

Women's Voices Forward: Building Peace Across Continents. Lessons and Experiences from Burundi, Colombia and Myanmar.

"Behind everywoman leader there is a support network"

This outcome document presents the key findings and strategic recommendations, emerging from the LEAP4Peace closure event on advancing women's participation in peace and politics, held in Bogota on 7-11 July 2025. The event brought together practitioners, women peacebuilders, women politicians from Burundi, Colombia, Myanmar, the UK and The Netherlands.

This event was convened by the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and NIMD Colombia, and the LEAP4Peace partners: Burundi Leadership Training Programme (BLPT), the Gender Equality Network Myanmar (GEN), Gender Action Peace and Security (GAPS), NIMD Myanmar and supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. Taking place 25 years after the adaption of the UNSCR 1325 and amid global challenges of increased militarisation, conflict, and budget cuts to women's organisations, the event provided a critical platform to assess progress and strategies, confront persistent barriers and provide recommendations for future programming to fully implement the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

1. Key progress achieved towards women's participation in peace and politics

Women leaders at the grassroots level are taking ownership of the 1325 resolution and driving its implementation in their communities. In Colombia, the NAP 1325 was approved in 2024 after a participatory process where women in all their diversity were consulted on their priorities. While Women advocates, from national to local and grassroots levels, are successfully pushing for Women, Peace and Security agenda points to be integrated into local development frameworks. The NAP 1325 on WPS provides a key tool for advocacy and for women to advance their participation in peace and politics in their communities and regions. Meanwhile, in Myanmar, women peace builders and leaders are creating vital community spaces where they educate and mobilize other women around the principles of Resolution 1325, fostering collective understanding and action.

Multi-party women's spaces and multi-stakeholder safe spaces in Burundi, Myanmar, and Colombia have significantly enhanced the visibility, legitimacy, and capacities of women politicians, peacebuilders, and peace ambassadors. In Myanmar, women peace ambassadors and peacebuilders networks bringing diverse women together in safe spaces, have emerged as a critical force where women are engaging in mediation of conflict in their communities, directly engaging with Ethnic Armed Organizations, and building foundational support for women as critical actors in peace processes and the transition to democracy. In Burundi, women politicians at grassroot level are engaging in multi-party village and saving loans associations, increasing their financial autonomy to engage in politics. In Colombia, the multi-party women spaces at district level in Bogota and nationally, have allowed the strengthening of women's leadership and joint agendas. The multi-stakeholder approach has expanded their access to key stakeholders, vital information, referral networks, and essential resources needed to advance their peacebuilding work.

Advocacy and commitment to peace and gender equality by women political leaders has driven the transformation of political actors and spaces. Women political leaders engaging in women multi-party spaces have successfully exchanged on practices, learnings and joint agendas for gender equality in politics. Women engaging in these spaces have successfully advanced advocacy efforts and positioned their voices within their own political parties in Colombia, fundamentally contributing to a shift on how these institutions approach gender equality and women's participation. This sustained advocacy has contributed to significant legislative victories, including the passage of the law 2453 against violence against women in politics in Colombia approved and sanctioned in 2024, subsequently creating legal frameworks that protect women's political participation.

Local women voices and realities are informing global spaces while global frameworks like UNSCR 1325 provide a tool for advocacy at local level. The visibility of both Myanmar and Colombia contexts has increased substantially in international forums, amplifying women's voices from these conflict-affected regions. The relevant experience and journey of the Colombian women's feminist peace movement provides key strategies on achieving women's participation and gender mainstreaming in the peace agreement of 2016. The realities of women in the frontline of Myanmar humanitarian crisis and conflict are needed to inform international engagement to facilitate an exit to the crisis that supports civil society's priorities. This work has strengthened the critical connection between local realities and global policy discussions, ensuring that women peacebuilders' perspectives reach international decision-makers. By bringing women's voices to international platforms, advocates have created vital channels for grassroots experiences to inform high-level diplomatic and policy responses.

3. What is needed to respond to the current global context

The global rise of authoritarianism, conflict and militarisation is dismantling democratic institutions and civic spaces essential for women's political, peace and security work. Military solutions are being prioritised over inclusive dialogue processes, and budget aid cuts are affecting mostly women's rights organisations. The intensifying gender backlash is rolling back progress on women's rights and participation. This backlash manifests through targeted attacks on women politicians, restrictions on civil society organisations and pushback on progressive language, among others.

To respond to these enormous challenges, it's essential to continue supporting women's leadership at all levels. Women leaders possess the legitimacy and deep community trust necessary to build resilient, peaceful, and sustainable democracies from the ground up. **Supporting women's leadership requires moving beyond conventional training approaches. True support means recognizing and amplifying women's existing active roles in politics and peacebuilding, creating enabling environments and providing the protection needed** for women to leverage their leadership to deliver comprehensive solutions to sustain long-term peace.

Equally critical is the need for organisations committed to gender equality, peace, and inclusive societies to **actively resist and push back against regressive forces**. This resistance work requires courage, resources, and coordinated action to protect the gains achieved and prevent further erosion of women's rights and leadership roles. Below are some key recommendations.

3. Recommendations

- **Continue funding and supporting women spaces and the protection of diverse women's leadership.** As budget aid cuts materialize, it's essential that when resources are channeled through multilateral organisations, these remain accessible to local women's organizations.
- **In the midst of conflict, continue to invest in women's leadership and their political advocacy,** including the safety and protection mechanisms needed.
- **Open and democratise international spaces for women's participation from local perspectives.** Invest in movements across countries and the local and global connection to activate the collective power of local diverse voices for women from different contexts to build joint agendas, strategies and messages.
- **Consider peace beyond security and military defence.** Women contribute with broader concepts of security and peace for greater sustainability, such as: **human security, spiritual peace, mental health, healing.**
- **Ensure an intersectional approach to inclusive peace and politics is promoted.** Raising women's voices are not enough. **Women need to claim decision-making spaces and not be confined to gender sub-commissions or women only spaces in peace processes and in politics.**