



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
WPS	Women Peace & Security

Acknowledgements

We express our appreciation to Mpiwa Mangwiro from Sonke Gender Justice, Sonto Mabanga from Albertina Sisulu Human Rights Advice Centre (ALHAC), Celeste Diale from Lopeco for playing instrumental roles in collecting invaluable information as facilitators of the Focus Group Discussions in Gauteng, KZN and Mpumalanga Provinces. Our thanks also go to Sixolile Ngcobo from Commission for Gender Equality for her efforts in awareness raising about the project in KZN Province. We also thank Cathy Elando Kodiemoka from HURISA for the excellent work in documenting enlightening information that enriched the findings of this research from key informants.

Our thanks also go to Thomas Marishane for the technical role he provided in organising online meetings, including the design and layout of this publication and Tshepo Legodi HURISA for fabulous roles in managing communication with facilitators, KII & FDG participants, invitation follow ups, as well making logistical arrangement for distribution of mobile data during implementation of project activities

We thank all participants for attending the validating meeting, FGDs, KII for making time to share their experiences and contemporary information on the impact of COVID19 to women peace builder which enhanced this publication.

We are also grateful to the support provided by HURISA Board of Directors Chair Dr Zonke Majodina and HURISA Executive Director Corlett Letlojane for the guidance in implementation of the project and production of the publication.

We thank Global Network Women Peacebuilders profusely for extending support to HURISA to undertake this assessment study. We are particularly grateful to Agnieszka Fal-Dutra Santos for her considerations in implementing the project

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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 a critical opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the agenda to date, but also to critically assess the remaining gaps. It is also a significant year, because it coincides 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 cannot be effectively utilized without a strong and meaningful participation of local civil society, in particular local women, in the policy discussions before, during and after the 20th Anniversary of UNSCR 1325.

Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) supported HURISA to conduct assessment interventions in communities through organised 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 analysing the impact of the COVID19 pandemic. These range 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 COVID19 protocols. However, since their altruistic efforts are often undocumented or not valued 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 collection of information analysed for purpose of preparing a report, findings and recommendations. A strategy planning meeting was conducted for the KII & FDG facilitators to prepare them undertake the assessment initiative. A plan of action, including timeframe and road map were designed as 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 interest in the assessment exercised.

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 (1&2), Mpumalanga (1) and awareness raising in Kwazulu Natal Provinces 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 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 FGD and for interview engagements.

The Assessment Results

The results of information documented through questionnaire template were analysed. Summaries of discussions and interviews provides lived episodes of women and other vulnerable groups, the grass roots impacted by COVID19 affecting implementation of WPS resolutions. Responses of women to COVID19 as well as approaches adapted by women peace builders to overcome the crisis are documented, acknowledging their strides in instilling peaceful communities living in life threatening environments. Lessons learnt of these women in advancing preventative measures to sustain peace and post COVID19 recovery plans will enhance the outcome of the 20th anniversary of UNSR 1325 and subsequent peace resolutions.

Summary of 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.
- Educate the youth on the importance on 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.
- 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.

- inclusion of corporate governance and private sectors in funding interventions to address the WPS issues.
- Funding for local women peacebuilders to help them and their communities acquire the technological support to continue building community cohesion and resilience at local level. Offer support to women's initiatives seeking involvement in peace processes.
- Adequate resources should be allocated for effective implementation of National Strategic Plan to combat domestic violence in the context and post COVID-19.
- Financial institutions should facilitate women's access to finance by not asking them for collaterals.
- Education is the most important tool for human development and the eradication of poverty. International actors and the government should increase educational opportunities for the poorest and most disadvantaged women.
- Undertaking an educational campaigns involving women and men to deliberate the root cause of human right violations that is victim driven, perpetrated driven and community driven
- Cabinet should adopt the Resolution 1325 National Action Plan to fast track implementation.
- The civil society organizations, communities and the stakeholders should not relent in seeking solutions so as to work with government to create a just and safe society based on human rights, human dignity, equality and accountability.
- They need to implement concrete mechanisms to report on the National Action Plan by creating panels for learning exchanges to get the best practice model for countries to launch their National Action Plans.
- The International actors should hold the government responsible for whatever funds are availed from the UN, Multinational Companies, Local and Foreign donors.
- They should monitor and evaluate work supported by donors.
- Government, international actors and UN leaders should provide more funding opportunities for the Implementation of WPS agenda.
- It is often women in rural areas who are most affected by conflicts and insecurity. The UN and the member states should strengthen the reach and the implementation of WPS agenda in rural areas, and translate Resolution 1325 into local languages to enable disadvantaged groups to be part of the peace processes
- 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 organisations and institutions that have a role to improve livelihoods and people's welfare, particularly in land user's rights, water use security and leadership.
- 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.
- UNSC encourage Member States establish a tool dedicated to monitor violence against women and girls in armed conflict situations.
- Increase UNW collaboration with women's organizations by providing medical, psychological and legal support to survivors of gender based violence.
- Implementation of gender mainstreaming strategy should advance women's human rights.
- Gender awareness raising & sensitization programmes should be provided for peace support personnel operations at all levels.
- Donor and funders working on the ground with refugees and internally displaced persons should support programmes that aim to guarantee the protection of refugee women.
- A centralized database is to be implemented to monitor the progress of WPS agenda.

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. The announcement of the National Disaster and national lockdown failed to adequately consult organisations providing basic services. The regulations were not crafted with gendered aspirations taking account of peculiar situations of women. For example, mothers with babies, young children, pregnant women, care givers of households, children with disabilities, elderly among, including rendering services in communities, among others were not prepared on how regulations will impact on them. The lockdown traumatised women and had psychological, spiritual impact on them, especially during the alert level 5, imposed extreme limitations toward movement of people. Women were overburdened with child care, homework, household chores, lack of capacity and resources to manage the impact (FD1). 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 like 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 structure. This was despite the moratorium passed prohibiting evictions to avoid exposing people to the pandemic and 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 stimulus package for responding to COVID19. 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. The Private Sector also added contribution of 150billion for with humanitarian relief and grant relief packages to the needy.

However, large amounts of the stimuli packages ended up squandered by unscrupulous 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 identity documents before for receiving humanitarian aid, like food parcels or grant relief (Action Support). There was a challenge experience by both undocumented migrants as well as those whose documents had expired for accessing food parcels and basic hygiene products. This situation led to the Department of Home Affairs imposing repatriations of migrants to their respective countries. Unfortunately, international refugee law is 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 provided for 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 were added to assist police. However, gender based violence and femicide cases escalated disproportionately. 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 have intimate relationship 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.

Sex workers were treated inhumanly, tortured, arbitrarily arrested, resulting in death in police cell because of police brutality. Police confiscated 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 liabilities (KII)

The basic services often rendered by women organisations and CSOs dealing with GBV, including legal aid were no longer available to monitor GBV cases and support them access court services and 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 gas and arbitrary arrests. Women were also exposed to cybercrimes to silence them while conducting webinars with a focus on GBVF. The FGD (2) regrettably pointed out that work performed by Women Human Rights Defenders is mostly antagonised and subjected to reprisals because they fight against the status quo, even during COVID19.

Organisations dealing with gender-based violence were also not recognised as essential service providers until they engaged in protests. As COVID19 restricted physical interaction and face to face meetings with the victims, it made it difficult for most to access internet and getting data due to cost implications that resulted in most meetings and some training workshops postponed. Some organisations 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 organisations 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 of children not going to school. The workload of peacebuilders comes with demands and managing a home impacts heavily on women

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.
- We need to educate the youth on the importance on 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.
- 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 organisation's programmes 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 participate confidently 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 was some organisations were also performed advocacy work at national level accessing webinars to interact and coordinate work with government.

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

A women led organisation 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 behaviours in communities. The chat shows are 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 lockdown. The chat shows also provided a platform to engage diverse issues with various communities and the youth to tackle the toxic muscularity problem inculcating conflict and life-threatening risk to women. The chat shows have successfully brought in local women leaders to contribute strategies in the search for the root cause of GBV, including, patriarchal embedded in social, 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 granted loans because financial institutions require collateral such as land or property. This creates barriers because many women do not have collateral properties or land to access the loan for them to start their own businesses.

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

Recommendations

- We need the inclusion of 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.
 - We need financial institutions to facilitate women's access to finance by not asking them for collaterals.
 - Education is the most important tool for human development and the eradication of poverty. We therefore call upon the International actors and the government to increase educational opportunities for the poorest and most disadvantaged women.
 - Undertaking an educational campaigns involving women and men to deliberate the root cause of human right 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 GBV& F. Regarding this, three pieces of legislations have been passed with stringent provisions for successful prosecutions of the suspects of GBV&F, stricter measures for consideration of 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 GBV&F, against police brutality, especially excessive use of powers to disperse protesters. CSOs presented the state of women human rights, peace, security, GBV& F in South Africa at the 66th Session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, UN Special Rapporteur of GBV, UN Special Rapporteur on Peaceful Assembly. CSOs have also formed coalitions for development of CEDAW Shadow Report.

From the government's side they have never been much 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 interesting initiatives from the government and other organisations but implementation is an issue. Budget from the government has really not being forthcoming around these issues. Especially now we have seen the channelling of budget to COVID-19 relief and responses taking away funds from such initiatives that contributes to women peace and security in the country.

The President is now taking standard measures whereby the 3 bills meant to curb gender-based violence will be introduced to the parliament 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 advocate groups to now strengthen the WPS agenda by requesting for funding to support these initiatives in curbing gender-based violence and femicide.

Furthermore, regarding the crisis response and planning for post recovery, the opportunity has been provided by international organisations 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.

Recommendation

- Adequate resources should be allocated for effective implementation of National Strategic Plan to combat domestic violence in the context and post COVID-19.
 - The governments need to assign roles towards the implementations of the National Action Plan.
 - Offer manual response 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 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 creating panels for learning exchanges to get the best practice model for countries to launch their National Action Plans.
- The International actors should hold the government responsible for whatever funds are availed from the UN, Multinational Companies, Local and Foreign donors.
- They should monitor and evaluate work supported by donors.
- We call upon the government, international actors and UN leaders to provide more funding opportunities for the Implementation of WPS agenda.
- It is often women in rural areas who are most affected by conflicts and insecurity. We want the UN and the member states to strengthen the reach and the implementation of WPS agenda in rural areas.

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 that the lessons learned from the study conducted will help increase the number of women participation in peace processes and ensure the gender-sensitive implementation of peace agreements.