



Amplifying voices, generating ownership: Consultations for the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review with local women, other key national and local stakeholders

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Abbreviations

ACHPR	African Commission on Human and People's Rights
ACTION	Action Support Centre
ALHAC	Albertina Sisulu Human Rights Advice Centre
CGE	Commission for Gender Equality
GNWP	Global Network Women Peace Builders
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HURISA	Human Rights Institute of South Africa
KII	Key Informant Interview
NAP	National Action Plan
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WPS	Women Peace & Security

Foreword

It is an honor and privilege to present my key note address at this historical webinar reflecting on international mechanisms promoting women peace agenda. This historical impetus coincides with the International peace month and commemoration of South Africa's heritage pride of our diversity as a Rainbow Nation. The rainbow emblem signifies our unity, solidarity and compassion to others less privilege, including the vulnerable groups, minority groups, migrants, refugees, women, elderly, people with disabilities which are mostly women.

The year 2020 is significant for various reasons. Firstly, it marks the 20th Anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 which, fosters zero tolerant policies to sexual violence and promotes gender mainstreaming in post conflict countries, including encouraging training of troops for prevention and rapid respond to sexual abuse of women in peace operations. The resolution also emphasise the need for States to develop National Action Plans to ensure women play key roles in peace construction, mediation and in conflict resolution. Our country was reluctant for many years to consider development of a NAP. It was only after CSOs such as HURISA through support from UN-Women and collaboration with Foundation for Human Rights, Commission for Gender Equality and other women led activists at the grass roots pushed for provincial dialogues. The process resulted with government partnering with CSOs in hosting multi-stakeholder consultations across provinces with a focus on UNSCR 1325. The NAP will be published once approved by cabinet.

The NAP is a tool that will add value to the recent NSP outcome espoused in three bills passed to secure successful prosecutions of GBVF cases, places stricter measures for bail applications and sentencing, lifting prescription for GVBV cases that occurred many years ago. President Ramaphosa expressed his dismay at the disproportionate GBVF in South Africa, that make the country unsafe place for women and girls. Their situation has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic preventative measures where women and girls were trapped with their perpetrators who are intimate partners like husbands, boyfriends and live partners. Police statistic revealed a staggering estimate that every three hours a woman is raped or murdered in South Africa. The country is among the highest ranking countries in GBV such as the DRC. This calls for a new paradigm shift in the nation, to overhaul the deep rooted patriarchal social construct perpetuating gender inequality through education, sensitization, social cohesion dialogues to find solution for comprehensive address of the root cause of GBVF.

The year is also important for marking the 25 Anniversary of Beijing+, the 20th Anniversary of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

These milestones are meaningless to women and girls when they continue to face the GBVF scourge for many years without repercussion of the perpetrators. HURISA is working together with other CSOs to put a CSOs Shadow Report on CEDAW. This process should ensure South Africa improves irregular reporting status on its obligation under CEDAW and implement concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee. The Committee described the patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes persisting in South Africa as sustaining subjugation of women in both public and family lives. Traditional practices and norms such as *Ukuthwala*, abduction and forced marriages of women and young girls to older men, including, *Ukuhlola*, polygamy is unconstitutional that African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights recommended South Africa to outlaw. The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences also recommended South Africa to initiate mandatory training for the judiciary, judges, prosecutors, and magistrate courts on CEDAW and through its Optional Protocol, increase training on GBV, gender based stereotypes in general during her mission in South Africa from 4-11 December 2011.

I wish you a successful deliberation of your report assessing the impact of COVID-19 to women peace and security and your outcomes to reach decision makers at national, regional and international levels to advance women the guaranteed peace.

Dr Zonke Majodina- Chairperson of Human Rights Institute of South Africa (HURISA) Board of Directors

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Corlett Letlojane

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25/09/2020

Introduction

The year 2020 marks the 20th Anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). It is also a critical opportunity for the African Continent to reflect on the progress made in implementation of the African Women's Decade 2010-2020 declared by the African Union for advancing gender equality, acceleration of regional mechanisms, Beijing Platform of Action and AU Assembly Decisions on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE). The AU Member States also undertook to achieve full ratification and enforcements of the Maputo Protocol by 2015 and domestication by 2020. Furthermore, the AU has declared the year 2020 as a year of Silencing the Guns.

The significant of this year is also displayed in the coincidence with the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review mandated by the 2016 Sustaining Peace Resolutions, which underscored the importance of investing in conflict prevention. It also coincides with the 5-year review of the Agenda 2030, and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. Thus, it provides an opportunity to reflect on concrete strategies for more integrative, inclusive, and cross-sectoral implementation of the WPS resolutions. However, this global momentum will have minimum impact if there is no meaningful participation of local civil society, in particular local women, in the policy discussions before, during and after the 20th Anniversary of UNSCR 1325.

As part of the project “Amplifying voices, generating ownership: Consultations for the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review with local women and other key national and local stakeholders”, supported by UN Women and the Government of Ireland, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) supported HURISA to conduct assessment interventions in communities through organized focus group discussions and key informant interview techniques to reach multi-stakeholders working on Women, Peace and Security. The assessment provided the opportunity to stakeholders working in peacebuilding to raise voices from the ground with a view of analyzing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. These ranged from implementation of women, peace and security resolutions, leadership roles played by women in responding to the crisis. As this time of radical uncertainty propelled most in learning new responses such as providing humanitarian aid, food parcels, making face masks as well as hygiene products to women, children, elderly, people with disabilities and refugees. Women also volunteered as essential service providers assisting in ensuring communities comply with the COVID-19 protocols. However, since their altruistic efforts are often undocumented or unvalued in both public and private sphere. It is based on this backdrop that the assessment presents this opportunity of acknowledging their continuous work in attaining sustainable peace regardless of circumstances. Lessons and strategies initiated to prevent conflict and contribute towards building safe societies and planning for post COVID-19 pandemic recoveries

are vital on the outcome of the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, the Peacebuilding Architecture Review, and 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action

Methodological techniques

Key Interview Informants and Focus Group Discussions techniques were used for information collection, analyzation for preparing a report, findings and recommendations. A strategy planning meeting was conducted with the KII & FDG facilitators to prepare them undertake the assessment initiative. A plan of action, including, the timeframe and a road map were designed as a monitoring tool for embarking the initiative. A validation meeting was conducted with all participants engaged in the FDG & KII interventions and other stakeholders that found the assessment process valuable.

KII

Sixteen (16) key informants were interviewed across the country telephonically, as well as through online platforms, WhatsApp, and also by face to face. The interviews lasted 1-2 hours.

FDG

Twenty-five (25) participated in the focus group discussions conducted in three provinces; Gauteng Province (1&2), Mpumalanga Province (1) and awareness raising in Kwazulu Natal Province. The FGDs programme lasted 2 and half hours.

Time Frame

The assessment initiative commenced from 18 August 2020 and ended on 25 September 2020.

Stakeholders in the KII, FGD & Validation Meeting

Participants and key informants were made up of local women leaders, peacebuilders and activists, representatives of local communities, especially women, young women, traditional, faith based, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Over thirty (30) participants were reached made up of and sixteen (16) FII & sixteen (16) FGD. All these participatory processes were conducted virtually online and telephonically. Mobile data was distribution to enable participation in FGDs and for interview engagements.

The Assessment Results

The documented information through questionnaire template were analysed. Summaries of discussions and interviews provides the lived episodes of women and other vulnerable groups, the grass roots impacted by COVID-19 affected implementation of WPS resolutions. Responses of women to COVID-19 as well as approaches adapted by women peace builders to overcome the crisis are documented, acknowledging their strides in instilling a culture of peace in communities, living in life threatening environments. Lessons learnt by these women in advancing preventative measures to sustain peace and post COVID-19 recovery plans, will enhance the outcome of the 20th anniversary of UNSR 1325 and subsequent peace resolutions.

Summary of Recommendations

- Cabinet should adopt the Resolution 1325 National Action Plan to fast track implementation for protection of women against gender based violence and femicide.
- A well trained police service is needed with skills, as well as medical professionals, dedicated frontline workers and judiciary that has zero tolerance for gender-based violence.
- A coherent strategy is needed to empower women to partner with organizations and institutions responsible for improving citizen's livelihoods and welfare, particularly, in land user's rights, water use security and leadership.
- UNSC encourage Member States establish a tool dedicated to monitor and dedicate resources to prevent, combat violence against women, girls and elder women in armed conflict situations.
- Increase UNW collaboration with women's organizations by providing medical, psychological and legal support to survivors of gender based violence.
- Implement gender mainstreaming strategies to advance women's human rights, ensuring refugees, vulnerable caught up in taxi, gang conflicts in townships, rural areas, informal settlements are reached.
- Gender awareness raising & sensitization programs should be provided for peace support personnel operations at all levels, in particular, police, local authority, defence and private security agents.
- Donors and funders working on the ground with refugees and internally displaced persons should consider supporting programs that aim to guarantee the protection of refugee women and girls.
- We need a centralized database with lesson's learned, main successes and failures to monitor the progress of the implementation of WPS agenda.
- Educate the youth on the importance of gender equality because they are the future leaders of the country.

Assessment questions and themes

1. **What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic** on the implementation of WPS resolutions in conflict-affected and post-conflict countries, and in particular the six priority areas identified by the UN Secretary-General in his 2019 report on WPS to the Security Council?
2. **How have local women peacebuilders adapted and mitigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?** How have women continued their work for an inclusive and sustainable peace? What challenges and barriers do women's rights and peacebuilding organizations face? What support do they need to overcome them?
3. **How have women been involved in official efforts to address COVID-19 and plan for post-pandemic recovery?** Are local women meaningfully included in decision-making about crisis response, preventative measures, economic relief packages, and planning for post-COVID recovery?
4. **What are the key recommendations of local women peacebuilders ahead of the 20th Anniversary of UNSCR 1325?**

Responses to the assessment questions and recommendations

1. What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of WPS resolutions in conflict-affected and post conflict countries, and in particular the six priority areas identified by the UN Secretary-General in his 2019 report on WPS to the Security Council?

The lockdown devastated many families and threatened lives in various aspects of economic, social and political rights of women. The announcement of the National Disaster and national lockdown failed to adequately consult organizations providing basic services. The regulations were not crafted with gendered sentiments to take account of peculiar situations of women. For example, mothers with babies, young children, pregnant women, care givers of households, children with disabilities, the elderly, including those rendering services in communities, among others were not prepared on how the regulations will impact on them. The lockdown traumatized women and had psychological, spiritual impact on them, especially during the alert level 5, imposed extreme limitations on movement of people. Women were overburdened with child care, homework, household chores, lack of capacity and resources to manage the impact brought by the lockdown, (FDG1). In respect of basic economic and social necessities, many women in informal trade, domestic work, sex work lost their livelihoods. Breadwinners were severely impacted and unable to provide basic needs like food for families and to pay utility bills, such water, electricity, sanitation, rental and mortgage bonds. As for those living in shacks, squatter camps, informal settlements and townships experienced massive evictions and demolitions of their dwelling structures. This was despite the moratorium that was passed to prohibit evictions to avoid exposing people to the pandemic and exacerbating homelessness.

Access to basic necessities, including food, baby clothes was difficult to access because shops were closed, except commercial shops. Participants in FGD (1) viewed this as a serious pervasive patriarchal attitude in South Africa.

President Ramaphosa informed the nation that a budget of R500 billion will be provided as a stimulus package for responding to COVID-19. The stimulus package was provided for rendering humanitarian aid such as health, food and grant relief to the various needy groups in the society including, informal traders, unemployed, domestic workers, based on their exclusion from contributing in the Unemployment Insurance Fund. 150million was also provided as a seed for the private sector to establish solidarity fund for assisting the distress with humanitarian aid and grant relief.

However, large amounts of the stimuli packages ended up in unscrupulous hands of officials, leaving the poor in extreme poverty. Many CSOs submitted lists of names

and contact details of qualifying people for food parcels, including women, but many are still waiting for food parcels even to-date. As for migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, their situations got aggravated by the requirement of presentation of identity documentation before receiving humanitarian aid, like food parcels or grant relief (Action Support). There was a challenge experienced both by undocumented migrants as well as those with expired documents to access food parcels and basic hygiene products. Department of Home Affairs imposed repatriations of migrants to their respective countries. Unfortunately, international refugee law against non-refoulement of asylum seekers was unconsidered for potential hardship of their arrest back home. Furthermore, some were stuck at border posts because all the borders were closed. The government considered their plight after CSOs publicity through awareness raising and advocacy on social media.

The President had also informed the nation that R641 million was allocated for the deployment of the military to assist police maintain law and order. This budget was subsequently increased to R4.9 billion after 73,000 military personnel was added to assist the police. However, gender based violence and femicide cases escalated disproportionately across the country. This is also despite the National GBV Centre established to operate 24 hours a day. Women and girls were trapped in homes with their perpetrators, who are mostly people they intimately relate with, such as husbands, boyfriends and partners providing them with accommodation, or share homes, including their wellbeing.

Harmful traditional practices such as child marriage, (*Ukuthwala*) forced marriages limits young women's academic opportunities which also impacts on their future economically. There were also cases of LGBTI groups that felt disconnected from their community during the peak of COVID-19 and this resulted in affecting them mentally because they were discriminated against while being trapped with their family members who are their abusers.

Sex workers were treated inhumanly, tortured, arbitrarily arrested, resulting in death in a police cell because of police brutality. Police confiscate their belongings, including identity documents when found involved in acts conducted for earning incomes. They lost income to support themselves, families, and became homeless for missing paying their liabilities (KII)

The basic services often rendered by women organizations and CSOs dealing with GBV, including legal aid were no longer available to monitor GBV cases and support them access court services and apply for court orders. The other challenge was that local police stations were closed and women were unable to report cases of gender-based violence and receive domestic protection orders

CSOs performing monitoring roles on the civic space, conducted assemblies and protests against GBVF or corruption, mismanagement, fraud and other crimes were met by heavy handed police, in shooting, tear gassed and arbitrarily arrested. For

example, community's protests in Alexandra township in sympathy with a widow who together with her children witnessed the brutal murder of her husband, Collins Khoza, allegedly killed by the military during the lockdown patrol. Similar actions were demonstrated in solidarity with the Eldorado Park mother of a 16-year-old Nathaniel Julies with a Down Syndrome who was fatally shot by the South African Police Service during a social service delivery protests.

Women were also exposed to cybercrimes to silence them while conducting webinars with a focus on GBVF. The FGD (2) regretfully pointed out that the work performed by Women Human Rights Defenders is mostly antagonized and subjected to reprisals because they fight against the status quo, even during COVID-19.

Organizations dealing with gender-based violence were also not recognized as essential service providers until they engaged in protests. As COVID-19 restricted physical interaction and face to face meetings with the victims, made it difficult for most to access internet and data due to cost implications that resulted in most meetings and some training workshops postponed. Some organizations had to close down operations and not able to work from home due to funding constraints, because funding was diverted towards COVID-19. This perpetuated the difficulty of women organizations soliciting funding to perform their work as the work they do on the ground is not always valued.

Furthermore, working from home posed a new pressure on women, especially in balancing between work, home and the family as a new lifestyle was created for children not going to school. The workload of peacebuilders comes with high demands and managing a home has its own challenges.

Recommendations

- All civil society rendering protective services for women and girls must be classified as “essential service providers” during any disaster.
- The government should protect WHRDs in the region by responding to their multiple and intersectional needs.
- Education of the youth on the importance of WPS and encourage them to speak out against any form of violence to break the cycle of gender-based violence and femicide
- The government should fully decriminalize sex work and ensure that sex workers do not experience discrimination in law or practice.
- South Africa's bill of rights declares that every person is equal before the law and has access to the same legal protections and benefits. We call upon the government to ensure the protection of vulnerable groups like LGBTI, people with disabilities and elderly people, ensuring effective functioning of legal aid to render legal services.

- The government should curb a culture of impunity against police, military for brutalizing citizens, especially in protests and hold the perpetrators of these violence accountable as well as compensating complainants of these crimes.
- The government should find innovative ways of creating job opportunities for women to improve their socio-economic situation. This will work towards ending the dependence most women have on their male partners.

2. How have local women peacebuilders adapted and mitigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic? How have women continued their work for an inclusive and sustainable peace? What challenges and barriers do women's rights and peacebuilding organizations face? What support do they need to overcome them?

Women navigated new methods for reaching out to communities. Some of the organization's programs and funding models were reconstructed and diversified with a view of sustaining peace and safe communities. National Disaster Management Act provisions were simplified for community' understanding and e confident participation in decision making processes. Conducting work through online platforms and online gatherings became a sole way of conducting work. However, there were challenges in ensuring everyone's access and afford online services. The positive side of things was that some organizations performed advocacy work at national level and were able to access webinars to interact and coordinate work with government.

As for the women in leadership positions, they played phenomenal roles in displaying solidary and assisted the less privilege to be represented in decision making processes. HURISA collaborated with ALHAC to donate food parcels, face marks for home base care centres, including approaching the Department of Social Department to provide food parcels for leaners that returned to school or stayed at home. Communities were educated about prevention of COVID19 and engaged police to address impunity and police brutality (FGD2).

A women led organization named Lopeco took the opportunity to use social media as a tool to conduct educational chat shows with a view of building a culture of a rainbow nation, peace, family values, moral and social behaviors in communities. The chat show is easily accessible, especially to connect with GBV victims and serve as a communication channel to give hope and up-liftment of people facing difficulties to cope with the challenging situation. The chat shows also provide a platform of engaging with diverse issues with various communities and the youth to tackle the toxic muscularity problems, conflict and life-threatening risk to women. These have successfully brought in local women leaders to contribute strategies in the search for

the root cause of GBV, including, patriarchal behaviours embedded in societal, cultural and religious constructs (FGD3).

In certain instances, women leaders ensured government structures and plans include women sectors. However, some laws and policies limit women to access economic opportunities and resources. For example, the land tenure system and land ownership are not empowering women to access land despite the fact that women work very hard than their male counterparts on the land (FDG2). Women are still unable to obtain land independently in rural areas without obtaining assistance from the family, male relatives or spouses. In instances where they have no male relatives in their families, be it a spouse, women are excluded from receiving land ownership and opportunities that come with it.

In terms of accessing business opportunities like loans, women are at high risk of not being considered for loans because financial institutions require collaterals such as land or property. This creates barriers because many women do not have collateral securities to access the loan for them to start their own businesses.

Women led organizations at grassroots level also lack information on how to access funding. Accessing resources for new organizations can be challenging (KII). The best thing for new organizations to consider is to forge partnerships with already existing organizations in order to access resources.

Recommendations

- There's a need to tap into corporate governance and private sectors in funding interventions to address the WPS issues.
- The local women peacebuilders are asking the funders to help them and their communities acquire the technological support to continue building community cohesion and resilience at local level.
- There's a need for financial institutions to facilitate women's access to finance by not asking them for collateral securities.
- Education is the most important tool for human development and the eradication of poverty. The International actors and the government called upon to increase educational opportunities for the poorest and most disadvantaged women, especially in rural areas.
- Undertaking educational campaigns involving women and men to deliberate the root cause of human rights violations that is victim driven, perpetrated driven and community driven.

3. How have women been involved in official efforts to address COVID-19 and plan for post-pandemic recovery? Are local women meaningfully included in decision-making about crisis response, preventative measures, economic relief packages, and planning for post-COVID recovery?

Women have been pushing for development and implementation of National Strategic Plan for effective implementation of GBVF. Regarding this, three bills have been passed with stringent provisions for successful prosecutions of the GBVF suspects, stricter measures for bail applications, extension of the scope of law to allow reporting of GBV cases that happened many years ago. They have also advocated for the cabinet to adopt the NAP 1325 which women CSOs worked on for many years from the grass roots. In other instances, women have engaged in protests against GBVF, against police brutality, especially excessive use of powers to disperse protesters. CSOs presented the state of women human rights, peace, security, GBVF in South Africa at the 66th Session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, UN Special Rapporteur on GBV, UN Special Rapporteur on Peaceful Assembly. CSOs have also formed coalitions for development of CEDAW Shadow Reports.

From the government's side they have never been adequate budget for this WPS agenda in South Africa. South Africa condemns gender-based violence but there are no resources to match the articulations and the condemnations of these atrocious acts against women.

There are viable initiatives from the government and other organizations but implementation is an issue. The budget from the government has really not being forthcoming around these issues. Especially now we have seen the channeling of budget to COVID-19 relief and compromising women peace and security initiatives in the country.

The President is determined to ensure the 3 bills meant to curb gender-based violence is legislated to extend or expand the protections of women against gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa. This will be an opportunity for CSOs and advocacy groups to now strengthen the WPS agenda by requesting for funding to support these initiatives in combating gender-based violence and femicide.

Furthermore, regarding the crisis response and planning for post recovery, the opportunity has been provided by international organizations to assist CSOs begin engaging on recovery plans. It is through support of GNWP that consultations were held with some women stakeholders to brainstorm post COVID-19 recovery planning.

Recommendations

- Adequate resources should be allocated for effective implementation of National Strategic Plan to combat domestic violence in the context and post COVID-19.
- Involvement of a range of civil society organizations and government agencies to be part of the national strategic plan processes in each and every phase and assign roles to guarantee ownership and participation of all actors
- Offer emergency funds to support women's initiatives seeking involvement in peace processes.
- The civil society organizations, communities and the stakeholders should not relent in seeking solutions so as to work with government to create a peaceful, just and safe society based on human rights, human dignity, equality and accountability.

4. What are the key recommendations of local women peacebuilders ahead of the 20th Anniversary of UNSCR 1325?

Recommendations

- They need to implement concrete mechanisms to report on the National Action Plan by facilitation of dialogues, panels for learning exchanges to get the best practice models for countries to launch their National Action Plans.
- The International actors should hold the government responsible for whatever funds availed from the UN, Multinational Companies, Local and Foreign donors.
- They should monitor and evaluate work supported by donors.
- Call upon the government, international actors and UN leaders to provide more funding opportunities for the Implementation of WPS agenda.
- There's a need for better models for rapid response and early warning systems like threats and pandemic for planning ahead of the crisis.
- It is often women in rural areas who are most affected by conflicts and insecurity. There's a need for the UN and Member States to strengthen the reach and implementation of WPS agenda in rural areas.
- A recovery plan to rebuild societies, economies after the pandemic surge, producing new strategies from past lessons for a better response to sustain peace

Conclusion

We encourage women and youth peacebuilders who have been at the forefront of the COVID-19 crisis response in local communities to widen the norm of WPS. We hope lessons learnt from the study will contribute towards increasing women participation in peace processes and ensure formidable engendered policy driven and practice of peace agreements.