Concept Note WPS Annual Open Debate 2024 Side Event: Re-imagining Peace Processes by Shifting Power

Essential insights from women peacebuilders from Colombia, DR Congo and South Sudan

Date: 23 October 2024
Time: 08.30 -10.00 am EDT (light breakfast will be served, doors open from 8.00 am)
Venue: Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the UN in New York
Address: 666 3rd Ave (18th floor), NYC

Organised by Cordaid, WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform, the Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the UN, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy and PAX

Next year it is the 25th anniversary of UNSC Resolution 1325. However, we still seem to be far away from effective implementation of the WPS agenda ever since its adoption. This is particularly the case when we look at women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

The session aims to enhance visibility and strengthen the WPS agenda, in a world of growing conflict, increasing numbers of civilians experiencing armed conflict and military spending at an all time high. We bring together women peacebuilders from Colombia, DR Congo and South Sudan, to share their invaluable insights and experiences from the frontlines of peace and reconciliation. The session will highlight the importance of investing in informal peace processes, crucially complementing formal processes.

The women will inspire international actors to shift the power: to better link formal and informal peace processes while ensuring these processes are meaningfully inclusive and move beyond "add women & stir". This is why the speakers will focus on concrete recommendations for next steps to successfully re-imagine the international peacebuilding infrastructure and meaningfully include women every step of the way.

Background

The peace process in **Colombia** culminating in the 2016 agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, was exemplary in its inclusive approach. In addition, it addressed root causes of conflict, such as social inequalities and the active inclusion of marginalized groups, including Afro-Colombians and indigenous communities. The agreement addressed a broad range of social issues, not just the cessation of hostilities. A specific gender sub-commission was established to ensure that the agreement reflected the needs and rights of women and girls. Women participated in both formal and informal negotiations, and their involvement led to discussions on issues such as land rights, rural development, gender-based violence, and the reintegration of former combatants into society.

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, after the national elections in 2023 and the formal announcement of the withdrawal of the UN Mission MONUSCO, the conflict in DR Congo intensified.

Particularly in Eastern DRC there is increased (sexual) violence and limited women's participation in the various peace processes. Women's rights organizations continue to advocate for women's participation in peace processes however. The various initiatives for peace talks and meetings by heads of state on security issues included a very small number of women, or no women at all. Civil society has played a significant role in local peace-making efforts. They served primarily as conveners or mediators, participated as negotiators, contributed to consultations, and served on monitoring commissions. However, peace processes that limit civil society's influence—by confining their input to late-stage consultations after key decisions have already been made—undermine their effectiveness.

In **South Sudan** the political and economic situation remains volatile due to continued delays in the implementation of the 2018 peace agreement including the lack of clarity on the upcoming elections. Talks currently underway in Nairobi aim to bring in previously excluded political stakeholders into the peace agreement implementation. Despite the overall delays in R-ARCSS implementation, women peace builders are seeking ways to actively influence the peace process, most recently vis-a-vis the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing and the Compensation and Reparation Authority. Transitional justice is crucial in addressing causal factors to violent conflict and conflict related sexual violence, by addressing past atrocities, promoting reconciliation and building sustainable peace. The effective participation of women in the transitional justice process has however been lacking but is critical to ensure the incorporation of unique experiences and perspectives of all.

The event

In an interactive debate, women peacebuilders from Colombia, DR Congo and South Sudan will share key analyses, lessons learned and practical recommendations on improving the international peacebuilding infrastructure. The session aims to improve policymaking both at national, UN and Member State level. The speakers will focus particularly on the importance of supporting informal peace processes and how to address barriers that prevent women in all their diversity to participate in current peacebuilding processes.

Objectives of the session

- Provide analysis and share knowledge and insights on improving the functionality and inclusivity of peace processes
- Identify opportunities to promote meaningful women's participation in informal and formal peace processes in Colombia, DR Congo and South Sudan
- Provide recommendations to international and national policy decision makers and INGOs for meaningful engagements and interventions regarding women's participation in peacebuilding (an outcome document will be shared afterwards)
- Enhance visibility of the WPS agenda in a world where this is most needed

Programme

Time	What	Who
8.00 – 8.30	Walk in	Moderator Pablo Castillo Díaz (UN Women)
8.30 – 8.45	Opening remarks	Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the UN Lise Gregoire-van Haaren
8.45– 8.55	Speaker DRC	Ms. Claudine Tsongo
8.55 - 9.05	Speaker South Sudan	Ms. Esther Soma
9.05 – 9.15	Speaker Colombia	Ms. Diana Maria Salcedo López
9.15 - 9.45	Open discussion	
9.45 - 10.00	Closing remarks	TBD

Speakers

Claudine Tsongo is a lawyer and activist. She is the Director and co-Founder of Dynamique des Femmes Juristes (DFJ) based in Goma, North Kivu. DFJ campaigns for the promotion of women's rights and leadership, the fight against VAWG including GBV and impunity of its perpetrators, the promotion of gender and the construction of gender-equal communities in situations of humanitarian crises as well as in the context of peace and the development process (triple nexus between emergencies, development and peace).

Esther Soma is a gender and peacebuilding practitioner currently serving as Head of Programs and Deputy Country Director at PAX South Sudan. Esther supports civil society networks particularly youth, women, and church leaders at national and community levels in their peacebuilding work. Esther previously worked at UN Women South Sudan, as WPS Program Specialist and was actively involved within South Sudan civil society networks. As part of the Technical Support Team to the civil society and women delegates at the South Sudan peace talks, Esther provided gender sensitive technical inputs to the delegates which contributed to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan 2018. She is the author of the Oxfam and UN Women research report '*Our Search for Peace: Women in South Sudan's Peace Processes.*'

Diana Maria Salcedo López is a political scientist, feminist antimilitarist and director of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF/ LIMPAL in Spanish). LIMPAL is a feminist and anti-militarist organization, active for 26 years in Colombia and partner within the Women Advocate for Peace programme, with Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres, Corporación de Apoyo a Comunidades Populares, HealthNet TPO and ICCO Cooperation. LIMPAL actively participates in the peace process. Diana Maria Salcedo López is the author of various articles on the rights of women victims of armed conflict and protection of female human rights defenders. Her articles focus on topics such as disarmament, the impact of small arms on the lives of women, and the participation of women in peacebuilding and peace consolidation

Strategic partnerships on Inclusive Peace and Women, Peace and Security

This event is organised under the umbrella of three strategic partnerships supported by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, namely:

- **Just Future:** implemented in South Sudan and DR Congo towards access to equitable security & justice and inclusive peace
- **Women Advocate for Peace**: implemented in Colombia to contribute to a lasting peace process with gender justice in Colombia in which women and girls have the same rights and opportunities as men and boys
- **Leaders of Peace**: implemented in South Sudan to strengthen women's participation in peacebuilding processes and gender-based violence legislation, including transitional justice

Organisers

Cordaid is an international development and relief organisation, working in and on fragility. Cordaid is the leading partner of the Just Future Alliance which is active in six countries including the DR Congo and South Sudan. Within Just Future we work on more accessible, responsive and accountable security and justice institutions, and more inclusive arrangements for political governance and peace-making. Together with ICCO Colombia, Healthnet TPO and national partners Cordaid also implements the Women Advocate for Peace programme in Colombia.

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) supports inclusive democracy worldwide by facilitating multi-party and multi-stakeholder dialogue processes, strengthening the position of underrepresented groups in political decision-making and supporting a more democratic culture. NIMD has successfully supported the position of women, youth and other groups such as ethnic minorities in decision making spaces. Through the LEAP4Peace consortium, NIMD supported the participatory process for the NAP 1325 development in Colombia by facilitating consultation forums with key populations like signatories of the peace agreement.

PAX is the largest peace organization in the Netherlands. PAX works to protect civilians against acts of war, to end armed violence and to build inclusive peace. PAX works in conflict areas worldwide, together with local partners and people who, just like them, believe that everyone has a right to a dignified life in a peaceful society. PAX ensures all its programming is gender-sensitive as a minimum and realizes country wide gender-transformative programmes. In South Sudan through the Leadersof Peace programme, PAX partners directly strengthen women's political participation by linking formal and informal processes at the national and international level

WO=MEN - Dutch Gender Platform is the largest gender platform in Europe. Around 58 organisations and 125 professionals are linked to WO=MEN: development and peace organisations, women's and gender rights organisations, diaspora organisations, trade unions, police, journalists, knowledge institutes, academics, military personnel, entrepreneurs, students and opinion-makers. Together we work towards a just world in which gender equality and the rights of women and girls are respected. Together with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, WO=MEN coordinates the Netherlands National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP 1325).