



Human Rights Institute of South Africa (HURISA) role in the Journey towards development of Women Peace & Security National Action Plan Framework – UNSC Resolution 1325



## Introduction

HURISA role in a journey towards development of the UNSC Resolution 1325 NAP has been proactive, community-based oriented and encouraging states to implement adopted mechanisms, ceasefire agreements and promises to shape peace and security processes. Starting from 2004 in promoting Women Peace, Security and democracy in South Africa, the region, particularly working with partners advocating for peace and protection of women and children facing sexual violence in the volatile conflict zone, Darfur state in Sudan, and South Sudan to the AU and UN. The organisation cofounded a CSO Coalition Option on Sudan and South Sudan with Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre, African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, Darfur Bar Association, and South Sudan Human Rights Society and conducted CSOs consultations on the margins of the AU Summit. The Coalition was established as an advocacy platform for promoting peace and security in Sudan and South Sudan. It was conceived as a result of the organised militia that plunged South Sudan on 15 December 2013. This conflict had claimed over 10, 000 lives and uprooted almost 400, 000 civilians where over 80 people had to flee as refugees in neighbouring countries. Although the war started in Juba, it spilt over into rural areas where victimisation of women and internal displacement intensified. They fled from their villages and got accommodated at the UN camps. This compromised their livelihoods as farming or performing daily domestic chores got affected



*Women and children at a UN camp outside Juba, July 2014*

A resolution was adopted and presented to the IGAD officials who attended the CSO Options on Sudan and South Sudan. It was through support from Oxfam-GB that enabled HURISA advocate at the African Union High Level Panel on Sudan to ensure Sudan effectively comply with its decision and end the senseless killings in Darfur, sexual violence on women and girls.



HURISA was part of the CSO delegation that participated in the drafting of the Cessation of hostilities and engaged the IGAD Team of Mediators, including Mabior de Mabior, member the warring opposition leader of Dr Riek Machar and former Deputy President of South Sudan. HURISA also witnessed the signing of cessation of hostilities agreement during the ceremonial function held on 23 January 2014.

### **Concept for initiating WPS Programme in South Africa**

In early 2013 the organisation recognised that although South Africa as a post conflict country with established human rights institutions and citizens enjoying democratic dispensation, it was not the same for women and children. This was due to among others, unresolved problems, or unfinished restorative justice process that fuel violence, gender-based violence, marginalisation of vulnerable groups, political intolerance, police misconduct, crime, and corruption. These indictments have given rise to social permission for some men to commit extreme forms of violence against women and girls. These rooted challenges make South Africa peace and economic justice trajectory seemed bleak and unpredictable. Over and above this, is the peace keeping, negotiation and mediation role South Africa play in the continent. It was important to advocate South Africa peacekeepers and mediators uphold national, regional, and international standards promoting transparency and recognition of women's role in conflict resolutions processes. Community reach-out programmes, dialogues, working groups, capacity building, advocacy interventions encouraging officials comply with peace promises and agreements as well as research studies were identified as effective tools to cultivate effective change for sustaining peace.

South Africa acceded to the UN and AU mechanisms adopted for promoting women's roles in the peace and security architecture, such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325, AU Constitutive Act, AU Peace and Security Council and AU Women Decade 2010-2020 as well as the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). However, the lack of knowledge and understanding of these progressive standards and instruments, debilitated the CSOs, WHRDs and WPS builders in South Africa to utilise for redressing GBV, stigma, victimisation, and exclusion of women in peace building and mediation processes.

In September 2013 HURISA participated at the Oxfam strategic planning meeting on WPS with a view of providing a platform for CSOs capacity building and training on WPS mechanisms.



The strategic intervention concluded with empowered stakeholders and a road map adopted as a plan of action to drive WPS agenda, including,

- Establishing a CSO Working Group on UNSC Resolution 1325 WPS
- Conducting provincial dialogues, to empower community-based organisations, WHRDs and peace builders on UNSC Resolution 1325
- Baseline research studies on WPS in DRC, Sudan, South Sudan Somalia, and Mali.
- Commemoration of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa to mark the 10th Anniversary of Maputo Protocol on 10 October 2013,
- Facilitation of a panel during the NGO Forum preceding the 54th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights, on 19 October 2013,
- A side event parallel to the AU Summit to launch the media campaign, Her – Voice – Her - Peace – She – Matters.
- A side event parallel to CSW59 Session to promote the media campaign, Her – Voice – Her - Peace – She – Matters.

Throughout 2014 the WPS project Working Group increased voices of local women and girls that effectively advocated for acceleration of South Africa and the SADC region countries behind with adopted NAPs to make progress by 2015 and include local women in WPS initiatives. HURISA was inspired by the developments in the African Union in declaring the year 2015 as ‘Year of Women’s Empowerment. The AU nominated Dr Nkosazana Zuma as Chairperson of the African Union Commission and furthermore, appointed Dr Binta Diop as a Gender and Conflict Advisor in the new Gender and Conflict Envoy. This reaffirmed Africa’s commitment to making gender equity a serious matter on its agenda. It was another achievement which offered CSOs a platform to speak out on WPS issues and gender equality.

## **Strategies and Approaches implemented Nationally, Regionally and Internationally.**

### **National level**



Meetings with officials yielded fruitfully in committing Department of Women, Youth People With Disabilities, International Relations and Cooperation, South African Defence Force to lead national processes for developing WPS NAP. The Troika Women Ministerial leadership played phenomenal roles in the history of South Africa by supporting and paving way for National Multi-stakeholders Consultations attended by diverse populations in South Africa and government officials that resulted with actions focused on developing the first NAP for the country.

### **Civil Society Coalition**



HURISA collaborated with Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Sonke Gender Justice, People Opposing Women Abuse, and more organisations joined and provided technical support such as Foundation for Human Rights, Institute for Security Studies, Professor Cheryl Hendricks, South Africa Women in Dialogue, Khulumani Support Group, African Centre for Constructive Resolution of Dispute, national institutions including Commission for Gender Equality, South Africa Human Rights Commission among others, were identified as key collaborators. A Steering Committee was established with FHR assuming secretariat roles. Programmes, plan of action, materials, and labour demarcation based on partners expertise were undertaken for impacting WSP in communities of South Africa.

The provincial dialogues were conducted countrywide ensuring no one is left behind. Participation was characterised by vibrant discussions from representatives of local women-based organisations, living in rural areas, townships, informal settlements as well as representatives of women with disabilities, women with albinism, LGBTIQ+, traditional leaders, local municipalities, faith-based organisations, sex work, migrants. These dialogues were implemented with support from UN-Women.

Over 1000 participants were reached across nine provinces and engaged on burning WPS situations experienced by women and diverse groupings in South Africa from the grass roots.



Provincial & local dialogues on WPS – Resolution 1325, Durban KZN Province, Mpumalanga Province, and Gauteng Province

Most of participants were exposed for the first time to this kind of process cascading international mechanisms into local understanding. Strategies and modalities were considered for simplification of mechanisms promoting WPS for understanding in communities and engaging debates in local languages for free and open contributions on the NAP.



### **Research Study & Policy Document**

In 2014 HURISA conducted research study and policy document was produced to assist the Working Group establish the extent to which gender is a determining factor in South Africa’s interventions and engagement with peace, security and conflict. This was due to the overwhelming impact of armed conflict on women and children that dictated gender emphasis in South Africa foreign relation efforts. The regrettable allegations about South African soldiers involved in peace keeping and combat having been part to the abuse and rape of defenceless women and children in contravention of UN and AU protocols pointed to the need to monitor and ensure that all resolutions are adhered to for the protection of the human rights of the poor and weak.



*Women carrying a dead body from a village, 2014.*

A policy document was produced highlighting research findings conducted by HURISA in South Sudan as well as South Africa’s history of engagements and supporting political processes in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Sudan. The findings elaborate limitations in enhancing women’s rights and participation. In the DRC, for instance, South Africa was involved in the country’s 2002 Sun City Peace Agreements. South Africa was also instrumental in the negotiations of South Sudan’s independence. As it continues to grapple with gender issues itself, South Africa had the opportunity to positively influence South Sudan and DRC on these issues. Not only does South Africa need to consider how to strengthen the implementation of this resolution but it also needs to become a major player in shaping these policy debates.

## **Task Team on WPS**

A Task Team made up of CSOs, National Institutions, Academia, Officials from key Government Departments was set up with DIRCO assuming secretariat roles. The collaboration ensured inclusive and opened engaging process with diverse CSOs groupings and key stakeholders in national programmes aimed at developing WPS NAP.



Participants at the validation of the NAP, August 2019



Multi Stakeholder Consultative Meeting for developing the NAP December 2018

## **Regional Interventions**

HURISA seized the momentum to collaborate with Foundation for Human Rights, Department of Justice and Constitutional Development parallel to South Africa's hosting of the AU Summit, in June 2015, Sandton. Speakers included African Commission Special Mandate Holders and AU Special Envoy. Former African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Chairperson and Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, Soyata Maiga, noted weaknesses in application of WPS under Articles 10 and 11 of the Maputo Protocol. She also identified a lack of political will within the African regional bloc in pushing for the adequate implementation of the regional instrument. Malawi was reported as the only country among 37 signatory countries that had presented a voluntary report on the Maputo Protocol. Example of the Mali accord, inspired HURISA and partners resilience in advocating for WPS through their active protests and petition to the Prime Minister against exclusion until they were incorporated in the process.

While Advocate Pansy Tlakula, also former African Commission Chairperson and Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa used the experiences of the 270 abducted Chibok girls in Nigeria and many other incidents in the country that turned women as easy targets of insurgents. In Mali, the women were also victims, and in Eastern Congo – during the conflict that engulfed the country – there was the deplorable situation wherein women became victims of peacekeepers supposed to protect them as many of them were raped and others had to offer themselves sexually to peacekeepers in order to gain protection.



“Bring Back Our Girls” Campaign and expressed several messages imploring the AU States to strengthen efforts to protect African citizens against militias, armed conflicts and terrorist attacks which have continued to weaken peace and stability the region.

Yasmin Sooka former FHR Executive Director inspired HURISA, CSO Coalition and partners to increase implementation of WPS framework in South Africa and beyond because the report of the first study carried in 2002 by Elizabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (former President of Liberia) was not awarded an official UN number because of several political reasons, besides documented stories of women experiences all over the world. Radhika Coomaraswamy was commissioned as the lead author for the 2015 review of resolution 1325. She was supported by an advisory panel with the UN Women playing Secretariat role. This global study informed the secretary general’s annual report to the UN Security Council on WPS.

### **Advocacy interventions at AU**

Parallel to the AU Summit in Ethiopia in January 2015, HURISA launched its social media campaign *Her Voice, Her Peace, She Matters*. This social media campaign raised awareness and consciousness on the socio- economic rights of women, their inclusion in democracy and governance as well as the issues on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post conflict societies. The campaign attracted twitter, Facebook and blog account holders to pass messages broadly.



Former African Commission on Human and People’s Rights Chairperson Honourable Soyata Maiga and also mandate holder as the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa launched the campaign attended by CSO from across the continent as well as representatives from UN Women, Oxfam, the AU commission Political Affairs, media, leaders of CSOs such as Femnet and Make Every Woman Count. Representative from Department of International Relations and Cooperation- Gender Unit also attended.

## **Interventions at NGO Forum & African Commission on Human and People's Rights**

### **NGO FORUM**

HURISA impacted its advocacy roles and partners at the NGO Forum to accelerate actions for development and adoption of national frameworks to effect UNSC Resolution 1325. This action culminated in advocacy at the NGO Forum that pioneered an interest group on peace and security. This interest group lobbied the Commission to adopt a resolution for working closely with the AU Peace and Security Council (AU –PSC) in accordance with Article 19 of the AU-PSC Protocol and other regional and sub-regional processes, for comprehensive address of high scale human rights violations in conflict situations.



HURISA and partners, including CSVr, FIDH, Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre, established Peace & Security Interest Group within agenda of the NGO Forum. The group strengthens Commission Resolution 332, particularly in respect of promoting State's accountability and compliance with Article 10 & 11 of the African Charter to increase the realisation of WPS in the continent.

### **African Commission on Human and People's Rights**

African Commission adopted Resolution 332 with a theme for addressing human rights in conflict situations. The Resolution enhanced the Commission role in addressing human rights issues in conflict situations, to collaborate with the AU PSC and other relevant stakeholders working in the issues of peace and security, enhancing the role of the African Commission, as well as its coordination with other continental processes.

### **Side Event on Fringes of ACHPR**

#### **Launch of SA CSO Report on Women Peace and Security Report**

HURISA partnered with Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) and Foundation for Human Right (FHR) to host a side event on the promotion of WPS in Africa on the margins of the 65<sup>th</sup> Session of the ACHPR, held on 23 October 2019.

The partners launched a consolidated Report on the work of the Civil Society Steering Committee, concluding its provincial dialogues and a national dialogue for implementation of Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council<sup>1</sup>.



Panellists are Honourable Chairperson of ACHPR, Dr Solomon Adele Dersso, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, Honourable Commissioner Lucy Asuagbor, and Corlett Letlojane HURISA Director & State Delegate from Lesotho, Mr Tanki Mothae

### **International Level**

HURISA used the opportunity to bring at the global table the emerging threats and hindrances to African WPS at the CSW 59 Session, which focused on review of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 20 years after its adoption. The media campaign *Her Voice, Her Peace, She Matters* was promoted as a vehicle to break the silence of women facing war, physical and emotional trauma. This inhibits them to participate fully in political and economic life. The social cycle of abuse experienced by millions of women on the continent and in the Diaspora, coupled with the ever-increasing numbers of conflicts, new wars of terror and rising fundamentalisms have created an unstable and unsafe environment for African women to fully participate in decision making processes in meaningful ways.

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<sup>1</sup> This is in line with the AU Constitutive Act<sup>1</sup> which emphasise attainment of peace and unity in Africa. It calls for measures to guarantee the rights of women, ethnic minorities, migrants, and people with disabilities, refugees, displaced persons, and other marginalised groups.