

---

## Missing in Action: Inclusive Conflict Prevention

*Cate Buchanan and Shelagh Daley, March 2025*

---

### Why does this matter?

Prevention, one of the four pillars of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda (alongside protection, participation, and relief and recovery) is unquestionably the most neglected pillar. It has been aptly described as the “weakest P”.<sup>1</sup> The 2015 Global Study on implementation of the WPS agenda drew considerable attention to this: “*The world has lost sight of some of the key demands of the women’s movement while advocating for the adoption of resolution 1325: reducing military expenditures, controlling the availability of armaments, promoting non-violent forms of conflict resolution, and fostering a culture of peace.*”<sup>2</sup>

The original vision of landmark United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 and WPS was to transcend militarism, prioritise human and environmental security, reframe linear and patriarchal (mis)understanding of ‘conflict’, and privilege the agency and insights of women to contribute to and lead on matters of peace and security.<sup>3</sup> However, the practice, as well as subsequent WPS resolutions, have morphed understanding and action on ‘prevention’ to being framed as preventing sexual violence and violent extremism. This has been compounded by the waning focus on conflict prevention writ large. The contemporary era of toxic geopolitics—‘victorious wars’, rising authoritarianism and democratic backsliding, diminishing belief in multilateralism, and record levels of military spending—risk further depleting the oxygen for embedding prevention.

Smarter conflict prevention is urgent. Global military expenditure is at an all-time high: in 2023 reaching \$2443 billion (up from \$2240 billion in 2022, a 6.8 per cent increase)<sup>4</sup> as compared to \$223.7 billion spent on aid.<sup>5</sup> There are more active violent conflicts than during any year since World War II,<sup>6</sup> yet multilateralism and human rights inspired norms—such as WPS, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the 1995 Beijing Platform—have wavering support and financing. Energy and resources over recent years have been deployed towards ‘holding the space’ for gender equality as opposed to ‘expanding the space’. This creates a defensive environment and means there is little bandwidth for reinvigorating lost agendas such as conflict prevention.

This paper aims to stimulate deeper thinking about the parlous state of conflict prevention, and the feminist and WPS dimensions to it. It is drawn from a longer analysis developed for the United Kingdom (UK)-funded WPS Helpdesk.<sup>7</sup> It provides a reflection on the state of WPS and conflict prevention, identifying how conflict prevention has been included—or more precisely, buried—in the WPS agenda, followed by areas of promising practice, and closes with select areas for action.

### Methods

This research, conducted in October 2024, was informed by key informant interviews including: people working on WPS, conflict prevention, and digital peace promotion; mediators; UN staff; academics; and women’s rights peace proponents. It is informed by an extensive literature review from academic and policy domains from the feminist, WPS, and mainstream conflict prevention and resolution fields.

## **Feminist visions for conflict prevention**

Most peace and security efforts are crisis-driven and linked to ‘negative peace’ (the absence of violence) or short-to-medium term conflict resolution. The concept of ‘positive peace’ lies at the heart of the original WPS vision and focuses on the transformation of root causes of oppression and conflict.<sup>8</sup> Positive peace, upstream conflict prevention, and gender equality are strongly correlated: societies that have greater gender equality (political, economic, and social) are less likely to use military force in inter-state conflicts, and conversely, states with less gender equality (and high rates of violence against women) tend to be more likely to use violence to assert power and address conflicts.<sup>9</sup>

We understand conflict prevention to be actions and policies to address causes of conflict before violence escalates, though this could take place at any point in the conflict cycle. Feminist conflict prevention explicitly aims to transform the underlying conditions driving conflict and oppression: inequalities, exclusion, structural violence and oppression, colonialism and its legacies, militarism, and more. Violence occurs at all levels of society, including transnational and global levels, taking both deep structural and more immediate forms. A feminist approach identifies patriarchy as a system of oppression with invisible (structural and deep) forms as well as more visible (tangible and more obvious) forms.<sup>10</sup> It also emphasises a continuum of violence and does not distinguish between so-called public and private violence. Cogent feminist analysis questions forms and types of power, particularly exposes invisible oppression and influence, and recognises intersectionality.<sup>11</sup>

## **Lost in plain sight: Conflict prevention and the WPS agenda**

Conflict prevention is the least developed pillar of the formal WPS agenda. This has manifested in the following ways:

### **Marginalised feminist analysis and representation in peace and security decisions:**

Participation and representation remain as vital as ever, yet there is a large gap between rhetoric and action. Closed male networks prevail—whether armed groups, or the foreign ministers who are typically selected to be envoys and mediators.<sup>12</sup> Women consistently ‘add value’ in tracks 2, 3, and 4 of peace processes, yet their marginalisation from track 1 and the elite nature of these deals, often focused on sharing power between men with guns, persists; a model that rarely results in sustainable peace.<sup>13</sup> Gains in women’s numerical representation have not led to concomitant gains in feminist perspectives and outcomes. Simply: not all women are feminists, even fewer men are, and feminists in such processes often self-silence or are effectively marginalised.<sup>14</sup> This has major implications for analysis that provides data, ideas, and contacts for decision-makers, donors, journalists, and others—a crucial step in prevention and early warning.

**Avoidance of masculinities and gendered drivers of conflict:** Gender remains conflated to being about women, avoiding discussion of militarised masculinities and the male domination of peace and security processes. Expectations and perceptions of gender, femininities, and masculinities underwrite armed conflict and oppression. This has implications for understanding the localised causes and drivers of conflict (e.g., increases in ‘bride price’ resulting in cycles of violent cattle raiding in South Sudan),<sup>15</sup> as well as global causes (e.g., the burgeoning global arms trade linked to hyper-militarised masculinities). Whilst there has been some research and programming on masculinities in peace and security, this issue is yet to break through persistently. Instead, the onus falls largely to feminist analysts and advocates to analyse and raise these issues, which comes with the significant risk of appropriation by some men in their organisations who deftly see this as a shortcut to ‘working on gender’ without having to do very much.

**Gender-based violence seen as separate from war-related violence:** Mainstream peace and security processes still consistently side-line gender-based violence as separate from war-related violence, erroneously framed as a ‘women’s issue’ and conflated to conflict-related sexual violence. Feminists reject the misnomer of public and private violence, especially as experienced by women and girls. In this light, early warning systems that take gendered power seriously remain the exception, not the norm.

**Protection conflated to conflict prevention:** Work on preventing conflict-related sexual violence has often been conflated with the WPS prevention pillar. This has led to security-based solutions such as more women peacekeepers or focusing on women’s ‘pacifying influence’ in countering violent extremism.<sup>16</sup> There is of course a strong relationship between women’s safety and security, participation and inclusion, and the integration of gender equality principles and concepts in conflict prevention. However, this remains poorly articulated in the formal WPS agenda, despite a positive correlation between women’s inclusion in different forms of peace promotion and the sustainability of peace agreements.<sup>17</sup> This agenda is further challenged by the fact that mainstream peace and security is heavily siloed across ‘peacemaking’, ‘peacebuilding’, and ‘peacekeeping’, with conflict prevention not really pronounced anywhere.

**Inadequate funding:** Funding quality and quantity for WPS implementation and conflict prevention, especially feminist approaches, is inadequate and under threat.<sup>18</sup> In 2022, only 4 per cent of total Official Development Assistance contributed to conflict prevention<sup>19</sup> and less than 1 per cent of development aid reached women’s rights, women-led, and feminist organisations directly.<sup>20</sup> In conflict-affected states, this counted for 0.3 per cent of bilateral aid in 2021, well short of the 1 per cent UN recommended target.<sup>21</sup> This under-resourcing has a direct impact on the ability of civil society organisations to work on the longer-term issues that can promote resilience, systems change, cross-sectoral linkages, or whatever is most needed at national and sub-national levels to prevent conflict.<sup>22</sup> The growth of bespoke pooled funds targeting women-led and women’s rights organisations (WROs) is welcome. So too is the development of the Women’s Humanitarian and Peace Fund, though more reforms are required to ensure the UN is providing accessible, flexible, risk tolerant, and longer-term funding.

## Finding conflict prevention in the formal WPS agenda

October 2000 marked the start of the 10-resolution formal UN Security Council process. To get to that point, women had been mobilising for peace and conflict prevention for hundreds of years around the world. Feminist anti-war and pacifist campaigns were the bedrock of this movement, which gathered pace when the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action was agreed. Twelve priority areas were finalised to accelerate sluggish implementation of CEDAW and remedy numerous omissions including attention to women and armed conflict, and gender equality and the media, amongst others. General Recommendations (GR) such as GR30 have further promoted the women and armed conflict dimension and sought to build a clearer link between CEDAW and WPS. Arguably, this is the most pronounced articulation of prevention in the WPS agenda to date.<sup>23</sup>

There are five Security Council resolutions (SCR) devoted to addressing conflict-related sexual violence: SCR 1820 (2008); SCR 1888 (2009); SCR 1960 (2010); SCR 2106 (2013); and SCR 2467 (2019). Across the other resolutions, SCR 1889 (2009) focuses again on women’s meaningful participation in peace processes. SCR 2122 (2013) aimed to be a corrective to the extensive focus on protection thus far and to lay the groundwork for the 2015 Global Study. It does include the need to address the root causes of conflict and women’s insecurity but fails to provide directions on what this can encompass.

SCR 2242 (2015) is considered by some to bring a revitalised focus on prevention. Indeed, paragraph 13, in a rare move for a WPS resolution, “welcomes the increasing focus on inclusive upstream prevention efforts”. However, this relates to the inclusion of women in preventing violent extremism, an agenda that created concern (and still does) about the instrumentalisation of women, setting women up as de facto intelligence gatherers within their communities, and reinforcing damaging stereotypes, including but not limited to women’s “maternal pacifist nature”.<sup>24</sup> This resolution also calls for the establishment of the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, which serves as a bridge between the Security Council and the implementation of the WPS agenda. It has yet to have a dedicated discussion on conflict prevention. Doing so in 2025 could assist with bringing the issue up an agenda of competing concerns.

## Feminist conflict prevention in practice

Our research revealed several areas of practice which might contribute to feminist conflict prevention. Some non-exhaustive elements are provided below.

**Sub-national conflict prevention and peacebuilding:** There was clear consensus in interviews that there needs to be action from the ground up to make more progress on prevention, alongside efforts from the ‘top.’ Notably, a 2024 study concludes that where women are most prominent in conflict prevention and resolution roles is at the sub-national level.<sup>23</sup> This study also finds that women involved in peace promotion focus more than men on “*identifying consensus solutions rather than enforcing outside settlements*”, raising points on durability, compromise, and inclusion.<sup>24</sup> Significant effort has gone into localising the WPS agenda.<sup>25</sup> In northern Kenya, women have been making an impact to encourage peaceful resolution of disputes through policy and community dialogue, linked to the localisation of Kenya’s National Action Plan (NAP), at national, sub-national, county, and local level.<sup>26</sup> Interviews also highlighted the transformative vehicle that the WPS agenda presented for women’s participation in peace promotion in Colombia, linking this to their ability to promote dialogue to prevent and resolve conflict.<sup>27</sup> Liberia was also cited as an example of women’s peace networks demonstrating resilience and ability to keep a stable trajectory and respond to conflict threats.<sup>28</sup> Another vital development is preventing election violence through Women’s Situation Rooms, originating in West Africa.<sup>29</sup> Elections are inherently episodic, but Women’s Situation Rooms could be developed and maintained as a more sustainable peace mechanism; for example, to quickly counter dis- and misinformation. This is consistent with the concept of ‘insider mediation’ and enabling national and sub-national actors, particularly women, to prevent conflict.

**Inclusive peace promotion and mediation:** Feminists and some peace advocates are shifting the framing of conflict mediation towards ‘peace mediation’ to bring back in the focus on conflict prevention as core to effective mediation. Whilst most mediation falls into the more operational, short-to-medium term end of conflict prevention, it is important to focus on ensuring longer-term presence and preparedness at national, sub-national, and regional levels. Women’s involvement and leadership in non-violent movements matters for conflict prevention.<sup>30</sup> However, women who have been key actors in non-violent civilian movements against authoritarianism tend to be marginalised in and/or excluded from political negotiations to reach political settlements.

Incrementalist approaches are inadequate for the problems at hand. There has been a steady decline in women’s representation and participation both in UN-led processes and those supported by other states (i.e., on Afghanistan, Sudan), when what is needed is higher level political amplification and access supported by envoys and others, and more women appointed into mediation teams and into envoy roles, and of course negotiating teams. This involves insisting more on gender quotas to fast-track representation. Gender quotas (Temporary Special Measures permissible under international law, CEDAW, Article 4) are identified as the most effective way to fast-track women’s representation,<sup>31</sup> yet peace and security practitioners continue to avoid them. Meaningful participation as a contribution to prevention should be actioned at all levels—from analysis to programming through to funding and diplomacy.<sup>32</sup>

Women’s mediation networks were heralded as a new strategy in transforming men’s dominance of envoy, mediator, and facilitator roles. Yet, the efficacy of these networks has yet to be established. Indeed, a 2024 dataset exploring mediation support revealed that “*women more commonly are appointed as mediators by nongovernmental organisations than by states and international organisations...the presence of more mediators in the [conflict prevention or resolution] effort, and when this is more gender equal, are associated with greater likelihoods that peace agreement is concluded*”. We note that a peace agreement is overemphasised as an outcome, but it nonetheless presents an indicator of conflict party engagement. Change in this area requires states that agitate for their nationals to be in such roles—Germany, Norway, Sweden, Finland, the UK, Switzerland, amongst others—to be transparent about how women from these networks have been advanced for such roles and backed by relevant state machinery to be selected.

One view posits that these networks are yet another parallel process that separates women and the WPS logic of these networks from the ‘main game’. Another theme across interviews was concern about the trajectory of these networks and how sustainable a two-track approach is if there is not clear evidence of states and international organisations selecting—*preferencing, fast tracking, parachuting*—women from these networks into a range of roles. The longer these networks exist and are busy with their own conferences, workshops, and seminars, the less pressure there is on the ‘malestream’ to change the status quo.

**Flexible long-term quality funding:** There are several innovative approaches being piloted at different levels to address the gaps in quality funding for women-led, feminist, and WROs.<sup>33</sup> Longer-term and quality funding has the potential to provide organisations with the necessary fuel to work on more political and sensitive issues related to conflict prevention. For example, the UK-funded pilot project ‘Resourcing Change’ provided core and flexible funding and movement building support to WROs in Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen.<sup>34</sup> The evaluated Myanmar Gender Peace and Security Window was deemed to be of high impact.<sup>35</sup> UN Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund has also drawn attention to the potential of sub-national conflict prevention through supporting WROs in Burundi, Iraq, Palestine, Philippines, and Uganda.<sup>36</sup> The French government set up the Support Fund for Feminist Organisations (FSOF), which includes both pooled consortium funds managed by international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs) as well as smaller funds to reach local WROs.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, the Equality Fund represents an innovative approach to supporting WROs and feminist activism. Consortium mechanisms often come with power differentials between Northern and Southern entities.<sup>38</sup> Donor support for equitable partnerships and shifting power, ensuring funding reaches WROs directly, is one starting point.

**‘Feminist’ foreign policy:** Some states have advanced the WPS agenda through political party commitment whilst in government to ‘feminist’ foreign policy. This has included, but is not limited to, the governments of Sweden (2014— since withdrawn following a change in government in 2022), Canada (2017), France (2019), Mexico (2020), Germany (2021), Luxembourg (2021), Spain (2021), Chile (2022), and the Netherlands (2022—it has since cut aid for gender equality). Their commitments to gender equality, including in their aid spending, presented significant potential for furthering both a WPS and a revitalised conflict prevention agenda. However, these are under threat amid electoral shifts towards populism and backlash against gender equality.<sup>39</sup>

**Global norms and multilateralism:** At the UN level, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) sparked a more integrated discussion around gender equality and sustained peace. The potential of SDG16 on peaceful, inclusive societies and SDG5 on gender (referred to as SDG16+) for conflict prevention remains. However, the UN Secretary General has referred to implementation as “*alarmingly insufficient*”.<sup>40</sup> The Secretary General has demonstrated top-down leadership in this area, for example, including disarmament as one of his WPS priorities.<sup>41</sup> In addition, his New Agenda for Peace included a call to dismantle patriarchal and oppressive power structures.<sup>42</sup> Unsurprisingly, this did not make it through in the 2024 Pact for the Future due to push-back from states hostile to gender equality as a collective goal.<sup>43</sup> The concept of developing national violence prevention strategies with the support of the Peacebuilding Commission were confirmed in the Pact for the Future. A feminist distillation of ‘how to’ ensure national strategies are inclusive seems timely.<sup>44</sup>

**Early warning and data:** At all stages, conflict prevention benefits from gender-sensitive data and early warning indicators. On paper, developing context-specific early warning indicators in partnership with a range of civil society actors, analysts, WROs, and others should be standard good practice.<sup>45</sup> Some examples of promising programming include by Cordaid in South Sudan, which through its WPS Barometer project gathers data on women’s security needs at a local level.<sup>46</sup> Another is a project in Somalia by Saferworld, which trained women and developed a Violence Observatory System to gather data on violence against women activists and journalists, evidence which they then brought to authorities to promote change.<sup>47</sup> Gender early warning data also feeds into regional early warning systems, such as, for example, CEWARN under the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which includes gender-related indicators. In practice, however, effective early warning ultimately needs deft response and political will. This requires advocacy capacity and support, as WROs may lack high-level connections needed to communicate their concerns around impending violence in rapidly shifting contexts.

## Opportunities for action

- 1. Revitalise connections and action on gender and conflict prevention:** To mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing processes (designed to accelerate CEDAW implementation), press on the conflict prevention focus in the 'Women and Armed Conflict' priority area. This is also where agreement could be cemented to update the Secretary General's WPS indicators (2010) in response to SCR 1889, with contemporary security challenges such as tech-facilitated gender-based violence, online hate, climate change, and more. Holding a thematic meeting of the Informal Expert Group on WPS on conflict prevention, inviting civil society peacebuilders to provide their perspectives, could also help move this agenda.
- 2. Champion the multilateral sustaining peace agenda and feminist conflict prevention:** Invest resources and political capital in galvanising support for the implementation of SDG16+. Support the process to develop national violence prevention strategies to include feminist approaches to prevention. The Peacebuilding Commission and other entities providing support for such strategies would benefit from clear criteria and evidence to ensure efforts are gendered from the start. Linked to this is the review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture in 2025, which is an important process in which to ensure feminist conflict prevention (and accessible funding) is included. Finally, insist on a strong focus on WPS and conflict prevention in the next iteration of the World Bank's Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence, due to expire in 2025.
- 3. Include conflict prevention in WPS National Action Plans:** The most prominent articulation of national (and regional) approaches to WPS are NAPs. A cursory review of NAPs reveals a low level of emphasis on conflict prevention. A practitioner-policymaker oriented guidance note on how to increase and strengthen conflict prevention in such plans and how to distinguish between operational and structural or upstream conflict prevention could be helpful. As many INGOs and UN entities take their cues from NAPs, this could stimulate these entities to engage in more detail on upstream conflict prevention.
- 4. Increase the safety of women journalists and feminist analysts and advocates:** Support for journalist safety through providing scholarships to seek respite from targeting could be associated with learning about peacebuilding and conflict prevention. This can be an effective contribution to improving public knowledge on these issues. Likewise, we have seen the importance of having data and evidence for women activists to advocate for legal changes and other protections with authorities, so supporting initiatives like Violence Observatory Systems and other locally owned data generation on violence can help support their initiatives for change.<sup>48</sup>
- 5. Address digital insecurity and support cyber peace promotion:** The evidence of increased risks to civil society actors across the world engaging in non-violent political movements is clear, including in digital domains. The differential impacts on women are particularly stark, even more so if they have other intersecting identities.<sup>49</sup> While some guidance has been produced to support their protection, growing threats to women's political space and ability to engage in conflict prevention abound.<sup>50</sup> Online misogyny and tech-facilitated gender-based violence is increasingly documented and mapped.<sup>51</sup> Women are mobilising around what feminism and digital peacebuilding can and does involve.<sup>52</sup> This requires serious integration into the many social media and digital peacebuilding teams in peace and security organisations.
- 6. Link gender equality, environmental protection, and climate security:** Climate change is a conflict risk multiplier. Feminists have observed that *"the rules of the game continue to prioritise very specific notions of governance and security and masculine conceptions of climate prevention"*.<sup>53</sup> Better understanding the links between WPS and inclusive climate action and security, and conflict-sensitive responses to climate and environmental insecurity, needs to be firmly situated in the coming decade of elevated WPS efforts.<sup>54</sup> Stimulating more connections across and between environmental and gender justice groups and movements is ripe with possibility. Climate action financing schemes are increasingly coming into play, yet conflict sensitivity and women's leadership are yet to be firmly established in principle and practice. This is significant as many violent conflicts and much inequality hinges on land and natural resource concerns.<sup>55</sup> A gendered conflict sensitivity approach can identify intersectional and differential impacts of climate change and how these interact with conflict dynamics.
- 7. Enhance the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund:** Longer grants of at least four years are consistently called for by civil society actors and would provide a powerful threshold for the many other UN pooled funds to follow suit. The Equality Fund could also undertake a similar call. Building on the momentum generated by donors seeking to support WROs directly, commit to support informal feminist movements and WROs through direct and core funding. Give them the breathing space they need to act politically, including to prevent conflict, through core and direct funding. Ensure all UN funding mechanisms take more concrete actions to address risk transfer and outdated notions of mitigation (e.g., short funding terms to reduce risk) to enable more WROs and others to operate more safely and sustainably.

- 8. Activate a global review of early warning systems:** A global review of early warning systems is long overdue. Contemporary gendered early warning indicators are scattered across dozens of WPS reports and papers. Scraping the best of these into a dynamic platform (e.g., multilingual website linked to proactive social media) could shift the needle and stimulate the industry of conflict analysts and observatories to take gendered insights and risks seriously. This needs to go beyond indicators to a stronger grasp of root causes and acceptance that patriarchy is a highly organised adaptive system of oppressive power that not only affects women and girls disproportionately but also limits the potential of men and boys, and sexual and gender minorities in profound ways. This should also include focus on climate change, digital insecurity, and tech-facilitated gender-based violence, amongst other concerns.
- 9. Spotlight masculinities:** Interviews highlighted how masculinity is a neglected lens in the formal WPS agenda, which tends to be outward looking and focused on poor, marginalised young men of colour with little power in the global South, as opposed to wider dynamics around militarised masculinities, including in the peace and security industry of the global North. A central focus to date has been on engaging men to prevent violence against women through programming to address harmful gender norms or using so-called ‘good men’ campaigns.<sup>56</sup> There is also some thinking on how to incorporate masculinities into peacebuilding work.<sup>57</sup> This nascent area needs a strategic lift but must be carefully designed to avoid instrumentalisation, backlash, reification of ‘good men’, and nil outcomes. It also must be co-designed with women and then implemented mainly by the men in the peace and security sector. Focusing on masculinities means getting uncomfortable and tackling men’s dominance as gatekeepers, authorities, negotiators, armed actors, analysts, envoys, and more.
- 10. Amplify women’s experiences and perspectives:** In practice, women working in the realm of conflict prevention often lack access to decision makers or are exposed to risks when speaking up. Finding ways to first listen to and then amplify women’s peace perspectives (such as by envoys, ambassadors), including through providing dedicated funding to document evidence and engage in advocacy, is an important contribution to turning early warning into early response. Include feminist activists in high-level discussions on peace and security, and include women as envoys, mediators, and other decision makers. Political backing is important to support risk-exposed women peace promoters.
- 11. Invest in learning and exchange on feminist conflict prevention:** Feminist approaches and women’s efforts to promote peace requires an investment in policy-relevant analysis on ‘what works’ to catalyse better integration into the literature and practice on conflict prevention. This would necessitate dogged outreach to NGOs and civil society organisations who have information but have not been able to share it or haven’t necessarily thought about their work as conflict prevention. Commission a conference series over 2025–27, in a range of low-, middle-, and high-income settings, to create a groundswell of interest in conflict prevention with gender fully integrated. These gatherings could stimulate media coverage too. This could also include a focus on climate action and identification of good form in financing schemes and green transition initiatives that are serious about conflict sensitivity, prevention, gender equality, and inclusion.
- 12. Make peace newsworthy:** Peace journalism and constructive journalism makes visible civilian mobilisation against violence and conflict, the role of social protection, health and education, land rights, and more in nurturing the conditions for social cohesion and peace promotion. In relation, since 2000 there is no obvious guidance on WPS and news media.<sup>58</sup> This means that producers searching or researching stories, journalists, fixers, and the like do not have a steer on gendered indicators and early warning signs of conflict, radicalisation, or atrocities. This represents an opportunity to influence the framing of peace and security issues and bring attention to the benefits of conflict prevention.
- 13. Diversify expertise:** The state of conflict and war globally demands greater competition of ideas, theories, and policy directions. This means more feminists, more women, people of colour, marginalised identity groups, and those who do not see themselves represented in ‘international relations’ bringing forward ideas. Lack of expert diversity in research organisations and think tanks flows into foreign affairs briefings for states, international organisations, and media reporting. With the pressure of the 24-hour news cycle and diminishing budgets for research, some journalists repeatedly turn to the same staff in male-dominated think tanks and academia as sources of expertise and ‘sense-making’. The same applies to those in international organisations and foreign ministries. This leads to an overuse of the same men as experts and missed perspectives on complex problems.

## About the Women Peace and Security Helpdesk

The Women Peace and Security Helpdesk, managed by Saferworld in partnership with Conciliation Resources, GAPS UK, University of Durham and Women International Peace Centre (WIPC), was established in December 2021 to increase capability across the UK Government on WPS policy and programming in order to make its work on conflict and instability more effective. If you work for the UK government and you would like to send a task request, please email us at [wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk](mailto:wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk). If you do not work for the UK government but have an enquiry about the helpdesk or this report, please email us at [enquiries.wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.wpshelpdesk@saferworld.org.uk)



## Endnotes

1. Basu, Soumita and Confortini, Catia C (2017), 'Weakest "P" in the 1325 pod? Realizing conflict prevention through Security Council Resolution 1325,' *International Studies Perspectives*, 18(1), 43–63.
2. Key messages at <https://wps.unwomen.org/preventing/> related to: Coomaraswamy, Radhika (2015), *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing the peace: A global study of the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*, 'Chapter 8: Conflict prevention,' New York, NY: United Nations.
3. Ruby, Felicity (2014), 'Security Council Resolution 1325: A Tool for Conflict Prevention?' In Heathcote, G., Otto, D. (eds) *Rethinking Peacekeeping, Gender Equality and Collective Security. Thinking Gender in Transnational Times*, Palgrave Macmillan, London; Sharoni, Simona (2017), 'Conflict Resolution: Feminist Perspectives,' *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of International Studies*; Basu, Soumita and Shepherd, Laura (2017), 'Prevention in pieces: representing conflict in the Women, Peace and Security agenda,' *Global Affairs*, 3(4–5), 441–453; Donovan, Outi (2024), 'Chapter 3: Women in conflict prevention,' In *Research Handbook on Conflict Prevention*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing; Vincent, Louise (2003), 'Current discourse on the role of women in conflict prevention and conflict transformation: a critique,' *Conflict Trends*, Vol. 2003, No. 3, 5–10.
4. Nan Tian, Lopes da Silva, Diego, Xiao Liang and Scarazzato, Lorenzo (2024), 'Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2023', SIPRI, Fact Sheet, April.
5. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2024), 'International aid rises in 2023 with increased support to Ukraine and humanitarian needs,' Press release, 11 April.
6. Rustad, Siri Aas (2024), 'Conflict Trends: A Global Overview, 1946–2023,' PRIO Paper, Oslo: PRIO.
7. Buchanan, Cate and Daley, Shelagh (2024), '[Conflict Prevention, Women, Peace and Security and Feminist Perspectives](#)', ISF Women, Peace and Security Helpdesk.
8. As pioneered by Johan Galtung. Also see <https://positivepeace.org/what-is-positive-peace>
9. Various studies in Crespo-Sancho, Catalina (2017), 'Conflict Prevention and Gender.' Background paper for the United Nations–World Bank Flagship Study, 'Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict,' World Bank, Washington, DC. Also see: Melander, Erik (2005), 'Gender Equality and Intrastate Armed Conflict', *International Studies Quarterly*, 49 (4), 695–714; Caprioli, Mary (2005), 'Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict', *International Studies Quarterly*, 49 (2), 161–178.
10. Enloe, Cynthia (2017), *The Big Push: Exposing and challenging the persistence of patriarchy*, Oxford: Myriad.
11. Koester, Diana (2015), 'Gender and power, Brief 4,' Development Leadership Program; McLeod, Laura and Maria O'Reilly (2019), 'Critical peace and conflict studies: feminist interventions,' *Peacebuilding* 7(2):127–145; Quay, I (2019), 'Rapid Gender Analysis and its use in crises: from zero to fifty in five years,' *Gender & Development*, 27:2, 221–236; Haines, Rebecca and Buchanan, Cate (2023), 'Making inclusive analysis a reality – strengthening political analysis in Myanmar, Practice Note,' Singapore: Reimagining Conflict Sensitivity, January.
12. Kreutz, J., & Cárdenas, M. L. (2024). The women and men that make peace: Introducing the Mediating Individuals (M-IND) dataset. *Journal of Peace Research*, 62(1), 182–192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433231211761>
13. Donovan, Outi (2024), '[Chapter 3: Women in conflict prevention](#),' In *Research Handbook on Conflict Prevention*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

14. A damaging simplicity that equates increasing the number of women in positions of power with gender equality as opposed to systemic transformation of structural and political-socio-cultural barriers. See Dharmapuri, Sahana (2011), '[Just Add Women and Stir?](#)' Parameters, pp. 56-70. Also see Salmela, Katarina, Manion, Megan, and Buchanan, Cate (2018), '[Experts Group report on women's meaningful participation in peace processes and gender-inclusive peace agreements](#)'. UN Women: New York; Ellerby, Kara (2016), 'A seat at the table is not enough: Understanding women's substantive representation in peace processes,' Peacebuilding, 4(2): 136-50; Klot, Jennifer and Seckinelgin, Hakan (2014), '[From Global Policy to Local Knowledge: What is the Link between Women's Formal Political Participation and Gender Equality in Conflict-affected Contexts?](#)' Global Policy, Vol. 5, Issue 1, pp. 36–46.
15. Wright, Hannah (2014), Masculinities, conflict and peacebuilding: Perspectives on men through a gender lens, London: Saferworld.
16. Shepherd, Laura J (2020), 'The paradox of prevention in the Women, Peace and Security agenda', European Journal of International Security, 5(3):315–331.
17. Coomaraswamy (2015).
18. Coomaraswamy (2015). Also see: Davies, Sara and True, Jacqui (2022), 'Follow the money: Assessing Women, Peace, and Security through financing for gender-inclusive peace,' Review of International Studies, 48, 668–688; Douglas, Sarah and Mazzacurati, Cecile (2017), 'Financing for Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding: Setting Financial Targets as a Tool for Increasing Women's Participation in Post-Conflict Recovery, Gender, Development and Social Change,' In Zohra K and N Burn (Editors), Financing for Gender Equality, chapter 10, Palgrave Macmillan, 227–246.
19. OECD (2023), 'Peace and Official Development Assistance,' OECD Development Perspectives, No. 37, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/fccfbffc-en> and OECD (2022), States of Fragility 2022, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c7fedf5e-en>.
20. Association for Women in Development (2020), [Where is the money for feminist organising? New analysis finds that the answer is alarming](#); and (2021), Where Is the Money for Feminist Organizing?
21. Ibid. Also see United Nations, 'Our Common Agenda policy brief 9,' p. 20.
22. Arutyunova, Angelika and Clark, Cindy (2013), Watering the Leaves, Starving the Roots: The Status of Financing for Women's Rights Organizing and Gender Equality, Association for Women in Development; Association for Women in Development (2020), [Where is the money for feminist organising? New analysis finds that the answer is alarming](#); CARE (2021), [Time for a better bargain: how the aid system shortchanges women and girls in crisis](#); Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (2020), [Financing for women's organizations: the billion-dollar question](#); Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (2021), [Fund us like you want us to win: Feminist Solutions for more Impactful Financing for Peacebuilding](#); Koester, Diana et al (2016), 'How can donors improve their support to gender equality in fragile settings? Findings from OECD research,' Gender and Development, 24(3): 353–373. Also see: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development–Development Assistance Committee, Network on Gender Equality (2017), Gender equality and women's empowerment in fragile and conflict-affected situations: A review of donor support, Policy paper, Number 8, October; OECD (2021), Development for gender equality and women's empowerment: A 2021 snapshot; OECD (2023), [Development for gender equality and women's empowerment: A 2023 snapshot](#), 1 March.
23. UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2013), General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations CEDAW/C/GC/30, Section 4, Part A: Conflict prevention. Also see, Swaine, Aisling and O'Rourke, Catherine (2015), [Guidebook on CEDAW general recommendation no. 30 and the UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security](#), New York: UN Women.
24. Giscard d'Estaing, Sophie (2017), 'Engaging women in countering violent extremism: Avoiding instrumentalisation and furthering agency,' Gender & Development, 25:1, 103–18; Idris, Ifat with Abdelaziz, Ayat (2017), 'Women and countering violent extremism,' Helpdesk report, GSDRC; Möller-Loswick, Anna (2017), '[The Countering Violent Extremism Agenda Risks Undermining Women Who Need Greater Support](#),' Post, London: Saferworld.
25. Kreutz and Lorena Cárdenas (2024), p. 6.
26. Kreutz and Lorena Cárdenas (2024), p. 6. For more on different approaches taken by some women see Buchanan, Cate (2021), [Gender-inclusive peacemaking: strategies for mediation practitioners](#), Mediation Practice Series, Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue; Dayal, Anjali (2018), [Connecting Informal and Formal Peace Talks: From Movements To Mediators](#), Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, Policy Brief, GIWPS: Washington DC; Turner, Catherine (2020), 'Soft ways of doing hard things: women mediators and the question of gender in mediation,' Peacebuilding, 8(4), 383–401.
27. See Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (2019), [From Best Practice to Standard Practice: A toolkit on the Localization of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security](#).
28. UN Women (2023), 'Cooling Northern Kenya's conflict hotspots,' <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/feature-story/2023/07/cooling-northern-kenyas-conflict-hotspots>
29. Interview with Rosa Emilia Salamanca, October 2024.
30. See work on women's 'peace huts' in Liberia: UN Women (2019), '[National peace huts in Liberia – an account of support provided by UN Women](#)'.

31. Drumond, Paula, Prügl, Elisabeth, and Consolata Spano, Maria (2022), '[Mobilizing gender for conflict prevention: Women's Situation Rooms](#),' Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 16 (3): 249–268.
32. Chenoweth, Erica (2019), Women's participation and the fate of nonviolent resistance campaigns: A report on the Women in Resistance (WIRE) dataset. Broomfield, CO: One Earth Future Foundation.
33. Dahlerup, D., et al (2014), Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas, Stockholm: International IDEA, Inter-Parliamentary Union, and Stockholm University; Haider, Huma (2011), Helpdesk Research Report: Effects of political quotas for women, UK: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre; Dahlerup, D., (ed.) Women, Quotas and Politics, London: Routledge, 2006; Krook, Mona (2009), Quota for women in politics: gender and candidate selection reform worldwide, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
34. Salmela, Katarina, Manion, Megan, and Buchanan, Cate (2018), [Experts Group report on women's meaningful participation in peace processes and gender-inclusive peace agreements](#). UN Women.
35. Kreutz and Lorena Cárdenas (2024, p.1, p.2.
36. Interviews with Nina Tsikhistavi-Khutsishvili, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, Georgia; Miriam Coronel Ferrer, South-East Asian Women Peace Mediators; Helena Puig Larrauri, Co-Founder and Strategy Lead, Build Up, October 2024.
37. See Karayi, Laureen and Eva Tabbasam (2024), [Funding for Women's rights Organisations in Humanitarian Crises](#), Report. Women, Peace and Security Helpdesk.
38. Saferworld, Women for Women International and WILPF (2023), [Localising Women, Peace and Security](#).
39. Pilar Domingo, Kay Soe, Ying Lwin (Naung Latt), Jane Remme, Caitlin Williscroft. (2019), '[Claiming Spaces: Women Mobilising for Peace and Equality in Myanmar: a Paung Sie Facility Learning Brief.](#)'
40. Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (2023), 'Women's Transformational Roles in Local Conflict Prevention: Case Study of WPHF-Supported Civil Society Organizations in Burundi, Iraq, Palestine, Philippines, and Uganda'.
41. Agence Française de Développement (AFD), (2021), [AFD and the Fund for Feminist Organisations \(FSOF\)](#).
42. See summary evaluation findings from AFD's FSOF, which unpack some of these dynamics and how they can be addressed: Agence Française de Développement (2022), [Intermediate evaluation of Fonds de Soutien aux Organisations Féministes \(Support Fund for Feminist Organisations - FSOF\) 2020-2022 Summary of the final report – December 2022](#).
43. Taylor, Sarah and Baldwin, Gretchen (2019), 'The Global Pushback on Women's Rights: The State of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda,' New York: International Peace Institute.
44. United Nations (2024), [2024 SDG Report: Global Progress Alarmingly Insufficient](#).
45. United Nations (2020), Women and peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/946), para 113.
46. United Nations Executive Office of the Secretary-General (2023), [A New Agenda for Peace: Our Common Agenda](#), Policy Brief 9.
47. United Nations (2024), [Summit of the Future Outcome Documents: Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact, and Declaration on Future Generations](#).
48. Monnier, Céline (2023), Seven Questions to Consider in Designing, Implementing, and Supporting Effective Nationally Led Violence Prevention Strategies, Centre on International Cooperation, NYU.
49. See Schmeidl, Susanne and Piza-Lopez, Eugenia (2002), Gender and Conflict Early Warning: A Framework for Action, International Alert, June; Basu and Confortini (2017).
50. Cordaid (2022), [Women, Peace and Security: Barometer Report South Sudan](#).
51. Saferworld (2023), [Addressing gender-based violence against women activists in Somalia: Violence Observatory Systems](#). This is entering into a new phase, establishing an early warning and early response system and training local women monitors.
52. See Saferworld (2023).
53. UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights website. [Women's Human Rights and Gender-Related Concerns in Situations of Conflict and Stability](#); United Nations (2023), Women and peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/725); UN (2022), Women and peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/740); UN (2021), Women and peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/827); (2020), Women and peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/946); Zulver, Julia Margaret (2019), '[Learning from High-Risk Feminism: Emergent Lessons about Women's Agency in Conflict Contexts](#),' Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal, 13(3): 21–43.
54. See, for example, Holmes, Melinda (2020), [Protecting Women Peacebuilders: The Front Lines of Sustainable Peace](#), International Civil Society Action Network.
55. UN Women and World Health Organisation (2023), [Expert Group Meeting report: Technology-facilitated violence against women: Towards a common definition](#), UNW: New York.
56. Build Up (2023), Sealing the Cracks – An Intersectional Feminist Perspective on Digital Peacebuilding, Policy Paper. Berghof Foundation and Platform Peaceful Conflict Transformation; Buzatu, Anne-Marie (2021), [Women, Peace, and Security and Human Rights in the Digital Age: Opportunities and risks to advance women's meaningful participation and protect their rights](#), New York: GNWP.

57. Yoshida, Keina et al (2021) [Defending the future: Gender, conflict and environmental peace](#), LSE Centre for WPS, GAPS UK and WIPC.
58. Detraz, N (2009), 'Environmental Security and Gender: Necessary Shifts in an Evolving Debate,' *Security Studies* 18 (2), 345–69; Kronsell, Annica (2018), 'WPS and Climate Change,' In *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, Davies, Sara and True, Jacqui (Eds), Oxford: Oxford University Press: 726–37; Yoshida, Keina et al (2021) ; Yoshida, Keina (2020), 'The Protection of the Environment: A Gendered Analysis,' *Göttingen Journal of International Law*, Vol 10, No 1: 285–305.
59. For example, see Stork, Adrienne, Travis, Cassidy, and Halle, Silja (2015), '[Gender-Sensitivity in Natural Resource Management in Côte d'Ivoire and Sudan](#),' *Peace Review*, 27.
60. Duriesmith, David (2017), [Engaging Men and Boys in the WPS Agenda: Beyond the "Good Men" Industry](#), LSE.
61. See Conciliation Resources (2021), [Integrating masculinities in peacebuilding: shifting harmful norms and transforming relationships](#).
62. The few examples include: UN Women Ukraine (2019), [Guidelines for Gender and Conflict-Sensitive Reporting](#), UN Women: New York; Kvinna til Kvinna Foundation (2015), [Gender and Conflict Journalism Handbook](#), Kvinna til Kvinna: Stockholm; UN Women Ethiopia and the African Union (2016), [Practicing Gender-Responsive Reporting in Conflict Affected Countries in Africa](#).