The challenge

The Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security called for women to participate in peacebuilding, to be better protected from human rights violations and to have access to justice and services to eliminate discrimination. Yet, the implementation of this landmark resolution remains a major challenge, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, the so-called MENA region, with ongoing conflicts in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen. The “Global Study on Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325” (launched in October 2015) made recommendations on how to improve implementation.

Women’s participation in peace processes is crucial for the effectiveness of peace and security initiatives. Research shows the links between women’s inclusion and the likelihood of more durable and stable peace. An analysis of 40 peace processes since 1989, conducted by the Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative (IPTI) at the Graduate Institute, shows that in cases where women’s groups were able to exercise strong influence on the negotiation process, chances were higher that an agreement would be reached than when women’s groups exercised weak or no influence.¹ Strong influence of women in negotiation processes also increased the likelihood of agreements being implemented. Additional research shows that peace agreements are 64 per cent less likely to fail when civil society representatives, including women’s organisations, participate.² More specifically, inclusive peace processes are linked to a 20 per cent increase in the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least two years.³

Key findings of this global study highlight the need to move beyond capacity building for women to training and awareness-building for mediation and peace process actors, particularly on the importance of women’s engagement and the “how to” of both the design and the content of inclusive peace processes. There can be gains in stressing the importance of women’s engaging with the technical and substantive issues of peace negotiation beyond gender provisions.

Further gains can be achieved by providing information on specific entry points for women’s participation and leadership to key peace and mediation actors. Moreover, greater focus is needed on the implementation and monitoring phases of peace agreements to ensure the gender-sensitive outcomes that have been secured in peace agreements are not lost.

Our approach

With its partners, UN Women is contributing toward building sustainable peace in the MENA region by strengthening women’s leadership and participation in high level peace and transition processes. This is being done through the transfer of evidence-based knowledge and skills to empower institutions and key actors, including women in the region themselves, to engage in and influence peace processes.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE PROJECT INCLUDE:

- knowledge sharing and building of the evidence base on strengthening women’s meaningful participation
- engaging key actors including women’s organisations and organisations and governments supporting women’s participation in mediation and peace processes on the “how to” of inclusive processes
- ensuring relevant actors in peace processes have access to technical resources and demand driven inputs needed to inform gender responsive outcomes, including through development of expertise resources and provision of needs-based advice
- provision of targeted gender expertise
- building capacity for monitoring implementation of peace agreements, and
- strengthening protection efforts and linkages between justice efforts against sexual and gender-based violence and for peace talks.

Expected results

As a result of the project, women will have enhanced opportunities for political participation and influence in high-level peace and transition processes in the MENA region. This is being achieved through the transfer of evidence-based knowledge to these women and to key actors who are engaged in peace processes in Iraq, Libya, as well as in Syria and Yemen. This includes, in particular, UN envoys, UN offices and special agencies, governmental actors and non-governmental organisations.

- The Women’s Influence Database will be created, maintained and updated.
- A user-friendly online resource portal will be launched.
- 20 in-depth country case studies will be produced on the presence and influence of women in peace and transition processes.
- Up to 30 briefs with infographics on women’s influence will be produced and made available online.
- 5 generic policy briefs will be developed and disseminated on topics including power-sharing, security arrangements, governance systems such as federalism and decentralization, transitional justice provisions and constitution-making.
- 4 regional focus group meetings will be convened to discuss country-specific briefs and topic guides developed and disseminated to foster women’s inclusion in Syria and Yemen.
- 8 country-specific briefs and topic guides will be developed and disseminated.
- 4 workshops will be organised on the design and content of enhanced women’s inclusion in and influence on peace and transition processes.
- 3 international conferences with specific meeting outcomes will be convened for cross-fertilization with ongoing peace negotiations in Colombia, Myanmar, the Philippines, South Sudan and other contexts.
- Capacity building workshops will be organised on women, peace and security monitoring and reporting, including the implementation of peace agreements; and 3 annual progress reports on implementation of women, peace and security will be produced.
- 2 long term deployments and 4 short term deployments of gender experts to mediation teams will be made available.
- 1 regional training will be organized and 5 sexual and gender-based violence investigators will be supported to strengthen the documentation capacity of first responders to support gender crimes.

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