

# Listening to Women Peacebuilders

**Perspectives on Women, Peace and Security  
from Kachin and northern Shan States,  
Myanmar**



**Durable Peace Programme - Policy Paper**  
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# Contents

2	ACRONYMS
4	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
5	GENDER AND CRISES IN KACHIN AND NORTHERN SHAN STATES
5	Impact of Conflict and Crises on Women and Girls
7	Twenty Years on – the Status of UNSCR 1325 in Myanmar
10	WOMEN’S FULL, EQUAL AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION
10	Participation in Peace and Security
11	What Makes Women’s Participation ‘Meaningful’?
12	Barriers to Women’s Meaningful Participation
15	CONFLICT PREVENTION
15	Diverse Conflict Prevention Initiatives
15	Gendered Approaches to Conflict Prevention
17	Barriers and Risks in Conflict Prevention
19	PROTECTION OF RIGHTS
19	Advocacy and Pursuit of Justice for SGBV in Conflict
20	Protection within Conflict-Affected Communities
22	Protection – a Restricted but Expanding Space
23	PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVES
23	Women’s Visions of Peace
24	Holistic Peacebuilding Activities
25	Male and Elite Dominated Peacebuilding Processes
27	RELIEF AND RECOVERY
27	Prioritising Relief and Recovery Across the WPS Agenda
27	Women’s Relief Efforts
29	Women’s Recovery Priorities
31	CONCLUSION
32	RECOMMENDATIONS
34	ANNEX ONE: WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY RESOLUTIONS
35	END NOTES



## Acronyms

BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CMC	Camp Management Committee
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DPP	Durable Peace Programme
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organisation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
KII	Key Informant Interview
KIO	Kachin Independence Organisation
KSWN	Kachin State Women's Network
KWPN	Kachin Women Peace Network
MIGS	Myanmar Institute of Gender Studies
NAP	National Action Plan
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSPAW	National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women
PoVAW	Protection and Prevention of Violence against Women
R&R	Return and Resettlement
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UPC	Union Peace Conference
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
WPS TWG	Women Peace and Security Technical Working Group
WRO	Women's Rights Organisation



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## Methodology

This Policy Paper draws on primary data sourced through key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted in September 2020, with national and international WPS experts, WRO representatives, and women peacebuilders in Kachin and northern Shan States, Myanmar. All informants identify as women and their perspectives of peace and security arise from their personal and professional experiences working on WPS in Myanmar, and particularly in Kachin and/or in northern Shan States. The qualitative findings from these KIIs and FGDs are supplemented by an extensive literature review including quantitative data from the DPP Phase II Baseline Survey (October 2019).



## The Durable Peace Programme

The DPP seeks to achieve lasting and equitable peace and sustainable development in Myanmar's Kachin and northern Shan States through a range of interventions, including support for durable solutions, resilient livelihoods, social cohesion and gender equality. WPS is central to the DPP and the programme works in partnership with a number of active WROs and aims to raise women's voices at different levels of the peacebuilding process, support and build Track Two women peacebuilders' capacities, and lead awareness raising and advocacy initiatives on WPS. For more information on the DPP, please visit: <https://durablepeaceprogramme.com/>



## Executive Summary

Ongoing armed conflicts, protracted displacements and the COVID-19 pandemic have disproportionately impacted ethnic minority women in Kachin and northern Shan States, Myanmar. Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination have further resulted in their frequent exclusion from peace and security processes, meaning women's gender-specific experiences and important contributions are often absent from decisions that determine their futures. However, women refuse to be seen as passive 'victims' of these crises and have been working individually and with women's rights organisations (WROs) to demand and create space for their meaningful participation.

This Policy Paper explores the diverse and critical roles women and WROs play in Kachin and northern Shan States that cut across, link with and strengthen each of the pillars of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Women employ their skills in mediation and negotiation, as well as their central roles within communities, in order to monitor conflicts and prevent the escalation of tensions. They lead wide-ranging and holistic peacebuilding initiatives that play an important, yet undervalued, role in forging peace across divides. WROs continue making ground-breaking contributions to peace and security accountability through their activism in raising awareness of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict. Simultaneously, they provide protection shelters and support survivors to access justice in remote and conflict-affected areas. Women and WROs are often among the first responders to crises and provide gender-responsive relief for the immediate needs of civilians and continue to lead recovery efforts that support women's and girls' priorities long after the response ends.

These holistic peace and security-related actions led by women and WROs in Kachin and northern Shan States seek to create more equal communities, which are not only more resilient to new outbreaks of crises, but also to the re-occurrence of violence and violations. Yet, despite these contributions and enormous potential, women's efforts are widely under-acknowledged or actively discouraged and WROs remain underfunded and frequently delegitimised in peace and security. Therefore, on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, this Policy Paper advocates for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women across peace and security processes to achieve sustainable, equitable and gender-just peace in Myanmar, and offers key recommendations:

- Fully operationalise the WPS agenda at all levels by ensuring cross-departmental coordination and allocating dedicated financial, technical and logistical resources.
- Support women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and security sectors at all levels and sensitise men on the critical importance of their participation.
- Remove restrictions on funding unregistered civil society organisations such as ethnic WROs.
- Invest in programming that transforms harmful social norms and violent masculinities as well as recognises, reduces and redistributes women's unpaid care and domestic workloads.
- Recognise and support women's diverse conflict prevention efforts, skills and approaches.
- Complement women's protection initiatives with women's empowerment approaches that serve as a catalyst for transformation.
- Hold peace and security events in accessible locations with timely invitations and translation.
- Recognise the relief and recovery pillar as a strategic component of the WPS agenda that holistically supports all other pillars.





## Gender and Crises in Kachin and northern Shan States

### Impact of Conflict and Crises on Women and Girls

Decades of civil war and military dictatorship have had a deep impact on Myanmar, especially on the country's ethnic states where most of the conflict continues to take place. Despite the partial signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in 2015 and four sessions of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Peace Conference since 1947 – formal peace negotiations have excluded key actors and conflicts continue to intensify in the country's northeast and west with devastating effects.<sup>1</sup> In Kachin State, the resumption of conflict between the Myanmar Armed Forces (the Tatmadaw) and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in 2011 resulted in loss of life, land and livelihoods, causing immeasurable human suffering and the protracted internal displacement of over 97,000 people (IDPs).<sup>2</sup> While a series of short-term ceasefires beginning in December 2018 has slowed fighting in Kachin, armed conflict in northern Shan has escalated between the Tatmadaw, Tatmadaw-allied militias and a number of Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs), including the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), Shan State Progress Party (SSPP), United Wa State Army (UWSA), Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA). The frequent outbreaks in fighting in close proximity to civilian areas in northern Shan have resulted in significant human rights violations, the protracted internal displacement of around 9,600 people and cycles of temporary displacement of thousands more, with many communities being displaced several times in the one year.<sup>3</sup>

“ We have to run all the time, there are many human rights violations. If we go to the farm, we have to worry about landmines. We are worried about our children going missing if the fighting starts. We see nothing about peace in the community right now.

Woman peacebuilder, northern Shan State



Gender norms and access to power shape the different impacts that conflict and displacement have on women, men, girls and boys – as well as the roles they play within these crises. In Kachin and northern Shan States, men make up the majority of combatants, are more likely to die from the direct impact of conflict and face a higher risk of landmines, forced labour, portering, military conscription, arbitrary detention and drug and alcohol addiction.<sup>4</sup> Women and girls face heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), shoulder increasing unpaid care and domestic workloads, are more economically vulnerable, have their movement significantly restricted and face gender-specific barriers to accessing essential supplies and services such as clean water, food, healthcare and education.<sup>5</sup> As a result of these challenges, respondents from Kachin and northern Shan States expressed that conflict and displacement disproportionately impact women and girls in their communities. As crises exacerbate pre-existing and intersecting inequalities, ethnic and religious minority women, displaced women, female-headed households, survivors of SGBV, young and adolescent girls, elderly women, pregnant women, women living with disabilities and people with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations face additional vulnerabilities.<sup>6</sup>

“ Women are the worst affected by the war in northern Shan. We do not have protection for women who are raped, who are sexually harassed. Women who are disabled by the war. Women who are killed. Women who lose their baby during pregnancy because of the war. Women suffer the treatment from both sides – not only from the military but also from the ethnic armed organisations. They suffer from both sides. They suffer also from the drug issue. The war impacts women economically, socially – in every sector women are suffering.

WRO representative, northern Shan State

This situation is exacerbated by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic which disproportionately impacts conflict-affected and displaced women living in crowded conditions with limited access to healthcare, clean water and sanitation. Respondents from Kachin and northern Shan States highlighted the rise in SGBV during stay-at-home measures and in quarantine centres; women’s increasing unpaid work caring for the sick and home-schooling children; female migrant workers returning from China and Thailand facing extremely precarious livelihoods; and the challenges women face in feeding their families due to movement restrictions, barriers to livelihoods and limited humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, while Myanmar’s recent surge in local transmissions and deaths illustrates the importance of preventative measures, the militarisation of the COVID-19 response and the male-dominated security actors responsible for implementing lockdowns, curfews and quarantine centres pose serious implications for peace, security and women’s human rights.<sup>7</sup>





“ In Mohnyin IDP camp, women have a lot of mental pressure and stress. Because of COVID, we cannot go every day to the market, so when we go one time we have to buy for the whole week. But we don't have any work and income, so how can we buy the food in advance? Even before COVID, we have to work day-by-day and figure out what we are going to eat on that same day. And especially in the IDP camp, we have to follow these [COVID-related] rules.... So, even if we need to go and get some vegetables for our family, we would not be allowed to go.

Woman peacebuilder, Kachin State

## Twenty Years on – the Status of UNSCR 1325 in Myanmar

In October 2000, the disproportionate impact of conflict and instability on women and girls and the critical roles women play in preventing conflict and building peace were recognised for the first time at a global level through the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent nine resolutions to date, outlined in Annex One, form the WPS agenda. This agenda is underpinned by four main pillars: 1) the role of women in conflict *prevention*, 2) their *participation* in peace and security, 3) the *protection* of their rights during and after conflict, and 4) their specific needs during repatriation, resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict *relief and recovery*. The significant impacts of ongoing conflict, as well as instability caused by protracted displacement and COVID-19, on women and girls living in Kachin and northern Shan States illustrates the relevance that UNSCR 1325 continues to hold in Myanmar twenty years after its adoption.

“ When we are looking at the effect of the war in northern Shan State, it is the opposite of UNSCR 1325 – it breaks every pillar of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

WRO representative, northern Shan State

Recognising the critical importance of UNSCR 1325 in Myanmar, WPS experts, representatives from women's rights organisations (WROs)<sup>1</sup> and women peacebuilders were quick to reiterate that the Government of Myanmar holds ultimate responsibility for the operationalisation of the WPS agenda. Myanmar's international obligations are reflected in UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent resolutions, as well as the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Sustainable Development Goals 5 on gender, and 16 on peace.<sup>8</sup> However, respondents widely expressed frustration and disappointment that the government's commitments to these agreements remains, at best, only on paper. This lack of commitment has also been observed internationally, with Myanmar dropping a record 31 places in the Georgetown Institutes' WPS Index in 2019 to a dismal global rank of 150.<sup>9</sup>

“ The ongoing conflict in Kachin and northern Shan constantly reminds people to focus more on WPS... If there is no conflict, then people might forget and think, 'women are enjoying their lives'. But no, our women have been raped, and a lot of unfairness is happening and there is no justice and that is why we have to demand for justice! So that is why the WPS agenda is important, because it attracts leaders and decision makers. But this [comes at the cost of] the very painful experiences of women. But without this pain, can we get attention on WPS? Can we get attention without facing the suffering? That is my question.

National WPS expert, Myanmar

1. The term women's rights organisations (WROs) is used in this paper to broadly refer to national and community-level organisations, groups, committees, networks and movements which are women-led and work to advance women's rights and gender equality.

Respondents identified several key challenges that hinder the government's commitment to, and progress on, WPS. Not only do government officials lack awareness on WPS and fail to understand their related international obligations, but furthermore respondents identified that the deeply patriarchal political culture and governance systems do not uphold women's rights. There is also a widespread reluctance to work on issues that are deemed to be politically sensitive, including peace, conflict and security. Consequently, WPS has been politicised as a 'social and development issue' under the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) rather than also being understood as a 'security issue' involving actors such as the Ministry of Defence (MoD) – and indeed a broader political priority requiring comprehensive cross-departmental support. Peace and security structures and processes have also failed to meaningfully integrate gender perspectives, for example with the Union Peace Conference (UPC) failing to acknowledge the gendered dimensions of conflict and the specific considerations required to protect women's security.<sup>10</sup> Although progress can be observed through the development of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW, 2013 - 2022) and the establishment of the WPS Technical Working Group (WPS TWG), several respondents felt that the lack of budget, minimal progress on implementation and absence of commitment from relevant government ministries renders these mechanisms ineffective, especially in the absence of a National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS.

“ UNSCR 1325 is very good, but it is not currently working in Myanmar because the government is not interested in it... So, even though the government say they committed to it – they are not actually committed and they do not implement it. Not only do they not promote it, but the government is also not supporting or helping people who are committed to the efforts on WPS... So, the progress we have made on WPS in northern Shan is not because the government has done something. No, the successes are because of the women's organisations and the women's groups – it is because of their efforts.

WRO representative, northern Shan State

Respondents in Kachin and northern Shan also expressed that these national mechanisms, centred in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon, fail to meaningfully engage conflict-affected and displaced women and consequently do not reflect their lived realities or their priorities. Compounding this, while a number of national WROs and networks are able to play an active role within some national mechanisms, such as the WPS TWG, exiled and unregistered WROs are often excluded from these forums. Yet despite these challenges, women's strong civil society activism organised through WROs has been enormously impactful in Myanmar's peace and security processes.<sup>11</sup> In achieving this work, several respondents identified that the WPS agenda has provided an internationally recognised normative framework that has helped to legitimise WROs' activism, within their own communities, nationally and internationally.

“ There is a big debate, should we have NSPAW or should we have a NAP. But regardless, the problem is that the government owns the process and depoliticises it. And that excludes ethnic minority women from conflict areas to actively participate, not least the women who are activists and organise politically in organisations. And I don't think this is a coincidence. There is a reason why those women's groups who are not seen to be cooperating with the government are excluded from those discussions and debates.

International WPS Expert focusing on North East Myanmar

## International Perspectives - Rethinking the Peace and Security Paradigm

Feminist researcher and activist, Cynthia Cockburn, explains in *Gender and Militarism* that patriarchal gender relations predispose societies to crises and act as a driving force that perpetuate war. Through this lens, we can deduce that armed conflict and displacement are direct outcomes of the patriarchal system and toxic masculinities. So, if we accept this view, how does it make sense that processes aimed at nation-building or peacebuilding efforts revert to patriarchal practices and restrictive gender norms? The only way then conflict or displacement can be mitigated is by creating or restoring (if it existed before) a 'balance of power.' If in conflict situations men held all the substantive power, then it stands to reason that without a transformation of this power, the crises cannot be resolved at all. Thus, if peacebuilding processes are to be genuinely effective, then the restrictive gender norms and oppressive patriarchal systems need to be transformed.

Post-conflict or displacement rehabilitation, peace negotiations and humanitarian and development programmes are in a unique position to rebuild a new, empowered and equal society from the devastation of crises. As Isabelle Geuskens says, "nonviolence – often also referred to as 'people power' or 'civil courage' – recognises that conflict is a fact of life, and can even provide an important opportunity for positive change."<sup>12</sup> Peacebuilding processes and humanitarian and development programmes, therefore, must not mimic the prevalent patriarchal systems. Instead, women and men must be empowered to break the patterns of gender violence and exclusive male entitlement to peace and security spaces. Just as women need to be empowered and equipped to confront and challenge the status quo, men must learn to give space to women as decision makers. They also need to learn to acknowledge that women are the custodians of their own choices and safety and dignity, that men need no longer play the role of protectors, since women no longer need be passive receivers of that protection. Similarly, just as men need to learn that toxic and violent masculinities cannot lead to a just society, women too need to unlearn internalised restrictive gender norms and patriarchal constructions of 'femininity'.

It is with this very good reason that peace processes, nation-building efforts and humanitarian and development programmes must focus on the meaningful participation of women and other excluded groups. WPS architect, Sanam Anderlini, argues in *Women Building Peace*, "supporting women's full and active participation in decision-making, particularly in countries emerging from conflict is a key indicator of a shift away from the status quo that, in many instances, catalysed the conflict." What is needed now is the political courage and willingness to invest in critical and ground-breaking approaches that transform our peace and security paradigms altogether. The only way a just and equitable society can be actualised is by dismantling the underlying causes of war and violence and redefining peace and security from a holistic gender perspective. Thus, the WPS agenda calls on all actors to adopt "a gender perspective" and to support WROs' conflict prevention and relief initiatives, ensure women's meaningful participation in all levels of peacebuilding and recovery efforts and uphold the protection of, and respect for, women's and girls' human rights.



## Women's Full, Equal and Meaningful Participation

### Participation in Peace and Security

Central to the WPS agenda is the conviction that sustainable and just peace will only be attainable when women's full, equal and meaningful participation is assured at all levels of leadership and decision-making and within all aspects of peace and security, including in the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery. This commitment is in line with a rights-based approach, which highlights women's inherent and inalienable right to participate in public life and in all decisions that shape their futures. This approach is underpinned by the international convention, CEDAW, and the national strategy, NSPAW.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, beyond a simple 'add women and stir' approach, a commitment to women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and security means acknowledging that diverse women have unique experiences of crises and hold specific priorities which must be engaged and reflected in all levels of decision-making. As the Kachin State Women's Network's (KSWN) *Common Charter of Demands* articulates, "If women and their advocates are absent in humanitarian and peace building planning and decision-making processes, there will never be a complete understanding of the gendered vulnerabilities and impact of crises and conflict to design and inform policy, planning and programmes that are effective, accountable and based on sound evidence."<sup>14</sup> Global evidence supports this conviction, illustrating that peace agreements are more likely to be reached, implemented and have a higher probability of lasting longer when women have been able to meaningfully influence peace processes.<sup>15</sup>

“ Women should be in the leadership position and every level of decision-making – from parliament to all other levels. Only then, when women are there in those positions, will women be listened to and women's feelings and experiences be covered. Not only for women to have the power, but also to listen to the voices of the women who are suffering. Because women have been suffering mentally and physically, from all kinds of violence like rape. So, it is very important that when women have that kind of decision-making power that they listen to all women's experiences.

Woman peacebuilder, northern Shan State



## What Makes Women's Participation 'Meaningful'?

The concept of meaningful participation goes beyond simply the number of women present in peace and security processes and refers to the quality of women's participation through the representation and impact of their diverse interests. Figure 1, developed by UN Women, illustrates the multifaceted nature of the concept and demonstrates that women must have the opportunity to actively contribute, their expertise recognised, their concerns heard, and their priorities taken on board in order to achieve meaningful participation.<sup>16</sup> WPS advocates believe that women's meaningful participation is critical to ensure that gender equality interests inform and shape all levels of decision-making in peace and security in order to produce gender-sensitive policies, decisions and actions that will benefit all members of society.<sup>17</sup>

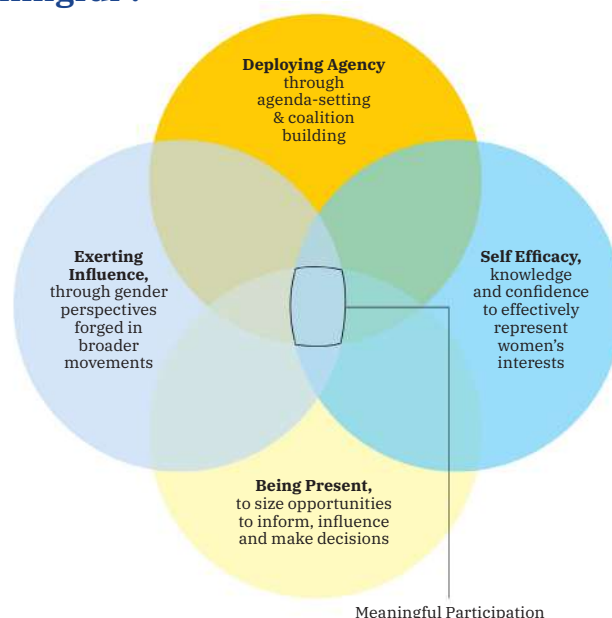


Figure 1

“ We want to meaningfully participate, to make decisions about what we face and what we experience. It is really important to be in the decision-making level, because if we are not at the decision-making level then we are not guaranteed any law or policy and we cannot even raise the issue about the reality we are facing... Men do not know the specifics of what women face and how they feel, especially women who face the conflict, especially woman who are facing rape. We need to challenge them – if you bring us and if you listen to us and give us the power for decision-making, then we will come, otherwise we will not. Otherwise, we just waste our time.

WRO representative, Yangon

In discussing what meaningful participation means with women peacebuilders and WROs in Kachin and northern Shan, respondents reflected similar ideas. They stressed that meaningful participation is not about the number or percentage of women participating in a process, but instead whether women can genuinely access decision-making and take on leadership roles in that process. Respondents stressed the importance of women having the capacity, confidence and will to actively speak at the table and push their perspectives so their voices are heard. Furthermore, many respondents spoke about the importance of genuinely representing diverse women's experiences, particularly displaced women, women living in remote and conflict-affected areas and ethnic and religious minority women. Acknowledging that women are not a homogenous group, many respondents felt that 'elite women', often seen as Bamar women from urban central Myanmar who are socioeconomically privileged and have received higher education, are unable to represent diverse and marginalised women's priorities in peace and security. Finally, women peacebuilders in Kachin and northern Shan added a new and important component to the conceptualisation of meaningful participation within their contexts, which includes the embodiment of peacefulness and possession of a deep commitment to nonviolence, fairness and equality through their participation as leaders and decision makers.

“ When we have leadership, the first thing we need to do is to reflect on ourselves. Are we practicing fairness and equality ourselves? Are we treating people equally? Are we giving people equal opportunities? When we are leading, when we are communicating, when we are solving the issues – are we doing this nonviolently? We need to reflect ourselves and transform ourselves, and only then can we be leaders in peacebuilding.

Woman peacebuilder, northern Shan State

## Barriers to Women's Meaningful Participation

Despite the critical importance of women's full, equal and meaningful participation, Myanmar's peace and security sectors remain highly patriarchal and male-dominated, blatantly failing the country's international obligations and national commitments. In understanding the barriers women face to participation, Myanmar's formal peace and security sectors can be understood as a microcosm of the underlying socio-cultural norms that inhibit women taking on leadership and decision-making roles.<sup>18</sup> Across diverse communities in Kachin and northern Shan, pervasive socio-cultural norms shape what kind of behaviour, responsibilities and opportunities are considered appropriate for women and men – widely confining women to the domestic sphere while elevating men in political activities.<sup>19</sup> As a result, women are often excluded from public meetings and decision-making process, have less access to information on political matters and have fewer opportunities to develop leadership skills such as public speaking.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the internalisation of norms that deem women unqualified for political discussions means that many women themselves feel that they do not have the capacity to participate.<sup>21</sup>

“ When we look at leadership it is always men in these roles. Since childhood it has always been men. They are supported to learn the leadership skills. And since women were young girls, they think leadership is not for them, they are not supported much to develop the leadership skills and the capacities. Even if girls have the capacity, they are never provided with the chance or opportunity to use this capacity. They are always being oppressed. When women try to participate their opinions are rejected, they are told their opinions are not relevant, that they are not official or legitimate.

Woman peacebuilder, northern Shan State

In addition to discussing the barriers posed by women's perceived or actual lack of leadership capacities, several respondents also highlighted the hypocrisy in the widespread assumption that men inherently possess these skills. Women peacebuilders from Kachin recalled examples of the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) automatically recruiting men as Township Administrators (TA) – even when they did not possess the same skills or qualifications as women, “just because they never consider women for these roles.” This is compounded in peace and security, where ‘hard’ security issues like military strategy, conflict, ceasefires and demarcation are seen as areas that only men are qualified to work on, while women lead on ‘soft’ matters like health, education and protection from SGBV. Yet, while both of these areas of work are critical to creating healthy, peaceful and functioning communities, the ‘hard’ sides of security are widely afforded more value than the ‘soft’ work that women lead. This dichotomous division is enforced by powerholders, as women peacebuilders spoke of facing backlash within their households and communities for acting ‘unwomanly’ and have been actively blocked, or at times even imprisoned, when their activities were deemed ‘too political’ or ‘inappropriate for women’. Other ways male-dominance is upheld is by relegating women to making snacks and tea within leadership committees and at peace and security events, as well as consistently undervaluing the critical roles that women play across all aspects of peace and security.<sup>22</sup>

“ In my area, the leaders in the [IDP] camps are somewhat challenging. When we are trying to organise the meetings, they ask ‘What are you going to discuss in the meeting?’ – so we say, ‘We are just discussing about women's issues like violence against women and Myanmar's legal protection and those kinds of issues.’ But they say, ‘this is politics – and it is not good for women in the camp to discuss about political issues.’ And they try to stop us from doing this, from holding these meetings and raising awareness on these issues.

Woman peacebuilder, Kachin State

Socio-cultural norms that restrict women to the domestic sphere also create practical barriers in terms of the time and energy women are able to give to public participation. In Kachin and northern Shan, women's unpaid care and domestic workloads increase significantly in displacement and during COVID-19 – and are often conducted in addition to paid work and without any support from men.<sup>23</sup> Respondents shared that it would be impossible for many women in their communities, and particularly women living in IDP camps, to find the time, headspace and resources to take on leadership roles in addition to their reproductive responsibilities.

“ For the men, they just look after themselves... But for the women, especially for the mothers, they have to look after their children and the family and so many responsibilities.... Even if there is a peace process and the Panglong Conference, and even now the election is happening, women [don't have time to] think about that because they have to think about taking care of their family. And now they are also battling COVID, so they don't have time to think about anything else. They are thinking about what they are going to eat tomorrow and are they going to be safe. They just care about the survival of their family.

WRO representative, northern Shan State

While women from Kachin and northern Shan often referred to the common experiences of gender discrimination that women across Myanmar face, they also highlighted their specific experiences of oppression that are shaped by their ethnic and religious identities and experiences of conflict and displacement. Respondents highlighted issues of not being paid equally for their work, facing ongoing physical security threats, and not being able to finish school or own land. They also expressed that Myanmar's laws and policies do not safeguard against these forms of discrimination, despite the country's commitment to CEDAW and NSPAW. Furthermore, these intersecting forms of marginalisation pose practical barriers to meaningfully participating in peace and security, for example with discussions taking place in Burmese language and meetings being held in Nay Pyi Taw or Yangon. In addition, during COVID-19, events are often held online and require access to computers or smartphones and stable internet connectivity – which are often out of reach for women in conflict-affected areas. Ethnic WROs face additional barriers due to the politicisation of women's groups associated with EAOs, a reluctance to work with non-signatories, barriers to access funding without formal NGO registration and the challenge of juggling both



their gender and ethnic commitments. Consequently, the nominal space that women are afforded to participate is often held by elite, urban, educated, Burmese and Buddhist women and national WROs – who often cannot represent the full diversity of women’s experiences and priorities.

“ Ethnic women and organisations are facing even more challenges and barriers than other women in WPS. Firstly, we face challenges from the other ethnic groups – they say, “oh those ethnic women, you only give support for your own ethnic group, you do not do that for other ethnic groups.” And even with our ethnic group we are receiving the criticism and backlash, as men think that we are only focusing on women’s issues, and they accuse us that we are not focusing on our entire ethnic community. And another challenge is in Myanmar people do not know about our ethnic identity... For example, if I say I am Ta’ang or Lisu then people will say, “what is that? Is it an insect or an animal?” So that is why it is very hard for us to go out and participate. And a final challenge, we are never invited to participate directly in the peace process. We are always part of another [women’s or ethnic] group or network, so we can only participate in the token way. We, as a minority ethnic group or women’s organisation, will never be invited directly.

WRO representative, northern Shan State

While these intersecting barriers to women’s meaningful participation are important to understand, they should not be equated with women being passive victims. As the subsequent sections of this paper explore, despite these significant barriers, women in Kachin and northern Shan are demanding and creating their own space for participation and are taking on diverse and vital roles across all pillars of the WPS agenda.

“ Yes, these are the challenges that we face. But I want to encourage women – that we can do this! I will keep supporting women so that we can do this!

Woman peacebuilder, northern Shan State





## Conflict Prevention

### Diverse Conflict Prevention Initiatives

In Kachin and northern Shan States, women and WROs are at the forefront of community-level and informal conflict prevention efforts. They take on a range of essential roles – including leading conflict early warning systems; negotiating with leaders to prevent the escalation of conflict; advocating to decision makers on issues of gender and peace; negotiating with armed actors to mediate issues such as taxation and portering; and mediating community and household-level disputes such as road accidents and SGBV to prevent social tensions and mitigate further harm. Across these diverse activities, women’s core objectives are to prevent, or at least to de-escalate, armed conflict and other forms of disputes in order to minimise the harm caused to their communities. While respondents from both Kachin and northern Shan States provided examples of their involvement in conflict prevention activities, women and WROs in northern Shan appear to be taking on more active conflict prevention roles within the current context of ongoing and escalating armed clashes.

“ When we are looking at the situation in northern Shan, the women and the women’s groups are working so hard to stop conflict... Women are negotiating and mediating between military and armed groups. They can go to conflict areas or where the armed groups are based and carry out activities like monitoring and negotiation. So, we can see that women are actively participating in prevention efforts and playing a critical role.

Woman peacebuilder, northern Shan State

### Gendered Approaches to Conflict Prevention

Women are often considered to be better equipped to lead certain conflict prevention activities as they are seen to be effective, skilled and principled negotiators and mediators. While negotiation and mediation skills are relevant across all pillars of the WPS agenda, and particularly in peacebuilding, respondents most often mentioned these skills in discussions around conflict prevention. When referring to women’s negotiation and mediation efforts, respondents often highlighted women’s ‘soft’ diplomacy skills and their ‘calm’ approach, enabling them to

de-escalate tensions and find common ground with community leaders, EAOs and the Tatmadaw. These approaches are reflected in reports on women's leadership in Myanmar, which illustrate that women are seen to be more gentle and thoughtful in their leadership, are better positioned to lead mediation between different parties and are more likely promote fairness, justice and transparency.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, global research has illustrated that the style and the gender of the mediator influences outcomes, and that female mediators are more effective at mediating binding settlements.<sup>25</sup> However, care must be taken not to conclude that these are inherent differences between women and men, as these approaches to mediation and negotiation are learned through the socialisation of gender norms. Furthermore, these stereotypes can be flipped to actively exclude women's participation in conflict prevention by depicting them as 'too weak' or 'too soft' – particularly in male-dominated sectors that promote masculine approaches to negotiation.<sup>26</sup>

“ As women, we are more likely to see things from multiple perspectives and angles. We are more tender, we are more motherly in nature. That's why if women are in negotiations, they are more likely to have, and more willing to get, the positive result. Because women are more willing to approach these negotiations in a tender way – not to approach this by fighting or in a tough way. So, if women were there, the process would be easier, it would not be harsh or get blocked. Women are working in this better way, to make the negotiations flow well.

WRO representative, Kachin State

Women and WROs are also well-positioned to prevent violence and de-escalate conflicts according to their central social roles within conflict-affected and displaced communities.<sup>27</sup> Respondents shared that women's groups associated with EAOs are uniquely positioned to advocate on gender and peace through their 'insider access', family relations and understanding of the culture. Similarly, respondents referred to the importance of women's roles as wives in influencing their husbands' behaviour to prevent conflicts, and as mothers in socialising the next generation by raising their children to value peace and deradicalizing youth. In addition, examples were provided of women and WROs leverage their extensive networks with community and IDP camp leaders, government personnel, EAOs and committees such as youth groups in order to prevent armed conflict, de-escalate disputes and mitigate social tensions.





“ In summertime of 2018, an EAO took three Lisu men as porters. So, the Lisu community informed each other and told me about this situation. I am not directly working on this monitoring, we are working on human rights violations, so I didn't know what to do... But I know there is a women's organisation so I contacted them. They took up the case, contacted the Lisu Minister and sent letters to contact the EAO. And finally, after one month of being captured, the men were released.

Woman peacebuilder, northern Shan State

Women's deep understanding of conflict dynamics within their communities, including the underlying causes of conflict, further strengthen their roles in prevention activities. This is illustrated through their valuable contributions to early warning systems, with respondents providing examples of women in northern Shan possessing strong skills in detecting early warning signs of conflict, accurately analysing what these signs mean and taking actions accordingly to prevent or mitigate the impact of conflict on their communities. Furthermore, according to women's gender-specific experiences of conflict, they are more likely to incorporate a gender analysis that recognises the gender drivers and gendered impacts of conflict in their prevention activities.<sup>28</sup> Research from the Solomon Islands has similarly illustrated that women are best placed to integrate gender responsive indicators into early warning systems.<sup>29</sup>

“ Women in northern Shan monitor the situation and establish early warning systems. The women in the conflict-affected areas know, according to their experience, if there are military troops passing by – they can predict what will happen. They know if the conflict is going to peak and then they try to approach and negotiate with the leaders to have less damage in the community. Women don't want any harm, they don't want to see any violence, they don't want to see villages being burnt and people being killed. Women try as much as they can to keep peace. And, if soldiers start to fight between the groups, the women's groups try to negotiate, to calm down the situation. They know who is from the ethnic armed groups, they can recognise which person is from which group – and they know what will happen if there is a fight between those two. Women's group also try to negotiate with the youth group, to make them cool down, to stop the unnecessary hate speech from spreading.

National WPS expert, Myanmar

## Barriers and Risks in Conflict Prevention

Women are also seen to be well placed to lead community-level conflict prevention activities when these roles are perceived to be too dangerous for men. Women in northern Shan provided examples of where they had taken on highly risky roles by entering military zones and negotiating with armed actors because their male relatives or male community leaders did not feel safe to do so. Research from Karen communities has illustrated similar dynamics, whereby women living in conflict-affected communities were increasingly requested to take on the role of Village Tract Administrators (VTA) as men in these roles were more likely to be killed and persecuted by the Tatmadaw.<sup>30</sup> Yet it remains unclear whether women actually face less physical security threats through their conflict prevention work, or whether the risks they face are simply underacknowledged – as women and their organisations often participate in conflict prevention at huge personal costs. Respondents spoke about WRO offices being regularly harassed by the Tatmadaw and EAOs and, as the next section will further explore, there are devastating and ongoing accounts of women being tortured, beaten, raped and murdered at the hands of armed actors in Kachin and northern Shan. Research conducted by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) has similarly found that violence, including SGBV, is used as a method of repression against women engaged in political processes in Myanmar.<sup>31</sup> There were also several examples of women's male family members being persecuted by armed actors, seemingly as acts of retribution because of women's involvement in activities such as conflict monitoring.

“ In 2015/16, I was participating in civilian monitoring between EAO and Tatmadaw in our area, as a Youth Civilian Protection Monitor. At that time, I was threatened by both the EAO and the military. Because of these threats, I couldn't go home during that period... And one time, because I am monitoring the EAO, they took my uncle and my brother. And there was no time to go through the proper mechanisms because then they might kill them. So I decide that I have to go directly to the EAO and speak to them myself. So I try to ask people in my community, like the community leader, to go with me – but only one other woman felt comfortable to come with me. So, she and I go to the EAO and I try to talk with them, I try to explain to them about the national ceasefire agreement and I try to explain about how the monitoring work. The EAO is Shan and I am also Shan, so it is a little easier to explain the situation, and later they finally release my brother and my uncle. Another time when I collected information the Tatmadaw caught me. They arrested me and one other female colleague and they threatened us and say, “what are you doing and why are you doing that?” And I try to explain... but I know that in that moment if they want to kill me then they can. From 3:00 to 6:45 pm they kept us and then they finally released us.

Woman peacebuilder, northern Shan State

Yet despite women's and WROs' essential contributions to conflict prevention, their efforts remain underacknowledged. This is in part because most reports on WPS in Myanmar focus on SGBV in conflict or women's participation in peacebuilding but pay little attention to prevention efforts. It can also be attributed to the fact that women's diverse conflict prevention roles at the community-level are not replicated at the national-level.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, women living in conflict-affected areas can be seen to be instrumentalised in working to prevent conflict, often at great personal risks, yet face significant barriers to taking on more visible and formal roles in peace and security. Reflecting on this situation, several respondents felt that so long as armed actors, the security sector and the peace process remain male-dominated, there is little that they can do within their communities to truly prevent, and address the underlying causes of, conflict. One respondent from Kachin State also saw the male-dominated governance structures across the country and the breakdown of the rule of law in conflict-affected areas as further inhibiting factors, concluding that, “without the rule of law it is very hard to do the conflict prevention and actually prevent the conflict – so the rule of law has to be effectively implemented and upheld first.”

“ In terms of conflict prevention, in our situation, we [women] cannot prevent the conflict. Because this is the conflict zone. All the time the conflict is happening, and we are in the middle of it, so we cannot stop it. But what women can do, especially the women who have awareness of the situation and the skills, they are working with the community leaders. They give recommendations and advice to the community leaders to stop – well they cannot stop the whole conflict – but they can try to prevent. For example, if either conflict parties comes, the EAO or the army, then women will try to negotiate with that group and try to see how they can prevent that conflict situation. So, women are involved in this kind of process. Similarly, we cannot say that women are able to fully mitigate the impact of the conflict. But as women, we try to work to ensure that that will not happen again. To put measures in place to stop the negative impact from happening again.

WRO representative, northern Shan State





## Protection of Rights

### Advocacy and Pursuit of Justice for SGBV in Conflict

Women and girls, as well as people of all genders, face widespread and appalling human rights abuses and threats to their personal security as a result of the armed conflict in Kachin and northern Shan States. As documented by WROs such as the Ta'ang Women's Organisation (TWO), these human rights abuses include threats, arbitrary arrest, detainment, imprisonment, torture, SGBV, disappearance, murder, and serious bodily harm from landmines.<sup>33</sup> While these abuses must be recognised, it is important not to see women exclusively as victims, as this can inadvertently silence women and deprioritise their meaningful participation in peace and security.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, contrary to a 'passive victim' narrative, ethnic and religious minority women and WROs in Kachin and northern Shan have been enormously active in the 'protection' pillar of the WPS agenda – leading impactful protection initiatives within their communities and raising awareness of the gendered impacts of conflict at the national and international levels.<sup>35</sup>

“ The situation is very insecure for women in northern Shan State... In my area, if women go to the farm, we are at risk of violence – especially committed by the Tatmadaw, and also by any other armed group. Any of those groups can commit violations against us. There are many examples of this in northern Shan.

WRO representative, northern Shan State

Ethnic WROs have made ground-breaking progress in peace and security accountability by documenting the horrific accounts of rape and other forms of SGBV perpetrated by armed actors and highlighting how these acts of violence are used as weapons of war.<sup>36</sup> The first of these reports, *License to Rape* produced by the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) in 2002, resulted in the submission of a position paper to the UN which compelled the military regime to take unprecedented action by responding and sending an investigation team to Shan State.<sup>37</sup> Numerous subsequent reports have continued to make important contributions to WPS advocacy and have been echoed in the United Nations (UN) Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar.<sup>38</sup> Women peace advocates have also sought to increase international attention on these ongoing abuses, as exemplified by Khin Ohmar's briefing on Myanmar at the UN Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict in July 2020.<sup>39</sup>

“ As civil society and women’s rights organisations, we can collect all the information including the human rights violations and we can bring that evidence to the UN or to the government. I think that that is where civil society organisations (CSOs) in northern Shan can really help on WPS.

WRO representative, northern Shan State

Despite the significant progress WROs have made in raising awareness on SGBV, perpetrators continue to enjoy widespread impunity and women are disproportionately impacted by the lack of protection laws and measures. One of the key challenges that WROs have highlighted is that the 2008 Constitution grants military courts exclusive jurisdiction over cases involving military personnel, which enables military perpetrators to evade prosecution and fosters a culture of continued and escalating violence against women.<sup>40</sup> Respondents in Kachin and northern Shan shared examples of rape cases where military personnel were able to escape accountability by denying accusations, regardless of eyewitness accounts. While progress has been marked by the draft Protection and Prevention of Violence Against Women (PoVAW) law, WROs have argued the ongoing failure to enact this legislation has been unreasonably protracted and the drafting process has lacked transparency and inclusivity.<sup>41</sup> In addition, respondents in Kachin and northern Shan felt that the chronic insecurity characterising conflict-affected communities and IDP camps has led to a breakdown in the rule of law, further inhibiting protection measures and justice mechanisms for women. Respondents believe that this is further exacerbated by the lack of commitment to ‘women’s issues’ such as SGBV on the part of government, police and community leaders. It is within this highly fragile context that WROs have stepped up to take on essential roles in leading and supporting efforts to seek justice for human rights abuses and protection cases.

“ There was a woman working on the farm and the Burmese military raped her. So, she came to the youth and women’s organisations to ask for advice, and we are trying to help her by giving her information and complaining to the township police. But the Tatmadaw denied that this ever happened and say that they don’t have a military base there. But many people know that the Tatmadaw is based there. Even though when the soldiers raped her, they were not wearing their military uniforms, the young woman recognised who these soldiers were, because she has seen these soldiers in this area all the time. But regardless, the Tatmadaw keeps denying. And so, there is no action on this case.... But still, it is very important for the community people, and especially for the young women, that we have CSOs and those kinds of groups active in this area. Because we live in the conflict area. So, if there is a rape case or any other kind of human rights violation by any group – then there are some spaces for those victims to go and to discuss the situation and to get support.

WRO representative, northern Shan State

## Protection within Conflict-Affected Communities

Women and WROs in Kachin and northern Shan States are also delivering a range of important protection services within in their communities. These include establishing women’s shelters for survivors of SGBV, constructing women and children friendly spaces, running gender-based violence (GBV) committees and training community protection officers. These efforts are particularly important given the heightened protection risks within IDP camps – as crowded conditions with a lack of privacy, limited livelihood opportunities and widespread drug and alcohol abuse increase the risks of trafficking, child marriage, domestic violence and sexual harassment and abuse.<sup>42</sup> These protection risks have been further exacerbated by the lockdown measures and economic hardships caused by COVID-19, with female migrant workers returning from China and Thailand facing significant risks in crowded quarantine facilities that provide little privacy and GBV hotlines reporting an increase in rates of domestic violence across the country.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, during the COVID-19 pandemic WROs have taken on additional activities including supporting women in quarantine centres and IDP camps with dignity kits, hygiene promotion and counselling



services as well as conducting GBV awareness raising. These initiatives are all the more important as they address critical gaps in services where humanitarian actors are not able to reach remote, conflict-affected and displaced communities, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>44</sup>

“ In Laiza we are working on GBV and we took an assessment during the COVID pandemic and we see that there is a big increase in GBV cases. Before the COVID time, especially in the camps, people are depending on the daily labour work in the banana or coffee plantations in China. But because of COVID they are not allowed to cross the border to do this work... So the situation now is zero income. This is a very difficult situation and there are so many domestic violence and the GBV is really increasing in this period. And even child rape is increasing during this COVID time. When we are doing the assessment, we learn that across the whole world domestic violence is increasing during this COVID period, and it is also happening in the KIO areas and in Laiza.

Woman peacebuilder, Kachin State

Women and WROs in Kachin and northern Shan States are also working to prevent GBV and to strengthen existing protection mechanisms. Women peacebuilders in Kachin State gave numerous examples of leading GBV prevention activities, often integrating awareness raising on protection and legal mechanism into their WPS trainings and community dialogue forums. Others spoke about targeted GBV prevention activities, including organising educational games with at-risk children in IDP camps and leading drug elimination projects that raise awareness on the protection risks that men’s drug addictions can pose for women and their children. Women in Kachin spoke about the importance of ensuring these activities reach women and their families outside of IDP camps, reflecting the DPP Phase II Baseline finding that non-displaced communities are less likely to be aware of GBV than displaced communities.<sup>45</sup> In addition, given that most protection cases are managed by traditional leaders and customary justice systems, women identified that their positions within communities enabled them to influence these leaders and systems to be better equipped to serve justice for survivors of GBV.



“ To solve the cases, the people turn to the traditional leaders and elders to soften GBV cases and they do not go to the court. That is why it is very important to raise awareness of the traditional leaders and to try to change the traditional practice that are not protecting women... Because if it is not protecting women, it is violating women. So, we have to raise the awareness of the traditional leaders who are solving most of those cases.

Woman peacebuilder, Kachin State

## Protection – a Restricted but Expanding Space

Despite their considerable achievements, women and WROs also face numerous challenges in leading protection work. While WROs tend to receive community support for their work documenting abuses committed by the Tatmadaw, they often face backlash when looking at the same issues within their own households and communities. This reluctance to support women's work on domestic violence, sexual harassment within the community and rape committed by affiliated EAOs reflects the expectation that ethnic women should subordinate gender concerns, such as protection issues, in order to uphold their commitment to ethnic priorities.<sup>46</sup>

“ As an ethnic women's organisation, one of the main challenges that we face is when we have to handle the cases with the EAO. If it is the same ethnic group, then it is very challenging because it is looking like bias against the EAO. But if the EAO violates against people – we stand against these cases. But then, when we stand for that case, then the EAO will say, 'you are not us, you are from the other side'.

Woman peacebuilder, northern Shan State

When WROs' protection initiatives are accepted, this is often still restricted within the socio-normative gendered division within peace and security that views protection as 'women's work'. However, through these protection activities, women have been able to carve out space for broader participation across the WPS agenda. For example, respondents explained that through women's involvement in GBV committees, they have been able to demonstrate their decision-making and problem-solving skills and slowly shift restrictive perspectives that deem women as unfit for leadership roles. In addition, respondents highlighted the critical importance of engaging men in both the GBV committees as well as GBV awareness raising initiatives to challenge the perspective that GBV is a 'women's issue'. To support these subversive efforts, one respondent argued that protection initiatives must not focus on 'women as victims', but instead should focus on changing men's behaviour. She stated, "Women don't need to be protected, men need to control themselves! Don't focus on protecting women – we need to train men not to do the violent behaviour in the first place!"

“ The original situation is that the community does not want to give the leadership or decision-making position to women. They do not want women as the leader. They do not think that women can communicate well, that they can think and talk and lead. They do not think that women can make decisions or solve the problems. This is the culture of the communities. But when there is a GBV case and the women are solving this problem – women are the ones who are taking action, they are the ones coordinating and leading, making the decisions and solving the problem. So when the community sees women taking on these roles, the community's understanding of women changes.... And peacebuilding is about the same skills – talking, negotiating, leading, problem solving etc. So if the community is changing their opinion that women can lead, take decisions and solve the problems – then the community is changing their idea about women's roles in WPS.

WRO representative, northern Shan State





# Peacebuilding Initiatives

## Women’s Visions of Peace

The WPS agenda recognises that, just as women’s experiences of conflict are different to those of men, they also widely hold different priorities in peace and have specific understandings of what peace means.<sup>47</sup> Respondents from Kachin and northern Shan States often expressed that women hold more holistic visions of peace. Women and WROs rejected the idea that a cessation in fighting in their communities would equate to peace, highlighting that peace requires addressing underlying issues such as persistent inequalities and discrimination. The Transnational Institute (TNI) has similarly reported that Chin, Shan and Kayah WROs’ visions of peace incorporate values such as non-discrimination, gender equality, human rights, justice and the rule of law and require harmony within communities and between different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.<sup>48</sup> Respondents from Kachin and northern Shan also highlighted the importance of reaching peace at all levels – within households and communities, as well as across the country. This broader conceptualisation of peace is often missing from the narrow focus on ceasefire agreements, and reflects the fact that women experience a continuum of violence, both in the public and private spheres as well as before, during and after armed conflict.<sup>49</sup> Finally, women repeatedly highlighted the importance of finding inner peace, with one respondent explaining that people cannot be forced to be peaceful as they have to develop an awareness of the harmful repercussions of violence in order to commit to peaceful behaviour.

“ Peace happens at all levels. It is created by all people, not from one group. We have to start to build peace in ourselves first at the individual level, then in our family at the household level, then in our communities, then we build out to the national level. That is how we build peace.

WRO representative, northern Shan State

“ We have peace when we have equality. Equal decision-making power, equal opportunities and equal benefits. When we have these equalities, then we have peace. And it is not just between women and men, we need all kinds of equality... When we are talking about peace, we also have to look at the equality in the areas where there are diverse ethnic and religious groups living together. We have to support equality between these groups.

Woman peacebuilder, northern Shan State

## Holistic Peacebuilding Activities

Women peacebuilders and WROs are leading a diverse range of community-level peacebuilding activities in Kachin and northern Shan States. These activities include facilitating community dialogue forums; running women peace gathering meetings; mobilising networks of peace advocates across IDP camps and non-displaced communities; organising campaigns on occasions such as International Peace Day; and conducting awareness raising sessions targeting women, men, youth and community leaders. These peacebuilding activities focus on topics such as the national peace process, Panglong Conferences, the NCA, disarmament, the WPS agenda and the related Security Council resolutions. They also explore broader topics such as CEDAW, NSPAW, women's rights, human rights, SGBV, the rule of law, democracy and federalism. In addition, women peacebuilders aim to address the barriers to meaningful participation that women face by conducting trainings to build women's confidence, capacities and skills in leadership, decision-making, public speaking, problem solving, mediation and negotiation. This diverse range of peacebuilding activities can therefore be seen to cut across the WPS pillars and demonstrate women's holistic and nuanced visions of peace.

“ In Putao area, we can see that women become confident when we are having this kind of meeting and discussing about WPS, UNSCR 1325, CEDAW and all the important documents for women's participation. And what we see after, is that women are already starting to participate in the administration and leadership roles. Women are taking on roles as the 10-household leader and they are also participating in the 100-household administration roles. I get really excited and happy with this kind of progress for women. And even in the IDP camp, the women say, 'please involve me, please include me', and that shows the improvement and empowerment as a result of the work we are doing.

Woman peacebuilder, Kachin State



Research from Kachin State has also found that women are able to integrate peacebuilding into their gender-prescribed roles within their households and communities. For example, women living in displacement camps establish and maintain peaceful relationships and unity among community members and instil peaceful behaviour in the younger generation through their roles in socialisation.<sup>50</sup> While these efforts are not commonly recognised as peacebuilding activities, displaced women identified that they make important contributions to the peace process by reiterating that peace must be built at the individual, family and community levels in order to reach the national level.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, these skills in relationship building and fostering unity are harnessed by women peacebuilders to support each other and develop networks of solidarity – providing an important source of strength in the face of intersecting forms of marginalisation. One of the most pertinent examples of this is the Women’s League of Burma (WLB), an umbrella group consisting of 13 member WROs from different ethnic groups working to advance the status of women toward a peaceful, just and federal democratic union of Burma.<sup>52</sup> Within a context where there are limited examples of lasting and inclusive alliances, over the past two decades the WLB has demonstrated women’s abilities to transcend conflict lines and to work together for a shared agenda of peace and gender equality.<sup>53</sup>

“ In Hpakant, for our peacebuilding activities we always work in coordination with other women’s groups and networks. We do research and assessment related to WPS, we lead trainings and we have also done advocacy to different levels of decision makers. When we are doing peacebuilding, we always have to coordinate with others. We cannot do peacebuilding work alone. We have to do together.... everyone has to work together to support each other and to ensure the security.

Woman peacebuilder, Kachin State

## Male and Elite Dominated Peacebuilding Processes

Despite these critical initiatives, women peacebuilders’ efforts remain underacknowledged and they continue to face intersecting barriers to meaningful participation. As has been highlighted throughout this paper, these barriers are posed by unpaid care and domestic workloads, political sensitivities around peace, restrictive gender norms deeming peacebuilding as ‘men’s work’ and backlash from leaders who see ethnic WROs’ initiatives as divisive and incompatible with broader political goals.<sup>54</sup> Respondents from Kachin and northern Shan gave examples of IDP camp leaders actively blocking their peacebuilding activities and community leaders refusing to listen to their voices on matters relating to peace. Furthermore, COVID-19 restrictions have exacerbated the well-documented barriers women face to accessing information on the peace process.<sup>55</sup> Women peacebuilders are finding it increasingly difficult to reach the most remote and marginalised women due to a lack of internet connectivity, access to smartphone technology and digital-literacy skills. Furthermore, for women living in active conflict zones in northern Shan State, respondents felt unable to meaningfully participate in peacebuilding as the very concept of peace remains so distant from their lived realities. The result of these barriers is reflected in the DPP Phase II Baseline findings that women in Kachin and northern Shan were less likely than men to have participated in community-level peace initiatives in the past 12 months, had less knowledge of the peace process and subsequently saw their priority issues as largely absent from community peace initiatives.<sup>56</sup>

“ When people hear the word peace, it is very sensitive. So women think, ‘this is not something that is feasible for us’, they think ‘this is nothing to do with me’. And even when we talk about peace dialogue – the fighting and the war is ongoing, it is still active. So the perspective of women on peace is that it is very distant, so women’s engagement in peace processes is very weak. We feel that we cannot involve in peace process or dialogue because the idea of peace is so distant while there is an ongoing war.

WRO representative, northern Shan State



These barriers are magnified in formal peacebuilding processes at the national level. Male-dominance is upheld through formal channels, for example by requiring military experience as a prerequisite for participation, and informal gate-keeping such as men leaving the room or removing their hearing aids when women are talking.<sup>57</sup> Additional practical barriers are posed by holding peace events in Nay Pyi Taw and providing little notice for invitations – making it almost impossible for women to prepare, arrange childcare and travel from remote locations, especially as only 52 per cent of displaced women in Kachin and northern Shan possess identity cards enabling inter-state travel.<sup>58</sup> Conducting these events in Myanmar language further discriminates against ethnic minority language speakers.<sup>59</sup> Respondents also expressed concern that gradual improvements that have been made in women's participation might be revoked, as anecdotally women were the first to be deprioritised in the limited participation allowed at the fourth UPC in August 2020, due to COVID-19 restrictions. Respondents identified that ethnic WROs face additional barriers as they are politicised and delegitimised in the peace process and face the triple intersection of barriers posed to civil society, non-signatory EAOs and women. Consequently, many women expressed disappointment that the commitment to 'strive to achieve 30 per cent women's participation' made by the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) is only 'on paper', with limited action taken towards inclusive and meaningful participation.<sup>60</sup>

“ They write down on paper that women's participation should be 30 per cent. So they agree on paper, but in reality they don't want women's participation. They say, “oh we already have the paper, so it's done”, but they only want to use women as a step. But we say, “no, women should be 30 per cent in the leadership role!” But they don't want to practice this in the reality. They don't want to talk about women's participation.

WRO representative, northern Shan State

There is irony in that those who are most impacted by conflict – ethnic minority women living in conflict affected areas and displacement camps – are the least represented in all levels of the peace process. The implications for their exclusion are serious, as in the oft cited words of Tin Tin Nyo from the Burmese Women's Union (BWU), “without women, there will be no peace.”<sup>61</sup> Excluding conflict-affected and displaced women and ethnic WROs from the formal peace process means that their experiences and priorities will not be represented, and peace negotiations will consequently remain blind to the gendered and other structural inequalities that are at the root cause of conflict.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, as peacebuilding is a critical aspect of state-building that shapes the structures of society, excluding women's priorities and holistic visions of peace risks further setting in place discriminatory structures and norms.<sup>63</sup> The benefits of women's meaningful participation in peace can be seen in international examples, such as Guatemala where women's participation in the peace process in the 1990s resulted in the peace agreement including specific commitments to women on housing and land rights, penalising SGBV and the creation of a national women's forum.<sup>64</sup>

“ They just focus on the ceasefire, they think this peace process is mostly related to the armed groups and the government and the military. It is not for the people. Not for women... They don't think about inclusion, about diverse participation of women. But we always push them. Because without participation of diverse groups – especially those in minority, like women's participation, youth participation, persons with disability participation – without those groups, you cannot move forward. Because these groups are also part of the peace negotiation, part of the peace process, part of the conflict resolution. So if you do not invite them, you cannot move forward. We have seen the peace process deadlocked for a very long time... so we are pushing them that they have to think about the diverse inclusion... they need to think about who has the experience of surviving conflict and who have given their lives to this conflict. They have to bring those people to the peace table. If not, then we cannot move forward.

WRO representative, Yangon





## Relief and Recovery

### Prioritising Relief and Recovery Across the WPS Agenda

Relief and recovery remain the most under-researched, under-acknowledged and under-funded pillar of the WPS agenda.<sup>65</sup> This is reflected in the omission of relief and recovery from much of the WPS literature in Myanmar. While many respondents identified this pillar as the most ambiguous area of WPS work, their reflections nevertheless illustrate the critical relevance of relief and recovery to WPS in the context of Kachin and northern Shan States. Furthermore, women and their organisations' relief efforts and recovery priorities illustrate the pillar's ability to link, and strengthen, all components of the WPS agenda. For example, respondents identified the link between recovery initiatives such as economic empowerment as fundamental to supporting all other pillars – arguing that supporting women's standard of living is critical to prevent conflicts, protect women from violence and enable women's participation in peacebuilding. This supports the argument made in a recent article in the Oxford Handbook on WPS, that “the relief and recovery pillar has the most transformative potential to connect both short-term and long-term goals to achieve sustainable peace, development, and resilience, while also promoting women's participation and socioeconomic rights.”<sup>66</sup>

“ It is important to provide support that improves women's day-to-day lives and their living standards – through income, work and education. When women can access these opportunities, their standard of living will improve and then they will have a better life. And, with a better life, women will be able to prevent conflict.

Woman peacebuilder, northern Shan State

### Women's Relief Efforts

Women and WROs in Kachin and northern Shan play critical roles in responding to crises by providing gender-responsive relief that addresses the specific needs of women, girls and vulnerable groups. They raise money from donors and across community networks in order to respond to the immediate needs of women and their families – including providing dignity kits, emergency food packages, educational resources and supporting the

construction of GBV shelters. Whether these relief efforts respond to floods, armed conflict, cycles of displacement or health crises, women and WROs are often among the first responders because of their roles within impacted communities.<sup>67</sup> These efforts are particularly important in a context where there are ongoing gaps in government services and restricted humanitarian access.<sup>68</sup> In addition, understanding the deeply gendered impacts of crises, WROs have sought to document and raise awareness on women's gender-specific needs and priorities, which are often overlooked in male-dominated humanitarian responses.<sup>69</sup> This is illustrated by initiatives such as the joint assessment of 17 IDP camps across four townships in Kachin State conducted by the Gender Equality Network (GEN) and KWPN which identified displaced women's unmet needs and advocated for increased service delivery.<sup>70</sup>

“ We [ethnic WROs] are the only ones working directly for the people – we speak the language and we understand the situation, so we know how to help them. Maybe the INGOs or the national NGOs can support by providing funding or doing health distribution, but this is not very direct support to the community. Because in the conflict area [and] when there is COVID 19 pandemic, no one can travel to the community area. And there is the language barrier. So, the local CSOs directly support the community people, especially the young women in the IDP camp. There are many examples of the CSOs and the WROs providing this kind of relief in the IDP camps... But I have never seen any of these kind of activities from the government.

WRO representative, northern Shan State

Within the current context, the most pertinent example of relief is the COVID-19 crisis response. Across Kachin and northern Shan States there are countless examples of women and WROs supporting the functioning of quarantine facilities by providing meals, cleaning bedding and sanitising the centres as well as sewing masks and donating hand sanitisers, soap, hygiene kits, blankets and food supplies to at-risk community members. Women and WROs have also been producing creative, accessible and gender-responsive information, education and communication (IEC) resources and are conducting awareness raising on COVID-19, hygiene practices and GBV. Furthermore, women and WROs are often deeply aware of the gender-specific impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and diverse women's needs and priorities. Respondents identified the personal security risks, including SGBV, posed by male-dominated security actors enforcing lockdown measures and facing female migrant workers in crowded quarantine facilities. Respondents also identified the daily stress women experience trying to feed their families with extremely limited livelihood opportunities, the difficulties uneducated women face in home-schooling their children and the increase in negative coping mechanisms such as substance abuse, sex work and early marriage.

“ I am part of a COVID prevention committee. As part of this work, a group of us sit at the toll gate and when the bus comes we arrange people into the quarantine centre, especially women, and then we also help them in the quarantine centre. But people say, “These women should not be out at night and they should not be at the toll gate. This is not work for a good woman, this is not a woman's job.” So, I try to explain to them, “At the toll gate the passenger is not only men, it is also the women, so we need to explain to those women about the situation and the quarantine centre. If we can explain woman-to-woman then it is better, and women will feel more secure.” But whatever activities we do, every time, because we are women we are always attacked. And we have to explain every single thing that we do.

Woman peacebuilder, Kachin State

Understanding how important WROs' relief efforts are in responding to gender-specific needs, it is concerning that these efforts often remain underacknowledged and women face barriers to participating in decision-making processes and leadership structures for crisis response. This holds serious implications for vulnerable groups, as respondents flagged that male-dominated emergency responses ultimately hinder the effectiveness and gender-responsiveness of relief efforts. Compounding this, women and WROs shared that they have often experienced

active resistance from male leaders in implementing relief activities. Furthermore, some respondents raised concern that the reliance on women to lead relief work has the counterproductive effect of restricting WROs' opportunities to work on strategic programming that addresses underlying inequalities.

“ In northern Shan we see women advocating on service delivery, running in and helping after floods, approaching donors to get small money to help address essential needs. But one of the challenges is that relief is almost too much of a focus; they [WRO] sometime lose the long-term advocacy point. A lot of donors are happy doing shelters for GBV, delivering kits and helping with the immediate needs. But my concern is that donors want quick solutions.... I think it disempowers women-led organisations. It reinforces that women's role is in the house – supporting things like hygiene kits and exercise books for kids, not sitting at the discussion table.

International WPS expert, based in Yangon

## Women's Recovery Priorities

Within the current context, one of the most important longer-term recovery processes is return and resettlement (R&R) – particularly in Kachin State. Although progress on R&R has been slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been some notable advancements since the launch of the Government of Myanmar's *National Strategy on the Resettlement of IDPs and Closure of IDP Camps* in November 2019. For example, government and non-government actors have identified several villages for R&R, consultations and assessments are underway and some initial returns have already taken place. While assessments in Kachin State have indicated that IDP communities are both hopeful and concerned about the prospects of R&R, women hold gender-specific perspectives that are often different from those held by men.<sup>71</sup> For example, women's concerns often centre around the availability of essential supplies and services for their family members, such as food, schools and health clinics. They also fear for their personal safety and security, for example being concerned about risks of SGBV while collecting firewood near military bases.<sup>72</sup> As a result of these concerns, the DPP Phase II Baseline survey found that women were less likely to feel ready for R&R than men.<sup>73</sup>

“ In terms of return and resettlement, we feel that the government is not much accountable for security risks, especially for the returning IDPs. For us IDPs – when we return, what happens? Who is going to be accountable for our security? And for women, if the conflict resumes when we return, then we face high risk. We don't know about any protection mechanisms for women in that process. And when we are talking about security, it is not only bodily integrity – but we also need to consider about food, shelter and livelihood – these are also part of human security... So if we return, we also need food, education, school and livelihood opportunities. We need access to all those services. And we also need emergency clinics at the return and resettlement sites because of COVID.

Woman peacebuilder, Kachin State

While women and WRO representatives in Kachin agreed that only women can represent these gender-specific concerns in R&R, they held mixed views on whether women are able to meaningfully participate in relevant processes. Echoing the findings of the DPP's Discussion Paper on Displaced Women's Priorities in Kachin, several respondents expressed that women face extremely limited opportunities to influence decision-making around R&R and highlighted that R&R leadership structures, such as government, security actors, camp management committees (CMC) and faith-based organisations, are male-dominated.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, other respondents identified that displaced women, particularly those involved in CMC, are very active in R&R processes. Some women even referenced the impact of their peacebuilding activities in developing displaced women's leadership capacities and therefore increasing their meaningful participation in R&R.



“ In my township, the participation of women has improved... Women have done a lot of things, so they started to listen more to women than before. So right now, in this return and resettlement process, there are more women than men, because women are staying at home so therefore mostly their participation is higher. I decided not to return but instead to resettle because of the problems with our village. And I am involved in this process. For example, I am involved in the meeting on resettlement work and I joined this meeting about purchasing the land from the military... We are planning and preparing our land and our place... So, the participation of women and youth in this process is quite higher than the elderly people and men in this IDP camp.

Woman peacebuilder, Kachin State

Across diverse recovery efforts, including in R&R, women hold gender-specific priorities – with respondents most frequently highlighting the importance of land rights, livelihood opportunities and economic empowerment. This reflects the fact that women are among the most economically vulnerable groups living in conflict-affected communities and displacement camps in Kachin and northern Shan.<sup>75</sup> They face gender-specific barriers to inherit, register and manage land according to customary land laws and restrictive gender norms.<sup>76</sup> Women also have limited livelihood opportunities, due to the ongoing instability and restrictive gender division of labour, and are often paid less for their work.<sup>77</sup> WROs across Kachin and northern Shan therefore lead a number of initiatives that seek to address these challenges, including establishing women’s land rights groups and conducting vocational trainings. These efforts provide critical contributions to women’s economic empowerment and sustainable recovery efforts, by mitigating women’s vulnerabilities in crises and expanding their agency in social and political spheres.<sup>78</sup>

“ When we are thinking about WPS, we need to also think about women’s jobs and incomes. Only when women have a job and an income can they have a role in peace and security. Also, for the survivor of the violence, it is very important to support the survivor, to keep raising awareness in the community... So sometimes these issues don’t seem very important to WPS, or these activities don’t seem very big or impressive, but I really want to say that all of these issues are important to WPS!

Woman peacebuilder, northern Shan State







## Conclusion

In pursuing their visions of peace and equality, women peacebuilders and WROs in Kachin and northern Shan States often do not see their work as falling under separate pillars of the WPS agenda. Therefore, while this paper has been structured under the WPS pillars, women's peace and security efforts often transcend these silos. For example, women peacebuilders explained the importance of preventing and responding to all forms of SBGV as a precondition to enabling women to meaningfully participate in the peace process. Similarly, they identified that an increase in women's standards of living through livelihoods and land rights will work to address the underlying causes of instability, and therefore prevent armed conflicts.

These integrated approaches to WPS reflect women's broad conceptualisations of meaningful participation and their holistic visions of peace. Their approaches also overcome the limitations of an often uneven and siloed implementation of the WPS agenda caused by fixed donor priorities and narrow programming objectives.<sup>79</sup> Women and their organisations therefore possess the capacity to transform WPS towards a more holistic, integrated and strategic agenda.

As has been resoundingly reiterated by women peacebuilders and in WROs' activism efforts, women's meaningful participation in peace and security is vital to achieving gender-just and sustainable peace in Myanmar. Yet, even twenty years after the unanimous adoption of the UNSCR 1325, women's efforts in Kachin and northern Shan States are underacknowledged and they continue to be excluded from critical peace and security processes. The following policy and programming recommendations aim to address the barriers women face and reassert the importance of women's full, equal and meaningful participation.

# Recommendations

## To the Government of Myanmar

- Fully operationalise the WPS agenda at all levels by ensuring cross-departmental coordination and allocating dedicated financial, technical and logistical resources. This includes engaging the Ministry of Defence on the WPS agenda and integrating gender concerns into the security sector.
- Facilitate regular functioning of the WPS TWG and decentralise WPS mechanisms, for example by creating local chapters of the WPS TWG at the township-level that meaningfully engage conflict-affected and displaced women and ethnic WROs.
- Uphold commitments outlined in NSPAW, particularly ‘30 per cent women’s participation in the political dialogue’, by ensuring the meaningful participation of ethnic minority women and WROs from conflict-affected and remote areas.
- Build capacity and raise awareness of government officials, security actors and administrative staff on the WPS agenda, gender equality and commitments to CEDAW and BPfA.
- Expedite the legislation of the PoVAW law, strengthen the draft text by including robust categorisation of rape and other types of violence, clear definition of “consent” and removing anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rhetoric.

## To donors and the international community in Myanmar

- Fund holistic and cross-cutting initiatives that mitigate a siloed and uneven approach to WPS programming.
- Remove restrictions for funding CSOs that do not hold formal NGO registration. Provide multi-year and flexible funding to ethnic WROs – allowing them to set their own agendas and priorities and implement strategic gender programming.
- Ensure all development, humanitarian and peacebuilding programmes build on a gender and conflict analysis and are, at a minimum, in line with gender responsive, conflict sensitive and Do No Harm approaches.
- Scale-up initiatives that develop women’s confidence and capacities in leadership and decision-making and create spaces for women to build social support and networks of solidarity.
- Invest in programming that addresses unpaid care and domestic work – by recognising the importance of this work, reducing women’s unequal burdens and redistributing their workloads.
- Invest in efforts to sensitise men, including security, community and religious leaders, on the importance of women’s full, equal and meaningful participation across all peace and security initiatives.
- Allocate resources for women to access technology and support the development of digital literacy skills to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

## Further recommendations for all actors working in Kachin and northern Shan States

### Conflict Prevention

- Invest in building the skillsets of diverse women from conflict-affected communities on mediation, negotiation and diplomacy, as well as conflict analysis, prevention, resolution and transformation.
- Recognise the risks women face while working at different levels of conflict prevention. Provide adequate protection measures to ensure security and support for re-location, essential supplies and access to justice.
- Support ethnic WROs, including those associated with EAOs, in conflict prevention initiatives, acknowledging their deep understandings of their communities and existing networks.
- Carry out research to generate evidence on women’s roles in, and contributions to, conflict prevention in Myanmar – an area widely overlooked and under-acknowledged.

## **Protection of Rights**

- Complement women's protection initiatives with women's empowerment and gender transformative approaches that support women's agency. Ensure language in peace and security processes, including ceasefire agreements and political dialogues, is in line with this empowerment approach.
- In addition to standalone programming targeting women and girls, engage men, boys, community and religious leaders in protection initiatives and invest resources in addressing harmful social norms and violent masculinities.
- Identify both formal and informal actors within conflict-affected communities and displacement camps who commonly respond to protection cases and provide training on key issues such as gender equality, women's rights, confidentiality and Do No Harm approach.
- Raise awareness of stakeholders, such as camp and quarantine centre management committees, on the increased risks of GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic and distribute dignity kits to women and girls at the quarantine centres and IDP camps.

## **Peacebuilding Initiatives**

- Include women and WROs in the design and planning of all peacebuilding initiatives to ensure they are at the centre of peacebuilding processes from the outset.
- Recognise the diverse peacebuilding initiatives organised by women and WROs at the community-level. Where feasible and in line with a conflict sensitive and Do No Harm approach, link these initiatives and women peacebuilders with the track one peace process and actors.
- Cascade peace process-related information in ethnic languages to diverse women living in displacement camps, conflict-affected and remote communities.
- Diversify peacebuilding consultations, programming and partnerships by involving ethnic, conflict-affected and displaced women and WROs, and ensure these engagements take place in accessible locations in ethnic languages, with sufficient notice and childcare for women to travel and attend.

## **Relief and Recovery**

- Ensure women's and girls' concerns, needs and priorities inform the design and delivery of relief services – including by supporting WROs' immediate and strategic work and establishing gender-sensitive feedback and complaint mechanisms in conflict-affected and displaced communities.
- Recognise women's longer-term recovery priorities across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programming and policies and support women's economic empowerment through transformative livelihoods and land rights.
- Ensure diverse women and WROs play a central role in decision-making and are proactively engaged in the design, planning and implementation of all recovery efforts – including the COVID-19 recovery and return and resettlement.
- Recognise the relief and recovery pillar as a strategic component of the WPS agenda that integrates with, and holistically supports, all other pillars.



## Annex One: Women, Peace and Security Resolutions

United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security <sup>80</sup> (as of October 2020)	
Resolution (Year)	Overview
<b>1325 (2000)</b>	Recognises the contribution of women in preventing and resolving conflict, their role in maintaining international peace and security, and the inclusion of gender perspectives in peace negotiations, humanitarian planning, peacekeeping operations, and post-conflict peacebuilding and governance.
<b>1820 (2008)</b>	Recognises sexual violence as a tactic of war and a matter of international peace and security that necessitates strengthened efforts to end sexual violence in conflict.
<b>1888 (2009)</b>	Strengthens efforts for more effective implementation of Resolution 1820, including by establishing a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and team of experts on rule of law and sexual violence in conflict.
<b>1889 (2009)</b>	Focuses on post-conflict peacebuilding, includes a strategy for increasing women's participation in peace talks, establishes global indicators for monitoring Resolution 1325 and requests the Secretary-General reports on women's participation in peacebuilding.
<b>1960 (2010)</b>	Reaffirms the earlier commitments required to address sexual violence in conflict and establishes a monitoring and reporting mechanism on sexual violence in conflict.
<b>2106 (2013)</b>	Stresses accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, as well as women's political and economic empowerment. Acknowledges the importance of civil society in preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict.
<b>2122 (2013)</b>	Sets in place stronger measures to improve women's participation and representation in conflict resolution, especially through leadership positions. Sets out the need for humanitarian aid to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health services.
<b>2242 (2015)</b>	Addresses persistent obstacles in implementing the WPS agenda. Focuses on women's roles in countering violent extremism and terrorism, and links the WPS agenda to CEDAW, providing detailed guidance on implementation of the agenda.
<b>2467 (2019)</b>	Calls on parties to conflicts to put an end to sexual violence, and to prevent such acts in the future. Stresses on justice and accountability efforts and urges for support to, and protection of, women's civil society organisations.
<b>2493 (2019)</b>	Calls for full implementation of all resolutions on WPS. Urges to ensure and provide timely support for the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in all stages of peace processes, including in the mechanisms to implement and monitor peace agreements.



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