LEAP 4Peace

a partnership to promote women's leadership for peace

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: PILLARS FOR PEACE

LEAP4Peace Consortium

Acknowledgements

This paper is the product of the LEAP4Peace Consortium, a consortium led by the Dutch-based Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) that includes among its members the Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP), the Gender Equality Network (GEN) in Myanmar, Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) and NIMD Colombia.

The paper was made possible by funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs within the context of their Women, Peace and Security agenda. We are extremely grateful to all Consortium Members and the NIMD offices in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Uganda that contributed to this paper by producing country-specific analyses with detailed case studies and recommendations. The LEAP4Peace Steering Committee, a body made up of senior staff of the Consortium Members, also provided invaluable input throughout the drafting process.

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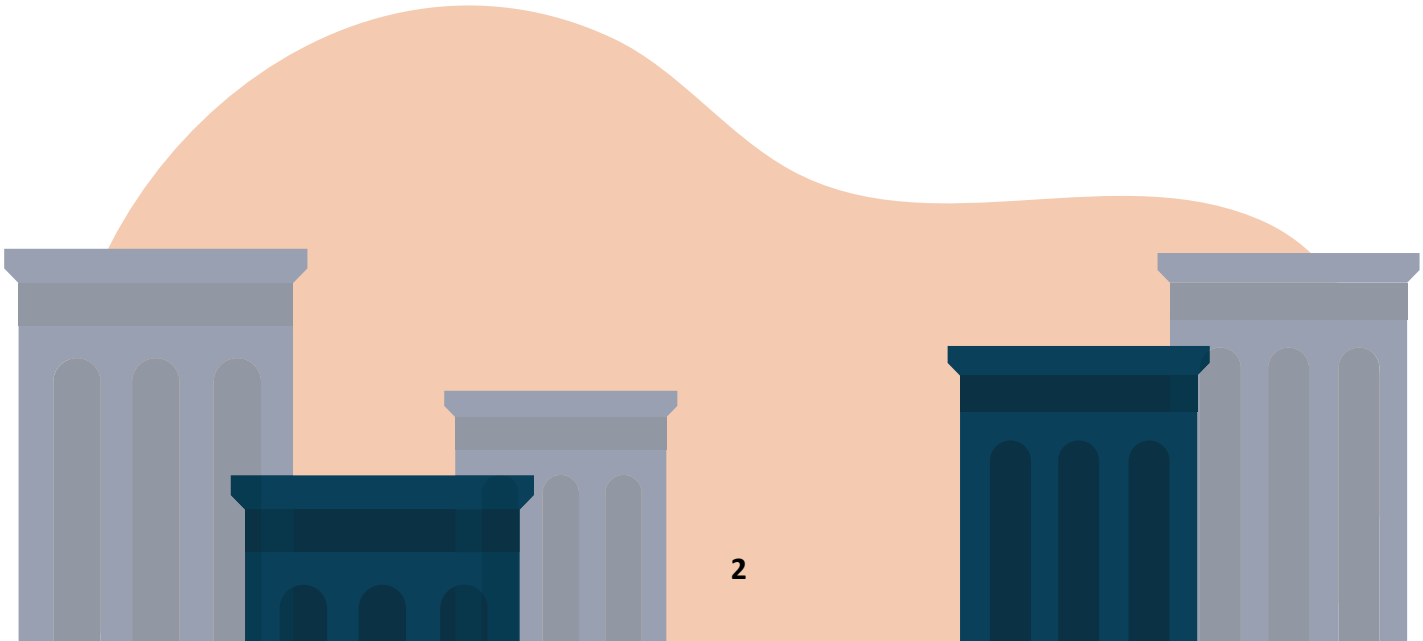

Glossary

BLTP	Burundi Leadership Training Program
CRSV	Conflict-related sexual violence
CSO	Civil society organization
EU	European Union
GAPS	Gender Action for Peace and Security, UK
GEN	Gender Equality Network, Myanmar
IDP	Internally displaced person
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning) and others
MFA	Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MySoP	Myanmar School of Politics
(I)NGO	(International) Non-governmental organization
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
PoD	Power of Dialogue
SDG	Sustainable development goal
SOGI	Sexual orientation and gender identity
UN	United Nations
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
WRO	Women's rights organization

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1. Introduction

Since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, the importance of women's participation in peacebuilding has been both recognized and widely defended. However, in practice, over the past 20 years women and women's rights and women-led civil society organizations have not been included in high-level decision-making forums and their participation has not been meaningfully supported by international and national actors.

The participation of women in peacebuilding activities and processes cannot be treated as merely a box-ticking exercise or as a means to an end for a more sustainable peace. Genuine participation must include women from all parts of society, especially those frequently excluded and marginalized from mainstream formal and high-level participation spaces and mechanisms. This should also include groups such as young women and girls, ones from differing socio-economic backgrounds, ones with disabilities, women of diverse SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identities), refugees, IDPs and those with uncertain immigration status, as well as women from groups representing religious and ethnic minorities and rural-based women. Their valuable contributions to peace processes and dialogue at the local level must be recognized through a supportive policy environment at local, regional, national and international levels. Meaningful efforts must be made to ensure that women are invited and enabled to access these spaces by providing logistical, financial and other resources, instead of simply issuing passive and general invitations.

Support for the Women, Peace and Security agenda is often accompanied by the argument that it is necessary for women to be involved in peace processes as that leads to a longer and more sustainable peace. While the evidence for this is compelling and is explored in this paper, it is important not to further this instrumentalist approach to gender and call for women's participation for its own sake. Women should be consulted, be recognized, make decisions about and participate in processes that they have a stake in and that which impacts upon them.

Peace agreements, and the conflicts that they emerge from, have a specific gendered impact upon women and girls, their rights and gender equality. This goes beyond the immediate effects of conflict-related violence and encompasses political instability, increased poverty, fewer economic opportunities, disruption to education, the displacement of communities and the war and conflict-related suppression of other rights.

Through the LEAP4Peace Consortium, networks, women's rights organizations and civil society organizations in Burundi, Colombia, Myanmar, the Netherlands and the UK are working together to promote women's participation in peace and democratic processes through training, lobbying and advocacy, as well as working directly with women activists and politicians.

This paper examines the roles that women and women's rights and women-led civil society organizations have played in peace and democratic processes in the LEAP4Peace partner countries (Burundi, Colombia and Myanmar) and in other NIMD programmes (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Uganda). The latter four

nations were also included in this paper due to their existing and ongoing work on Women, Peace and Security, as well as women's participation in peace and political processes. They are all participants in another NIMD Consortium called the Power of Dialogue.

Each country has developed a separate report based on desk-based research, analysis and the experience of working on women's political participation. This paper in turn draws on the evidence-based research contained in each of the country reports and highlights the common and overarching themes.

The country-specific papers contain case studies from women working on peace processes as well as other peacebuilding activities that contribute to the peace and democratic processes of their countries. They also detail the wider impact of their work on the challenges faced and available opportunities.

This paper aims to contribute to and fill in the gaps of the existing literature and knowledge on the inclusion of women in peacebuilding and participating in peace and democratic processes by providing evidence-based information on the impact of our programmes and interventions and the lessons learned. By sharing these experiences, we hope that the paper can be a useful resource for Consortium Members and allow actors involved in Women, Peace and Security to incorporate these findings into current programmes and truly benefit from both the successes and the lessons learned.

2. Project summary

The Women Leadership and Participation for Peace (LEAP4Peace) programme is a consortium of organizations from Burundi, Colombia, Myanmar, the Netherlands and the UK. The Consortium was formed with the specific goal of advancing the role that women play in peacebuilding and political processes in the three target countries – Burundi, Colombia and Myanmar – and promoting that role at a global level. The Consortium consists of the Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP), the Gender Equality Network (GEN) in Myanmar, the NIMD office in Colombia, the Myanmar School of Politics, an NIMD programme, Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD). The programme was launched in 2021 and will last for five years, and it is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

The LEAP4Peace Consortium addresses the structural underrepresentation of women in peacebuilding and politics and supports women's political leadership and the participation of women in decision-making processes. The Consortium has identified four barriers to meaningful participation and the empowerment of women in peacebuilding:

1. Persistent patriarchal and exclusionary power structures that reproduce social norms and perpetuate gender inequality.
2. Ignorance, the lack of willingness and intended and unintended barriers for women with regard to political participation and decision-making processes.
3. Inadequate and exclusionary legal and policy frameworks in post-conflict settings.
4. A diminishing space for civil society to advocate for gender equality.

LEAP4Peace recognizes the interconnectedness of these barriers and the importance of addressing all of them in order to deliver the strategic programme objective of achieving a conducive environment for the full and meaningful inclusion of women in political and decision-making processes so as to sustain peace in Burundi, Colombia and Myanmar.

The two long-term objectives that this paper, and the programme as a whole, aim to achieve are:

- The meaningful representation of women in decision-making roles for peacebuilding.
- A supportive policy framework for women's rights and political participation in peacebuilding.

The planned activities include skills training, media and awareness campaigns, workshops for political stakeholders, democracy education and other associated actions.

LEAP4Peace recognizes the varied roles played by women in all political activities and the extraordinary contribution that women make towards promoting and maintaining peace in a country – from informal rights-based community-level activism to international high-level formal peace processes. The activities undertaken in each country address the specific and interlinked barriers to participation and gender equality.

FORO DE
Diputadas
al Congreso de la República de Guatemala
El Foro de Diputadas al Congreso
de la República es un espacio
multipartidario que une esfuer
genera diálogo y fortalece cap
para una mejor acción y par
política de las Muje

3. Country contexts

All of the countries dealt with in this paper are confronted with the global societal challenge of patriarchy, with many or most institutions and formal structures deeply rooted in patriarchal norms and values. Further to this, social positions and social relationships are highly gendered and impact on all aspects of women and girls' lives. Another commonality is the recent history of conflict and an ongoing process of peacebuilding. The details of each country's political history are summarized in this section. The specific ways in which patriarchy and misogyny are expressed and affect women's political participation does however vary between each country, which is also further explored.

Burundi

Women have been able to run for public office in Burundi ever since the country gained independence from Belgian colonial occupation in the early nineteen-sixties, with the first woman joining the National Assembly in 1965. Burundians were impacted by cyclical wars in 1965, 1972, 1988, 1993 and 2015, the longest of which was the civil war that broke out in 1993 and lasted over a decade, which the United Nations labelled as ethnic genocide. Women played a role in this conflict as combatants, victims and also as peacebuilders. During the peace talks that lead to the Arusha Accords in 2000, women were only given observer status, despite a long period of lobbying and advocacy on their part to play a more significant role. While the war officially ended in 2005, women had already initiated community-level strategies for peaceful cohabitation actions at the community level, well in advance of any activities initiated by established institutions. Peaceful demonstrations in 2015, organized by civil society in response to a constitutional violation, were violently suppressed by security forces, leading to the internal displacement and exile of Burundians. That in turn had enormous repercussions for women and girls, as displaced persons and refugees, and also as victims of violence, especially gender-based violence that was perpetrated by certain elements in the security forces and criminal gangs. The Burundian constitution, amended in 2018, reiterates the 2005 constitutional stipulation that a minimum of 30 percent of elected positions be reserved for women. This has been widely welcomed, although that 30 percent has proved to be the maximum number of elected women parliamentarians instead of the hoped-for minimum. Women are now calling for the same ratio to also be employed for non-elected positions, as these roles are often highly influential.

Colombia

Colombians have been enduring conflicts involving a range of guerrilla groups, including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), since the early nineteen-sixties, shaping the lives of all women and girls in Colombia for decades. Finally, in 2016 a peace agreement was signed between the Colombian Government and FARC and ratified by the country's Congress. The peace treaty was notable for being the first to have a specifically gendered approach, thanks to the efforts of women activists and rights organizations. One outcome was the creation of the Special Electoral Mission, with the aim of promoting greater transparency and representation, independent of any political group. The Colombian Government received, through the Special Electoral Mission, a series of recommendations for furthering women's political participation throughout the electoral process and within political parties. However, the impact thus far has been limited to only five parties being led by a woman, out of a total of sixteen official parties, and at a regional level equal representation has actually been decreasing in recent years.

El Salvador

In El Salvador, a 1979 coup d'état deposed the Government, resulting in a 14-year civil war. The armed conflict resulted in tens of thousands of deaths, hundreds of thousands of injured and millions of internally displaced people and refugees. The Chapultepec Peace Accords were signed in 1992 and involved women at all stages of the process, with women active in almost all post-conflict negotiations. The final signatories included two women, while women constituted a third of the beneficiaries of the land redistribution and reintegration packages. This is an example of how even a low-level involvement of women can lead to direct improvements to the quality of life of many other women.

Guatemala

After 16 years of armed conflict and dictatorships, the Guatemalan Peace Accords were finally reached in 1996. Women and girls in Guatemala have long tackled gender equality in the country and have pushed back against the corruption and authoritarianism that marked this time. Even today, women still only make up 19.3 percent of the country's National Congress, and voter turnout among women is much lower than for men.

Honduras

Women in Honduras won the constitutional right to vote in 1955 and women's rights organizations have been advocating for further electoral legislation ever since that time. In 2021 the new Electoral Law was passed, which defined the envisaged democratic culture, including gender parity and women's inclusion in government structures. In the wake of a coup d'état in 2009, Honduras faced a constitutional crisis. In spite of an all-time high of a quarter of parliamentarians being women, the proportion of elected women has decreased in recent years. Machismo plays a significant role in Honduran culture and women are not encouraged to run for political office.

Myanmar

After winning independence from the British colonial occupation in 1948, Myanmar was subjected to half a century of authoritarian military rule before transitioning to a democratic system in 2011, holding the first peaceful and free elections in 2015. Since that time, the military continues to exercise control over numerous governmental facets, eventually attempting to overthrow the Government after the 2020 general election. This has had a serious impact upon women and marginalized ethnic groups, who are facing violence and repression in the ongoing conflict. Women are expected to work exclusively at home, caring for their family and community, but women in Myanmar nonetheless have played an important role in the informal peacebuilding process, despite little recognition or being included in formal negotiation and policy forums at both national and international levels. Women have been excluded from political processes for many years, and while the country is now in the midst of complex Government-led peace talks between the military and several ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), the peace process structures are still unknown and have yet to be established, although the need to include women and many other different actors has been acknowledged. Myanmar's transition to democracy and the peace process have suffered a grave setback as a result of the military coup d'état on 1 February 2021. The military subsequently disbanded the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC), the leading internal peace process mechanism of the former Government under the National League for Democracy (NLD) and arrested many civilian leaders. The EAOs were told that future peace talks will only be conducted with a peace committee created by the armed forces. The Government overthrow has led to the formation of a civil disobedience movement and massive demonstrations across the nation. The protests, labelled the Spring Revolution, saw many women leaders and defenders of human rights on the frontlines, and the popular movement is the largest in Myanmar's history.

Uganda

Ugandans have been ruled for decades by the same president, with successive elections marred by ever-increasing violence, vote-buying and rigged polls. Despite the most recent elections in 2021 having the highest turnout yet, especially among younger voters, it was also marked as one of the most controversial since independence in 1962. The security forces were responsible for much intimidation and other violence, affecting access to ballot stations and participation in the election. Women's rights organizations played a notable role in peacebuilding and negotiations between the opposing political leaders, both during and after the general elections.

SENNHEISER

4. Literature review

Some literature in this field already exists, which explores the roles that women play in peace processes and identifies where the aspirations of women's rights activists are yet to be fully realized. The LEAP4Peace programme and this paper make the connection between women's meaningful political participation and the Women, Peace and Security agenda. It is on that basis that we here explore what the literature says on the participation of women in peacebuilding and peace processes, so that we can subsequently identify the areas where LEAP4Peace can provide the most effective contribution and build further on the existing body of work.

Despite the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the number of women signatories to peace agreements has in fact decreased since 2000. Statistical analysis performed by Krause, Krause and Bränfors[1] shows that peace agreements signed by women delegates correlates with sustainable peace, a greater number of clauses being included that aim at political reform and a higher rate of those clauses being implemented. The authors also explore why this is the case, drawing on existing literature, and by crediting the strong relationships between women signatories and women-led civil society organizations and women's rights organizations (WROs). Even though women signatories might hold a diverse range of political views and do not necessarily have expertise in or an understanding of gender-transformative peace processes, they tend to act as brokers for local WROs, which ultimately benefits the sustainability of a peace agreement and its implementation.

Adeogun & Muthuki[2] in turn argue for an integrated approach to gender inclusion in peacebuilding processes, calling for women to be represented at all levels. Their paper calls for all stakeholders to consider the bottom-up approach, usually adopted by feminists, and the top-down approach that is employed by states and the security sector. They explore the case of South Sudan, the scene of a strong grassroots movement but one where the lack of women in policymaking forums has limited the impact of the grassroots women's organizations. Women did not feature in the original concept of peacebuilding, as developed by the UN.

Adeogun & Muthuki refer to Speake's report[3], which categorizes approaches to gender-inclusion in peacebuilding as instrumentalist, protection, practical needs, transformative and, ultimately, participation. A lack of engagement with South Sudanese women's groups has constrained the implementation of the country's National Action Plan, while the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Government of Sudan did not consider gender equality as a key factor in security, which thus excluded women from the hard-won peace. The need for gender-transformative peace processes is the foundation of the LEAP4Peace Consortium and the evidence presented in the literature review enables Consortium Members to commence with project-specific work without having to make the case anew.

Erzurum and Eren's paper[4] explores the impact of conflict on women, particularly how sexual violence is used as a tool of war and how sexual exploitation becomes a feature of conflict and post-conflict settings. Erzurum and Eren also take an instrumentalist approach when it comes to advocating for women's participation in peace processes, linking such participation to greater stability and explaining it on the grounds of the role women presumably play as mediators in their families and communities.

Hilary Charlesworth meanwhile compares the manner in which international structures construct women and peace with on-the-ground experiences[5]. She eviscerates an oft-cited paper by Fukuyama[6] that concludes, on the basis of the behaviour of chimpanzees, that a biological basis for sex differences exists and will lead to world peace, as well as the widely held belief that

[1] Jana Krause, Werner Krause & Piia Bränfors (2018): Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace, International Interactions, 44:6, 985-1016, DOI: 10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386
[2] Tolulope Jolaade Adeogun & Janet Muthoni Muthuki (2018): Feminist perspectives on peacebuilding: The case of women's organizations in South Sudan, Agenda, 32:2, 83-92, DOI: 10.1080/10130950.2018.1450572
[3] Beth Speake (2013): A gendered Approach to Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution. Available at: http://www.e-ir.info/2013/02/11/a-gendered-approachto-peacebuilding-and-conflict-resolution
[4] Kemal Erzurum & Berna Eren (2014): Women in Peacebuilding: A Criticism of Gendered Solutions in Postconflict Situations, Journal of Applied Security Research, 9:2, 236-256, DOI: 10.1080/19361610.2014.883297
[5] Hilary Charlesworth (2008): Are Women Peaceful? Reflections on the Role of Women in Peace-Building. Fem Leg Stud 16, 347–361. DOI: 10.1007/s10691-008-9101-6

women are innately peaceful. She expresses concern that if UN initiatives such as the Beijing Platform for Action and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 are linked to peaceful-women rhetoric, participation by women will be restricted to feminized tasks.

Charlesworth's[7] paper suggests that an equality framework be used for participation by women in peace processes and that the word 'gender' be avoided when solely associated with women, but that instead the gendered expectations of all people be considered equally. Krause, Krause and Bränfors' paper also firmly rejects essentialist assumptions about women having an inherently peaceful nature. This literature sets out crucial arguments that support the LEAP4Peace Consortium, as we aim to explore the varied roles of women in peacebuilding, which have been shown to exist in the literature review and in this paper as a whole. We see this reflected in the LEAP4Peace country-level analyses – which served as input for this paper – as the roles women play in conflicts, such as those defined in Colombia, being combatants, victims and peacebuilders.

While there is considerable literature on women's participation in peace processes, we do not observe an even distribution among the four key areas of peace-making, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peace education. Peace education, in particular, contributes to a long-term and sustainable peace but there has been limited research on women's roles in this field. This is an aspect of Women, Peace and Security that has thus far not been explored in depth through the LEAP4Peace Consortium's work, and is potentially one that could receive further focus in future years.

Adjei's review[9] draws upon two general perspectives, essentialism and social constructionism, which provide different explanations for why women should be included in peace processes – either because women are inherently more peaceful due to a biological predisposition (essentialism) or because women are affected differently by conflict and these different experiences, which are informed by constructed gender roles, must be included within peace processes (social constructionism).

While some peace agreements have explicitly identified the varied roles that women play in support of peace processes, women have also found alternative ways to leverage their roles in society in order to promote peace. A notable example in Adjei's paper[10] is that of local women's groups in Liberia, which surrounded buildings that housed peace-negotiators to ensure they remained there until negotiations were completed. However, Adjei's review[11] highlights the fact that *'often women have little choice on their role in peacebuilding. Mazurana and McKay (2002) argue that women's role in peacebuilding is usually less obvious because they are "intertwined [with everyday issues] of gender equality, demilitarization, promoting non-violence, reconciliation...and sustaining the environment"'*. Women are often regarded as merely victims of war, requiring protection from men, rather than active members of the community who have a stake in maintaining peace.

Jackie Kirk[12] argues that women teachers have a particular capacity in respect of promoting a gender-just peace, although much of this argument revolves around the improved economic and social standing of women teachers and higher rates of school enrolment for girls. It does however make a start at exploring their potential as agents of change and the potential for training as teachers to enable them to become participants in peacebuilding.

[6] Francis Fukuyama (1998): Women and the Evolution of World Politics, Foreign Affairs, 77:5, 24-40, DOI: 10.2307/20049048
[7] Hilary Charlesworth (2008): Are Women Peaceful? Reflections on the Role of Women in Peace-Building. Fem Leg Stud 16, 347–361. DOI: 10.1007/s10691-008-9101-6
[8] Jana Krause, Werner Krause & Piia Bränfors (2018): Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace, International Interactions, 44:6, 985-1016, DOI: 10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386
[9] Maxwell Adjei (2019) Women's participation in peace processes: a review of literature, Journal of Peace Education, 16:2, 133-154, DOI: 10.1080/17400201.2019.1576515
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Jackie Kirk (2004): Promoting a gender-just peace: The roles of women teachers in peacebuilding and reconstruction, Gender & Development, 12:3, 50-59, DOI: 10.1080/13552070412331332310

Examples of women's varied roles in peacebuilding are explored in Arostegui's 2013 paper[13], which focuses on Rwanda and Uganda, drawing out lessons to be used in the then-emerging women's rights landscape in post-conflict South Sudan. She notes that *'despite barriers to participation, however, women around the world have emerged as voices of peace, mobilising across communities and using their social roles and networks to mediate and mitigate violence'*, and determines a range of factors that enabled women to mobilize in those countries. The women interviewed for the paper – politicians and founders of women's rights organizations – credit international frameworks, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and UNSCR 1325, with enabling women to take part in decision-making, increasing political will and the allocation of resources by governments and their use as points of reference when creating national constitutions that include strong clauses pertaining to the rights of women.

The work undertaken by the LEAP4Peace project builds on this body of experience and brings forth unique perspectives. It highlights more recent examples from a wide geographical array, and the case studies in this paper consider not only women's participation in formal peace processes but also in sustaining this work in post-conflict environments. This goes beyond the key asks for government and explores what local organizations are doing to enable women's participation, what the barriers and enablers are, what the impact has been, and how we can build further on these outcomes. Common themes that connect the experiences in the project countries are identified and discussed in the sections that follow.

[13]Julie Arostegui (2013): Gender, conflict, and peace-building: how conflict can catalyse positive change for women, Gender & Development, 21:3, 533-549, DOI: 10.1080/13552074.2013.846624

5. Themes

The LEAP4Peace Consortium Members all work to further the inclusion of women in peacebuilding, taking different approaches to suit their different contexts and political environments. When looking at the Consortium Members and the different intervention strategies that they have implemented, three main themes are evident: training women leaders, network building and community engagement. In this chapter we shall examine the project activities undertaken, their implementation and the results and contribution made to women's meaningful participation in peace processes and in the political realm. In examining these themes, we also identify the challenges – both common and unique – that add to what this paper seeks to uncover. The different interventions overlap with other work too – they are not standalone activities and are influenced by other actions, and so the way that different interventions interact with each other and what this means for inclusive peacebuilding is also dealt with.

5.1. Training of women leaders and capacity strengthening of women's rights organizations

A starting point for many organizations is training: working with women and adolescent girls to raise their awareness regarding their rights, to develop their political participation skills and to encourage them to become more involved in local, regional, national and even international activism. Training is often used as a tool throughout a woman's political journey and can support women in all levels of influence to effect concrete change with a solid policy foundation.

5.1.1. Training on the Women, Peace and Security agenda

Women can be introduced to political participation through becoming sensitized to women's rights. In **Burundi**, the BLTP provided training revolving around UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. One community leader, Mrs Elizabeth Ndimurwanko, said of the course: *'I did not know that even the United Nations thinks about what Burundian women endure in terms of inequality, and especially what they endure in case of armed conflicts'*. The training resulted in her running for office and she was elected twice as a hill councillor and a leader of her community. The training also gave Mrs Ndimurwanko public speaking skills, confidence and technical knowledge on policy areas that impact upon women and girls. She went on to support key policies on women's economic opportunities, including the creation of savings associations, and spoke about peace and unity in well-received public speeches. In **El Salvador**, similar training courses on the development of the National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 were provided.

5.1.2. Skills training

Ahead of elections and other potentially violent events, it is crucial that women are trained in skills that promote and maintain peace. One organization in **Uganda**, the Women's Situation Room (WSR), led a public media campaign to encourage peace during the 2016 and 2021 electoral processes. The WSR organized a variety of training for many different groups, including journalists, youth leaders and local police forces. The aim of training journalists was to ensure that media reporting and incident responses would contribute to a de-escalation of violence. Thousands of women and young leaders in all four regions of Uganda were also trained on conflict resolution and as election observers. Crucially, the trained observers were from different parties and could appeal to a cross-party audience.

In a powerful example from **Burundi** that had wide-ranging impact, the BLTP trained a national network of over 500 women mediators in 2014, with support from UN Women, called the Network of Women Actors of Peace and Dialogue. They were trained in mediation and

conflict management skills that they were able to use in conflict resolution within their wider communities, which was of particular value during the election period. The mediators have gone on to be recognized in local government structures and are consulted on a regular basis. The network has also gone on to encourage other women to join and become involved in peacebuilding activities.

Training programmes aren't always uncontroversial. In **Myanmar**, Mu Nang Wai Wai Htun faced persecution from the military regime when she provided citizenship training to youth leaders. Through the efforts of MySoP and despite the risk of further harassment by the authorities, Mu Nang Wai Wai Htun was later able to receive training herself through another programme, the Democracy School, which improved her skills, confidence and knowledge, along with those of the other attendees, with respect to participating in political processes. She commended the training programme, saying: *'This multiparty setting enables us to strengthen our trust and cooperation across party lines, something not possible a generation ago in Myanmar'.*

The Gender Equality Network (GEN) in **Myanmar** also conducted trainings on many aspects of women's leadership. The content was wide-ranging, from ending gender-based violence and discrimination to more technical issues, including the adoption of gender quotas in elections. By promoting women's participation in political life, raising consciousness about their rights and challenging gender norms, the training course built skills and encouraged women to be more involved at all levels of peacebuilding, conflict resolution and mediation.

5.1.3. Training political stakeholders

Project partners also provided training for political stakeholders, including political parties and politicians. Training political parties is an effective way for introducing changes that will impact directly on levels of participation by women. This requires gender equality to be a priority for the political party – or, at least, a party must want it to be seen as a priority. In **Honduras**, nine of the fourteen parties were trained by NIMD Honduras. The training programme, called the Democracy School, covered a wide range of topics dealing with democracy, including training for women in politics on their political rights. By training participants to be trainers for future sessions, the programme also ensured its own sustainability.

The success of this work has led to a law being passed in **Honduras**, the Electoral Law of 2021, which stipulates that training must be provided for political participation. The advocacy and dialogue skills learned by the programme participants played a role in the adoption of this legislation, as they lobbied for those electoral reforms, reforms that acknowledge the need for gender parity on electoral slates and the required associated training.

Women parliamentarians in **Guatemala** were trained, with expert facilitation, on a number of political, economic, social and technical topics concerning women's rights policies that they could have an impact upon. This led to greater knowledge about a legislative agenda that would be conducive to progressive, gender-transformative change.

The Myanmar School of Politics Programme in **Myanmar** continues to train its past participants, including candidates and politicians, with the focus on communication skills, electoral campaigning and analyzing the political landscape. Through this and another EU-funded democracy programme, they have developed written guidance for political parties on gender equality in politics and provide training on inclusion and gender-sensitive policy reforms. One specific result is that women politicians are motivated and empowered to continue participating more freely in politics.

In **Colombia**, various training processes have been implemented that are designed specifically for women leaders, candidates and elected officials, on topics such as the Colombian electoral system, gender parity, violence against women in politics and other matters. These trainings aim to promote women's political participation on equal terms and, by harnessing their skills and knowledge, raising their esteem among political decisionmakers. The training led to the creation of 'Equality Routes', an intra-party initiative to help women overcome obstacles to their political careers. These Equality Routes require a commitment from political parties to sponsor training and also to raise awareness among men.

5.1.4. Approach

An important aspect of the training offered is the justice and equality-based approach: local organizations ensured courses were gender-sensitive, with at least half of all trainers and participants being women. Also taken into consideration were gender-specific barriers to participating, such as the fact that sessions were scheduled so women would not have to travel alone at night. The training programme content was also built around exploring the gendered impact of conflict and other gender norms, contributing to a shift in perceptions of women's leadership abilities in conflict-prevention and peacebuilding at different levels. The training also took into account the obstacles faced by other marginalized groups – not all women face the same obstacles, and other groups face different barriers to participation.

Civil society engagement at all levels of training, from development to delivery, was also an important part of the training. This created stronger links between politicians and civil society and strengthened the local organizations' relationships with the community.

5.1.5. Challenges

Training courses do not come without their own difficulties, and there are always barriers to voluntary work. Women will often have many duties in their homes and the communities and have a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. This means that the time needed to attend training courses and travel to the venues – time that could be used to generate income – can be a significant deterrent. There are ways to minimize this, including providing stipends, childcare support and holding trainings at convenient times and places, but it cannot remove that barrier altogether. Social norms and expected gender roles in communities must change for all training to be truly accessible.

Furthermore, once women and people from other marginalized groups have been encouraged and choose to take up leadership roles, they face additional barriers. The training provides women with technical knowledge, political skills and even an awareness of political violence, but this does not prepare them to endure a hostile environment. Even when women have broken through into influential roles in peace processes, the political spaces have been created for men, who are resistant to change, sending a clear message that women are not welcome. The result is that a high proportion of women do not seek re-election at the end of a term and conclude their political journey earlier than they might have wished. An important takeaway from this is that it is important to provide resilience and selfcare-training and to continue to support women in their journey as decisionmakers, and to create networks of peers so that women support each other by sharing experiences and concerns.

5.2. Network building

Women with increased skills who understand their rights are able to bring about immense changes in their communities and countries, but if they do not have the support of their community, national actors and other activists, they face an uphill struggle with inadequate resources. Bringing together groups of motivated activists to be educated on political skills and rights relating to peace, creates natural networks that are instrumental to peacebuilding and sustaining democracy. Networks, whether organic or formed as part of the programme objective, and the act of strengthening existing networks, form crucial spaces and act in conjunction with training and other activities.

5.2.1. Capacity building for community networks

The mediation training in **Burundi** generated further benefits beyond just the training. Members of the Network of Women Actors of Peace and Dialogue were subsequently trained by the BLTP in entrepreneurship, enabling them to encourage community members to join savings and credit associations as a way of fighting poverty. When these women met to discuss savings and credit associations, they had the opportunity to exchange ideas and solutions to the different challenges a community faces. The mediation training, together with the network strengthening has led to a robust and effective team of women mediators, with a number of men also aboard. They availed themselves of the full benefits of networking to also strengthen the network's capacity and cohesion. The result is that many conflicts are now handled at community level, and local courts are no longer overwhelmed by family conflicts, as fewer community-level conflicts have to go to court. Urgent issues are more easily resolved, thanks to the authority commanded by the mediator networks and the fact that they can operate at a more rapid pace, including responding to a number of emergency situations, such as supporting survivors and victims of sexual violence through counselling and other care.

The Women's Situation Room in **Uganda** was also able to make best use of their network to promote peace, using a peer-to-peer approach that meant the network's messages could be widely spread. It also platformed influential women within the network to communicate to the media and hosted town hall meetings to plan for the elections and call for peace and calm during the election period. Over 20 million people were reached through the efforts of the network.

5.2.2. Building networks: parliamentary forums

Following an election, other types of networks are necessary to support women parliamentarians in achieving their objectives and delivering gender-equality policies. The Parliamentary Forum of Women MPs of the Congress of the Republic was formed in **Guatemala** following the work of NIMD Guatemala. The benefits of a cross-party network enabled greater dialogue on key women's rights policies. Women's rights organizations have been able to provide technical support to the Forum, including analyzing budget amendments and other legislation. One specific activity was a regular parliamentary breakfast, where civil society was able to provide training more easily to parliamentarians across the political spectrum.

MySoP set up a women's caucus network in the conflict-affected region of Shan State in **Myanmar**, providing peer-to-peer support and sharing knowledge. Members of the caucus reported that they were able to build relationships based on trust, interact with diverse members, including ones from other parties, and promote a gender-equal legislative and policy agenda as a result of the network. As a member of the Myanmar National Committee on Women (MNCW), GEN in **Myanmar** participated in a number of technical working groups for the implementation of the 2013-2022 National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW), co-chairing and leading the working groups that promoted the work of the MNCW, along with a number of other women CSOs. Through

this, they could directly approach key decisionmakers and advocate gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting to government ministries, parliamentarians, and all relevant stakeholders.

Women's rights organizations can also provide support to existing parliamentary networks. NIMD **Honduras** facilitated strategic planning sessions with women MPs to arrive at a joint legislative agenda. NIMD also provided training to and improved the visibility of women parliamentarians through its work with the Women's Forum of Honduran Political Parties. They were able to highlight the role that women have played in politics, reducing political violence and gender-based abuse. Through this forum, women parliamentarians were able to push through electoral reforms that would ultimately commit resources to and support initiatives concerning gender equality. One key clause was that electoral slates must consist of an equal proportion of women and men.

5.2.3. Civil society networks

During the peace negotiations in **Colombia**, women came together in order to effect an influence upon the process, an influence that had previously been wholly absent. The National Summit of Women and Peace led to a gender sub-commission for the inclusion of women and the adoption of a gendered perspective for the remainder of the talks. NIMD Colombia next built further networks by supporting the Observatory on Violence against Women in Politics. The Observatory brought together important political stakeholders, including the Presidential Council for Women's Equity, and became a reference point for actors working on this issue. By linking to the work of other networks, NIMD became well-known and was able to give evidence to the nation's Congress in public hearings. Eventually, it was appointed as the technical secretariat for a panel of experts in the Special Electoral Mission, acknowledging the importance of NIMD Colombia and its expertise. Civil society in **Myanmar** also benefited from network building, with GEN taking on a pioneering role in establishing the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP), which mobilized women activists, women's rights organizations and women parliamentarians to coordinate their Women, Peace and Security activities. The benefits of a collective effort are clear, and individual activists were able to share their experiences and build informal personal relationships within a dedicated space.

5.2.4. Challenges

The cases set out in the country-level papers demonstrate the importance of existing women's rights organizations, given that the absence of such groups can prevent effective network building. While women's rights organizations can and do arise anywhere, the lack of capacity and resources means that they are unable to cover all regions of a country to an equal extent. Without a national platform, there cannot be the level of coordination required for truly transformative campaigns.

GEN and AGIPP are both networks of women's rights organizations and in some ways they have been successful in how they were established and are recognized for their expertise in **Myanmar**. However, ultimately the lack of Government interest has proved to be a major barrier to the networks having a real impact. Where they aimed to performatively demonstrate commitment to gender equality, the authorities only invited government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) to be involved in securing the participation of women in peace processes. These GONGOs did not truly challenge the Government to push for a better role for women in peace processes. The grassroots and independent organizations were consequently not well represented in formal peace negotiations, despite their immense efforts.

In the case of parliamentary forums, the benefits aren't always straightforward. In **Guatemala**, the Parliamentary Forum of Women was targeted by political opponents, and divisiveness between members caused the forum to break down for several years

between its establishment in 2016 and its revival in 2020. Part of that pushback was related to the anti-corruption initiatives that the Forum championed, though there was also direct and personal harassment aimed at the president of the Forum in relation to her sexual orientation as a lesbian. This is a prime example of the need to consider the intersectional ways in which women parliamentarians are targeted and how they can face obstruction, both in different ways. Women from other marginalized groups, especially oppressed ethnic or religious minorities and older or younger women, will face the same difficulties that other women parliamentarians face, together with additional barriers.

The contrasting issue is that networks and the media work they undertake can appear to be too closely linked to the Government and oppressive groups. This happened in **Uganda**, where opposition parties and some of members of public criticized NIMD and the WSR for the media messages aimed at the public, while the state was harassing its citizens and organizations. This reduced public trust in NIMD; careful strategic advocacy must be undertaken to maintain clear impartiality, where appropriate, and to avoid aligning with harmful state-sanctioned actions.

5.3. Community & citizens

Effective networks and forums provide a base level of solidarity and support that can enable women peacebuilders and women's rights activists to do their work. Beyond this, an environment supportive of peace and of political activism is crucial. Without pressure from their constituents, key decisionmakers will often lack the political will to listen to activists. Raising public awareness and creating an interest in the issues at stake is another important aspect of peacebuilding.

5.3.1. Community activism

The women mediators trained in **Burundi** by the BLTP, with support from UN Women, were from the community and so truly understood the context and people that they went on to serve. They were already involved in this type of work, working in women's rights organizations and human rights organizations, and the training built on those skills. Working with the whole community is also important – raising awareness of women's rights issues with both women and men helps to change the social norms that result from the absence of participation by women. In **Honduras**, the contextual patriarchal expression of 'machismo' contributes to the lack of faith in women's ability to lead. This is directly linked to political violence against women, which saw a decrease after the work by NIMD Honduras to increase confidence in and respect for these women.

5.3.2. Awareness raising

The work of NIMD El Salvador focused on raising awareness of the activities performed by Salvadoran women with citizens and, ultimately, aimed at having a Government audience. A powerful multimedia project, telling the stories of women and girls during and after the conflict, was used to broadcast the activities. The project was rooted in numerous published reports that explored the actions and interventions required to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in the country. The final report identified the need for recognising women in peacebuilding and maintaining peace in **El Salvador**.

The outcome was a book and a touring photographic exhibition, relating the accounts of women survivors of the conflict, the mothers of the disappeared who are searching for their children, and all these women's efforts to bring about peace and justice. The evocative campaign was featured in many fora throughout the country, including cultural centres, Government offices, embassies, public spaces, and city halls. It was also shared with military officials.

Sharing stories of people who were affected by the conflict was the core of the project. Another activity collated the accounts relating to a specific battle through short documentaries, interviews, video analyses and a museum exhibition. The document was screened as part of training sessions and also shown to military and government audiences. By presenting the stories in this innovative way, NIMD El Salvador and the women involved were able to demonstrate the nuanced and complex nature of how conflict affects individuals and communities. NIMD El Salvador also supported the creation of a digital archive of the stories, relating the experiences of women during the armed conflict in El Salvador and their contributions to peacebuilding.

By highlighting the roles of women in **El Salvador** in conflict, peacebuilding and political efforts, this project exposed the unrecognized work of women and girls in peacebuilding. Too often, women's stories are excluded from the narrative that society constructs around a conflict. By raising awareness of the real efforts made by women, decisionmakers are able to see the importance of participation by women in peace processes, negotiations and post-conflict politics.

Another outcome of the project was that ongoing injustices were kept alive in public consciousness; by giving visibility to the 'disappeared', women activists have been able to obtain greater support for their search for missing family members. Promoting

these stories has led directly to cases of families reunified and institutional backing for the activists' important work. All of these results relate to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 by creating a historic memory, giving visibility to unresolved cases and encouraging women to participate more in the processes that impact upon them and their communities.

Women's organizations in **Colombia** also worked together in the Committee for the Promotion of UN Resolution 1325 to bring awareness to the work of women in peacebuilding, and have called for the state to recognize the work of women's rights activists in maintaining the peace. Additionally, the research reports produced by NIMD Colombia showcase the challenges that women face throughout their political journey.

5.3.3. Elections

In **Burundi**, women representatives of political parties found that the lack of resources constituted a barrier to mobilization, network building and providing training. The need for safe spaces to hold meetings and other important sessions saw them raise funds together and rent a space in which they could organize. The national party acknowledged the success of that endeavour and supported the women's objectives of being elected to different levels of public office.

The Democracy School, and subsequently the MySoP Alumni Forum, supported individuals in **Myanmar** in respect of learning specific skills for setting up their own campaigns, both through workshops and their network. An example is Mu Nang Wai Wai Htun, who said, *'I feel much more confident to run for the 2020 state-level election as a candidate myself'*. The project created safe spaces to mobilize and share knowledge within the political parties and with women across the political spectrum. Mu Nang Wai Wai Htun went on to champion progressive legislation for women, using the skills she developed from the training as a basis for her knowledge of policy.

5.3.4. Challenges

Despite the excellent examples of raising community awareness, it is not always a simple task to change entrenched gender norms. The expected roles of women and the reticence of people to vote for women exists throughout society, including among women themselves. Activists in **Honduras** and **Colombia**, for example, experienced challenges in trying to break these cultural patterns and gender stereotypes, despite the great progress made in their work engaging communities. This gender inequality is a systemic issue endemic to all parts of the world and all communities – not just those mentioned in this report – and cannot be overturned overnight. Women activists noted that they need more than just the skills alone, but effective allies too (often men) who can implement change at all levels.

Even where women's political participation is encouraged, the individual women often do not recognize the work that they do in their communities as being equivalent to the formal political positions disproportionately held by men, and do not recognize the fact that their own skills can be transferred to different levels. This attitude can be countered by designing awareness programmes that specifically demonstrate the links between community work, such as local charity work and school parent councils, and political skills. Unfortunately, by increasing the visibility of the difficulties women experience in the sphere of political participation, women may also be dissuaded from active involvement, as they become more aware of the challenges and likely abuse that they could face. This is the trade-off that comes with the necessary and important awareness-raising work to inspire the next generation of women political actors and to improve the environment. The networks discussed in this paper did to some degree mitigate this issue by creating community support systems and opportunities for sharing experiences and solutions.

6. Recommendations

Across all the countries featured and all the different cases explored in this paper, the common theme is the need for greater support for women peacebuilders. These activists are willing, personally motivated and can be greatly effective in promoting and maintaining peace. Their efforts are bolstered and more women are empowered to participate if they have the training, networks and societal support that has been detailed in this paper. Among the direct impacts are reduced conflict in communities, changing attitudes to women's leadership and stronger and more widespread networks throughout the countries in question. Furthermore, the implementation of UNSCR 1325 was supported, and the development of the UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan frameworks. However, many of these initiatives do not have the human, technical or financial resources to sustain their work.

The country-specific papers address the various stakeholders that are responsible for peace and democracy in their countries, and identify a number of specific actions that can be taken by national governments, political parties, civil society and the international community. The case studies and lessons explored throughout this paper form the basis for these recommendations.

Recommendations suggested by consortium partners and contributors to this project include:

For national governments

- To include in their annual national budget specific amounts designated for actions related to guaranteeing the national application implementation of UNSCR 1325, including a fully costed National Action Plan (NAP), and to include the gender perspective in peacebuilding within national government institutions as part of the implementation of and compliance with UNSCR 1325, in order to be able to meaningfully perform the NAP activities as well as monitoring, evaluation and learning.
- To engage in an inclusive comprehensive consultative process with all stakeholders before passing laws that affect the population as a whole.
- To consistently share a unifying discourse, which invites people to come together and discourages provocative acts by any parties that could lead to ethnic divisions.
- To promote community dialogue initiatives that engender a culture of democracy and the peaceful resolution of potential causes of conflict, as well as discussions on peace and security issues.
- To encourage women's economic empowerment, an approach that allows women to support themselves and not be wholly economically dependent on spouses and/or male family members. These are also opportunities to promote their participation in the governance of these associations and the country.
- For electoral institutions to take on the responsibility and role as guarantors of women's rights in politics, to constantly monitor and evaluate compliance by political parties with the law.
- To set a minimum quota for women in decision-making roles and in parliaments.
- To undertake gender-inclusion audits in order to assess how women are involved, in what ways and at which levels, and how gender as a policy concern can be integrated into programmes or activities.
- In the case of Myanmar, to support the implementation of the NSPAW and ensure that it serves as the framework for a future Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan.
- To implement practical solutions to reduce barriers to women's participation in the peace processes and allocate funding and resources to enable women to participate.

For political parties and institutions

- To strengthen women's parliamentary caucuses and women's causes in congress and/or parliament, not only through training, but also through structuring, planning and providing financial resources that allow the women's agenda to be implemented nationally.
- To promote more inclusive electoral reforms for women, not only at a congressional level, but at all levels, such as presidential and municipal levels.
- To promote programmes that reduce violence against women in politics, as well as to raise their participation levels and create more inclusive spaces.
- To sensitize men on gender equality and violence faced by women involved in politics, including actions they can take to challenge it.
- To promote women's political participation, with dedicated resources and training to implement initiatives, improve equality mechanisms and promote women's campaigns.
- To establish clear preventive, sanctioning and mitigating mechanisms in regard to violence against women in politics, improving reporting and disciplinary processes.

For civil society and women's rights organizations

- To combine awareness-raising on the content of UNSCR 1325 with other interventions and tools to stimulate women's struggle and perseverance against the social obstacles dictated by patriarchy.
- For women's rights organizations working on Women, Peace and Security issues to come together and build a network that acts as an interlocutor on women's participation issues.
- To continue to strengthen and create women's networks, and ensure they are sustainable and have the capacity to perform local and national activities.
- Local and national organizations must engage in peacebuilding initiatives as blocs, as opposed to individual entities, as that exposes them and makes them liable for shortcomings, turning them into easy targets.
- Local and national organizations must form coalitions to enable them to engage in peacebuilding as a bloc with a common interest, to avoid being targeted by governments.
- To address gender stereotypes, norms and assumptions within communities, to change the attitudes towards women in leadership roles.
- To undertake gender-inclusion audits in order to assess how women are involved, in what ways and at which levels, and how gender as a policy concern can be integrated into programmes or activities.
- National NGOs and CSOs must focus on women's participation and gender inclusion in peace processes.
- To conduct training courses on gender and women empowerment, focusing on Women, Peace and Security issues.
- To organize regular public awareness campaigns promoting women's participation in peace processes.
- To advocate at national, regional and international levels in order to pressure the authorities, policymakers and decisionmakers with respect to the inclusion of women in peace processes.

For the international community

- To actively promote the inclusion of women in peace negotiations and peacebuilding, using international frameworks, including UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and CEDAW.
- To speak out on issues related to violence against women, discrimination and harassment.
- To undertake gender-inclusion audits in order to assess how women are involved, in what ways and at which levels, and how gender as a policy concern can be integrated into programmes or activities.
- To ensure gender-power analyses are consistently included in peace processes, as these peace processes are ultimately about power.
- To support the development and implementation of Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans.
- To promote the participation of women in peace processes and integrate gender analysis into their work.
- To convene an international WPS funding group to promote information exchange and the coordination of WPS activities and funding.
- To establish periodic dialogue for the purpose of improving the flow of information relating to women's participation in peace processes.
- To engage in global WPS networks so as to combine efforts and resources to share knowledge and best practices, supporting WPS networks.

Using the findings garnered in this paper and in the work already undertaken, the key stakeholders that support women's peacebuilding efforts – governments, political parties, national institutions and civil society organizations – can and must step up their work. Where existing peace programmes are being implemented, these recommendations must be integrated. Where an initiative is being developed, these recommendations can form the basis of a truly gender-transformative peace programme. The varied roles of women as peacebuilders must be recognized, valued and supported.

7. Consortium members and project-funder

Burundi Leadership Training Program

The Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP) is a non-profit organization registered in Burundi. Its overall goal is to build leadership capacity in Burundi, aimed at both women and men. The BLTP assists politicians, political parties, as well as future political and civil leaders in acquiring tools and techniques for non-violent communication, negotiation and conflict management. NIMD's collaboration with the BLTP began in 2008, and since then they have carried out multiple programmes dealing with party capacity support, dialogue between political actors and schools of politics. Gender considerations are always integral to the BLTP's work, and specific projects have been aimed at women leadership at the community level, as well as women within political parties, encouraging them to develop priority agendas and ways to advocate those agendas.

Gender Equality Network Myanmar

Gender Equality Network (GEN) Myanmar is a diverse and inclusive network of over a hundred civil society organizations and national and international NGOs, all working to bring about gender equality and the fulfilment of women's rights in Myanmar. The organization was first formed in 2008 in response to Cyclone Nargis, under the name of the Women's Protection Technical Working Group. Since then, GEN has evolved to become the leading network organization addressing the transformation of norms, systems, structures and practices in order to enable gender equality and gender justice in Myanmar.

Gender Action Peace and Security

Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) is a UK-based network of development, human rights, humanitarian and peacebuilding NGOs that lobby on key issues relating to UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. Hosted by Women for Women International, it supports international advocacy on Women, Peace and Security. GAPS will specifically support the international knowledge, lobbying and advocacy programming for the LEAP4Peace Consortium, in partnership with NIMD, and connect this to the work taking place on advocacy in the programme countries.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

The LEAP4Peace project is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) is an international NGO based in The Hague, the Netherlands, and also serves as the head office of the NIMD global network. Since 2000, NIMD has worked on democratization, inclusion and dialogue programmes in over 30 countries around the world. NIMD has experience in implementing large multiannual multi-country programmes aimed at capacity building for CSOs, facilitating dialogue between political actors, and supporting women's political participation. It is important to stress that NIMD always works with all political parties using a non-partisan approach. For instance, NIMD mobilizes political actors to assess and identify their own organizations' internal barriers to women's participation, and to design and implement regulations for overcoming these barriers. Notably, between 2014 and 2017 NIMD implemented the 'Respect for Women's Political Rights (WPR) programme' under the Dutch MFA Human Rights Fund, and considers the inclusion and participation of women in politics as a key priority in this Multi-Annual Strategy for 2021-2025.

Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy Colombia

NIMD Colombia was established in 2014 as a country office of NIMD. Previously, it had worked closely with partners such as International IDEA, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Cordaid to implement its programs. Over the years, the Colombia office has grown to become an important actor in the democracy support landscape in Colombia, implementing several projects focused on peacebuilding, democracy education and women's political participation and dialogue. All programmes are aimed at strengthening Colombian democracy and at increasing the levels of representation, promotion, inclusion and political participation of underrepresented groups in society. In recognition of this role, NIMD was named as the international verification organization for overseeing the application of the Agreement on Political Participation of the Peace Agreement (2016).

Further information about the LEAP4Peace Consortium can be found at https://nimd.org/programmes/the-leap4peace-consortium/

LEAP4Peace Consortium