

# THEMATIC REVIEW ON GENDER-RESPONSIVE PEACEBUILDING

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Authoried by Katharina Merkel  
Edited by Kelly O'Neill  
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This **Thematic Review on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding**, commissioned by the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) in partnership with the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) and UN Women, was prepared in the context of the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).<sup>1</sup> It maps good practices, gaps, challenges, emerging trends and priorities for action in gender-responsive peacebuilding. In 2014, PBSO's first Thematic Review on Gender and Peacebuilding<sup>2</sup> identified several areas in need of accelerated action, including the need for increased budgetary allocation and better tracking of project results. The present Thematic Review, which focuses on the period from 2015 to 2020,

analyses progress across those and other areas related to gender-responsive peacebuilding, paying particular attention to the extent to which recommendations put forward in the 2014 Review have been implemented.

The current Thematic Review also draws on field-level consultations with women's civil society organizations in **Guatemala, Mali, Niger, Somalia, South Sudan**, and **Sri Lanka** and key informant interviews with policymakers, academics and UN staff carried out between April and June 2021; and a review of academic, practitioner and policy literature, as well as UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) project documents, evaluation reports and guidance notes.

<sup>1</sup> S/RES/1325 (2000), [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1325\(2000\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1325(2000)).

<sup>2</sup> Eleanor O'Gorman, "Independent Thematic Review on Gender for the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO)", PBSO, March 2014, [https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/final\\_report\\_thematic\\_review\\_on\\_gender\\_peacebuilding\\_0.pdf](https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/final_report_thematic_review_on_gender_peacebuilding_0.pdf).

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### EMERGING CONTEXT, TRENDS AND DEBATES

► There is no doubt that 2020 presented unexpected and unprecedented challenges for peace and security. The outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has underscored and, in many cases, intensified the devastating effects of social inequalities, discriminatory structures and toxic social norms. The Thematic Review provides strong support for the notion of a ‘shadow pandemic’ of gender-based violence (GBV). Restrictive measures to protect public health have, in some cases, served as pretext for closing civic spaces, with women’s organizations seen as easy targets in such crackdowns. Trust-building measures – an important ingredient in effective peacebuilding – have been weakened in the absence of direct human contact. On top of long-standing difficulties in securing political support for gender-responsive peacebuilding, COVID-19 has created new obstacles for those working to prevent conflict and sustain fragile peace.

► While socioeconomic and political contexts are challenging, advances in policy and research since the PBF’s last Thematic Review on Gender and Peacebuilding underscore the field’s substantial accomplishments since 2014. Several high-level reviews and UN reforms have reaffirmed the importance of gender equality and women’s empowerment in peacebuilding processes. A growing research base contributes to robust debates on topics such as the risks of gender essentialism, and the value of inclusive perspectives that recognize challenges associated with the gender binary and are sensitive to the needs and interests of minority groups. Accordingly, activists have started calling for more nuanced gender-balancing and gender-mainstreaming approaches to better reflect the complexities of gender identities, variations in women’s experiences and needs, and the interrelationship of war with both masculinities and femininities. These are positive developments with potential to yield even stronger outcomes for gender-responsive peacebuilding. At the same time, this Thematic Review indicates that these emergent good practices remain to be fully implemented.



### GENDER-RESPONSIVE FINANCING

► A lack of financing was identified as a key impediment to gender-responsive peacebuilding in the PBSO’s 2014 Thematic Review on Gender and Peacebuilding.<sup>3</sup> In 2010, the Secretary-General (SG) committed the UN to allocate a minimum of 15 per cent of all peacebuilding and recovery funds to gender equality.<sup>4</sup> Since then, several UN pooled funds have experimented with ways to achieve the target. After meeting the 15 per cent target in 2015, the PBF committed to achieving a more ambitious 30 per cent<sup>5</sup> – a target it has met or exceeded every year since.<sup>6</sup> However, beyond the PBF, funding increases have been slow to occur, and many UN funds still lack appropriate systems to even report against their targets. The PBF’s Gender Marker (GM) is widely seen as good practice and other UN funds draw extensively on PBF guidance.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The 2010 SG Report on WPS introduced the Seven-Point Action Plan that proposed the 15 per cent target. Available at [https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/seven\\_point\\_action\\_plan.pdf](https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/seven_point_action_plan.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> In recognition of diverse priority and focus areas of PBF investments, the Peacebuilding Fund’s 30 per cent target is calculated based on the budget allocations to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment across the entire PBF portfolio (among GM1, GM2 and GM3 projects).

<sup>6</sup> Thirty-six per cent in 2017, see 2017 SG Report on PBF at <https://undocs.org/A/72/740>; forty per cent in 2018, see 2018 SG Report on PBF at <https://undocs.org/A/73/829>; forty per cent in 2019, see 2019 SG Report on PBF at <https://undocs.org/A/74/688>; forty per cent in 2020, see 2020 SG Report on PBF at <https://undocs.org/en/A/75/735>

► An area of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda that remains chronically underfunded is direct bilateral aid to women's organizations in fragile and conflict-affected states. OECD data indicate that between 2016 and 2017, only 1 per cent of all gender-focused funding went to local women's organizations.<sup>7</sup> Between 2017 and 2018, this rate declined even further to only 0.39 per cent.<sup>8</sup> Despite pleas by the UN Secretary-General to multiply by five the percentage of funding allocated directly to women's organizations in fragile and conflict-affected countries,<sup>9</sup> persistent funding gaps remain at the local level. Many grassroots women's organizations interviewed as part of this Thematic Review expressed concern over the slow pace of global progress in making funding more readily available. This situation persists despite accelerated efforts across the wider UN system. For instance, in 2016 and for the first time, the PBF made available funding to peacebuilding projects focused on youth empowerment and extended eligibility to CSOs. The same year saw the launch of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) as an innovative and flexible funding mechanism for grassroots women's organizations.



## DESIGN, MONITORING, EVALUATION & LEARNING

► One of the priority areas identified in the 2014 Thematic Review was the need for validated theories of change to enhance the design, monitoring, and evaluation of gender-responsive peacebuilding interventions. There has been some progress on this front. All PBF projects are now required to submit a theory of change (ToC) at the proposal stage. As a review of selected samples suggests, however, theories of change put forward by Fund recipients generally lack specificity regarding the intended results of projects. Many of the terms used, such as 'women', 'participation', 'decision-making' and 'peace', require elaboration. ToC frameworks often view women's participation as the final goal, but how this participation is expected to contribute to peace is rarely made explicit. Theories of change need to pay closer attention to how the various ways diverse women participate in peacebuilding interact with wider conflict dynamics.

► As one of the four pillars of the WPS agenda, 'participation' tends to dominate the framing of gender-responsive peacebuilding. There is a need, however, to look more closely at the other pillars – protection, prevention, relief and recovery – and their interrelationship. For instance, interventions aimed at addressing the psychosocial and justice needs of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are often articulated in terms of the 'protection-participation hypothesis'. In other words, since SGBV survivors are supported, women's participation in peace and security decision-making is assumed to increase. While it is beyond the current scope to assess the validity of the hypothesis, the tendency to default to the participation pillar risks diminishing, or altogether overlooking, other important peacebuilding dimensions. Projects that address the justice needs of SGBV survivors can, for instance, also lead to work against impunity, thus linking to the prevention pillar.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/development/gender-development/OECD-Gendernet-Financing-UNSCR.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> 2020 SG Report on Women and Peace and Security, [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2020\\_946.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2020_946.pdf).

- ▶ The broadening of the conceptual scope of gender-responsive peacebuilding – a key recommendation put forward in this Thematic Review – also opens up opportunities to work on other relevant themes, including gender norms such as those associated with masculinities and femininities. For example, high rates of SGBV can reflect complex causes, including young men’s violent indoctrination into armed groups and gendered norms related to ideas of ‘manhood’. While projects addressing the psychosocial and justice needs of SGBV survivors are critical – this Thematic Review by no means calls for their suspension – these types of interventions only address the symptom and not the cause. To achieve progress for women and for girls, there is a need to address the gendered norms that harm both women and girls as well as men and boys. This Thematic Review calls for greater focus on these interrelationships and deeper exploration of the gendered roots of armed conflict and violence at the project design stage.
- ▶ While all PBF projects are now required to include gender considerations in their context and conflict analyses, the quality of analysis varies significantly across the PBF portfolio, with marked differences between Gender Marker 3 (GM3) and other projects. Conflict analyses that fall outside the Gender Promotion Initiative (GPI)<sup>10</sup> tend to include only a cursory treatment of gender issues. GM3 project analyses often explore gender more systemically, for instance,

by looking at how gender relations have changed during, and because of, conflict. GPI and other GM3 project conflict analyses are generally good at avoiding stereotypical portrayals of women, and even on occasion adequately account for intersecting forms of exclusion and discrimination. Overall, however, most analyses continue to overlook the different roles and identities held by women and instead portray them as one-dimensional actors.

- ▶ Some unresolved challenges also remain when it comes to results measurements. Despite widespread adoption of gender-mainstreaming programmes and policies, the impact of promoting gender equality in peacebuilding interventions has been difficult to measure. Peace itself remains an elusive concept, as it can be experienced differently person to person. This is important to recognize in gender-responsive peacebuilding. Indicators that are gender-blind and/or gender-biased will likely not reflect differences in women’s and men’s lived experiences of conflict or peace. Yet, results frameworks often draw on the same metrics of success for both women and men. Overall, the peacebuilding sector remains unhelpfully concerned with numbers (‘counting women’), while more fundamental questions are often left aside, such as tracking perceptions of security or levels of conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence in ascertaining the quality of ‘peace’ for women.



- ▶ Beyond challenges in identifying suitable metrics of success, monitoring and evaluation is also hampered by a lack of gender-disaggregated data collection. While the majority of PBF results frameworks call for the collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data, review of a selected sample of GM2 project evaluations illustrates that this data is often unavailable. Approximately one fifth of the evaluation reports reviewed referred to ‘beneficiaries’ as a homogenous group. Overall, consideration of other intersecting variables remains limited in results frameworks. For example, while most projects that fall under the Youth Promotion Initiative (YPI) consider gender an intersecting variable, age is rarely considered outside of the YPI. Given these limitations, robust evidence of what works in gender-responsive peacebuilding remains scarce, with many of the assumptions that underpin gender-responsive programming lacking rigorous testing.

<sup>10</sup> GPI projects are required to meet GM3 requirements.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- ▶ **Strengthen the language of diversity and intersectionality<sup>11</sup> in WPS policy discourse** by explicitly referring to the different experiences and needs of women of diverse backgrounds and origins.
- ▶ **Enhance the WPS Global Indicator Framework** through expanding the focus to include not only quantitative indicators measuring the advancement of women but also their substantive representation – i.e., look at not just the number of women involved but also the type of power they hold. Apply an intersectional lens and recognize how women’s diversity impacts their access to decision-making. Measure gender-responsive peacebuilding by widely applying indicators based on women’s narratives and experiences of conflict and peace.
- ▶ **Pay greater attention to the construction of male identities and masculine norms** (as related to femininities/female identities) in the context of armed conflict.

- ▶ **Ensure that the WPS agenda is truly inclusive and intersectional**, including by referring explicitly to the experiences and needs of gender and sexual minority groups.



### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONORS

- ▶ **Finance the WPS agenda in a moment of extraordinary crisis** by scaling-up direct funding to grassroots women’s organizations in fragile and conflict-affected states and supporting those peacebuilding initiatives that place gender equality and grassroots engagement at the centre of their strategies (e.g., PBF’s GYPI and the WPHF).
- ▶ **Strengthen peaceful and gender-sensitive responses to the COVID-19 pandemic** by ensuring that gender and conflict are considered cross-cutting themes in all response measures.
- ▶ **Strengthen gender-responsive peacebuilding approaches through robust monitoring and evaluation** by making adequate investments in rigorous, theory-based evaluation approaches that test linkages and assumptions underpinning gender-responsive peacebuilding.

<sup>11</sup> See UN Women brief on addressing exclusion through intersectionality in rule of law, peace and security context: “Emerging from critical race and gender theory, intersectional approaches encourage policymakers and practitioners to move beyond singular categories of identity (such as gender, race, disability or age) and consider the more complex relationships and interactions between all identities and the impact of structures of oppression – including racism, sexism and ableism. The lens of intersectionality, broadly conceived, can better illuminate complex contexts and drivers of exclusion as it pays attention to the relationships between experiences of marginalization, power dynamics and structural inequality.” Full text available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/12/brief-addressing-exclusion-through-intersectionality-in-rule-of-law-peace-and-security-context>.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PEACEBUILDING FUND

▶ **Enhance the Gender Marker** tool by expanding the PBF Gender Marker Guidance Note's focus to include masculinities and femininities and by specifying the requirements for gender-sensitive conflict analysis. Continue to invest in quality assurance and verification of Gender Marker scores, especially in those countries where the UN lacks in-country gender expertise.

▶ **Introduce a gender scorecard** in the evaluation process to encourage more thorough examination of the gendered impacts of an intervention. The gender scorecard will help assess projects along a continuum from harmful to gender transformative. A useful example is the recently launched CARE Gender Marker<sup>12</sup> that uses a five-point ranking to examine gender equality outcomes instead of intended results.

▶ **Enhance design, monitoring and evaluation frameworks** by engaging in cross-fertilization of knowledge with DPPA desks and units, sharing guidance notes, tools and analyses more systematically. Consider introducing a revised results framework that includes an intermediate outcome level to encourage Fund applicants to reflect more holistically on both gender equality and peacebuilding outcomes. In the PBF Theory of Change Guidance Note,<sup>13</sup> include examples of ToC diagrams/systems maps to enhance understanding of the importance of underlying assumptions in gender-responsive peacebuilding.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUND RECIPIENTS

▶ **Enhance the quality of gender-sensitive conflict analysis** by ensuring a deeper exploration of the gendered root causes of conflict and violence.

▶ **Enhance the quality of theories of change** by using ToC diagrams/systems maps as an alternative to 'if/then statements' and clearly spell out the assumptions underpinning programming.

▶ **Improve metrics to move beyond participation** by complementing quantitative indicators on women's advancement in peace and security spheres (gender balancing) with qualitative assessments of women's substantive representation as well the various ways they participate in peacebuilding. Use an intersectional lens to understand the interaction of women's multiple identities

with experiences of exclusion and oppression. Monitor whether and how the contributions of diverse women translate into broader gender equality objectives.

▶ **Improve metrics to include gendered definitions of project success** by ensuring that results measurements place greater focus on the lived experiences of conflict and peace, including through conducting perception surveys and integrating women's narratives and experiences of conflict and peace.

▶ **Provide capacity-building support to local implementing partners** by focusing routinely on institutional capacity development for grassroots women's organizations, specifically in such areas as financial management, grant writing and monitoring and evaluation.

Full report of the Thematic Review on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding is available at:

[www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/gender-responsive-peacebuilding-2021](http://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/gender-responsive-peacebuilding-2021)

<sup>12</sup> CARE Gender Marker Guidance, [http://gender.careinternationalwikis.org/media/care\\_gender\\_marker\\_guidance\\_english.pdf](http://gender.careinternationalwikis.org/media/care_gender_marker_guidance_english.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/toc\\_guidance\\_note\\_en.pdf](https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/toc_guidance_note_en.pdf)