



THEMATIC KNOWLEDGE SERIES

Session 1: Protection of women in conflict and crisis contexts, including women human rights defenders

November 22, 2022

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:

Given existing structural gender inequalities, women and girls in conflict and crises are at increased risk of human rights violations. This prevents them from fully benefiting from, meaningfully participating in, and leading efforts around peace and security, relief and recovery, and humanitarian action and assistance. Women are much more likely than men to be targeted with sexual- and gender-based violence, verbal abuse, as well as online surveillance and violence. Reports have also found that women human rights defenders have been increasingly targeted with reprisals, preventing them from meaningfully participating in public life and decision-making.

Despite this, the international community's response mechanisms for protecting women human rights defenders at risk are still inadequate and underdeveloped. While the protection of women human rights defenders has been repeatedly highlighted as an urgent area of action by the Secretary-General, more action is needed. Women-led organizations directly leading and supporting efforts on the ground are also calling for flexible funding that can quickly be disbursed to guarantee the protection of women human rights defenders as well as for the provision of comprehensive survivor-centered services.

During the session, the importance of consulting and engaging grassroots communities in local peace processes was stressed by speakers. Before decisions are taken at the national and international level, the support of grassroots communities is imperative, or interventions won't succeed to tackle the root causes of conflict. Some Signatories also shared how they had successfully negotiated with donors for the inclusion of a built-in and flexible protection fund





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that can quickly be tapped into when a youth- or women peacebuilder is at risk and in need of urgent relocation and emergency medical treatment.

Compact Framework impact statement:

Women and girls in all their diversity in conflict and crisis-affected contexts experience significantly fewer violations of their human rights, and threats, attacks and reprisals against women and girls in these contexts are reduced and their consequences mitigated to the greatest possible extent. More survivors of these violations – including but not limited to GBV - have access to the full range of gender-responsive and comprehensive survivor-centered services and care, including sexual and reproductive health services, and to a holistic range of judicial redress. Women and girls are increasingly at the center of the design, implementation and evaluation of prevention and response efforts.

Stakeholder commitments and investments in this area:

At the time of this session, protecting and promoting women's human rights in crisis and conflict contexts was the least subscribed to thematic area of the Compact. Most of the Signatories that have committed to implementing actions specific to this thematic pillar are headquartered in Europe and Central Asia, followed by the Americas and the Caribbean. The majority of Signatories committed to actions on protection are Civil society organizations (CSOs), followed by Member States. Following the overall trend for other thematic pillars, the majority of subscribed to actions are related to programmatic and advocacy. Even if Protection was the least subscribed to thematic area by number of Signatories, it accounts for 45% of all Compact specific actions committed to by Signatories. The most subscribed to action for CSOs is to recognize and engage men and boys as partners in addressing and reversing harmful gender norms.

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

- **Shift away from a militarized approach** to peacebuilding towards a more human-centered approach that centers around social and economic development. Several signatories have taken action and created a policy paper on [Feminist Financing for Peacebuilding](#) that calls for a shift from the military approach to a more humane approach to security.

Intersectional

- **Engage men and boys as partners and allies** in order to address harmful gender norms.

Localized

- **Ensure grassroots-level organizations are engaged in peace processes** in a meaningful way.
- **Localization of WPS efforts should include translating information** and knowledge into the local languages to ensure it is accessible to all women and girls.
- **Support the documentation of attacks** and human rights violations targeting women human rights defenders both online and offline.

Intergenerational

- **Develop and support protection mechanisms** for young women leaders, including protection protocols and support networks of professionals such as legal experts.

Resourced and sustainable

- **Empower local peacebuilders and local actors** – particularly women and youth – through increased financing, as the lack of funding for protection mechanisms remains a large gap. Life-saving tools and contacts should be accessible to women peacebuilders and human rights defenders when they need them.
- **Donors should provide flexible funding** for the protection of women human rights defenders and peacebuilders and not only look at short-term programmatic priorities but also commit to more long-term investments in gender equality. Donors should agree on protection funds that can quickly be disbursed when needed, as they have proven effective and life-saving in many cases.
- **Improve access to services for sexual violence and GBV** through local networks to build referral pathways that can improve access to quality and survivor-centered services. There's also a need to improve access to clinical management of rape cases and access



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to safe abortion, as the lack of dedicated clinics remains a major hurdle to delivering services to survivors of CRSV.

- **Include a built-in protection fund in projects** to allow for a rapid response to women and young people who may face any kind of risk in their work.
- **Provide funding for survivor-centered care centers** and shelters for GBV survivors, as well as psychosocial support.
- **Finance and support training on digital security** and risk communication for women peacebuilders.

Inclusive and multistakeholder

- **Ensure safe spaces and psychosocial support for all women and girls**, including those with disabilities and other marginalized groups through remote service provision when needed.
- **Raise awareness around UN Security Council resolution 1325** to ensure the effective participation of women and girls – in all their diversity – in decision-making both when it comes to conflict resolution and their specific needs.

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:

- **Emily Kenney**, Policy Specialist, Rule of Law, and Transitional Justice, UN Women
- **Pauline Brosch**, Policy Analyst, UN Women
- **Mavic Cabrera Balleza**, Founder and CEO, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders
- **Jason Robinson**, Deputy Director, Conflict Resolution Unit, Dept of Foreign Affairs, Ireland
- **Clotilda Andiansa Waah**, General Coordinator, Center for Advocacy in Gender Equality and Action for Development, Cameroon
- **Emilie Page**, Senior GBV Officer, SftS, UNHCR
- **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