

BENCHMARKS, BARRIERS AND
BRIDGING THE GAPS:
ENHANCING WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL
PARTICIPATION AND CONTRIBUTION
TO PEACE PROCESSES IN GEORGIA



UN WOMEN

2020

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This publication was prepared in the framework of the UN Women project "Strengthening Women's Meaningful Participation in Peacebuilding and Gender Mainstreaming in the Security Sector in Georgia" with the financial support of the UK Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (UK CSSF).

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UN WOMEN
Tbilisi, Georgia, 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, we would like to thank Erin Mooney, an international expert in human rights, internal displacement and humanitarian affairs, who led the research and writing of the study, together with Ms. Tamar Avaliani, a lecturer in human rights and gender issues at various universities in Tbilisi, Georgia.

We extend our appreciation to Tamar Lobjanidze, Women, Peace and Security Project Analyst at the

UN Women Country Office in Georgia, for her kind contributions to this study.

We express appreciation to all those who gave of their time to be interviewed for this study and shared their experience, insights and expertise.

This study is dedicated to all women and girls who have been affected by the conflicts in Georgia.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABL	Administrative Boundary Line
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEDAW Committee	United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
COBERM	Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism
CSO	civil society organization
EUMM	European Union Monitoring Mission
Expert Group	Expert Group Meeting on Women's Meaningful Participation in Negotiating Peace and the Implementation of Peace Agreements
GID	Geneva International Discussions
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IDP	internally displaced person
Inter-Agency Commission	Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
IPRM	Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism
MoD	Ministry of Defence of Georgia
NAP	National Action Plan
NAP on WPS	National Action Plan of Georgia for Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security
NGO	non-governmental organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PDO	Public Defender's Office of Georgia
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council resolution
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
WIC	Women's Information Center
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

INTRODUCTION

In its landmark resolution 1325 adopted in 2000, the United Nations Security Council recognized the inherent link between women, peace and security and acknowledged that women are not only victims of conflict with specific concerns but that they also play a critically important role in conflict prevention and resolution. Indeed, participation constitutes one of the four cornerstones of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda defined by UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) (hereinafter UNSCR 1325). By “reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding”, the Council stressed “the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution”. Recognizing that women’s “full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security”, the Council urged “Member States to ensure increased representation of women ... [in] mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict” and called on “all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective”. This includes taking into account the “special needs of women and girls during [all related processes, including] post-conflict reconstruction” and taking “measures that support local women’s peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements”.¹ Subsequent resolutions over the past 19 years have expanded upon the issue of women’s participation and other key themes in UNSCR 1325.²

“Change is coming at a pace that is too slow for the women and girls whose lives depend on it. Nearly two decades since resolution 1325 was adopted, women still face exclusion from

so many peace and political processes. Peace agreements are still adopted without provisions considering the needs and priorities of women and girls.”

UN Secretary-General António Guterres,
to the UN Security Council, 29 October 2019

Yet, in its most recent resolution on WPS, adopted unanimously on 29 October 2019, the Security Council emphasized the “need for far greater implementation of the women, peace and security agenda”. The Council remained “deeply concerned by persisting barriers to the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the frequent under-representation of women in many formal processes and bodies related to the maintenance of international peace and security” and underscored this has a “resulting detrimental impact on the maintenance of international peace and security”. The Council urged Member States to ensure and promote “the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of peace processes” and in particular urged States supporting peace processes to “facilitate women’s full, equal and meaningful inclusion and participation in peace talks from the outset, both in negotiating parties’ delegations and in the mechanisms set up to implement and monitor agreements”. The Council also encouraged States “to support efforts ... to address the unequal representation and participation of women in the peace and security agenda”, including “timely support to women to enhance their participation and capacity building in peace processes”.³

UN Women, as part of a larger project supported by the UK Conflict, Stability and Security Fund on “Strengthening Women’s Meaningful Participation in Peacebuilding and Gender Mainstreaming in the Security Sector in Georgia”, commissioned this study in 2019 to enhance women’s full, equal, direct and meaningful participation in peace processes concerning the conflicts in Georgia.

¹UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), adopted on 31 October 2000. S/RES/1325.

²UN Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019).

³UN Security Council resolution 2493 (2019), adopted on 29 October 2019. S/RES/2493.

Purpose and Scope of this Study

This study explores women's participation in peace processes related to the conflicts in Georgia and seeks to answer two interconnected questions:

How can women's meaningful participation be enhanced in formal as well as informal peace processes in Georgia?

How can the gap between the formal and informal peace processes successfully be bridged from the viewpoint of women's direct and meaningful participation?

In an effort to answer these questions, this study examines women's experiences of participating in the formal and informal peace processes in Georgia, identifies barriers and challenges to their participation and explores ideas for reducing these barriers and addressing these challenges. The study also explores current trends and future possibilities for strengthening linkages between the formal and informal peace processes in Georgia as a means of enhancing women's meaningful participation. By way of background, Part I provides a brief overview of multitrack conflict resolution efforts, encompassing both formal and informal tracks, as well as what these comprise in the context of the conflicts in Georgia.

Methodology

The methodology of the study was primarily qualitative. The reasons for this qualitative focus were twofold. First, quantitative data, including sex-disaggregated data on female participants in formal and informal peace processes in Georgia, was reported – and found – to be very limited; quantitative data nonetheless was sought, obtained, analysed and is reflected in this study, where relevant. Second, and more fundamentally, the crux of the research questions is qualitative rather than quantitative in nature, namely: How can women's meaningful participation be enhanced? Indeed, global research on the role of women in peace processes has found that the number of women directly included in a peace process is not a sufficient determinant of ensuring that issues of concern to women are addressed. Rather, what makes a difference is the degree to which women are able to influence a process. In the words of a recent global study, “making women's participation count is more important than merely counting the number of women included in peace processes.”⁴

Qualitative methods of data collection comprised the following three interlinking steps: a desk review, key informant interviews and a validation workshop with key stakeholders.

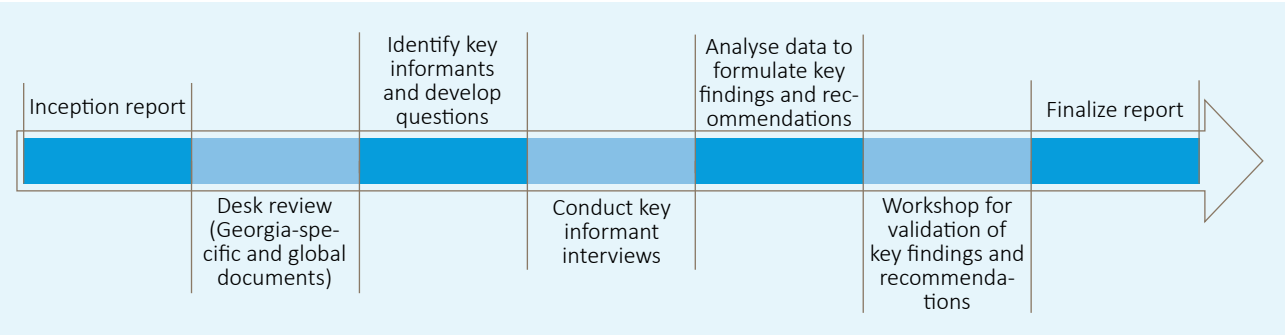
- A **desk review** examined existing key policies, programmes and initiatives to facilitate and strengthen gender equality and women's participation in formal and informal peace processes in Georgia. Most significant of the many documents reviewed were the Government of Georgia's successive National Action Plans for implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security; the State Concept of Gender Equality; the Law of Georgia on Gender Equality; and the National Human Rights Strategy and its Action Plan. The desk review also examined key global policies, guidance and recent literature on the subject of women's participation in peace processes. The most relevant of the documents reviewed appear in Annex I: Key References.
- **Key informant interviews** constituted the primary source of data collection. These were essential especially to ensuring that the voices, views and experiences of conflict-affected women and girls themselves are reflected in the analysis and report. Other key informants included various relevant Government officials, the mediation team (including individual interviews with all three Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions, i.e. the formal peace process), members of civil society, representatives of humanitarian partners and experts from academia. UN Women assisted in the identification and prioritization of persons to interview. Annex II provides a list of organizations interviewed.
- A **validation workshop** took place following the review of the data collected during key informant interviews. Preliminary findings and recommendations were drafted and then presented in a workshop with key stakeholders, namely internally displaced (IDP) and conflict-affected women and civil society representatives actively engaged in WPS issues in Georgia. The workshop, orga-

⁴Thania Paffenholz and others, *Making Women Count – Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women's Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations* (Geneva, Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative (The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies) and UN Women, 2016), p. 5. Available at <https://www.inclusive-peace.org/sites/default/files/IPTI-UN-Women-Report-Making-Women-Count-60-Pages.pdf>.

nized with the support of UN Women, brought together 13 conflict-affected women from Tbilisi (the capital) and Shida Kartli (a conflict-affected region), including leaders of established organizations of conflict-affected women as well as IDP and conflict-affected women working at the grass-

roots level. Participants overwhelmingly endorsed the key findings and recommendations presented, provided feedback on the prioritization of the barriers in terms of significance, and contributed useful suggestions. Key points of feedback from the workshop are reflected in the study.

FIGURE 1:
Methodology Overview



In terms of an analytical framework and approach for examining barriers to women’s meaningful participation in peace processes, the study analysed the peace processes in Georgia vis-à-vis the **seven key global challenges for women’s meaningful participation in peace processes** that have been identified by an Expert Group⁵ that UN Women convened in 2018 and which included a representative from Georgia.⁶ Specifically, these challenges are:

- Patriarchal systems and persistent gender inequality
- Limited recognition of women’s expertise and lived experience
- Shrinking political space and threats against women human rights defenders
- Funding challenges and insufficient investment in gender expertise
- Knowledge gaps
- The nature of contemporary conflict

- Tension between transformative and technocratic approaches

In addition to identifying barriers and challenges to women’s meaningful participation, the study also sought, and succeeded, to identify and document any “best practices”, i.e. good practices,⁷ in the peace processes in Georgia that have already been implemented and have paid positive dividends in terms of enhancing women’s meaningful participation.

Throughout, the study sought to obtain and analyse sex- and age-disaggregated data. While quantitative data was limited, efforts were made to consult different age groups of women and consider other measures of diversity, including seeking the views of IDP and conflict-affected women from different areas (rural as well as urban), affected by the different conflicts (Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia) and with varying durations of displacement (some displaced in the early 1990s, some in 2008), among other measures. Where findings differ across these various groups, it is specified in the report.

⁵Expert Group Meeting on Women’s Meaningful Participation in Negotiating Peace and the Implementation of Peace Agreements (hereinafter Expert Group)

⁶UN Women, *Women’s meaningful participation in negotiating peace and the implementation of peace agreements: Report of the Expert Group Meeting* (2018). Available at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/10/egm-report-womens-meaningful-participation-in-negotiating-peace>.

⁷Given the inherent challenges with the term “best” practices, including the high bar for the evidence base that must be tracked over time in order to validate a practice as such, the text instead refers to “good practices”.

Terminology

The meaning of “meaningful participation”, which is at the crux of the research question, is explored in Part I of this study, which also sketches the distinction between “formal” and “informal” peace processes. Also central to the research are a few other terms that require quick clarification.

To begin with, reference in the research question to “women” is taken to mean women and girls, i.e. females of all ages. Indeed, an important element of “meaningful” participation is ensuring that the backgrounds, experiences and views of a range of different ages of women and girls are represented.

Secondly, in the highly politicized context of conflicts, including those in Georgia, terminology can be controversial and loaded with political connotations. This study does not enter into those debates and uses terms at face value, i.e. the dictionary meaning or term of art according to international lexicon, including as utilized by the international community in the context of the conflicts in Georgia. Place names are especially contentious and require clarification. Throughout this study, “Georgia” refers to the country and its geographical boundaries as recognized by the United Nations, while “Abkhazia” and “the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia” refer to the two conflict areas.⁸ Similarly, this study echoes the international community’s usage of the term “Administrative Boundary Line” (ABL). As regards the formal peace process, the Geneva International Discussions (GID) utilize the term “participants” in place of “delegations” to describe the main attendees to the peace process. While echoing the term “participants”, this study tends to refer to “main participants”, so as not to include the various organizations also participating in the GID as observers. Finally, the terms “conflict” and “internally displaced and conflict-affected women” do not connote a classification specific to the conflicts in Georgia: in line with international humanitarian law, the term “conflict” refers to any armed conflict, whether non-international or international in nature.⁹

⁸For the purposes of the present study, Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia are referred to as Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, as the toponyms used in this report correspond to standard international usage in line with the United Nations Secretary-General’s 2019 report on the status of IDPs and refugees from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. See UN General Assembly, *Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia: Report of the Secretary-General* (21 May 2019). A/73/880. Available at <https://undocs.org/en/A/73/880>.

These clarifications of the above-mentioned terms apply throughout the text. In the event that any other terms appear in the study that are contentious, any political connotation the reader ascribes to these terms is unintended by the authors and must not be assumed to convey a political interpretation. In short, readers are asked to bear in mind that this study is **humanitarian** in focus.

Structure of the Study

The main body of this study is structured in five parts. **Part I** provides a primer on multitrack peace processes, both formal and informal, and outlines the forms they take regarding the conflicts in Georgia. It also explores and seeks to clarify the meaning of the term “meaningful participation”. **Part II** briefly sets out global benchmarks for women’s participation in peace processes and an indication of how the peace processes in Georgia currently measure against such benchmarks. **Part III**, which is the heart of the study, focuses on the seven global barriers to women’s meaningful participation in peace processes and their relevance to peace processes in Georgia. **Part IV** offers ways – those which are already underway as well as potential options for consideration – to bridge the gaps between informal and formal peace processes so as to enhance women’s direct and meaningful participation, and provides key recommendations compiled from earlier parts of the study. The **annexes** provide a list of organizations interviewed and key resources for further reading.

Target Audience

This study seeks to contribute to the existing literature on women’s participation in peace processes, with respect to both the global situation and the conflicts in Georgia. In the context of the conflicts in Georgia, it is the hope that this study will provide useful information, observations and recommendations for all those engaged in the peace processes: first and foremost, IDP and conflict-affected women themselves, as well as civil society organizations (CSOs), in particular those engaged in WPS and/or conflict

⁹This point requires mention as some interlocutors seized upon and misunderstood the term “conflict-affected women” to connote an intra-State, internal armed conflict and suggested the study refer instead to “war-affected women” as this would, they believed, emphasize an international conflict. This issue was clarified during the course of the key informant interviews as well as at the validation workshop.

resolution; the mediation team; all participants in the formal peace process; and other relevant actors. Secondly, this study seeks to contribute to the global literature on WPS, in particular regarding women's meaningful participation in peace processes. Indeed, to UN Women's knowledge, this is the first study to assess in a specific context the seven barriers to women's meaningful participation that were identified by the Expert Group convened in 2018. In this regard, the methodology utilized by this study may be instructive for similar analyses in other contexts. Moreover, the good practices identified by this study may also prove of interest in other contexts.

More concretely, it is the hope that this study will contribute not only to reflections about enhancing women's full, equal, direct and meaningful participation in the peace process in Georgia and in other peace processes globally, but also to the swift implementation of corrective measures to reduce and remove the barriers to meaningful participation in peace processes that conflict-affected women, both in Georgia and around the world, continue to face. On the cusp of the twentieth anniversary of UNSCR 1325, the commitments made therein demand no less.

PART I: BACKGROUND

Before delving fully into the research question as to how to enhance women's meaningful participation in formal and informal peace processes in Georgia, it is important to clarify what is meant by formal and informal peace processes and sketch how these feature as regards the conflicts in Georgia. The meaning of "meaningful" participation also must be explored.

Multitrack Peace Processes

Typically, peacebuilding efforts are pursued via multiple channels or "tracks". Track 1 refers to the formal, or official, peace process typically conducted through government-to-government diplomacy. Informal peace processes are all those that occur outside of this official sphere. Unlike Track 1 processes, which involve government officials, Track 2 processes bring together influential non-governmental actors – e.g. civil society, academic experts, members of the private sector – with no governmental participation. In between these two spheres, Track 1.5 dialogues are closed-door dialogues that include a mix of government officials, who participate in an unofficial capacity, and non-governmental experts. Peacebuilding initiatives that engage the local population at the community and grass-roots level are referred to as Track 3.

While Track 1.5, Track 2 and Track 3 do not carry the weight of a formal peace process, they each have strengths and can provide invaluable support to the formal process.¹⁰ Generally, they serve the critically important purpose of providing "a private, open environment for individuals to build trust, hold conversations that their official counterparts sometimes cannot or will not, and discuss solutions."¹¹ Informal peace processes can enhance understanding and identify possible solutions on particular issues, thereby having the potential of helping to advance discussions taking place in the formal sphere. Multitrack diplomacy is especially valuable in protracted conflicts and prolonged peace processes as advances, however small, made in Tracks 1.5, 2 or 3 can inject improved understanding and

new momentum when formal negotiations in Track 1 get "stuck". Moreover, informal peace processes are invaluable for maintaining channels of communication in the event that the formal peace process reaches a standstill or is even suspended. Furthermore, and directly relevant to this study, "multi-track diplomacy can serve many purposes: it can help to incorporate grassroots and civil society participation when these groups have otherwise been excluded".¹²

"If the goal of a peace process is only to end violence, then women – who are rarely the belligerents – are unlikely to be considered legitimate participants. If the goal is to build peace, however, it makes sense to gain more diverse inputs from the rest of society."

Marie O'Reilly, Andrea Ó Súilleabháin and
Thania Paffenholz, *Reimagining Peacemaking:
Women's Roles in Peace Processes* (2015)

This is important because while women tend to be well represented in Track 2 initiatives and overwhelmingly tend to lead Track 3 initiatives, they are significantly underrepresented in the formal peace processes of Track 1. Indeed, it has been pointed out that the model of multitrack diplomacy has created its own gendered hierarchies, as "even the way we talk about tracks implies hierarchy" by which "the 'hard' security approaches of track one are elevated over the 'soft' peacebuilding work that happens at the track three level."¹³ This global tendency is strongly reflected in the context of peace processes regarding the conflicts in Georgia, where women's contributions to peacebuilding are widely recognized, but negotiating peace is left largely to men (see Barrier: Patriarchal Systems).

Experience around the world has shown that formal peace dialogues are most successful when they have some connection to informal peace processes and vice versa.¹⁴ Indeed, the importance of cre-

¹⁰For a good summary on the respective strengths of Track 1.5 and Track 2 efforts, see United States Institute of Peace (USIP), "A Primer on Multi-track Diplomacy: How Does it Work?", 31 July 2019. Available at <https://www.usip.org/publications/2019/07/primer-multi-track-diplomacy-how-does-it-work>.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

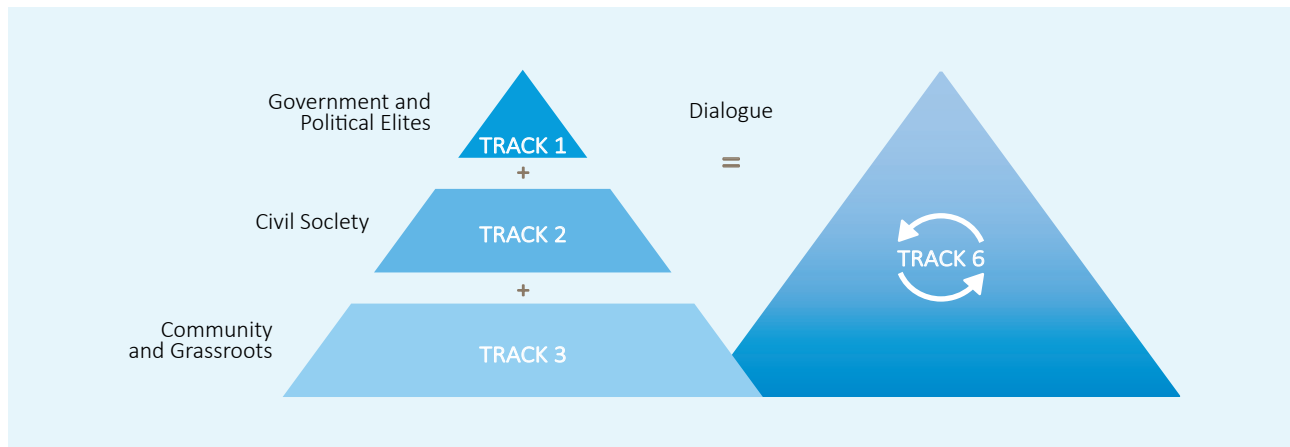
¹³Catherine Turner, "Women's Leadership for Peace: Towards a Model of Multi-Track Leadership", International Peace Institute Global Observatory, 18 October 2019. Available at <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2019/10/womens-leadership-for-peace-towards-multi-track-leadership/>.

¹⁴ USIP, "A Primer on Multi-track Diplomacy: How Does it Work?"

ating linkages between formal and informal peace processes for an integrated multitrack approach to peacebuilding has led some practitioners to refer to an additional track dubbed “Track 6”, comprising the efforts of Track 1 plus Track 2 plus Track 3 (i.e. $1 + 2 + 3 = 6$), as illustrated in the figure below. This approach connects the respective peacebuilding ef-

forts of local communities, civil society, governments and the international community in order to ensure that high-level formal peace processes “reflect local realities and benefit from local knowledge”, are inclusive of critical stakeholders, including women, and thereby support the legitimacy and sustainability of high-level agreements.¹⁵

FIGURE 2:
A Track 6 Approach¹⁶



Particularly when women are not adequately represented in a formal peace process, linkages with informal peace processes are critically important to ensuring that women’s concerns, views and recommendations are known, taken into account and reflected in the high-level agreements that ultimately are expected to emerge to resolve the conflict and its consequences.

Peace Processes in Georgia

In Georgia, the formal peace process is the framework known as the Geneva International Discussions (GID). These are the series of internationally sponsored talks that commenced in Geneva, Switzerland on 15 October 2008, in accordance with the six-point agreement of 12 August 2008 and implementing measures of 8 September 2008 following renewed hostilities in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia in August 2008.¹⁷ Co-chaired by the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU), the GID brings together representatives of Georgia, the Russian Federation and the United States and Georgia’s

breakaway regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia to discuss security-related issues and humanitarian consequences of the 2008 conflict in Georgia. The fiftieth round of the GID concluded on 11 December 2019. While international conflict resolution efforts (co-sponsored by the United Nations and OSCE) regarding Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia have been underway since the conflicts began in the early 1990s, in terms of the formal peace process, this study focuses on the two currently established processes: the GID and the Incident Prevention Response Mechanism (IPRM). This study does not review or analyse the content and outcomes of the GID, but simply the extent to which women are able to meaningfully participate in this forum.

As regards informal peace processes for the conflicts in Georgia, there have been many such processes comprising Tracks 1.5, 2 and 3 over the more than 26 years since the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia began in the early 1990s.

¹⁵ Interpeace, “Our Track 6 Approach”. Available at <https://www.interpeace.org/our-approach/track-6/>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The convening of international discussions on the modalities of security and stability in Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia is one of the key elements of the six-point plan, agreed to by Georgia and the Russian Federation through EU mediation, to diffuse the August 2008 conflict in South Ossetia. For more on the GID, including official statements issued by the Co-Chairs, see <https://dppa.un.org/en/mission/unrgid>.

The number of these informal processes is far too great to mention. Moreover, the nature of informal peace processes as needing to be low-key and often confidential means that many are not publicly reported upon or documented. Due to the conflict, most of these processes take place outside of the country, usually in Armenia or Turkey. A useful summary and analysis of key peacebuilding initiatives since the early 1990s has been prepared by the IDP Women's Association "Consent".¹⁸ Notably, this study found that "women activists and women's organizations were active at all stages of this prolonged process, although their role was not always appreciated."¹⁹ Further, an observation and concern expressed by many key informants was that funding for such informal processes concerning the conflicts in Georgia has dramatically reduced in recent years due to the protracted and seemingly intractable nature of the conflicts, donor fatigue and competing priorities elsewhere in the world (see Barrier: Funding Challenges).

The Meaning of "Meaningful Participation"

Recent years have witnessed an evolution in the way in which the issue of women's participation in peace processes is emphasized, to stress not just increased but "meaningful participation". UNSCR 1325 (2000), stressing the importance of women's "equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security" urged Member States to "ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict".²⁰ Since 2015, following the UN Secretary-General's report to the Security Council on WPS focused on the issue of women's meaningful participation, the Council began referring to women's "meaningful participation" in peace processes. The Council, in resolution 2242 (2015), noted "the substantial link between women's meaningful involvement in efforts to prevent, resolve and rebuild from conflict and those efforts' effectiveness and long-term sustainability" and encouraged Member States

supporting peace processes "to facilitate women's meaningful inclusion in negotiating parties' delegations to peace talks" and "the meaningful participation of civil society organizations at international and regional peace and security meetings, as appropriate".²¹ In its most recent 2019 resolution, the Security Council urged Member States to intensify efforts to implement the WPS agenda and its priorities by "ensuring and promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of peace processes" and urged States supporting peace processes "to facilitate women's full, equal and meaningful inclusion and participation in peace talks from the outset, both in negotiating parties' delegations and in the mechanisms set up to implement and monitor agreements".²²

"Conflict prevention includes placing gender equality and the meaningful participation of women at the centre of all efforts to prevent conflict and sustain peace."

UN Secretary-General, S/2018/900, para. 7

The UN Security Council did not define in these resolutions what constitutes "meaningful participation". Indeed, there is no standard definition of the term. The dictionary defines "meaningful" as something that has significance or purpose and that is serious, important or worthwhile.²³ The UN Secretary-General, in his recent 2018 report focusing on the issue of women's meaningful participation in peace processes, indicated, "The term 'meaningful' in the context of the right of women to participation is intended to challenge superficial efforts to include women without genuinely extending them the opportunity to influence outcomes." The Secretary-General gave the example that such superficial efforts "in some cases ... [have] taken the form of parallel processes or advisory bodies that are unable to contribute to main processes and outcomes."²⁴ He also bemoaned the fact that even when women are included, it typically has been a case of "too little, too late" and appealed that it is "critical that we end the frequent practice of bringing women into processes late or, too often, as

¹⁸Maia Kuprava-Sharvashidze and Iulia Kharashvili, *Peacebuilding Efforts in Georgia – Women on the P2P Path: Achievements and Challenges* (IDP Women's Association "Consent", 2018).

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁰UNSCR 1325 (2000), Preamble and para. 1.

²¹UNSCR 2242 (2015), Preamble and para. 1.

²²UNSCR 2493 (2019), paras. 1 and 2.

²³See, for example, definitions provided by the Oxford English Dictionary (<https://www.lexico.com/definition/meaningful>), Merriam Webster (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meaningful>) and the Cambridge English Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/meaningful>).

²⁴UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security* (9 October 2018). S/2018/900, para. 29. Available at <https://undocs.org/S/2018/900>.

tokens.”²⁵ Instead, the Secretary-General has encouraged States

to support an equal footing for women within local, national and regional peace processes. This includes requiring and advocating for processes to include meaningful and influential roles for women’s civil society organizations and core, decision-shaping and decision-making roles for women with the same access and at the same level as men; platforms and mechanisms dedicated to addressing the full scope of the human rights of women and girls and gender equality, specifically as it is linked to prevention; and inclusion of gender expertise and gender-responsive analysis from the start.²⁶

The Expert Group Meeting on Women’s Meaningful Participation in Peace Processes, which informed the UN Secretary-General’s 2018 report on the subject, had as one of its main aims to “explore the concept of ‘meaningful participation’ – what it includes, and how the UN, Member States, civil society and other relevant actors can best effectively advocate for it, and consistently operationalize it”.²⁷ The Expert Group concluded that the concept of “meaningful participation” describes

a multifaceted set of elements to realize the tangible and urgent demands that women not only be present, but that their concerns are heard and taken on board, they have the opportunity to articulate their contributions and expertise, to ensure that gender perspective and analyses inform and shape peace processes, and that outcomes benefit the whole of society.²⁸

Two key elements are numeric participation (i.e. the number of women participating) and the quality and impact of women’s roles in representing their interests. While both of these remain “vital twin-tracks”, the Expert Group emphasized the need for greater

attention now to be given to deepening the quality and impact of women’s participation, noting that “while the push to simply include women in all roles in negotiations is a clear and fair democratic imperative, ... it may not yield [an] outcome in which gender equality interests are represented and converted into gender-sensitive provisions in outcome documents and implementation processes.”²⁹ In the words of another report on the topic, women’s meaningful participation in peace processes is not simply a matter of counting the number of women at the table but of making women’s voices count.³⁰ It is therefore imperative, while still focusing on increasing the number of women participating in peace processes, to also guard against women being relegated to superficial or tokenistic forms of participation.

Beyond numbers, more fundamental elements of women’s meaningful participation would include the following:

- Women being brought into peace processes with sufficient time to consult, analyse and prepare their contributions and to formulate recommendations and build consensus or support for them
- Women having adequate knowledge and confidence about the issues to be discussed to effectively represent women’s interests
- Opportunities to share knowledge, experiences, good practices and lessons learned among and between women’s organizations engaged in peacebuilding, including in different contexts
- The ability of women’s organizations to have sustained capacity and a capability to be present, without financial and other practical barriers, “so they can ‘hit the mark’ when the participation window opens”³¹

The understanding of “meaningful participation” arrived at by the Expert Group is illustrated in the diagram below.

²⁵ Ibid., para. 33.

²⁶ Ibid., para. 32.

²⁷ UN Women, Report of the Expert Group Meeting, p. 1.

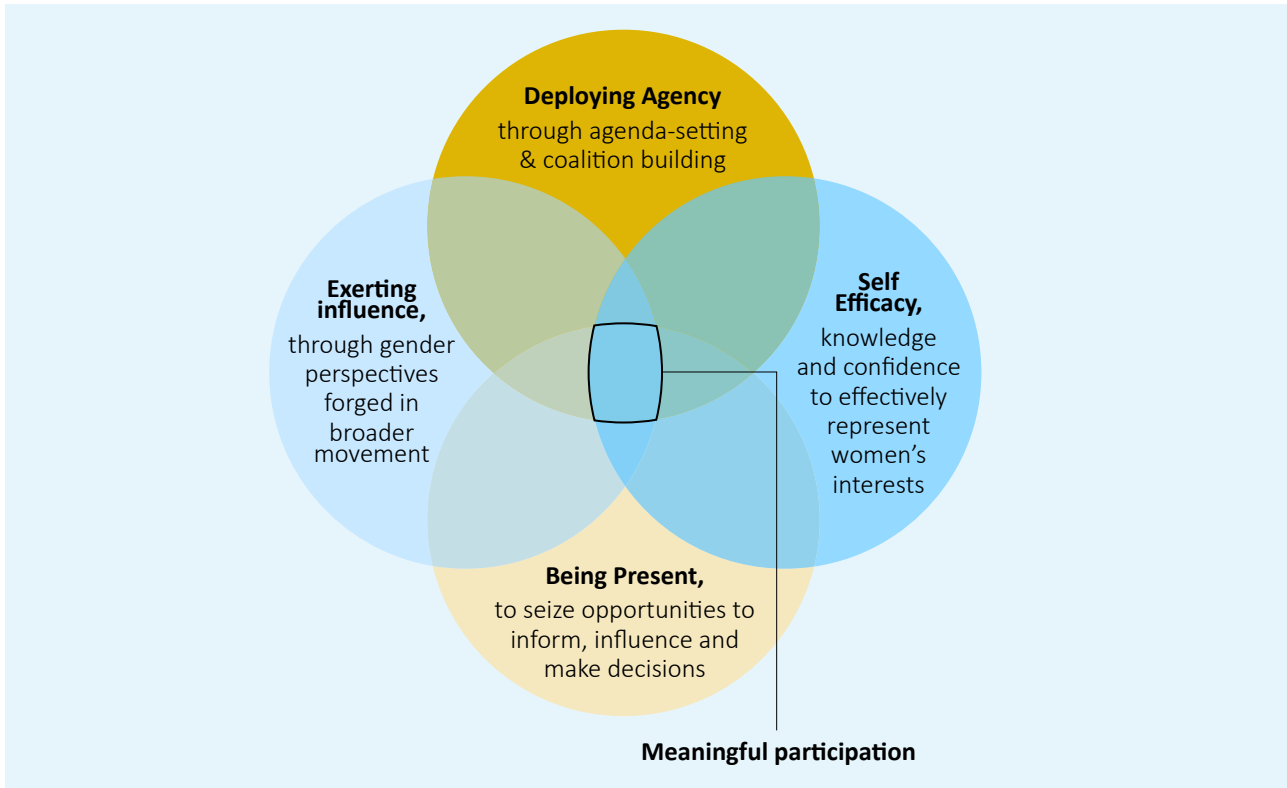
²⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

³⁰ Paffenholz and others, Making Women Count, p. 5.

³¹ UN Women, Report of the Expert Group Meeting, p. 12.

Elements of Women’s Meaningful Participation in Peace and Security Processes



UN Women. *Women’s meaningful participation in negotiating peace and the implementation of peace agreements: Report of the Expert Group Meeting. 2018. p. 12.*

An earlier study on women’s influence on and inclusion in peace negotiations identified several enabling and constraining factors occurring in different phases of peace processes that affect the capacity of women to exercise meaningful influence on peace processes.³² Building upon this, the Expert Group identified seven main barriers to women’s meaningful participation in peace processes. As noted in the introduction to this study, assessing the extent to which these barriers feature in the peace processes in Georgia and identifying recommendations for reducing, if not entirely removing, these barriers is the main focus of this study, constituting Part III.

8	Citizen Control	Citizen Control
7	Delegation	
6	Partnership	
5	Placation	Tokenism
4	Consultation	
3	Informing	
2	Therapy	Nonparticipation
1	Manipulation	

Arnstein’s Ladder (1969) Degrees of Citizen Participation

Also useful to understanding “meaningful participation” is Arnstein’s “ladder of citizen participation”. Each step of the ladder represents a different level of involvement, increasing with each higher rung on the ladder. Above the bottom rungs of the ladder, which are considered to be not only non-participatory but also harmful and disrespectful to citizens, are a series of rungs that constitute tokenism. First is “informing”, whereby citizens are merely told what is happening or what will happen in the future. Moreover, typically this information is provided at a very late stage in the process, when changes can no longer be made. “Consultation”, typically by surveying and data extraction, is one rung higher on the ladder. Next is “placation”, when in an attempt to make communities feel heard, a small number of community members will be selected to participate in established forums. While this gives the community more access to decision-makers or at least a sense that their concerns are being addressed, the community’s voice is just one voice among many others and can easily be ignored or overruled when final decisions are made, such that “the majority of power still resides outside the community”. It is only at the higher rungs of the ladder when citizens have significant decision-making power.

³² Paffenholz and others, *Making Women Count*, p. 6 and chap. 6.

er and some degree of control on outcomes.³³

“Meaningful participation is not about ensuring women are 50 per cent of the participants in the peace process but that 50 per cent of the peace process outcomes reflect women’s concerns.”

Woman leader of a CSO of
conflict-affected women, Georgia

In Georgia, in the instances where women’s participation in the peace process features in policy documents (see Part II: Benchmarks), the emphasis is on the number of women participating rather

than the degree of their influence on the process. While acknowledging certain progress in increasing women’s participation in recent years, a consensus view among key informants interviewed was that women’s participation did not yet amount to being meaningful. Asked what “meaningful participation” constitutes, the overwhelming sense was a case of “we’ll know it when we see it”. A woman leader of an organization of conflict-affected women in Georgia suggested that meaningful participation is “not about ensuring women are 50 per cent of the participants in the peace process but that 50 per cent of the peace process outcomes reflect women’s concerns.”³⁴

³³ Sherry R. Arnstein, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation”, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, vol. 35, No. 4 (July 1969). Available at <https://www.participatorymethods.org/sites/participatorymethods.org/files/Arnstein%20ladder%201969.pdf>

³⁴ Key informant interview, September 2019.

PART II: BENCHMARKS

In line with UNSCR 1325 and subsequent WPS resolutions, the UN Secretary-General has underscored that “representation of women in peace and security efforts is one essential measurement of commitments related to women, peace and security”.³⁵ As noted in the introduction to this study, the UN Security Council, in UNSCR 1325 and subsequent WPS resolutions, has called for women’s increased participation in peace processes. In its most recent WPS resolution, the Council urged Member States to ensure and promote “the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of peace processes” and for States supporting peace processes to “facilitate women’s full, equal and meaningful inclusion and participation in peace talks from the outset, both in negotiating parties’ delegations and in the mechanisms set up to implement and monitor agreements”.³⁶

While emphasizing that “Member States hold the primary responsibility for advancement of the women and peace and security agenda”, the Secretary-General also acknowledged that the United Nations itself must “walk the talk” and do more. Bemoaning the paucity – less than a handful – of UN mediators who are women, he has committed to “continue to promote the representation and meaningful participation of women across mediation efforts, including on mediation teams and in leadership positions.”³⁷ In September 2018, he appointed the first woman to the role of United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions (reportedly one of only three UN mediators who are women in the world). More than one key informant interviewed for this study flagged this fact as significant in terms of the United Nations setting an example, albeit belatedly, that women are capable negotiators in formal peace processes and should not just be relegated to

informal peacebuilding initiatives.

The Government of Georgia has adopted a National Action Plan (NAP) for implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions on WPS. Indeed, Georgia was the first country in the region – and among the first several in the world – to do so. Since 2002, women’s CSOs had been advocating the development of an NAP on WPS; in 2006, they contributed to the development of a first draft.³⁸ In 2011, the Government of Georgia adopted its first National Action Plan for Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (hereinafter NAP on WPS) for the period 2012-2015; the adoption of updated NAPs on WPS, covering the periods 2016-2017 and 2018-2020, followed. As CSOs themselves attest, each of the NAPs on WPS was developed in close consultation with civil society.³⁹ Women’s CSOs, with the support of UN Women, also play a key role in independent monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the NAPs on WPS,⁴⁰ complementing the official monitoring reports produced by the Public Defender’s Office (PDO), also with the support of UN Women.⁴¹

Supporting women’s increased participation in peace processes is a clear policy commitment of the Government of Georgia. Indeed, years prior to the adoption of the NAP on WPS, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the State Concept of Gender Equality in 2006, Article 5 of which encourages the full and equal participation of women and men at all levels of conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes.⁴² The NAP on WPS is also harmonized with the Government’s Action Plan on the Protection of Human Rights⁴³ and is aligned with the objectives, targets and indicators of Georgia’s commitments to relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The current NAP on WPS

³⁵ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General. S/2018/900*, para. 9.

³⁶ UNSCR 2493 (2019).

³⁷ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General. S/2018/900*, paras. 48 and 35.

³⁸ Women’s Information Center (WIC), *Independent Monitoring of the 2016-2017 National Action Plan of Georgia on Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security* (Women’s Information Center and UN Women, 2017), p. 5.

³⁹ WIC, *Independent Monitoring of the 2016-2017 NAP on WPS*, pp. 5-7; and Kuprava-Sharvashidze and Kharashvili, *Peacebuilding Efforts in Georgia – Women on the P2P Path*.

⁴⁰ See, for example, WIC, *Independent Monitoring of the 2016-2017 NAP on WPS*.

⁴¹ See, for example, PDO, *Implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in Georgia: Monitoring Results* (2017). Available at <http://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2019042317463258695.pdf>.

⁴² Parliament of Georgia, *State Concept of Gender Equality* (2006). Available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/44014?publication=0>.

⁴³ Georgia, *Human Rights Action Plan 2018-2020*. Available at <http://myrights.gov.ge/en/Human>.

assigns responsibilities to a range of relevant Government ministries and offices, all of which are represented (through their gender focal points and Deputy Ministers) in the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter the Inter-Agency Commission), the body overseeing the NAP's implementation. According to the Chair of the Commission,

the NAP constitutes a whole of government approach to integrating gender perspectives in the security sector and in decision-making processes, using a gender lens in peace negotiations, protecting the rights of women and girls and promoting their meaningful participation in conflict prevention and resolution.⁴⁴

The first goal discussed in the current NAP – “Increased participation of women at the decision-making level in the security sector and peace negotiations” – has been a key focus of all three successive NAPs on WPS adopted by the Government of Georgia. Specifically, regarding women's participation in peace processes, the NAP commits to supporting the representation of women in the formal peace negotiations, that is, the GID and IPRM. To this end, the Government commits to making continued investments in training women negotiators at its diplomatic training centre; to promoting equal career advancement opportunities for women and men in the security sector; and to maintaining or increasing the percentage of women participating in the Government's delegations to the formal peace process, according to the baselines set by the Government in 2017 for the GID (40 per cent women) and IPRM (33 per cent women).⁴⁵ Also related to the formal peace process, the Government commits itself to sharing the priorities and recommendations made by IDP and conflict-affected women and to strengthening regular dialogue between the Government participants in the GID and IPRM meetings with civil society, including NGOs, women's rights activists and IDP and conflict-affected women, with the aim of “ensuring that women's priorities and needs are included in the negotiations' agenda” of the GID and that the IPRM responds “effectively to women's priorities and needs”.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Georgia, *2018-2020 National Action Plan of Georgia for Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security* (Tbilisi, 2018), Foreword. Available at <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/09/2018-2020-national-action-plan-of-georgia>.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Goal 1, Output 1.1 and 1.2.

Regarding informal peace processes, the current NAP on WPS sets out to increase the inclusion of IDP and conflict-affected women, youth and women's organizations in peacebuilding. To this end, the NAP provides for direct support to women's CSOs in the implementation of people-to-people diplomacy initiatives and leadership trainings.⁴⁷ Moreover, increasing the participation of IDP and conflict-affected women and youth in decision-making processes regarding conflict prevention, management and resolution is a goal in and of itself. Activities in this regard include establishing regular dialogue mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of IDP women and youth in policy development, including regarding livelihoods and resettlement, and in the development of targeted programmes in the villages adjacent to the ABL.⁴⁸

Implementation, of course, is key. The PDO, in its report on the implementation of the Government's second NAP on WPS, stated that

it is a positive development that, in accordance with the National Action Plan, there are women participating in such meetings [as GID and IPRM information-sharing sessions]. However, their mere presence cannot be the sole factor in the assessment of said activity. It is necessary to make appropriate use of the mediating platforms in order to inform engaged, influential individuals of the urgent and specific problems of the conflict-affected women and girls. Raising these issues during high-level official meetings will increase the likelihood of success.⁴⁹

While not specific to the peace processes regarding the conflicts in Georgia, it is relevant to mention that the Governments of Georgia, the Russian Federation and the United States – all participants in the GID – are among the more than 150 States to date who have endorsed the UN declaration reaffirming their pledge (and that of regional organizations including the EU) to “collectively commit to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda and its priorities by ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of

⁴⁶ Ibid., Goal 2, Output 2.2.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Goal 1, Output 1.3.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Goal 2.

⁴⁹ PDO, *Implementation of the NAP on WPS in Georgia: Monitoring Results*, p. 9.

the peace process and by systematically integrating a gender perspective into all stages of analysis, planning, implementation and reporting.”⁵⁰ Moreover, the Government of the Russia Federation, in its statement to the UN Security Council in advance of its adoption of the most recent WPS resolution, emphasized the critical importance of women’s participation “at all levels of peacemaking”.⁵¹

“[W]omen themselves must participate at all levels of peacemaking in order to make real change.”

Russian Federation, statement to the
UN Security Council before adoption
of resolution 2493 (2019)

⁵⁰ UN Department of Peace Operations, *Action for Peacekeeping: Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations* (2018). Available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/a4p-declaration-en.pdf>. For the list of States that have endorsed the Declaration to date, see <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-for-peacekeeping-a4p>.

⁵¹ United Nations, “Security Council Urges Recommitment to Women, Peace, Security Agenda, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2493 (2019)”, SC/13998, 29 October 2019. Available at <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13998.doc.htm>.

PART III: BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES IN GEORGIA

Alongside increased emphasis by the Security Council and the UN Secretary-General on the importance of ensuring women's meaningful participation in the peace process, there also has begun to emerge a greater understanding of the specific barriers standing in the way of this goal. Pinpointing these barriers, based on women's experience in peace processes to date, was a focus of the Expert Group meeting, the findings and recommendations of which informed the Secretary-General's 2018 report centered on this subject. The Security Council has since strengthened its emphasis on the need to ensure women's meaningful participation in peace processes. However, in advance of the Security Council's most recent deliberations on WPS, South Africa, holding the presidency of the Council at the time, lamented:

Despite these laudable resolutions, challenges still remain in realizing the meaningful participation of women in peace and security activities, primarily because of discriminatory laws, attitudinal and institutional obstacles, gender stereotyping, political instability and the abuse of human rights in armed conflict situations. Moreover, women remain marginalized or their roles are limited in contributing to and participating in peace processes, including in the drafting of peace agreements, mediation and negotiation.⁵²

To enhance women's meaningful participation in peace processes, the barriers they face must first be identified and understood, then reduced and ultimately removed. Globally, seven barriers to women's meaningful participation in peace processes have been identified by the Expert Group on this topic. Specifically, these are:

- Patriarchal systems and persistent gender inequality
- Limited recognition of women's expertise and

lived experience

- Shrinking political space and threats against women human rights defenders
Funding challenges and insufficient investment in
- gender expertise
- Knowledge gaps
- The nature of contemporary conflict
- Tension between transformative and technocratic approaches⁵³

As noted earlier, these seven barriers provided a framework for analysing the challenges conflict-affected women in Georgia face to meaningful participation. All seven global barriers were found to be evident, to a greater or lesser degree, in the context of peace processes for the conflicts in Georgia. This finding was confirmed by the conflict-affected women at the validation workshop reviewing the key findings and recommendations of this study. The option of adding additional barriers was left open. In the end, this was not necessary as the research findings corresponded to one of the seven global barriers. This conclusion was similarly confirmed at the validation workshop.

Presented below are the seven global barriers to women's meaningful participation in peace processes and the ways in which they feature in the context of the peace processes in Georgia.

BARRIER

Patriarchal Systems and Persistent Gender Inequality

Global Context

It is a global trend that patriarchal and militarized systems contribute to and perpetuate gender inequality and are one of the most basic and persistent barriers

⁵² UN Security Council, *Letter dated 8 October 2019 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General* (8 October 2019). S/2019/801, para. 4. Available at <https://undocs.org/S/2019/801>.

⁵³ UN Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting*.

ers to women's meaningful participation in peace processes. According to the global trend, gender stereotypes inhibit women's involvement in security discussions and the security sector and instead position security as "a man's issue".⁵⁴ There is a perception that "security issues are the concerns of men, because traditionally men are believed to be strong and solution providers."⁵⁵ Indeed, "patriarchal socio-cultural stereotypes of women as victims and uncritical advocates for peace, combined with a strict division of labour in the public and private spheres, prevent women from entering official peace processes."⁵⁶

Globally, patriarchal barriers and gender inequality are revealed through multiple international studies pointing out that worldwide, "women remain under and un-represented in all categories where international legal and normative commitments, including the WPS Agenda, envisage their full, equal and meaningful participation."⁵⁷ The report of the Secretary-General on WPS reconfirms the representation of women in peace and security efforts as one of the essential measurements of commitments related to WPS.⁵⁸ Despite successes, in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, the strategic goal "Women and Armed Conflicts" – equal participation of women in conflict settlements and peacebuilding – remains one of the most unimplemented areas.⁵⁹ According to the 2018 report of the Secretary-General on WPS, "women remain underrepresented and unrepresented in efforts to negotiate peaceful political resolutions to conflict, including in processes designed to create entry points or mitigate the impact of conflict."⁶⁰ According to the report, "between 1990 and 2017, women constituted only 2 per cent of mediators, 8 per cent of negotiators and 5 per cent of witnesses and signatories in all major peace processes."⁶¹

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), to which Georgia is a State party, "requires that conflict pre-

vention policies be non-discriminatory and that efforts to prevent or mitigate conflict neither voluntarily or inadvertently harm women nor create or reinforce gender inequality." This requires not only that States in which the conflict is occurring but also any third-party States involved in the peace processes "respect rather than undermine women's leadership and peacekeeping roles at the local level." All States parties to CEDAW accordingly are recommended to "reinforce and support women's formal and informal conflict prevention efforts" and "ensure women's equal participation in national, regional and international organizations, as well as in informal, local or community-based processes charged with preventive diplomacy".⁶² Indeed, even within the United Nations and other international organizations, the Expert Group underscored that "many political leadership positions remain under the control of elite men" and "patriarchal cultures, discrimination and related bias not only persist, but continue to be defended."⁶³

At the same time, addressing this barrier regarding deep-seated attitudes is not simply a matter of ensuring women's equal participation in the peace process. As the United Nations Secretary-General recognizes in relation to ongoing efforts towards fulfilling his commitment to achieving gender balance in the Organization, "achieving gender parity also requires efforts that go beyond the numbers to transform professional and institutional cultures of discrimination and gender bias in all its forms, including institutionalized policies and practices and individual conscious and unconscious bias."⁶⁴

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter the CEDAW Committee), which monitors CEDAW, has noted that

the full participation and involvement of women in formal peacemaking and post-con-

⁵⁴ World Pulse, *The Future of Security is Women: Women, Peace, and Security Report* (2019), p. 29. Available at https://www.worldpulse.com/sites/default/files/world_pulse_the_future_of_security_is_women_report_2019.pdf.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 29.

⁵⁶ GIZ, *Promoting Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and Peace Processes* (2014), p. 17. Available at http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/features/features-working-women/working-with-women/docs/2014-05-08_toolkit_promoting-womens-participation-peace-neg_en.pdf.

⁵⁷ UN Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting*, p. 3.

⁵⁸ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General. S/2018/900*, para. 9.

⁵⁹ United Nations, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 27 October 1995*. Available at https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf.

⁶⁰ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General. S/2018/900*, para. 25.

⁶¹ Ibid., para. 25.

⁶² CEDAW Committee, *General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations* (18 October 2013). CEDAW/C/GC/30, paras. 31 and 33. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/GComments/CE-DAW.C.CG.30.pdf>.

⁶³ UN Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting*, p. 4.

flict reconstruction and socioeconomic development are often not realized on account of deeply entrenched stereotypes, reflected in the traditionally male leadership of State and non-State groups, which exclude women from all aspects of decision-making, in addition to gender-based violence and other forms of discrimination against women.⁶⁵

To address these barriers, the Expert Group has underscored that significant “institutional and cultural shifts with dedicated and robust investment in gender mainstreaming and gender equality” will be required.⁶⁶

From Global to Local

The barrier of a patriarchal system and persistent gender inequality impacting the WPS agenda is evident in Georgia, with repercussions for women’s meaningful participation in peace processes. The recommendations of the CEDAW Committee call upon Georgia to continue its efforts towards the elimination of gender stereotypes.⁶⁷

Further, Georgia ranks 40 out of 129 countries on the SDG Gender Index for 2019, with a score of 72.8, placing Georgia in the category of “fair” performance.⁶⁸ On SDG 5 regarding Gender Equality, Georgia’s score is 66.7, while its score on SDG 16 is 73.2.

Gender Stereotypes and Patriarchal Systems

Gender stereotypes and the patriarchy are deeply rooted social and cultural phenomenon in Georgia impeding women’s meaningful participation in peace processes. Women’s status in Georgia is deeply affected by the local context, traditions and cultural specificities. Patriarchal traditions and behaviour patterns persist across rural and urban areas, influencing women’s participation in the private and public sec-

tor. Indeed, “male supremacy becomes grounds for unequal treatment and discrimination against women. Male-dominated households give women very little voice to express their opinion and little space to act.”⁶⁹ Georgian tradition regarding masculinity is that “men have to have more power”, as one of the interviewed informants pointed out, further noting that Georgian men honour and respect women but fail to see the patronizing elements of this “respect”: “We respect you, but we know what is the best for you and make decisions instead of you.”

In Georgia, the distribution of social roles and responsibilities is highly gendered. It is a gender stereotype that security issues are men’s task and responsibility; women’s main responsibility is taking care of the children and family, while men have the final say in the family.

The dominance of women’s traditional roles as mothers and caregivers, as well as supporters rather than leaders, puts obstacles to women’s participation in political life in Georgia (including Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia). Their access to mainstream politics, information and resources is rather restricted, partly due to socioeconomic burdens and their responsibilities for supporting their families and communities, but also due to assumptions about them being unsuited for politics – a stereotypically male domain that is “dirty” but at the same time full of privileges.

Although women are an active part of peace processes in Georgia, especially in Track 2, they are not represented at the decision-making level. It is another gender stereotype that “peacebuilding should be done by women but negotiation by men”.⁷⁰

Women in the Public Sector

Rational, gender-sensitive human resources policy in security sector institutions is the prime indicator of

⁶⁴ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General. S/2018/900*, para. 14, citing United Nations System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity (2017), pp. 4, 10, 19 and 25.

⁶⁵ CEDAW Committee, *General recommendation No. 30. CEDAW/C/GC/30*, para. 43.

⁶⁶ UN Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting*, p. 4.

⁶⁷ CEDAW Committee, *Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Georgia* (25 August 2006). CEDAW/C/GEO/CO/3. Available at <https://undocs.org/CEDAW/C/GEO/CO/3>; and CEDAW Committee, *Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Georgia* (24 July 2014). CEDAW/C/GEO/CO/4-5. Available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/779007?ln=en>.

⁶⁸ The 2019 SDG Gender Index provides a snapshot of where the world stands, right now, linked to the vision of gender equality set forth by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It measures the state of gender equality aligned to 14 of the 17 SDGs in 129 countries in five regions and 51 issues such as health, gender-based violence, climate change, decent work and others. See <https://data.em2030.org/em2030-sdg-gender-index/>.

⁶⁹ Sabine Mandl, *Women in Georgia: Peace, Security and Democracy from a Women’s Rights Perspective – Desk Research* (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, 2011), p. 15. Available at https://bim.lbg.ac.at/sites/files/bim/Women%20in%20Georgia_Peace_Security_Democracy_0.pdf.

⁷⁰ Respondent interviewed for the study.

success towards women's meaningful participation in security sector and peace processes. Such policies are part of the commitments undertaken by the Government of Georgia in the 2016-2017 and 2018-2020 NAPs on WPS and contribute directly towards creating an enabling environment for the increased participation of women in decision-making positions within the security sector. Further, on 23 April 2019 in New York, the Government of Georgia undertook 10 additional commitments at the UN High-Level Commitments event on preparing for the twentieth anniversary of UNSCR 1325.⁷¹

The vast majority of Georgian ministries participating in the implementation of the WPS agenda have no sectoral strategies or action plans on gender equality issues. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Security Service of Georgia have not adopted any gender-sensitive policy documents so far. In 2014, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) was the first Ministry to adopt such policy, through its Gender Equality Strategy⁷² by Decree No. 544 of the Minister of Defence of Georgia. The Strategy aims to promote gender equality among MoD employees and personnel, to prevent discrimination and to combat against all forms of gender violence. The Gender Equality Strategy envisages awareness-raising activities about UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions as well as promoting their implementation. In 2016, the Minister of Defence approved the Action Plan on the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy.⁷³ The Action Plan has eight priority areas, among which are promoting gender equality and women's participation in decision-making processes in the defence and security service. Furthermore, the MoD has created an internal gender equality mechanism by appointing Gender Advisers in different units of the Ministry.⁷⁴ The aim of the position is to protect and integrate gender equality and UNSCR 1325 into the defence system of Georgia.

Also former Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons

from the Occupied Territories, Refugees and Migration of Georgia was one of the first line ministries to adopt a gender equality strategy and action plan in 2016.⁷⁵ The promotion and observance of gender equality, the prevention and elimination of discrimination and sexual harassment, combating violence against women and domestic violence, protecting victims/survivors and implementing the UN Security Council resolutions on WPS are some of the key principles of the documents that are based on the fundamental guarantees of equal rights, freedoms and opportunities for women and men. The Ministry's Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan were harmonized with other national policies on gender equality and women's empowerment. The Ministry also appointed a Gender Adviser to the Minister and established its interdepartmental Gender Equality Commission. However, with the splitting and merging of this Ministry with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the continuity of this gender work has been disrupted.

The national machinery for gender equality refers to institutional arrangements and mechanisms for ensuring, on the one hand, effective gender equality policymaking and, on the other, effective gender mainstreaming. The Government of Georgia, which shares the principles of equality and assumes international obligations to promote gender equality in the country, has established a number of entities responsible for gender equality and women's empowerment:

- Gender Equality Council of the Parliament⁷⁶
- Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (in the executive branch: within the Prime Minister's Office)⁷⁷
- Gender Equality Department of the PDO⁷⁸
- Gender equality councils and gender advisers at the level of local governments

It is a positive trend in Georgia that all the line minis-

⁷¹ See <https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/WPS%20Commitments%20April%202019.pdf>.

⁷² The MoD Gender Equality Strategy is available at <https://mod.gov.ge/uploads/archive/doc/gebderulistrategiisdokument.pdf>.

⁷³ The Action Plan is available at <https://mod.gov.ge/uploads/archive/kancelaria/genderuligegma2016.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Information on the MoD Gender Advisers is available at <https://mod.gov.ge/uploads/archive/pdf/gender/Tavdacvis-saministro-genderuli-mrCevlis-samuSao-aRwera.pdf>.

⁷⁵ The Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan is available at <http://mra.gov.ge/res/docs/2017061415575993901.pdf>.

⁷⁶ Information about the Gender Equality Council is available at <http://www.parliament.ge/en/saparlamento-saqmianoba/komisiebi-da-sabchoebi-8/genderuli-tanasworobis-sabcho/sabchos-shesaxeb>.

⁷⁷ Decree No. 286 of the Government of Georgia is available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3698004?publication=0>.

⁷⁸ Information about the PDO Gender Equality Department is available at <http://ombudsman.ge/geo/genderuli-tanastsoroba>.

tries participating in the implementation of the WPS agenda have their focal points in the WPS Working Group of the Inter-Agency Commission.

Participation in the GID and IPRM

In its concluding observations on Georgia's fourth and fifth periodic report, the CEDAW Committee recommended that the State "involve women in the implementation of its action plan and policies aimed at settling conflicts and promote the active participation of women in high-level meetings in this regard."⁷⁹

The attainment of women's meaningful participation in peace negotiations, conflict resolution and related political processes still calls for further efforts.⁸⁰ More than 10 years have passed since the launch of the GID, yet women remain underrepresented around the negotiating table.⁸¹ According to the Public Defender's 2017 monitoring report, the participation of women in the GID and the IPRM needed to increase (by 30 per cent and by 33 per cent, respectively) or at least remain at the same level as the year 2015 (indicator 1.1.c).⁸² In 2017, only 4 of the 10 Georgian participants (40 per cent) sent to the GID were women. However, of the currently 12 Georgian participants, only 2 are women (16.6 per cent). There was a similar situation with the IPRM, where only two or three (33 per cent or 50 per cent) of the total six Georgian participants were women.⁸³ No women are present among the Abkhaz and South Ossetian participants.

The Government of Georgia, in its 2018-2020 NAP on WPS, has committed to increasing the number of women negotiators.⁸⁴ In light of marking the twentieth anniversary of UNSCR 1325, Georgia joined the pledges made in April 2019 by other UN Member States to accelerate the implementation of the WPS agenda at the national level. According to the pledge,

the Government has committed to ensuring an increase in women's participation in the GID of up to 50 per cent by October 2020.⁸⁵

Women's Participation in the Security and Diplomatic Sector

In 2017, women's participation in the Armed Forces of Georgia stood at 7 per cent, while in international peacekeeping missions, it was at a mere 1 per cent. Although there was an even gender balance among the staff of the civil service of the MoD, the representation of women in managerial positions accounted for 30 per cent.⁸⁶ According to the Public Defender's Annual Parliamentary Report (2018), in the MoD civil service, the gender balance is still 50 per cent. In 2018, women's representation in leadership positions decreased by 7 per cent, accounting for 23 per cent.⁸⁷ The gender distribution of employees in the MoD is as follows:⁸⁸

- Women participating in international missions: 1 per cent
- Women servants employed in the Defence Forces: 8 per cent
- Women appointed to leadership positions: 23 per cent
- Women servants employed in the civil service: 50 per cent

The underrepresentation of women in the diplomatic sector is confirmed by the statistics of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; between 2014 and 2015, there were six women among high-level diplomats, compared to 26 male diplomats.⁸⁹ In 2019, "from the ambassadors and heads of missions, 10 are women and 53 are men; among the envoys, seven are women and 17 are men; [and] among low-ranked diplomats, 116 are women and 150 are men".⁹⁰

⁷⁹ CEDAW Committee, *Concluding observations*. CEDAW/C/Geo/CO/4-5, para. 25.

⁸⁰ Georgia, *National-level Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Beijing +25* (2019). Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/64/national-reviews/georgia.pdf?la=en&vs=2350>.

⁸¹ PDO, *Parliamentary Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, 2018*. Available at <http://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2019042620571319466.pdf>.

⁸² PDO, *Implementation of the NAP on WPS in Georgia: Monitoring Results*, p. 9.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 9; and PDO, *Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the Rights of Women and Children in Conflict-Affected Regions (Review of 2014-2016)* (2017), p. 44 (noting that "usually there is no female participant in the Abkhazian and Tskhinvali region delegations").

⁸⁴ Georgia, *2018-2020 NAP on WPS*.

⁸⁵ Georgia, *National-level Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Beijing +25*. See also "Commitments to Women, Peace and Security in advance of the 20th Anniversary of 1325", 23 April 2019. Available at <https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/WPS%20Commitments%20April%202019.pdf>.

⁸⁶ PDO, *The Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia 2017: Annual Report of the Public Defender of Georgia*, p. 90. Available at <http://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2019062409381039906.pdf>.

⁸⁷ PDO, *The Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia 2018: Annual Report of the Public Defender of Georgia*, p. 111. Available at <http://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2019101108583612469.pdf>.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 111.

⁸⁹ WIC, *Strengthened Women for Peace and Security: Monitoring Report of 2012-2015 National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security* (2015), p. 16. Available at <http://www.parliament.ge/uploads/other/75/75663.pdf>.

⁹⁰ Respondent interviewed for the study.

It can be assumed that discriminatory gender stereotypes and the patriarchal system are underlying causes of women's low participation in decision-making positions in the public sector.

BARRIER

Limited Recognition of Women's Expertise and Lived Experience

Global Context

Globally, it is now widely recognized that women play a critically important role in conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding at local, national, regional and international levels. Indeed, research has demonstrated that peace agreements are more sustainable when they include women.⁹¹ Even so, it remains the case that women's contributions and expertise to peace and security continue to be overlooked, undervalued and underused. The fact that women typically are particularly active in peacebuilding at very local levels further reinforces the tendency for their contributions to peacebuilding to receive little recognition, often to the point of invisibility. The Expert Group concluded that:

women are not 'seen' in their societies and this lack of recognition as experts follows into an institutionalized devaluation of women's lives, capacities and experiences. These lived everyday experiences [of women] need recognition, not only to be incorporated into top down approaches to conflict resolution, but to drive conflict resolution from the ground up.⁹²

Further, the Expert Group points out that presumptions about the lack of "capacity" as well as a tendency to relegate women to "women's issues" pose significant barriers to women's meaningful participation in peace processes.⁹³ Despite their direct experiences of violence, insecurity and conflict resolution, conflict-affected women typically are not seen as possessing expert insight on these issues. Often compounding this global trend are the pervasive, persistent gender stereotypes that minimize women's capacities and expertise and undermine gender

equality (see Barrier: Patriarchal Systems).

To address these barriers, the Expert Group has pointed out that States, international organizations and regional peace and security institutions need to recognize the experiential knowledge of conflict-affected women as relevant for achieving peace and security outcomes. This requires including and consulting women from the outset of process design. It may also require strengthening the skills and confidence of women, in ways women themselves define. It entails supporting women's participation not only in Track 1.5 and Track 2 peace processes but also by ensuring that women are put forth as candidates for political office and governmental positions where they can directly participate in and influence formal conflict resolution efforts. Further, the Expert Group drew attention to the need to analyse the selection criteria for women's participation in Track 1 processes, where women's participation is often subject to far more stringent selection criteria while, at the same time, their other relevant hard and soft skills are discounted. Gender expertise within international peace and security institutions, including the United Nations and regional institutions, is also essential to maintain.⁹⁴

UNSCR 1325 (2000) recognized that "an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security". It also noted the need to "consolidate data on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls" and called upon "all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective".⁹⁵ Subsequent UN Security Council resolutions on WPS have continued to emphasize the importance of gender-specific data and analysis. The UN Secretary-General, in his recent reports on WPS, has articulated his expectation that all mediation teams systematically undertake a gender analysis of ongoing armed conflicts by 2020. He also has emphasized the value of conflict-affected women participating in conflict-specific briefings to the Security Council and has further encouraged such briefings in future.⁹⁶

⁹¹ See, for example, Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), "Women's Participation in Peace Processes". Available at <https://www.cfr.org/interactive/womens-participation-in-peace-processes>; and Jana Krause, Werner Krause and Pii Bränfors, "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace", *International Interactions*, vol. 44, No. 6 (2018), p. 1006. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386>.

⁹² UN Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting*, p. 6.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁹⁵ UNSCR 1325 (2000), Preamble and para. 8.

⁹⁶ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General. S/2018/900*.

From Global to Local

That women play a critically important role in peacebuilding and also have specific concerns as a result of conflict is well recognized in Georgia. This recognition is clearly evidenced in the Government of Georgia's development and adoption of three successive NAPs on WPS since 2011. Indeed, Georgia was the first country in the region to adopt an NAP on WPS and among the first in the world to do so.⁹⁷ Moreover, this recognition of conflict-affected women's role also is evidenced not only in the existence of the NAPs on WPS but also in the way in which they were developed – in close consultation with the CSOs of conflict-affected women. Furthermore, it is particularly noteworthy that the Government of Georgia has committed itself by the current NAP to tracking the percentage of women's representation in the GID and IPRM, setting a target of 40 per cent (as achieved in 2017) or higher by 2020. Going further, in the context of global discussions on the upcoming twentieth anniversary of UNSCR 1325, the Government of Georgia has committed itself to ensuring that women comprise up to 50 per cent of its representatives in the GID and IPRM by 2020.⁹⁸ In short, there is a strong policy commitment by the Government to women's meaningful participation in peace processes.

Yet, as one conflict-affected woman engaged in these processes pointed out, "Theoretically women's contribution is recognized, but not in practice." For one, the Government's strong policy commitment to WPS issues, as demonstrated in successive NAPs, is not matched by a budgetary allocation for implementation of the NAP (see Barrier: Funding Challenges). More fundamentally, while women's contribution to peacebuilding is now recognized, this recognition is very much relegated to women having a role to play in informal peace processes, not in the official peace processes. In the words of a woman peace activist, "We're constantly told that women do peacebuilding at the grass-roots level, but men do negotiations."

Even then, women's peacebuilding work is not always widely respected. A number of women noted that their engagement in peace and reconciliation

work was looked upon by society with a measure of disdain, even to the point of them being labelled by society as "enemies" of the State (see Barrier: Shrinking Political Space). According to one prominent woman peace activist interviewed for this study, "Women who are peace activists are almost ashamed to introduce themselves as working for peace." She pointed out another reason why peace activists are mostly women: "For men, there is no incentive to engage in peace work since there are no results and no recognition." While women peace activists in Georgia, including several interviewed for this study, had received international honours for their work, they noted with disappointment that their work was not similarly recognized or celebrated in their own country. They suggested that local media, in which they noted that the work of peace activists was often portrayed negatively or with suspicion, could play a more constructive role in this regard.

Additionally, there is also a tendency in the context of the conflicts in Georgia to relegate and limit women's expertise and potential contributions to peace and security to so-called "women's issues", which are presumed to be "softer" issues such as family reunification, health and education. A prevailing attitude expressed by key informants who are engaged in the formal peace process for the conflicts in Georgia is that gender mainstreaming would, at best, be concerned with the issues that are discussed in GID Working Group II, which is focused on humanitarian issues, while Working Group I and the IPRM addressing security issues were considered much less relevant for women. This view discounts the fact that security issues also affect women, and in specific ways, as indeed the introduction of the WPS agenda into the UN Security Council nearly 20 years ago underscores. The security issues on which the IPRM focuses, namely detentions, freedom of movement and the impact of so-called "borderization",⁹⁹ also impact women and in specific ways. There is a need for a gender analysis to be integrated into the analysis of all conflict-related issues, including security specifically.

Regarding capacity, conflict-affected women have

⁹⁷ As of December 2019, 83 UN Member States had national action plans on WPS. Only 28 (34 per cent) of all action plans included an allocated budget at adoption. For the latest information, see the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) at <https://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>.

⁹⁸ "Commitments to Women, Peace and Security in advance of the 20th Anniversary of 1325", 23 April 2019. Available at <https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/WPS%20Commitments%20April%202019.pdf>.

⁹⁹ So-called "borderization" is a process referring to the installation of razor and barbed wire fences along the ABL with Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.

proved and proactively contributed their expertise on peace and security issues in the development of national policies and programmes, most notably the three successive NAPs on WPS, and to various international expert forums. Alongside these efforts, a number of initiatives have been implemented, in particular by UN Women though also others, to strengthen the capacity of women engaged in formal or informal peace processes in Georgia. Such training in particular has covered women's rights issues, gender equality security, peacebuilding and confidence-building issues, gender aspects of mediation and advocacy skills. Areas where women engaged in peace and security issues in Georgia would welcome further capacity-strengthening include strategic advocacy and communications as well as leadership training. In particular, women emphasize an interest in re-establishing a regional network of women peacebuilders to promote an exchange of good practices and lessons learned that are most relevant to the context of the conflicts in Georgia.

At the same time as welcoming further capacity-strengthening support in the above-mentioned areas, conflict-affected women are quick to point out that capacity constraints are not the main impediment to their meaningful participation in the peace process; rather, it is the lack of recognition of their knowledge, skills and expertise. Related to gender stereotypes (see Barrier: Patriarchal Systems), it is often assumed, incorrectly, that only women, not men, require skills development. According to one of the women peace activists interviewed, women constantly face the attitude that "women have no skills and need constant training, while men know everything. It is a kind of stigma that successful women are not recognized". Making a similar point, another key informant supportive of ongoing capacity-strengthening for women indicated that there is a need to safeguard against reinforcing the paternalistic attitude of men that "women need training in order to speak".

Accordingly, it was emphasized that just as important as strengthening women's capacity is building gender-sensitive capacity among those engaged in

peace processes – in particular men but also women in leadership positions, whether in government or in CSOs – who are not very familiar with the WPS agenda. Particular emphasis should be given to raising awareness among security actors, typically a male-dominated field, on WPS concerns. Globally, the UN Secretary-General has emphasized that "investment in capacity-building of both women and men, particularly gate-keepers and those in positions of decision-making, in preparatory processes and inclusive process design is essential."¹⁰⁰

Barrier Shrinking Political Space and Threats against Women Human Rights Defenders

Global Context

The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders recognizes the special role of human rights defenders.¹⁰¹ Women human rights defenders are designated as a special group,¹⁰² and the UN Special Rapporteur welcomes in her report the activeness of women human rights defenders and the empowerment of civil society. At the same time, however, she expresses concern about the fact that human rights defenders often become victims of physical, psychological, economic and social violence.¹⁰³ Despite international guarantees, human rights defenders often become targets of concrete and serious abuse, threats, persecution, censorship, defamation, stigmatization, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, disappearance and murder. They are often subject to restrictions on their freedoms of movement, expression, association and assembly. The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders also describes widespread methods of abuse and violence against women human rights defenders such as information-technology-related violations: online harassment, cyberstalking, violations of privacy, censorship and hacking of email accounts, mobile phones and other electronic devices, with a view to discrediting women human rights defenders.

The Declaration calls on States to take concrete steps to prevent threats, harassment and violence against

¹⁰⁰ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General. S/2018/900*, para. 32.

¹⁰¹ The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders is available at <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Defenders/Declaration/declaration.pdf>.

¹⁰² UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders*, Margaret Sekaggya (20 December 2010). A/HRC/16/44, paras. 17-103. Available at <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/16/44>.

¹⁰³ UN General Assembly, *Situation of human rights defenders: Note by the Secretary-General* (30 July 2015). A/70/217. Available at <https://undocs.org/A/70/217>.

women human rights defenders. To this end, the Declaration suggests that States review the implementation of internal legal practices to identify the extent of protection guarantees in the regulations given to women human rights defenders.

Human rights, including the right of freedom of expression and opinion, are fundamental to all aspects of the WPS agenda, including that of women's participation in peace processes. However, working against women's meaningful participation in peace processes globally is an alarming trend of "persistent insecurity, direct targeting and threats against women rights defenders and women who challenge traditional gender and cultural norms simply by involvement in public life regardless of whether they are a women's rights advocate or not."¹⁰⁴ Additionally, there is deep concern about the shrinking political space for women-led CSOs and the inevitable negative impact of this on the WPS agenda.¹⁰⁵ The United Nations Secretary-General has urged Member States to "develop and institutionalize protection mechanisms for defenders of women's human rights, publicly condemn violence and discrimination against them and acknowledge their critical contribution to peace and security."¹⁰⁶

From Global to Local

Because of their work and activism, women human rights defenders are still at high risk of pressure and bullying from the Government and society. In recent years, the main types of intimidation against women human rights defenders in Georgia have been cyberbullying and cyberthreats. The PDO has studied several cases of violations against the women's rights defenders because of their activity. The Public Defender revealed that the main type of intimidation was cyberbullying and cyberthreats, posing a serious threat to activists living in Georgia.¹⁰⁷ It is a trend in Georgia that high-ranking officials verbally assault human rights defenders and NGOs in order to discredit them. The victims are NGOs and human rights defenders working on topics necessary for the democratic development of Georgia, such as the prevention of corruption, protection of human rights and monitoring of properly functioning State institutions

and elections.¹⁰⁸ The verbal assaults are accompanied by large-scale negative campaigns against chairpersons of NGOs and human rights activists in social media. In 2015, the Gender Equality Department of the PDO reviewed several cases in which women human rights defenders were threatened because of their work. A study of these incidents demonstrated that the representatives of law enforcement bodies faced difficulties with properly evaluating the threats and risks faced by women human rights defenders.¹⁰⁹

BARRIER

Funding Challenges and Insufficient Investment in Gender Expertise

Global Context

Whereas global military spending has increased exponentially over the nearly two decades since the introduction of the WPS agenda,¹¹⁰ funding for WPS issues remains a major challenge. Indeed, the UN Secretary-General recently has bemoaned the fact that "essential services for women and girls in conflict-affected countries are chronically underfunded, as are initiatives that promote gender equality and the participation and leadership of women in peace and security areas."¹¹¹ Although overall bilateral aid to promote gender equality in fragile country situations is on the rise, dedicated support for programmes prioritizing gender equality amount to a mere 5 per cent of total bilateral aid to such countries.¹¹² In particular, the Secretary-General has expressed concern about "signs of the shrinking space and funding for women-led civil society organizations, many of which operate on the front lines of conflict."¹¹³

It is not only the amount but also the type of funding that is problematic. Where women's organizations do receive funding, it tends to be dispersed according to short implementation windows that "expose many women's organizations to a debilitating cycle of short-term projects and secondary contracting" and "relegate women's organizations to the limited role of implementing partner rather than change agents involved in the design and development of projects

¹⁰⁴ UN Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 5. See also *Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2018/900, para. 97.

¹⁰⁶ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security* (16 October 2017). S/2017/861, para. 19. Available at <https://undocs.org/S/2017/861>.

¹⁰⁷ PDO, *The Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia 2018*, p. 121.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 142-143.

¹⁰⁹ PDO, *The Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia 2016: Annual Report of the Public Defender of Georgia*, p. 379. Available at <http://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2019062409381031243.pdf>.

¹¹⁰ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General*. S/2018/900, para. 94. Global military spending had reached a staggering USD 1.74 trillion in 2017, marking a 57 per cent increase since 2000.

¹¹¹ Ibid., para. 91.

¹¹² Ibid., para. 91.

¹¹³ Ibid., para. 97.

and programmes.”¹¹⁴ This global trend of short-term funding has a particularly deleterious impact on peacebuilding initiatives given that peacebuilding inherently is a long-term endeavour of seeking to effect transformational change. As the Expert Group has pointed out, “the timeframes for meaningful change often do not align with project cycles”.¹¹⁵

Another global trend is that when women do have opportunities to participate in peace processes, whether formal or informal, resource constraints often impede their ability to do so. Travel expenses can be prohibitive. The cost of childcare is another concern and a financial burden that, given traditional gender roles, disproportionately falls to women.

From Global to Local

Each of the above-mentioned global funding trends impacting the WPS agenda is evident in Georgia, with repercussions for women’s meaningful participation in peace processes.

While there is increasing recognition in Georgia of the critically important contribution women’s CSOs make to peacebuilding, such recognition is not matched by commensurate resources. In general, women’s organizations do not benefit from limited financial support. These resource constraints directly impact the work of women’s CSOs engaged in peacebuilding; the lack of adequate funding for their work was raised by every women’s CSO interviewed.

The Government of Georgia’s 2018-2020 NAP on WPS sets out an obligation on the part of the Government “to support women’s CSOs in the implementation of people-to-people diplomacy initiatives”.¹¹⁶ However, no budget is allocated for this commitment, nor for the NAP overall. The fact that resource mobilization efforts were indeed envisaged is suggested by the related commitment in the NAP for the Government “to enhance communication and cooperation with donor organizations and NGOs in order to increase participation of women and youth in peacebuilding and confidence-building initiatives”,¹¹⁷ yet no funding targets or other indicators for implementing this commitment are specified.

In addition, none of the Government of Georgia’s

three successive NAPs on WPS have included a budget. Women’s CSOs have been pointing out for years that the lack of budgeting has constituted one of the main challenges to the NAP’s effective implementation. This means a lack of dedicated funds not only for CSOs but also for Government agencies and local authorities to implement resource-dependent activities envisaged by the NAP. The inclusion of budgetary provisions to enable implementation of the NAP, including at the local level, was a key recommendation advocated by women in advance of the development of the 2018-2020 NAP on WPS.¹¹⁸ However, the current NAP also lacks a budgetary allocation from the Government. UN Women provided trainings on costing and budgeting the NAP, which has not yet translated into practice. As a result, implementation of the NAP is overwhelmingly dependent upon financial support from international organizations, in particular UN Women, and NGOs.

The small-scale, short-term and sporadic nature of funding for peacebuilding activities has also been identified in Georgia. Even when funds are available for CSOs to engage in peacebuilding, such interventions are typically small-scale and short-term, focused on a specific set of activities to be implemented over a short time period. Moreover, funding opportunities tend to be sporadic, subject to the whims of donor interest, which has declined dramatically. Concerns about the unpredictable and short-term nature of peacebuilding funding apply even to the more established funding mechanisms. For example, CSOs pointed out that the joint EU-UNDP Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism (COBERM), which they noted was the only remaining significant funding source for peacebuilding activities for the conflicts in Georgia, experiences extended breaks in its funding cycles. Specifically, while the third phase of COBERM funding ended in 2018, the upcoming fourth phase, for which bids were due in September 2019, only began during the last quarter of 2019.¹¹⁹

The short-term, sporadic and unpredictable nature of funding prevents long-term programming and its greater potential for sustainable impact. This is particularly disruptive and deleterious to peacebuilding work, and especially that of informal peace processes and confidence-building, which inherently require

¹¹⁴ UN Women, Report of the Expert Group Meeting, pp. 5-6.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹⁶ Georgia, 2018-2020 NAP on WPS, Activity 1.3.2.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., Activity 1.3.1.

¹¹⁸ WIC, *Independent Monitoring of the 2016-2017 NAP on WPS*, p. 73.

¹¹⁹ EU and UNDP, “COBERM IV – Call for project ideas (First round)”, July 2019. Available at https://www.ge.undp.org/content/dam/georgia/docs/COBERM/201907_COBERM_IV_Call_Round_I_ENG.pdf.

sustained and predictable engagement. When activities are disrupted, connections between people, which had been so carefully built up over time, become severed – sometimes permanently, as people move on with different activities or interests in the intervening phase or even disengage as they become cynical given the inconsistency of the process. Then, when new funding becomes available, the process suddenly has to start all over again.

Indeterminate consideration of the gender dimension in funding decisions is another issue. For the funding opportunities that do exist for peacebuilding work, it is unclear to what extent gender equality and women's empowerment count among the criteria for funding. The Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality maintains a database of successfully funded projects (including those financed by multilateral and bilateral donors) that are relevant to peacebuilding. However, it does not specifically monitor or report on those that include advancing gender equality and women's empowerment among the project objectives. Among the main funding sources for peacebuilding work currently are COBERM and the EUMM Confidence Building Facility, each of which are briefly considered below.

COBERM, funded by the EU and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was established in 2010 to serve as an apolitical, impartial and flexible programme to support “immediate and concrete initiatives which seek to have an impact on confidence building within and across conflict divided communities” with the objective to “strengthen an enabling environment involving conflict-affected communities by addressing local needs and supporting initiatives aiming to build social cohesion and confidence that foster peace and stability.”¹²⁰ Since its establishment, COBERM reports having supported nearly 200 initiatives that have addressed various themes relevant to confidence-building. Women's empowerment explicitly features among these themes. Arguably, gender dimensions would also be relevant to all of the other themes addressed by COBERM, namely youth education; people diplomacy, dialogue and policy research; improved livelihoods and increased resilience of vul-

nerable communities; cultural cooperation; ethnic minorities; health care and humanitarian assistance; community mobilization; and capacity-building of CSOs. However, the extent to which gender analysis and gender-responsive programming was integrated into these other themes is not clear.

For the current, fourth round of COBERM funding, it therefore is noteworthy that gender, including WPS concerns, explicitly are referenced within one of the five priority activity areas, namely

initiatives that demonstrate long-term cooperation prospects, strengthen relations and communication between experts, professionals, organizations and local communities affected by conflict, and propose scaled-up partnerships on practical issues of mutual concern with an observable impact on confidence-building mainly focusing on, but not limited to health, environment, education, culture, technology-enabled services, gender issues and initiatives mainstreaming Women, Peace and Security perspectives in alignment with the UNSCR 1325.¹²¹

Moreover, among the five stated criteria for project selection is

interaction among conflict-affected groups and communities, with a special focus on women and youth, and/or gender equality and equal opportunities, demonstrating alignment with the UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 2250 and ensures that it addresses the need to engage, empower, protect and support women, girls and youth in the pursuit of sustainable peace.¹²²

The EUMM Confidence Building Facility (CBF), totalling EUR 180,000 per annum, was established in 2015. It provides small grants for projects that span the ABLs, including small-scale events intended to generate dialogue and understanding between conflict-affected communities. WPS is a priority area for funding for EUMM's Confidence Building Facility (CBF). Gender mainstreaming and WPS focus has been part of the core criteria for CBF proposal as-

¹²⁰ UNDP Georgia, “Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism (COBERM)”. Available at <https://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/projects/coberm.html>.

¹²¹ UNDP Georgia, “COBERM 4 – Call for Project Ideas, Round 1”, 25 July 2019. Available at <https://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/presscenter/announcements/coberm-4-call-for-project-ideas.html>.

¹²² Ibid.

sessments since October 2019 as a type of a gender marker, which can be considered a positive practice.

Financial constraints to participating in peace processes are a main concern. Travel costs constitute a major impediment to women's meaningful participation in peace processes in Georgia. The venue of the formal peace process in Geneva, Switzerland entails significant costs, both for airline travel and for accommodation and meals; indeed, Geneva consistently is ranked one of the most expensive cities in the world.¹²³ For women's CSOs, these costs are prohibitive, robbing them of the opportunity to engage in lobbying efforts. Moreover, the regionalized nature of the conflict and internal restrictions on civilian travel to and from Sukhumi and Tskhinvali to Tbilisi means that informal peace processes almost always, with few exceptions, take place outside of Georgia as well, most often in Armenia or Turkey. The ability of CSOs and conflict-affected persons to be able to travel to these locations to participate in such initiatives is contingent on financial support.

Even closer to home, most conflict-affected women and grass-roots women leaders do not have the financial means to pay for the transportation costs associated with participating in the information and consultation sessions on the peace process, such as those regularly organized by the Georgian delegation to the GID as of 2014 with the support of UN Women and, more recently, the consultations convened by the GID Co-Chairs. This is particularly a challenge for women living outside of Tbilisi, where the Government's GID information sessions take place, and for women who live outside of the main cities (Gali, Sukhumi, Tskhinvali and Zugdidi), where the GID Co-Chairs' consultations occur. In several conflict-affected regions, there is limited public transportation, if at all. As a result, women who want to participate in these consultations typically would need to travel by taxi. For instance, women from outlying villages would need to take a taxi to attend the GID consultations with Co-Chairs in Gali due to the limited public transportation options (i.e. a bus that runs only a few times each week). Such roundtrip travel by taxi is reported to cost RUB 2,000 (approximately USD 30).¹²⁴ For many conflict-affected women, whose economic security already is constrained, this is a cost they sim-

ply cannot afford.

The result is that these consultations with conflict-affected women – a good outreach initiative that should continue – tend to include only a small segment of women who live in close geographic proximity to the meeting venue. Consequently, conflict-affected women who live further afield – and typically in areas more directly impacted by the conflict – do not have the opportunity to voice their questions, concerns and views. This, in turn, narrows the insights and takeaways emerging from these consultations. Locating some of these consultations closer to conflict-affected areas would greatly facilitate the participation of women most directly impacted by the conflict. However, for practical reasons of time and the number of locations to be covered, this option may not often be feasible, on the part of the convenors, on a systematic basis. At a minimum, funding needs to be made available to cover the transportation costs to enable more women and a broader cross section of conflict-affected women to attend these consultations in the current locations where they are held.

In addition, and exacerbating these funding challenges, investments in peacebuilding in Georgia are widely regarded as having significantly decreased in recent years as donor attention increasingly has turned to newer crises in other parts of the world, particularly in the Middle East. The protracted nature of the conflicts in Georgia, persisting now for almost three decades, combined with the perceived limited progress in the prolonged peace processes present particular challenges for resource mobilization, including for the WPS agenda. While statistics on funding levels are not readily available, concern about a sharp decline in funding for peacebuilding initiatives, especially in recent years, has been a common refrain.

The decline in funding available for peacebuilding activities appears to impact grass-roots efforts most acutely. It was noted that donors appear to prefer investing limited funds in a select few well-established organizations. However, even these organizations noted that they very much struggle to secure funds for peacebuilding activities – and even then, often succeed at securing only small grants for short, one-off projects. Moreover, some members of some of

¹²³ The Economist, "The World's Most Expensive Cities", 19 March 2019. Available at <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2019/03/19/the-worlds-most-expensive-cities>.

¹²⁴ Interview with CSO based in Abkhazia.

these well-established women's CSOs pointed out that the limited funding available also heightens competition even among them and undermines their otherwise strong interests in cooperation and coordination on issues of mutual concern and their full potential for joint advocacy efforts.

To address the funding challenges to women's meaningful participation in peace processes in Georgia, a number of recommendations emerge. Specifically, advocacy is necessary to sustain attention and financial support from donors and international as well as regional organizations for peacebuilding efforts in Georgia, notwithstanding the protracted nature of the conflicts. Indeed, the protracted nature of the conflicts and the perceived lack of major breakthroughs in the long-standing official peace process arguably make it all the more important to fund alternative, informal peacebuilding activities, as these hold the potential to increase confidence-building and to create new momentum.

The Government of Georgia should allocate funding to enable implementation of the NAP on WPS, including to support its implementation at the local level. All future NAPs on WPS should include a budget and budgetary allocation. To date, the international community has been the primary source of funds for implementation of the NAP. In future, the Government of Georgia must match its rhetorical commitment to the WPS agenda with dedicated financial resources. It is equally necessary to systematically integrate gender into financing for peacebuilding activities and to report on the extent to which funded projects advance gender equality and women's empowerment. The extent to which existing projects funded for peacebuilding activities regarding the conflicts in Georgia incorporate a gender analysis and work to address the specific concerns of women and girls is unclear. While in some cases gender and women's concerns are mentioned in the call for proposals and sometimes even as a specific criterion, the methodology according to which projects will be assessed against this criterion are not clear.

To address this need, donors are encouraged to in-

tegrate gender equality measures as part of their criteria in their evaluation of project proposals. A tool that may assist such efforts is the "Gender Marker", developed by UN and INGO humanitarian agencies and recently updated as the "Gender with Age Marker" (GAM). The GAM codes programmes and projects on a scale from 0 to 4 based on responses to questions covering about 12 key gender equality measures. It is now mandatory that all projects seeking funding from the United Nations humanitarian country appeals be assessed on this basis, and the United Nations encourages Member States to commit to funding projects that utilize this tool and subsequently update their marker "scoring" based on monitoring data.¹²⁵ The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department (ECHO), for its part, has developed a specific toolkit on the GAM to promote and facilitate its use by partners seeking ECHO funding.¹²⁶ Of course, any effort by donors to more effectively integrate gender considerations into their funding decisions should be complemented by training CSOs on the GAM and how to undertake a gender analysis and integrate its findings into their programming and monitoring.

Further, reporting on the extent to which peacebuilding financing relevant to the conflicts in Georgia actually funds projects that address women's specific needs or support gender equality and women's empowerment equally will be important. In this regard, it is important to recall that in 2010, one of the benchmarks of the Seven-Point Action Plan on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding is that all UN-managed funding in support of peacebuilding allocate a minimum of 15 per cent of available funds to projects whose principal objective is to address women's specific needs, advance gender equality or empower women.¹²⁷ Eight years on, the Secretary-General reported that tracking the progress in reaching this goal remains "highly uneven" across UN entities. The Secretary-General accordingly called upon relevant UN entities "to establish dedicated systems to measure progress and respond to stagnated or downward trends."¹²⁸

Establishing mechanisms such as a rapid-response

¹²⁵ See IASC Gender with Age Marker at <https://iascgenderwithagemarker.com/en/home/>.

¹²⁶ ECHO, "European Commission launches Gender-Age Marker Toolkit", 30 January 2014. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/echo/news/european-commission-launches-gender-age-marker-toolkit_en.

¹²⁷ UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General: Women's participation in peacebuilding* (7 September 2010). A/65/354-S/2010/466, para. 36. Available at <https://undocs.org/A/65/354>. See also https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/seven_point_action_plan.pdf.

¹²⁸ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General*. S/2018/900, para. 95.

for funding women's participation in peace processes and related consultations are also necessary. Funding urgently needs to be made available to cover the transportation costs to enable more women and a broader cross section of conflict-affected women to travel to in-country consultations related to the formal peace process, e.g. those convened by the Government of Georgia's delegation to the GID and those convened by the GID Co-Chairs themselves. The costs in question would be minimal to a donor or international organization but would significantly improve conflict-affected women's accessibility to these consultations. This same funding mechanism also could be utilized to support conflict-affected women to travel to Geneva during the GID rounds, in order to be able to inform, lobby and seek to influence participating delegations about women's specific concerns. Indeed, in his most recent report on WPS, the UN Secretary-General explicitly encouraged the establishment of "rapid-response funding mechanisms, with capacities to approve requests on short notice, thereby empowering women to seize critical opportunities in peace processes and related events."¹²⁹ Such support is critically needed for women in Georgia to meaningfully participate in the peace processes, both formal and informal.

BARRIER

Knowledge Gaps

Global Context

Globally, WPS experts have observed that notwithstanding the extensive body of research and analysis on WPS issues undertaken since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, "strategic gaps in knowledge and data continue to undermine evidence-informed decision-making and practice."¹³⁰

More specifically, a number of overlooked issues and areas for further research and analysis have been identified, including gender-responsive ceasefires; the potential of women-led informal peacebuilding initiatives to unlock stalled formal peace processes; women's participation in monitoring and verification mechanisms; perceptions of masculinity and the impact on peace processes; women's participation

in transitional justice processes; and indicators of women's meaningful participation.¹³¹ Linked to the above-mentioned barrier regarding the limited recognition of women's expertise and lived experience, it also was pointed out that around the world, it is often the case that "women affected by conflict continue to be excluded from informing and leading on research on *their own context and efforts*."¹³² Further, there existed a "tangible lack of cross-fertilization" between broader peace and security actors and the WPS policy community, which carried significant repercussions: "Whether this results in failure to incorporate gender into peace and security efforts or results in siloed approaches, the result is the same, policy and programming options suffer, and actors run the risk of engaging in vertical, duplicative, or ill-informed responses."¹³³

From Global to Local

First, an evident knowledge gap directly impacting this study is the lack of data and analysis regarding the number of women who participate in the formal peace process mechanisms in Georgia, that is, in the GID and IPRM. In research interviews, informants reported varying figures and very often also made assumptions – which proved to be incorrect – that among GID participants, only the Government of Georgia included women in its delegation. A solid evidence-base is needed on this point, with this information systematically monitored and reported. Tracking such information, at least on the gender composition of the Government of Georgia's participants in GID and IPRM meetings, is an obligation of the Government in line with the NAP on WPS;¹³⁴ and, by extension, also should be included in the reports on NAP implementation that are prepared by the PDO. Such information is also needed about other participants in the GID and IPRM meetings. The Co-Chairs' offices are best placed to monitor and report such information. A good example is the data collection and analysis that has been conducted by the UN team for a number of GID rounds; particularly noteworthy is that this data collection and reporting included the sex-disaggregated information of not only the GID participants but also the UN team. Building upon these examples, it is encouraged that any such reporting include both quantitative and qualitative data, indicating not only the number of women participating in the GID and IPRM but also their functional role.

¹²⁹ Ibid., para. 33.

¹³⁰ UN Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting*, p. 7.

¹³¹ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

¹³² Ibid., p. 7.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 7.

¹³⁴ Georgia, *2018-2020 NAP on WPS*, Indicator 1.2.a (requires data collection on this point).

Information and analysis about this concern of conflict-affected women is more readily available. Indeed, there exists a wealth of excellent, in-depth research and analysis on women's peace and security concerns. This includes a plethora of research and analysis on the specific needs and concerns of conflict-affected women.¹³⁵ Significantly, Georgia presents a noteworthy exception to the above-mentioned global trend of limited research led or informed by conflict-affected women regarding their own context and efforts. Conflict-affected women's organizations also organize themselves to collectively produce "shadow" reports that provide an independent analysis of the implementation of the NAPs on WPS,¹³⁶ complementing the official reports separately produced by the Inter-Agency Commission and by the PDO, to which conflict-affected women also have the opportunity to contribute. Moreover, conflict-affected women have recently produced a useful, thorough analysis that tracks the various peacebuilding initiatives, past and present, in which women have been actively engaged and identifies current gaps to be addressed to enable improved implementation of the WPS agenda.¹³⁷ It should be noted that such research generally is contingent upon project-based financial support from donors¹³⁸ versus being an ongoing activity supported through core funding.

In Georgia, therefore, the issue is not so much one of a lack of research and analysis led or informed by conflict-affected women but of challenges in ensuring this research informs decision-making and practice. Certainly, there are some evident successes, for instance, that the findings and recommendations of conflict-affected women regarding implementation of the Government of Georgia's NAP on WPS have directly fed into the development of its subsequent iterations. Facilitating the translation of this research and analysis into policy and practice is the fact that, as mentioned above, conflict-affected women's CSOs working on WPS issues prepare a joint report on the implementation of the NAP on WPS. Key to ensuring that the findings and recommendations of this report then reach the ears of decision-makers is

the fact that three NGO representatives – namely the Women's Information Center, the IDP Women's Association "Consent" and a third, local women's NGO (chosen on a rotating basis) from areas adjacent to Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia – participate in the Coordination Group established by the Government of Georgia to oversee implementation of the NAP. In addition to providing an opportunity for advocating the findings and recommendations of their joint report, the strong representation of women-led CSOs in the Coordination Group is considered to be strategically important and impactful as it allows them "to immediately bring to the attention of relevant state actors the problems occurring [sic] in the communities, especially in the zones adjacent to the separated regions", including problems of physical insecurity, the lack of water supply, problems with agricultural lands and land registration in these areas, and the health concerns of women.¹³⁹

Another good practice, which is key to avoiding knowledge gaps, is the series of consultation meetings being organized, both by the Government of Georgia and more recently by the Co-Chairs to the GID, between participants in the formal peace process and conflict-affected women. Building on a commitment under the previous NAP on WPS,¹⁴⁰ the Government of Georgia committed itself in the current NAP to strengthening regular dialogue between the Government's representatives (both in the GID and the IPRM) and civil society, including NGOs, women's rights activities and IDP and conflict-affected women – an initiative supported by UN Women since 2014. These meetings are to take place twice a year with the Government's participants to the GID and three times a year for the Government's participants in the IPRM. The stated aim of these information sessions is to ensure that "IDP and conflict-affected women's needs, priorities and recommendations are considered and addressed in the official negotiation processes" and that participants respond "effectively to women's priorities and needs". To measure progress in the implementation of this commitment, the NAP specifies as an indicator the percentage of women's

¹³⁵ See, for example, *Through the Eyes of Women* (IDP Women's Association "Consent", 2019); *Strengthened Women for Peace and Security* (WIC, 2015); *Strengthening of Women's Voices in the Process of Conflict Transformation* (Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi", 2016); and *Needs Assessment of the Population Residing Along the Administrative Boundary Lines in Georgia* (UN Women, forthcoming).

¹³⁶ WIC, *Independent Monitoring of the 2016-2017 NAP on WPS*, compiling comments from a total of eight such CSOs the most active in Georgia on WPS issues.

¹³⁷ Kuprava-Sharvashidze and Kharashvili, *Peacebuilding Efforts in Georgia – Women on the P2P Path*.

¹³⁸ In particular, from UN Women, bilateral donors include Austria, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States and INGOs including CARE, the Danish Refugee Council, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, Hilfswerk and the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation.

¹³⁹ Kuprava-Sharvashidze and Kharashvili, *Peacebuilding Efforts in Georgia – Women on the P2P Path*, p. 27.

¹⁴⁰ Georgia, *2016-2017 National Action Plan of Georgia for Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security* (Tbilisi, 2016), Goal 2. Available at <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/12/2016-2017-national-action-plan-of-georgia>.

priorities and recommendations made by women's NGOs that are "taken into consideration in official peace negotiation processes, based on the work format and specificities".¹⁴¹ The specified implementation target is 70 per cent or higher by 2020, with the minutes of the meetings of the GID and IPRM providing the data source for this analysis.

This commitment in the current NAP on WPS signals a noteworthy readiness on the part of the Government of Georgia to not only consult with conflict-affected women but also ensure that their concerns and recommendations inform the formal peace process. At the same time, experience with the previous NAP suggests some challenges with monitoring the implementation of this commitment. Specifically, the Government reported that during the implementation of the 2016-2017 NAP, 11 of the 14 priorities and recommendations (78 per cent) voiced by women within the framework of this dialogue mechanism were "taken into consideration" by the Government of Georgia's participants in the GID meetings, meaning that these issues were raised by the Georgian delegation during GID meetings.¹⁴² As reporting on this commitment relies entirely on Government sources, there is no means of verification. A number of women-led CSOs to whom this statistic was cited during our interviews indicated they were hearing it for the first time and were somewhat surprised by it, with many voicing a concern that they do not receive feedback as to whether or not their recommendations are raised and with what result.¹⁴³

Indeed, the lack of information on any actions taken regarding previously raised concerns was a common complaint among the women interviewed for this study who had participated in these consultations with participants, whether from the Government of Georgia or the Co-Chairs, in the formal peace process mechanisms. In general, these conflict-affected women had very much welcomed these meetings as a good initiative. They pointed out that while these meetings were particularly useful at the outset, in recent years, they have devolved largely into sessions "where the Government tells us information we already know that is in the public news". Moreover, the format is now a series of high-level statements from various Government and international officials, with

little time for discussion. Further, conflict-affected women who participate in these sessions expressed frustration about not knowing whether or not their recommendations are raised, or their needs addressed – and with what result. For this reason, the same points need to be repeated by women at each meeting, so that the content becomes quite repetitive and unproductive.

With regard to the consultations with the GID Co-Chairs, conflict-affected women suggested the need for ensuring more extensive and diverse participation with conflict-affected women. In addition, women were eager for more two-way dialogue with the mediators, through which the mediators would give them some information regarding follow-ups to the points women had raised and any tangible results. The strong appeal from conflict-affected women to receive more information about whether and how women's concerns are being discussed in formal peace processes can be considered another knowledge gap. Sharing such information with women in turn could point them to any gaps in their information or analysis and possible solutions for resolving stumbling blocks on these issues, which would facilitate efforts to raise and discuss these issues in the formal mechanisms, thereby supporting such efforts. Absent this, there is a strong sense among women that the platforms for dialogue with them increasingly are becoming repetitive and of diminishing value.

At the same time, women's advocacy efforts in these forums could be enhanced through more preparation, for instance, by working in advance to develop a joint statement of concerns and recommendations, akin to the joint report that women's organizations prepare to review the implementation of the NAPs on WPS. This recommendation would require, women pointed out, that they have adequate advance notice of these meetings, which they noted is not often the case. Further, while exploring options to support women's CSOs to undertake more joint analysis and to strengthen their agency and strategic advocacy, it would be important to formalize this process with the inclusion of local women, not only the well-established CSOs in the capital. Maintaining the connection to grass-roots efforts and consultations with women in the regions is key.

¹⁴¹ Georgia, *2018-2020 NAP on WPS*, Indicator 2.2 and Activity 2.2.2.

¹⁴² Office of the State Minister of Georgia on Reconciliation and Civic Equality Issues, Department of Policy Analysis, Planning and International Relations, *Decree No. 1588*, 30 June 2017, cited in WIC report, p. 23.

¹⁴³ Research interviews with various women-led CSOs, conducted for this study.

Moreover, while knowledge of WPS concerns, including the substantive content of research and analysis conducted by women's organizations, appears to be well known by governmental actors who serve as gender advisers and gender focal points, this information and analysis is not necessarily considered priority reading for other actors with a role to play in peace and security issues. There is a need for the WPS policy community to diversify and expand the dissemination of its research and focus of its advocacy efforts, in particular to include more security actors, both governmental and non-governmental.

Further, in addition to not fully permeating formal peace and security mechanisms, the information and analysis produced by women's CSOs working on WPS issues also appears to have gained little traction among researchers working on conflict resolution and on peace and security issues more generally. With a few notable exceptions, they largely appear to be working in silos. Research organizations working on peace and conflict issues more broadly largely reported focusing on "higher level" political, territorial and security concerns. They appear to regard WPS issues as separate, rather than integral, to those issues. Some such peace and security experts, notably including some women, were not even familiar with UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda. And yet, if the analysis of peace and security issues these organizations produce and the peacebuilding dialogues they often sponsor are gender-blind, such conclusions are inevitably incomplete in their analysis and impact.

While the two epistemic communities are aware of one another's work and sometimes participate in the same events, there appears to be little cross-fertilization of efforts. Sometimes, they even risk working at cross purposes. Women's organizations pointed out with concern that the consultative meetings – convened by the Government of Georgia as part of its commitments under the NAP on WPS – and particularly the meetings held in Tbilisi, have broadened beyond their original focus of specifically consulting with conflict-affected women. Instead, the consultations now include a much broader group of civil society engaged in peace and security in general, including many experts who are not directly affected by the conflict and have no gender perspective in their work. A growing trend was noted by many respon-

dents, including CSOs comprising and/or representing conflict-affected women, whereby CSOs working on peace and security issues more broadly now tend to dominate at such meetings. Consequently, these meetings now tend to focus more on deeply political and "big picture" issues, such as whether to define the conflict as internal or international (Georgia-Russia) and issues regarding territorial status, rather than the specific concerns and views of conflict-affected women. More than one practitioner actively engaged in WPS issues bemoaned that "the meetings have been taken hostage" by these other NGOs that do not represent the views of conflict-affected women and often have little connection with them.

Finally, there is a need for more regional exchanges among women working on WPS issues. While a number of informants, both governmental and non-governmental, had participated in global forums on WPS issues (including in the Expert Group) and greatly appreciated these opportunities, they also suggested it would be valuable to have more exchanges with, and learning from, women working on WPS issues in the region. The nature of the conflicts in the region, while each unique, had certain similarities, therefore enabling more analogous examples facilitating the direct relevance and applicability of experience sharing and knowledge transfer.

BARRIER

The Nature of Contemporary Conflict

Global Context

Globally, the proliferation of actors, complexity of contemporary conflicts and the fact that "many conflicts remain in cycles of humanitarian access and ceasefire negotiations" create "hurdles for gender inclusion and women's meaningful participation, particularly as ceasefires are often still regarded as the preserve of security actors[,] understood to be men."¹⁴⁴ Yet, as the UN Secretary-General has emphasized, the "meaningful participation of women includes the participation of women and women's civil society organizations in shaping security priorities and efforts and addressing root causes".¹⁴⁵

Further, as is well documented, a cessation of active hostilities or even an actual end to armed con-

¹⁴⁴ UN Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁵ UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General. S/2018/900, para. 77.

flict does not necessarily mean an end to violence, including violence against women.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, the CEDAW Committee has underscored that “for most women in post-conflict environments, the violence does not stop with the official ceasefire or the signing of the peace agreement and often increases in the post-conflict setting” and that “while the forms and sites of violence [may] change, ... all forms of gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence escalate in the post-conflict setting.”¹⁴⁷ As CEDAW Committee has pointed out, “gender-blind conflict prevention measures cannot adequately predict and prevent conflict. It is only by including female stakeholders and using a gendered analysis of conflict that States parties can design appropriate responses.” CEDAW Committee accordingly has recommended that States parties “establish early warning systems and adopt gender-specific security measures to prevent the escalation of gender-based violence and other violations of women’s rights”.¹⁴⁸

From Global to Local

A particular characteristic of the conflicts in Georgia – and of other conflicts in the region¹⁴⁹ – is their protracted nature, with both conflicts stemming back to the early 1990s. With the exception of the five-day war in August 2008, active hostilities are not a regular occurrence. Rather, these are so-called protracted conflicts, where there generally is an absence of active armed hostilities but also an absence of peace.

Additionally, Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia have been outside effective control of the Government of Georgia since the height of hostilities in the early 1990s. Since then, Georgian civilians have been unable to enter Abkhazia, apart from a number of those displaced in the early 1990s from the Gali region who were able to return according to an agreement negotiated in 1994.¹⁵⁰ Movement between the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and rest of Georgia was possible for many years, with trade particularly thriving along this route at the Ergneti

market. However, since the Russo-Georgian War in August 2008, access to the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia has not been possible, not only for Georgian citizens but also for most of the international community except the International Committee of the Red Cross and, in recent years, the GID Co-Chairs. These movement restrictions directly impact peace-building, including initiatives by women, as civilians face tremendous difficulties even with meeting one another; it is for this reason that informal peacebuilding efforts typically need to take place in third countries, such as Armenia or Turkey.

Further, although active hostilities have ceased, insecurity continues, which impacts women and girls in specific ways. Detentions and restrictions on the freedom of movement are a major concern for all civilians, with specific implications for women and girls, including for their security, human rights and access to education, health care and livelihoods. Following the 2008 war and securitization of the ABL, civilians’ movement along this axis became severely constrained. This has especially been the case since early 2013 as a result of the so-called “borderization” process, by which barbed wire fences were installed all along the ABL, and often extending beyond it, by Russian border guards patrolling on the other side of the ABLs.¹⁵¹ At the same time, the number of official checkpoints has decreased. Movement from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia to the rest of Georgia is tightly regulated, with access now legally permissible only at designated checkpoints patrolled by border guards and during specific hours. Moreover, individuals seeking to cross the checkpoint must be in possession of the correct identity documents and authorization from the de facto authorities in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, which can be difficult to obtain.¹⁵² Civilians attempting to cross the border without the proper documents or via unofficial checkpoints risk abuse, especially detention.

¹⁴⁶ Erin Mooney, “Protecting and reintegrating displaced women and children postconflict”, in *Security, Reconstruction, and Reconciliation: When the Wars End*, Muna Ndulo, ed. (London, University College London Press, 2007). See also the documents listed in endnote 11 (p. 65) of the *Report of the Expert Group Meeting*.

¹⁴⁷ CEDAW Committee, *General recommendation No. 30*. CEDAW/C/GC/30, para. 35.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, paras. 30 and 33(c).

¹⁴⁹ These include the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan concerning Nagorno-Karabakh and the conflict concerning the Transdniestria region of Moldova.

¹⁵⁰ “Quadripartite agreement on voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons signed on 4 April 1994”. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/georgia/quadrupartite-agreement-voluntary-return-refugees-and-displaced-persons-signed-4>. The agreement was signed by the Abkhaz and Georgian sides, the Russian Federation and UNHCR.

¹⁵¹ A related issue, not covered by this study, is the phenomenon by which the fences demarcating the so-called “border” are often repositioned to assert extended territorial control into Georgia proper. For more on this process, see A/71/935-S/2017/509, paras. 16 and 49. Available at <https://undocs.org/S/2017/509>.

¹⁵² UN General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General. A/73/880, paras. 16-19.

Detentions as a result of alleged “illegal” border crossings are a regular occurrence and major security concern. In 2018, for example, 96 persons travelling in the direction of Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia were arrested and detained, as were 28 persons travelling in the direction of Abkhazia.¹⁵³ According to the State Security Service of Georgia, from January to August 2019, there had been 60 illegal detentions, of which 10 concerned women: 9 women in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and 1 in Abkhazia.¹⁵⁴ One of the most infamous examples concerns the detention on 29 September 2018 of a woman named Maia Otinashvili, aged 37, who was arrested crossing the ABL in the village of Khurvaleti, located on the ABL in Gori Municipality. After five days of imprisonment, the so-called District Court of Akhlagori convicted Ms. Otinashvili for “illegally crossing the border” and sentenced her to one year of punishment with a six-month probationary period.¹⁵⁵

The detention of women raises specific concerns. For one, the circumstances under which women are detained and exposed to this risk needs to be better understood. Moreover, the conditions under which women are detained need to be considered, such as whether they are detained in the same room as men and whether children are detained in the same room as adults. Moreover, while the successful release of detainees is to occur before 7 p.m., informants noted cases where women detainees were released later at night in an isolated area, thereby exposing them to further security risks.

Restrictions on the freedom of movement have significant negative repercussions in many aspects of civilians’ lives. The impact on economic livelihoods was noted above in terms of the trade route. Also relevant are the complications posed regarding access to agricultural property and the loss of livestock who wander across the ABL. Education is another major concern. For youth living in Gali, who are given special permission to cross into rest of Georgia regularly in order to continue with their studies in the Georgian language at the university, their access to education has often been disrupted due to restrictions on crossing.¹⁵⁶ Access to health care can also be frustrating.

¹⁵³ UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, *Cooperation with Georgia: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* (20 August 2019). A/HRC/42/34, para. 64. Available at <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/42/34>. See also Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, *Activity Report 2018* (2019), p. 8. Available at https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/prev/Report_201_771641a4.pdf.

A particularly painful issue is that the restrictions on freedom of movement impede individuals from attending relatives’ funerals. While special permission to cross is authorized in such cases, the procedure is not uniform, and civilians “face many difficulties, especially due to the great expenses involved in taking relatives into the Gali territory. Until 2015, this procedure was relatively simple and flexible. Nowadays, it costs GEL 100 per person, to be paid by the family, which often means that relatives cannot be invited to funerals.”¹⁵⁷ In one recounted case, the only option possible was for the body of the deceased to be brought to the bank of the river, so that relatives on the other side of the ABL could gather on the riverbank and pay their respects to the deceased from across the river.

Restrictions on freedom of movement also directly impact peacebuilding opportunities. They impede contact and confidence-building between conflict-affected populations and grass-roots people-to-people diplomacy. Most Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian civilians cannot even meet with one another unless they travel to another country, which is an expense few can afford. This disrupts, even to the point of rupture, the ties between people and communities. Whereas older people who knew one another prior to the conflict often work hard to maintain these contacts, or at least have memories of them, several informants noted with particular concern the impact this can have on young people who are growing up not knowing one another, leading to hardened attitudes and diminished prospects for peace.

“Analysis undertaken in conflict-affected settings that lacks a gender lens is partial and can result in flawed analysis and planning, which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on the whole of society.”

UN Secretary-General, S/2018/900, para. 18

Issues of the ABL, checkpoint crossing restrictions and detentions dominate the security-focused discussion in the IPRM and in Working Group I of the GID. It is essential that discussion of these issues is

¹⁵⁴ Respondent interviewed for the study.

¹⁵⁵ Information available at <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2018/2096>.

¹⁵⁶ PDO, *The Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia 2018*, pp. 261-263.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

not “gender-blind” but considers and addresses the gender-specific dimensions of each of these issues. In this sense, as noted by more than one key informant engaged in the GID and IPRM, the view that the “agenda of the GID and IPRM is set and does not allow for discussion of ‘women’s issues’” loses sight of the fact that these issues do impact women and in specific ways. As such, it is not a matter of discussing “women’s concerns/needs” separately but of integrating gender into the analysis of these security issues.

The impact of the restrictions on ABL crossing on the freedom of movement and livelihoods of the conflict-affected population has been noted with concern by the co-moderators of GID Working Group II on humanitarian issues. As such, the division between “humanitarian” and “security” issues is not so clear-cut, and it cannot be assumed that the integrated concerns of women are relevant only to humanitarian issues and not to security issues. Indeed, in the words of one informant, “There is a need to broaden awareness and understanding of ‘security’ to also encompass issues including human rights, access to services and participation, education, economic security, ecological issues, and others”¹⁵⁸ – that is, human security. Certainly, no analysis of human security would be complete without considering the security of the majority of the human population, who are women and girls.

Indeed, two key lessons emerged from a recent global initiative piloting gender-responsive conflict analysis in transitional settings. First, priorities related to gender equality and WPS must be “built into the overall conflict analysis processes and not run as a stand-alone or parallel process”. Secondly, “the quality of these processes directly depends on the level of inclusion and engagement of various partners and beneficiaries, including women’s organizations and representatives.”¹⁵⁹ On the importance of gender analysis, see also Barrier: Limited Recognition.

BARRIER

Tension between Transformative and Technocratic Approaches

Global Context

The WPS agenda has its origins in a century-old effort

of women mobilizing to end wars and stake claims for inclusive and just societies.¹⁶⁰ The “long arc” of this agenda first emerged at the Women’s International Peace Congress in the Hague in 1915. A key milestone came in 1979 with the adoption of CEDAW, according to which women’s right to participate in public life and decision-making was recognized as a human right.¹⁶¹ Further significant evolution in gender equality norms was generated in 1995 by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Linking these advances to the peace and security agenda came with the landmark UN Security Council resolution 1325 in 2000. Yet, despite the progress and evolution of the WPS agenda in the nearly 20 years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, the Expert Group has expressed concern about a “drift from the transformative origins of the feminist movements that spearheaded the original efforts” as overly “[t]echnocratic approaches ... [are considered] to be leading to superficial and, at times, counter-productive outcomes.”¹⁶²

From Global to Local

Among other participants of the peace process, the Government of Georgia in particular has developed a robust policy framework for advancing the WPS agenda and gender equality more broadly. In 2006, the Parliament of Georgia adopted gender equality as a State concept.¹⁶³ In 2007, the Georgian Government established the Inter-Agency Commission on Developing Gender Equality Policy of Georgia. As noted earlier, in 2011, Georgia was the first country in the region, and among the first in the world, to have developed an NAP for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on WPS. This and the two subsequent NAPs on WPS that have followed were developed in close consultation with CSOs of conflict-affected women, who also independently monitor and report on the NAP implementation. The NAP on WPS is a key component of the 2014-2020 National Human Rights Strategy, which is overseen by the Inter-Agency Council on Human Rights established in 2016.

In 2017, with advocacy and technical support from UN Women and other UN agencies, the Georgian Government established the Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, consisting of gender focal points from all key ministries. Some ministries, in par-

¹⁵⁸ Respondent interviewed for the study.

¹⁵⁹ UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General. S/2018/900*, para. 19.

¹⁶⁰ Jacqui True, “Explaining the global diffusion of the Women, Peace and Security agenda”, *International Political Science Review*, vol. 37, No. 3 (2016), pp. 307-323.

¹⁶¹ UN Women, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting*, p. 7.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁶³ The Parliament of Georgia adopted Resolution No. 3488 on 24 July 2006 by which it approved the State Concept of Gender Equality.

ticular the Ministry of Defence, have gone further, to develop their own ministry-specific gender strategy and action plan, with a strong component on human resources. Other ministries, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, are in the process of developing a ministry-specific gender strategy. These are significant steps that should be commended.

At the same time, some key elements are missing which impede these important measures from achieving their full potential. For one, there is a need for the NAP on WPS to be complemented by a budgetary allocation to support its implementation, including at the local level. Second, the country still needs to develop a gender analysis of the conflict and its specific impact – in all areas, including security dimensions – on women and girls. This is essential so that gender advisers and focal points in the various ministries are better informed about the gender dimension and are well placed to influence the work of an entity. The inclusion of a gender perspective into conflict analysis can provide a more nuanced and effective understanding of conflict factors, actors and dynamics. Such analysis can highlight the gendered nature of the causes and impact of conflict, providing a deeper understanding of the structural issues that need to be addressed through peacebuilding. Third, transforming institutional commitments to gender equality and enhanced knowledge of how conflict impacts women requires a change in attitudes to recognize women's experiential knowledge, specific

skills, expertise and contributions in peace and security – not just in policy but also in practice (see Barrier: Limited Recognition).

Within civil society, while a number of peacebuilding initiatives continue, they appear to be rather fragmented and ad hoc. A key challenge highlighted by informants interviewed for this study is the decline in funding for peacebuilding efforts and the short-term, project-based and ad hoc nature of what limited funding opportunities still exist (see Barrier: Funding Challenges). This undermines the continuity and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts, which is so fundamental as this is a long-term endeavour. In the words of a woman peace activist interviewed for this study: “While there is talk about a ‘women’s peace movement’, in reality, there is no ‘movement’”, just a series of small-scale, short-term projects. Moreover, women’s CSO leaders lamented the loss, due to the termination of donor funding, of the regional network of women peace activists, from which they drew tremendous support, solidarity and ideas for their efforts.

Transformative approaches require complementing the important policy and institutional developments (i.e. technocratic measures) with a wide range of steps to address the various other barriers to women’s meaningful participation in the formal and informal peace processes in Georgia. For more specifics, see the recommendations elaborated to address barriers covered by this study.

PART IV: BRIDGING THE GAPS – STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

Globally, women remain largely excluded from decision-making processes and are significantly underrepresented in formal peace processes. At the same time, they play a major role in “back-room”, informal peace processes, where they bridge divides and provide support to those engaged in official negotiations.¹⁶⁴ A 2018 study found that women’s civil society groups play a critical part in peace processes. In particular, strong linkages and collaboration between diverse groups of women, such as delegates, CSOs and local civil society activists, are key for the inclusion of provisions in peace negotiations that address social inequalities, especially gender inequality.¹⁶⁵ Another study by Georgetown University’s Institute for Women, Peace and Security also found that 38 out of 63 post–Cold War peace processes have identifiable informal initiatives, of which almost three quarters (27 of the 38) have clear evidence of involvement from identifiable women’s groups, and that more than half of all peace processes are accompanied by informal efforts, the majority of which involve women’s groups in forging a peace.¹⁶⁶ Further, there is a growing body of literature that argues that when the linkages are fostered across both formal and informal peace tracks, stalled peace negotiations can see a positive transformation through Track 2 actors – including women’s rights groups and leaders – serving as catalysts of change and contributing to conflict transformation and the achievement of a sustainable peace.¹⁶⁷

Throughout the history of Georgia’s protracted conflicts and prolonged peace process, women’s CSOs and women at the grass-roots level at large have always been at the centre of conflict transformation and have played a critical role in building peace. It is noteworthy that women involved in grass-roots peace activism or people-to-people dialogues have gained trust and valuable expertise over the past three decades, building networks, improving communication and

proving to be relatively productive in peace and confidence-building efforts in Georgia. However, as identified by this study, there are constraining trends concerning women’s direct and meaningful participation in peace processes in Georgia, where they are mostly seen as beneficiaries of peace and security processes rather than actors and experts shaping and influencing it. Namely, their involvement in the formal peace processes (GID and IPRM) is limited and uneven, while at informal processes, women appear to be the main and most active drivers of peace, organized through multiple peacebuilding initiatives. Recognizing women’s legitimacy, effectiveness and expertise on issues related to peace and security, promoting and appointing more women with diverse experiences as mediators and negotiators and supporting women’s peace initiatives at the grass-roots level in Georgia can lead to a reduction in the identified barriers and offer innovative and transformative ways (such as maintaining an inclusive vision) towards building confidence and durable peace in the country. It is therefore crucial to bridge the gap and foster the linkages between formal and informal mechanisms that complement and contribute to a meaningful and more inclusive, gender-sensitive and gender-responsive peace process, which would have a positive influence on the content and outcomes of the peace talks and its aftermath.

Most importantly, in societies such as Georgia with its complex legacy of unresolved conflicts, it is necessary to consider alternative approaches and visions for (re)shaping peace. Linking formal and informal peace tracks enables women to directly and meaningfully participate in peace processes, represent the needs and interests of diverse groups of women and girls and amplify their voices. Further, it may offer a key to unlocking and transforming the stagnant peace process in Georgia and contribute to achieving a just, inclusive and sustainable peace.

¹⁶⁴ Patty Chang and others, *Women Leading Peace: A close examination of women’s political participation in peace processes in Northern Ireland, Guatemala, Kenya, and the Philippines* (Washington, D.C., Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2015). Available at <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Women-Leading-Peace.pdf>.

¹⁶⁵ Krause, Krause and Bränfors, “Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace”.

¹⁶⁶ Anjali Dayal, *Connecting Informal and Formal Peace Talks: From Movements to Mediators* (Georgetown Institute for Women,

Peace and Security, 2018). Available at <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Connecting-Informal-and-Formal-Peace-Talks.pdf>.

¹⁶⁷ Paffenholz and others, *Making Women Count. See also UN Women, Conference report – Women’s Meaningful Participation in Peace Processes: Modalities & Strategies Across Track* (2018); Chang and others, *Women Leading Peace* (2015); and Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini, *The Better Peace Tool* (Washington, D.C., International Civil Society Action Network, 2015). Available at <http://www.icanpeacework.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Better-Peace-Tool-English.pdf>.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The set of recommendations elaborated below offer specific approaches to reduce identified barriers to women's meaningful participation in peace processes and successfully bridge gaps between the different peace tracks, as well as suggest pathways to inclusive and effective peace and security process in Georgia.

A. Increasing the number of women in the formal peace process

- ✓ Encourage all participants in the GID and IPRM to take specific measures to increase the number of women in said processes, in particular in senior leadership roles, and to identify and address any challenges in this regard.
- ✓ Monitor and publicly report the sex-disaggregated data on the participants of the GID and IPRM. This should be done systematically by the Government of Georgia in line with the NAP on WPS as well as by the Co-Chairs of the GID and IPRM for all of the other participants.
- ✓ Ensure that all GID and IPRM participants, including mediators and their staff, receive training on WPS and on guidance for gender-inclusive mediation strategies¹⁶⁸ as well as examples of good practices, particularly in contexts from the region.

B. Strengthening the linkages between the formal and informal peace processes for Georgia

- ✓ Encourage the participants of the GID and IPRM, as well as the Co-Chairs of both processes, to regularly convene consultation sessions with conflict-affected women (as is currently done by the Government of Georgia and GID Co-Chairs) to better identify their concerns and recommendations. These sessions should:
 - Be scheduled in advance of the GID and IPRM sessions so that the concerns and recommendations voiced by women can inform the discussions
 - Include feedback on the status of recommendations previously made
 - Include a diverse group of conflict-affected women from conflict-affected areas, including rural areas, youth and older persons

- Be convened, where possible, in conflict-affected areas, with transportation subsidies provided to women travelling from a distance

- ✓ Provide support (financial and technical, if required) to conflict-affected women to organize a preparatory meeting before each such consultation session to consolidate their concerns and recommendations, in order to maximize the strategic impact of their joint advocacy.
- ✓ Establish a regular consultative body, consisting of women's CSOs and diverse conflict-affected women, to advise the Co-Chairs of the GID on the concerns, views and recommendations of conflict-affected women on the full range of issues, including security issues, covered by the formal peace processes.
- ✓ Strengthen the dialogue and coordination between women involved in formal and informal peace processes.
- ✓ Strengthen the women (regional) mediator networks to identify and broaden the pool of women mediators.
- ✓ Explore opportunities for conflict-affected women to participate in briefings of the United Nations Security Council as well as to OSCE and EU as relevant.

C. Addressing barriers

Patriarchal Systems and Persistent Gender Inequality

- ✓ Encourage all participants to put in place and implement WPS action plans, to systematically train public servants on the WPS agenda and to share good practices from other contexts.
- ✓ Ensure that any projects providing support to conflict-affected populations mainstream gender, in

¹⁶⁸ United Nations, *Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies* (2017). Available at <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/1.%20English%20-GIMS.pdf>.

particular with respect to target groups, data collection and analysis, the identification of specific needs and programming.

- ✓ Encourage the Government of Georgia to intensify efforts to localize the NAP on WPS and its gender-sensitive policy, including by ensuring budgetary allocation and the appointment of gender advisers/focal points in all municipalities.
- ✓ Encourage all participants of the GID to mobilize youths during the process of creating the peace-building models, and support confidence-building initiatives among the youth of conflict-torn communities around gender equality and women's empowerment.

Limited Recognition of Women's Expertise and Lived Experience

- ✓ Conduct a comprehensive gender analysis of the conflict covering the gendered nature of the causes of conflict, the gendered impact of conflict and gender dimensions of security issues and of peace-building, and ensure that this informs conflict resolution efforts in all areas, including discussion of security issues. This analysis should be conducted with the active participation of conflict-affected women from a diverse group encompassing the different conflicts in Georgia, including both rural and urban women, women of different ages (with a special focus to ensure the inclusion of younger women), grass-roots peace activists and well-established women's CSOs. The participatory approach should go further than inviting conflict-affected women to contribute information: it should give them ownership over the process and the results so that they can put the findings of this analysis to use in ways that make the most sense to them.
- ✓ Sensitize the media to WPS issues and the important contributions being made by women to peace and security, promoting a more constructive portrayal of their efforts by the media.
- ✓ Support ongoing capacity-strengthening of IDP and conflict-affected women leaders and CSOs, in particular at the grass-roots level, in strategic advocacy and communications, leadership training, gender-sensitive analysis of security issues and information exchanges and trainings of women peace activists from the region.

- ✓ Intensify capacity-strengthening on WPS issues among women and men engaged in peace and security or conflict resolution efforts more broadly in order to promote their increased understanding of the integral relevance of WPS issues to their work.
- ✓ Advocate and facilitate presentations by conflict-affected women to briefings of the GID, IPRM and UN Security Council.

Shrinking Political Space and Threats against Women Human Rights Defenders

- ✓ In consultation meetings with conflict-affected women, systematically include queries that are specifically about the risks that women experience working on WPS issues and women's suggestions for mitigating these risks.
- ✓ Encourage the PDO to systematically monitor the violations against women human rights defenders working on the WPS agenda and devote a specific section to this issue in its monitoring report on the NAP on WPS.
- ✓ Include specific measures in national action plans and strategies regarding gender equality to protect women human rights defenders in line with international standards.
- ✓ Promote and highlight peace initiatives through the media in order to increase awareness and support from society.
- ✓ Ensure that the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the PDO, international organizations, the GID and the IPRM are systematically informed about the risks and threats to human rights defenders.
- ✓ In cases where human rights activists are being threatened, ensure that the gender advisers and gender focal points of different institutions make statements in the media and denounce the attacks.
- ✓ Take measures to recognize, promote and appreciate the work of the peace activists.

Funding Challenges and Insufficient Investment in Gender Expertise

- ✓ Advocate for sustained attention and financial support from donors and international as well as regional organizations for women's peacebuilding

efforts in Georgia.

- ✓ Encourage the Government of Georgia to allocate funding to enable implementation of the NAP on WPS, including to support its implementation at the local level.
- ✓ Increase support for women-led CSOs, in particular for organizations operating at the grass-roots level.
- ✓ Prioritize long-term and core funding for peacebuilding activities.
- ✓ Systematically integrate gender into financing for peacebuilding activities, and report on the extent to which funded projects advance gender equality and women's empowerment, including by considering use of the "Gender Marker" for assessing projects' integration of the gender perspective.
- ✓ Establish a rapid-response funding mechanism for women's participation in peace processes and related consultations.
- ✓ Ensure that the reports on the implementation of the NAP on WPS, prepared by the Inter-Agency Commission and separately by the PDO, monitor and report on the funding levels of women's organizations focusing on the WPS agenda.

Knowledge Gaps

- ✓ Monitor and report systematically on the number and roles of women participating in the GID and IPRM meetings.
- ✓ Ensure that all GID and IPRM participants, including mediators and their staff, are trained on WPS and familiar with global guidance on gender-inclusive mediation strategies.¹⁶⁹
- ✓ Promote and support initiatives for additional research on conflict-affected women about their specific concerns and recommendations regarding peace and security, in particular joint research initiatives and research led or informed by conflict-affected women also in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.
- ✓ Sensitize CSOs working on conflict resolution

and peace and security issues more generally to WPS concerns and the relevance and value of a gender perspective to their analysis on political, peace and security issues related to the conflicts in Georgia.

- ✓ Promote and support greater cross-fertilization between broader peace and security actors, including researchers, and the WPS policy community.
- ✓ Advocate and support initiatives on WPS issues at the regional and subregional level that bring together women from the region – namely the South Caucasus, Moldova and Ukraine – to share information, experiences, good practices and lessons learned.

The Nature of Contemporary Conflict

- ✓ Integrate an analysis of the gender-specific dimensions of all human security issues (e.g. freedom of movement, detentions, securitization of the ABL) into those discussed in the IPRM and GID, including the circumstances increasing women's exposure to risk, the conditions during detention and the conditions of release from detention. This gender analysis should be informed by consultations with conflict-affected women.
- ✓ Increase the capacity of security sector and law enforcement personnel to prevent and respond to the specific security risks faced by women and girls, including gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.
- ✓ Give clear, accurate and updated information to conflict-affected populations about the procedures for crossing the ABL and the security risks of doing so, including specific risks for women and girls.
- ✓ Install security cameras along the ABL to improve evidence-based monitoring of arbitrary arrests and detention.

Tension between Transformative and Technocratic Approaches

- ✓ Ensure harmonization of the policy and institutional development actions in addressing the barriers to women's meaningful participation in

¹⁶⁹ United Nations, *Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies*.

formal and informal peace processes in Georgia.

- ✓ Strengthen the roles of gender advisers/focal points within the institutions who can play a crucial role in influencing and enabling the par-

ticipation of women in peace and security processes.

- ✓ Place gender-sensitive and responsive conflict analysis in all efforts related to peace and security.

ANNEX I: KEY REFERENCES

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ANNEX II: LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS INTERVIEWED

Key Informants Interviewed, 9-20 September 2019

Organization	NAME and TITLE of PERSON(S) MEETING
GID Co-Chairs	
UN	Ms. Ayşe Cihan Sultanoğlu, United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions (UNRGID) Mr. Hailu Mamo, Deputy Head of Mission/Senior Political Affairs Officer Ms. Irina Yegorova, Political Adviser to the UNRGID
EU	Mr. Toivo Klaar, EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia
OSCE	Mr. Rudolf Michalka, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the South Caucasus
Government of Georgia	
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Ms. Ketevan Chumbadze, Deputy Political Director Ms. Nino Berikashvili, Head of Conflict Resolution Policy Division Mr. Zurab Svanishvili, Counsellor for the Conflict Resolution Policy Division
Office of the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality	Ms. Lali Devidze, First category specialist in the Department of Political Planning and International Relations
State Security Service	Mr. Giorgi Sabedashvili, Analytical Division
Ministry of Defence	Ms. Maka Petriashvili, Deputy Head of the Department of Human Resources, member of the Government of Georgia's Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence
Ministry of Internal Affairs	Ms. Maka Peradze, Acting Director of the Human Rights Protection and Quality Monitoring Department
Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs	Ms. Ketevan Goginashvili, Head of the Department of Health Policy Division Mr. Konstantine Razmadze, Deputy Head of the Department on IDPs and Ecomigrants' Issues
Public Defender's Office	Ms. Sopho Rusetski, Senior specialist in the Gender Department
CSOs	
Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflicts	Ms. Nino Kalandarishvili, Director Ms. Eliko Bendeliani, Expert
IDP Women's Association "Consent"	Ms. Julia Kharashvili, Director
Women's Information Center	Ms. Elene Rusetskaia, Director
Cultural-Humanitarian Fund "Sukhumi"	Ms. Ala Gamakharia, Director

Caucasian House	Mr. Ivane Abramashvili, Executive Director Ms. Ana Dvali, Head of the Peace and Integration Programme
International Center on Conflict and Negotiation	Ms. Nino Tsikhistavi, Director
Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development	Ms. Marina Elbakidze, Project Coordinator
Caucasus Center for Civil Hearings	Ms. Nino Gogolashvili, Executive Director
Other	
UN Women	Ms. Tamar Lobjanidze, WPS Project Analyst Ms. Marika Jobava, Project Associate
EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM)	Ms. Sini Ramo, Gender Adviser
Embassy of Switzerland in Georgia	Ms. Medea Turashvili, Peace and Human Rights Officer
George Mason University, School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Center for Peacemaking Practice	Dr. Susan Allen, Associate Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution
Field trip to Shida Kartli	15 internally displaced and conflict-affected women and grass-roots women's organizations, specifically: 1. Group of IDP women in IDP settlement in Shavshvebi 2. Women in the village of Zardiaantkari on the ABL (ethnic Georgians and Ossetians) 3. Group of women from ABL villages in Gori

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