



# THEMATIC KNOWLEDGE SERIES

## Session 4: Financing the WPS Agenda and Gender Equality in Humanitarian Programming

31 May, 2023

The Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS-HA) Compact Thematic Knowledge Sessions (TKS) are conducted under Chatham House Rule and give signatories the opportunity to come together to share learnings, highlight gaps, and find potential partnerships with other signatories. Each session explores one of the Compact's five pillars or another thematic area relevant to signatories with the aim of highlighting new ideas and creative approaches, identifying missteps that can be avoided, and ways to replicate and scale up high-impact interventions.

### **Context overview:**

Without the necessary funding, women and girls are at even greater risk of staying under-represented in peace and political processes, and their needs not being addressed. It is well-established that the lack of quality financing for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action is a major challenge to realizing normative commitments. This includes quality financing that's adequate, flexible, predictable, and sustainable for local women-led civil society organizations (CSOs) who must deviate from their peacebuilding work to provide urgent humanitarian response in times of conflict and crisis. They are also the first responders best positioned to advance sustainable peace in their communities, even while they are helping their community's weather and recover from humanitarian crises.

Small, local, women- and youth- led CSOs and community-based organizations especially have been demanding more — and more accessible — funding to support their work, including flexible and long-term funding, which is needed to enable stronger and longer-term results on peace and humanitarian objectives. However, Member State donors are also accountable to their taxpayers and to ensuring that tax dollars are spent in transparent, efficient, and effective ways.

[OECD data shows](#) that Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members' bilateral aid to gender equality and women's empowerment in fragile contexts has been increasing over the past ten years, reaching on average \$20.7 billion in 2018-2019. However, only \$2.3 billion in that period was dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective of the programme, corresponding to only 5.6% of bilateral aid to fragile contexts. Official Development Assistance (ODA) going to gender equality and women's empowerment in conflict, peace and security as a





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sector was less than \$1 billion in 2021 – the lowest in five years – according to the OECD. Funding to women's rights organizations also remains low at only \$198 million for fragile context in 2020-2021. Taking into account funding in all contexts, this remains a tiny percentage of ODA. Bilateral donors have recognized the difficulty in effectively integrating gender equality into humanitarian activities and spending and it remains one of the most challenging of all sectors for tracking ODA.

### **Compact Framework impact statement:**

Member States prioritize gender-sensitive budgets, funding contributions to WPS and gender equality in humanitarian action in order to meet existing and agreed targets, including by the consistent inclusion of gender analysis and recommendations in all humanitarian appeals, and by a significant increase in funding to local women's rights and women-led organizations. WPS-HA commitments have adequate, sustained, flexible funding and local women's rights and women-led organizations have sustained, core funding.

### **Stakeholder commitments and investments in this area:**

At the time of this session, financing the WPS agenda and gender equality and humanitarian programming was the third most subscribed to thematic area of the Compact. Investments were the highest in advocacy and programmatic actions respectively, in line with the overall Compact trend, with CSOs having signed up to the greatest number of actions in this thematic pillar. This thematic area also shows how complementary Compact actions for different stakeholder groups generates synergies and contributes towards enhancing impact and finding solutions in the area of financing.

### **Principles of transformation:**

The Compact has taken an intentional approach through its methodology and six principles of transformation to support signatories to develop and implement effective and comprehensive strategies for promoting durable peace and stability with the greatest positive impact on women and girls and local communities. These include:

1. Humanitarian-development-peace-nexus
2. Intersectional
3. Localized
4. Intergenerational
5. Resourced and sustainable
6. Inclusive and multistakeholder



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## Recommendations:

### Humanitarian-development-peace-nexus

- **Donors should strengthen funding for humanitarian work**, which is still seen as an area where women's organizations aren't considered as legitimate responders. They should also help fund coalition building to help bring the movement of women's organizations working on crises to the next level where they can learn from one another and jointly advocate for better recognition of their claims and rights.

### Intersectional

- **Adopt an intersectional lens** in order to ensure support for young women-led peacebuilding organizations, as young women especially face difficulties in accessing both funding and opportunities for participation and making their voices heard. These barriers become even greater when coupled with other factors, including for women that come from indigenous or refugee backgrounds.

### Localized

- **Ensure that capacity building provided to CSOs doesn't only focus on improving their bureaucratic capacity**, but ensure it helps them become better mediators and to do their core work more effectively, rather than focusing on skills for writing funding proposals. It's also imperative that donors do a needs assessment and directly ask CSOs what type of capacity building they need.
- **Support intermediary networks and organizations** who have close partnerships with small, local organizations and who can help redistributed and channel funding from larger donors.
- **Showcase the successes of women peacebuilders** – for citizens, governments, and donors – to highlight that women do make a difference when it comes to peace building and help make the case for more funding. We also need more of an evidence base to showcase how much local women's organizations add value and their strong return on investment.

### Intergenerational

- **Ensure dedicated funding for young women and youth-led organizations**, who often face additional barriers and difficulties in finding resources.



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## Resourced and sustainable

- **Improve donor coordination and set up a donor coordination group to maximize support for local women**, including using the Compact as a venue for facilitating better donor coordination and ensuring that the dialogue is accompanied by the willingness of donors to make the institutional change required.
- **Ensure small women-led organizations can also access smaller grants** as they often don't have the absorption capacity required to manage big amounts of funding. Many smaller organizations don't want to be forced to increase their staff if they receive a big grant, and instead want to focus on improving the impactful on-the-ground work they're already doing.
- **Create longer-term partnerships between donors and other organizations** – rather than short term collaborations – to help integrate gender equality and set out priorities and financing for longer periods of time. The donor community should look at reshaping its approaches to focus on long-term peacebuilding strategies that include flexible and core funding for institutional and network strengthening, with some adoptive monitoring and evaluation processes.
- **Donors should fund skills training for women's organizations** working on peacebuilding, as it's a difficult area to get funding for.
- **Continue to fund small women-led organizations doing peacebuilding work even when donor priorities shift** in order to guarantee the survival of these organizations even when priorities and media coverage might shift their focus to new conflicts.
- **Invest in existing structures and partnerships and build on them** by continuously learning and adapting, instead of creating new structures.
- **Donors need to fund protection and self-care** for women peacebuilders and human rights defenders.
- **Encourage more Member States to adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy** which encourages more interaction with and funding for women's groups.
- **Ensure high-level leadership and support dedicated gender expertise** and capacity across the systems, organizations and structures, including through the development of guidance methodologies, tools and monitoring mechanisms.
- **Provide other types of support in the absence of funding**, including training, workshops, and advocacy support in order to ensure continuity of work for small organizations even when funding isn't available.
- **Create authentic partnerships between donors and local peacebuilders**, where CSOs have the autonomy and flexibility to adopt their operations to the changing context on the ground, to build their institutional capacity, and to maximize impact. This should



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include scaling up peacebuilding resources, increasing the flexibility of funding, as well as minimizing bureaucracy.

### **Inclusive and multistakeholder**

- **Acknowledge local peacebuilders as experts** and ensure that their lived experience of conflict and violence is trusted and recognized, and that their experience is put at the core of decision making.
- **Make grant making participatory**, in order to help support the capacity development of local organizations and invest in learning and knowledge exchange between local peacebuilders and other local, national, regional and global actors.
- **Explore creative and innovative approaches to creating partnerships that are truly equal**, help shift power dynamics and help level the playing field so that small organizations don't feel that they have to chase project funding which often takes them away from advancing their core mission.

### **Speakers:**

The TKS brought together a wide range of speakers, including several signatories as well as speakers from UN Women and the WPS-HA Compact Secretariat:

- **Natasha Lea Lamoreux**, Coordination Specialist, UN Women
- **Harriette Williams Bright**, WPS-HA Compact Lead, UN Women
- **Roya Murphy**, WPS-HA Compact Monitoring and Reporting Consultant, UN Women
- **Lisa Williams**, Team Lead and Senior Policy Analyst, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, OECD Development Co-operation Directorate
- **Visaka Dharmadasa**, Founder and Chair, Association of War Affected Women
- **Maja Vitas Majstorovic**, Gender and Inclusivity Adviser, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
- **Tatyana Jiteneva**, Policy Specialist, UN Women
- **Marie Doucey**, Policy Specialist, Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding, UN Women
- **Ghita El Khyari**, Head of the Secretariat, United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund