

Peace Processes: Assessment and Perspectives After 25 Years of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

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Abstract

2025 marks the 25th anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 by the UN Security Council and the beginning of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, built over more than two decades through a huge collective effort by a multiplicity of feminist actors from the Global North and South. The agenda currently faces unprecedented challenges in an international scenario of growing armed conflict and willingness to use force to address conflicts, militarism, and patriarchal leadership and agendas. Peace negotiations, one of the tools that in recent decades seemed to consolidate as a frequent strategy for dealing with armed conflicts, is also at a crossroads. This publication analyses some of the progress and the challenges that persist in the field of negotiations and peace processes, considering the capacity of influence that the WPS agenda has had to shape this area of peacebuilding. It addresses issues such as the chronic under-representation of women in negotiations; effective participation and mechanisms for change; the hierarchical structure of negotiations and the obstacles women face in participating; the initiatives of women's organizations in the promotion of peace with rights; the role of mediating actors; and the inclusion of the gender dimension and the feminist perspective in the text of the peace agreements resulting from the negotiations.

1. Introduction

October 2025 marks the 25th anniversary of the adoption of Resolution 1325 by the UN Security Council and the beginning of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, built over more than two decades through a huge collective effort by feminist activists from countries of the Global North and South, academics, United Nations staff, government representatives and diplomats with the aim of imbuing peacebuilding efforts, initiatives and tools with a feminist and gender equality approach. Born in a context of expansion of the so-called "liberal peace",¹ and after years of expansion, in parallel with a growing strength of feminisms as a heterogeneous international movement driving innumerable political, social and cultural changes,



Women of the Philippines promoting the peace agreement in Mindanao
Source: UCA News

1. Liberal peace has consolidated its position as the predominant approach to peacebuilding processes since the end of the Cold War. This model is conceived as an institutional peace, which promotes governance and offers international guarantees; a constitutional peace, which supports both liberal democracy and free trade; and a civil peace, oriented toward the protection of rights and freedoms (Richmond, O., *Peace in International Relations*. Routledge, 2008, p. 7). The consolidation of this paradigm has coincided with the strengthening of the role of the United Nations as a key player in the international peacebuilding arena (Mateos Martín, O., La "paz liberal", el día después. Un análisis de la segunda generación de críticas a la agenda internacional de construcción de paz, in Pérez de Armiño, K. and Ziron Landaluze, I. (Eds.) *Pax Crítica. Aportes teóricos a las perspectivas de paz posliberal*, Tecnos, 2019, p. 47). This model has been the subject of strong criticism from critical positions as an ineffective, neocolonial project that has attempted to impose a standard model, ignoring the particular characteristics of each local context.

the agenda itself encompasses different visions, critical reflections, international advocacy processes and regional and local developments and processes specific to each context. As Shepherd and Kirby have pointed out,² the WPS agenda is multiple and heterogeneous, with different visions and tensions, and more than a “singular political project” it can be understood as “a plural object of knowledge and practice”, a “policy ecosystem” with which to engage to build feminist peace.

The agenda currently faces unprecedented challenges in an international scenario of rise and consolidation of patriarchal leadership and agendas contrary to the recognition of basic human rights and of growing violence and armed conflict, including an ongoing genocide against the Palestinian population by Israel. The horizon of feminist peace longed for by the pioneers who promoted the agenda in 2000 and by multiple actors and movements that promote peace with justice is at serious risk in a context of growing militarism, unprecedented increases in defence budgets and the rise of misogynistic and patriarchal ideologies and hate speech that have permeated governments, political parties and civil society.

The international context in terms of armed conflict is one of significant deterioration. In 2024, 37 armed conflicts took place, which not only represents an increase from the previous year in which 36 cases were registered, but is the highest figure in the last 12 years. In addition to the increase in conflicts, other worrying trends were also noted, such as the fact that more than half of armed conflicts in 2024 were of high intensity,³ resulting in serious consequences in terms of lethality and impacts on human security. Added to this is the fact that 60% of these conflicts increased their levels of violence in 2024, a trend that was also aggravated compared to previous years.⁴ The proportion of deaths of civilian women in armed conflict doubled during 2023 compared to the previous year, according to the United Nations.⁵

Peace negotiations, one of the tools that in recent decades seemed to have consolidated as one of the most accepted and frequent for achieving peace in armed conflicts, are also at a crossroads, with peace processes that are prolonged over time and face numerous obstacles, in parallel with a greater willingness by States to use or threaten to use force to address conflicts.

Over the two and a half decades of existence and implementation of the WPS agenda, some progress has been made in terms of participation and inclusiveness in peace processes, and research has exhaustively demonstrated the positive impacts of the participation of women and other traditionally excluded groups. However, this progress is clearly insufficient and does not allow for a successful stocktaking of the agenda in terms of the evolution of peace negotiations towards transformative processes in the field of gender justice.

This publication analyses some of the progress and also the challenges that persist in the field of negotiations and peace processes, taking into account the capacity that the WPS agenda has had to shape this area of peacebuilding. It addresses issues such as the chronic under-representation of women in negotiations; effective participation and mechanisms for change; the hierarchical structure of negotiations and the obstacles women face in participating; the initiatives of women's organizations in the promotion of peace with rights; the role of mediating actors; and the inclusion of the gender dimension and the feminist perspective in the text of the peace agreements resulting from the negotiations. Finally, some conclusions are outlined. Given the challenging international context, the agenda's 25th anniversary represents an opportune moment to take stock and rethink how to address the challenges to continue driving the transformations that the agenda has pursued throughout its decades of existence.

2. Inclusive participation in peace processes, a pending challenge

In the 25 years since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, feminist and women's rights organizations and activists, academics, and actors involved in political or diplomatic practice have supported, exercised, and reflected on women's participation in peace processes and, more broadly, in peacebuilding. Although it remains an understudied field compared to others related to peace and security, there is significant knowledge built collectively and collaborative practices that seek to strengthen women's initiatives and movements and continue to expand learning. We recap some key ideas about women's participation in peace processes.

2. Kirby, P. and Shepherd, L.J., *Governing the Feminist Peace. The vitality and failure of the women, peace and security agenda*, Nueva York: Columbia University Press, 2024.

3. According to the School for a Culture of Peace definitions, high-intensity armed conflicts involve levels of violence that cause more than 1,000 deaths annually. In many contexts, the fatality rate is well above this figure.

4. Data on trends in armed conflict can be found at Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2025! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2025.

5. UN Secretary-General, *Protection of civilians in armed conflict. Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2024/385, 14 May 2024.



Meeting between representatives of the AKP and DEM parties in the framework of the peace process in Türkiye. Source: Hürriyet

Chronic under-representation of women: the exclusionary logic of the processes

The panorama of peace processes continues to be characterized by a predominant exclusion of women in formal negotiation processes. Recent negotiations such as those between Israel and Palestine against the backdrop of Israel's genocide in Gaza, Israel-Lebanon (Hezbollah), Russia-Ukraine, India-Pakistan, Sudan, Yemen, among many others, highlight the exclusionary nature of peace negotiations.

The United Nations stressed in 2024 that there has been little progress in the last ten years.⁶ Based on the systematization of data from the Women in Peace Processes Monitor tool, the UN Secretary-General concluded in 2024 that there is "lack of overall progress on women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace processes".⁷ Out of a set of more than 50 peace processes in 2023, women made up 9.6% of negotiators, 13.7% of mediators, and 26.6% of signatories, and the percentages would be even lower if it were not for the processes in Colombia, where more significant participation of women is observed. Thus, excluding the agreements in Colombia, the percentage of signatories

fell to 1.5%.⁸ In the previous two years, 2022 and 2021, the UN had identified an annual setback in terms of participation in formal negotiations. Year-on-year studies also show this under-representation. Between 1992 and 2019, 13% of negotiators, 6% of mediators and 6% of signatories were women, according to data from the Council of Foreign Relations.⁹ Some analyses suggest that these actual figures could be even lower, given that the latter percentages reflect only the largest peace processes and those that reach agreements.¹⁰

Further back in time, UN Women's landmark 2012 study on women's participation in peace processes, which looked at 31 peace processes between 1992 and 2011, found that only 9% of negotiators, 2% of lead mediators, and 4% of witnesses and signatories were women.¹¹ Citing this and other sources, the Global Study that was carried out in 2015 on the occasion of the anniversary and balance of the 15th anniversary of Resolution 1325 had concluded that there was an upward trend in terms of women's global participation, but that it was excessively slow, and in which the cases of the Philippines and Colombia stood out for significantly higher levels of participation than other processes.¹² In this 15-year balance, and taking into account participation and other

6. UN Secretary-General, *Women and peace and security. Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2024/671, 24 September 2024, par. 22.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Council of Foreign Relations. "Women's Participation in Peace Processes", *CFR*, 2022.

10. Corredor, Elizabeth S. and Anderson, Miriam J., *Secrecy, Uncertainty, and Trust: The Gendered Nature of Back-Channel Peace Negotiations*, *International Studies Review*, Vol. 26, No. 2, June, 2024, viae023, p. 8.

11. UN Women, *Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence*, 2012.

12. Coomaraswamy, R., *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing Peace. A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*, UN Women, 2015, p.45.

elements (e.g. references to women or gender in peace agreements, inclusion of gender experts in mediation support teams), it was concluded that there were signs of progress in relation to inclusion in peace processes, but slow and with a long way to go.

Ten years after that global review, the future outlook regarding participation in formal negotiations is uncertain. On the one hand, some elements of progress converge, such as the increase in women in mediation positions, the institutionalization of expert support on gender equality in peace processes in some peace processes, the expansion of forums and tools such as networks of women mediators, exchanges of learning between groups of women in civil society from different contexts in conflict and peace processes, or the training and training spaces for women participants in negotiations, among others. There continues to be some degree of women's participation in ongoing peace processes. Among others, in the Philippines, the NDF negotiating panel was still chaired by a woman, Julie De Lima. Most of the dialogue processes in the Americas had the presence and leadership of women. In Colombia, it is worth noting the continuity of Vera Grabe as head of the government delegation in the negotiations with the ELN after her appointment in 2023 and that the government delegations in all negotiations had women, although the only delegation with equal representation of men and women, was the one formed for the dialogue with the ELN. In the new peace initiative in Türkiye, the delegation of the pro-Kurdish DEM party that talks with the imprisoned PKK leader and with the country's political parties is led by parliamentarian and women's human rights defender Pervin Buldan, and women from different political parties hold meetings to discuss the new process. However, there are also elements of stagnation or potential regression, such as the lack of progress in participation in the last decade identified by the United Nations, and which is part of the stagnation and regressions in recent years in relation to the WPS agenda more broadly.¹³ There is also a convergence of global and regional context factors that can lead to setbacks both in the agenda as a whole and in participation: reductions in bilateral aid to gender equality objectives and in funding to women's civil society organizations; a panorama of growing global militarization, geopolitical divisions, patriarchal leadership and democratic setbacks; more violent

The panorama of peace processes continues to be characterized by a majority exclusion of women in formal negotiation processes



Vera Grabe, head of the government delegation in the negotiations with the ELN. Source: UN Verification Mission in Colombia

armed conflicts with greater fragmentation of the map of actors; among others.

Beyond the numbers: effective participation and mechanisms for change

The accumulation of practical experiences and studies carried out on participation have underlined that beyond numbers, a focus is needed on the substantive and effective participation of women, with the capacity to influence peace processes and promote women's rights. This focus was already in the Global Study of the 15 years of Resolution 1325 and has continued to acquire more centrality.

The standardizing visions of women in peace processes clash with a heterogeneous reality, in which women participate in peace processes with different positions, interests and loyalties. In addition, women continue to face multiple barriers to participation and to participation that is not merely symbolic.

Already around the 15th anniversary of Resolution 1325, the importance of the ability to influence was emphasized, as opposed to the focus on numbers. Several authors pointed out the positive correlation between cases in which women's groups have been able to effectively influence processes and the likelihood of reaching an agreement, its implementation and its longer duration.¹⁴ The focus on the ability to influence has expanded significantly.¹⁵ In more recent literature, Good

13. UN Secretary-General, *Women and peace and security. Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2024/671, 24 September 2024, par. 3.

14. O'Reilly, M., Ó Súilleabháin, A. and Paffenholz T., *Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes*, IPI, 2015; Paffenholz, T., Ross, N., Dixon, S., Schluchter, A. and True, J., *Making Women Count—Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women's Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations*. Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative (The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies), UN Women, 2016; Paffenholz, T., *Women in Peace Negotiations*, in: Aggestam, K., Towns, A. (Eds) *Gendering Diplomacy and International Negotiation. Studies in Diplomacy and International Relations*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018.

15. See, for example, Ellerby, K., "A seat at the table is not enough: understanding women's substantive representation in peace processes", *Peacebuilding*, 2016; Aanstoos, K., *A Voice at the Table: How Women in Peace Processes Shape Political Representation*. *Politics & Gender*, 2025, 1–31; Fal-Dutra Santos, A., *Towards gender-equal peace: From "counting women" to meaningful participation*, The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2021.

(2024) confirms the existence of a significant correlation between women's involvement in peace negotiations and the inclusion of references to women in global peace agreements, although this correlation is dependent on whether there are women in positions of power in the processes¹⁶ and it does not mean that the inclusion of women in positions of power in negotiations alone will result in their advocacy for gender equality in the negotiations and the resulting agreements. In other words, statistically, women participants in negotiations defend the provisions on women in the agreements under negotiation more than their male counterparts, but it is key to focus on the conditions and influence mechanisms, such as the capacity and will of those who advocate for the defence of women's rights.¹⁷ Other authors have reiterated this need to delve deeper into the influence mechanisms.¹⁸

Beyond the numerical participation of women, a focus is required on the influence mechanisms that impact the defence of women's rights in the processes

As an example of recent developments, in the long-standing peace process in Cyprus, the only one on the European continent to have a gender mechanism at the level of formal negotiations, it has been stressed that the gender committee of the process needs more political support to implement the gender action plan that the committee itself promoted in 2022 and which was aimed at promoting integration of the gender perspective in the negotiating process and the substantive participation of women.¹⁹ In the case of Chad, although women's organizations have participated in the national dialogue process, their proposals have not been reflected in the conclusions of the process.²⁰ In Ethiopia (Tigray), despite the prominent and heterogeneous role of women during the war – both in campaigns to end the war and to seek justice for the atrocities suffered, and participating in the armed struggle – women were excluded from the negotiating process and have also been relegated in the implementation stage of the agreement. Only one woman was part of the government negotiating delegation and none represented the Tigray People's Liberation Front. Even so, the mediating actors and, particularly the representative of the AU and former Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, promoted a gender agenda in the negotiations.²¹ The interim

administration (IRA) has included eight women out of the 27 cabinet members but relegated to roles with little substantive power.²²

Hierarchical peace processes and barriers to participation

Critical approaches have emphasized the problematization of peace processes and the limits of inclusion as the only way to address gender inequalities and to deploy more holistic peace agreements.²³ These critiques underscore the gender hierarchies of peace processes, which exclude women (different groups of women and marginalized populations) and give centrality to militarized and masculinized visions of conflict and violence and state-centric visions of security.²⁴ From this critical approach, women's participation in peace negotiations is also defended, but the importance of questioning peacemaking institutions and greater attention to the unequal structures that influence access, influence, legitimacy and ascendancy in securitized and masculinized negotiation processes is emphasized.²⁵

Women continue to face multiple barriers to effective participation: resistance to their inclusion; exclusion



Signing of the peace agreement between Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front. Source: Jacoline Schoonees

16. Good, E., *Power Over Presence: Women's Representation in Comprehensive Peace Negotiations and Gender Provision Outcomes*, *American Political Science Review*, 2025, 119(3):1099-1114, p.1109.

17. Ibid.

18. Aggestam, K., Svensson, I., Where Are the Women in Peace Mediation?, in: Aggestam, K., Towns, A. (Eds) *Gendering Diplomacy and International Negotiation. Studies in Diplomacy and International Relations*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018, p.150.

19. Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus, 2024. Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2025.

20. Ibid.

21. UN Women, *A Review of Women's Engagement in Peace Processes in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan & Uganda: Good Practices and Lessons Learned*, UN Women, 2024.

22. Ibid.

23. McAuliff, A. K., Peace Negotiations as Sites of Gendered Power Hierarchies. *International Negotiation*, 2022, p.1-25.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid. p.20.

of women from key phases and dimensions such as pre-negotiations, informal negotiations or informal spaces;²⁶ exclusion from decision-making; attacks against activists and deterioration of the security situation for women; logistical barriers, among others. In the decade since the 15th anniversary, there has been no reduction in barriers; and peace processes today continue to be mostly exclusive spaces in terms of participation. In addition, the hierarchical tendency persists on the topics and approaches of the negotiations, so that the experiences and security needs of the civilian populations affected by the conflicts, including specifically women's rights, are ignored.

Numerous recent cases illustrate these trends. In Mali, the situation of insecurity in the country has worsened, with significant impacts on women's physical security, including attacks by jihadist groups such as JNIM against women who disobey the gender norms imposed by the group, in addition to the declaration in 2024 by the military junta of "immediate termination"

Women continue to face multiple barriers to effective participation, such as resistance, exclusion from pre-negotiations and informal dialogues, and attacks on activists

of the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement, which was definitively suspended and led to the interruption of the peace process.²⁷ In relation to the peace process in Libya, Libyan women have denounced obstacles to their substantive participation, including limitations on movement, persecution of activists and human rights defenders, including in virtual spaces. In the national dialogue process in Ethiopia, sectors of civil society, including women's organizations, criticized the requirements and procedure for the appointment of commissioners, which excluded many women, youth, local and religious leaders, and called for its modification to move towards an inclusive process.²⁸ The long-standing dialogue process between Serbia and Kosovo, facilitated by the EU, has continued to be characterised by the under-representation of women and by exclusionary formats. Studies have pointed to obstacles such as social attitudes and expectations regarding gender roles, institutional attitudes, and indifference on the part of state and political actors regarding women's participation in the process.²⁹

Box 1. Syria: Limits of Consultative Architectures in Peace Negotiations

Syrian women have had limited participation and advocacy capacity in formal negotiation spaces to try to address the armed conflict that was activated in the country after the start of the revolt against the regime of Bashar al-Assad in 2011. Given the reduced presence of women in the negotiating delegations, various initiatives promoted by Syrian women advocated for greater participation in the negotiating spaces mediated by the United Nations (Geneva process). Among their proposals, they suggested the creation of a specific delegation of women and that the negotiating delegations of the opposition and the government incorporate a minimum of 30% among their representatives. In this context, an alternative mechanism was put in place in 2016: an all-women advisory council to advise the UN special envoy for Syria, then Staffan de Mistura. The Women's Advisory Board (WAB) was established to ensure that the diverse perspectives and priorities of Syrian women were considered in the political process and in the Geneva

process talks. This mechanism – the first of its kind promoted by the United Nations – was established with the support of UN Women and the UN Department of Political Affairs and had as normative frameworks both the international agenda WPS and UN Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) on Syria which, among other things, it encouraged meaningful participation of Syrian women in the UN-facilitated political process.

The creation of the WAB was valued at the time as an innovative initiative, as an attempt to establish a specific gender architecture that would make it possible to circumvent the exclusion of women and to formalize and institutionalize the contacts that different diplomatic actors had with women in Syrian civil society.³⁰ The WAB was a space to convey some relevant issues that grassroots civil society organizations tried to make visible – such as the detained and disappeared – and contributed to the establishment of a 30% quota for

26. Corredor, Elizabeth S. and Anderson, Miriam J. Secrecy, 2024, op.cit.

27. Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus, 2024. Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2025.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. María Villellas, *¿Construyendo una paz feminista? Aportaciones y limitaciones de la Agenda, Mujeres, Paz y Seguridad* (PhD Thesis, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), 2024.

women in the committee formed to discuss the new Syrian Constitution within the framework of the negotiations.³¹ However, since its genesis, this mechanism has also been the subject of various questions and over time the analyses that point out its limitations and weaknesses have multiplied.

A first focus of criticism has been its level of representativeness and the lack of transparency in the selection of its members. The WAB has been made up of fifteen Syrian women selected for their individual profiles and trajectories,³² seeking a variety of political, geographical and religious representation. However, Syrian feminist analysts and groups have warned that a stereotypical view of diversity was applied that affected its ability to be an inclusive body and to represent Syrian women in their complexity and multiplicity.³³ Another element of criticism has been the “depoliticizing” effect of the mechanism and the limits for the creation of consensus only based on the shared gender. Various voices – including women who were part of the WAB – warned about the consequences of focusing on women only as peacebuilders, of not recognizing the important role played by women in the revolt against al-Assad, of the limitations in the language and in the issues addressed by the body due to the difficulties of reaching common positions given the presence of both women supporters and opponents of the regime and also of the importance of women in the region. disparate positions on gender issues. A third focus of questioning has been directed at the merely advisory nature of the WAB, without a

formal and binding relationship with the negotiations, without guarantees that its recommendations would be considered/implemented and that has had an impact on its capacity to influence and to obtain concrete results. A reflection that has led to warnings about the risks of cosmetic participation and calls not to confuse presence in negotiations with occupying a place at the negotiating table.³⁴ The problems in influencing the process were also conditioned by the lack of progress and the general deadlock in negotiations, which did not offer an effective way to address the Syrian conflict.

After the fall of Bashar al-Assad’s regime at the end of 2024, a new chapter in Syria’s history has opened. Various women’s organizations and activists have mobilized to set out their vision and priorities for the future of the country. Among them, the WAB, which – with new members after a renewal process – held its first meeting on Syrian territory in early 2025 and requested guarantees for women’s political participation from the new authorities. Its capacity to influence this new phase will be conditioned by the evolution of the political transition and its level of inclusiveness –and by the role of the UN itself, which in the face of the new scenario is reevaluating its role in the country. The changes in Syria have aroused expectations, but also concern and uncertainties, among others in feminist sectors that observe with concern some of the policies and positions of the new government and are suspicious of the trajectory of some of its representatives, such as the interim president himself, Ahmed al Sharaa, linked in the past to al-Qaeda.

The persistence of women’s organizations promoting peace with rights

Despite the barriers, women’s human rights organizations and feminist movements and activists have mobilized and continue to mobilize in multiple contexts of armed conflict/tension scenarios with and without peace processes and also in countries directly or indirectly involved in the cycles of violence (arms exporting countries, countries with commercial links with States perpetrators of violence, etc.) in defence of peaceful ways to address conflicts and in defence of agendas that focus on women’s rights while defending broader demands for other sectors and for the population as a whole.

From an in-depth qualitative analysis of 40 processes and with a focus mainly on the participation of women’s groups that do not represent the parties to the conflict, several authors identified a decade ago seven models of inclusion in peace processes, and whose combined use made it more likely to influence the results: direct participation in negotiation tables, observer status, consultations, inclusive commissions, problem-solving spaces, public decision-making processes and collective mass action.³⁵

In addition, they identified four areas frequently advocated by women’s organizations: ceasefires and the start of negotiations; signing of peace agreements; increasing

31. UN Women, *Women’s participation in local mediation: Lessons from Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen*, 2022.

32. Initially, the WAB was composed of 12 members. The group has been progressively renewed and expanded to try to represent more voices from civil society. It is currently made up of 17 women.

33. Heinrich Böll Stiftung, *The Syrian Women’s Advisory Board – lessons to be learned*, 25 January 2022.

34. Mouna Ghanem (former WAB member), “If governments want to achieve peace in Syria, they need to stop excluding women from their negotiations”, *The Independent*, 22 February 2019.

35. Paffenholz, T., Ross, N., Dixon, S., Schluchter, A. and True, J., 2016, op.cit.

women's participation in the processes themselves and in post-war political structures; political and judicial reforms with a gender perspective.³⁶

The current international landscape continues to be characterized by the articulation of women's organizations and women activists in countries with dialogue and negotiation processes and that promote ceasefires and an end to violence, inclusive peace processes (in terms of participation and agendas) and implementation mechanisms, as well as transitional justice mechanisms and an end to impunity. Among many others, in Cameroon, the women's civilian fabric made new shows of support for ceasefire calls in 2024.³⁷ In Sudan, women from peace organizations, political groups, religious organizations and other sectors of civil society have continued to articulate themselves to press for a peaceful solution to the conflict, with alliances with the AU as a mediating actor. In 2024 they made progress on common agendas, in generating agreements on criteria for selecting women representatives in political dialogue, and in developing strategies to build a broad-based women's movement in support of peace in Sudan.³⁸ The South Sudan Women's Coalition for Peace (SSWCP) has continued to call for more women's participation in all peace



Women's demonstration in Colombia. Source: ODHACO

The current international landscape continues to be characterized by the articulation of women's organizations and women activists that promote the end of violence

processes in the country and to achieve at least 35% representation, in contrast to a peace process with residual participation of women. In Yemen, women continued to engage in consultation processes "from below", calling for a genuinely inclusive peace process in the country and denouncing the obstacles to women's substantive participation in the political arena. In Syria, women have been demanding a greater role in defining the country's future for years.

Box 2. Syria: alternative civil society advocacy mechanisms

One of the priority issues raised by women's groups and Syrian civil society organizations led by women has been that of missing persons who have disappeared in the context of the armed conflict. Representatives of these entities have actively mobilized to denounce this situation, which would affect more than 180,000 people, the vast majority –more than 160,000– disappeared in the prisons of Bashar al-Assad's regime. In their meetings with political actors and with the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Syrian women insisted on the need for this issue to be high on the negotiating agenda.³⁹ However, the UN-sponsored negotiation process in Geneva ended up focusing on discussions for a new constitution, which failed to prosper and were definitively blocked in mid-2022.

With no prospect of the issue of disappearances being addressed through the negotiating framework, civil society

continued to explore other avenues and to advocate internationally. Thus, with the endorsement of the United Nations General Assembly (resolution 77/301), in 2023 was achieved the creation of an international mechanism with the specific mandate to contribute to clarifying the truth about the fate and whereabouts of missing persons in the country. The Independent Institution for Missing Persons in Syria (IIMP)⁴⁰ was formally established in Geneva in April 2024 and began consultation work from a participatory, victim- and survivor-centred and with gender-sensitive approach. Karla Quintana, a Mexican lawyer expert in human rights and transitional justice and former commissioner for the search for the more than 100,000 disappeared people in Mexico, was appointed to head the IIMP.

In this context, the fall of Bashar al-Assad took place in December 2024. The discovery of numerous mass

36. Ibid.

37. Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus, 2024. Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2025.

38. Ibid.

39. UNifed, *Geneva / De Mistura Syrian Women*, 23 February 2017.

40. More information available at: <https://iimp.un.org/en>

graves and the opening of the regime's prisons exposed the serious situation of detainees and the enormous challenges in knowing the fate of those who remain missing. The issue has continued to be one of the key issues in the new transition scenario. In light of the decision of the new authorities to create their own mechanisms for investigation and accountability – the National Commission for Transitional Justice and the

National Commission for the Disappeared in Syria were established in May 2025 – civil society has insisted on the need for an inclusive approach that has survivors and the families of those who are still missing⁴¹ as protagonists and that the disappearances and human rights violations committed by all actors in the conflict be investigated, without discrimination.⁴²

Mediation and the WPS Agenda: Progress, Limitations and Uncertainties

There has been a trend of an increase in women mediators in peace processes since the adoption of resolution 1325. This was pointed out by research launched a few years after the 15th anniversary of the resolution.⁴³ Between 1992 and 2021, 6% of mediators were women (Council of Foreign Relations). Of the 50 processes in 2023 analysed in the new UN Women tool, women made up 13.7% of mediators. However, in line with the broader discussions on participation, the figures and percentages on women's participation in mediation do not provide clues on their own as to whether mediators integrate approaches that take into account gender inequalities, whether they promote their overcoming, and clues about their results.

Aggestam and Svensson have identified five typologies in relation to the position, organization and rank of women mediators: 1) senior representatives of international organizations, although not all of them are chief mediators, 2) lower-ranking mediators from small countries, 3) senior ministers from small or intermediate countries, 4) “power” mediators, with examples such as mediators from the United States, and (5) internal mediators, a category that refers to, for example, women supported by women's groups involved in the negotiations.⁴⁴

More attention is needed to the qualitative dimension of mediation practice with respect to the gender dimension and to the factors and mechanisms of influence. For example, the case of the peace process in Moldova points to the limitations of mediation mandates. In this process, negotiations between the delegations of Moldova and Transnistria, led respectively by Oleg Serebrian and Vitaly Ignatiev, were facilitated in 2024 by an OSCE team

composed of the head of mission (Kelly Keiderling), the deputy head of mission (Izabela Sylwia Hartmann), and between two and three members of the Political Office. According to the OSCE, the topics for discussion were proposed by the parties, without the OSCE having the prerogative to propose topics, including gender-specific issues.⁴⁵

However, even when there are obstacles to broadening the range of issues, gender approaches in mediation can encompass multiple other areas, such as how to address the issues under discussion, interactions and consultations with a multiplicity of civil society actors, including women's organizations, among others. For example, the OSCE mission in Moldova itself interacted in 2024 with the Women's Advisory Council for Sustainable Peacebuilding (an informal body, composed of 7 women from civil society and experts from the right bank of the Dniester/Nistru River and seven others from the left, and supported by UN Women). The OSCE's objective in these interactions was to advise its participants on engagement and advocacy with chief negotiators for the inclusion in the negotiating agenda of issues identified by the Women's Advisory Council.⁴⁶ In South Sudan, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) supported in 2024 with funding the participation of five women representatives of the South Sudan Women's Bloc, academia and civil society organizations to participate as observers in the peace negotiations known as the Tumani Initiative. Overall, however, women's participation in this process was residual.⁴⁷ In Cyprus, despite the stagnation of the process and the difficulties faced by the Technical Committee on Gender Equality, a certain boost was given in 2024 to inclusive participation by the then new personal envoy of the UN Secretary-General, María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar, a former Colombian minister and former negotiator of Colombia's peace process with the FARC.

41. Mustafa, W., *The families of Syria's disappeared are asking for the truth. Our country cannot rebuild until we have it*, *The Guardian*, 2 October 2025.

42. ICJT, ICTJ Welcomes Establishment of Syria's New National Commissions for Transitional Justice and the Missing, 22 May 2025; Human Rights Watch, *Syria's Transitional Justice Commission: A Missed Opportunity for Victim-Led Justice*, 19 May 2025.

43. Aggestam, K., Svensson, I., 2018, op.cit.

44. Ibid.

45. Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus, 2024. Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2025.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

Cuéllar held meetings with women's organizations, within the framework of consultations with social actors during her mandate, which facilitated exchanges of information and transmission of demands.

It remains to be seen how the field of mediation will evolve in terms of gender, in the face of a panorama of transformations in armed conflicts and tensions and in the mediation ecosystem itself: greater fragmentation of armed actors and mediators, more violent conflicts, projection of interests and geopolitical divisions in conflicts and in peace processes, increase in policies contrary to women's human rights, among others. Although the role

More attention is needed to the qualitative dimension of mediation with respect to the gender dimension and the mechanisms of influence

of the UN as the main mediating actor has been reduced, it continues to be the actor with the most active presence in the field of mediation and the mediating actor with the greatest capacity to deploy the WPS agenda. However, peace processes such as those in Syria (in their format prior to the overthrow of the al-Assad regime), Libya and Yemen have highlighted the enormous limitations of the UN as a gender-sensitive mediation actor. On a positive note, the AU launched the so-called Swakopmund Process in 2024, which seeks to promote greater participation of women in peace processes in Africa. Among other commitments, it includes the development of a gender parity policy in the AU's

Table 1. Women mediator networks

Nom	Any de creació
Nordic Women Mediators (NWM)	2015
NWM – Denmark ⁴⁸	2015
NWM – Finland ⁴⁹	2015
NWM – Iceland ⁵⁰	2015
NWM – Norway ⁵¹	2015
Swedish Women's Mediation Network ⁵²	2015
FemWise-Africa (Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation)	2017
Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN)	2017
South Caucasus Network of Women Mediators	2018
Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC)	2018
Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks	2019
MWMN - Antenna Cyprus ⁵³	2019
MWMN - Turkey Antenna ⁵⁴	2019
FemWise-ECOWAS ⁵⁵	2019
Arab Women Mediators Network (League of Arab States)	2020
Southeast Asian Network of Women Peace Negotiators and Mediators (SEANWPNM)	2020
Southeast Asian Women Peace Mediators (SEAWPM)	2020
OSCE Networking Platform for Women Leaders (peacebuilders & mediators)	2021
Regional Network of Mediators of the Southern Cone (RNMSC)	2021
ECCAS Women Mediators' Network	2022
Pacific Women Mediators Network (PWMN)	2023
Ibero-American Network of Women Mediators	2023
SADC Network of Women Mediators	2025

Source: Authors.

48. State network that, in turn, is part of the regional network Nordic Women Mediators (NWM).
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. A national network that, in turn, is part of the regional network Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN).
54. A national network that, in turn, is part of the regional network Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN).
55. Regional network that, in turn, is part of the continental FemWise-ECOWAS network.

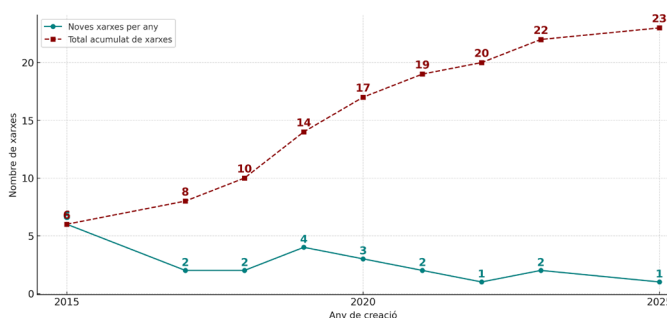
mediation and co-mediation efforts. In addition, women mediator networks have continued to expand, although their capacity to effectively influence conflicts and ongoing processes is relative.

Other global and regional developments throw uncertainty. The trend of greater involvement of emerging mediator States has not translated, for the time being, into a boost to gender-sensitive mediation practices, but often this type of actors performs functions of mediation and facilitation of masculinized and exclusionary negotiation processes, such as Türkiye in the processes of Ethiopia – Somalia (Somaliland), Somalia – Somaliland, Russia-Ukraine; United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Eritrea-Ethiopia; Ethiopia-Somalia (Somaliland) and Israel-Palestine; Saudi Arabia in Sudan, Yemen and Russia-Ukraine; among others.⁵⁶ In addition, in many cases, these are States with internal policies that face contestation from feminist organizations and collectives and women's human rights activists due to setbacks in those countries in terms of rights, criminalization and persecution of feminist protests and anti-LGTBIQ+ policies.

3. Peace agreements and a gender perspective

In recent decades, a significant number of peace agreements have been signed in multiple armed conflicts. Some of these texts have made it possible to put an end to open armed conflicts with significant impacts on the population of the affected territories. Thus, in 2005 the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding ended the armed conflict in Aceh (Indonesia); in 2006, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement brought an end to the armed conflict in Nepal; in 2014, the Global Agreement on Bangsamoro was signed, ending the armed conflict between the MILF and the Government of the Philippines on the island of Mindanao; or in 2016 the Government of Colombia and the FARC sealed peace with the signing of the Final Peace Agreement. These are agreements with a global character, which address the substantive aspects of an armed conflict. Others have been preliminary agreements that have laid the foundations for future negotiations – such as the agreement signed in 2025 between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda or the Framework Agreement between the Indian government and the Naga armed group NSCN(IM) in 2015 – or have addressed partial aspects such as ceasefire agreements or specific issues included in the negotiating agendas of the actors in the conflict. Peace

Figure 1. Evolution of women mediator networks



Source: Authors.

agreements emerge as public “contracts” between the parties to the conflict and have been defined as a “formal, publicly available document produced after discussion with conflict protagonists and mutually agreed to by some or all of them, addressing conflict with a view to ending it”.⁵⁷ The importance of peace agreements as a tool for peacebuilding in an inclusive way was established in resolution 1325 itself, which already “calls on all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective”. In any case, throughout the two and a half decades of the agenda implementation, in the same way as armed conflicts and peace negotiations, these agreements have generally been exclusive with respect to the demands and proposals of women affected by armed conflicts.

The inclusion of the gender perspective in the peace agreements makes it clear that the participation of women and actors sensitive to gender equality has led to concrete results in a given peace process. In addition, inclusivity brings greater legitimacy and sustainability to agreements.⁵⁸ It should be added that the fact that peace agreements have gender provisions also has an



Signing of the Global Agreement on Bangsamoro in Mindanao Source: OPAPRU

56. Non-exhaustive list of participation of emerging countries in mediation and facilitation functions in peace processes. For more information see Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus, 2024. Report on Trends and Scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2025.

57. Bell, C. and Wise, L., *Peace processes and their agreements in Contemporary Peacemaking: Peace Processes, Peacebuilding and Conflict*, Springer, 2022.

58. Ibid.

impact on women's opportunities for political and social participation after the end of the armed conflict and, therefore, also on possible progress on gender equality in post-conflict societies.⁵⁹ Although from the outset, women's participation was one of the central axes of action in the implementation of the WPS agenda, multiple evidences show that mere participation is not a guarantee of transformation or emancipatory results in peace processes and that, frequently, women can't influence the outcome of negotiations.⁶⁰

The gender provisions in the peace agreements included in the agreements signed in recent decades, in line with the commitments indicated by the WPS agenda, have been specified in different ways in the text of the agreements, through references to legal texts relating to the recognition of women's rights, the establishment of affirmative action measures for traditionally excluded populations, the recognition of gender-specific impacts of armed conflict, and proposals for legislative transformations aimed at achieving greater levels of equality in post-conflict societies. True and Riveros-Morales point to five types of gender clauses concerning: 1) participation (gender quotas, national machineries for women, in government bodies and in post-conflict governance); (2) post-conflict and transitional justice aspects (accountability, consideration of women's special needs during repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration); 3) violence against women (e.g., sexual violence in ceasefire agreements); 4) economic empowerment and development (land and inheritance rights, women's roles in implementation, education, capacity building, special attention to women heads of household); and 5) references to international legal or human rights mechanisms specific to women (CEDAW or resolution 1325).⁶¹

Some agreements signed in recent years have included some of these issues in their formulations. Thus, for example, the agreement reached between Ethiopia

and the political-military authorities of Tigray in 2022 included issues relating to gender-based violence and sexual violence, the promotion of family reunification, and the specific needs of what the agreement describes as "vulnerable groups", in which the document includes women, minors and the elderly, in the provision of humanitarian aid. The agreement resulting from Tumaini's initiative in July 2024 establishes a 35% quota for women in public institutions, as well as the representation of young people and other people with special needs. The 2020 Sudan agreement recognized the importance of

women's participation in transitional justice mechanisms. The National Consensus for an Inclusive Transition and Transparent Elections reached in Haiti in 2022 also established quotas for women's participation in different electoral bodies agreed in the agreement.

Peace processes have been one of the ways in which progress has been assessed in the implementation of the WPS agenda,⁶² and the content of the agreements resulting from

the negotiations is one of the most evident signs of the capacity to permeate the negotiations. The evaluation of the agenda carried out in 2015 pointed to an increase in mentions of issues related to gender equality and women's rights after the adoption of resolution 1325, noting that it had gone from 11% of agreements prior to the year 2000 to 27% after this year.⁶³ However, it should be noted that according to the data collected and analysed by PeaceRep this figure has hardly changed since then. PeaceRep's research indicates that since 2018, mentions of women, girls, sexual or gender-based violence have remained between 20% and 30%, with 2024 being the year with the highest percentage (31%).⁶⁴ The United Nations Secretary-General, in his 2024 report, with data relating to the previous year, points out that only 8 of the 31 peace agreements signed in 2023 included explicit references to women, girls, gender or sexual violence. This figure represented a percentage of 26% of deals, a decline from 28% in 2022.

Since 2000, references to gender equality in peace agreements have increased, but progress has been minimal since then

Box 3. Yemen: Women and Implementation of Agreements Despite Marginalization in Track I

Yemeni activists and women's organizations have persistently tried to play a substantive role in the

different high-level negotiation spaces that have been established in recent years to address the conflict in the

59. True, J. and Riveros-Morales, Y., *Towards inclusive peace: Analysing gender-sensitive peace agreements 2000–2016*. *International Political Science Review*, 40(1), 2019, 23–40.

60. Fal-Dutra Santos, A., *Towards gender-equal peace: From "counting women" to meaningful participation*. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2021.

61. True, J. and Riveros-Morales, Y., 2019, op.cit.

62. Wise, L., and Campbell, F., *Women, Peace and Security at 25: Assessing Implementation through Gender Perspectives in Peace Agreements*, PeaceRep, 2025.

63. Coomaraswamy, R., *Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing Peace. A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*, UN Women, 2015.

64. Wise, L. and Campbell, F., 2025, op.cit.

country, but they have faced enormous resistance, and the dynamics of exclusion have persisted. Although the National Dialogue held in the country between 2013 and 2014 concluded with a commitment for women to have at least 30% representation in political decision-making spaces, Yemeni women only accounted for 12% of the internationally recognised government delegation at the talks held in Kuwait in 2016 (total absence from the al-Houthi delegation), only 4% in the negotiations that led to the Stockholm Agreement in 2018 and none in the talks to resolve the struggles in the anti-al-Houthi camp that led to the Riyadh agreement in 2019.⁶⁵

Despite this marginalization, Yemeni women have continued to try to influence negotiation efforts through other mechanisms – including the Yemeni Women Pact for Peace and Security (Tawafuq) and the Technical Advisory Group assisting the UN Special Envoy for Yemen – and have

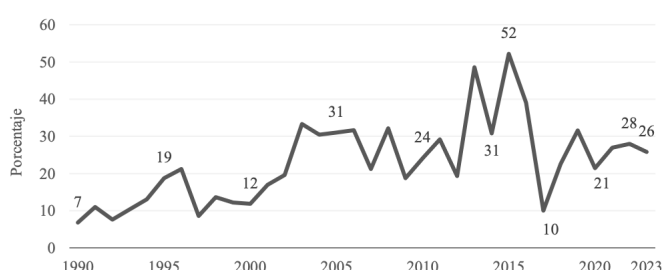
continued to work for peacebuilding. Its work has been particularly outstanding in the field of local mediation⁶⁶ and on issues such as the facilitation of humanitarian access to certain areas, the fight against child marriage or the reintegration of child soldiers. An issue in which they have also played an important role has been the release of prisoners. In this way, the action of Yemeni women has complemented in practice the work of other mediating actors (mainly the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross) involved in the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, which, among its three points, establishes a commitment by the parties – the al-Houthis and the internationally recognized Yemeni government – to the exchange of prisoners.⁶⁷ This contribution of women has hardly been publicly recognized and is even more notorious, if possible, considering that after the approval of the Stockholm Agreement, no woman was appointed to the committees established for its implementation.⁶⁸

Agreements and rights of the LGBTI population

The WPS agenda establishes the importance of the inclusion of a gender perspective in peace agreements. However, this perspective has been interpreted restrictively throughout the more than two decades of application, and in almost exclusive reference to women's rights. Analysis of more than 1,500 peace agreements signed between 1990 and 2015 showed that only nine of them had included any reference to sexual orientation in their content.⁶⁹ Bell points out that, in addition, of these nine references, only six of them do so in a positive sense of provision of rights, while three were restrictive in nature. Issues related to the rights of the LGBTIQ+ population face serious difficulties in making their way both in the agendas of the peace negotiations and in the agreements that emerge from the dialogues. Colombia's peace agreement signed in 2016 between the government and the armed group FARC-EP illustrates the possibility of including aspects of these rights in a peace agreement.

From a broader perspective, LGBTIQ+ rights issues have faced numerous obstacles to making their way onto the peace and security agendas of the United Nations, including the Security Council. Some progress in recent years includes

Figure 2. Percentage of Peace agreements with provisions referring to women, girls and gender, 1990-2003



Source: UN Secretary-General, Women and Peace and Security. Report of the Secretary-General S/2024/671, 24 September 2024

the adoption in 2024 by the UN Secretariat of a strategy for the protection of LGBTIQ+ people against violence and discrimination.⁷⁰ This strategy includes, among others, the Department of Political Affairs and Peacebuilding, the Department of Peace Operations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, all of which are of enormous relevance to the negotiation of peace agreements and the implementation of the WPS agenda.

65. Council on Foreign Relations, *Yemen: Current Peace Effort*, Women's Participation in Peace Processes, (accessed 10 October 2025).

66. UN Women, *Women's participation in local mediation: Lessons from Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen*, 2022.

67. UNMHA, *Stockholm Agreement*, 13 December 2018.

68. Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, *UN Security Council Briefing on Yemen by Linda Al Obahi*, 12 September 2024.

69. Bell, C., *Gender Violence in Conflict and Peace Processes: The Neglect of LGBT Security*, Peace Rep, 22 de enero de 2019.

70. United Nations Secretariat, *United Nations Secretariat Strategy On Protection From Violence And Discrimination Of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex And Queer (Lgbtiq+) Persons*, 2024

Box 4. Colombia's 2026 peace agreement from a gender perspective

In 2016, after four years of peace negotiations, the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP guerrillas signed a peace agreement that has been considered one of the most inclusive from a gender perspective, incorporating gender as one of the priority approaches that permeated the whole of the agreement and that should also inform its implementation. UN Women identifies 100 concrete measures with a gender perspective included in the final agreed text. All the points of the agreement include specific gender measures, so it can be said that the gender approach is incorporated into the agreement in a transversal way. It should be noted that the bodies established for the implementation and monitoring of the agreement itself also incorporate the gender approach. The gender approach of the Colombian agreement not only implies a recognition of women's rights, but also includes the LGBTBI population, being the most advanced agreement in this regard so far.

While the Colombian agreement demonstrated that it was possible to make a qualitative leap in terms of

gender inclusion in peace negotiations, subsequently, in line with the trend towards a reduction in both the number of agreements reached and the degree of completeness that they comprise,⁷¹ no other agreement with the same inclusive character has been achieved.

In addition, the implementation of the agreement has experienced significant challenges and difficulties and the gender approach, specifically, has lagged behind other aspects included in the agreement. One of the biggest obstacles was the endorsement of the agreement itself, since in the plebiscite called by the Government of Colombia to grant popular validation to the agreed text, the agreement was rejected. One of the elements behind the rejection of the agreement was the issue of the gender approach, which was subject to manipulation and disinformation by actors opposed to both the signing of the agreement and the inclusion of issues related to the recognition of the rights of women and the LGBTBI population.

4. Conclusions

Twenty-five years after Resolution 1325, the WPS agenda continues to be a framework used by numerous women's organizations and groups in different parts of the world to defend women's human rights in the face of armed violence, call for ways of effective participation in peace processes and mobilize specific demands related to each context. In the specific area of peace processes, the balance of the 25 years of the WPS agenda shows the relevance of the agenda and concrete progress, albeit slow and fragmented. However, its review also exposes an agenda stressed by an adverse environment: militarization and the use of force to address rising disputes, processes of dialogue and openly patriarchal leadership, and democratic setbacks, among others. This context has eroded the conditions for the promotion of the agenda as a whole and for its deployment as a transformative framework of dynamics of exclusion and inequality, specifically in relation to peace processes and feminist peacebuilding.

This report has analysed some of the dimensions of the WPS agenda in relation to peace processes, pointing out some of the progress made over the past 25 years, but

above all, chronic challenges and a hostile and uncertain current environment for the future of the agenda.

In terms of participation, in these 25 years there have been advances, such as the increase in mediation positions, the institutionalization of expert support on gender equality in peace processes, the expansion of forums and tools such as networks of women mediators, the exchanges of learning between groups of women from different contexts in conflict and peace processes, or the spaces for training and training in negotiation for women participants in negotiations, among others. However, there is still a chronic under-representation of women in formal negotiation spaces. The most recent data show stagnation and even setbacks. This gap is not merely quantitative; it reveals organizational patterns and cultures that continue to privilege masculinized armed elites and exclude women from key phases (pre-negotiations, informal spaces, decision-making).

The comparative evidence accumulated in the last decade reaffirms that women's participation figures in themselves are not enough to move towards transformative peacebuilding. In the quarter of a century of the agenda, emphasis has been placed on the importance of influence

71. Mac Ginty, R., Introduction, in Mac Ginty, R. (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding* (Second). Routledge, 2025.

conditions and mechanisms in gender processes, such as the capacity and power position to influence and the will to defend women's rights in these processes. Otherwise, participation may end up being merely symbolic.

The report also notes the persistence of structural barriers: explicit resistance to their participation; closure of civic space and security risks for women defenders; sustained funding shortfalls for women's organizations; biases and hierarchy that relegate human security and gender violence; and narrow mediation mandates, among others. They are interrelated barriers to peacemaking approaches that prioritize militarized, masculinized, and state-centric visions of violence, peace, and security.

In the face of this, women's organizations persist in the process of articulation, mobilization and proposals for peacebuilding. The combination of diverse forms of articulation and participation has been an element that has increased the capacity for advocacy.

In the field of mediation, the number of women in mediation and dialogue support functions is growing, but the scope of the mandates, the processes environment and the will of the parties in conflict condition the potential of the agenda in these roles. The UN continues to be the actor with the greatest capillarity in deploying the agenda, although processes such as Syria, Libya and Yemen show limits. Regional advances –such as the

AU's Swakopmund Process or the expansion of networks of women mediator – coexist with the rise of emerging mediating states whose praxis reproduces masculinized and non-inclusive formats. The picture is one of a denser mediation ecosystem, but not necessarily more gender-sensitive.

In terms of peace agreements and gender perspective, progress is uneven. After the jump in gender references from 11% (pre-2000) to 27% (post-2000), the proportion has stagnated since 2018 at 20–30%. Deficits persist in areas such as sexual violence, participation, and guarantees for implementation. The process in Colombia (FARC) demonstrated that it is possible to mainstream the gender approach –including LGTBIQ+ rights– but its trajectory highlights the fragility of these advances and the impermeability of other processes to extract lessons. Overall, the WPS agenda has generated some progress in the field of peace processes, but these continue to be spaces of power with hierarchies and gender dynamics and in regional and global environments of growing challenges such as militarization, greater willingness to use force and conflicts with more intense violence, repression against peacebuilders, human rights defenders and other civil society groups, democratic setbacks, growing hate speech and patriarchal leadership. Therefore, greater efforts are needed at multiple levels to sustain and expand the WPS agenda and, specifically, to encourage inclusive peace processes that promote human rights.



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