



OUR SECURE FUTURE

Women Make the Difference

# MAKING THE CASE FOR WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

## EVIDENCE AND COUNTRY EXAMPLES

### THE ISSUE IN BRIEF

Women's status in a country is a major predictor of peace and their participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding leads to longer lasting peace agreements. Despite this evidence, only [33 percent of peace agreements](#)<sup>1</sup> reached in 2022 referenced women, girls, and gender. That same year, women represented just [16% of negotiators or delegates](#)<sup>2</sup> in peace processes led or co-led by the United Nations, a noticeable drop from previous years.

While women have long contributed to efforts in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, more work needs to be done to ensure their equal and meaningful participation in peace and security processes.

### THE SOLUTION

Women's inclusion in decision-making that affects them and the future of their countries is not only a matter of fundamental human rights, but also a strategic imperative, as adding a broader range of perspectives can tangibly [reduce conflict and advance stability](#).<sup>3</sup>

Women, Peace and Security (WPS), a concept rooted in [UN Security Council Resolution 1325](#),<sup>4</sup> recognizes the disproportionate effect of violence on women and girls, and calls for women's full and meaningful participation at all stages of international peace and security decision-making.

## THE EVIDENCE

### THE CRITICAL ROLE OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE AND SECURITY

Mounting evidence confirms that women's meaningful engagement in peace and security processes increases the likelihood and sustainability of peace:

- ✔ **Women's active participation in peace negotiations** improves the quality of peace accords, boosts provision implementation rates and contributes to longer-lasting peace.<sup>5</sup>
- ✔ **Women are at the forefront of prevention efforts for conflicts and crises.** In many countries, women peacebuilders help to diffuse tensions and mediate disputes<sup>6</sup> between groups.
- ✔ **Women work across political, religious, social and cultural divides to mobilize diverse groups.** By establishing inclusive coalitions for peace,<sup>7</sup> women create openings for dialogues and help reconcile disparate groups.
- ✔ **Women hold critical knowledge about socially and culturally sensitive conflicts,** allowing them to develop context-specific humanitarian responses and peacebuilding efforts.<sup>8</sup>
- ✔ **Women can leverage their role, status and influence within societies and families to prevent and counter violent extremism and conflict,** such as by identifying the early-warning signs of radicalization and servicing as first-line defenders<sup>9</sup> within their communities.
- ✔ **Women and women's organizations are commonly seen as more trustworthy.**<sup>10</sup> Their participation in power structures is crucial for building and maintaining the public's confidence, especially in fragile conflict and post-conflict environments.
- ✔ **Women's political participation is associated with more equitable policy outcomes in post-conflict environments.** Women tend to establish more inclusive political, economic, and social institutions,<sup>11</sup> adopting a participatory approach to decision-making. This significantly contributes to long-term peace and prosperity.
- ✔ **Women's education and participation in the workforce promotes inclusive economic growth and reduces income inequality and poverty.** Women typically invest in their families and communities,<sup>12</sup> leading to improved outcomes for their children and more peaceful and prosperous societies.
- ✔ **Gender equality is a strong predictor for the stability of countries.** In countries where women have limited rights or participation in decision-making, there are higher levels of violence and conflict. Shifts in the treatment of women often serve as early indications of instability<sup>13</sup> within a society.

## THE EVIDENCE IN NUMBERS



When women participate in peace processes as negotiators, mediators, signatories, and witnesses, the **probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years increases by 35 percent**.<sup>14</sup>



Yet in 2022, women accounted for just **16 percent**<sup>15</sup> of participants in UN-led or co-led peace processes, **dropping by 7 percent** from 2020. **Only 6 out of 18**<sup>16</sup> peace agreements reached in 2022 included gender provisions.



Studies of 40 peace processes show **0 instances**<sup>17</sup> of women's groups acting as **spoilers** in peace processes.



The participation of civil society organizations, including women-led organizations, makes a peace agreement **64 percent less**<sup>18</sup> likely to fail.



A study of **58 conflicts**<sup>19</sup> found that the **absence of female parliamentarians increases the risk of relapse into conflict** over time. However, when women comprise at least 35 percent of legislatures, the **risk of relapse is almost non-existent**.



The presence of women in the workforce is an early indicator of instability. Countries where women make up just 10 percent of the labor force, compared to those with 40 percent female labor participation, are almost **30 times more likely**<sup>20</sup> to experience internal conflict.

## WOMEN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

The following country examples illustrate the integral role that women have played and continue to play in peace and security efforts around the world.



### AFGHANISTAN 2021 – PRESENT

Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, women's rights groups and leaders have been tirelessly advocating for the recognition of the Taliban's gender apartheid regime as a crime against humanity. Despite the significant progress made in women's rights and security over the last 20 years in Afghanistan, the [Taliban's systematic discrimination](#),<sup>21</sup> segregation, and exclusion of women from the education system, workforce, and public spaces has contributed to one of the world's worst humanitarian and economic crises. The End Gender Apartheid campaign, started by a coalition of Afghan and Iranian women activists, legal experts, and leaders, calls for gender hierarchies to be included in the definition of apartheid under international law, and criminalize the Taliban's attacks on the basic rights of women and girls.



### COLOMBIA 1964-PRESENT

Local women's organizations pressured the Colombian government and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to include women on the negotiation teams and to establish a Gender Sub-Commission during peace negotiations in 2014. This led to strong gender mainstreaming in the 2016 Final Peace Agreement, including [130 gender equality and women's rights commitments](#).<sup>22</sup>



During the peace process in Colombia, women comprised [40 percent of delegates](#) in Havana.<sup>23</sup>



In transitional justice processes in 2022, women represented [55 percent of magistrates](#)<sup>25</sup> in the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in Colombia, and [36 percent of commissioners](#)<sup>26</sup> on truth commissions.



The final peace agreement had [130](#)<sup>24</sup> gender and women's rights provisions.



Since 2000, a [coalition](#)<sup>27</sup> of Colombian women's organizations, e.g. Red Nacional, Limpal, Codacop, Humanas, Colombia Diversa, Ciase, and Casa de la Mujer, have advocated for the development and implementation of a WPS National Action Plan in Colombia. In August 2022, plans were announced to develop the inaugural Colombian NAP.



## ETHIOPIA

### 2020 – 2022

The Tigray conflict in Ethiopia, one of the deadliest globally, saw an alarming level of gender-based violence (GBV), with an estimated 40 to 50 percent of women and girls in the Tigray, Amhara, Afar, and Oromia regions likely to have been [affected by GBV](#)<sup>28</sup> throughout the two-year war. In response, the Network of Ethiopian Women’s Associations (NEWA) partnered with leading women’s peacebuilding organizations to establish the Ethiopian Women Peacebuilders Network (EWPB). The network harnesses the role of women in community settings to provide peacebuilding and conflict resolution training, as well as support the development and coordination of localized peace projects.



## IRAN

### 2022 – 2023

Feminist nonviolent resistance in Iran has existed for [decades](#).<sup>29</sup> Widespread protests, known as the [“Woman, Life, Freedom” movement](#),<sup>30</sup> were sparked in September 2022, after Mahsa Amini, a young Kurdish woman, died in the custody of Iran’s “morality police” for allegedly violating the country’s strict dress code laws. A growing number of female activists, lawyers and students have since been arrested for voicing dissent against the government. Defiance of ever stricter hijab mandates has grown nationwide, alongside continued anti-regime demonstrations and pro-democracy activism. Iranian women, including the imprisoned women’s rights activist and 2023 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi, continue to [advocate](#)<sup>31</sup> for the recognition of gender apartheid in Iran as a crime against humanity.



## ISRAEL AND GAZA

### 2023 – PRESENT

Efforts such as the 1325 Project have laid a crucial foundation for [women’s participation in the peace process](#)<sup>32</sup> by spotlighting qualified Israeli and Palestinian women; yet there remains an opportunity to further empower and integrate them into current peace negotiations. Presently, [Israeli and Palestinian women-led organizations](#)<sup>33</sup> like Women Wage Peace and Women of the Sun are taking proactive roles in spearheading peacebuilding initiatives and nonviolent resolution from each side of the conflict.



## KOSOVO

### 1998 – 1999

Despite challenges, progress is ongoing in normalizing relations between Serbia and Kosovo, emphasizing women’s security and wellbeing. Survivors of wartime sexual violence in Kosovo have access to innovative reparations, supported by a strong network of women’s organizations and [established transitional justice frameworks](#)<sup>34</sup> to enhance their protection and inclusion in regional negotiations.



## LIBERIA 1989-2003

In 2003, the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace (WLMAP), a [women-led peace movement](#)<sup>35</sup> started by Leymah Gbowee, honored with a Nobel Peace Prize for her work, staged nonviolent protest efforts demanding an end to the civil war in Liberia. [Thousands of women mobilized](#),<sup>36</sup> organizing a sit-in outside of the peace negotiations and blocking the exit until the war ended in a peace agreement. The WLMAP continued their involvement in the implementation of the peace agreement, and in 2006, Liberia democratically elected Ellen Johnson Sirleaf – becoming the first country in Africa to elect a female head of state.



Women represented up to [40 percent of combatants](#)<sup>37</sup> during Liberia's civil war.



In 2002, more than 2,500 women from across the country took part in the Liberian Mass Action for Peace, "sitting, dancing, singing, weeping, praying and fasting for peace in the capital."



Prior to formal peace talks, women produced the [Golden Tulip Declaration](#),<sup>38</sup> a platform of women's goals and demands, calling for gender equality, their meaningful participation in Track I peace processes and 50 percent representation in the transitional leadership.

Their efforts reinvigorated the peace talks, leading to the end of Liberia's 14-year civil war and bringing to power the country's (and continent's) first female head of state, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.



During Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's presidency, [one third of county governors](#)<sup>39</sup> were women and women led the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Commerce, Youth and Sports, and Gender and Development.



## LIBYA 2011 – PRESENT

Through nonviolent protest and activism, women-led civil society organizations, such as the [Libyan Women's Platform for Peace](#),<sup>40</sup> played a [key role](#)<sup>41</sup> in the uprising against the Gaddafi regime and the subsequent political transition. Historically, women have been central figures in [conflict negotiation](#)<sup>42</sup> and mediation on a local level, a process that is crucial to ensuring buy-in to national peace talks. While the role of traditional women mediators is often overlooked by official institutions and formal peace efforts, women continue to advocate for more representation in the peace process and are contributing to a lasting political solution for Libya. In 2020, women secured [23 percent of seats](#)<sup>43</sup> in the UN-facilitated Libyan Political Dialogue Forum.



## MALI

### 2012 – PRESENT

Following a rebellion in the north and a coup in 2012, women mobilized across ethnic and other divisions to call for human rights and an end to violence, using both formal and informal peacebuilding channels to urge armed groups to participate in peace dialogues. Despite their lack of inclusion in subsequent peace negotiations, women have remained [actively engaged](#)<sup>44</sup> at the local level and in Track II and III mediation processes. In 2015, Mali adopted a 30 percent gender quota for appointed and elected office, as well as a second WPS National Action Plan for 2015-2017. Initiatives like [Case de la Paix](#),<sup>45</sup> made up of over 70 women’s associations and 2,000 members, are working to further advance women’s participation in Malian political life, economy and conflict resolution efforts. Through their advocacy, in February 2024, the Malian government launched the “Roadmap on Gender, Elections and Reforms” to strengthen women’s representation in appointed and elected offices.



## MYANMAR

### 2021 – PRESENT

Since February 2021, women have emerged as the driving force behind nonviolent street protests and the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), leading to an unprecedented surge in political mobilization among diverse groups of women as compared to the democratic era. Women have joined pro-democracy security institutions and armed resistance groups, including Myaung Women Warriors – Myanmar’s first all-female People’s Defense Force unit. Their involvement in [traditionally male sectors](#)<sup>46</sup> has helped to challenge ingrained gender inequities, underscoring the need to further integrate women into decision-making processes.



## RWANDA

### 1994

Since the end of the genocide and civil war in Rwanda, various measures have been implemented to facilitate women’s political participation. The high number of women elected to government positions in Rwanda, as well as ongoing efforts to advance women’s equality, have made the country a leading voice for women’s political participation. Today, women continue to hold a [majority of parliamentary seats](#).<sup>47</sup> Female parliamentarians used a participatory legislative and leadership approach to introduce and gain support for a [GBV bill](#),<sup>48</sup> strengthening democratic processes. In 2018, Rwanda adopted its latest WPS National Action Plan for [2018-2022](#).<sup>49</sup>



Women comprised [70 percent](#)<sup>50</sup> of the post-genocide population, stepping into fill the power vacuum.



[Women held a quarter of seats](#)<sup>54</sup> on the constitution-drafting commission for Rwanda. The commission established a [30 percent quota](#)<sup>55</sup> for women throughout government, as well as a gender monitoring office.



Women represented [44 percent](#)<sup>51</sup> of community mediators and [48 percent](#)<sup>52</sup> of the access to Justice Bureaus. They held over [60 percent](#)<sup>53</sup> of positions in the lower house.



Rwanda is the first country in the world to have a female majority in parliament: [61 percent in the Chamber of Deputies](#)<sup>56</sup> and [37 percent in the Senate](#).<sup>57</sup>



In 2020, Rwanda was ranked in the [top 10 countries](#)<sup>58</sup> to shrink the gender gap.



## SUDAN

### 2023 – PRESENT

Since the renewal of conflict in 2020, over [49 women-led peace initiatives](#),<sup>59</sup> humanitarian efforts, and civil society organizations from across the country have established the Peace for Sudan Platform. The network fosters communication and strengthens community-based collective advocacy efforts to affect change. Women’s organizations, historically active in national political demonstrations, peace efforts and humanitarian initiatives, have mobilized to deliver humanitarian aid, arrange shelters for internally displaced people (IDPs), and document instances of human rights abuses and gender-based violence.



Women made up [70 percent of protesters](#)<sup>60</sup> in nation-wide demonstrations against President Al Bashir.



In 2019, the Sudanese Women’s Declaration for Change No (1) demanded [women’s representation in all sectors at decision-making levels](#).<sup>62</sup>

Women’s rights groups led nation-wide campaigns to ensure women’s inclusion in the peace process that led to the signed agreement between the Government of Sudan, the Sudan Revolutionary Front, and the Sudan Liberation Movement in 2020.



In 2022, due to the advocacy of women’s rights organizations, the Sudan Political Framework agreement outlining the country’s transition process was written to include key provisions on gender equality, violence against women and women’s meaningful participation in politics, stipulating that women hold at least [40 percent of legislative and executive level positions](#).<sup>61</sup>



Since the outbreak of renewed violence in 2023, [49 women-led peace, humanitarian and civil society initiatives](#)<sup>63</sup> have come together to create the Peace for Sudan platform.

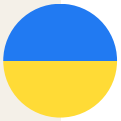


## SYRIA

### 2011 – PRESENT

Syrian women have played a crucial role in resolving various conflicts in their communities, protesting against the Assad regime and demanding democratic reforms. Despite immense personal risk, they have [engaged in mediation efforts](#)<sup>64</sup> and led negotiations with government and armed actors on a wide range of issues, from ending sieges to facilitating temporary ceasefires, obtaining access to essential services, and halting the recruitment of child soldiers. Syrian women and women-led organizations, such as the [Center for Civil Society and Democracy](#)<sup>65</sup> and the [Syrian Women’s Political Movement](#),<sup>66</sup> have in the meantime continued to lead humanitarian and post-conflict recovery initiatives.





## UKRAINE AND RUSSIA

2022 – PRESENT

Since the 2022 invasion by Russia, Ukrainian women have become an integral part of Ukrainian defense efforts. Women comprise [22 percent of Ukraine's armed forces](#),<sup>67</sup> including service in combat roles, and volunteer in civilian resistance efforts. Volunteer support by [women's civil society groups](#)<sup>68</sup> has also provided critical frontline support, coordination of humanitarian assistance, and aid for civilian casualties of war. Women and girls in Ukraine, who have faced increased risk of gender-based violence, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), human trafficking, and displacement, have pushed for [criminal accountability and transitional justice](#)<sup>69</sup> for victims. In 2022, Ukraine's War Crime Unit established a specialized CRSV department led by a female prosecutor. Due to sustained advocacy by a coalition of 50 women's rights groups, in 2022, Ukraine [ratified the Istanbul Convention](#)<sup>70</sup> on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. Still, women's voices lack full and equal representation at the decision-making level, highlighting the need to increase the participation of women in peace and security efforts.



## YEMEN

2014 – PRESENT

Despite being marginalized from formal politics, Yemeni women have actively participated in peace, security, and governance, most visibly during the [National Dialogue Conference](#),<sup>71</sup> with their involvement continuing despite the ongoing war. The Women Solidarity Network in Yemen [amplifies women's voices](#)<sup>72</sup> in international fora, contributes to the development of a national agenda focused on Women, Peace and Security, and plays a critical role in national peacebuilding activities.

# CALL TO ACTION

Despite progress made toward achieving gender equality, women and girls are disproportionately affected at every stage of conflicts and crises, and remain under-represented in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction.

Here's what you can do to advance Women, Peace and Security:



## AMPLIFY WOMEN'S VOICES

Individual stories resonate and are relatable. When possible, include individual stories in research, panel discussions, and news reporting.

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## WELCOME MEN AS ALLIES

Men want a better world too, and embracing their support will help achieve better outcomes and faster institutionalization of the WPS agenda.

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## PRIORITIZE DIVERSITY OF ALL KINDS

Women make up 50 percent of the world, and gender-based data is often the easiest to research. Gathering gender-based data uplifts all societal groups, and champions diversity of all kinds and experiences to foster inclusivity and progress.

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## EMBRACE A PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

Women want to be heard and they will speak if given the opportunity, but often women are placed in male-dominated environments that lack conditions for women to participate fully and on equal footing.

**Gender perspectives improve security outcomes.**

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