Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Asia: Towards a Context-responsive Approach from the Bottom Up

A Scoping Study commissioned by Women's Leadership for Peace and Security Programme Cordaid

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Table of Contents

A. Background

This scoping study aims to identify the opportunities to promote regional advocacy on the agenda of women, peace and security in Asia[1]. Four specific objectives have been identified for this scoping study. They are: (1) to map international and regional policy institutions/mechanisms for women's leadership for peace and security in Asia (SE Asia and South Asia); (2) to analyse policy making mechanisms and entry points for lobby and advocacy for women's leadership for peace and security, and provide input on possible entry points; (3) to identify relevant strategies and opportunities for policy influence on the women, peace and security agenda in Asia; and, (4) to contribute to the work of civil society in promoting regional policies and platforms for women, peace and security.

To meet these objectives, this scoping study discusses the following subject matters: (a) the nature of conflicts in Asia and its implications; (b) a policy framework for local women's leadership on peace and security; (c) a mapping of relevant international and regional institutions and mechanisms for South and Southeast Asia; (d) a bottom-up strategy for policy advocacy on women, peace and security in Asia; (e) issues and suggestions for forward movement.

B. The Nature of Conflicts in Asia and Its Implications

A recent review of global datasets on conflicts around the world[2] finds that Asia has among the world's longest running armed struggles, often lasting multiple generations, at an average length of 45 years. Often, the onset of new subnational conflicts are simply the re-emergence of pre-existing conflicts. These conflicts have constituted 60% of the world's active subnational conflicts in the last ten years and caused more deaths than all other forms of conflicts combined between 1999-2008. In fact, from 1992 to 2012, subnational conflicts affected 50% of the countries in South and Southeast Asia. This unique nature of conflicts in Asia requires a deeply contextualized approach to the issue of women, peace and security for the region.

Number of active subnational conflicts – global comparison by region
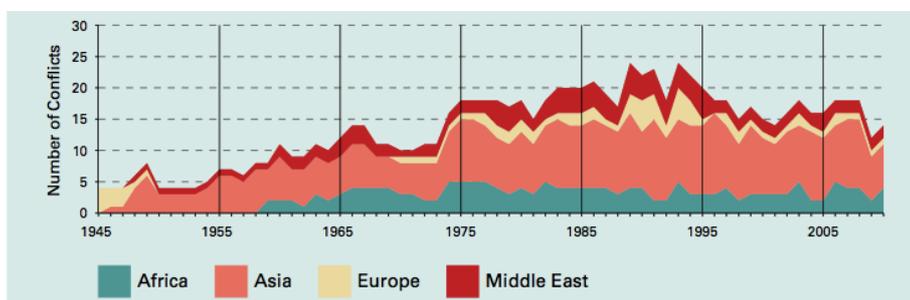
Source: "The Contested Corners of Asia: Subnational Conflicts and International

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[1] This scoping study was commissioned by Cordaid's Program on Women's Leadership for Peace and Security (WLPS), which works to increase the capacity and voice of local women in processes for peace and security at all levels, linking daily priorities issues to policy frameworks. The report and its recommendations serve as input to shape Cordaid's planning in relation to Women's Leadership for Peace and Security in Asia, together with consultations with key partners and organisations in the region.

[2] Thomas Parks, Nat Colletta, Ben Oppenheim, "The Contested Corners of Asia: Subnational Conflicts and International Development Assistance," The Asia Foundation, 2013.

It is important to note, for example, that in practice subnational conflicts are not always recognized officially by states as such, or their very existence is the subject of intense political debate and disagreement. Consequently, situations of long-standing violence, unresolved political uncertainty and daily forms of insecurity stay void of any formal peace negotiation process. In this context, efforts to end violence, address deep-rooted inequalities and (re)establish the rule of law may not necessarily be acknowledged as part of a peacebuilding process, either by national governments or by international bodies on peace and security. Most subnational conflicts in Asia do not have UN peacekeeping missions, although some have experienced peace mediation by international (non-governmental) third parties, such as by the Henri Dunant Institute for Humanitarian Dialogue in Aceh, Indonesia. In this context, efforts by advocates, including women's rights advocates, are crucial for building awareness of national and international responsibility for human rights and human security in subnational regions affected long-term conflict.

According to the same Asia Foundation study, most of Asia's subnational conflicts are a result of deep-rooted structural problems, such as discriminatory policies and practices by the state or local authorities; collusive relations between national and local elites that marginalize some minority populations; and, entrenched horizontal inequalities that concentrate power and resources in some ethnic groups at the expense of others. In the authors' view, ending or reducing these practices requires nothing less than a shift in the political balance that has kept them in place for so long. Consequently, the peace and security agenda in Asia cannot be in any way divorced from the task of transforming a conflict-affected country's overall development agenda.

Furthermore, unlike conflict situations in many parts of Africa, according to the Asia Foundation study, the state in Asia's subnational conflict areas is neither weak nor fragile. In fact, the balance of power between the parties in conflict is often asymmetrical between a strong state at the national level and deeply marginalized minority communities in the country's peripheries. In this context, the New Deal for Fragile States may not necessarily be relevant for the women, peace and security agenda in Asia. New pathways would need to be forged, including those responsive to the complexities of rampant identity politics and the debilitating forces of poor governance.

Given the nature of subnational conflicts, it must be recognized that the disconnects between the national center and the marginalized communities at the peripheries may also reflect itself in the women's movement. National women's organizations may not necessarily be consistently nor effectively responsive to issues faced by women in the subnational conflict-affected communities. In a multicultural country where national advocacy organizations are dominated by women of the majority community, minority women may not necessarily feel comfortable nor consider themselves fully accepted in existing national platforms.

In this context, local women must find ways to overcome multiple and intersecting discrimination, as they are often members of minority communities who face discrimination from outside, from within their own communities, as well as from the mainstream national women's movement. Additionally, given the structural roots of these conflicts, local women's

initiatives must also be capable of addressing the complex nexus between peace, development and governance.

Ultimately, support for local women leaders must include not only capacity building interventions, but also political support and protection mechanisms which can effectively deal with the risks and vulnerabilities they face as women human rights defenders.

C. A Policy Framework for Local Women's Leadership on Peace and Security

Since 2000, a policy framework on the women, peace and security agenda has been developing mostly at the international level, under the high-level political leadership of the UN Security Council. In the past 13 years, seven resolutions have been adopted by the Council. Last month, in October 2013, the CEDAW Committee followed on with General Recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, thereby integrating the women, peace and security agenda into a legally binding international treaty on women's rights. All countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia are State Parties to this treaty and are now requested to report on implementation of their international obligations in the context of diverse conflict situations.

The emerging international policy and legal framework for the women, peace and security agenda provides a useful reference point for policy advocacy strategies to support local women's leadership in this field. Among others, there are five policy issues which can be particularly relevant to the Asian context: recognition of diverse conflict situations; the broad scope of legally-binding state obligations on women's rights in conflict and post-conflict situations; the international community's special focus on local women; the critical nexus of peace, security, development and governance; and, combating impunity for gender-based crimes. There also exist specific references to the role of regional institutions in implementing the women, peace and security agenda.

1. Recognition of diverse conflict situations

Given the prevalence of subnational conflicts in Asia, the CEDAW Committee's expansive understanding of conflict provides women with a more robust framework to fulfill the potential for women's leadership in diverse conflict situations. In General Recommendation No. 30, the CEDAW Committee states that application of the CEDAW Convention covers:

> "conflict prevention, international and non-international armed conflicts, situations of foreign occupation, as well as other forms of occupation and the post-conflict phase …. [and] other situations of concern, such as internal disturbances, protracted and low-intensity civil strife, political strife, ethnic and communal violence, states of emergency and suppression of mass uprisings, war against terrorism and organized crime, that may not necessarily be classified as armed conflict under international humanitarian law and which result in serious violations of women's rights …" (Paragraph 4)

Since women's agency in building peace and security occurs in diverse conflict situations, CEDAW's broad articulation of the range of conflicts covered under this international treaty is

crucial for allowing the scope of international obligations to be in sync with women's varying contexts on the ground.

Resonating with the context of conflicts in Asia, the CEDAW Committee also recognizes that "the transition from conflict to post-conflict is often not linear and can involve cessations of conflict and then slippages back into conflict – a cycle that can continue for long periods of time." This long view of conflicts is particularly relevant to the long-term transformative agenda espoused by women's movements in Asia and other regions of the world.

The CEDAW Committee's adoption of a broad understanding of conflict is critical and potentially path-breaking, especially given the on-going debates and disagreements among the UN Security Council members with regard to addressing gender-based violations in countries not considered a threat to international peace and security and are thus viewed as "outside the purview of the Security Council".[3]

2. The broad scope of legally-binding state obligations on women's rights in conflict and post-conflict situations

The CEDAW Committee also articulates the scope of state obligations on eliminating all forms of discrimination in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. According to this Committee, States parties are bound to apply the Convention when they exercise territorial or extraterritorial jurisdiction, whether individually in unilateral military action, or as members of international or intergovernmental organizations and coalitions as part of an international peacekeeping force. The Convention also applies to bilateral or multilateral donor assistance for conflict prevention and humanitarian aid, mitigation or post-conflict reconstruction; in involvement as third parties in peace or negotiation processes; and in the formation of trade agreements with conflict-affected countries (Paragraph 9).

Furthermore, the Convention requires States parties to regulate the activities of domestic non-State actors, within their effective control, who operate extraterritorially. This would extend to acts of national corporations operating extraterritorially, such as cases in which national corporations extend loans to projects in conflict-affected areas that lead to forced evictions and which call for the establishment of accountability and oversight mechanisms for private security and other contractors operating in conflict zones (Paragraph 10).

This wide scope of state obligations provides a broader frame for women's advocacy and monitoring efforts and is thus more responsive to the different contexts of women's vulnerabilities in times of conflict and post-conflict in Asia as well as other parts of the world.

3. The international community's special focus on local women

UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which is the first of seven resolutions on the women, peace and security agenda, calls on States to take "measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution". In 2009 and 2013, the Council

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[3] See UN Security Council Cross-Cutting Report, "Women, Peace and Security: Sexual Violence in Conflict and Sanctions", April 2013, pg. 5.

makes a further commitment to meet with local women and women's organizations during its field visits to conflict areas (SCRs 1888 and 2122).

The Council also makes specific reference to local civil society, including women's organizations, in several resolutions, namely in the context of (1) encouraging States to develop dedicated funding mechanisms to support the work and enhance capacities of local civil society organizations that support women's leadership development and full participation in all levels of decision-making (SCR 2122); and (2) urging all parties concerned, including Member States, United Nations entities and financial institutions, to support the development and strengthening of the capacities of national institutions, in particular of judicial and health systems, and of local civil society networks in order to provide sustainable assistance to women and girls affected by armed conflict and post-conflict situations (SCR 2122); and, (3) recognizing the role of civil society organizations and networks in enhancing community-level protection against sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations and supporting survivors in accessing justice and reparations (SCR 2106).

With regard to women and women's organizations in general, in a recent resolution adopted in June 2013, the Council gives specific recognition to the important role that can be played by women, women's organizations as well as formal and informal leaders in exerting influence over parties to armed conflict in order to address sexual violence (SCR 2106).

Concurrently, the CEDAW Committee – through its General Recommendation No. 30 – makes special mention of rural, indigenous and minority women in conflict situations. It also identifies distinct groups of women and girls who are at risk of violence during and after conflict, namely internally displaced and refugee women; women human rights defenders; women belonging to diverse caste, ethnic, national, religious or other minorities or identities who are often attacked as symbolic representatives of their community; widows; and women with disabilities. Also recognized is the vulnerability of female combatants and women in the military to sexual assault and harassment by State and non-State armed groups and resistance movements.

Similar to the Security Council, the CEDAW Committee also makes a specific call for States to support women's formal and informal conflict prevention efforts and to ensure women's equal participation in informal, local or community-based processes for conflict prevention (Paragraph 33).

4. The critical nexus of peace, security, development and governance

The critical nexus of peace, security and development is firmly established in the Security Council resolutions, the CEDAW general recommendation regarding conflict and post-conflict situations, and the Post-2015 Development Agenda. This nexus is particularly important in the context of the long-term subnational conflicts in Asia which is experienced by marginalized communities across multiple generations, lasting for more than four decades, on average.

In Resolution 1889, the UN Security Council calls on states to support better socio-economic conditions in post-conflict situations, through education, income generating activities, access to basic services, in particular health services, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and mental health as well as through gender-responsive law enforcement

and access to justice. It also requests the UN Secretary General to take into account the need to improve the participation of women in political and economic decision-making from the earliest stages of the peacebuilding process.

According to the CEDAW Committee, the fulfillment of state obligations in eliminating discrimination against women involves addressing specific violations as well as the underlying structural discrimination that enabled such violations. This includes adopting legislation and policies that recognize the particular disadvantages that women face in claiming their right to inheritance and land in post-conflict contexts. This is part of the Committee's basic observation that inequalities in marriage and family relations impact women's experiences in conflict and post-conflict situations. (Paragraphs 62-65)

The CEDAW Committee calls on states to undertake gender-sensitive and gender-responsive security sector reform (Paragraphs 66-69) that results in representative security sector institutions that address women's different security experiences and priorities, and for this purpose, liaise with women and women's organizations. It specifically requests clear linkages between security actors and service providers, particularly in the context of addressing gender-based violence.

The High-level Panel on the post-2015 development agenda makes a direct link between the peace and security and the development and governance agendas. It has identified peace as one of the necessary 'transformative shifts' that needs to happen in the coming decades, and it is also set as one of the seven illustrative development goals. According to the Panel, conflict-related targets in relation to violent deaths, access to justice, stemming the external causes of conflict, such as organised crime, and enhancing the legitimacy and accountability of security forces, police and the judiciary, cannot in themselves guarantee peace or development in countries emerging from conflict. Development- and governance-oriented agendas, such as jobs, participation in political processes and local civic engagement, and the transparent management of public resources, are also important.

In order to ensure a coherent strategy in addressing this critical nexus, it is crucial for local women leaders and peace builders to adopt and promote a human rights approach in which economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights are treated as indivisible and interdependent.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has provided an authoritative reference on the principle of non-discrimination (General Comment No. 20) that outlines the parameters of multiple and systemic discrimination[4], which is particularly relevant for women in the subnational conflict-affected communities in Asia. The UN Special Rapporteur on cultural rights has also provided a groundbreaking framework on cultural rights and women's equal access to this right which can be further developed for the context of local women in conflict and post-conflict situations.[5] The latter references are particularly relevant for women peace builders who carry out their role while facing discrimination from within their own cultural communities.

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[4] Link at ttp://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2fGC%2f20&Lang=en
[5] Links at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/CulturalRights/Pages/AnnualReports.aspx

5. Combating impunity for gender-based crimes

Both the UN Security Council and the CEDAW Committee recognizes rape and other forms of sexual violence as a tactic of war and make firm calls for states to end impunity for such gender-based crimes.

The Security Council makes this call in three consecutive resolutions (SCRs 1820, 1888 and 1960), essentially building international commitment to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls. To monitor implementation of this political commitment, the Council has established regular reporting mechanisms during its sessions, including time-bound commitments by all parties of the conflict, a procedure on listing/delisting perpetrators, and inclusion of rape and other forms of sexual violence in the consideration of the Council's sanctions committees.

The CEDAW Committee recommends that states ensure women's and girls' access to justice; adopt gender-sensitive investigative procedures to address sexual and gender-based violence; conduct gender-sensitive training and adopt codes of conduct and protocols for the police, the military, including peacekeepers; build the capacity of the judiciary, including in the context of transitional justice mechanisms to ensure their independence, impartiality and integrity. Additionally, it also calls for data collection, using standardized methods, on the incidence and prevalence of gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence in different settings and against different categories of women (Paragraphs 74-81).

Some key Security Council political commitments and the CEDAW Committee general recommendations are particularly relevant to conflict situations where traditional/customary institutions are deeply entrenched in community life. For example, the Council makes a specific call to states to ensure that traditional leaders prevent stigmatization of victims (SCR 1888), and the CEDAW Committee recommends direct engagement with informal justice mechanisms (Paragraph 81(l), GR 30).

The Security Council also addresses the socio-cultural factors that contribute to the perpetual cycle of impunity on sexual violence. In particular, it has taken responsibility for addressing root causes of sexual violence by exposing about the inevitability and non-preventability of sexual violence in war, and by debunking myths that fuel sexual violence (SCR 1820).

6. The role of regional institutions

Lastly, the Security Council speaks directly to regional and sub-regional institutions with regard to implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. In Resolution 1820, it urges appropriate regional and sub-regional bodies in particular to consider developing and implementing policies, activities, and advocacy for the benefit of women and girls affected by sexual violence in armed conflict.

Since 13 years ago when the Security Council adopted Resolution 1325, it already called for the increased representation of women at all decision-making levels, including in regional institutions and mechanisms, for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict.

For the upcoming 2015 high-level review of the women, peace and security agenda, the Council includes within its scope of assessment the progress of implementation at the regional level, along with that at the national and international levels.

Countries in Asia are part of several regional institutions and mechanisms, namely ASEAN in Southeast Asia, SAARC in South Asia, and UN ESCAP for the whole of the Asia Pacific region. As a regional policy issue, the women, peace and security agenda is addressed, directly and indirectly, by ASEAN. The recently adopted ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children (2013) makes specific reference to the Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, and the 2012 ASEAN Declaration on Human Rights articulates the right to peace. The latter is expressed in the following way:

> "Every person and peoples of ASEAN have the right to enjoy peace within an ASEAN framework of security and stability, neutrality and freedom, such that the rights set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised. To this end, ASEAN Member States should continue to enhance friendship and cooperation in the furtherance of peace, harmony and stability in the region."

D. A mapping of relevant international and regional institutions and mechanisms for South and Southeast Asia

Several institutions and mechanisms at the international and regional levels are relevant for the effective role of local women advocates of human rights, peace and security in Asia. Among those particularly relevant at this point in time are the following:

INTERNATIONAL	
UN Security Council	
UN General Assembly	
UN Human Rights Council	
Commission on the Status of Women	
CEDAW Committee	
ASIA PACIFIC	
UN Economic and Social and Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP)	
UN Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN RCM TWG GEEW)	
SOUTHEAST ASIA	**SOUTH ASIA**
ASEAN Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)	SAARC Gender Policy Advocacy Group
ASEAN Commission on the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)	

ASEAN Summit	
ASEAN Institute on Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR)	

Each of the above-listed 12 institutions and mechanisms has its own distinct functions and potential role in advancing t11he women, peace and security agenda in Asia and for local women's leadership in the conflict-affected areas of South and Southeast Asia.

1. UN Security Council

In relation to its established political commitments, the Council convenes annual debates on the issues of women, peace and security with the head of UN Women and conflict-related sexual violence with the UN Special Representative assigned to this issue. As of October 2013, the Council continues to adopt resolutions on the women, peace and security agenda. It also integrates concerns regarding this agenda in its method of work, namely the Council's visiting missions to conflict-affected areas. Additionally, Member States in the Security Council have utilized its informal 'Arria Formula' meetings to discuss issues related to the women, peace and security agenda. While only Council members can initiate these meetings, other stakeholders, including civil society organizations, are often invited to participate in them.

Among the country situations under review at the Security Council to date, only a small number are located in Asia. They include: Afghanistan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste.

In 2015, the Security Council will convene a high-level review of the women, peace and security agenda in order to "assess progress at the global, regional and national levels in implementing resolution 1325 (2000), renew commitments and address obstacles and constraints that have emerged in the implementation of the resolution." In the meantime, it has requested the Secretary General to submit its annual report on women, peace and security on March 2014 as well as a report on progress in the UN's peacebuilding efforts, including with regard to women's participation in peacebuilding and placing particular emphasis on the impact on the ground, no later than December 2014.

For local women leaders, access to the Security Council deliberations can be obtained through the following pathways:

- NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security – This NGO working group places itself as a bridge between women's human rights defenders working in conflict-affected situations and policy-makers at the UN Headquarters. This group provides monthly recommendations – called Monthly Action Points on Women, Peace and Security – to the Security Council, which is particularly focused on specific country situations under review by the Council. The working group also participates in the Council's open debates on the agenda and makes regular analysis of the Council's overall work on this agenda.

- Member States in the Security Council – Among the permanent members, the United States and the United Kingdom are leading the focus on conflict-related sexual violence. Australia, which is one of the non-permanent members for 2014, is of particular relevance to the agenda for local women's leadership in Asia. Australia's approach to its membership in the

Security Council includes an interest in building cooperation between the Council and regional bodies as well as a focus on issues of women, peace and security and the nexus between security and development.

- UN Women – Peace and security is one of UN Women's main program areas worldwide and its Executive Director has a distinct role in the Security Council's annual debates on the women, peace and security agenda. UN Women's South Asia office has a program on women in peacebuilding for the region, while UN Women's Representative in Bangkok is co-chair, with the Chief of UN ESCAP's Social Development Division, of the UN Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN RCM TWG GEEW).

2. UN General Assembly

The UN General Assembly is convening a series of deliberations on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the framework of 'open working groups,' each of which consists of no more than 30 member states. The first of eight sessions has started, on March 2013, and the last is scheduled for 3–7 February 2014. During this last session, two issues will be discussed separately: (1) 'Promoting equality, including social equity, gender equality and women's empowerment' and (2) 'Conflict prevention, post–conflict peacebuilding and the promotion of durable peace, rule of law and governance'. Civil society organizations with consultative status with ECOSOC may participate as observers in these inter–governmental meetings.

For local women leaders, access to this process can be obtained through:
- NGOs with consultative status with ECOSOC, for observation of the last thematic session of the Open Working Groups, in February 2014;
- Member States participating in the Open Working Groups[6], for input into the deliberations following the established working method;
- UN Women, for input into its policy documents and interventions.

3. UN Human Rights Council

The UN Human Rights Council's Special Procedures mechanism covers 37 thematic and 14 country mandates.[7]

Out of the thematic mandates, none focus specifically on conflict situations although many independent experts holding the mandates do include conflict situations in their annual thematic reports and make official visits (and thus produce country-based reports) to conflict–affected countries. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, for example, has produced a report on violence against women in armed conflict situations (2001) and one on reparations for women victims of gross violations of human rights (2010).

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[6] For the list of countries participating in the Open Working Groups, see
http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/67/L.48/Rev.1&Lang=E
[7] For a link to the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, see
http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Welcomepage.aspx

Among the country mandates, three are currently in the Asian region, namely: Cambodia, Myanmar and North Korea. These mandates are currently held by the following independent experts: Mr. Surya Prasad (Nepal) for Cambodia, Mr. Tomas Ojea Quintana (Argentina) for Myanmar, and Mr. Marzuki Darusman (Indonesia) for North Korea. As of this year, the Council has also established a Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

For local women leaders working in conflict-affected areas, access to the Special Procedures can be obtained by:
- Sending individual complaints to relevant thematic mandates which have provided the means for such a procedure (see the respective websites of each mandate);
- Pushing their respective national governments to extend an invitation to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, the Working Group on discrimination against women in law and in practice, or other relevant thematic mandates;
- For those who live in countries for which the Council has established a specific country mandate, seek direct contact with the mandate holder to provide relevant information.

4. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Since 1995, the CSW is mandated to review progress and gaps in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA), in which one of the critical areas of concern is 'Women and Armed Conflict'. The 2013 session of CSW, which focused on violence against women, produced an Agreed Conclusions which included reference to the women, peace and security agenda, following the UN Security Council resolutions on this issue. In 2015, the CSW will conduct a 20-year review of the BPFA.

For local women leaders, access can be obtained through:
- Direct participation in side events during the 2014 and 2015 CSW sessions, as the CSW sessions traditionally gather the highest number of women's organizations worldwide;
- Participation in official government delegations to the CSW sessions;
- Input into the review documents prepared by UN Women and the UN regional commissions, namely UN ESCAP for the Asia Pacific region.

5. CEDAW Committee

With General Recommendation 30 (GR 30) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, State Parties to the CEDAW Convention are expected to include areas of concern expressed in the General Recommendation when it is relevant. The GR 30 specifically requests State Parties to provide information on the implementation of the Security Council resolutions on the women, peace and security agenda. NGO shadow reports should therefore include information which can contribute to a robust dialogue between the Committee and the State Parties on this agenda, following CEDAW's framework as articulated in the GR 30.

The production of shadow reports on implementation of the CEDAW Convention is well integrated into the agendas of national women's rights organizations around the world, even if they are not always responsive to the issues faced by women in conflict-affected regions of

their respective countries. In situations where national women's organizations are not responsive to women's rights issues in subnational conflicts, special efforts/initiatives are needed to build the capacity of local groups to negotiate for a special section on conflict in the main national shadow report or, if all else fails, to produce their own shadow report focusing on implementation of the Convention in the context of GR 30. The CEDAW shadow report produced by the Women and Media Collective for the review of Sri Lanka in 2011 contained a special chapter on conflict.[8] In 2010, the CEDAW Committee conducted an unprecedented step of consideration of an 'exceptional report' regarding mass violence in Gujarat, India, and its effects on women, despite the Indian Government's non-responsiveness on this issue.[9] The issues raised for such a consideration were initially presented to the Committee by Indian women's rights groups in civil society.

The consultations leading up to the writing of a shadow report is in itself a valuable process. Local women's groups working in conflict-affected communities can potentially utilize this process as a means to build multi-stakeholder support and to bring about public awareness on their issues of concern.

Capacity building to engage with the CEDAW Committee following the schedule for country reporting is available from a long-standing regional resource center, IWRAW Asia Pacific, based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

6. UN Economic and Social and Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP)

This regional development arm of the UN deals with the issue of gender equality under its Social Development Division. In February 2014, UN ESCAP will convene a civil society consultation on the Beijing+20 Review and, in November 2014, it will host an Asia Pacific Conference on the same topic.

For local women leaders, these regional review processes on the Beijing Platform for Action should be accessible, directly through the civil society consultation and indirectly through input to the key stakeholders participating in the Asia Pacific conference in November 2014.

Currently, the Asia Pacific Women Law and Development (APWLD), the biggest membership-driven network of leading feminists in the region, is seeking ways to directly engage with the UN ESCAP, particularly to promote a model of 'development justice' (The Bangkok Declaration) in the on-going deliberations for a new development agenda. This organization has strong constituencies in South and Southeast Asia.

7. UN Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (RCM TWG GEEW)

The UN Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (RCM TWG GEEW) is a UN system-wide coordinating mechanism for the Asia Pacific region. The RCM TWG GEEW is co-chaired by ESCAP's Chief of the Social Development Division and UN Women's representative in Bangkok. At the 10th anniversary of

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[8] See http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws48.htm
[9] See http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/co/CEDAW-C-IND-CO--SP1.pdf

SCR 1325, it created an advisory group to provide high-level technical advice and support to the RCM TWG GEEW and other stakeholders in the Asia Pacific region for the effective implementation of the Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. The advisory group, named the Asia Pacific Regional Advisory Group on Women, Peace and Security, is comprised of independent experts from government and civil society, including from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal in South Asia as well as from Indonesia and the Philippines in Southeast Asia.

The Second Meeting of Advisory Group, conducted in August 2013, addressed the economic and social dimensions of women, peace and security in the Asia Pacific.

Local women leaders in South and Southeast Asia can access the Advisory Group directly through the individual members in the respective sub-regions[10], or through the Bangkok offices of UN Women and the Social Development Division of UN ESCAP.

8. ASEAN Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)

AICHR is an inter-governmental human rights body whose establishment is mandated by the ASEAN Charter. Effectively, its main functions lie in the promotion of human rights in the region, rather than its protection. It is a consultative body that reports to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting. Following the reference to the right to peace in the ASEAN Declaration on Human Rights, this inter-governmental human rights body is conducting a regional thematic study on this issue. No information is available as to what extent the gender perspective is integrated into this study on the right to peace in Southeast Asia.

AICHR deals with women's rights and collaborates with UN Women and other relevant bodies on this issue.

9. ASEAN Commission on the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)

ACWC is an inter-governmental consultative body that reports to the ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Social Welfare and Development. Among its functions is to assist Member States with implementation of the Concluding Observations of CEDAW, CRC and other relevant treaty bodies.

ACWC played a key role in the drafting of the ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children, which makes reference to the UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security.

10. ASEAN Summit

The ASEAN Summit is the 'supreme policy making body' of ASEAN. This high-level meeting held twice a year and hosted by the Member State holding the ASEAN Chairmanship. Following this, in 2014, the ASEAN Summit will be held in Myanmar. For 2015, the year of high-level reviews

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[10] Members from South Asia: Anwarul K. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Bandana Rana (Nepal), Simar Samar (Afghanistan). Members from Southeast Asia: Kamala Chandrakirana (Indonesia), Teresita Quintos-Deles (Philippines).

on the women, peace and security agenda as well as on the Beijing Platform for Action, the Summit will be held in Malaysia under the Malaysian Government's Chairmanship.

Local women leaders in Southeast Asia's conflict-affected communities can access all the above-mentioned bodies – AICHR, ACWC and the ASEAN Summit meetings –through the Southeast Asia Women's Caucus on ASEAN (also known as the Women's Caucus). The Women's Caucus has members in the 10 countries of ASEAN plus Timor-Leste, whose membership application is being reviewed, and is the main forum for policy advocacy for women's human rights directed at all of ASEAN's bodies. The Caucus was established through the partnership of IWRAW Asia Pacific and APWLD. Both organizations continue to play a key part in the development of the Caucus, as co-convenors.

11. ASEAN Institute on Peace and Reconciliation

ASEAN has announced the establishment of this institute within the framework of ASEAN's Political-Security Community Blueprint, although its specific Terms of Reference is still in being finalized. Its function will be in the field of research and capacity building on peace and reconciliation. It could potentially be a bridge to policy dialogues with ASEAN's main security sector body, the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM) which is convened annually. The institute will most probably be based in Jakarta.

Possible methods for local women leaders to access this institute will be clearer once the Terms of Reference is completed and adopted, and its leadership is appointed.

12. SAARC Gender Policy Advocacy Group

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has identified 'gender-related issues' as one of the areas of cooperation under the Social Development agenda. It has a 'Technical Committee on Women, Youth and Children' which meets regularly. In March 2013, A Gender Policy Advocacy Group (SAARC-GPAG) was established to "keep gender high on the policy agenda of SAARC Countries". It will have 16 members, comprised of senior policy level officials from the Member States and experts from civil society/academia from the respective member countries.

Because of the unresolved conflict among SAARC's member states, the peace and security agenda is extremely difficult to navigate for women's rights advocates in any official forum within SAARC. The most realistic entry point for formal engagement with SAARC by local women's groups/leaders in South Asia's conflict-affected areas would be through the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda in the context of development. Given the critical nexus between development, conflict and peace, this would not necessarily be a disadvantage.

The South Asia office of UN Women has been supporting SAARC's program on gender equality and women's empowerment, including for the development of a Gender Info Base. This UN Women office also set up a UN Women Expert Group to support its program on 'Women Count for Peace' and convened a regional conference on women's agency in peacebuilding in 2013. Further information and access to SAARC for local women leaders can be pursued through the South Asia office of UN Women.

E. A bottom-up strategy for policy advocacy on women, peace and security in Asia

The main challenge for promoting a regional policy advocacy strategy in Asia is that, despite the vibrancy of the women's movement in Asia, there is currently no existing regional forum that is specifically and consistently focusing on women in conflict and post-conflict situations and on the women, peace and security agenda. At the national level, inclusive feminist platforms dedicated to these issues exist in some countries and not in others. Some of them developed as part of donor-supported processes to formulate national action plans on women, peace and security, while others emerged out of networks and institutions advocating for women's human rights in diverse conflict and post-conflict situations. Where they exist, understanding of the effectiveness and sustainability of these platforms requires contextualized and critical reviews.

Given the under-development of the institutional infrastructure for activism on the women, peace and security agenda within civil society, and in national and regional women's movements more specifically, engaging on this issue at this point in time would require a long-term strategic investment. This involves initiating strategic interventions at the regional level, alone or in partnership with others, which would open new space, create new knowledge and expertise, and develop new constituencies within existing networks and through new ones when necessary.

An effective advocacy strategy in which local women leaders are at the core would also have to address the five gaps that Cordaid has identified in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda so far, namely: the effective representation gap, the analysis gap, the connection gap, the policy gap, and the multi-stakeholder gap. These gaps can be addressed in the following way:

Gaps	Possible measures to address gaps
Effective representation	A thematic regional network comprising of local women leaders and concerned national women activists with regular communication channels and an effective mechanism for accountability to its members.
Analysis	Resources and capacity building for participatory action research focused on documenting empirical realities on the ground and building a collective analysis on important trends and issues.
Connection	Strategic partnerships and/or relations with key regional institutions which play a bridging role across sectors and levels of policy making.
Policy	A regular flow of findings and analysis from participatory action research to provide evidence for policy advocacy at higher levels.
Multi-stakeholder	Strategic multi-stakeholder forums for policy dialogues at national, regional and international levels.

A bottom-up strategy to promote policy advocacy on women, peace and security, in which local women leaders in South and Southeast Asia are at the core, could look like this:

1. Build capacity for local women leaders in conflict-affected areas through strategic partnerships with regional women's rights organizations which have well-established expertise and advocacy achievements.

There are several feminist regional organizations with valuable expertise and experience in areas relevant for advancing the women, peace and security agenda. For these organizations to contribute effectively to the agenda, they themselves need support to integrate this agenda into its work. Among others, these organizations are:

- IWRAW Asia Pacific has been the main center where local women's rights advocates in the region are trained and supported to utilize the CEDAW Convention and prepare shadow reports on its implementation in national settings. IWRAW AP was actively involved in providing input and support for the drafting of General Recommendation 30 by the CEDAW Committee. They are well-placed to develop a module for local women leaders to utilize the CEDAW GR 30 on conflict. Building the capacity to engage with CEDAW for local women activists in conflict-affected communities will also produce an added benefit of overcoming the disconnect that often exists between these activists and national women's rights organizations.

- APWLD is an Asia Pacific-wide membership-based network with a programmatic focus on accessing international and regional mechanisms for women's human rights. It has also built strong alliances with other regional and international civil society networks advocating for a 'development justice' approach in formulating the new global development goals as well as to influence UN ESCAP policy making. Together with IWRAW AP, APWLD co-founded the Southeast Asia Women's Caucus on ASEAN.

- DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) offers regular regional courses for young feminists in Asia, and has initiated cross-regional exchanges between local women activists in conflict-affected communities in South and Southeast Asia. A publication has come out of the latter initiative, although the network has not developed further.

Strategic and long-term partnerships with key regional organizations will ensure the long-term impact and benefit for a wide range of local women's rights activists working in diverse conflict-affected communities in South and Southeast Asia.

2. Focus on gaining policy impact through the upcoming review and deliberation processes, in 2014 and 2015, of key international commitments relevant to women's human rights in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The next couple of years provide the most strategic opportunity for input into policy making on the women, peace and security agenda which could potentially generate long-term impacts and broaden the space for local women's leadership. These opportunities are created by the

planned high-level processes of reviews and deliberations within the UN system which are open to civil society input, namely:

- the high-level review by the UN Security Council on implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, in 2015;
- the 20-year review by CSW on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in 2015, with regional preparations by UN ESCAP scheduled in 2014;
- the deliberations by the UN General Assembly's Open Working Groups on the new global development agenda, in 2014.

For these policy forums to be responsive to local women's leadership, other measures suggested below need to be carried out.

3. Support the growth of a regional civil society forum for building and exchanging information and knowledge from the ground up to address the implementation gaps in the women, peace and security agenda in Asia.

Currently, there is no regular forum at the regional level dedicated to issues on women, peace and security. While there are several regional organizations which are well-placed to integrate this agenda in their respective work, they would all still need a venue in which relevant civil society initiatives and stakeholders can converge and discuss and raise strategic issues common concern. In the build up to the UN-centered high-level reviews and deliberations, such a venue has become even more urgent.

For this forum to be inclusive and sustainable, it might be best positioned if supported by a consortium of regional feminist organizations working together to ensure a cumulative impact of all their respective work though the empowered voice and activism of local women.

4. Facilitate the development of resources and expert support for participatory action research in conflict-affected areas in South and Southeast Asia on issues relevant to the women, peace and security agenda.

The most important contribution that local women in conflict-affected communities can give – and eventually benefit from – is to provide information, knowledge and analysis from the ground to address the knowledge gap that feeds into huge discrepancy between policy and implementation on the women, peace and security agenda.

While documentation on violence against women and other forms of gender-based human rights violations in conflict-affected situations have been carried out by many women's rights organizations in the region, none have followed a common framework that feeds into a coherent policy advocacy strategy on the women, peace and security agenda. The recently adopted CEDAW GR 30 has allowed for a more robust and holistic interpretation of the Security Council resolutions. And the high-level policy discussions on a new development agenda provides a new opportunity to better articulate the nexus of peace, security and development and governance. A coherent and comprehensive new framework is now possible and can

increase the potential impact of local women's voice and experiences on all levels of decision-making.

CSO networks could initiate a dialogue with interested donor agencies to dedicate a significant fund for participatory action research on women, peace and security issues in Asia. This fund can be designed to encourage partnerships between scholars and activists to ensure grounded analysis and effective policy recommendations. Australia is preparing to take over the Presidency of the Security Council in November 2014 and may be interested in this initiative. Several donor agencies are particularly interested in supporting regional approaches, especially in Southeast Asia. And the momentum of high-level reviews and deliberations within the UN system can provide added incentive. The Australian National University's Gender Institute considers the women, peace and security agenda as one of its main areas of focus, and may be interested in engaging on a research-based initiative.

Findings, analysis, publications from this knowledge building process can feed into the upcoming UN-based reviews and to the regional civil society forum (see above) and sub-regional inter-governmental institutions/mechanisms for the longer term.

5. Support integration of the women, peace and security agenda into existing sub-regional networks of women's rights activists and enhance the effective inclusion of local women leaders in conflict-effected areas in these networks.

In Southeast Asia, there is an historic momentum building through the new Charter-based ASEAN (see Section D above). A network of Southeast Asian women's rights activist is growing and actively engaging with all the relevant ASEAN bodies. It also takes part in the Steering Committee of the annual ASEAN People's Forum which is convened back-to-back with the ASEAN Summit. While conflict situations is one of areas of concern already identified by members of the Southeast Asian Women's Caucus on ASEAN, there has been little opportunity to focus on this issue specifically and integrate the women, peace and security agenda into the Caucus' work.

F. Issues and suggestions for forward movement

In order to build on existing work and achievements in the region, CSO networks and partners might consider supporting the creation of a consortium of feminist regional organizations focusing on the women, peace and security agenda. Most existing regional organizations operate at the Asia Pacific or Asia level, in which South and Southeast Asia are only two sub-regions among several (East Asia, Northeast Asia, West Asia).

One of the first activities of the consortium could be organizing a regional forum on women, peace and security in February 2014, back-to-back with UN ESCAP's civil society consultation on the Beijing+20 review. The forum will focus on the BFPA's Critical Area of Concern regarding 'Women and Armed Conflict'. If interest exists, the forum can be convened annually to feed into various policy-making forums at the sub-regional, regional and international levels. Participants in these forums can also bring issues home for policy dialogues with relevant state agencies at the national and local levels.

At the sub-regional level, the most promising space for policy advocacy is in Southeast Asia with ASEAN and the Southeast Asia Women's Caucus on ASEAN. In 2014, ASEAN will be chaired by Myanmar, which provides historic opportunities to influence development of the agenda in Myanmar as well.

In South Asia, engagement with SAARC will have to be framed in the context of 'development', rather than specifically on 'peace and security' which is a sensitive topic among Member States in the region. At this point in time, it may be more productive to provide support for the active participation of local women's groups in the conflict-affected areas of South Asia in the work and activities of a regional consortium on this issue.

As expected, not all governments in South and Southeast Asia are willing and interested in dealing with the women, peace and security agenda. In countries where National Action Plans on this issue have been adopted, namely in the Philippines and Nepal, the door is wide open. In other countries, particularly those in which subnational conflicts are not officially recognized as such, alternative entry points need to be utilized. It is precisely in response to such a context that this Scoping Study suggest a multi-pronged approach, beyond National Action Plans on the WPS agenda, utilizing the CEDAW GR 30, the Beijing+20 review, the post-2015 development agenda to ensure a robust and productive engagement on this very complex and important issue.