



Concept note

Women's participation in peacebuilding: how can the international community support women's leadership in conflict resolution, and representation in post-conflict governance?

"Women were never simply guests at the negotiating table. The roles they play as combatants, supporters of fighting forces and peacemakers qualify them to sit at the negotiating table and to assume an active role in implementation." Anne Itto, Sudan

The international community has long recognised the importance of women's full and effective participation in peace efforts, and to the maintenance and promotion of lasting peace and security. Since the UN Security Council's unanimous adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2000, States, regional organisations, UN agencies and civil society organisations have made firm commitments to support women's decision-making, leadership and participation in conflict resolution, peace processes and post-conflict peacebuilding and statebuilding. Nearly 50 National and Regional Action Plans to implement resolution 1325 have been developed, and the Secretary-General's Seven-Point Action Plan on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding sets out the UN's system-wide commitment to operationalising the Council's women, peace and security agenda in conflict resolution, recovery and post-conflict settings. Key peacebuilding and Statebuilding principles, including the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, emphasise the importance of women's participation in governance as critical to legitimate and inclusive political processes, which in turn is critical to the prevention of relapse into violence.

And the results are starting to show — new data from the United Nations indicates that women's participation in peacebuilding processes is beginning to improve, gender expertise is increasingly being deployed to assist in conflict resolution processes, and women are starting to assume a greater role in negotiations, both as negotiators and as technical experts.

Yet, despite these efforts, it has often been difficult to see the impact of policy initiatives on the ground. Women are still largely excluded from official peace efforts, and their contribution to broader peacebuilding often goes unrecognised. Barriers to their participation are ineffectively addressed, and final agreements overwhelmingly lack a gender perspective or provisions specifically addressing women's rights and concerns. Necessary support for women's participation, while often lauded in international fora, is regularly not forthcoming at key political moments. This includes financial support for women's inclusion, security arrangements for women, and training and capacity building for all participants at the negotiation table, so that they are able to bring a gender perspective to discussions, and to fully address women's rights and concerns.

Ensuring international policy to facilitate women's participation is informed by women's own varied and broad-ranging peacebuilding experiences is one fundamental way to aid effective implementation of the Council's women, peace and security agenda. With

multiple actors responsible for implementation, discussion of concrete examples of what has worked, and where the barriers to implementation still remain, is valuable to the Council, Member States, the UN system and other key stakeholders. How do women participate effectively in these processes? What support has proved valuable for their participation, and what policy initiatives have not worked? And are there policy measures that can be applied across cases?

The Event

This panel discussion brings together peacebuilding practitioners from the Asia-Pacific, Africa, the UN and civil society to discuss ways that the Security Council, Member States, UN agencies and non-governmental organisations can work together to strengthen and support women's participation in post-conflict governance – a key commitment in the Secretary-General's Seven-Point Action Plan on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding. Following presentations from panellists, the floor will be opened for an interactive discussion (questions of no longer than 2 minute).

The meeting will highlight the relevance of ensuring women's participation and the integration of women's rights in all peacebuilding efforts, providing good practice examples for the ongoing work of the Security Council and other actors engaging in efforts towards peace and security.

The meeting aims to complement the UN Peacebuilding Commission's high-level event on 26 September on women's economic empowerment in post-conflict situations, and to contribute to policy approaches to reinforce the role of women in peacebuilding ahead of the Security Council's annual open debate on women, peace and security in October. A short outcome document will be produced.