Local Voices In Global Spaces: Influencing International Norms And Standards

GNWP, with support from UN Women, is leading an effort to ensure women's civil society voices are reflected in the global policy debates around the Sustaining Peace agenda – both by adding their voices to the discussions about the agenda, and by ensuring that these global discussions are transformed into concrete and necessary actions at national and local levels. GNWP's work on this includes Civil Society Study on Sustaining Peace, conducted in 15 countries; and global policy advocacy to highlight the results of the study, and amplify the voices of local women and civil society, including through a side event to the High Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in April 2018.

Background

The importance of peace as a foundation for sustainable development has been underscored by a number of research studies[1], as well as the 2014 Millennium Development Goals Report, which emphasized the negative impact of conflict on education and poverty in particular.[2] This recognition has been reflected in particular in the Sustainable Development Goal 16 – "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions". In a similar vein, the nexus between gender equality specifically and communities' resilience to conflict, is also well-researched and documented.[3] Peace has been recognized as a foundation for sustainable development and gender equality. At the same time, gender equality and inclusion, in particular of women and women's organizations, have been recognized as key drivers of peace, and studies have shown that their inclusion can lead to more durable and sustainable peace.[4]

In 2015, an Advisory Expert Group (AEG), designated by the UN Secretary-General at the request of the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council, conducted a review of the UN peacebuilding architecture (the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO)). Among other things, the review highlighted the nexus between peacebuilding and sustainable development; and recommended that all national leaders commit to prioritizing gender equality and women's empowerment as part of national peacebuilding priorities.

The findings of the review gave impetus to the UN commitment to "Sustaining Peace." In 2016, the UN General Assembly and Security Council adopted identical resolutions (UNSC Resolution 2282 and General Assembly Resolution 70.262), emphasizing the importance of a broad approach to peacebuilding, encompassing all stages of peace, not only the immediate post-conflict reconstruction.

While such an approach is in many ways novel and ground-breaking, it is also akin to the approach taken by the local women's organization and civil society, especially in their efforts to implement the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The work of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) with civil society, and in particular local women from conflict-affected and post-conflict countries, as well as from countries that have not experienced armed conflict in recent history, clearly shows that the key tenets of the sustaining peace agenda – long-term vision, multi-sectoral approach, and strong local ownership – are also the principles guiding the work of civil society organizations (CSOs) to promote and sustain peace in their local communities. This observation was reinforced by the responses to the CSO survey for the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security, conducted by GNWP, in partnership with Cordaid, the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, which highlighted the need to "prioritize local women, local initiatives and local implementation"; and the importance of "holistic approaches to post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding".

As such, civil society organizations can be seen as pioneers in implementing the Sustaining Peace agenda – and as key actors who will take it forward.

Civil Society Study on Sustaining Peace

The study is being conducted in: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burundi, Canada, Colombia, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mexico, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sweden, Syria, Ukraine.

When selecting the countries to participate in the study, GNWP, in consultation with UN Women, strived to maintain a regional balance, as well as a balance between countries currently experiencing conflict; post-conflict countries; and countries that have not experienced conflict in recent history.

In order to triangulate all information received through the research, GNWP and its partners will use the following research methods:

– *Survey questionnaire*, distributed to civil society organizations, mostly women's organizations. The survey includes a number of questions on what sustainable peace means to local communities, how they already work to build it, and how the Sustaining Peace agenda could support their efforts and fill the

remaining gaps. The survey is available in Arabic, French and Spanish, and to complete online, as well as on paper.

– *Focus group discussions (FGDs)* with civil society organizations and local women's organizations. These discussions will complement the survey with more in-depth questions and qualitative analysis of what Sustaining Peace agenda means for local populations, and how it can strengthen and complement their ongoing efforts.

– *Key informant interviews (KIIs)* with women civil society leaders, youth and community leaders and other relevant stakeholders in target countries.

– *Review of relevant documentation* on the Sustaining Peace agenda, as well as efforts to build and sustain peace in the target countries.

 The data collection is taking place between April and August 2018. The final report highlighting the key findings and recommendations will be produced by the end of 2018 and disseminated widely by GNWP and its partners.

Panel discussion during the High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

For more information on the panel discussion co-organized by GNWP and UN Women in partnership with the Peacebuilding Support Office, and the Permanent Missions of Canada; Japan; and Liberia to the UN on the margins of the High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, convened by the President of the General Assembly, please see the blog post.

Read more about the discussion, and the emerging findings from the Civil Society research Survey *here*.

Next Steps: Localizing Sustaining Peace

GNWP will continue its work to bring local women's voices, perspectives and experiences to the global policy discussions on Sustainable Peace. The Civil Society Study is planned to be completed by August 2018. Its findings will be presented in the Fall of 2018, and the final report will be produced by the end of 2018. GNWP also hopes to continue the cooperation with UN Women to bring the discussions on

Sustaining Peace agenda to the regional, national and local level, and ensure their implementation through regional conferences.

For more information on GNWP's work on Sustaining Peace, contact our Program Coordinator, Agnieszka Fal-Dutra Santos at agnieszka@gnwp.org.

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[1] Cf. Gates, S. et al., *"Development consequences of armed conflict"*, *World Development,* Vol. 40, No. 9, September 2012; Stewart, F., *"Conflict and the Millennium Development Goals"*, *Journal of Human Development,* Vol. 4, No. 3, 2003.; Denney L., *"Security: The missing bottom of the Millennium Development Goals? Prospects for inclusion in the post-MDG development framework"*, Overseas Development Institute, August 2012.

[2] United Nations, *Millennium Development Goals Report,* 2014.

[3] Cf. Caprioli, M., 2005. Primed for violence: The role of gender inequality in predicting internal conflict. Int. Stud. Q. 49, 161–178.; Gizelis, T.-I., 2009. Gender Empowerment and United Nations Peacebuilding. J. Peace Res. 46, 505–523. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343309334576

[4] Coomaraswamy, C. et al, (2015). Preventing Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace A Global Study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325. Retrieved from: *http://wps.unwomen.org/~/media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf*;
Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security. S/2017/861. 16 October 2017.