among groups within countries and across countries and regions, particularly with First Nations Women.

**The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)** is a global member-led network of civil society organisations who actively work on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Our mission is to promote a global shift in peacebuilding from solely reacting to conflict to preventing conflicts from turning violent. We do this through multi-actor collaboration and local ownership of strategies for peace and security.

GPPAC advocates for the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security from the perspective of prevention. We find that interpretations of UNSCR 1325 tend to highlight prevention of violence against women as victims, rather than building on women's activism to prevent conflict. We place strong emphasis on the need to recognise, highlight and involve women through their active roles in conflict prevention efforts, as part of any holistic engagement towards sustainable peace. Our prevention perspective on UNSCR 1325 links closely to



our advocacy on other relevant policy processes. These include Human Security First, a campaign to highlight people's local perspectives as a basis for engagements on security; and clear commitments to peace and conflict prevention in the post-2015 development agenda.

We build on and promote women's active leadership from inside our network. Our gender experts have been present at events around the anniversary of UNSCR 1325 in New York since 2010, bringing their local stories to New York-based actors. At home, they also share their perspectives with key actors in the field, working to connect practices from the local to the regional and global level.