



IN BRIEF



THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA: ENHANCED PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN ETHIOPIA

Photo: UN Women/ Catianne Tijerina

Background and overview

UN Women Ethiopia Country Office organized a workshop, *The Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Enhanced Participation of Women in Peace and Conflict Resolution in Ethiopia*, from 2 to 3 December 2021. The workshop had the objective to increase understanding of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda among civil society organizations (CSOs) and government entities and to increase these stakeholders' awareness of the importance of developing a National Action Plan (NAP) on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. In line with UN Women's commitment to supporting the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Ethiopia, this policy brief has been developed to capture the key findings and recommendations of the diverse presentations and discussions of the workshop. UN Women believes that the findings and recommendations forwarded by presenters during the workshop can provide valuable input to all key stakeholders working to promote the WPS agenda, particularly the Government of Ethiopia, which has already embarked on the critical process of developing a NAP on UNSCR 1325.

The workshop consisted of research paper presentations and interventions by UN Women and other experts, as well as facilitated discussions among participants. UN Women presented the WPS agenda, its international framework - ten UN Security Council resolutions adopted between 2000 and 2019 - and its main components: four strategic pillars of prevention, protection, participation and relief and recovery. The presentation also discussed the benefits of implementing a NAP on Women, Peace and Security, as well as the different steps of the process. In addition, UN Women gave an overview of a recent assessment on the engagement of different actors

in the country on the WPS agenda. This assessment demonstrated low stakeholders' awareness, knowledge and engagement. Therefore, there is a need for capacity building, improved coordination, practice sharing and networking to ensure stakeholders' robust involvement in implementing the WPS agenda.

Four academic research and discussion papers were presented to ensure evidence-based information and discussions on the current situation in the country and the legislative, policy and programmatic needs in the future. **Enguday Meskele** presented a paper titled *A Glimpse into Hidden World of Women in Situation of Armed Conflict and Displacement: Reflective Analysis of Protection against Sexual Violence under International and National Laws in Ethiopia*, which analyzed the extent to which the Ethiopian legal framework protects women from conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). **Mulugeta Tesfaye Teshome** presented a paper titled *Protecting Women in Conflict Zones: The Urge for Women Sensitive Recovery Programs in Northern Ethiopia*. The paper studied the prevalence of conflict-related gender-based violence (GBV) in conflict-affected areas in the Amhara region and whether recovery programs have been gender-sensitive in order to address the need for gender-sensitive relief and recovery programs in the region.

Yakob Tilhaun Yimer's paper titled *Awareness of Ethiopian Parliamentarians (MPs) to Support the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda* surveyed Members of Parliament on their knowledge, perception and attitudinal capacities to support the WPS agenda in Ethiopia. He also analyzed the potential contribution of parliamentarians as key actors for

implementing the NAP through legislation, oversight and budgeting. Finally, **Wubrest Fantahun**'s paper titled *The Undervalued Role of Women Human Rights Defenders in Supporting and Contextualizing the WPS Agenda in Ethiopia* discussed the role and contributions of Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) in the implementation of the WPS agenda in Ethiopia, the challenges they face and the need to implement international frameworks to protect WHRDs.

Key Findings and Recommendations

General recommendations

- Adopt a National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000) in Ethiopia. The NAP must integrate other existing relevant policies, plans, frameworks and strategies relevant to peacebuilding issues in Ethiopia. It must comprehensively include all four pillars of the WPS agenda and be developed in broad consultation with relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, with sufficient resource allocation for its implementation.
- Increase and institutionalize the effective participation of women in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution, and political processes. Support nationwide awareness-raising and capacity building activities to this effect.

On the legal framework to protect women from conflict-related sexual violence

Findings

- Sexual violence is a prominent feature of armed conflicts, and allegations of widespread sexual violence have been made against all parties of the conflict in Northern Ethiopia.
- Ethiopia is a party to international human rights law, humanitarian law and criminal law frameworks that prohibit the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war. However, the national normative framework falls short and does not provide adequate protection from and prohibition of conflict-related sexual violence and allows perpetrators to live with near-complete impunity.
- The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and CSOs can play an essential role in ending impunity for conflict-related sexual violence through human rights monitoring and advocating for a robust legal framework.

Recommendations

- Revamp the national legal framework, including the amendment of the criminal code to domesticate provisions of international legal instruments to provide adequate coverage for international war crimes and crimes against humanity. In addition, strengthen the Government's institutional capacity to protect women from conflict-related sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence and ensure accountability for perpetrators.

- Conduct regular human rights monitoring and investigations to ensure the protection of women from sexual and other gender-based violence in conflicts, redress and access to justice.

On conflict-related gender-based violence in the Amhara region

Findings

- Gender-based violence, including sexual, physical, and psychological violence, is widespread in conflict-affected areas in the Amhara region. In addition to physical harm, this has caused women and girls in the region to suffer from emotional trauma and economic hardships.
- Women are inadequately protected from GBV in the conflict-affected areas of the Amhara region and lack the means to seek judicial redress for the violence and harm they were exposed to.

- In addition, shelters and camps for internally displaced persons in the regions are overcrowded and have inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, insufficient nutritious food and lack of health and social services, including access to sexual and reproductive health services. As a result, internally displaced women and girls are exposed to physical insecurity, gender-based violence and are highly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Recommendations

- Establish effective mechanisms to protect women from GBV/CRSV in the Amhara region and in the country more widely and ensure timely access to comprehensive quality services for the survivors.

- Ensure that post-conflict recovery plans actively promote and support women's effective participation in peacebuilding, conflict resolution and economic reconstruction. Women's needs, concerns and changed realities must be included in economic development plans, demobilization, disarmament and reintegration.

- Assess women's significant role and contributions in conflict resolution mechanisms and identify opportunities for their meaningful participation and contribution to formal and informal peace processes.

On the Members of Parliament's awareness of the WPS agenda

Findings

- Surveyed Ethiopian MPs, elected in the 6th general election in Ethiopia in 2021, have some knowledge of the WPS agenda and are able to set it in the larger context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national development goals. However, there is significant variation in terms of MPs' self-assessment of their level of competency to realize the WPS agenda.

- Ethiopian MPs generally lack an in-depth understanding of the different constituting elements of the WPS agenda, including the resolutions that form it, its pillars and the role of a National Action Plan. However, they show a positive attitude towards the agenda and the Parliament's role in implementing it.

Recommendations

- The Parliament is a key actor and has a critical role in domesticating the WPS agenda and other related frameworks through legislation, oversight and budgeting. Therefore, it is essential to provide training, a space for dialogue and awareness-raising targeted at parliamentarians on the WPS agenda and the Parliament's role in it.
- Other government entities and stakeholders should work alongside the Parliament to carry out the WPS commitments in Ethiopia

On Women Human Rights Defenders' role and challenges in supporting the WPS agenda

Findings

- Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) have a vital role in promoting human rights and sustainable peace in pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict situations. They operate at the frontlines of conflicts and at the grassroots level, providing relief, advocating for peaceful and inclusive conflict resolution and monitoring progress.

- The protection of and support to WHRDs is affirmed in the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in resolutions of the UN General Assembly and The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

- In addition to similar risks and violations that all human rights defenders face, WHRDs working in peace and conflict resolution face sexual and gender-based violence both at home, in public and online. The lack of protection, justice, and fair and timely trials amplify their risks. Moreover, online sexual harassment and threats of sexual violence create additional obstacles to their full engagement and are insufficiently addressed by legislation.

Recommendations

- Domesticate International commitments to protect WHRDs and review and reform legislation to ensure WHRDs' right to protection and participation.

- Assess the role and participation of WHRDs in conflict resolution mechanisms in Ethiopia and strengthen their contribution to conflict resolution and peacebuilding at the grassroots level through social institutions and ceremonies.

- Take concrete action to ensure WHRDs' safety and the possibility to operate in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, including through awareness-raising on their role and rights. In addition, systematically document violations against WHRDs and take timely preventive action.

Disclaimer

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