



Bringing Local Voices to the Regional Arena: A Report on GNWP's Advocacy initiative on Women, Peace and Security in the African Union

By Mavic Cabrera Balleza and Lori Perkovich¹

Background

The global normative framework on the women and peace and security agenda has garnered support in Africa particularly in the African Union (AU) and among some African Member States. Out of the 63 countries² with National Action Plans on the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), 19 are from Africa.

The AU's Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa³ adopted in Maputo, Mozambique on 11 July 2003 contains Article 10 on the Right to Peace. Also known as the Maputo Protocol, it references UNSCR 1325 in its preambular paragraphs. It calls on States Parties to take all appropriate measures to ensure the increased participation of women in programs of education for peace and a culture of peace; and in the structures and processes for conflict prevention, management and resolution at local, national, regional, continental and international levels.

The protocol's Article 9 on the Right to Participation in the Political and Decision-Making Process requires States Parties to take specific positive action to promote participative governance

1 Mavic Cabrera Balleza is the Founder and International Coordinator of GNWP. Lori Perkovich was GNWP's Localization and Peacebuilding Policy Specialist from June 2015 to June 2016.

2 As of May 2016, this includes: Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Lithuania, Mali, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Kosovo and State of Palestine. Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on women and peace and security. S/2016/822. Retrieved from http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2016_822.pdf on March 25, 2017.

3 The full text of the protocol is available here: http://www.achpr.org/files/instruments/women-protocol/achpr_instr_proto_women_eng.pdf



and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures; and ensuring increased and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision-making.

Another important instrument adopted by the AU in support of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 is the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA). Through this Declaration that was endorsed in July 2004, AU Member States agreed to “Ensure the full and effective participation and representation of women in peace process including the prevention, resolution, management of conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction in Africa as stipulated in UN Resolution 1325 (2000) and to also appoint women as Special Envoys and Special Representatives of the African Union.”

Furthermore, AU Member States declared in the SDGEA that: [we]“Commit ourselves to report annually on progress made in terms of gender mainstreaming and to support and champion all issues raised in this Declaration, both at the national and regional levels, and regularly provide each other with updates on progress made during our Ordinary Sessions.”

Additionally, the AU Member States said in the SDGEA: “We request the chairperson of the African Union Commission to submit, for our consideration, an annual report, during our ordinary sessions, on measures taken to implement the principle of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, and all issues raised in this Declaration both at the national and regional levels.”

The Maputo Protocol and the SDGEA have a strong foundation in the AU Constitutive Act, which is the constitutional framework promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment; the AU Gender Policy, which provides a policy framework for gender and women’s rights; the African Women’s Decade, which is the AU’s implementation framework and the Fund for African Women, which provides the financial framework.

Clearly, the African Union has developed an extensive and progressive body of legal instruments to promote gender equality, women’s rights, peace and security.

However, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights notes that out of 54 AU Member States, only 36 States⁴ have signed and ratified the Maputo Protocol. It is also a concern that only nine States⁵ have submitted complete reports to the Commission.

4 Ratification Table: Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Retrieved from <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/women-protocol/ratification/> on March 24, 2017.

5 State Reports and Concluding Observations. n.d. Retrieved from <http://www.achpr.org/states/reports-and-concluding-observations/> on March 24, 2017.



Implementation (or lack thereof?)

Despite the sophisticated normative frameworks, the majority of African women and girls still do not enjoy their rights. They continue to face multiple barriers to gender equality. These include economic exclusion and financial systems that discriminate against women; under-representation in political decision-making and public life; lack of access to education and poor retention of girls in schools; sexual and gender-based violence, and harmful traditional practices. Furthermore, women are excluded from peace negotiations either as lead mediators or as members of the negotiating teams of conflicting parties—among other peace processes. The World Bank's Africa Region Gender Action Plan for 2013-2017⁶ notes that an African woman faces 1 in 31 chance of dying from complications due to pregnancy or childbirth, compared to a 1 in 4,300 chance in the developed world.

Attitudes and cultural norms perpetuate many of these inequalities across generations. Statistics show that 81 percent of Ethiopian women ages 15-49 think that being beaten by their husbands is a justifiable punishment for disagreeing with him, burning the food or refusing to have sex. Child, early and forced marriage is still sanctioned in some local communities.

Adoption of a policy and ratification of a protocol are big steps in policy and legal advocacy. This process elevates issues to the policy and legal arenas and institutionalizes the response from governments or multilateral institutions such as the UN and the AU. However, adoption of a policy or ratification of a treaty are not and should not be the end goal. Effective implementation is.

It is not uncommon that even when governments drafted a treaty or sponsored the adoption of a policy, they do not take the necessary steps to implement it in their countries. Faiza J. Mohamed of the network Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR)⁷ cites Sudan, one of the original State Parties that contributed to the drafting of the Maputo Protocol and one of the first African countries to sign the Protocol in 2008. Despite its key role in the drafting of the Maputo Protocol, Sudan has stalled in ratifying the essential women's rights instrument. It has remained unaccountable for the continuous and significant abuses being committed against the country's women and girls.

For ratification to be meaningful, States Parties must review their domestic laws and ensure that they are aligned with the protocol's provisions. With regards to UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda, 19 African member states have adopted national action plans (NAPs). However, many of these plans are not effectively implemented due to lack of funding for implementation, absence of a systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanism, weakness in intra-government

⁶ The World Bank's Africa Region Gender Action Plan for 2013-2017. Retrieved from <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFRICA/Resources/AFR-Gender-Action-Plan-FY13-17.pdf> on March 25, 2017.

⁷ 11 Years of the Maputo Protocol: Women's Progress and Challenges. n.d. Retrieved from <http://www.soawr.org/blog/11-years-maputo-protocol-women%E2%80%99s-progress-and-challenges-faiza-j-mohamed> on March 25, 2017.



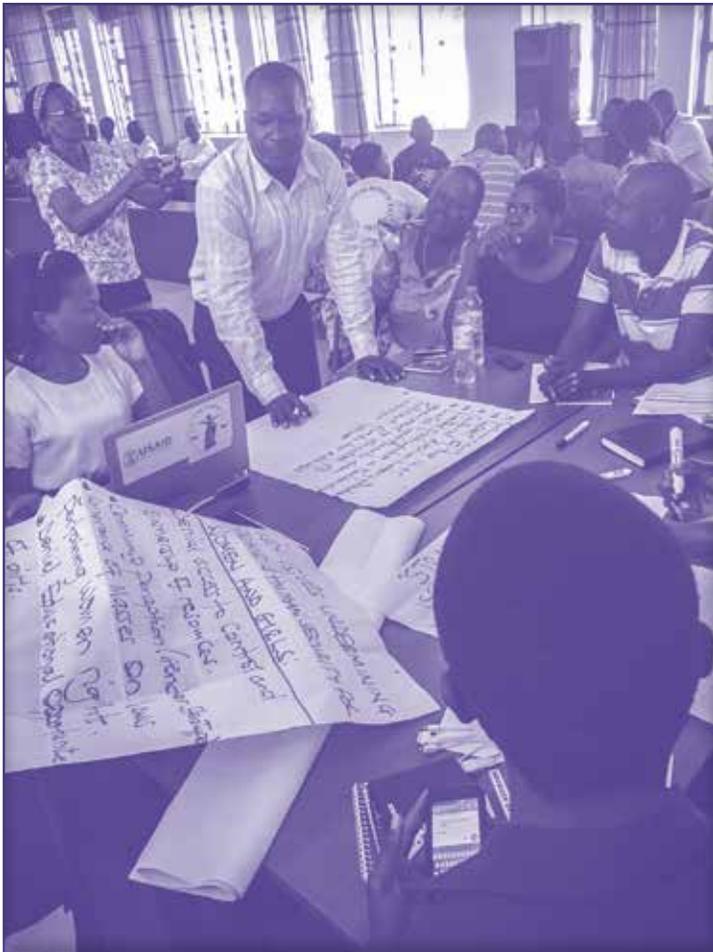
coordination and lack of political will among concerned government authorities. Furthermore, a number of these NAPs such as the ones in Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Uganda have now expired.

Successful implementation

The picture is not completely bleak, however. In various discussions at the AU, the GNWP delegation cited the following positive experiences in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the supporting of WPS resolutions using Localization as a strategy:

Sierra Leone's Local Development Plans

The implementation of Sierra Leone's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 (SiLNAP) through integration in local development plans is now part of the performance evaluation of local district officials. In other words, the performance of mayors, local councilors and other local officials in Sierra Leone are reviewed based on how they have implemented the SiLNAP.



The Localization program in Sierra Leone has also led to the establishment of Local Steering Committees. These committees team up with the National Steering Committee composed of government and civil society and led by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs in the implementation of SiLNAP across the country. The training for customary law officers on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 is also an important achievement of the Localization program.

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in partnership with civil society developed Localization of SiLNAP Guidelines. These Guidelines serve as a primary resource material in order for the local authorities to implement the SiLNAP in their local districts.

Reducing sexual and gender-based violence in Uganda

Between 2012-2016, local authorities and civil society groups in Amuria, Bushenyi, Dokolo, Kitgum and Lira Districts in Uganda developed Local Action Plans (LAPs) on UNSCR 1325 and 1820, which focus on sexual and gender-based violence. Research findings reveal that Localization has resulted in reduced incidence of sexual and gender-based violence in those districts.



GNWP at the AU Summit

As part of its project FROM WORDS TO ACTIONS: An integrated approach towards effective implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 at local, national, regional and global levels, supported by the Austrian Development Cooperation, GNWP and its members and partners from Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda participated in the African Union (AU) Gender Pre-summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) workshop from January 19-22, 2016. In addition, the GNWP delegation had bilateral meetings with the Office of the AU Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security; the Director for Women, Gender and Development of the African Union Commission; the Senior Gender Advisor of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); the UN Women Country Director for South Sudan; and the Director for Gender at the Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs of Kenya.



The AU Gender Pre-Summit was organized by the African Union Commission Directorate of Women, Gender and Development, GIMAC, and other AU partners, under the Presidency of H.E Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the AU Commission, as a part of the 2016 African Year of Human Rights, with a particular focus on the rights of women. A wide range of stakeholders participated in the consultation, including Ministers of Gender, AU member state representatives and women and youth from civil society in Africa and the diaspora to discuss gender and economic empowerment.

Chair HE Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini- Zuma opened by stating that Africa has made some progress but can't wait for 80 years, the current rate, for women's equality. Dr. Priscilla Joseph, Chair of the South Sudan Women's Peace Network, explained that gender equality is very important, it cannot be achieved when there is conflict and noted that within Eastern and Central Africa alone, several countries are in conflict: Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and South Sudan.

Attendance at the Gender pre-summit was particularly significant in 2016 because this year represents numerous milestones for the African continent and the global women's agenda for gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment. The year 2016 marked the 30th anniversary of the coming into force of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1986); the beginning of the second phase of the African Women's Decade 2010-2020; commemoration of 36 years since the adoption of CEDAW; and the 21st anniversary of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most comprehensive agenda on women's rights, women's empowerment and gender equality.



The overall objective of the Gender Pre-Summit was to bring together voices of key actors in the gender equality and women's empowerment arena, and increase dialogue between AU Member States, regional intergovernmental institutions, civil society and development partners on the opportunities, gaps and solutions for enhancing women's economic empowerment. It also aimed to ensure that women are at the forefront of sustainable development, peace, and economic growth in Africa; and influence and shape the discussions and decisions that will be adopted by Member States during the AU Summit.

The main output document of the Gender Pre-Summit is the Communiqué⁸ adopted by Ministers of the AU in charge of Gender and Women's Affairs, representatives of Regional Economic Communities (RECs), intergovernmental conferences, and members of the GIMAC network, Civil Society Organizations, UN Agencies, African Development Bank, development partners and private sector organizations. Some of the important commitments made by these actors are the following:

- ▶ Assess progress on women's participation and decision making in politics, public office, the judiciary and other public spheres at all levels; identifying the challenges and barriers hindering their effective participation as well as developing and implementing strategies to accelerate implementation;
- ▶ Facilitate consultations and agreement on the opportunities, gaps and solutions for enhancing women's socio-economic empowerment and ensuring that women are at the center of sustainable development, peace and security, regional integration and economic growth in Africa; and
- ▶ Accelerate the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda on the continent through the establishment of a continental results framework to monitor and report on national and regional Women, Peace and Security commitments at all levels, learning from the outcomes of the Global Study on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, among other key studies, and in collaboration with RECs, the UN, and civil society.

The communiqué also presented the following recommendations to the AU Commission, Regional Economic Communities and Member States:

- ▶ Organize a continental Campaign on the ratification and domestication of the Maputo Protocol and eradication of harmful traditional practices, align national legislations to reflect women's sexual and reproductive health rights, create a legal fund for women victims of human rights violations; hold perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse accountable, and ensure women's effective inclusion and participation in peace dialogues;
- ▶ Increase budget allocations to programs and organizations dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment and strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to ensure effective mainstreaming of priority actions in all areas;

⁸ 8th African Union Gender Pre-Summit on the margins of the 26th AU Summit: Communiqué. January 20, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.tralac.org/images/docs/9184/8th-african-union-gender-pre-summit-on-the-margins-of-the-26th-au-summit-communiqué-january-2016.pdf> on March 25, 2017.



- ▶ Adopt an integrated approach to reinvigorate dialogue between stakeholders participation, in playing a leadership role in public office by 2020 on the opportunities, gaps and solutions for enhancing women's economic empowerment and ensure that women are at the center of sustainable development, peace, regional integration and economic growth initiatives in Africa; and
- ▶ Engage practitioners, policy-makers, civil society organizations, and a broad range of stakeholders to review the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda on the continent, learn from various experiences and challenges, and reflect critically on what is needed to accelerate implementation and monitoring at all levels, as well as on the way forward.

Targeted advocacy and bilateral meetings

In all of the fora and bilateral meetings attended at the AU, the GNWP delegation consistently advocated for the implementation of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan between the South Sudan Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement In Opposition (SPLM-IO) and the central role of women's civil society organizations in the implementation of the agreement. In the same meetings, GNWP members presented their experiences in the Localization of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 program and promoted it as an effective strategy in the implementation of the WPS resolutions in local communities particularly those that are directly affected by violent conflicts.

The GNWP delegation also discussed its support to the Consortium of Organizations for Women of South Sudan, who were calling for the appointment of a female Speaker of the parliament and implementation of the 25 percent quota in women's representation in the Transitional Government of National Unity. The delegation had a dedicated discussion on this subject with Ms. Bineta Diop, the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security as well as with other AU officials.

Seminar on South Sudan

GNWP participated at the Civil Society Seminar "In Solidarity with the people of South Sudan" organized by Oxfam and Crisis Action on January 18, 2016. At this event, the participants examined the nexus between peace and accountability, and whether accountability can act as an impetus for peace or if peace must first be achieved at all costs.

GNWP expressed its support for the establishment of an AU-led hybrid court and other transitional justice mechanisms for South Sudan. GNWP also emphasized the central role of women civil society in the implementation of the agreement and in the documentation of evidence for an eventual hybrid court. The mandate of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission's (JMEC) to oversee the implementation of the peace agreement was likewise discussed at this seminar. GNWP also joined the seminar participants in calling on the Government of South Sudan and the SPLM-IO to ensure the protection of civil society and respect of human rights for all.



Meeting with Kenya's Director of Gender

On January 18, 2016, GNWP and its members also had a meeting with Ms. Katherine Muoki, the Director of Gender at the Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs (MPSYGA) of Kenya.



Ms. Muoki discussed the status of the Kenyan National Action Plan (KNAP) and the implementation and coordination mechanism that is being developed. GNWP presented its plan for Localization workshops in partnership with Kenyan civil society and local authorities and how it can be a significant contribution to the implementation. At this meeting, GNWP representatives informed Ms. Muoki of their travel schedule to Kenya to prepare for the Localization workshops. They also requested a meeting with the Permanent Secretary of the MPSYGA in Nairobi to offer support to the implementation of the KNAP. The meetings with the MPSYGA that occurred in Addis Ababa and in Nairobi on January 25, 2016, proved to be instrumental to the adoption of the KNAP because the Localization plans became a “positive pressure” to the government. During the meeting in Nairobi, the MPSYGA representative commented that it would be more logical and more strategic to conduct the Localization workshop series after the KNAP was adopted.

The KNAP was subsequently adopted on March 8, 2016 after more than four years of drafting process.



Meetings with AU officials

On January 22, 2016, at the AU, the GNWP delegation met with Ms. Mahawa Kaba Wheeler, Director Women, Gender and Development, African Union; Dr. Jean Bosco Butera, Advisor, African Union; Ms. Victoria Maloka, HoD AUC WGDD, African Union; and Ms. Kayitesi Jeanne Flora, Office of Human Rights, African Union. GNWP and its members presented their work in Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda, with specific emphasis on the Localization program. Dr. Butera explained that the AU is interested in working together in building upon current policies at the country level and directly with CSOs. Ms. Maloka was

interested in the possibilities associated with Localization of UNSCR 1325 because it translates difficult to understand legalistic abstracts of the international instruments to the local language; and makes concepts understandable, relatable and implementable at local level. Ms. Kaba Wheeler provided further feedback on Localization explaining that these types of best practices (localization) are what the AU is looking for, and that scalability of a program is very important.

The outcome of this meeting was an invitation for GNWP to make a presentation on the Localization process in Africa at next AU Summit and/or at one of their department meetings with Member States.



Meeting with the UN Economic Commission for Africa

The GNWP delegation also met with Ms. Ngone Diop, Chief Gender Equality and Women in Development, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), on January 22, 2016. The focus of the discussion was the Localization program. Ms. Diop explained that her work focuses on economics, social issues, human rights, and violence against women. She described her interest in mechanisms that provide concrete, sustainable actions on ground, including costing of the process.



The outcome of the meeting was an offer for GNWP to write a policy brief about the Localization process in Africa for an upcoming UN ECA report.

Reflections from GNWP members and partners

GNWP members and partners who attended the GIMAC workshop and AU Gender Pre-Summit as well as the bilateral and targeted advocacy meetings reflected on their participation.

“Participating in GIMAC workshop was an opportunity to show how GNWP members in Africa can strategize and make presentations at GIMAC and the AU on our work such as Localization and Monitoring implementation of the WPS agenda,” said Ms. Robinah Rubimbwa from the Coalition for Action on Resolution 1325 in Uganda. The summit also afforded her the opportunity to participate in discussions that informed what the AU Member States need to do to actualize the benefits behind the intention of Agenda 2063. Rubimbwa, said that she, “found the AU a richer discussion than the GIMAC, the process notwithstanding.”

Ms. Emma Mogaka, Executive Director of the Rural Women’s Peace Link – Kenya explained that the forums helped her “view women’s rights issues from a global and regional perspective and see how RWPL’s work contributes to the regional and global goals.” Ms. Mogaka noted that after the AU meetings, she realized that RWPL must strengthen its documentation and tell its stories better. She said, “We also need to develop a tracking system to know how our work contributes to different development goals.” The forums provided Ms. Mogaka with an opportunity to network with women from different parts of Africa and the diaspora and engage in conversations on how to strengthen women’s rights work as well as to learn new strategies from other organizations





to address challenges in her community. She summarized her learning from this AU advocacy initiative as follows:

- ▶ Build strategic partnerships with the National and County Governments;
- ▶ Translate international instruments for the rural communities and build their capacity to understand them and what they mean so as to build mutual accountability;
- ▶ Be creative and innovative in our work: tell stories, use art and music to pass messages to our beneficiaries so as to enhance understanding and leave lasting impressions;
- ▶ Use relevant and credible data to back up our advocacy work;
- ▶ Build on our multi-sectoral approach to bring together all relevant stakeholders to achieve the maximum impact.

Dr. Priscilla Joseph, Chair of the South Sudan Women's Peace Network, said, "The Gender Pre-Summit was a great opportunity for members of the network to meet with the Minister [of Gender] who promised to have the network more involved in peace discussions in South Sudan," she said. "Women need to claim their space to influence peace, not just through numbers, but through strategic vision for maximum impact," Joseph added.

Conclusions

The African Union (AU) Gender Pre-Summits are organized before each Summit of the AU to bring together the voices of key actors in the gender equality and women's empowerment arena to update and discuss critical developments related to gender equality and women's empowerment, with the aim of influencing and shaping the discussions and decisions of scheduled AU Summits. Building on the AU's obligations on gender equality and women's empowerment outlined in its legal instruments, these preparatory meetings serve as an important vehicle to incorporate gender perspectives into the highest decision-making body of the AU, thus ensuring that gender and women's concerns remain on the high priority list of the AU.

The Gender Pre-Summits are organized by the AU Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) in collaboration with other Departments of the AU Commission (AUC) and development partners. Initially conceived as civil society consultation platforms, the Gender Pre-Summits now draw the participation of African Ministers responsible for Gender and Women Affairs, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), AU organs, AUC Departments, the private sector, United Nations (UN) agencies and development partners. This is in line with the decision of the Ministerial Consultation with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) held on 24 June 2014, in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, that the AUC should henceforth have inclusive consultative processes involving all relevant stakeholders within the gender equality and women's empowerment sector. This process can be likened with the annual sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the UN Headquarters in New York. The Agreed Conclusions, the outcome document from the CSW sessions inform other policy discussions



in the UN system in order for gender to be mainstreamed in other policies. Women's groups and other civil society actors use the Agreed Conclusions to hold governments and UN entities accountable to their commitments on women's rights and women's empowerment and gender equality.

As the 2015 Global Study on UNSCR 1325⁹ stresses, regional organizations such as the AU give a new opportunity for WPS issues to have more focused energy and direction. As the conflicts among countries within the same region tend to be more interrelated, so are the solutions. Ownership of regional policies and normative frameworks may also be easier to attain as such policies and frameworks cannot be dismissed as not applicable or not reflective of the realities on the ground.

Regional policy discussion and decision-making spaces such as the AU Pre-Summit on Gender and the AU Summit itself are not only opportunities to lobby governments. They are also critical spaces for civil society to showcase their work and generate more support. Equally important, they are spaces for civil society to network, forge solidarity and build movements. At the GIMAC workshop and the AU Pre-Summit on Gender the GNWP members and partners from Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda provided support to Burundian women's organizations that were lobbying the AU to investigate the human rights violations in their country. At the same time, they also exchanged experiences and lessons learned from their work on their respective countries' NAPs on UNSCR 1325. Regional advocacy is thus critical in the overall strategy for implementation of the WPS resolutions. Complemented by local, national and global advocacy efforts, regional advocacy will contribute to making effective implementation of Resolution 1325 a standard practice.

⁹ Preventing Conflict. Transforming Justice Securing the Peace. A Global Study on UNSCR 1325. Accessed from <http://wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf> on March 25, 2016.

