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Norway in Uganda
Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kampala

POLICY BRIEF

Women's Participation Key to
Realization of Peace and Security
in Uganda



Photo credit: UN Women

Introduction

This policy brief highlights the findings of a study conducted in Uganda to establish knowledge, perceptions and how UNSCR 1325 has been implemented. The brief highlights the study findings in relation to UNSCR 1325 Pillar of women’s participation in peace building processes. The Participation pillar calls for increased participation of women at all levels of decision-making, including in national, regional, and international institutions; in mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict; in peace negotiations; in peace operations, as soldiers, police, and civilians; and as Special Representatives of the U.N. Secretary-General. The pillar is overarching and all-encompassing and critical for the realization of all the other pillars. This policy brief outlines the challenges women face in participating in peace building and suggests the roles different stakeholders can play in enhancing women’s participation in peace building processes.

UN member states implement UNSCR 1325 through development of a National Action Plans (NAP).



By 2021, ninety-eight (98) countries globally had formulated NAPs that would aid in the realization of the Women Peace Security agenda. Uganda has demonstrated this commitment on UNSCR 1325 through the development and implementation of the first National Action Plan (NAPI) 2008–2010, the second NAP 2011–2015 and now the third NAP 2021 - 2025. These NAPs have also led to the creation of the Local Action Plans in the different districts across the country. Where the latter have not been formulated, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is committed to supporting local communities to develop their local action plans.

Uganda's NAP III WPS 2021 – 2025 aims at ensuring sustained peace and security through enhanced meaningful participation of women in peace and development processes. Specifically, Uganda's NAP III aims to: Prevent all forms of violence and

promote peace within families, communities and the nation; Promote meaningful participation of women in leadership and governance at all levels; Strengthen the capacity of women to mitigate and prevent natural and human made disasters; and strengthen the institutional and coordination mechanism for WPS agenda at all levels. With regard to women's participation, NAP III emphasises not just the presence, but effective presence and participation of women in the WPS agenda. NAP III foresees a theory of change put in practice where women can be key drivers of peace and security processes that ensure sustainable and long lasting peaceful societies.

Methodology

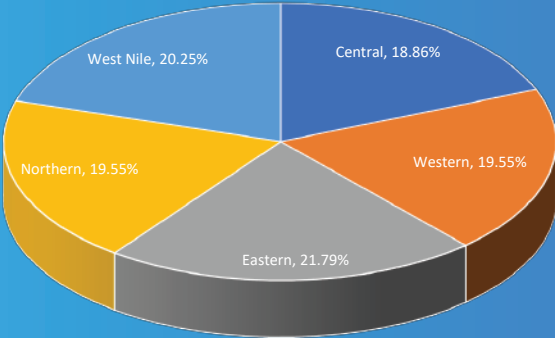
The study was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to ensure that they augmented and complemented each other for optimal results. Additionally, desktop research on the resolution was undertaken to draw on how other countries were implementing and strengthening the resolution. Five thousand questionnaires were administered in twenty-five districts across all regions in Uganda. A total of 365 key informant interviews and 75 focus group discussions were conducted

Findings from the Study

Of all the 4 pillars, the participation pillar is where there has been comparatively greater traction. This is attributed to the conducive policy framework and particularly the Affirmative Action which provide for women's representation at all levels of decision-making. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Development Partners (DPs) have also been credited for their instrumental role in actualizing women's participation in peace building processes.

As indicated in the figure below, Women’s participation in the three districts of Kamuli, Moroto and Mayuge which posted the highest scores at 80.6, 76.4 and 74.9 percent respectively, was attributed to the work of influential women leaders and the work women organisations that actively mobilized and supported the establishment of grassroot women groups, thereby widening opportunities for women’s activism and leadership. All of these efforts culminated in awareness and appreciation of the role of women in peace and security. The outcomes of NAP III focus on increased capacities of women in areas of transitional justice, mediation and negotiation skills, land rights and conflict. In supporting the WPS agenda, the Government of Uganda will ensure this continued meaningful participation of women in issues that affect them. Women participation in decision making is bound to be increased in security, social cultural and religious spaces and dialogues on security around the country (MoGLSD, 2021).

Regions' Levels in Participation Pillars



The study established that although women’s representation in decision-making spaces has increased substantially, entrenched patriarchal norms, resource constraints and capacity gaps arising from their relatively lower literacy levels continue to limit women’s effective participation. Further interrogation shows that despite being represented in peace building processes (negotiation, mediation, conflict resolution), women do not wield much influence. Women’s views are frequently ignored and their presence is mostly symbolic. The study also established that women’s participation is most visible in informal and community level peace building processes and particularly those parallel to women’s caregiving roles i.e., welfare issues and family conflicts

Several constraints that inhibited women’s strong participation in peace building processes were highlighted by the study. The most striking factors outlined were limited levels of education, socio-cultural values, lack of resources both financial and material and limited space for inclusion in peace and security discussion and activities.

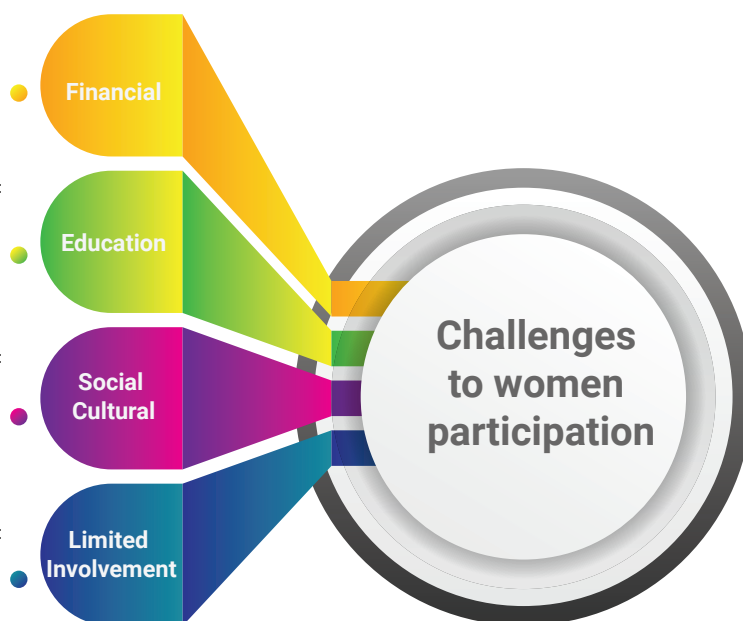
Challenges to women's participation in Peace and security initiatives

Due to insufficient funding, programmes for women's peace building are not well resourced. This has affected capacity building of women leaders and activities at district and in the sub county level

Socialisation and their lower education/ literacy levels affects women's confidence to assert themselves and articulate their views

Unequal power relations and gender bias are pervasive and women are perceived as 'incompetent'. Men sometimes resist ideas brought forth by women.

Women are disproportionately represented in leadership positions relative to men. For example, one woman may represent two sub counties compared to one man per sub-county.



Conclusion

According to Arnstein (1969), there are eight levels of participation in a model that is popularly known as 'the ladder of citizen participation', with each level corresponding to the extent of the citizens' power in determining the end product (Soen, 1981:108). The eight levels of participation are: (1) Manipulation; (2) Threplay (3) Informing (4) Consultation (5) Placation (6) Partnership (7) Delegated Power and (8) Citizen Control. From the findings, the study concludes that women in the districts surveyed are mostly operating on levels 1 and 2; and that they lack the both the economic resources and political influence to participate effectively. Patriarchal gender norms remain the biggest restriction to women's leadership and meaningful participation in decision making processes. NAP III envisions enhancement of women's participation and visibility in leadership, something that is bound to enhance their political empowerment. This calls for policy shifts and recommendations as suggested below.

Policy recommendations

01

Government

Enhance women empowerment both financially and economically: : More effective women's participation will be realized when women can make financial and economic decisions to participate in initiatives that advance humanity's agenda. In line with its commitments to WPS as demonstrated by the development of NAP III WPS 2021 – 2025, Government should allocate funds to support its implementation which will ensure socio-economic empowerment of women. While some gender policies in the Uganda Police Force (UPF) and the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) have been implemented, there is a need to support institutional systems and structures that enhance gender equality in both the public and private sectors.

02

Enhance the education levels of women by advocating for the closure of the literacy gap between men and women. This will prepare them for leadership positions and enable them to make meaningful contribution. This should entail ensuring that education programs are gender responsive in regard to planning, budgeting, and programming; including allowing the many young girls who got pregnant during COVID-19 lockdown to go back to school to further their education. In this regard, policies like the affirmative action, UPE and USE can be used to support more girls in school.

03

Socio-cultural and Religious Institutions

Address the discrimination against women in religious institutions by emphasizing religious teachings that empower women participation at different levels. Deliberate effort should also be made to enable women to engage more in activities beyond the normally perceived feminine roles. NAP III calls for social cultural values, practices and perceptions that are aligned to human rights standards. This calls for face to face engagement with these institutions to enhance women's meaningful participation in the WPS agenda.

04

Address the socio-cultural and religious factors that impede the roles of women: The failure to address these socio-cultural and religious factors may continue to reflect negatively in the low degree of women's participation and the weak gender-responsiveness of national policies.

05

Development Partners

Advocate for gender responsive systems and structures at all levels of society.

05

Academic Institutions

Makerere University Rotary Peace Center together with other departments and institutions of higher learning should continue building women's capacity and all other players as well as provide evidence based data as a critical contribution to the realisation of OUTCOME 2 of NAP111 (NAP 2020:20).

UN Women

UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls. UN Women operationalizes this through Flagship Programming Initiatives (FPIs) developed to achieve transformative results for gender equality and women empowerment. One such FPI is the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) programme through which UN Women, with funding from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Uganda, aimed to achieve the following results:

(I) Overall Policy: An enabling environment for implementation of WPS commitments is created;

(II) Conflict Prevention: Women participate in and inform decision-making processes & responses related to conflict prevention;

(III) Conflict Resolution: Representation and leadership of women is increased in formal and informal peace negotiations; and

(IV) Peacebuilding & Recovery: The socioeconomic recovery & political participation of women and girls are promoted in post conflict situations.

As part of this programme UN Women supported the Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development to develop the Third National Action Plan WPS 2021 – 2025.

For more information on UN Women's work in Uganda please visit

<https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/eastern-and-southern-africa/uganda>

and follow us @unwomenuganda on twitter.

Makerere University Rotary Peace Center

Makerere University is the second top Research University in Africa with 90 percent of research publications in Uganda. The University hosts a number of globally recognized centers of excellence including the first Rotary Peace Center on the African Continent.

UN Women with funding from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Uganda supported the Rotary Peace Centre to implement a project on strengthening the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Uganda with a particular focus on research and training. Through this partnership, Makerere University conducted a study on perceptions knowledge and implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Uganda. Results of the study have been used to develop training curriculum for the Judiciary, Parliament, Security sector, Local governments, CSOs, Religious and Cultural leaders on implementation of UNSCR 1325. For more information on the Rotary Peace Center at Makerere University please visit: Website: <https://rpc.mak.ac.ug/>, Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MakerereRotary>,

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/MakerereRotary>, LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/makerere-university-rotary-peace-center/>



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