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ADVANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION

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Preface

This year, the international community marked three major milestones in its collective journey towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment: the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the UN Security Council resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325); the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action; and the launch of the Decade of Action to deliver the 17 Global Goals. As we stand at this crossroads, we are reminded that more needs to be done to fully realize the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and ensure the full, meaningful participation of women and girls across all settings.

The plight of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations continues to be a matter of grave concern, with the long-term impact of armed conflict on them exacerbated by their social vulnerability. The post-conflict transition period is a critical window in the peace-security continuum, not only to determine whether or not violence will relapse in a community, but also to secure women's political participation and support legal reforms mandating gender inclusion in government institutions. Increased women's meaningful representation reduces the likelihood of renewed conflict and is associated with more equitable and sustainable policy outcomes. In countries emerging from conflict, this is the window of opportunity to facilitate their participation in rebuilding societies to ensure gender equality. However, we continue to see slow and uneven progress toward increasing women's global inclusion, and women remain underrepresented in participatory processes both at the national and sub-national levels.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought new urgency to many areas of the WPS agenda as it has contributed to exacerbating conditions for violence to thrive. We have seen spikes in sexual and gender-based violence around the world, with a particularly heavy toll in conflict and post-conflict settings where women are already vulnerable. At the same time, COVID-19 has shown us the extraordinary strength of women as peacebuilders and their critical role in shepherding a successful and inclusive recovery, both post-pandemic and post-conflict. While we have collectively made strides in ensuring women's participation and inclusion within normative and legal frameworks thus far, there is still a lot of room for improvement. This inspired us to collaborate on a critical aspect of the WPS agenda.

Building on the UAE's vast experience in the area of WPS and GIWPS's expertise, we convened a series of high-level discussions on advancing the role of women and girls in post-conflict reconstruction. This provided a forum to pursue both persisting and emerging challenges to women's roles in the post-conflict window, to generate a discussion on how to best advance their inclusion, and to sharpen our focus on what remains an understudied aspect of the peace-security timeline in a community emerging from conflict. We were quite fortunate to have female political and grassroots leaders engaged in post-conflict contexts join us to share their diverse perspectives on strategies for advancing women's role, and to take stock on current efforts aimed at overcoming the barriers to their engagement. These rich discussions have resulted in tangible recommendations that we have compiled in this report, as well as in our Action Plan.

We aim for these recommendations to reaffirm the important role of women in peacebuilding and the need to promote their role in decision-making. This report should also offer a road map for UN operations to move the conversation on the WPS agenda forward, to develop concrete policy and practice recommendations for overcoming barriers, and to enhance successful strategies for more effective peacebuilding outcomes, both at headquarters and in the field.

We are stronger united. We can shape a more peaceful and stable world when we engage women and girls throughout the process toward achieving peace. We hope that this publication contributes to furthering the WPS agenda, as well as demonstrating that women and girls are not merely victims of armed conflict but in fact active agents for change.

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Executive Summary

The period after conflict is a window of opportunity to build back better—to accelerate gender equality, advance women's empowerment, and promote meaningful participation in all aspects of reconstruction. Post-conflict reconstruction encompasses major peace milestones, beginning with the cessation of hostilities and signing of a peace agreement and continuing through demobilization, disarmament and reintegration, establishment of a functioning state, building of democratic institutions, economic recovery, and societal reconciliation.[1] Countries emerging from the devastation wrought by violent conflict have to rebuild the political, economic, and social institutions needed to pave the way for sustainable peace and security.

Women need to be involved in building post-conflict institutions that will foster long-term peace, stability, and development. Although women's political representation is associated with a reduced likelihood of renewed conflict and with more equitable policy outcomes,[2] women are often sidelined, and post-conflict reconstruction processes frequently lack a gender perspective and fail to achieve sustainable peace.

The need for inclusive approaches to post-conflict reconstruction has been heightened by the additional challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis. The global pandemic has exacerbated vulnerabilities and inequalities for women, especially in conflict and post-conflict contexts. Gender-based violence, loss of livelihoods, and women's exclusion from decision-making have all been pronounced features of the pandemic to date.[3] Seven of the ten countries most vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic are conflict zones, while other highly vulnerable countries are fragile states recovering from violent conflict or hosting refugee populations.[4] Post-pandemic and post-conflict recovery require collective commitments to build back better by advancing inclusion and resilience to ensure that communities are equipped to confront future crises.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), which calls for women's participation in all aspects of peace and security, including relief and recovery measures that address conflict and the prevention of violence against women from a gendered viewpoint.[5]

The 20th anniversary has inspired reflection on lessons from the past two decades of the implementation of the WPS Agenda and ways to advance women's meaningful participation in peace processes, conflict prevention, relief, and recovery.

This joint report by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) and the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations seeks to inform the UN Secretary-General's review of progress under Resolution 1325 by highlighting good practices, effective strategies, and entry points to ensure women's meaningful participation as decision-makers, implementers, and beneficiaries of post-conflict reconstruction. It also draws on the conclusions and recommendations from a jointly sponsored panel discussion series with policymakers, practitioners, and subject-matter experts.

This report focuses on four areas of post-conflict reconstruction and presents concrete examples of promising practices.

Chapter 1 outlines lessons that can advance women's political participation in the constitution-making process and in all levels of post-conflict governance. It also suggests ways to overcome barriers to women's meaningful participation in rebuilding political institutions.

Chapter 2 examines good practices and strategies to foster women's inclusion in post-conflict economic recovery, notably taking climate vulnerability into account. It focuses on using gender-sensitive diagnostic tools, building the capacity of women to work in climate-smart agriculture and clean energy, and adopting legal reforms to enhance women's access to economic resources.

Chapter 3 outlines the challenges faced by women and girls in accessing justice institutions, addressing conflict-related sexual violence and domestic violence, and protecting their rights. It also includes priority recommendations for action.

Chapter 4 offers ways to build inclusive security institutions and mainstream gender in security sector reform by advancing women's participation, engaging civil society and women's groups, and tackling hypermasculinity in the security sector.

Across these four areas, good practices and promising entry points can accelerate gender equality and the role of women in post-conflict reconstruction. The report outlines an action plan with ten priority actions and related recommendations to advance these goals:

Post-conflict governance

Promote women's equal participation in peace negotiations and in all levels of post-conflict governance

• Women's political participation is associated with more equitable policy outcomes and a reduced likelihood of renewed conflict.[6]
• Mechanisms designed to advance women's inclusion, such as quotas and recruitment campaigns for women in all sectors of post-conflict governance, have been shown to significantly increase women's political participation.[7]
• Post-conflict states and the UN ought to mandate a 50 percent quota for women in negotiations and consultations on peace and reconstruction, and they should appoint women to national and local governance bodies at all levels.

Support women's civil society and grassroots initiatives

• Women's civil society and grassroots initiatives are at the front lines of peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts, engaging in critical work that sets the foundation for lasting peace and stability.
• Long-term, flexible, and rapid funding is crucial to deliver vital support to women's civil society organizations in the post-conflict period.[8]
• The UN, member states, and development partners should earmark financial support for grassroots actors in post-conflict reconstruction budgets as part of the 15 percent funding target for gender-specific interventions established by the secretary-general.

Economic recovery and environmental sustainability

Prioritize climate adaptation and gender inclusion simultaneously

• Integrating women's economic empowerment with strategies for adapting to climate change can contribute to more sustainable and gender-responsive post-conflict reconstruction.
• Investments to build the capacity and expertise of women in climate-smart agriculture and clean energy—through training, workshops, and the adoption of modern farming techniques and tools such as improved seed varieties and soil-conservation techniques—can add resilience to climate-vulnerable sectors and communities.[9]

• Effective strategies include setting benchmarks to ensure that post-conflict investments and assistance integrate climate adaptation, environmental sustainability, and gender inclusion through gender- and climate-sensitive budgeting and planning.

Bolster women in economic recovery and community-driven development

• Women are critical to economic recovery in the aftermath of violent conflicts, which often destroy household assets and livelihoods, as well as public infrastructure and services.[10] Women must be engaged as planners, decision-makers, and implementers in all sectors of the post-conflict economy, particularly in climate-vulnerable sectors such as agriculture, energy, and infrastructure.
• Promoting women-led businesses can boost economic growth, create jobs, and foster inclusive prosperity.[11] Addressing barriers to women's entrepreneurship is critical. Efforts should prioritize closing gender gaps in access to technologies, credit, and resources, which contribute significantly to women's productivity.[12]
• Gender-sensitive, community-driven approaches are valuable strategies to promote inclusive development. Such participatory processes should involve women and include community control of planning and resources.[13]

Justice and the rule of law

Prevent and respond to violence against women

• Conflicts, crises, and global pandemics inhibit women's access to basic services and justice and heighten ongoing threats of insecurity and violence. Post-conflict reconstruction needs to prioritize efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women and increase access to justice.
• Post-conflict transitions offer critical openings to repeal discriminatory laws and to introduce gender-responsive legal reforms to better protect women's rights and promote gender equality.
• New forms of technology can offer innovative solutions for reaching victims through emergency services, help lines, and other virtual means of creating safe spaces for women and girls. Good practices developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic could be applied to post-conflict contexts.[14]

Invest in grassroots justice actors in post-conflict settings

• In post-conflict settings, grassroots actors can create trust and establish channels of communication with survivors who have been denied access to justice, especially in cases of serious human rights violations.

• The UN, its development partners, and post-conflict states can offer vital support to amplify and legitimize the collective action of women grassroots justice actors by providing funding and physical meeting spaces and ensuring that women have opportunities to influence post-conflict processes.

Appoint gender advisors and ensure gender parity in truth commissions

• Promoting women's leadership in transitional justice processes and making commitments to inclusive, gender-sensitive justice mechanisms increases the likelihood that women will come forward, especially in cases of sexual violence.[15]
• Appointing gender advisors and mandating a 50 percent quota for women in truth commissions, reparations programs, and other post-conflict transitional justice mechanisms is crucial for enhancing women's access to justice after conflict and integrating a gender perspective into laws.

Security sector reform

Increase women's participation in the security sector

• Women's participation in the security sector contributes to greater operational effectiveness, accountability, and local ownership. In post-conflict contexts, women also bring greater attention to issues of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence.[16]
• Strong leadership and long-term commitments at the political level are needed to address gender bias, promote recruitment and retention, and bolster women's meaningful participation in security sector reform. Good practices include gender quotas, policies to address gender-based discrimination, targeted recruitment, and capacity-building to mainstream gender in security sector reform efforts.
• Gender-sensitive assessments to identify political, cultural, and institutional factors inhibiting women's inclusion within security institutions should also be performed as part of national security policies and peace agreements.

Enhance the effectiveness, coherence, and predictability of UN support

• The UN must provide clear and consistent directions to peace operations on the need to ensure women's meaningful participation in security sector reform, in order for the UN and partners to effectively advance WPS.

• Political, technical, and financial resources are needed to address the enormous gap between the expectations established by WPS resolutions and the effectiveness of interventions. Funding for these measures should be included as part of UN, member state, and development-partner efforts to achieve the secretary-general's 15 percent target of funds earmarked for peace and security interventions that promote gender equality.
• Member states and the UN should improve the collection and availability information on the number and status of women in national security institutions and develop baselines and indicators to monitor and report on the progress and challenges of peace operations.

Build trust between security providers and local communities and engage male allies

• Fostering local ownership, building trust between security providers and local populations (including women's civil society organizations), and engaging male allies are critical steps toward gender-sensitive security sector reform.
• Priority actions for building local trust include community policing, dialogue, and accountability measures. The UN and member states can strengthen security sector reform through commitments to developing gender-sensitized community-policing plans as an outcome of all police-related advisory work. Additionally, UN actors working in conflict and post-conflict zones should undergo mandatory gender training prior to deployment.
• Male allies are important for fostering gender equality and rejecting toxic masculinity in security sector reform. Male officers and senior military staff should receive coaching and mentoring on gender issues and codes of conduct and training on how to develop and implement action plans to promote gender equality.[17]

These ten priority actions outline inclusive and effective recommendations for mainstreaming gender and advancing women's meaningful participation in all aspects of post-conflict relief, recovery, and rebuilding. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic means that recognizing women's vulnerabilities and unique contributions to post-conflict reconstruction is even more imperative.

Chapter 1:

Enhancing Women's Participation in Post-Conflict Governance

The transition from violent conflict to post-conflict reconstruction is a critical time for ensuring women's meaningful engagement in political institutions and decision-making, and for advancing gender-responsive legislative reforms. Women's political representation reduces the likelihood of renewed conflict and is associated with more equitable policy outcomes.[18] However, progress in these areas has been slow and uneven, and gender equality has proven elusive in most countries—whether affected by conflict or not.[19]

Women remain grossly underrepresented as lawmakers at all levels.[20] Effective strategies are needed to boost women's political participation in post-conflict contexts and in constitution-making processes, which establish the framework for inclusive governance. This chapter outlines women's political participation in post-conflict contexts, highlights lessons from the constitution-making process, and suggests ways to overcome barriers to more meaningful political participation by women.

Understanding the state of women's political participation in post-conflict governance

Measures of women's political participation include their representation in parliament—the most widely available measure—and in cabinets, as well as their electoral registration and election turnout. Other forms of democratic engagement include women's leadership of civil society institutions and their representation and participation in local governance, planning, and implementation. Mechanisms to require minimum levels of women's participation typically include gender quotas.[21]

Human Development Report 2019 suggests that women are particularly underrepresented in positions of greater political power, such as upper houses of parliament, speakers of parliament, and heads of government (figure 1).[22] In 2019, women made up only five percent of heads of governments, seven percent of heads of state, and 20 percent of speakers of parliament globally.[23] In conflict and post-conflict countries, women's shares are even lower. [24]

Women head the state or government in only two post-conflict countries (Ethiopia and Serbia) and make up only 18 percent of ministers, compared with a global average of 21 percent. [25]

Figure 1. Gender gap in political representation
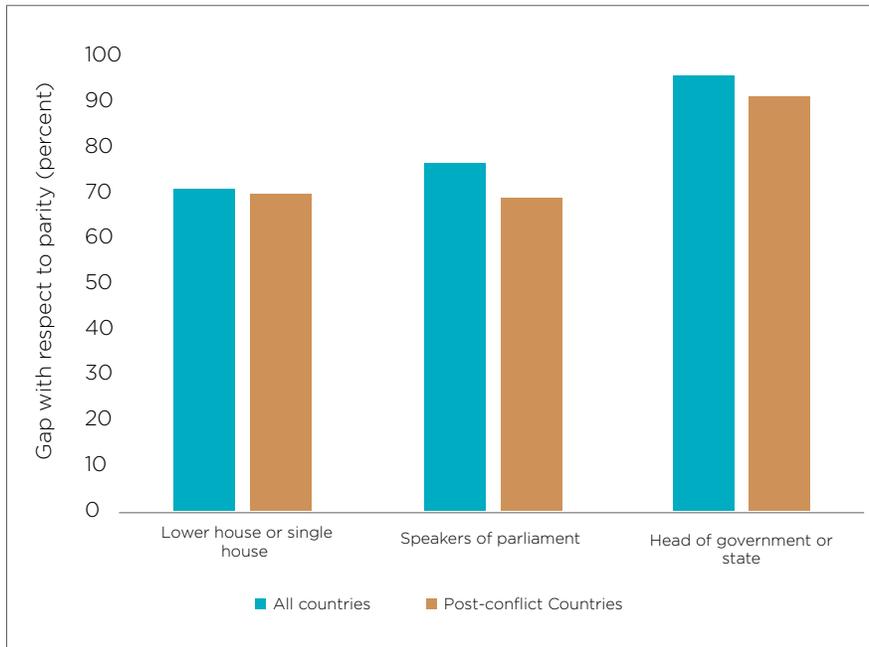
Note: The graph compares gender gaps in politics at the global level and among post-conflict countries. Gender gap is defined as the difference between male political representation (percent) and female political representation (percent) divided by male political representation (percent).
Source: Based on estimates adapted from UNDP (2019) and IPU (2019).

Progress on women's political participation in post-conflict governance has been slow and uneven, as measured by the share of women in cabinets and national parliaments. The 2019 UN Security Council update on WPS reports that women hold just 19 percent of parliamentary seats in conflict and post-conflict countries, compared with 24 percent worldwide.[26] While women hold a higher share of seats in some post-conflict countries—for example, 56 percent in Rwanda and 36 percent in Tunisia and Burundi—most countries are far from achieving gender equality.[27]

Efforts to increase women's representation should be sustained beyond the post-conflict period to prevent gains from being rolled back over time.[28] Additionally, harmful gender norms within institutions must be addressed to ensure measures such as quotas translate into meaningful political authority and influence for women.[29]

Using constitution-making processes to build inclusive institutions and advance gender-sensitive reform

The constitution-making process is a major entry point for women's participation in post-conflict governance and can establish a legal framework to build inclusive institutions.[30] Between 1990 and 2015, 75 countries reformed their constitution after violent conflict, unrest, or regime change.[31] From technical experts to constitution drafters, women participated in constitution-making bodies at a rate that rose from an average of 13 percent between 1990 and 1995 to 24 percent between 2002 and 2015.[32]

Women's involvement can have broad benefits. Evidence suggests that women are more likely than men to work across party lines,[33] and they tend to adopt a more participatory and collaborative approach to decision-making.[34] When women influence constitution-making processes, research demonstrates, they can help bridge divides and broaden participation across segments of society.[35] Women have also been successful in advancing progressive and gender-responsive constitutional provisions that pave the way for women's participation in post-conflict governance. In South Africa, advocacy by the Women's National Coalition helped ensure gender-inclusive language in the 1996 constitution,[36] along with provisions for equal protection before the law and gender equality for elected and appointed government positions.[37] These guarantees set a precedent for women's greater participation in post-conflict society and serve as the legal basis for demanding more gender-responsive reforms.[38]

Experience in various post-conflict and fragile contexts offers several lessons for enhancing women's participation in constitution-making processes.

Involve women early in the transition. Research from Tunisia shows that women are more successful in joining constitution-making bodies when they mobilize and advocate for their own inclusion well before members are nominated.[39]

There appears to be a link between women's involvement in peace processes and their inclusion in post-conflict governance. For example, in the Philippines, women made up 50 percent of the government's negotiating team and 25 percent of signatories to the 2014 comprehensive peace agreement. This facilitated their access to the constitution-making body and other opportunities for political representation. For example, women represented 27 percent of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission.[40]

Include explicit mechanisms for women's inclusion. Strategies for women's inclusion should be codified as early as possible in the transition and should include clear

mechanisms such as quotas and other means of enforcement to increase women's political participation. The 2019 UN Security Council report on WPS noted that "in conflict and post-conflict countries with legislated quotas, the share of women in parliament is more than twice that of those without such quotas (24 percent compared to 11 percent)." [41]

Women's share in parliament tends to rise over successive elections in countries with quotas—as in Kosovo, Nepal, and Rwanda—whereas a sustained increase in women elected officials is less evident in post-conflict countries without quotas (figure 2).[42]

Figure 2. Women's share in parliament tends to rise over successive elections in countries with quotas, but it is less evident in countries without quotas
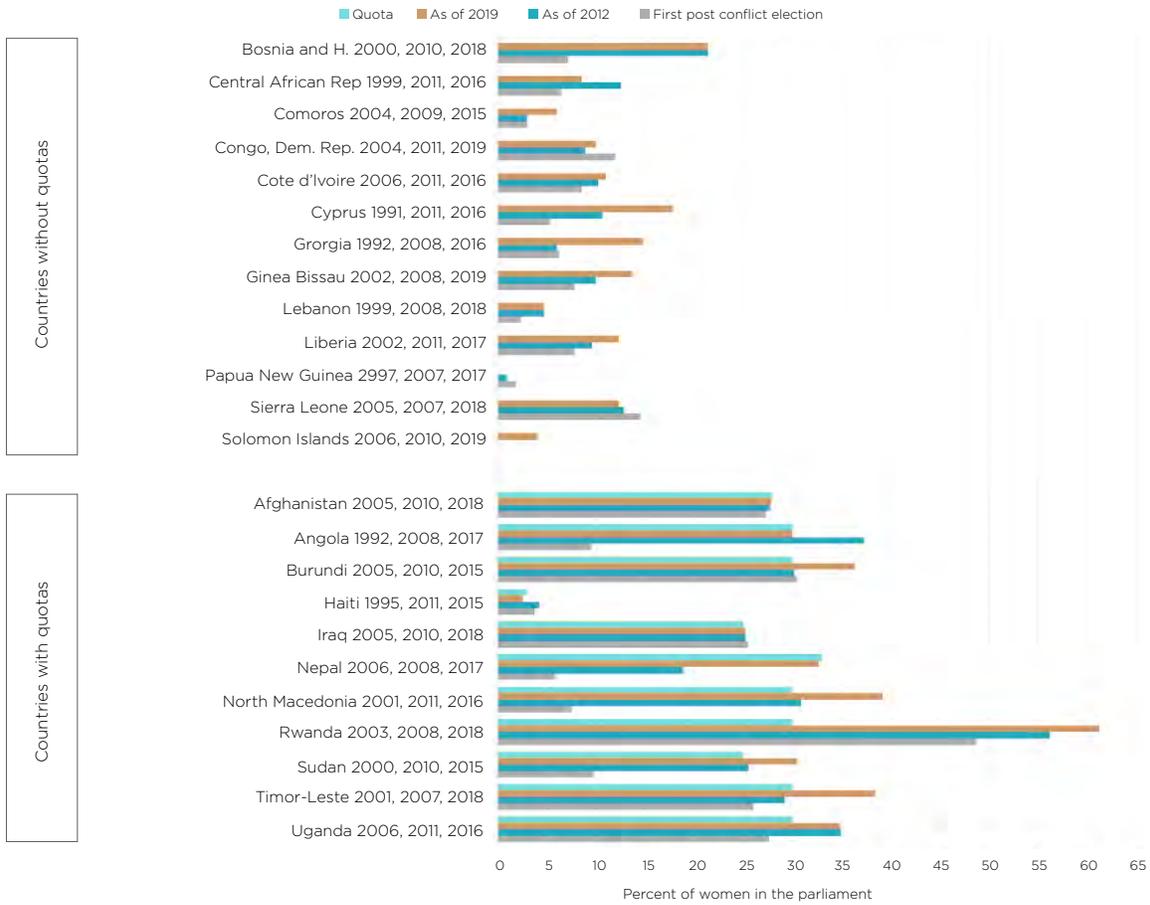
Source: Updated estimates based on UN Women (2012), data from IPU (2019), and the Gender Quota Database, Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

Quotas and other inclusion mechanisms are a first step to get women in the door and

to contribute to the normalization of women in politics.[43] However, quotas do not guarantee that women will have a significant impact on decision-making. In Burundi, for example, the adoption of a 30 percent quota for women in the 2004 constitution increased their representation in the National Assembly from 20 percent to 32 percent.[44] However, women are still marginalized in politics, do not hold leadership positions in parties, and face major challenges in raising gender-equality issues in legislative debates.[45]

During the COVID-19 pandemic, women have remained excluded from health-crisis responses and decision-making. A 2020 survey in 30 countries found that, in a majority of national-level committees established to respond to COVID-19, on average women accounted for only 24 percent of committee members.[46] Consequently, gender-responsive policies and programs have been limited: 54 percent of the countries did not take any action to address gender-based violence during COVID-19 lockdowns. Specific inclusion mechanisms are needed to enable women's full participation at all levels of the COVID-19 response and in gender-responsive recovery plans.

Employ a participatory approach to constitution-making processes. Citizens need to be involved in the development of the new constitution through "civic education, consultations with political parties [and civil society actors], public debates and open meetings, and written public submissions and publicity in the media."[47] Such an approach can benefit women because they are typically underrepresented among decision-makers and incumbents. It can also achieve greater legitimacy for the new constitution, foster broader ownership of it,[48] and address the inequalities that fueled conflict.[49] Women's civil society organizations can play a key role on this front, as they did in South Africa and Tunisia.[50]

In Tunisia, 16 women's rights organizations, including the League of Tunisian Women Voters and Aswat Nissa (Voices of Women), mobilized to form a coalition across party lines and, prior to the election of the constituent assembly, prepared a declaration setting women's priorities for the constitutional reform process.[51] Women's groups also organized programs around the country to encourage women to vote, providing information on registration and voting procedures, especially in rural areas. This civic mobilization and timely advocacy resulted in women gaining 31 percent of the seats in the constitution-making body.[52] Women in the constituent assembly built consensus on several contentious issues and advocated for the inclusion of Article 46, which commits to the protection and enhancement of women's rights and the eradication of violence against women. These women elected representatives also sought input and feedback from the Tunisian people and promoted transparency around the constitution-making process.[53]

Overcoming barriers to women's meaningful political participation

Common barriers (see box 1) are exacerbated in post-conflict contexts by larger threats of violence. Several good practices have been identified for overcoming these obstacles.

Box 1. Challenges to women's meaningful political participation

Women in many countries share several barriers to political participation, which are often intensified in post-conflict countries.

Gender discrimination and adverse norms. In transitions from violent conflict, traditional gender-based discriminatory norms and attitudes about women's roles in public and private tend to persist.[i] Such norms may cast women as underqualified and lacking experience, biasing voters against women candidates, especially in single-member electoral systems.

Political parties as gatekeepers. Political parties have historically been dominated by men. Their structure and patronage networks can be strong obstacles to women's political participation.

Violence against women in politics. From harassment to physical violence, violence against women voters, candidates, and political representatives is often exacerbated in post-conflict contexts.[ii]

Notes:

i.   Dutch NAP Partnership 2015.
ii. Lukatela 2012.

Support structural reforms at all levels of governance. Effective and lasting political change needs to happen at the national, regional, and local levels of governance. It is critical to support women's involvement in local governance and ensure that women's needs and priorities are reflected in local planning and budgeting.[54] Structural reforms of electoral systems—specifically, those that introduce proportional representation systems with list quotas or reserved seats—can also foster women's participation at all levels.[55]

For example, the Tunisian decentralization process and reform of municipal election lists to include both horizontal and vertical gender-parity requirements promoted women's representation in the 2018 municipal elections.[56] Women made up 49

percent of the candidates running for office and 47 percent of those elected at the local level.[57]

Reform political parties. In all countries, political parties have historically been male-dominated institutions of power. As such, they have served as gatekeepers of women's political participation. Political party rules and structures (such as registration costs and education qualifications) can impede women's participation directly or indirectly.[58] At the same time, political parties have the potential to promote women's political participation. They can do this by creating a pipeline of women political leaders and elected officials,[59] eliminating regulations that discriminate against women (such as candidate registration requirements and procedures that disadvantage women),[60] and developing mechanisms for women's inclusion (such as quotas for women in leadership and party management structures and specific funding opportunities for women candidates).[61]

In South Africa, women's demands for gender equality led the African National Congress (ANC) to adopt a party quota during the post-apartheid transition period. Women's share in parliament grew as a result of the ANC's major win in the parliamentary elections (63 percent of the popular vote).[62]

Conduct capacity-building training for women to vote and run for office. To overcome the perception that women lack the legitimacy and skills needed to run for office, civil society organizations can offer women mentorship and skill-building opportunities. These enable women to increase their subject-matter expertise and assert their political authority.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, civil society organizations have promoted women's voter registration and participation. They successfully mobilized women, who made up 51 percent of the electorate in the 2005 referendum.[63]

Build strategic partnerships and coalitions. To effectively advance women's political influence, partnerships should engage male and female allies and include both government insiders—such as key policymakers and political parties—and civil society outsiders.[64] For example, women in Rwanda formed a cross-party caucus to work on sensitive issues of land rights and food security.[65] They also built the only tripartite partnership with civil society organizations and the executive and legislative bodies to ensure that new legislation meets women's needs and gives local communities access to basic services.[66]

Address the security and safety of women voters and political leaders. Women face more intimidation, harassment, and violence than men as voters and political leaders.[67] In post-conflict countries, women voters are four times more likely to be targets of intimidation than male voters.[68] In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a survey found that 60 percent of women respondents had experienced some form of violence while in politics, and 46 percent had experienced gender-based violence.[69] In the 2010 Afghan elections, 55 percent of campaign workers who were killed worked for women's campaigns, and 90 percent of threats against candidates were against women, who represented less than a quarter of candidates.[70] More recently, the Chief of Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission, Shaharzad Akbar, wrote of a "worrying pattern of targeted attacks" after Fawzia Koofi, one of the few women involved in peace negotiations with the Taliban, was shot by a gunman.[71]

Violence against women in politics can be addressed by raising awareness and supporting international efforts and legal frameworks to combat violence against women.[72] In Sri Lanka, for example, electoral security providers and police forces received specific training on gender-sensitive election security.[73]

Women face considerable gendered barriers to meaningful political participation in the post-conflict context, including discrimination, hostility, intimidation, and even violence. Confronting these barriers and leveraging the constitution-making process can accelerate progress toward gender equality.

Chapter 2:

Fostering Women's Inclusion and Environmental Sustainability in Economic Recovery

While climate change does not lead inevitably or directly to violent conflict, climate change and environmental vulnerability have emerged as global threat multipliers,[74] which can exacerbate preexisting political and economic tensions and result in violence.[75] Drought and resource scarcity, for example, can aggravate social tensions and increase the risks of forced displacement and renewed conflict.[76] These dynamics have particular consequences for women and girls.[77]

In 2015, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2242 into the WPS Agenda, which marked the first time that climate change was recognized as a global threat to peace and security.[78] Both climate change and conflict can disproportionately affect the livelihoods and food security of women, especially small-scale food producers who are particularly disadvantaged.[79] In post-conflict countries, nearly four in five women in paid employment work in agriculture,[80] which heightens their exposure to climate impacts.

The post-conflict reconstruction period offers opportunities to rebuild in ways that advance sustainability, gender equality, and economic recovery. This includes minimizing greenhouse emissions through a transition to climate-smart agriculture, renewable energies, and sustainable infrastructure, and increasing the adaptive capacity of individuals and communities vulnerable to climate impacts, especially women.[81]

Engaging women—and perceiving them not only as victims but as change agents—in these processes is critical. Although women are disproportionately impacted by both climate change and conflict, they are often excluded from shaping the solutions. Their inclusion as planners, decision-makers, and implementers in all sectors of the post-conflict economy—particularly in climate-vulnerable areas such as agriculture, energy, and infrastructure—can maximize gains.

The COVID-19 pandemic further underscores the need to build back better and presents an additional opportunity—alongside post-conflict reconstruction—to do so. Approaches that integrate women's economic empowerment and climate adaptation can address women's environmental vulnerabilities while contributing to sustainable post-conflict and post-pandemic reconstruction.[82]

"Building back better means that our economies respond to climate challenges and that we do not rebuild dirty industries. Building back better ensures that women are empowered and that we address the fundamental inequalities in society. Building back better is essential, even in dark times."
—Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women

Evidence suggests that the period during and after conflict presents opportunities for women to take on new roles in the economy as traditional gender norms change and household incomes decline. In Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, studies have found that women in conflict-affected communities gained greater autonomy in their household and more financial independence than women in areas not affected by conflict.[83] Post-conflict areas where women are more empowered also experience more rapid economic recovery and poverty reduction.[84]

This chapter outlines good practices and strategies to advance women's participation in climate-vulnerable sectors of post-conflict economic recovery by using gender-sensitive diagnostic tools, building the capacity of women to work in climate-smart agriculture and clean energy, using decentralization processes as an entry point to boost women's participation, and adopting legal reforms to enhance women's access to economic resources. When it comes to both violent conflicts and pandemics, fostering long-term sustainability and women's effective inclusion is critical to better recovery outcomes.

Using gender-sensitive diagnostic tools

Understanding the barriers to women's effective participation in economic recovery and addressing discriminatory practices requires diagnostic tools to get an accurate assessment. Gender-sensitive indicators can track progress and hold decision-makers accountable yet developing and applying such indicators requires relevant gender-disaggregated data and analysis.

For example, in post-conflict Mozambique, the Feeder Roads Program, a labor-intensive public works initiative for rehabilitating tertiary roads, conducted a gender analysis to identify constraints on women's participation.[85] Measures such as gender sensitization and training for staff and the establishment of recruitment quotas for women were adopted to address key constraints. As a result, women's participation in the program rose from two percent in 1992 to 19 percent in 2002.[86]

In post-disaster Haiti, women provided critical inputs to Habitat for Humanity's community-mapping and urban-planning efforts through focus groups, consultations, and mapping exercises.[87] Women made up 65 percent of the community teams, mapped more than 4,000 buildings, and surveyed more than 6,000 households.[88] Women's involvement resulted in the inclusion of security considerations for women and girls in housing, water, and sanitation projects (such as the provision of street lighting and safe water) and in the setting of solid-waste management as a priority.[89]

Integrating women's economic empowerment with climate mitigation efforts through capacity-building

Women in fragile and conflict-affected contexts often work in climate-vulnerable sectors and have fewer resources to cope with environmental disasters than men. Close to four in five women who are in paid work in post-conflict countries work in agriculture (figure 3), which means that they have low wages and few legal protections.[90]

Already vulnerable, women farmers are even worse off because of COVID-19. Mandatory social distancing measures have made it difficult or impossible for women to sell their products in the market, they have heavier domestic burdens and caregiving duties than men do, and they must cope with income losses that impair their ability to buy seeds and other materials for the next planting season.[91]

Building the capacity and expertise of women in climate-smart agriculture and clean energy can enhance both women's economic empowerment and the resilience of communities to climate shocks. Skills training, workshops, and the adoption of modern farming techniques and tools (such as improved seed varieties and soil conservation) can all further progress in this regard.[92]

Figure 3. Close to four in five women who have paid work in conflict-affected and fragile countries work in agriculture
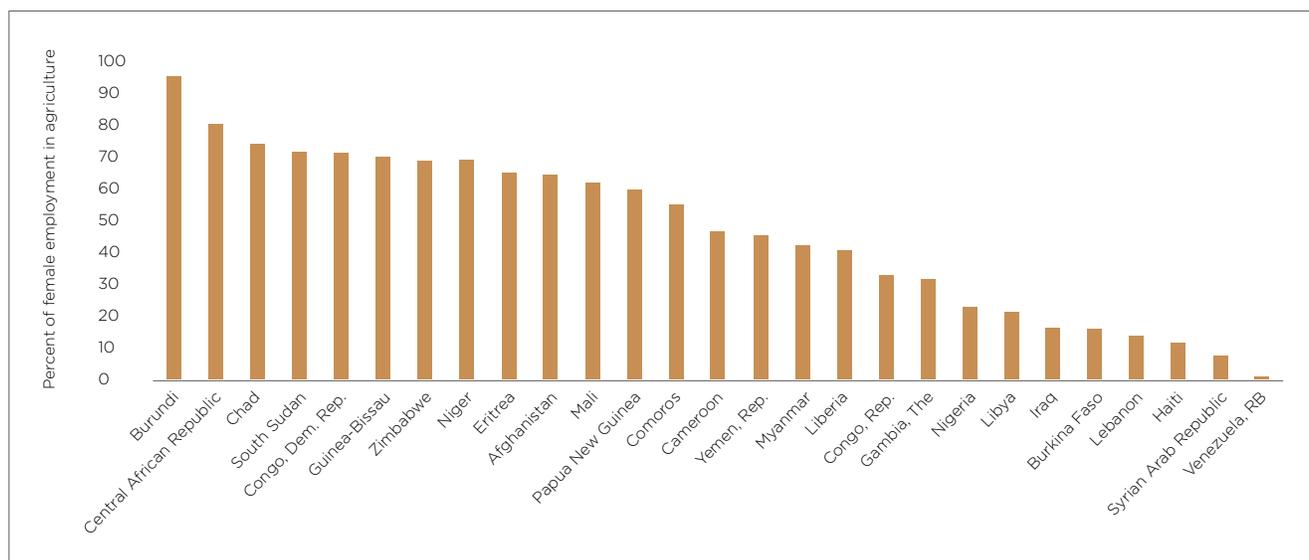
Train women in climate-smart agriculture. Approaches that integrate women's economic empowerment with climate mitigation and adaptation measures can contribute to sustainable post-conflict reconstruction. Especially important are training and skills-building activities for women in climate-smart agriculture.

In Niger, the Joint Program on Accelerating Progress toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women trained women in seven villages in the Dosso and Maradi regions to use and repair grinding mills and threshing machines, freeing considerable time for other activities. The program also trained women in compost making and post-harvest handling and storage. Additionally, women learned new trades and diversified their economic activities.[93] The Joint Program was replicated in six other countries, including post-conflict Liberia and Rwanda.[94]

Train women to participate in clean energy. To address the lack of electricity in rural areas in post-civil-war Liberia, women were trained for six months by Barefoot College and UN Women on building, installing, and maintaining solar lamps and panels.

After the training, the women provided electricity to more than 425 homes and structures in four towns. The solar panels were also installed in peace huts, which are local safe spaces where women can gather.[95]

Access to electricity can also lessen women's domestic burdens. Studies in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and South Africa demonstrated that household electrification increased women's likelihood of being employed outside the home by up to 23 percent, by reducing the time needed to complete domestic chores, such as collecting firewood, and by enabling women to do some of the chores at night under electric lighting.[96]

Promoting women's inclusion in community-driven development and local governance

Inclusion in community-driven development and local governance processes can boost women's participation in resilience planning and economic decision-making, with large returns.

Employ community-driven development. Participatory processes, including consultations and community control of planning and resources, are widely used to address the needs of local communities, often supported by development partners like the World Bank.[97] While community-driven development is not inherently gender sensitive, some programs have included women in post-conflict reconstruction.[98] The women brought unique perspectives on the use of agricultural and energy resources and the rebuilding of housing and schools.[90]

Afghanistan's National Solidarity Program required the formation of gender-balanced community development councils, which received block grants to fund local projects.[100] The program also required that at least one project in each village address women's priorities.[101] Rigorous evaluations found that the mandated inclusion of women improved their mobility across villages and perceptions of women's roles in the public sphere, including a 22 percent increase in residents' acceptance of women in village councils.[102] Girls' school attendance in program villages also increased, by an average of 0.28 days a week.[103]

Leverage women's local knowledge and skills in natural-resource management to foster climate resilience. In the water-scarce West Bank, women are the primary managers of water resources in households and on farms. They have adopted conservation measures during droughts and water shortages, such as recycling water, using gray water for irrigation and washing, monitoring water quality, and treating contaminated well water.[104] In Nepal, women's indigenous knowledge and skills in natural-resource management have lessened resource-related conflicts at the local level.[105]

Advancing gender-responsive legal reforms to give women greater access to economic resources and markets

For women to achieve meaningful progress, discriminatory laws must be repealed, including those governing women's property ownership, inheritance, and land rights. Gender-responsive legal reforms and policies can advance women's equal access to resources and economic empowerment. This is particularly important in responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, with its long-term risks to women's income, financial independence, and land ownership.[106] For example, women whose husbands die of COVID-19 can lose their land because of marriage-based property laws, exacerbating gender inequality in land rights.[107]

Overcome discrimination against women in land ownership. Women's agricultural work remains undervalued and under-resourced, due to widespread discrimination in the distribution of assets, services, and information.[108] Closing gender gaps in land rights and in access to technologies, credit, and other resources is critical to enhancing women farmers' productivity.[109]

Discriminatory laws prevent women from owning land in some post-conflict settings.[110] In Guinea, women make up more than half of agricultural workers but only five percent of landowners.[111] The Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that if women farmers enjoyed the same land rights as men, they could produce 20 to 30 percent more food on their land and reduce the number of malnourished people in the world by up to 17 percent.[112] Evidence also suggests that when women have land ownership rights, climate change mitigation efforts are more successful and the responsibilities associated with climate-mitigation programs are more equitably distributed.[113]

In the post-conflict period, Rwanda introduced a series of laws to protect women's ownership rights, such as the 1999 inheritance law and the 2003 reform of the constitution. The inheritance law allows women to own property and open a bank account without their husband's approval.[114] These gender-responsive legal reforms enhanced the security of women's livelihoods and their access to land. More than half of Rwandan women (54 percent) reported on 2010 demographic and health surveys that they had joint or sole ownership of agricultural or residential land.[115]

Harness public-private partnerships. The private sector is a vital partner in rebuilding the post-conflict economy. Public-private partnerships can increase women's participation when the government sets specific gender targets in procurement and job creation.

In South Africa, the Independent Power Producer Procurement Program, established to develop renewable energy, requires five percent of procurement spending to go to women-owned vendors or businesses.[116] In the Philippines, the national government's public-private partnership manual integrates gender considerations in the identification, structuring, and evaluation of the partnerships.[117] This policy has led to greater input from women on the design and operation of infrastructure projects and increased women's employment rates in construction, technical, and infrastructure management.[118]

During the post-conflict reconstruction period in northern Uganda, women won local government tenders in areas such as management of local markets.[119] They also won most of the contracts for the maintenance of link roads. However, the contracts were all small because women did not have sufficient capital to compete for large-scale projects.

Women suffer disproportionately from the impacts of conflict, especially in climate-vulnerable sectors of the economy such as agriculture. As outlined above, strategies and investments that integrate women's economic empowerment with climate change mitigation efforts and that increase women's participation in post-conflict recovery can enhance sustainable economic growth. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the negative impacts and adversely affected women's health, livelihoods, and security, especially for self-employed women in the informal sector who lack eligibility for social protection.[120] COVID-19 has also increased women's domestic burdens because of curfews and deteriorating economies, and many women lack stable income and access to teleworking options. Looking at post-conflict reconstruction through a gender lens is therefore critical for addressing the added challenges posed by COVID-19 and for ensuring an inclusive recovery post-conflict and post-pandemic.

Chapter 3:
Advancing Justice for Women

Transitions following conflict enable countries and communities to transform underlying inequalities and gender-based discrimination through new constitutions, legislative reforms, and institutions, as well as to address the injustices experienced by women during the conflict.[121] In the aftermath of conflict, several countries have taken the opportunity to rebuild more equitable institutions and enact more just laws. In Burundi, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone, for example, women rose to each country's highest judicial position in the immediate post-conflict period.[122] However, COVID-19 has been a major shock to justice systems in post-conflict settings, as elsewhere, and threatens to exacerbate risks and roll back gains.

This chapter outlines major threats to women and barriers to equal justice and offers priority recommendations for actions to advance women's access to justice institutions. It focuses on the particular repercussions for forcibly displaced people, domestic violence and conflict-related sexual violence, and discriminatory property and inheritance laws. It is important to underline the larger challenges faced by women and girls of diverse backgrounds, including those experiencing overlapping disadvantages—as in the case for women on the front lines and those in camps housing refugees and internally displaced people.

Understanding gender justice gaps and women's justice needs

As documented by the High-Level Group on Justice for Women, for too many women, gaps persist between the promise of justice and the realities in their community, workplace, and home. Women experience legal discrimination, patchy protections, and uneven implementation of safeguards—gaps that are even more pronounced in fragile and conflict-affected states.

Discriminatory social norms, compounded by multiple layers of disadvantage—such as poverty, ethnicity, disability, geography, and migratory status—remain powerful obstacles to equal rights. The poorest and most vulnerable people experience more frequent and complex interrelated legal problems, which intersect to form a cumulative disadvantage.[123]

Major challenges around justice for women in post-conflict contexts are outlined in box 2.

Box 2. Persistent injustices faced by women in conflict and post-conflict contexts

Domestic violence. In 2018, more than one billion women lacked legal protection from sexual violence by an intimate partner, including women living in 21 of 36 fragile and conflict-affected states. Even where protective legislation exists, enforcement may be weak because of serious gaps in national laws, lack of protective orders, and inadequate police and judicial responses.

Discrimination against women at work. Labor legislation in many countries still discriminates against women, and legal barriers to women's entrepreneurship persist. Alongside the gender-based discrimination embedded in property, employment, and family law in many countries, the regulation of informal work involves a complex web of legislation, rules, and enforcement practices—often in the realm of public law—that can be especially restrictive and even punitive toward women.

Discriminatory family laws. Discriminatory practices in family life are major obstacles to justice for women in many countries. Women face more family-related legal problems than men.

Unequal property laws. Some 40 percent of countries limit women's property rights, and women do not have equal ownership rights to immovable property in 19 countries. Property inheritance regimes—whether sons and daughters are treated equally and whether spouses have equal inheritance rights to each other's estates—also reduce women's access to property. Where customary rules prevail, a woman's use of land may depend on the relationship with her husband or a male relative.

Gaps in legal identity. The possession of legal identity documents—including those relating to property, business, housing, marriage, employment, children, and immigration status—influences a woman's ability to protect her rights and access benefits and services. Globally, an estimated one billion people face challenges in proving who they are. In low-income countries, on average, over 45 percent of women lack a legal ID, compared to 30 percent of men.

Exclusion from decision-making. Women justice professionals contribute to improved justice for women and other development outcomes. Nevertheless, they continue to be excluded from public life and senior decision-making roles.

Customary and informal justice systems. The primary mechanisms through which people—especially disadvantaged groups such as the poor, women, and minority populations—seek justice are not fully equipped to deliver justice based on human rights and principles of gender equality. Women are also often excluded from informal justice systems and traditional dispute resolution.

Source: UN Women, IDLO, UNDP, UNDOC, World Bank, and the Pathfinders 2020.

COVID-19 is bringing to the fore concerns about violations of fundamental rights, the rule of law, and the principles of democracy. Lockdowns and emergency orders to protect communities from the virus have exacerbated risks for women in abusive relationships, women working without security and legal protection, women and girls at risk of harmful practices and discriminatory laws, and women living in fragile humanitarian settings. As outlined by The Lancet, "People whose human rights are least protected are likely to experience unique difficulties from COVID-19." [124]

"Access to justice was at crisis levels before this pandemic and it is no doubt getting worse as a result of it."
—Jacqueline O'Neill, Canadian Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security

Attending to the additional challenges of displaced women

For many of the 79.5 million forcibly displaced people around the world —half of them women and girls—insecurity and violence are not new.[125] These conditions, which are both a cause and consequence of weakened legal frameworks and justice systems, increase the exposure of displaced women and girls to sexual violence and trafficking and inhibit their access to protection and basic services.[126]

COVID-19 heightens these challenges for women. Impacts of the pandemic could have devastating consequences in fragile settings such as Afghanistan, Syria, and South Sudan—given already weak health-care systems and rule of law, high levels of violence against women and girls, and gender inequality.

The pandemic has led to border closures and migration restrictions, significantly affecting resettlement processes and safe passage for people seeking asylum or migrating for economic reasons.[127] This means that women and girls fleeing violence and persecution will not be able to leave their country of origin or enter an asylum country.

In other instances, mass quarantine measures involving confinement are being pursued, placing women and girls at risk of abuse from which they are unable to flee. Asylum seekers face delays when the courts are closed, or they are returned to their home country without having a chance to pursue their claims, sometimes in violation of the principle of non-refoulement.[128] The suspension of visa processing has created long delays for women applying to change their migration status and excludes them from basic services.[129]

Many of the world's 26 million refugees live in developing countries, in overcrowded and under-serviced camps and informal settlements.[130] Lockdowns, quarantines, and border restrictions related to COVID-19 present additional challenges to the countries supporting refugee camps and providing humanitarian assistance. As noted by the International Commission of Jurists, when the coronavirus hits overcrowded displacement sites, the consequences can be catastrophic, with especially serious risks and repercussions for women and girls. Strategies to protect women and girls in crisis settings—such as moving in groups and ensuring adequate women aid staff—have become increasingly difficult under COVID-19 distancing practices.[131]

Addressing conflict-related sexual violence

In countries with armed conflict, women and children are subjected to sexual violence—sometimes on a massive scale—and large segments of the population are denied their most basic human rights. In the aftermath of a conflict, the legacies of war include capacity deficits and mistrust of essential justice and security providers and institutions.[132]

As the following good practices illustrate, increasing gender parity in justice systems—by engaging women as judges and participants in truth commissions and other justice bodies—can advance a gender perspective in post-conflict contexts. Specifically, a gender-sensitive approach can push communities and countries toward meeting the needs of victims of conflict-related sexual violence and combatting impunity for perpetrators.

Strengthen international justice architecture. In the past three decades, the international community has made progress in building an international justice architecture to prosecute conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence, especially through the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.[133] A recent case was the Congolese army (FARDC) commander sentenced to life imprisonment in 2018 for superior responsibility for rape, with victims entitled to reparations.[134] The prosecution of these crimes has served as an assertion of women's equal rights and of an international willingness to protect and uphold those rights.[135]

Historically, international criminal tribunals have had very few women judges. For example, women made up just two of the ten permanent members of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and two of the 17 members of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.[136] As Dr. Claudia Paz y Paz, director of the Center for Justice and International Law and former attorney general of Guatemala noted, "Having women actively adjudicating cases and participating in the administration of justice also makes a difference for accountability on CRSV [conflict-related sexual violence] and GBV [gender-based violence]."[137]

In Sierra Leone, women's participation in the design of the truth commission contributed to the establishment of a special unit to investigate war crimes from a gender perspective. A Women's Task Force—composed of members of women's organizations, UN agencies, the police, and the legal profession—helped ensure gender balance and sensitivity within the truth commission. [138]

Employ transitional justice mechanisms. Truth commissions, reparations programs, sanctions, mobile courts, and other transitional justice mechanisms must ensure that women's needs are addressed and guarantee justice for women.[139] As noted in the 2007 Nairobi Declaration on Women's and Girls' Right to a Remedy and Reparation, "[Justice and] reparations must go above and beyond the immediate reasons and consequences of crimes and violations; they must aim to address the political and structural inequalities that negatively shape women's and girls' lives."[140]

Reparations are a critical tool for recognizing victims and addressing the consequences of human rights violations and sexual and gender-based violence. In Sierra Leone, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended reparations, including free health care, educational support to children of victims, skills training, community support, provision of housing and pensions, and repeal of discriminatory legislation. As a direct result of these recommendations, the parliament passed three bills redressing gender inequality.[141] In Timor-Leste, the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation implemented an urgent reparation scheme for those most affected by the conflict, including victims of conflict-related sexual violence. Through this initiative, 712 victims with urgent needs received financial support and participated in healing workshops and in public hearings organized by the commission.[142]

Sanctions to address conflict-related sexual violence are another important tool available to the UN Security Council. Sanctions regimes with explicit criteria for designating an attack as sexual violence, such as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, and Somalia, along with publication of the names of sanctioned individuals, can be used to prevent and curb sexual violence during periods of armed conflict and end impunity for perpetrators.[143]

Finally, mobile courts can also reduce impunity for perpetrators by bringing judges and prosecutors to remote locations. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where a high number of incidents of rape occurred in remote communities lacking access to formal courtrooms and legal structures, mobile courts were used within the existing judicial system to advance justice for victims of conflict-related sexual violence. Between 2010 and 2013, 20 mobile courts heard 382 cases that led to 204 rape convictions, 82 convictions for other crimes, and 67 acquittals.[144]

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted efforts to address conflict-related sexual violence in post-conflict settings.[145] An investigation into mass rape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been suspended because of the pandemic, and the UN special representative has anticipated that COVID-19 will have significant repercussions for legal responses to conflict-related sexual violence,[146] including accountability, given reduced capacity to receive complaints and process reported incidents. Relevant investigative work, pretrial hearings, and trials are likely to be limited and justice delayed. The cumulative effects could significantly restrict survivors' access to justice.

Addressing increased rates of domestic violence

Domestic violence threatens many women around the world, especially in fragile and conflict-affected states. Exposure to conflict-related violence, including sexual violence, is correlated with increased risk of domestic violence, as found, for example, in Peru[147] and northern Uganda.[148]

The end of armed conflict often does not mean the end of violence in women's lives. In post-conflict settings, around one in five women report having experienced domestic violence in the past year.[149] This can be attributed to the widespread availability of weapons, lack of jobs, trauma among male family members, and human trafficking.[150] In Afghanistan, the Solomon Islands, South Sudan, and Timor-Leste, the rate exceeds 40 percent, dwarfing the global average of 13 percent.[151]

When stay-at-home orders were instituted worldwide to contain COVID-19 transmission, concerns quickly emerged about worsening threats of violence against women.[152] UN Women notes that, while it is too early for comprehensive data, there are many deeply concerning reports of increased violence against women during the current pandemic, including post-conflict states such as Kosovo.[153] In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Marie Lukasa's Forum of Women Citizens and Activists for Governance, Democracy, and Development reported receiving more than ten times the usual number of calls.[154]

At the same time that rates of domestic violence have escalated, access to justice, health care, and social services has diminished. Women seeking to enforce their rights during the COVID-19 crisis can face heightened barriers, particularly when court systems are shuttered.[155] Furthermore, perpetrators of domestic violence may feel a sense of impunity because police and security systems are overwhelmed. In Lebanon, for example, forensic doctors were reportedly unable to document physical abuse of survivors at police stations for fear of COVID-19 spread.[156]

Addressing gender inequality in property law and inheritance

For women in fragile and post-conflict contexts, gender-based discrimination embedded in property and family law can jeopardize access to shelter and security.[157] Around the world, many widows, daughters, and divorced women are barred, in law or in practice, from claiming their ownership rights to property in the case of a man's death or the dissolution of a marriage. In some cases, only the head of household, who is often a man, can formally register property,[158] creating unique challenges for widowed women.

The Loomba Foundation's country-level estimates of war widows found that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, the widowhood rate in some localities was 40 percent.[159] As of 2015, Afghanistan was reported to have 2.5 million war widows.[160] Moreover, women who are widowed by conflict but cannot prove their husband's death can be denied government income support.[161]

Landesa, a nonprofit organization that partners with governments and local organizations to secure legal land rights for women and the world's poorest families, has noted that difficulty accessing legal services and a lack of understanding of laws within communities and households—and among women themselves—"build an invisible but near impenetrable wall to women realizing land and property rights in rural and urban areas alike."[162] Property rights are "particularly critical as a resource for women"[163] and offer a key entry point to advance gender equality and promote women's well-being in post-conflict reconstruction.

Building justice systems from the ground up

Post-conflict reconstruction is an opportunity to build from the ground up justice systems that guarantee women's effective participation as judges, lawyers, and community leaders. Promoting women's participation in the legal system through training and affirmative action measures is a crucial step toward gender-sensitive

justice. A study by the Women and Children Legal Research Foundation found that the lack of women legal professionals can dissuade women from coming forward to seek justice, especially in cases of sexual violence.[164] In Afghanistan, for example, the Afghan Women Judges Association has trained women judges in leadership skills and provided networking and judicial education opportunities to promote the rule of law and equal justice.[165]

It is also important to ensure that formal legal institutions work closely with informal justice systems to advance women's rights and access to justice, especially by engaging male heads of villages and community leaders.[166] Women should be encouraged to participate in informal justice systems and local dispute-resolution mechanisms, and pathways must be created for women's meaningful engagement. For example, in post-conflict Liberia, village women participated in peace huts, which were safe spaces to mediate community disputes and raise claims of violence against women and girls.[167]

Moving forward

The agenda needed to ensure women's access to justice in the aftermath of conflict is well established. For over a decade, civil society, women's advocates, and the UN have argued in favor of prioritizing women's security in rule-of-law initiatives and creating a protective environment for women. Prevention of and response to all forms of violence against women, including conflict-related sexual violence, is central to broader post-conflict efforts.

Key to success is supporting women's access to justice and law-enforcement institutions and applying gender expertise and guidance to the formulation of truth commissions, reparations programs, and other transitional justice mechanisms. The International Development Law Organization and UN Women are among the agencies active on these fronts.

It is critical to address legal and other disadvantages for poor and marginalized women. Three priorities in post-conflict contexts are as follows:

Prevent and respond to domestic violence. Adding and strengthening laws against domestic violence should be coupled with services meeting affected women's legal, psychosocial, and health needs to both deter violence against women and provide for and protect victims. Evidence shows that targeted, specialized efforts not only increase reporting of domestic violence, but also reduce rates of violence against women. In Peru, for example, all-women justice centers consolidating police, legal, and

medical services have grown in number across the country, from 13 in 2006 to 226 in 2014.[168] According to one study, these centers have increased reporting and for gender-based violence by 40 percent and reduced rates of domestic violence by ten percent.[169] As a result of women's decreased exposure to domestic violence, these centers have had positive intergenerational effects on human capital measures as well, such as children's school attendance.[170]

Sustain good practices developed to address violence against women during the pandemic. Multiple innovative platforms have emerged during the COVID-19 crisis to prevent and respond to domestic violence that could be applied to conflict-affected and fragile states. Some strategies use existing platforms, like WhatsApp, while others have developed new free applications or instant messaging. Some aim at raising awareness, while others (including some with geo-location) are connected to emergency services, in particular the police, as well as to support services.

Another range of innovative solutions offer direct help to victims through help lines and emergency services that do not require cell phones and Internet access. Some countries are ensuring access to the courts through virtual means and continued protection through judicial extensions.[171] Good practices developed during the pandemic offer promising post-conflict models for intervention (including in refugee and internally displaced persons camps and settlements) and continued functioning of safe spaces for women and girls.[172]

Provide space and support for the collective action of women and women's organizations. Grassroots justice actors such as unions of informal sector workers, civil society justice defenders, community paralegals, public-interest lawyers, human rights activists, and other community leaders are advancing justice for women in many settings. For example, they have established channels of communication and trust with victims and survivors who have been denied access to justice, especially in cases of serious human rights violations during conflict.[173] Resources are needed to enable the work to continue, and women's human rights need to be observed.

Chapter 4:
Championing Security Sector Reform

During conflicts, state security forces are frequently associated with major breaches of human rights, war crimes, and atrocities against civilians, including sexual and gender-based violence. These are often not properly investigated and sanctioned.[174] Governments may have a vested interest in holding military institutions accountable to mitigate risks of a coup d'état.[175] In the context of COVID-19, emergency measures create the risk of a surge in autocratic rule and abuse of power, especially in countries with weak systems of oversight and accountability.[176] Combined, these factors make security sector reform an urgent post-conflict concern to reestablish safety and security, restore the rule of law, and build trust between security providers and local populations.

Post-conflict security sector reform brings new opportunities and responsibilities to create more inclusive and gender-responsive security institutions.[177] Such reforms are interdependent with disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, which bring former combatants into civilian life and often into new security institutions.[178]

This chapter illustrates strategies for gender mainstreaming and inclusion mechanisms to increase women's participation in the security sector, engage civil society actors, and address hypermasculine cultures in security institutions that can undermine women's effective participation.

Understanding security sector reform

Security sector reform, as defined by the UN, "describes a process of assessment, review and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation led by national authorities that has as its goal the enhancement of effective and accountable security for the State and its peoples without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law."[179] Reforms include a wide range of activities, such as legislative initiatives, awareness-raising campaigns, capacity-building, and infrastructure development.[180]

The aim of security sector reform is to improve security service delivery, enhance local ownership of security institutions, and ensure their sustainability.[181]

Thus, as outlined in the 2012 UN Security Sector Reform Integrated Technical Guidance Notes and the stand-alone 2014 UN Security Council Resolution 2151 on security sector reform, measures need to be gender-responsive and ensure that women and girls feel secure and safe in post-conflict environments.[182]

Reform within the sector is also important. Government and security sector personnel are known to perpetrate violence against women in conflict and post-conflict contexts, and in times of crisis. For example, during COVID-19 lockdowns, state forces were responsible for the largest proportion of political violence targeting women, such as in post-conflict Albania, Colombia, and Rwanda.[183]

Advancing women's participation in the post-conflict security sector

There is limited but growing anecdotal evidence that women's greater participation in national security forces (military and police) increases the likelihood that both men's and women's needs will be addressed. It also increases overall operational effectiveness, accountability, and local support of security sector forces.[184] Additionally, it contributes to the dismantling of power structures that heighten risks of gender-based violence and impede gender equality.[185]

In post-conflict contexts, women are critical for bringing attention to issues of sexual and gender-based violence, ensuring that the security needs of women and youth are considered in security sector reforms,[186] and increasing the likelihood that incidents of abuse are reported. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, research found that women victims of sexual violence were more likely to report the crime to a female officer than a male officer.[187] In Liberia, women promoted the creation of a Women and Children Protection Section within the national police in 2005. This section trained officers to handle cases of sexual and gender-based violence,[188] which increased women's willingness to report such crimes.[189]

To be effective, special units like these need to be adequately staffed and funded. In Timor-Leste, vulnerable persons units are under-resourced, in part due to a perception that these units are not masculine and thus not prestigious.[190] The lack of resources and institutional support has undermined the effectiveness of these units

by delaying investigations of gender-based violence. For example, only one quarter of the 482 cases reported to the vulnerable persons units in 2007 were forwarded to the office of the prosecutor-general for prosecution.[191]

Women's participation in the post-conflict security sector improves sector reform efforts, because women are able to perform some tasks that men cannot due to entrenched social norms. For example, women officers are able to establish contact and hear from both local men and women in Afghanistan, while male officers can only establish contact with men.[192] In Iraq, women officers screen local women during searches.[193]

Women security providers have also played major roles in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, as described in box 3.

**Box 3. How women security providers are responding
to COVID-19 in post-conflict contexts**

Women in the security sector have been on the front lines in responding to health and security concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic:
• In Kenya, the Faraja Foundation provided women prisoners with e-counseling services for psychosocial support, access to water, and sanitary products to contain the spread of COVID-19 in prisons.[i]
• Women medical officers with the UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo helped make prevention, protection, and hygiene top priorities of the COVID-19 response and ensured that health information was widely distributed.
• Women peacekeepers in the joint UN-African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur delivered awareness-raising sessions to staff on how to deal with social distancing measures and safely engage in local community outreach both online and in person.[ii]
• In Rwanda and Serbia, women's groups scaled up efforts to address violence against women during COVID-19 by providing immediate and free legal and psychosocial support to victims on 24-hour hotlines and online chat channels.[iii]

Notes:
[i]   Faraja Foundation 2020.
[ii]   UN Peacekeeping 2020.
[iii]   UN Women 2020.

Employing inclusion mechanisms and strategies

Women are often excluded from security sector reform processes because they take place within the male-dominated cultures of military and security institutions. In these environments, women fail to receive support or mentoring, and retaining women in security positions is difficult. These gender dynamics also create barriers to women accessing high-level security positions and leadership roles in government security agencies, such as chairs of defense and security committees.[194] The position of head of the defense ministry continues to be seen as a man's job, especially in states engaged in violent conflict, governed by a military dictator, or heavily invested in military operations.[195]

Transcending inequalities requires strong national leadership and long-term commitments at strategic political levels; additionally, it is crucial that women are appointed to high-ranking security positions to help change these norms. Good practices include undertaking barrier assessments to identify political, cultural, and institutional factors inhibiting women from joining, staying with, or being promoted within security institutions. Furthermore, strategies like quotas, targeted recruitment campaigns, and networking and political advocacy efforts among women leaders at the national, regional, and global levels can increase women's participation in security sector reform.

Good practices can be found in strategies developed by the UN mission in Liberia. Through a comprehensive security sector reform mandate, UN officials supported the establishment of the Liberian Gender and Security Sector National Task Force in March 2017, which proved to be an effective coordination mechanism to advance the implementation of WPS priorities in the security sector at the governance and strategic political levels. Chaired by the ministers of justice, defense, and gender, the task force helped to establish gender units across security institutions, and delivered mentorship and additional training to women serving in the security sector.[196] Other key activities of the task force included the development of an outreach program to encourage women to join security institutions and support for development and alignment of institutional gender policies and work plans.[197]

Multidimensional peacekeeping missions increase the likelihood of women's participation in post-conflict security sector reform.[198] A recent study by Kirschner and Miller (2019) also found that multidimensional missions helped to increase numbers of women police officers who transformed wartime culture and norms around reporting sexual violence.[199] Research shows that a post-conflict state is 22

percent more likely to adopt policies that promote the equal participation of women and men in the security sector if a peacekeeping mission is present in the country.[200]

More women in police forces can also reinforce public trust and action against domestic abuse. In Ukraine, the Ministry of Internal Affairs ensured that at least a quarter of recruits to the new police force were women. The resulting increased number of women police officers was accompanied by a rise in reports of domestic violence, likely because survivors trust women police officers.[201]

Quotas can be strategic tools to increase numbers of women police officers. In Liberia, for example, there was a 15 percent quota implemented in 2005 and expanded to 30 percent in 2012. Consequently, women's representation in this force rose from six percent in 2007 to 17 percent in 2016.[202] This three-fold increase was supported by the presence of an all-women Indian peacekeeping contingent in the UN Mission in Liberia, which encouraged the recruitment of women in the Liberia National Police.[203] The women peacekeepers also provided 24-hour guard duty and public order management, built the capacity of local security institutions, and managed community-level engagement.[204] Given their contact with Liberian women police officers, survey respondents reported "greater confidence and trust in the police as an institution because they considered the force to be more restrained and less likely to abuse civilians."[205]

Enhancing the effectiveness, coherence, and predictability of UN support

There is an significant gap between the expectations established by WPS resolutions and the paucity of resources—political, technical, and financial—made available for their implementation.[206] In a forthcoming report, the UN Department of Peace Operations identifies a need for the Security Council to provide clear and consistent directions to peace operations alongside dedicated financing, monitoring, and reporting to ensure women's meaningful participation in the security sector.[207]

Challenges also remain in developing baselines and indicators to monitor and report progress, assess impact, and identify roadblocks in the implementation of the WPS resolutions throughout security sector reform processes. In addition, data on women's representation in the security sector is insufficient to analyze their status at a global scale, pointing to the need for measures to improve data collection and availability.

Lastly, a review of the UN WPS Agenda[208] demonstrates that the language used in the resolutions largely associates security sector reform with the protection pillar of the agenda.[209] Efforts to promote women's agency in security sector reform would be strengthened if future resolutions more explicitly recognized women's active role in the political and service delivery aspects of security. Additional impact could be achieved through an integrative approach that maximizes synergies between stakeholders engaged in peacebuilding efforts and UN peacekeeping operations.[210]

Engaging women's groups and civil society in support of security sector reform

While enhancing the equal participation of women and men in the security sector is critical to building inclusive security institutions, good practice also includes engaging women's groups and civil society to support security sector reform and foster local ownership.

Local distrust of security institutions because of weak rule of law, corruption, and atrocities perpetrated during conflict are major challenges to address in security sector reform.[211] In Liberia, women have fostered trust in security institutions through dialogue between local communities, policymakers, and security sector personnel,[212] as well as other efforts to actively engage with local populations through formal and informal activities. Women-led civil society organizations have also worked with security services to provide information on local-level security threats.

Women's groups in Liberia improved public perceptions of the military by participating in the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process.[213] They also recommended policy reforms to enhance the gender-responsiveness of the security sector, including penal-code reform to address the needs of men, women, and youth prisoners; trauma counseling training for security forces; and anti-corruption measures.[214] These kinds of measures, combined with strengthening communication skills and active listening techniques among security providers, can increase the legitimacy of the security sector and build trust in security institutions among local communities.

In Sierra Leone, 55 percent of former combatants surveyed reported that women in the community played a major role in helping them reintegrate.[215] Just 20 percent of former combatants credited traditional leaders and 32 percent credited international aid workers.

Unfortunately, international actors and local governments often exclude civil society in the planning and implementation of security sector reform.[216] This is a major omission because informal actors such as tribal leaders often resolve local problems and disputes in post-conflict contexts. Civil society input can close the gap of trust and legitimacy between community members and local security institutions.[217]

Community-based approaches that build local confidence in security forces can also enhance the management of health crises. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, security providers have had to interact closely with local communities to enforce security measures and lockdown restriction—situations where community trust is vital to compliance.[218]

Adherence to traditional gender norms by community members and the police force can also pose challenges to inclusive security sector reforms. In Iraq, community-based surveys in Jubeil and Baradiyah in 2019 found that a majority of both men and women respondents would not allow women family members to visit the police alone to report a problem, due partly to concerns about the vulnerability of women to harassment.[219] For example, 53 percent of women respondents in Jubeil—an area affected by forced displacement, bombing, and seizure of property due to the conflict with ISIS—reported that they would ask a male family member to report a problem on their behalf, and 19 percent of them would not report the problem at all (figure 4). Among the women who would not report a problem to a male police officer, only 24 percent would report to a woman police officer. This shows high levels of mistrust in the police. Increasing women's participation in the security sector is therefore necessary but not sufficient. To be effective, security sector reform needs to foster a transformative change of gender norms.[220]

Figure 4. Only a quarter of women in Jubeil, Iraq, indicated that they would report a problem to police officers directly, 2019
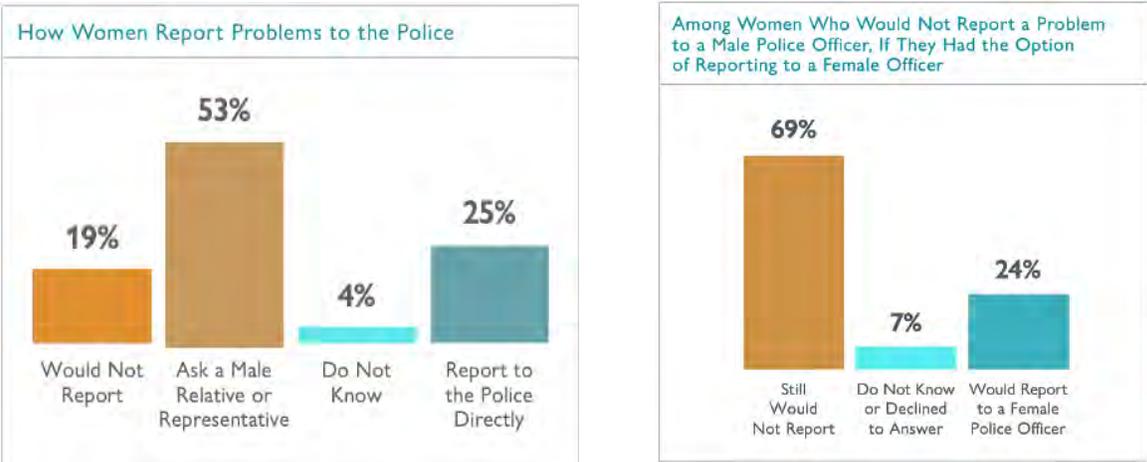
Source: Revkin and Aymerich 2020.

Fostering transformative change and cultivating the roles of male allies

Gender inclusion in the security sector can be improved not only by increasing women's participation, but also by addressing patriarchal cultures that are common in the security sector. Cultivating male allies and reinforcing positive behavior are important measures to support and advance gender equality.[221]

Accountability mechanisms within institutions are needed to address behavior that is not conducive to an inclusive environment. Structures of power dominated by men, like security institutions, resist change. Women within national militaries still face sexual harassment and abuse despite the implementation of "zero-tolerance" policies against sexual harassment.[222] The culture of toxic masculinity that undermines these policies can be changed by altering both formal and informal socialization processes among recruits and officers.[223]

Security sector reform can encourage men to be strong allies for gender equality.[224] This includes training male officers on gender issues and codes of conduct, as has been done in Afghanistan and Liberia.[225] Mentoring programs for men can also close gaps between theory and practice.[226] For example, the US Air Force Academy has offered cadets a course on men and masculinity to address sexist behavior.[227] In Montenegro and Sweden, gender experts coached senior military staff over a 12-month period to implement individual action plans to promote gender equality.[228] Officers who participated in these programs advanced gender equality within their security institutions through capacity development, rapport building, and increased knowledge of gender issues.[229]

Conclusion

Women are vital to the building of inclusive post-conflict institutions and to the establishment of reconstruction processes that contribute to long-term stability and prosperity. Building back better after violent conflict means that women are not only beneficiaries of reconstruction initiatives, but also active participants in decision-making, planning, and implementation. Building back better also means addressing environmental challenges and climate risks to promote long-term economic and environmental sustainability.

The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed a double burden on women in conflict and post-conflict settings by exacerbating gender disparities, such as women's exclusion from decision-making, lack of access to resources and justice, and increased exposure to gender-based violence. Yet women on the pandemic front lines have demonstrated leadership in managing the added economic, social, and health-care burden.

Post-pandemic and post-conflict reconstruction present critical windows to catalyze transformative change toward gender equality and the meaningful participation of women in all sectors and at all levels. To advance gender inclusion in recovery processes, this report highlights good practices and entry points in four aspects of post-conflict reconstruction:

1. In post-conflict governance, the constitution-making process is a major entry point to foster women's political participation and create a framework for building inclusive institutions. Other strategies include capacity-building for women, reforming political parties, and building strategic coalitions.

2. Post-conflict economic recovery investments that integrate women's economic empowerment and climate change adaptation can enhance sustainable economic growth and foster resilience in climate-vulnerable sectors of the economy.

3. Key priorities for advancing justice for women in post-conflict contexts include ensuring access to justice institutions, addressing domestic violence and conflict-related sexual violence, and repealing discriminatory laws.

4. Security sector reform is crucial to restoring rule of law and addressing mistrust in security institutions after violent conflict. Gender-sensitive security sector reform includes advancing women's participation in the security sector, engaging civil society and women's groups to localize reform efforts, and tackling harmful masculinities in security institutions that can undermine women's effective participation.

Cross-cutting strategies also emerge from this review:

• Gender-sensitive tools and assessments are key in all sectors to respond to the needs of both men and women in the aftermath of conflict.

• Inclusion mechanisms—such as quotas and targeted recruitment—are an important first step to guarantee women's participation in post-conflict contexts.

• Effective participation of women must be at all levels of governance and decision-making, from the community to the national level. Inclusive participatory processes that engage communities, civil society, governments, and the private sector foster ownership of post-conflict reconstruction and improve the chance of success.

• Building capacity and training both women and men to address gender inequality can bring about transformative change. Engaging male allies is critical in this process.

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Annex: List of Panel Participants

Post-conflict governance

- Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, United Nations
- H.E. Valentine Rugwabiza, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations
- Ms. Olufunmilayo Balogun, Deputy Chief of Peace & Security, UN Women
- Ms. Palwasha Kakar, Senior Program Officer, United States Institute of Peace
- Ms. Olena Yena, Director, Women Lead Program, National Democratic Institute (NDI), Ukraine
- H.E. Jürgen Schulz, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations

Economic recovery and environmental sustainability

- H.E. Geraldine Byrne Nason, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations
- Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, MB, Executive Director, UN Women
- Dr. Nesreen Barwari, Former Minister of Municipalities and Public Works, Iraq
- Dr. Anne Kuriakose, Senior Social Development Specialist, The Climate Investment Fund
- Ms. Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General, Climate and Natural Resources, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)

Justice and the rule of law

- H.E. Jacqueline O'Neill, Canada's Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security
- Dr. Sandie Okoro, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, World Bank Group
- Dr. Claudia Paz y Paz, Director, Mexico and Central America Program, The Center for Justice and International Law
- Mr. Fazel Rahim, Gender Integration and Training Specialist, EnCompass LLC and Former USAID/Afghanistan Gender Advisor

Security sector reform

- Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, United Nations
- H.E. Adela Raz, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations
- Commander Seema Dhundia, Former Commander of the First All-Female UN Peacekeeping Force, Liberia
- Dr. Sabrina Karim, Hardis Family Assistant Professor, Cornell University

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Program, and GFDRR 2016.
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[203] DCAF 2011.

[204] UN 2016.

[205] GIWPS and the Rockefeller Foundation 2020.

[206] UN Women 2015; Panel about gender-sensitive security sector reform organized by the United Arab Emirates Mission to the United Nations and GIWPS, October 2020.

[207] UN Department of Peace Operations 2020.

[208] UN Department of Peace Operations 2020.

[209] PeaceWomen n.d. While all the ten resolutions in the WPS Agenda call for the equal and full participation of women in all efforts to prevent, resolve, and rebuild from conflict, six resolutions explicitly refer to security sector reform: resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019). Out of these, four resolutions link security sector reform with preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict. The other resolutions refer to broader political processes and mechanisms that include security sector reform. For example, resolution 1960 (2010) reiterates the need for civilian and military leaders to demonstrate commitment and political will to prevent sexual violence and to combat impunity and enforce accountability.

[210] Panel about gender-sensitive security sector reform organized by the United Arab Emirates Mission to the
United Nations and GIWPS, October 2020.

[211] Revkin and Aymerich 2020.

[212] Karim 2019.

[213] Hunt Alternatives Fund, Initiative for Inclusive Security 2006.

[214] Hunt Alternatives Fund, Initiative for Inclusive Security 2006.

[215] AWEPA 2006.

[216] AWEPA 2006.

[217] Revkin and Aymerich 2020.

[218] DCAF 2020b.

[219] DCAF 2020b.

[220] Kunz 2014.

[221] Woodward and Duncanson 2017.

[222] Wood and Toppelberg 2017.

[223] Wood and Toppelberg 2017.

[224] Kunz 2014.

[225] Ansorg and Haastrup 2018.

[226] Ansorg and Haastrup 2018.

[227] Watson 2019.

[228] Watson 2019.

[229] SEESAC 2019.