
Localising Women, Peace and Security:

Taking a different approach to partnering with and resourcing women's organisations in fragile settings to enable locally led and integrated WPS interventions

Policy and learning brief



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Overview

Resourcing change: Supporting women's organisations in fragile and conflict-affected settings

Under the 'Resourcing Change' project,¹ Saferworld, Women for Women International (WfWI), Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), and WILPF Nigeria receive funding from the UK Government's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) to support women's rights organisations (WROs)² in Yemen, South Sudan and Nigeria.

The findings from the 'The Key to Change'³ 2020 research project, which preceded Resourcing Change and informed its design, offer recommendations and insights to donor governments and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) to fulfil their women, peace and security (WPS) commitments by supporting WROs in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS). Findings from this research – also funded by the CSSF – formed the basis of evidence-based recommendations to guide the international community in better fulfilling its commitments to localisation and to implement the WPS agenda through support for an independent and strong civil society. One of 'The Key to Change' project recommendations called for donors to implement a truly flexible and inclusive funding model, including through the provision of core funding, and a 'more holistic, integrated and context specific approach to WPS priorities, themes and focus areas of funding ... for [WROs]' self-defined priorities rather than those of donors.⁴

¹ Women for Women International; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; Saferworld (2022), 'Resourcing change: Supporting women's rights organisations in fragile and conflict-affected states, Policy and learning brief', October (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1406-resourcing-change-supporting-womenas-rights-organisations-in-fragile-and-conflict-affected-states>)

² Throughout this brief we refer to WROs, civil society organisations (CSOs) and organisations – this includes formal and informal, registered and unregistered associations, platforms, networks, groups, community groups, movements and organisations. This definition is used to ensure the work recognises the essential work of the range of groups and organisations who undertake vital women, peace and security (WPS) work at all levels.

³ Gender Action for Peace and Security; Somali Women Development Centre; Saferworld; WfWI; Women's International Peace Centre (The Peace Centre); WILPF Nigeria; and Womankind Worldwide (2020), 'The Key to Change: Supporting Civil Society and Women's Rights Organisations in Fragile and Conflict Affected Contexts'.

This research was undertaken by a consortium of organisations including the above-named. The research report, funded by the UK's CSSF, sets out recommendations for modalities to fund, support and strengthen WROs and CSOs, as well as enable the UK, CSSF Africa and the international community – including donors, multilaterals and international non-governmental organisations – to better understand the challenges and opportunities for WROs and CSOs working on peace and security issues in Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria and globally.

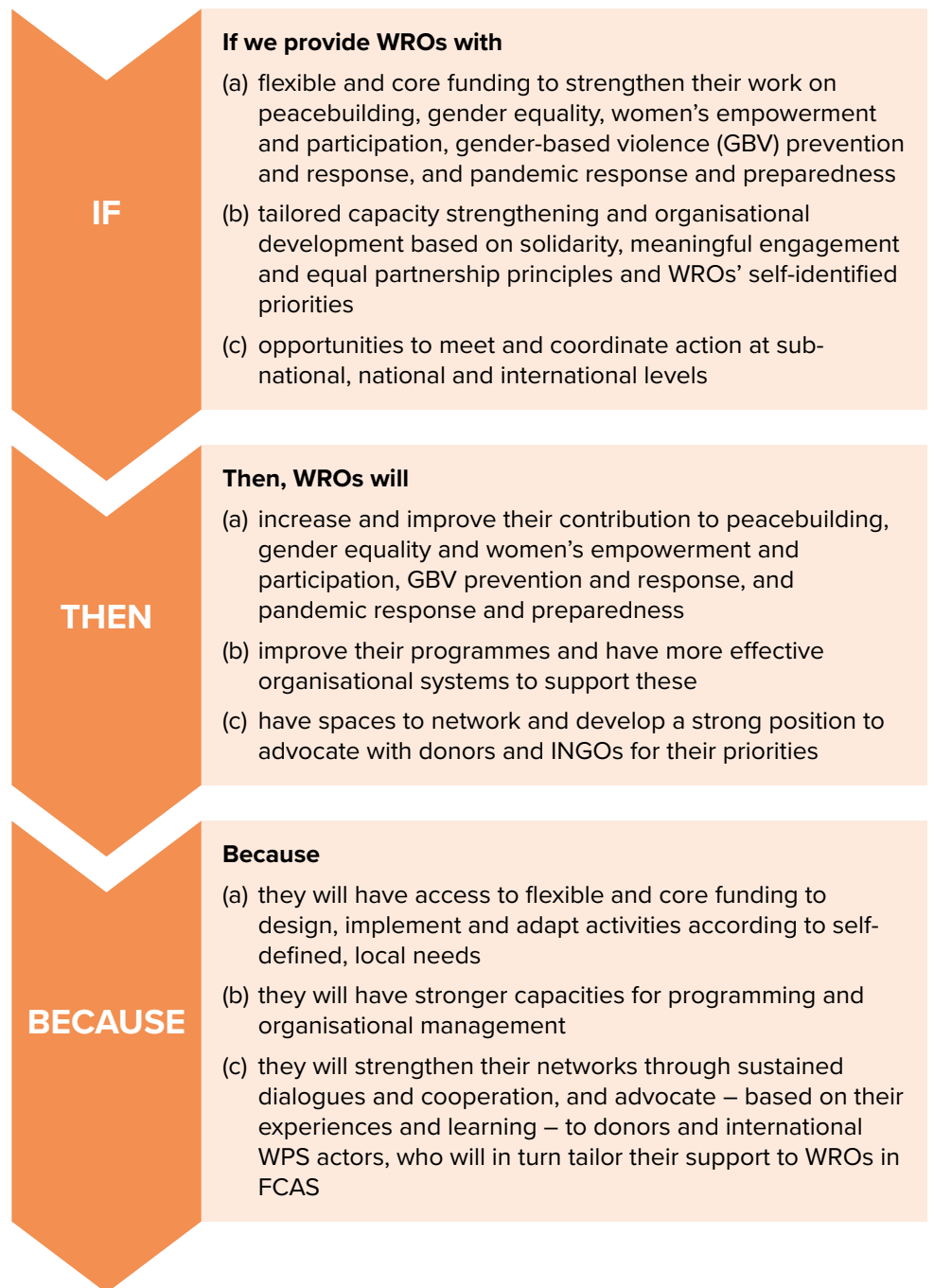
⁴ Ibid.

WROs in Resourcing Change advanced WPS in the following countries:

- **South Sudan**
 - National Action Plan (NAP) 2015–2020
 - Second NAP for 2023–2027 in progress
- **Nigeria**
 - NAP 2013–2017
 - NAP 2017–2020
 - Third NAP in progress
- **Yemen**
 - NAP 2020–2022

Subsequently, CSSF released a call for proposals to fund WROs in FCAS using the principles, recommendations and funding modalities highlighted in the research. Between November 2021 and March 2023, the Resourcing Change project provided 21 WROs in Nigeria (10), South Sudan (5) and Yemen (6) with an average of £30,000 each in core, flexible and accessible funding. This funding has enabled these WROs to respond to self-identified and -prioritised community needs and priorities to promote and advance the WPS agenda. The project also dedicates separate funds for WROs to pursue self-identified capacity-strengthening priorities through trainings or peer-to-peer learning, and to advance their movement-building work locally, nationally and among other WROs participating in the Resourcing Change project. The project is in its second year, and has adapted in response to learning generated during its [pilot phase](#) and first year of implementation.

Figure 1: Resourcing Change theory of change





Supporting WROs in fragile and conflict-affected states to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda

The WPS framework and implementation guidance calls for the identification and involvement of women’s rights networks and civil society in implementing the WPS agenda.⁵ Strengthening WROs’ capacity to not only meaningfully **participate**, but also **govern and lead** their own WPS work, is fundamental to advancing the WPS agenda across all pillars and to sustaining any progress made against WPS objectives within a given initiative or project.

‘A remarkable – and disturbing – 99% of gender related international aid fails to reach women’s rights and feminist organizations directly. Three-quarters of the funding never leaves development agencies themselves, and the remaining money that does goes almost entirely to mainstream CSOs and INGOs.’⁶

Even the little international aid and funding that reaches WROs in FCAS does not usually cover core costs, organisational capacity building, overheads or security, which leads to high staff turnover and difficulties in recruiting professionals to support organisational core

functions such as finance, monitoring, evaluating and learning (MEL), and fundraising, thus further impacting their abilities to access funding and compete with international organisations.

Compounding this challenge is the reality that working on and advancing the WPS agenda in FCAS requires flexibility and adaptability in the face of evolving security and regulatory environments, and rapidly changing needs. Local WROs are well-suited to adapt to these evolving needs and security situations. However, donor funding models are typically ill-suited

⁵ United Nations (UN) (2022), ‘Women, Peace and Security: Study submitted by the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), E.03.IV.1, May (<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/sq2002.htm#WPSstudy>)

⁶ Miller K, Jones R (2019), ‘Toward a feminist funding ecosystem’, The Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID), October (<https://www.awid.org/publications/toward-feminist-funding-ecosystem-framework-and-practical-guide>)

‘A remarkable – and disturbing – 99% of gender related international aid fails to reach women’s rights and feminist organizations directly. Three-quarters of the funding never leaves development agencies themselves, and the remaining money that does goes almost entirely to mainstream CSOs and INGOs.’

to accommodate an adaptive work plan or support the type of civil society strengthening and movement-building work needed to sustain WPS advances within these contexts. The WROs participating in the Resourcing Change project noted that their ability to respond promptly and effectively to evolving needs and priorities in fast-changing contexts increased the trust of communities, government officials and duty-bearers, strengthening their relationships and partnerships. The strengthened relationships with leaders and duty-bearers increase the WROs’

effectiveness in influencing local officials, increasing their own participation in peacebuilding efforts and decision-making spaces, and in implementing WPS activities.

A shift in funding and partnership models to include coverage of core costs, movement-building and technical support, and self-identified organisational capacity strengthening activities is key ‘to ensuring inclusive peacebuilding efforts which tackle root causes and shift the power dynamics that perpetuate conflict and violence’.⁷ Providing direct,

long-term, core and flexible funding to WROs is crucial to advancing the WPS agenda across all pillars and ultimately to building a peace rooted in gender equality.

This brief will provide evidence, examples and analysis to illustrate the links between WROs’ self-identified community needs, their priority areas and the WPS agenda.

⁷ Marib Girls Foundation; Root of Generations; ToBe Foundation for Rights and Freedoms; Women Advancement Organisation; Women for Change South Sudan; Yemen Women Union (2021), ‘Building peace rooted in gender equality: funding for autonomy’, Saferworld: December (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/news-and-analysis/post/980-building-peace-rooted-in-gender-equality-funding-for-autonomy>)

The Women, Peace and Security agenda

Underpinning the WPS agenda is a call for the international community to consider a broader, more inclusive and intersectional definition and approach to ‘security’. This broader conceptualisation emphasises human security and a continuum of peace in which actors who are often excluded and marginalised within FCAS – including women and gender-diverse individuals – can define what peace and security mean to them and their communities.

This WPS approach has implications for how the international community engages within environments representing all stages of the conflict cycle, including social and economic reconstruction. Reconstruction processes can cement or uproot existing social structures and inequities; and a commitment to inclusion at all stages of conflict and post-conflict decision-making supports transformative and sustainable peace processes.

The global WPS agenda is often referred to and implemented in alignment with its four pillars: **Prevention, Participation, Protection, and Relief and Recovery**. However, as with most approaches to peace and security or gender equality, these pillars should not be considered as independent silos. Often, the pillars are interdependent and/or overlapping across the spectrum of human security. Furthermore, to truly achieve

change, the work within and across these pillars must take place at multiple levels such as the individual, interpersonal, community, organisational, systemic and institutional, legal, and policy levels.

As such, civil society and WROs often take a holistic, participatory, context-driven and grassroots approach to WPS and building inclusive peace. This approach reflects the understanding that women and girls are not a monolith and that strong civil society and socio-political movement-building are essential to achieving and sustaining peace and security, gender equality, and advancing all four pillars of the WPS framework, at all levels.



Prevention

Calls for improving intervention strategies in the prevention of violence against women, including by prosecuting those responsible for violations of international law; strengthening women's rights under national law; and supporting local women's peace initiatives and conflict resolution processes.



Participation

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 UN Secretary-General.



Protection

Calls specifically for the protection of women and girls from sexual violence and gender-based violence (GBV),⁸ including in emergency and humanitarian situations such as in refugee camps.



Relief and Recovery

Calls for advancement of relief and recovery measures to address international crises through a gendered lens, including by respecting the civilian and humanitarian nature of refugee camps, and considering the needs of women and girls in the design of refugee camps and settlements.

⁸ The term 'sexual and gender-based violence' (SGBV) is sometimes used.

WRO approaches and areas of work advancing WPS



1. Strengthening WROs' organisational capacity to govern and lead independent WPS work

One of the key learnings from supporting WROs in the Resourcing Change project has been the rapid impact that donors and INGOs can have on WROs if they make core and flexible funds and resources available to them to engage in movement-building and capacity strengthening work. Such resourcing and prioritisation of this work, within their objectives, has enabled WROs to establish strong relationships, work jointly towards common goals, and enhance the effectiveness of their individual and collective WPS work beyond the end of the project.⁹

Examples

Nigeria

Many of the WROs that received Resourcing Change funding in Nigeria invested in organisational capacity strengthening activities. For example, the Coalition for Promotion of Gender Justice strengthened their institutional capacities to improve internal management systems to better support their fundraising and project implementation.

The Coalition for Promotion of Gender Justice also used funding to expand their networking activities, including engagement within the coalition and with other partner WROs working on preventing, redressing and ending GBV, which strengthened their movement-building capacity.

Many of the WROs in Nigeria included supplementary capacity strengthening activities in their Resourcing Change projects. This investment strengthened their own capacity to achieve individual and collective impact in line with their own mission(s) and enabled them to collaborate and network with other WROs within regional and national WPS spaces. Partners working to address GBV in Nigeria made contacts and looked for opportunities to work together across different geographies to standardise and merge their referral systems as appropriate. They also planned joint advocacy and systems-change, as outlined later in a case example in section 4, when they jointly lobbied for and achieved the adoption of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) national law at the state level.

⁹ Women for Women International; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; Saferworld (2022), 'Resourcing change: Supporting women's rights organisations in fragile and conflict-affected states', October (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1406-resourcing-change-supporting-womenas-rights-organisations-in-fragile-and-conflict-affected-states>)

South Sudan

In South Sudan, Women for Change (WFC) has a mission to prevent GBV and promote peaceful existence and an inclusive environment for women and men. WFC used its flexible and core funding to strengthen the capacity of its staff in writing proposals, leadership and organisational management, MEL and effective reporting mechanisms. This resulted in the development of its first strategic plan, a fundraising strategy and organisational policies.

WfWI reports that the increased capacity and institutional stability resulting from their investment supports their sustainability and impact in the community. WFC shared that community leaders and members are distrustful of organisations that are unable to sustain their work and follow-through on their plans or commitments. WFC currently co-leads the GBV sub-cluster in Warrap State, which enables them to work with the State Ministry of Gender, Child and Social welfare to organise and

coordinate state-level meetings and activities, provide trainings and support to other women-led organisations, and obtain updates from the national cluster lead and disseminate the information during meetings at the state level. This is a significant role for WFC and has increased the visibility of their work and objectives. More generally, it has increased the reputation and credibility of WROs to lead on this work and for WROs to have more decision-making power on state issues of gender and women. WFC also indicated that improved staff performance and organisational growth strengthened their holistic efforts to advocate for the inclusion of WPS programmes in community security initiatives, particularly in the protection and prevention of GBV. Their strategic approach and increased capacity and intentionality is contributing to a transformative and conducive working space for women and men and more collaborative and productive working relationships. For example, several partner

organisations, including WFC, formed community-based protection networks (CBPNs) to advocate and take action to address security and protection concerns by raising awareness, providing information, and engaging in referral systems for the protection of vulnerable women. Previously, women and men worked separately on community protection issues. However, after an inclusive training provided by WFC to facilitate the set-up of the community protection network, men and women are now working together on these issues across the 25 CBPNs throughout Yei River County, South Sudan.

Like WFC, other WROs across the three project countries reported a cascading effect from capacity strengthening initiatives conducted by the consortium partners, noting that the staff who participated in these activities were in turn able to train their colleagues on the job.

WROs also reported a link between receiving core

funds and their ability to strengthen movement-building, collaboration and coordination as needed. For example, in South Sudan, Jonglei Women Empowerment used funds for a safe and dedicated office space which has now become the main meeting space and centre of operations for other mission-aligned WROs in that location, serving as the venue for joint activities held to mark '16 Days of Activism' in 2022.

Yemen

In Yemen, Wogood for Human Security (Wogood) and Peace Track Initiative (PTI) were among the few organisations in the project who chose to invest their funds primarily in movement-building. While a WPS NAP was drafted for Yemen in December 2019, it has been heavily criticised for not consulting grassroots activists and Yemeni civil society organisations (CSOs), and therefore failing to respond to the needs and realities of many women and girls. Wogood identified a pressing

need for a bottom-up approach to WPS in Yemen, one which advances women's participation in political decision-making and peacebuilding. Wogood used the funds to advance the development of a strategy for a grassroots Yemeni feminist movement to support and build a strong foundation for feminist partnerships that would be better positioned to lead just such an approach to WPS.

Through its core and flexible grant, Wogood funded a strategic planning session, training sessions and held a feminist summit to advance women's empowerment as a basis for the feminist movement and lay the foundation for a grassroots approach to WPS in Yemen. The movement has already gained considerable traction among power-holders and is seeking to expand outreach, build momentum and affect change at the sub-national level. PTI used the flexible funds to provide trainings to Yemeni women to strengthen their leadership skills and decision-making capacities. It works towards ensuring that more women can participate meaningfully

in political negotiations and in decision-making processes that impact women's political and economic lives. As a result of the project, PTI noticed more receptiveness to the feminist movement and women's political participation at the Southern Transitional Council level. The anticipated result of creating space for the feminist movement and women's political participation in local councils is that peace processes and security decisions will be more inclusive and achieve greater human security for all, including those most vulnerable in the communities that these grassroots networks and organisations represent.

The use of an intentional and inclusive movement-building and capacity strengthening approach towards the WPS agenda inherently advances the participation of marginalised groups such as women, girls and gender diverse individuals. However, WROs frequently leveraged their strengthened networks and organisations to collaborate and advance one or

more WPS pillars – beyond the Participation pillar – including the many focus areas covered in this brief.

When WROs can use resources and technical support and accompaniment to strengthen their organisational capacities, they are able to lead more effectively and independently at different levels across all strategic WPS priorities and pillars. The organisational capacity strengthening and movement-building work that WROs prioritised included:

- **Systems capacities**
 - Financial management training
 - Safeguarding
 - Security and safety management
 - Results-based monitoring and evaluation
 - Outcome harvesting
 - Proposal development and fundraising
 - Procurement
- **Staff training and development**
 - Leadership skills
 - Strategic planning
 - Project design and implementation
 - Human resources, including compensation and recruitment
- **Relevant technical and topical expertise**
 - Gender-sensitive conflict analysis
 - Feminist governance
 - Advocacy and policy influencing measures
 - Peacebuilding and mediation
- **Movement-building and strengthening networks and relationships**



2. Investing in women's economic and social empowerment

Many WROs prioritised economic and social empowerment interventions in recognition that women in conflict and post-conflict communities face unique barriers to economic participation; and that the broader economic inequalities within FCAS that disproportionately affect women also pose barriers to their ability to participate meaningfully in advancing the WPS agenda.

First, financial insecurity is a barrier to women's social and political participation in their communities and in society, including in peacebuilding and conflict prevention at different levels. Evidence demonstrates that strengthening women's awareness, skills and respect in the community can increase decision-making power and agency at the individual, household, community and societal levels.¹⁰ In other words, increasing women's economic independence and skills directly impacts their ability to also meaningfully participate in decision-making at all levels, including in relation to conflict, peace and reconciliation.

There are often gendered legal and cultural barriers to women's economic participation that affect them, their families and communities, as well as macroeconomic insecurity that results from the instability arising from conflict. Furthermore, men are more often directly involved in armed conflict, which may claim their lives – or, if they do survive, they might be left traumatised or with disabilities that prevent them from working. This frequently leaves women with increased livelihood responsibilities within contexts that already present barriers to their economic participation and security.¹¹

¹⁰ Boserup E (1970), *Women's Role in Economic Development* (New York: St. Martin's Press) (via [Occasional Paper Series – Women's Economic Participation \(georgetown.edu\)](https://www.gewps.org/occasional-paper-series-womens-economic-participation-georgetown-edu/))

'Nearly fifty years ago, economist Ester Boserup was among the first to link economic independence to women's improved status in the family and community. When women earn, they gain both voice and choice, many for the first time in their lives.'

¹¹ Quek Y (2019), 'Women's Work in Fragile & Conflict-Affected Countries', GIWPS, 2 April (<https://giwps.georgetown.edu/womens-work-in-fragile-conflict-affected-countries/>)

Peacebuilding and gender-transformative approaches that include women's skills-building, literacy (including financial literacy), and which address systemic barriers to women's economic and societal participation, collectively build their power and agency and contribute to the **WPS Participation** pillar.

Second, there is strong evidence linking economic insecurity and the prevalence of GBV, particularly intimate partner violence (IPV).¹² COVID-19 exacerbated this dynamic in many contexts where lockdowns prevented women and men alike from earning an income and increased financial instability and IPV.¹³ In communities

with high household financial instability, often the case in FCAS, there tends to be a higher incidence of GBV. Thus, supporting economic and financial programmes for women – and using a community-led approach that includes risk mitigation – also addresses the **WPS Protection** pillar by preventing GBV and protecting women and girls from such violence before, during and after conflict and emergencies. Given that GBV is a major direct and indirect barrier to women's meaningful participation in decision-making,¹⁴ women's economic empowerment interventions advance both the **Protection** and the **Participation** pillars.

Finally, strengthening women's financial skills and reducing barriers in the way of their economic participation upholds

women's economic rights – including the right to work, to control resources, and in decision-making¹⁵ – which in turn increases a country's overall economic stability and fulfilment of other development agendas.¹⁶ Upholding and strengthening frameworks for women's human rights are critical components of the **Prevention** and **Relief and Recovery** pillars to mitigate rights violations before, during and after conflict.

¹² Breiding MJ, Basile KC, Kleven J, Smith SG (2017), 'Economic Insecurity and Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Victimization', *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 53 (4), pp 457–464 (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2017.03.021>)

¹³ Peterman A, Potts A, O'Donnell M, Thompson K, Shah N, Oertelt-Prigione S, van Gelder N (2020), 'Pandemics and Violence Against Women and Children', Center for Global Development, April (<https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/pandemics-and-vawg-april2.pdf>)

¹⁴ Coalition for Women's Economic Empowerment and Equality (2020), 'Preventing and Responding to Gender-Based Violence, a Critical Component of Economic Development and Women's Economic Empowerment', International Center for Research on Women, December (<https://www.icrw.org/publications/preventing-and-responding-to-gender-based-violence-a-critical-component-of-economic-development-and-womens-economic-empowerment/>)

¹⁵ Sujata M (2014), 'Remarks by Sujata Manohar', *Proceedings of the 116th Annual Meeting (American Society of International Law)*, pp 108, 259–262 (<https://doi.org/10.5305/procanmeetasil.108.0259>)

Examples

Women Advancement Organization (WAO), South Sudan

Since gaining independence in 2011, South Sudan has experienced civil war, climate challenges (for example droughts and floods), and COVID-19, and ‘remains impacted by fragility, economic stagnation, and instability’.¹⁷ While there is no available comprehensive disaggregated data¹⁸ on national labour force participation and poverty specifically, the country is still heavily reliant on humanitarian aid, with women and girls most affected by the economic stagnation and instability. There is also a clear context of gender inequality indicated by high rates of conflict-related violence, the highest maternal mortality rate in the world and

the fact that over 50 per cent of women are married before the age of 18.^{19,20}

Recent research, including the seminal ‘What Works to Prevent VAWG’ studies, also highlights the high prevalence of GBV in South Sudan,^{21,22} and the importance of linking GBV work with peacebuilding and state building work.²³ These studies highlight **Protection** challenges affecting South Sudanese women following cyclical war, conflict and the continued presence of military and security officers. These challenges include non-partner sexual violence (NPSV), but importantly also include IPV. The continued prevalence of NPSV and IPV is linked to the cycles of conflict faced by South Sudan since 2011, including intercommunal conflict or displacement to Protection of Civilians sites, but also to the economic instability and deep-rooted patriarchal

norms in the communities.

In South Sudan, the WAO used its flexible and core funding under Resourcing Change to increase women’s economic independence through skills development, vocational training, Village Saving and Loan Associations training, and building digital literacy among women and youth to better use economic empowerment technologies. WAO also used funds to provide graduates with start-up packs to sustain women’s and girls’ economic independence following their participation in skills development and training. WAO’s multipronged efforts targeted what it perceives to be a key barrier to peace, development and women’s participation: extreme poverty and lack of livelihood opportunities, especially for women. In addition to increasing women’s economic power and reducing barriers

¹⁶ Golla AM, Malhotra A, Nanda P, Mehra R (2011), ‘Understanding and Measuring Women’s Economic Empowerment Definition: Framework and Indicators’, International Center for Research on Women ([Understanding and measuring womens economic empowerment \(icrw.org\)](https://www.icrw.org/understanding-and-measuring-womens-economic-empowerment))

¹⁷ The World Bank, ‘The World Bank in South Sudan: Overview’ (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southsudan/overview>)

¹⁸ UN Women, ‘South Sudan Country Fact Sheet’ (<https://data.unwomen.org/country/south-sudan>)

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ UN News (2022), ‘South Sudan: “Hellish existence” for women and girls, March’ (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1114312>)

²¹ Ellsberg M, Ovince J, Murphy M, Blackwell A, Reddy D, et al. (2020) ‘No safe place: Prevalence and correlates of violence against conflict-affected women and girls in South Sudan’, *PLOS ONE COLLECTION Psychology*: e0237965 (<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0237965>)

²² Women for Women International (2022), ‘Violence Against Women South Sudan Policy Brief’, (https://www.womenforwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/825-WfW_PolicyBriefs_SSudan_Final2.pdf)

²³ International Rescue Committee (2018), ‘Intersections of violence against women and girls with state-building and peace-building: Lessons from Nepal, Sierra Leone and South Sudan’ (<https://www.rescue.org/uk/report/intersections-violence-against-women-and-girls-state-building-and-peace-building-lessons>)

to their participation, WAO also provided channels for women's participation by facilitating exchanges between women in their programmes and duty-bearers in the community. This enables women to become more involved in community discussions and their capacity to influence decisions, including decisions and priorities related to community safety and security.

Women who participated in WAO's technical, vocational, education and training programme reported gaining foundational skills and knowledge to help them contribute to societal development and economic independence, which enables them to overcome the range of social and economic barriers for disadvantaged groups and individuals. WAO's holistic approach to building women's skills and literacy and to empowering them to develop

income generating activities links to the **Prevention, Participation, Protection** and **Relief and Recovery** pillars to ensure women's and girls' specific and unique relief and protection needs are met, and women's capacities to act as agents in relief, recovery, peacebuilding, and household- and community-level decision-making are bolstered.

Kefaya Foundation, Yemen

While economic independence is vital for **Participation** in most FCAS, supporting women's economic participation and income generation in Yemen is particularly challenging and critical. Over the past 15 years, Yemen has consistently ranked last or next-to-last in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index. Women's economic and political participation is particularly low,

with a 2021 rate of women's participation in the workforce of only six per cent. 'Yemeni women remain significantly under-represented in public and elected office, holding only 4.1 per cent of managerial and decision-making positions and have minimal leadership roles in national and local peace agreements.'²⁴ Even when women are included in political or peace processes, their participation tends to be limited to small, educated elite groups, which excludes more marginalised or rural groups' participation or representation.

The United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also report that – despite social norms discouraging reporting of GBV incidents – it is on the rise in Yemen due to economic, health and social stressors.²⁵ Human Rights Watch reports

²⁴ UNDP, 'Gender equality' (<https://www.undp.org/yemen/gender-equality#:~:text=Challenges%20in%20Yemen&text=Among%20the%20consequences%20of%20gender,including%20early%20and%20forced%20marriage>)

²⁵ ReliefWeb Response, 'Gender considerations in the Humanitarian Response in Yemen' (<https://response.reliefweb.int/yemen/gender-considerations-humanitarian-response-yemen>)

that violence against women has risen by 63 per cent since the conflict's onset in 2015.²⁶ Within this context, and amid a legal system and social norms which contribute to women's marginalisation, women heads of households face many unique protection issues outside the home. This is due to obstacles they face when forced, in the absence of men relatives, to take over gender roles usually associated with men to support themselves and their families. Cybercrimes targeting women are also becoming increasingly endemic, with the practice and culture of impunity contributing to the silencing of women's rights movements, and women leaders and activists.²⁷

Thus, for women in Yemen to meaningfully **Participate** in advancing the WPS agenda, including decision-making within peacebuilding, conflict **Prevention**, and **Relief and Recovery** efforts, as well as for their **Protection** from GBV, it is essential to use a holistic empowerment approach to

tackle gender inequalities, build women's skills and strengthen their systemic level of participation. This approach is necessary for the successful and inclusive implementation of the WPS agenda.

In Yemen, the Kefaya Foundation strengthens the economic participation of women – specifically widows and other marginalised women – by supporting their professional development and providing microgrants to establish their own income-generating projects. Under the Resourcing Change project, they trained women in new professions such as making incense, henna and accessories, and connected them to local bazaars to help them expand their businesses and to build connections. Acting on concerns from women about safety in public and crowded spaces, the Kefaya Foundation installed lighting and security cameras to curb harassment and improve women's sense of safety. This mutually reinforcing work supports these women's

integration into society and their sense and experience of safety, along with Kefaya's supplementary work to raise awareness of women's rights and gender equality, as well as peacebuilding and GBV prevention training for youth on the topics of conflict resolution, community engagement and awareness-raising. In this way, the work supports a more positive and enabling environment for those women seeking integration.

Skills-building and income generation initiatives are key to enhancing marginalised women's ability to meaningfully participate in decision-making at home, in the community and at wider systemic levels by advancing women's status and access to rights and resources. Kefaya's holistic approach to women's economic participation was vital for women's meaningful participation at all levels.

²⁶ Human Rights Watch (2020), 'World Report 2020: Yemen Events of 2019', January (<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/yemen>)

²⁷ Al-Yousifi, M (2023), 'The cybercrime epidemic targeting Yemeni women', *FairPlanet*, 27 January (<https://www.fairplanet.org/story/the-cybercrime-epidemic-targeting-yemeni-women/>)

Christian Women for Excellence and Empowerment in Nigerian Society (CWEENS), Nigeria

Gender equality indicators in Nigeria suggest that there is still much progress to be made to increase women's political participation, reduce GBV and strengthen women's economic skills-building. Women in Nigeria have less access than men to health and financial services and only 50 per cent of women participate in the labour force.²⁸ In poorer parts of the country, 75 per cent of girls are out of school and are not developing the basic literacy and numeracy skills necessary for economic independence.²⁹ The lifetime IPV rate for women is 22.6 per cent while the female genital-mutilation rate is 19.5 per cent. While being a member of parliament does not necessarily guarantee their meaningful participation and decision-

making, the percentage of women in parliamentary bodies is often used as a proxy for women's meaningful participation and decision-making. Even this proxy statistic suggests that Nigerian women are far from equally represented; the percentage of Nigerian women in parliament is a paltry 3.6 per cent.³⁰ These statistics fall against a backdrop of political and intercommunal militia violence, which has been rising in recent years, while the threat from Boko Haram continues unabated.³¹

CWEENS used flexible and core funding provided through Resourcing Change to strengthen the economic capacities and skills of GBV survivors. CWEENS' survivor-centred and holistic approach towards this objective included trauma counselling and psychosocial support, strengthened capacity of the

local safe house (Kamkpe House), skills-building and vocational training for survivors, and GBV prevention through awareness-raising via talk radio programmes.

Like the Kefaya Foundation, CWEENS increased women's economic participation as part of its holistic approach to protect and promote women's and girls' rights and prevent GBV in recognition of the web of crisis points in the lives of survivors of GBV, and of conflict in Plateau State, Nigeria. CWEENS' work to strengthen the economic abilities of women GBV survivors contributes to the **Prevention** and **Protection** pillars, and indirectly supports stronger social cohesion via these survivors' reintegration and **Participation** in society.

²⁸ Bro A & McCaslin J (2019), 'Nigeria's Laws Hold Women Back, and the Economy Suffers', Council on Foreign Relations, 8 March (<https://www.cfr.org/blog/nigerias-laws-hold-women-back-and-economy-suffers#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20World%20Bank,women%20to%20work%20than%20men>)

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ UN Women, 'Global Database on Violence against Women' (<https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/fr/countries/africa/nigeria>)

³¹ Kazemi E & Raleigh C (2022), '10 conflicts to worry about in 2022: Nigeria', ACLED, (<https://acleddata.com/10-conflicts-to-worry-about-in-2022/nigeria/#:~:text=During%202021%2C%20ACLEDD%20records%20a,30%25%20increase%20compared%20to%202020>)



3. Conflict prevention and peacebuilding

WROs that advanced conflict prevention and peacebuilding work under this project contributed to the WPS **Prevention** and **Participation** pillars. Preventing conflict and building peace is one of many strategies to address root causes of all forms of violence and conflict (including GBV and conflict-related sexual violence). The **Prevention** pillar also directly calls for the support of local women's peace initiatives and conflict resolution processes. This is a call fulfilled by supporting community-led WROs' participation and leadership in self-articulated peacebuilding work.

As already mentioned in section 2, WROs' work on economic empowerment indirectly contributed to peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts by removing barriers to women's individual and group or community-level participation in peace and political processes. At the

community level, a lack of funding is often a barrier for smaller and informal WROs and networks seeking to meaningfully engage and lead peacebuilding efforts in their communities. Thus, the overarching Resourcing Change partnership approach that invests in sustainability and independence for WROs who are engaging in peacebuilding activities aligns with the **Participation** pillar. It does so by removing this barrier to participation and providing flexible and core funding for women's and WROs' participation in formal and informal mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict – as directly called for in the WPS agenda.

Examples

Root of Generations (RoG), South Sudan

RoG used flexible funding to advance a holistic approach to strengthening women's participation in formal and informal women's networks in Budi and Kapoeta South Counties to address WPS issues around **Participation, Prevention, Protection, and Relief and Recovery**. RoG administers trainings on the feminist and WPS agendas, including by providing critical information about existing opportunities, mechanisms and frameworks for participation, such as the Maputo Protocol, UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, and the affirmative action condition requiring 35 per cent women's representation in South Sudan's national and local governing bodies as per the country's Revitalised Peace Agreement. This information will strengthen the women's movement and unite many voices demanding inclusion in decision-making

around all aspects of women's and girls' lives throughout the continuum of peace, conflict and recovery.

RoG's work has already yielded positive outcomes, advancing peace and security at the county level. It was asked to facilitate an inclusive intercommunal peace dialogue between the Buya and Didinga communities to address prevailing intra- and inter-community tensions due to cattle raiding and cross-ethnic boundary disputes. Local advocacy led to a County Commissioner's formal statement proclaiming zero tolerance for revenge killings and calling for security along a key transit road in Budi County, Eastern Equatoria State.

This helped the Buya and Didinga communities to agree to dialogue and to resolve their issues peacefully, leading to a mutual agreement for shared access to common grazing land. Since the agreement, there have been no reports of fighting, killings or livestock theft. The agreement also

increased the ability of people to enjoy freedom of movement without road ambushes or targeted killings by members of one community against another along main roads. These promising outcomes indicate the commitment of the two communities to implementing the peace resolution. It also provides evidence of the demand within the community for a mediator committed to an inclusive peace dialogue process that has brought together 183 representatives, including 62 women.

RoG also facilitated promising cross-ethnic dialogues between Didinga and Lango ethnic groups, who agreed on free movement and trading across ethnic boundaries for the first time in a decade in Budi and Ikotos Counties, Eastern Equatoria State. As a result of the agreed resolutions from the dialogue, the two communities make at least ten cross-ethnic exchange and trust-building visits per month to sustain the terms and conditions for peace.

RoG also fostered and built peace by strengthening two existing peace committees through refresher training and a restructuring of the committee to include more gender-sensitive perspectives and more women. These peace committees will be better equipped to mediate emerging local conflicts in both Budi and Kapoeta South Counties; RoG's work will support **Participation** and **Prevention** within this peacebuilding effort.

Women Initiative for Sustainable Community Development (WISCOD), Nigeria

In Nigeria, WISCOD works on community policing and enhancing women's involvement and community action, increasing women's participation in and experience of security and protection. WISCOD used Resourcing Change funding to first establish the women peace network (WPN) and then increase and improve the capacity of women in the network to address perceived gaps in peace and security. The capacity strengthening focused on conflict monitoring, understanding GBV reporting procedures, and building livelihood and leadership skills. Women in the peace network received targeted training on election monitoring which they deployed in the 2023 Nigerian general election; they increased their participation in existing peace structures within their communities across the border communities in Jos North and Jos South.

The WPN proceeded to advocate for the inclusion of five women as advisers to the Head Chief of Naraguta Village, significantly increasing the role of women in village affairs. The WPN is now strategically positioned to address conflict issues, including mediation amongst conflicting parties and issues like SGBV, and they see the appointed women advisors as being able to 'serve as the voice for the voiceless' with meaningful roles in community leadership. These activities are already increasing women's visibility and voices in their local peace and security infrastructures and will support women in the network to take on more active roles in governance and decision-making at the community level.



4. Legal reform and strengthening the capacity of law enforcement and other public institutions to respond to women's and girls' needs

WROs that focused on legal reform and strengthening the capacity of legal and public institutions to be gender sensitive contributed to the WPS **Protection** pillar, described in Article 8 of UNSCR 1325 as the ‘...protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, especially in constitution, electoral system, police, and the judiciary...’³² However, the WROs’ approach

to this area of work also aligns it to the **Relief and Recovery** pillar due to their focus on reforming and strengthening institutions and services specifically to serve women’s and girls’ unique needs, essentially supporting them to adopt a gender lens in service and mission delivery in conflict recovery contexts. In the context of strengthening institutions’ capacity to respond to women’s and girls’ needs around GBV, many WROs see their work aligning with the **Prevention** pillar since a survivor-centred approach addresses root causes in order to prevent further GBV, not only to address and mitigate it.

WROs across Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen focused on reforming and strengthening

the capacities of institutions such as GBV safe houses, schools and government agencies (for example, health departments), and prison and security personnel, through activities such as awareness-raising and sensitisation. This forms a core part of their work, alongside advocacy, women’s empowerment and movement-building. Advocacy includes direct engagement and action with relevant stakeholders and decision-makers who are part of formal and informal community structures and institutions. Flexible funding enables flexible and adaptive advocacy strategies, including work with public institutions advancing **Protection** and **Relief and Recovery** efforts.

32 UNSC Resolution 1325, (31 October 2000) UN Doc S/RES/1325.

Examples

Coalition of WROs in Calabar, Cross River State Nigeria

In Nigeria, the Coalition of WROs in Calabar, Cross River State identified the need to adopt and fully implement the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) national law at the state level to holistically address GBV and enhance women's and girls' security and protection. They focused on general advocacy and awareness-raising, as well as targeted outreach to major stakeholders. These efforts included lobbying the Cross River State House of Assembly for the VAPP national law to be adopted and enforced at the state level; they also carried out advocacy and lobbying activities for the law's enactment with stakeholders such as the Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, the Commissioner for Women Affairs and the Speaker of the Cross River State House of Assembly. In addition, the coalition carried out broader advocacy campaigning during

the 16 Days of Activism against GBV. The coalition successfully secured the adoption of the VAPP at the local level in Cross River State where it was passed into law by the Cross River State House of Assembly in December 2021, thus advancing Protection, Prevention and Participation pillars.³³ In January 2022, the Governor assented to the law. This was a huge outcome in such a short period of time, and demonstrates the impact of providing core funds to WROs to address their own priorities. Following the local adoption of the VAPP, several WRO partners also engaged in the dissemination of the VAPP's relevant laws focusing on women's protection issues, which has opened up opportunities to engage with duty-bearers on broader women's rights, gender equality, and inclusive security as important and interrelated goals.

CWEENS, WGRDI and WISCOD also came together to organise safe spaces for survivors in Plateau State. A notable achievement stemming from their advocacy was that the National Human Rights

Commission called for the establishment of a safe space for survivors, with the Plateau State government donating a facility (not yet operational) to be used.

³³ *Premium Times* (2022), 'Gender-Based Violence: 34 states domesticate Nigeria's VAPP Act – Official', 6 November ([Gender-Based Violence: 34 states domesticate Nigeria's VAPP Act - Official \(premiumtimesng.com\)](https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/local-news/34-states-domesticate-nigeria-s-vapp-act-official/))

ToBe Foundation for Rights and Freedoms, Yemen

The ToBe Foundation in Yemen supports women prisoners and GBV survivors in pre-trial detention and in prison. It particularly contributed to the WPS **Protection** pillar by training security personnel who are in direct contact with women prisoners. The ToBe Foundation began its work with a focus on strengthening access to justice for GBV survivors and women prisoners by supporting affected women directly through the provision of small economic grants for basic needs, legal aid services, and psychological support and relief. However, during their thrice-weekly visits to the women at the police station, the foundation discovered that the prison guards were themselves perpetuating violence against the women.

It was then that the foundation took advantage of the flexible nature of Resourcing Change's funding to adapt and broaden its work to include sensitisation and awareness-raising trainings for law enforcement officers, aiming to instil a human

rights-based approach to managing prisoners, including the following topics: the rights of detainees; how to deal with women prisoners; the procedures for detention (Bangkok Rules);³⁴ human rights; and women's issues. Through strengthened capacity and raised awareness of human rights and gender-sensitive considerations for prisoner treatment, the ToBe Foundation was able to adapt its initial approach to GBV response to support the protection of women's rights more comprehensively and effectively, particularly for vulnerable populations in prison. The training of guards (men and women) and other officials in the prison on the rights of the prisoners resulted in the reduction of beatings of women prisoners and an overall improvement in treatment by prison officials.

The ToBe Foundation also linked the pretrial 'remand' prison system administrators with the prosecutors in Aden governorate to streamline and move cases more quickly to trial, thus reducing time women spend in prisons without trial. As a result of their efforts to

streamline the coordination of this process, nine women were released from prison after their cases moved to trial. Police officers will continue to retain access to such mechanisms and open channels connecting them to prosecutors – allowing them to move forward in the trial process more quickly in the future.

³⁴ UN General Assembly (2011), 'Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules)' (March), UN Doc A/65/457



5. Facilitating women's access to sexual and reproductive health and psychosocial services

The WPS agenda calls for the incorporation of gender perspectives, and for the special needs of women and girls during conflict to be taken into account, including during the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements. In particular, the **Protection** and **Relief and Recovery** pillars call for the adoption of a gender perspective during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction; and during the design and use of refugee camps and settlements.³⁵ Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services are not solely for women and girls, but the responsibility for many of these services and medications, such as family planning, maternity care, menstrual care and new-born care, tend to fall on women and girls. In times of crisis in FCAS, women's and

girls' access to SRH services is often not prioritised, and can fall due to decreased social spending on public services – like health. This leads to exacerbated health conditions and the violation of women's and girls' right to health during conflict. Health centres and SRH providers are also often the first responders or first point of referral in GBV cases, and without trusted health professionals, services and information available, GBV incidents may go underreported or unaddressed. There is a range of SRH services that are part of the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for SRH in Crisis Situations,³⁶ which is essential to advancing the **Relief and Recovery** pillar.

Access to mental health and psychosocial services is also critical for men, women and children in FCAS due to the trauma of conflict, displacement, violence and GBV. Providing targeted and trusted support for women and girls for their unique needs is critical for their overall health and capacity to continue supporting themselves and their families.

Examples

ToBe Foundation, Yemen

In addition to the work that the ToBe Foundation does to strengthen the capacity of security and prison personnel, as described in the priority area in section 4, the foundation also supports women prisoners' well-being. Specifically, it provides women in prison with legal and financial support and basic needs. The foundation also monitors and puts pressure on the justice sector in relation to detained women's cases to ensure that they proceed to trial without the egregious delays that often typify such cases. Its holistic approach to supporting women in detention advances women's access to basic services, support and justice.

³⁵ UNSC Resolution 1325 (31 October 2000) UN Doc S/RES/1325.

³⁶ UNFPA (2020), 'Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for SRH in Crisis Situations' (<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/minimum-initial-service-package-misp-srh-crisis-situations>)

Child Bride Solidarity (CBS), South Sudan

CBS leveraged flexible funding into a multipronged approach to strengthen the voice and leadership of women in peacebuilding in Jonglei State. Their approach included media trainings, women-led dialogues, supporting young women as peace leaders, and conducting media and social media campaigns. CBS also provided menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and SRH training, as well as menstrual pads, in schools. This increased young women's access to and awareness of SRH information, services and supplies, therefore addressing their unique needs.

In South Sudan, CBS shared that the peer-learning event was an opportunity to learn from WFC on the importance of including boys in their MHM interventions, which significantly improved their outcomes in reducing menstrual stigmatisation.

In addition to increasing women's access, CBS trialled a gender-transformative approach that raised boys' awareness of MHM and

increased interaction between boys and girls on the topic in schools, addressing harmful social norms and masculinities that led boys to believe that periods are taboo rather than normal and natural. This belief often translated into bullying behaviour by boys against girls, occasionally leading girls to miss classes or change schools. However, following the training, CBS noted positive changes among both boys and girls. CBS reported that after the training and awareness-raising session, boys understood MHM was normal and natural, and they were open to being involved in the distribution of dignity kits. They also shared information from the sessions with their sisters, cousins and neighbours. CBS reported that girls stopped missing classes and that dropout rates and school transfers decreased. CBS also implemented complementary initiatives to promote young girls and women as agents of positive change who can mobilise and engage their families and communities to support their campaign against harmful norms and taboos, as well as against harmful practices like child, early and

forced marriages. These young women and girls are already speaking up and taking a greater role in decisions that affect them in their households and in their personal health, creating a strong foundation for their future participation at home and in the community.

In this case, CBS used its funding to adapt in time to supplement necessary MHM services and supply provision with an awareness-raising campaign to ensure that those services and supplies could ultimately translate to improvements in **Protection** outcomes and girls' participation in education.

Conclusion

Scaling up gender-transformative and inclusive WPS implementation

Flexible and core funding, capacity strengthening and movement-building have been integral to these WROs' advancement of community-identified priorities and the WPS agenda in FCAS. Often, their work advances multiple WPS pillars simultaneously and at multiple levels of implementation.

The international community is currently contending with one of the starkest failures to meaningfully implement the WPS agenda: Afghanistan. The superficial implementation of WPS relating to the inclusion of women in Track I and Track II peace negotiations, investment in civil society and the women's movement directly, and the leveraging of political will and action to uphold Afghan women's and girls' rights undercuts the legitimacy of the WPS agenda globally.

At the time of writing, Sudanese women are contending with a violent outbreak of conflict following the failure of a non-inclusive peace process and a precedent of horrific levels of sexual violence in the conflict during the early 2000s. It should be painfully clear that the world cannot afford to wait until the next conflict to get WPS right. With this and other global crises multiplying and deepening, it is crucial that donors, UN agencies and international organisations working on humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts learn that the WPS framework must focus on enabling local and national civil society actors, especially WROs and women activists, peacebuilders and human rights defenders to meaningfully lead responses to crises and peace processes. This would be consistent with the many commitments made to localisation and supporting locally led peacebuilding efforts. A comprehensive approach and a conscious

reflection of the challenges and barriers our current funding models pose is necessary for the achievement of global gender equality and inclusive peace and security objectives for all.

The holistic, flexible funding and WRO-led model implemented through the Resourcing Change project offers best practices for the meaningful and sustainable advancement of WPS through investments in civil society and an emphasis on self-prioritised capacity strengthening activities, movement-building and networks as a priority for the granting and partnership mechanism. The lessons learnt³⁷ through this project and the progress made against the WPS agenda across communities in Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen demonstrate the potential of this WPS model and theory of change if it were enhanced and implemented at scale.

³⁷ Women for Women International; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; Saferworld (2022), 'Resourcing change: Supporting women's rights organisations in fragile and conflict-affected states', October (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1406-resourcing-change-supporting-womenas-rights-organisations-in-fragile-and-conflict-affected-states>)

Women for Women International (WfWI) supports women who live in some of the world's most dangerous places. Women enrol on the charity's year long training programme, where they learn how to earn and save money, improve their family's health and make their voices heard at home and in their community. Since 1993, the charity has helped over half a million marginalised women survivors of war in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Kosovo, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Sudan.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is a membership-based organisation that works through feminist principles, in solidarity and partnership with sister activists, networks, coalitions, platforms, and civil society organisations. WILPF's mission is to advance feminist peace and demilitarised security by addressing the root causes of violence with a feminist lens and mobilising for nonviolent action. It currently has over 40 Sections and Groups across Africa, the Americas, South Asia, Asia Pacific, Europe, and the MENA region.

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe in a world where everyone can lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from fear and insecurity. We are a not-for-profit organisation working in 12 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Illustrations by Céline Moya



The learning presented in this paper comes from women's rights organisations in South Sudan, Yemen & Nigeria, working together as part of a project funded by the United Kingdom's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund.