



THEMATIC KNOWLEDGE SERIES

Session 5: Women's Economic Security, Access to Resources and Other Essential Services

July 6, 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:

Conflicts, climate change and other crises are putting women and girls at increased risk. Too often the economic needs and essential contributions of conflict- and crisis-affected women and girls are absent from peace processes, peacebuilding, and immediate and long-term response and recovery plans. Women's limited and shrinking economic opportunities in these situations increase their vulnerability and compromise their resilience. It also directly impacts the ability of affected communities to fully recover from crisis and conflict shocks, hindering sustained peace, recovery, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, the economic needs of women and girls must be central to discussions on preventing and responding to conflicts and crises. Interventions must not only ensure women's economic security, but also their autonomy and empowerment in other areas of life by addressing discriminatory social, normative, and legal barriers.

An ever-increasing number of people are displaced by conflict and persecution, with over 108 million displaced by the end of 2022. The number of long-term protracted crises context has increased fivefold in the last 10 years and 75% of displaced people are long-term removed from their homes. This means short-term, siloed solutions that don't take into consideration access to durable solutions – including livelihoods and economic empowerment – are no longer viable. Conflicts and crises also perpetuate existing gender inequalities, including gender-based violence (GBV), displacement, and loss of livelihoods, all adding significant threats to women's physical and economic security. Despite these challenges, women play a central role in the survival and resilience of community's post-conflict. Empowering women economically is not only vital for achieving gender equality, but also for poverty eradication and inclusive growth.





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Some of the new challenges around women's economic empowerment in crisis settings include the burden of unpaid care work – which often increases during conflict – barriers to accessing financial services, loss of property, as well as difficulties accessing markets. Due to these barriers, female-headed households – which often increase during and after conflict – are often the most impoverished. During conflict, women are often forced into informal sectors with very low wages, limited protections, and heightened vulnerability to exploitation. Conflict also disrupts education systems and often limit women and girls' access to quality education, skills development, and employment opportunities, with adolescent girls in conflict zones being 2,5 times more likely to be out of school than boys.

Compact Framework impact statement:

Women and girls affected by conflict, crisis and displacement have attained increased economic security, autonomy and empowerment through improved access and control of the resources, skill sets, education, and employment opportunities they need, breaking discriminatory social and legal normative barriers to women's economic empowerment and autonomy, as well as meaningful input into economic planning and recovery, across the conflict and crisis spectrum.

Stakeholder commitments and investments in this area:

At the time of the session, women's economic security and access to resources and other essential services is the second least signed-upon thematic area of the Compact. Commitments were 50% higher in programmatic and advocacy related actions than in financing and policy, in line with the overall WPS-HA Compact trend for other pillars. However, the discussion highlighted the need to continue investing in advocacy work to address the gaps in women's and girls' economic empowerment.

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

- **Ensure that humanitarian assistance is gender-responsive** and improve efforts to bridge the divide between humanitarian- and development efforts by combining emergency response with sustainable development initiatives that further help the recovery and rebuilding of women's resilience.
- **More intentional collaboration between those working on Women, Peace, and Security and those working on economic security.** Including more of a focus on advancing economic security during the period between response and recovery and integrating it within the WPS and humanitarian agenda.

Intersectional

- **Collect, use, and disseminate data not only disaggregated by gender, but also by other intersectional identities** in order to see who is being left behind and not reached by services.
- **Creatively empower displaced people** to build on their multiple identities and skills and ensure integration support is adapted to the skills refugee women bring to the table.
- **Address intersectional barriers facing displaced people**, including race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, and socio-economic factors that add another layer of discrimination to their lives.
- **Ensure the understanding of women's contextual background** and intersectional factors that might hinder women from accessing resources and services, and ensure economic opportunities and investments designed for them are customized and adapted to what they need.

Localized

- **Advance and prioritize universal social protection** that includes women, as well as safety nets and access to basic services. It's also crucial for interventions to be intentional about ensuring services reach women and female-headed households.
- **Create market linkage for women-entrepreneurs** and provide training on small business administration, customer management, and skills development.
- **Improve efforts to prevent GBV and recognize it as a barrier to women's economic empowerment**, for example by developing referral pathways for GBV services, including for women in rural areas.
- **Support women to move away from the informal sectors** where they're vulnerable and lack benefits such as access to health care and pension and retirement benefits.



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Intergenerational

- **Implement a multi-dimensional response to prevent GBV** and support women's sexual- and reproductive rights, including tackling issues of child marriage.
- **Invest in not only programmatic work, but also policy- and advocacy level work** in order to implement relevant policies and laws to help fight sexual- and gender-based violence.

Resourced and sustainable

- **Ensure that legal frameworks protect women's economic rights** and rights to land and property ownership so that they can go back to their economic activities after a crisis ends, as well as ensuring access to the services they need to rebuild their lives, including access to finance and decent work opportunities both during and after conflict.
- **Increased and intentional investments** in women's economic initiatives – including through innovative financing mechanisms and gender-responsive budgeting – is crucial for implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda and ensuring resources flow directly to women.
- **Invest directly into women's small or micro- enterprises**, as well as self-help groups that can provide women with the necessary support they need to become entrepreneurs.

Inclusive and multistakeholder

- **Include women's voices and leadership** in all aspects of preparing for and responding to crisis, as well as collaborating with local communities and women's organization to ensure the understanding of specific needs and priorities of women in conflict and crisis.
- **Change the narrative around refugees**, who are often considered to require external support rather than acknowledging their ability to empower themselves by tapping into their existing skills and capacities and ensure they can get paid for it.
- **Address the underlying issues of gender inequality** and the unequal status of women and men in society, including recognition of the unequal distribution of unpaid care.
- **Ensure legislation that allow women to own and manage land** and ensure women's representation in the legislative bodies managing land issues to ensure they are at the decision-making table and can influence policy.
- **Address psychological trauma as a barrier to women's economic empowerment**, through the provision of psycho-social support and trauma healing in order to ensure their economic security in the long-term.



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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
- **David Coffey**, Global Humanitarian Coordination and Policy Lead, UN Women
- **Harriette Williams Bright**, WPS-HA Compact Lead, UN Women
- **Roya Murphy**, WPS-HA Compact Monitoring and Reporting Consultant, UN Women
- **Jemimah Njuki**, Chief, Economic Empowerment, UN Women
- **Tsfaya Malaku**, Executive Director, Light Ethiopia
- **Abdul Bangora**, Executive Director, United Funding and Development for Underaged Mothers
- **Perna Rathi**, Co-founder, People Beyond Borders
- **Diago Ndiaye**, President, Réseau Paix et Sécurité Pour les Femmes de l'Espace CEDEAO

