Mapping and Analysis of Peacebuilding Initiatives in Kenya

2021
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a report on the status of existing peacebuilding initiatives, and it provides an analysis of the peacebuilding environment in Kenya to help strengthen the effective implementation of the second Kenya National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) for the period 2020 to 2024. The report reflects the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, including local communities, civil society, government actors and academia. Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL) undertook the research with support from the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) under the framework of the project “Local communities build and sustain peace: Strengthening women and youth participation in building sustainable peace,” supported by the Austrian Development Agency.

This project seeks to increase the level of women’s participation in decision-making in peace and security and political processes.

The mapping exercise was conducted in the Uasin Gishu and Bungoma Counties with diverse stakeholders serving as key informants. Its findings provide important insights into the challenges and opportunities for WPS implementation in Kenya. This report will act as a resource for supporting the implementation of Kenya’s second NAP on WPS and as a basis for key stakeholders at local and national levels to initiate dialogue and become more effective in responding to the persistent challenges to women’s meaningful participation in building sustainable peace.
BACKGROUND

When women, young women and girls have the skills to participate in decision-making about peace and security, they can be critical drivers for peace and security. Inclusive societies, where women are economically and socially empowered, tend to be more stable. Moreover, the experiences of women and girls — including violence against women and gender-based restrictions of rights — often presage the emergence or escalation of security threats. A community or nation that listens to its women and girls is therefore advantaged in the planning and implementation of peace and security interventions.

Ten United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) collectively make up the WPS agenda at the global level. The first and most well-known of these resolutions — UNSCR 1325 — marked its 20th anniversary in 2020. It was adopted on 31 October 2000 by the UN Security Council and is widely recognized as a landmark resolution due to its recognition of the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women, as well as their unique roles in and contributions to building sustainable peace. In 2007, the UN Secretary-General called on Member States to adopt NAPs to ensure effective implementation of the WPS agenda. This call was reiterated in UNSCR 1889 (2009). As of 2020, 85 countries have adopted NAPs on WPS.

NAPs are an important tool in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 because, with the right components, they help articulate WPS priorities relevant to the specific peace and security situation in each country, increase the visibility of efforts on WPS through transparent reporting, enhance coherence and coordination within the government, strengthen ownership and awareness of the agenda, and ensure more systematic monitoring and evaluation, thus enhancing accountability. To be effective, NAPs should include clear mechanisms for reporting, creating awareness, enhancing capacities, and consulting with and engaging diverse stakeholders, including women peacebuilders from diverse backgrounds.

Kenyan National Action Plans (KNAPs) are guided by this framework. Kenya adopted its first NAP in 2016. The first KNAP was a three-year strategy (2016-2018) to integrate the principles of UNSCR 1325 into existing government processes. It aimed at mainstreaming the principles of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions into national development, diplomacy, and conflict prevention and resolution strategies. It also sought to implement existing commitments promoting gender equality and women’s participation and leadership in peace processes.
The second KNAP was launched on 27 May 2020 and will be implemented for five years, from 2020 to 2024. The key priority of the second KNAP is enhancing the capacities of National and County Government Institutions on mainstreaming UNSCR 1325 into national and county development plans and strategies (Mid Term Plan III Priority).

**PURPOSE AND USE OF MAPPING**

The purpose of the mapping of peacebuilding initiatives is to provide an analysis of the main causes of insecurity in Kenya and the different ways in which women and men experience insecurity. Additionally, the mapping also explores the existing initiatives to prevent conflict and build peace, enable their consolidation and harmonization, and prevent duplication of efforts.

The mapping will also be used to evaluate the achievements of the first KNAP (2016 to 2018) and to identify remaining gaps in implementation, including its overall goal of "promoting and advancing women’s active participation in the peace and security sector in Kenya while ensuring their human rights are protected and promoted," and additional stated outcomes. The mapping also documents lessons learned and good practices with the view to scaling up successful activities in future programming.

**MAPPING METHODOLOGY**

The mapping sought to answer four key research questions:

1. What are the main peace and security issues that local communities — especially local women — face?
2. What are the existing initiatives (led by the government, civil society or other stakeholders) to address these issues?
3. What are the key barriers to women’s full political and economic participation; and women’s meaningful participation in peace processes, and what steps are needed to address them?
4. How is the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the peace and security situation and the rights of women, young women, and girls, including women Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and those living in conflict-affected areas?

These questions allowed the mapping exercise to assess the main causes of insecurity, the different ways in which women and men experience insecurity, existing initiatives to prevent conflict and build a culture of peace, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on all of the above. This also provided an opportunity to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the KNAP on WPS.

The mapping was conducted using a combination of Key Informant Interviews (KIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique, a type of non-probability sampling method, where the sample is selected based on the respondents’ characteristics, availability and the objective of the study, as opposed to representativeness.
Thus, while the findings of the mapping results are not necessarily generalizable, they provide unique and in-depth insights into the research questions. KIIIs were conducted with local and national peacebuilders with unique knowledge of their projects, as well as project beneficiaries — including local women and young women. These interviewees’ involvement in various peacebuilding projects brought valuable experience and perspectives to the mapping exercise. KIIIs also targeted government actors, the members of the National Steering Committee on WPS and KNAP, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Youth and Gender Affairs, representatives of the security forces, civil society organizations, service providers, and other stakeholders, including members of traditional structures, such as councils of elders. The FGDs targeted women and men of different ages.

The mapping findings are divided into four parts, following the four key research questions:
1. Understanding the peace and security context in Kenya;
2. Mapping of existing peacebuilding responses in Kenya;
3. Barriers to women’s full political and economic participation, and participation in peace processes; and

UNDERSTANDING THE PEACE AND SECURITY CONTEXT IN KENYA

Key Finding 1: The peace and security context in Kenya is shaped by multiple and diverse types of violence — from cross-border and land conflicts, electoral violence, criminal activities by gangs and bandits, and violent extremism.

At the national level, the main factors contributing to insecurity are politicians who incite the youth, particularly during the election period, and violent extremist groups, such as Al-Shabaab and Mombasa Republican Council. The respondents cited the political competition between the factions of the leading Jubilee Party — Kieleweke and Tangatanga — as a source of disruption and violence.

At the national level, the competition led to the inefficiency of the house committees and negatively affected service delivery nationwide.

The tensions ahead of the elections were also felt at the local level. In Bungoma County, the struggles for political supremacy among political parties have affected peace and security. Interviewees from Bungoma County noted instances when the Tangatanga team was not allowed to meet and was scattered with tear gas. Some respondents were concerned that such tensions could escalate into physical violence ahead of the 2022 general elections. The political alignment of community leadership, such as the council of elders, can further aggravate tensions and divisions among the community, posing a threat to peace and security.
Respondents from Uasin Gishu County, a hotspot of election violence in the past, noted that members of certain ethnic communities were already selling their land in fear of a possible conflict or violence due to the political tension in the country. Women and girls are often threatened by physical, sexual, emotional and psychological violence in the event of escalating political violence. Women in the settlement area of Uasin Gishu County are the most at risk of displacement and violence due to their vulnerable background.

Another source of insecurity identified by the respondents is the violence perpetrated by organized criminal gangs, including youth-led gangs, police and security forces, which have been reported to abuse their power with impunity. The Nandi community mentioned instances of police using disproportionate violence against the youth, which led to the youth burning the Officer Commanding Station in Lessos. In the Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) areas, respondents noted that women, in particular, are at risk of attacks by bandits. According to respondents, bandit attacks cause women and children to leave their homes and sleep in the forest without bedding, food and water. This can go on for as long as three days, making women prone to different threats, including gender-based violence (GBV).

Border disputes also cause tension among communities. The disputes between the Nandi and Kakamega communities witnessed in June 2020 led to casualties and the destruction and theft of property. This conflict slowly spread to the neighboring counties of Uasin Gishu. For instance, the respondents cited a case of a youth from Uasin Gishu attacking another from Kakamega due to the above ethnic disputes.

Key Finding 2: Conflict and violence in Kenya disproportionately affect women — including through GBV, restricted access to healthcare and other services, economic hardship and barriers to meaningful participation in decision-making

Respondents highlighted that GBV, in its various manifestations, is one of the main security threats faced by women in Kenya. The impacts of GBV extend not only to individuals but also to their families and the community. 45 per cent of women aged 15 — 49 in Kenya have experienced either physical or sexual violence, and one in five Kenyan women (21 per cent) has experienced sexual violence. GBV disproportionately affects women since they account for 90 per cent of reported GBV cases.

As of 2020, 650,000 women and girls in informal urban settlements need access to basic household supplies and dignity kits to reduce the risk of GBV, while at least 2,350 women and girls across the country need shelters and safe houses for protection from GBV and Female Genital Mutilation

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The ritual of FGM, which is seen as a rite of passage for girls in many communities, remains widespread, despite the existence of laws prohibiting it at the national level. About 440,000 girls in counties with a high prevalence of FGM require social protection and psychosocial support, including dignity kits.

Respondents noted that cases of GBV tend to increase in communities during conflict. Insecurity is also seen as leading to increased teenage pregnancies and forced or early marriages. Respondents indicated that women often suffer from conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence from both state security personnel and other parties, such as organized gangs and ordinary men within the community, including their spouses. Moreover, women are also targeted as a strategy of war. Rape and sexual violence have been recognized as instruments of war, designed to weaken families and break down the social fabric of communities and societies. UNSCR 1820 (2008) acknowledges that sexual violence, when used as a tactic of war, can be a threat to international peace and security.

Respondents also noted that women face increased health vulnerabilities during periods of conflict and violence. The increase in GBV leads to health issues, such as physical injuries, fistula, unwanted pregnancies, teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and psychological trauma. At the same time, insecurity diverts funding away from healthcare, and maternal health in particular. As a result, women’s health needs may be both heightened and neglected during times of conflict.

Respondents further identified a link between insecurity that leads to disruption of economic activity. Women face additional workloads within and outside the home during conflicts and periods of violence. Community leaders noted that when men are injured or killed during the violence, women may become primary breadwinners in their families. Many local women are forced to seek sustenance for their families through informal employment. This excludes them from existing social protection measures provided to those who are employed in the formal sector and increases their economic vulnerability.

Yet, at the same time, women are continually excluded from decision-making about peace and security, including conflict prevention and peace processes. Respondents noted that conflict prevention and resolution is also often “securitized” and overly militaristic, using coercive means by state organs to control community dialogue and participation. This closes spaces for women’s meaningful participation since they often bear the consequences of the security forces’ brutality and abuses.

Moreover, the militarized approaches to addressing insecurity mean that there is little

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n%20and%20Response%20to%20Gender%20Based%20Violence.pdf

support for community-based responses, where women play prominent roles. Respondents from the civil society noted that community peace organs and committees, where women often are active, are rarely supported by national or county governments. As a result, the committees are underfunded and often do not have systematic strategies and action plans to help them achieve their objectives. Furthermore, despite their contributions, women are rarely given leadership roles within the peace committees due to patriarchal gender norms and stereotypes.

Respondents from civil society and academia noted that emergency conflict response and resolution measures are not participatory or gender-inclusive. Women are not consulted during emergencies. Therefore their needs are neither recognized nor catered for.

Key Finding 3: The key root causes of conflict and insecurity are unemployment, especially among youth, lack of trust between the citizens and authorities, and mismanagement of natural resources

Unemployment and lack of income, especially among the youth, were identified as contributing factors to insecurity. Without a source of income, young people are forced to join organized youth gangs that engage in theft and violent robbery, and may also be recruited by extremist groups. The situation has been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to the loss of income for many youths, creating an incentive to engage in crimes to earn a living.

The precarious economic situation and unemployment of the youth are also fueled by unsustainable policies within the extractive oil industry. Respondents raised concerns about the instability and inequality created due to the complicated recruitment and hiring processes used by oil companies and their subcontractors. They noted deep concerns about both the number and the quality of opportunities available to residents. When job opportunities are available to the local community, employment is available only on a short-term basis and for low-skilled positions. There exists a sentiment within communities where oil has been discovered that their land is being exploited by foreigners and that they are not gaining much from it. Such resentment could be a trigger of violent conflict. In Turkana, grievances among the local communities and political representatives have already constrained oil operations and may very likely continue to do so or even escalate in the future.

The lack of transparency and misuse of natural resources within the extractive industries also fuels land conflicts. For example, oil exploration and production in Lodwar and Turkana threaten to destroy grazing land and disrupt livelihoods. This could increase the potential for conflicts between communities as resources become more scarce. In Mt Elgon, deforestation and desertification have aggravated tensions around land distribution. Predominant clans and tribes in Mt Elgon have competed to control the scarce land, including the water sources, which has led to insecurity. In 2017, organizations including Rural Women Peace Link, Catholic Peace and Justice
Commission, and Community Development Sustainability held dialogues with the community members to address allegations that the dominant tribe wanted to poison the water source to prevent other tribes from benefiting from it.

Evictions and resettlements triggered by deforestation can act as another threat to security. In Uasin Gishu County, communities that resettled in Turbo Forest may be at risk of forceful eviction, which would put women and girls at risk of sexual violence and exposure to health risks such as miscarriages. The evictions from Mau Forest are ongoing. Since 2018, Kenyan authorities have evicted more than 50,000 people from Mau Forest lands, including more than 40,000 in July 2018 and the rest between August and November 2019. At least 6,000 people recently evicted live in harsh conditions in makeshift camps in Narok County and have not been relocated or compensated as required under Kenyan law. Reports indicate that there have been incidences of loss of lives. Human Rights Watch documented at least seven deaths during the 2019 evictions.

Finally, the environmental damage resulting from the misuse or mismanagement of natural resources can threaten the ecosystems of both animals and human beings. For example, the depletion of water and forest resources can damage plants and disrupt fish and animal ecosystems, subsequently causing food insecurity. Such shifts put women at particular risk. Women in conflict-affected countries are often primarily responsible for meeting the water, food, and energy needs of households and communities. Women play a critical role in the use and management of natural resources, and if water sources become limited, women have to walk long distances to fetch water. This puts them at additional risk of experience GBV or violence in heavily forested areas.

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Figures 1 and 2 provide a graphical demonstration of actors managing or addressing peace and security at the national level and the local level in Kenya.

Figure 1. National Actors managing peace and security

**MAIN ACTORS INVOLVED IN MANAGING OR ADDRESSING PEACE AND SECURITY**
Figure 2. Local Actors managing peace and security

- Nyumba Kumi
- Women Leaders
- Peace Committees
- Civil Society Organizations
- Neighbourhood Associations
- Council of Elders
- Peace Ambassadors
- Local Government
- Community Based Organizations
- Peace Champions

LOCAL LEVEL
Respondents identified several platforms and mechanisms that facilitate coordination on peace and security issues. The UWIANO Platform for Peace is a forum that brings together government and civil society, convened by the National Steering Committee on Peace Building and Conflict Management (NSC/PBCM) and the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC). It is a powerful platform used for early warning and early response mechanisms and has worked tremendously, especially during the electioneering period.

The Kenya National Dialogue Forum (KNDF) is a platform that was created during the COVID-19 pandemic. Like UWIANO, it is also convened by NCIC. It brings together actors across civil society and government to coordinate and exchange information on the pandemic. The platform has so far published two policy briefs and connected peace actors with resources to respond to peace and security issues that emerged due to the pandemic. The platform also supports in the collection of early warning information that is a threat to peace and security in Kenya, which can be used for responses that prevent escalation. The UWIANO Platform’s coordination capacity and regional presence spans across the 47 counties and represents at least 120 peace monitors and GBV analysts (with a gender ratio of approximately 1:2, women to men).

In addition, a number of groups and initiatives that are dedicated to advancing women’s roles in peacebuilding exist in Kenya. The WPS Working Group, led by the State Department for Gender, brings together state and non-state actors through the National Steering Committee that helps stakeholders in the peace and security sector to convene and guide the process of implementing the Kenya National Action Plan.

At the sub-national level, the government, through the Ministry of Interior, has established District Peace Committees (DPCs) across the country. The DPCs are an example of good practice by the

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government toward Localizing the WPS agenda, particularly the participation and promotion of prevention of conflict and its impact on women and girls. Through the KNAP, there has been an increase in participation of women in peace committees and county mediation teams, which act as standby mechanisms in case of conflict. The government also established the NSC/PBCM to coordinate peace efforts in the country carried out by various government ministries and departments, civil society organizations (CSOs), development partners and UN agencies. This is done through the implementation of a joint program with the UN Development Program (UNDP) titled 'Deepening Foundations for Peacebuilding and Community Security in Kenya 2014-2018.' The peace committee model has led to establishment of fully fledged Peace Directorates or Departments in some counties, including Baringo, Mandera, Turkana, Wajir and West Pokot.

Noteworthy peacebuilding initiatives put in place by the government, international partners and civil society, include:

- Training and deployment of women mediators across the country facilitated by the National Steering Committee, in partnership with NCIC, UN Women and International Peace Support Training Center. Civil society amplified this initiative, which trained Community Mediation Panelists in 25 counties in the East, with support from Act Change Transformation.

- The Transformative Leadership Program for County Women Executives curriculum at Kenya School of Government’s leadership training. This program is structured to provide training to women serving in county executive positions to enhance their performance and efficiency as leaders and managers.

- Joint programming through Conflict Analysis Group, Conflict Early Warning Early Response Unit in collaboration with Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Network and the National Drought Management Authority working in the ASAL regions. The resulting Ending Drought Management program incorporated a pillar on peace and security and engendered the peace process.

- Peace education and training provided by institutions like Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations, the African Leadership Centre (ALC), Methodist University, University of Nairobi-UNESCO, and supported by the Women Center. These initiatives contribute to building a culture of peace through education and training, including fellowship programs that build the capacity of young African women and men to drive peace, security and development across the continent.

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The Adoption of a National Peace Policy (2014) framework on peacebuilding and conflict management. This is aimed at improving coordination in the prevention, mitigation and management of conflicts as well as ensuring that peace processes are more inclusive and accountable. The legal framework also holds the government accountable for allocating resources toward peace.

These initiatives are complemented and amplified by various grassroots initiatives led by youth and women, mostly at the county level. Respondents noted that these initiatives have led to concrete and tangible results. For example, the government initiatives — including the increased coordination through the UWIANO platform, KNDF, NSC and DPC — contributed to better management of conflicts in hotspot areas, and the realization of a peaceful referendum of 2010 and elections of 2013 and 2017. Women have been incorporated into peace committees and Nyumba Kumi\(^\text{11}\) and hold leadership roles, such as Chairpersons. The ongoing leadership training and mentorship provided by the government to women is also seen as a success and is expected to increase the number of women likely to participate in the 2022 elections.

Initiatives led by international partners have also contributed to improved and more inclusive peace in Kenya. In 2013, UN Women, in partnership with Angie Brooks International and Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization, established a Women Situation Room that trained over 500 women and youth observers from eight identified hotspots areas in the country. They were able to report and issue early warnings, which culminated in a timely response to election-related violence. In 2013, the European Union (through Acord International) supported grassroots organizations, including RWPL and the Free Pentecostal Fellowship of Kenya, in providing capacity-building training for women political candidates in Bungoma County. The county recorded an increase in women elected and became the county with the highest number of female legislators elected to the county government. RWPL was also part of the Deepening Democracy Program (DDP) implemented in 47 counties, which sought to promote the active participation of women in electoral processes.

CSOs were also active during the 2017 election. They contributed to the harmonization of hotlines to address GBV during elections and provided rescue, counseling and reintegration of SGBV survivors back to community. Such initiatives included: providing legal aid, National Gender and Equality Commission and Health Care Assistance Kenya providing training, sensitization and assistance on violence against women in election, and establishment of help lines, SMS Amani 108- NSC, 119/.112 police and 116 child help.

In 2017, the U.S. Agency for International Development funded the “Kenya Electoral Assistance Program” with support from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems.

\(^\text{11}\) Nyumba Kumi is a community policing initiative in Kenya, which was proposed as the solution for criminal behavior and terrorism. The locals are encouraged by this initiative to constantly interact and share information about one another and are expected to monitor security threats and provide information to the local administration and security organs. kenyapolice.go.ke/pages/links/27-about-us/69-community-policing.html
They held several sensitization trainings with political aspirants on the importance of upholding peace and encouraged local political aspirants to sign peace pledges. County first ladies were also trained to encourage their spouses to promote and uphold peace during the electioneering period.

The ALC has trained and mentored more than 120 early-career young Africans from 21 African countries, including Kenya, 60 per cent of whom are women and are now also members of a robust Alumni network. Members of the alumni are emergent leaders in higher education, policymaking, civil society and regional organizations where they are shaping Africa’s peace, security and development discourse. ALC’s research outputs provide a basis for ongoing engagement and collaboration with key regional peace, security and development actors, institutions and processes, including the African Union’s Special Envoy on WPS, and the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise). The ALC has committed to building repositories of African-generated knowledge and making it widely available to African scholars, practitioners and policy actors through various platforms such as the ALC Pan-African Radio and the ALC Data Lab.

**Key Finding 5:** Despite persisting barriers to participation, women play crucial roles in peacebuilding initiatives, and their inclusion in peace structures has been increasing

Despite the efforts outlined above, several challenges and barriers to peacebuilding persist for women and girls’ participation in peacebuilding. This is largely a result of deeply rooted cultural norms that do not support women’s leadership. Stereotypes linked to gender and age lock women and young women out of the peace processes because they are perceived as weak and need to be led by men. Despite the constitutional provision that no gender should hold more than two-thirds of the seats in the parliament, meaning women should hold at least 33 per cent of seats, women constitute only 23 per cent of members of the National Assembly. At the County level, women constitute 34 per cent of elected and nominated officials.

At the local levels, women have been included in structures like Councils of Elders, that were initially male-dominated, and are allowed to contribute to the discussions. The initiative led by the Ministry of Interior has seen the increase of women in the DPCs to 29 per cent in 2019, while in the sub-county committees, the percentage of women increased to 45 per cent in 2019, meeting the constitutional threshold of 33 per cent.

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The inclusion of women is a good step toward meeting gender parity in the DPCs.14

Respondents noted that the involvement of women in such platforms is a positive development and can lead to greater inclusivity. However, women do not always participate meaningfully in critical decision-making, but are included in a tokenistic manner or to “tick boxes.” For example, the Government of Kenya has women at the helm of some key ministries like Defense and Foreign Affairs, but that does not necessarily translate into effective inclusion, as their policies often fail to recognize and address the specific needs of diverse women in the country.

In line with this, respondents noticed that despite the increasing percentage of women in DPCs, many government peace committees are not gender-responsive. Most respondents felt that the government’s initiatives are keener on peace and do not pay equal attention to gender issues. These initiatives aim to solve conflicts that may arise without considering the impact of their actions- on women, men, boys and girls. Less attention is paid to gender analysis when responding to conflicts. Respondents also felt that the civil society-led initiatives are more likely gender responsive because of donor requirements and women’s leadership.

Women were actively involved in the civil society-led peace initiatives to implement the KNAP (2016-2018). Most activities conducted within this framework directly targeted women. For example, the Peace Security Stability Program implemented by ACT in four counties (Kisumu, Garissa, West Pokot, and Isiolo) dealt with enhancing the role of women in peacebuilding. Implementation of the 2nd KNAP in 7 counties in Kenya is currently supported by the Embassy of Finland. The project “Local Communities Build and Sustain Peace” facilitated by GNWP also contributes to promoting women’s participation in sustainable peace and decision-making.

Table 1: Summary of the key Peacebuilding and WPS initiatives in Kenya

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<tr>
<th>Name of Initiative</th>
<th>Who Leads It?</th>
<th>Who supports it (financial or political support)?</th>
<th>Are women meaningfully included? (Yes/No)</th>
<th>Please explain how women are included</th>
<th>Is the initiative gender sensitive? (Yes/No)</th>
<th>Please explain how gender perspective is integrated</th>
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<tr>
<td>ALC</td>
<td>Prof. Funmi Olonisakin and Ms. Shuvai Nyoni</td>
<td>Carnegie Corporation of New York; Allan and Nesta Foundation; Foundation; African Women’s Development Fund</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The founder, Executive Director, board chair, and 60 per cent of the Board of Trustees, are women. Most staff (over 50 per cent) are women. Most beneficiaries of its peace, security and development fellowship programme are young women.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>‘Diversity’ is one of the core values. The recruitment policy has a positive bias (while not compromising on merit) towards women.</td>
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<td>Peacebuilding and Conflict Management</td>
<td>Center for International Development of the State University of New York, in partnership with The Urban Institute, Local Development International and ACT!Kenya</td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Women are included in leadership roles. The initiative targets policy governance and county support for systems strengthening</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Incorporation of women in the local implementation committees.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deepening Democracy Programme (DDP)</td>
<td>Development Alternatives, Inc.</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Women are trained and mentored on how to participate in political processes.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Has a gender strategy.</td>
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<td>Peace, Security and Stability (PSS)</td>
<td>Act!Kenya</td>
<td>DANIDA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Output 3 is on increased women engagement in leadership roles in peace and security.</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>They are specific indicators targeting women. PSS encourages a concise discussion of the role of community based structures that involve women and youth for peace, and initiatives that build on such existing frameworks. Further, activities demonstrating how disadvantaged and marginalized people can be brought into peacebuilding processes proposed.</td>
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PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVES IN KENYA
There are several gendered norms that have spurred discrimination against women in political and public life, leading to women's underrepresentation in politics. Political life is organized and accepted based on patriarchal norms and values. Factors such as targeted aggression, women's unpaid care roles, manipulation of political party nominations to short-change women, an electoral system and environment that is not conducive to women's participation, financial limitations for women, and the inability to utilize women's voting power and numerical strength all have conspired to make women in leadership an exception and not the norm. Gender norms and the manipulation of the electoral system based on such gender biases are also a factor in explaining why women's voting power and numerical strength is often manipulated to meet patriarchal ends. Political parties' laws and mediation mechanisms are not adhered to by politicians, as 95 per cent of political parties are male-headed. This complicates women's ability to join parties, and the few women who join do not reach decision-making positions.

Despite the increase in women's political participation in the country owing to several years of gender activism and capacity building and mobilization of women to take up various political leadership positions in the country, the country's political leadership still includes few women. The reasons for this reality include:

- Resource constraints, including the time to campaign long hours, economic barriers and lack to funds to finance campaigns and more;
- Election-related GBV, within political parties and beyond;
- Lack of positive media coverage of women who participate in political life;
- Gendered and skewed understanding of competent political leadership amongst a large proportion of the Kenyan population. This stems from cultural beliefs, practices and attitudes;

Key Finding 6: Structural barriers, such as entrenched gender norms, stereotypes, women's lack of access to financial resources and ethnicized nature of political parties are key barriers preventing women's meaningful participation in political life.

Resource constraints, including the time to campaign long hours, economic barriers and lack to funds to finance campaigns and more;
- Violent and male-centered competition for political power; and
- Intimidation from political rivals and lack of capacity to handle threats.

**STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

According to the interviews conducted by RWPL, there is a need for mentoring programs that will focus not only on increasing the number of women in government but also enhancing their effectiveness in political positions and their impact in decision-making. These programs need to support women to acquire skills in fundraising and financial management, public speaking, public relations, strategizing for campaigns and familiarity with the constitution and policy processes. Such skills are essential for running an effective campaign and winning public support.

Moreover, the participants highlighted the importance of lobbying for the implementation of laws on affirmative action that provide for a bigger quota of seats for women. Lobbying can also target the implementation of existing quotas, such as the constitutional requirements prohibiting one gender from obtaining more than two-thirds of all seats. The participants called on political parties to observe and implement the Political Parties Act, which calls for the use of at least 30 per cent of campaign funds to promote the representation of women and other marginalized groups in the Parliament and the County Assemblies and ensure all political parties adhere to gender provisions, including quota allocations. They also believed that the electoral commission should enforce legal punitive measures against those perpetrating violence.

Respondents believe the media is partly to blame for using a patriarchal lens and perpetuating gendered norms that paint women in power in a negative light. Women leaders must engage with the media in different ways, such as by working closely with media practitioners to challenge stereotypical narratives against them and to ensure that their success stories are amplified through comprehensive coverage. The most important intervention is establishing a level playing ground for political competitors across gender lines. This would ensure that governments at both national and county levels are committed to affirmative action and meaningful women’s empowerment, as has been the case in Rwanda. Additionally, political parties will benefit from embracing policies of inclusion focused specifically on gender, such as compulsory gender quotas guided by the spirit of the Constitution, UNSCR 1325, the KNAP (I and II), the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To this end, interviewees noted that it is necessary to reform the culture and practices of political parties so that they can attract and mobilize more women to join as members, volunteers and aspirant members.
The development of strong young women’s wings could redefine the stereotypical images of parties as masculine and the ‘male-dominated’ nature of politics more broadly.

The research participants also reflected on the importance of raising women’s awareness about opportunities for political participation, including in elections. In addition, women should be encouraged to aspire to political leadership. It is imperative that they be assisted with financial resources to run effective campaigns such that they can compete with established men in the communities they live in. There is also a need to enhance advocacy by the elected women using channels like the Kenya Women’s Parliamentary Association. Another avenue for reaching this goal is sharing success stories and experiences of women in leadership with an angle on mentorship (for example, Jael Mbogo, Phoebe Asiyo, and the late Grace Ogot).

Creating awareness on the election of women and support for their political participation should involve all of Kenyan society to change the current mindset that views effective leadership through the lens of patriarchy. Such a shift can be achieved through civic education programs that particularly target youths, rural women and men who may be easily manipulated against changing the status quo. Civic education programs must condemn all forms of GBV, especially violence targeted at women during political campaigns. At their core, such programs need to re-socialize people around gender equity principles.

BARRIERS TO WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN KENYA

Key Finding 7: Women’s exclusion from economic opportunities is deeply entrenched in gender norms and stereotypes, which begin at an early age. Women are expected to fulfill most unpaid care work and chores within the household and have limited access to financial assets.

Unpaid care responsibilities for girls and boys begin early, with the gap increasing for girls and women throughout their lifecycles. Unpaid care work takes up a huge part of women’s labor time. The disproportionate bearing of unpaid care work constitutes a root cause of women’s social and economic inequalities. The gaps in unpaid care time translate directly to gaps in paid work time, leading to a cascade of inequalities in the labor market, including gender employment gaps, job segregation, wealth inequality, and gaps in political representation and decision-making.

Gendered social norms make it challenging for women to start, run and scale their businesses. As such, women lack the economic means to a secure livelihood and are forced to depend on men for subsistence. In some cases, they are abused and violated by men for this reason.
There is also a limited number of social safety nets for women, particularly for most working women i.e., those involved in informal economic labor. There is limited investment in economic support programs such as microfinance, limiting the quantities of loans and specialized technical support provided.

**STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN KENYA**

Most research participants emphasized the role of the Ministry of Trade and Industrialization in economic empowerment. Through the Ministry, the Kenyan government has created an efficient ecosystem for innovators and entrepreneurs to channel their ideas into products and markets. Various government agencies have been tasked with the responsibility of supporting enterprises and innovations toward becoming viable, successful businesses. However, the interviewees suggested more professional technical support for women from the State Department for Gender.

The interviewees noted that awareness-creation programs should be designed to inform communities about the long-term economic and social return of women’s empowerment and to challenge the negative gender stereotypes that confine women to household and unpaid care work. Furthermore, the existing policies, such as the “Women Economic Empowerment Strategy 2020-2025,” should be translated into law and complemented by capacity development and monitoring mechanisms.

There is also an urgent need to address the structural challenges of unpaid care work and open avenues for intergenerational dialogue. To this end, the interviewees noted that it would be critical to involve men as gender equality allies to advance the women’s empowerment agenda.

The government implements various interventions to unlock the untapped potential of women and men, geared towards restoring gender parity and ensuring optimal participation in the country’s socio-economic progress. Interventions that address access to economic empowerment include the Women Enterprise Fund and the Uwezo (Empowerment) Fund. At the same time, social protection is provided in form of cash transfers to orphans and vulnerable children, persons with severe disabilities and older persons.

As Kenya looks to meet the UN SDGs by 2030, the full participation of women as producers, consumers, business owners and key decision-makers can be a potent force for change. A part of this solution rests in the commitment of the Government of Kenya, together with financial institutions, to address gender inequalities through market-based approaches, like Gender Lens Investing.16

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16 Gender Lens Investing (GLI) is a strategy or approach to investing that takes into consideration gender-based factors across the investment process to advance gender equality and better inform investment decisions.
They should roll out specific financial products, such as subsidies, interest rates, longer pay-back periods and fund competitions with a special bias towards investments in women-owned and women-led small-to-medium enterprises and companies. Simultaneously, intensive training at the community level is required to increase women’s financial literacy.

**IMPACT OF WOMEN’S INVOLVEMENT IN OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL PEACE PROCESSES IN KENYA**

*Key Finding 8: Despite the barriers they face, women in Kenya can meaningfully contribute to peacebuilding and conflict prevention — for example, by mediating localized conflicts, providing early warning during elections and influencing laws and policies to provide better protection.*

A few examples of women’s meaningful contributions to peace and conflict prevention are elaborated below.

The Tegla Loroupe Peace Foundation used the annual peace races to resolve conflicts and foster peace amongst communities in the North Rift region of Kenya. Specifically, the Foundation has used the peace races as forums to advocate for peace, educate people on human rights and respect for the rule of law, build relationships and reconcile the communities.

The Foundation has noted success in assisting with disarmament efforts, rehabilitation of warriors, provision of humanitarian support to people affected by conflicts, poverty alleviation and promotion of access to education amongst the communities involved in the conflict in the North Rift region of Kenya.

The UWIANO Platform for Peace mobilized and trained women from 47 counties in mediation and conflict management. This initiative sought to position women at the center of mediation, a practice that has not been common thus far. The trained women mediators provide linkages with other national high-level mediators and timely early warning information for response purposes — which was especially useful during the 2017 elections.

The inclusion of women at the negotiation table through the process of alternative dispute resolution and drafting of peace agreements can make them more sustainable. A case in point is the Mabanga Peace Agreement led by the Agency for Cooperation in Research and Development and NSC, with support from UNDP.
EXISTING INITIATIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE WOMEN’S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN KENYA

A) In Politics:
- The Transformative Leadership Program for County Women Executives curriculum at Kenya School of Government’s leadership training. This curriculum is structured for training women serving in county executive positions to enhance their performance and efficiency as leaders and managers.
- The National Democratic Institute is training women politicians and aspirants at national and county levels on advocacy and political participation.
- The International Peacekeeping Training Support Center has trained women on peace and security at the national and county levels.
- Due to the Political Parties Act, women political contestants pay lower nomination fees, and at least 30 per cent of party funds must be used to promote the representation of women and other marginalized groups in the Parliament and in the County Assemblies.
- The State Commendations Trailblazers’ Program recognizes and celebrates women leaders who have significantly contributed to Kenya’s political and socio-economic transformation.
- The Women Leadership Academy trains women in leadership and capacity-building.
- The Women’s Think Tank analyses legislation and incorporates women’s feedback and concerns.
- The Democratic Trust Fund for Women aims to support women aiming for elective posts.
- The Common Women Agenda is a forum that brings together women of diverse backgrounds to work collectively in safeguarding gender gains in the Constitution, particularly provisions relating to gender representation in elective bodies.

B) In Peacebuilding:
- In preparation for the 2017 General Elections and in the effort to strengthen its Conflict Early Warning and Early Response strategy, the NCIC recruited 117 cohesion monitors. This process was geared toward engendering the early warning system and made a special request for county selection processes to consider women participants.
- The Amani Clubs County Coordinators Induction Training ensured that women teachers were selected as part of the 47 County Coordinators. The project now benefits from the leadership of 15 Women County Coordinators and encourages the participation of the girl child in its various 65 peace initiatives. As a platform for social dialogue and dispute resolution amongst young people and between young people and their neighboring communities, the clubs also act as platforms where both boys and girls inculcate the appreciation of national values and diversity amongst different gender, ethnic, racial and religious communities.
Training of women mediators, such as initiatives taken upon by the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), where they provided an 18-hour training on Gender Responsive and Inclusive Mediation to women in 16 countries.

Since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and the Localization of WPS in various countries, there has been a substantial increase in the frequency of gender-responsive language in peace agreements.

There is also an increase in the number of women, women’s groups and gender experts who serve as official negotiators, mediators, or signatories.

Through increasing political activism, capacity building, strong policies and programs, and the launch of the second KNAP, the conditions for the advancement of gender equality, women’s participation in politics and decision-making on conflict resolution can be further escalated.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY

The COVID-19 global crisis had gendered impacts on women and girls. Lockdowns and confinement implemented to curb the spread of the virus increased instances of violence against women, including GBV, and further curbed access to essential sexual and reproductive health services.

In the first two weeks of the lockdown in Kenya, there was a 300 per cent increase in calls to a helpline reporting VAWAG. In the proceeding months of April-June, GBV cases increased by 87 per cent. There are several reasons for this sharp increase. Restrictions on movement and social distancing led to isolation situations in which domestic violence increased. The strain placed on male heads of households by a reduction or

IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON WOMEN IN KENYA

Key Finding 9: As in many countries around the world, the rates of violence against women and girls (VAWAG) have increased in Kenya during the COVID-19 pandemic. Women who face violence find it more difficult to seek help and access basic services. Despite some government efforts, an over-militarized response to the pandemic created additional risks for women.

loss of income and a lack of healthy outlets to deal with the psychological strain of not meeting the social norm expectations of being a provider can lead to more cases of intimate partner violence.

Due to the pandemic, women also have fewer options of recourse when they face violence. Many non-governmental organizations had to reduce their operations due to the lockdown restrictions and shrinking civic space. Restrictions on movement created limited access to basic services. For pregnant women, restricted access to prenatal care and a health facility for safe delivery, for example, can prove devastating. For many young girls who rely on programmers that distribute sanitary towels through schools, the closure of schools limited access to menstrual products.

The government acknowledged the increasing GBV rates and took some countering measures. Among such initiatives is the national helpline 1195 to report GBV and a toll-free number for victims of GBV. The Council of Governors is working to ensure that safe houses are available for victims of GBV.

Makueni County was the first to unveil a safe house for women who have undergone GBV. Counties are also establishing toll-free lines to help victims get support. The Ministry of Public Service collaborated with stakeholders in data collection, generating data disaggregated by sex, age and disability. This data can support a gender-responsive analysis to help inform an inclusive and comprehensive COVID-19 pandemic management strategy.

However, despite these measures, Human Rights Watch alleges that:

“Kenyan authorities failed to anticipate and properly plan for the risk of increased sexual and GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore did not prioritize and include critical early warning, detection, data collection and protection measures in national and county-level contingency plans and budgets for containing the COVID-19 pandemic. This lapse contributed to a delayed response to GBV and a later rush to implement response measures that were largely insufficient and ineffective.”18

Child exploitation also increases during crises. With few childcare options, especially where caregivers are forced to go to work to earn a living, children are increasingly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse. A lack of basic needs such as food, shelter and sanitary towels resulted in widows, young women and girls opting to engage in transactional sex and sex work for money. This pattern is evident in Kapsaos Ward from Road Block to Baharini where truck drivers sojourn. Moreover, with schools closed, girls are now exposed to potential early marriages, unplanned pregnancies and HIV infections, among other consequences.

18 Ibid
Key Finding 10: The COVID-19 pandemic has also aggravated the situation of conflict-affected communities and populations, such as refugees. It has also contributed to increased tensions and insecurity in some parts of the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended lives everywhere. Refugees and displaced persons are among the populations for whom dangers have only compounded. Refugees face added risks of having limited access to water, sanitation systems and health facilities. Yet, they also bring with them skills, leadership and resilience.

Social norms and gender roles in refugees camps or for IDPs limit women and girls’ access to information, leaving them more vulnerable to the pandemic. Social distancing and working from home are not viable options for many of the more than 200,000 refugees and host community members, living in large households with close quarters.

Communities caught amid violent conflict have also been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic disrupted humanitarian aid flows, limited peace operations and postponed ongoing peace negotiations. For communities suffering the after-effects of violent conflict, health systems have been left profoundly ill-prepared to deal with the outbreak.

An example of a recent conflict is the several attacks between Somalis living in Tana River and Kambas living in Kitui. By mid-May 2020, seven people from the two communities had died. There have been reported cases of police and youth confrontations on compliance issues — two groups with a strained relationship present from before the pandemic.

Key Finding 11: The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened and aggravated the economic inequalities within Kenyan society, with women’s livelihoods disproportionately affected.

During times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, inequalities become more apparent and specific gender-based biases, discrimination and vulnerabilities are exposed. The COVID-19 pandemic has widened socio-economic opportunities in Kenya, and has, once again, disproportionately gendered impacts on women. Women comprise at least 70 per cent of low-wage earners in the country. At least 88 per cent work in the informal sector employed or running micro and small enterprises. This sector is characterized by daily wages, limited social protection measures and savings, making women particularly vulnerable. During the pandemic, this situation worsened as demand for informal sector goods decreased, leaving workers with little to no income. This was worsened by an increase in gendered household caregiving duties.¹⁹

In some cases, such vulnerability leads to compromised financial resources for them and their families. In the case of horticulture, the lower consumer demand for Kenya’s flowers and other horticulture exports will affect mostly women, who account for 75 per cent of the workforce in the horticulture sector in Kenya. The existence of other disasters, including drought, floods and locust infestation, further threatens the livelihoods of vulnerable communities, including that of women and girls.

To promote women’s economic opportunities against the subsequent economic hardships, the government of Kenya began providing cash transfers to help ensure a social safety net for those most in need. The general empowerment and inclusion of women in all spheres will go a long way in cushioning families and communities from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Key Finding 12: COVID-19 has heavily impacted the operations of women-led civil society.**

Many national-level committees responding to the COVID-19 pandemic do not have equal gender representation. Participants claim that local women’s rights and women-led organizations and leaders were also not included in decision-making around the humanitarian response or received their fair share of funding.

The pandemic impacted civil society in several ways. Emergency measures such as strict lockdown measures limited civic rights and privileges, making it difficult to carry out advocacy and humanitarian responses Security forces were given more authority by the Health Act, and civil society noted serious restrictions to the constitutional guarantees of movement and association. Human rights and peacebuilding actors also cannot respond as they used to. There is a limitation of movement, including a curfew and social distancing provisions. Public gatherings for dialogues to resolve conflicts can no longer be held, and spaces for women-led action and organizing are no longer available.

Most activities intended to be carried out on-field were put on hold. While few organizations had the capacity and means to switch to online modalities, many more did not. Organizing may only be done virtually, making it difficult for rural women who are not connected digitally. Many women-led organizations lack technological knowledge, affecting the reach and quality of discussions and dissemination of content.

Funding intended for peacebuilding and conflict-prevention activities was diverted to addressing immediate needs, such as health services. Many organizations are still adapting to the crisis; some have laid off staff, put employees on unpaid leave or suspended programs. Funding for organizations is further constrained by the prioritization of controlling the spread of COVID-19 and the broader global economic downturn. Participants anticipate that peacebuilding and human rights organizations may not get as much support from donors following the COVID-19 pandemic.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENDER-RESPONSIVE AND CONFLICT-SENSITIVE COVID-19 RESPONSE

When asked for specific recommendations, the research participants identified the following:

- The Government of Kenya should
  - Include women and women-led organizations at the heart of the COVID-19 pandemic response;
  - Transform inequalities of unpaid care work into a new and inclusive care economy that works for all genders;
  - Design and implement socio-economic recovery plans that focus on the lives and futures of women and girls;
  - Be strategic and realistic about lifting various pandemic-related restrictions, especially as active cases continue to be confirmed;
  - Keep peace processes and conflict prevention efforts alive through collaboration with various actors, for example, maintaining secure electronic communications with conflict parties, and working with the Independent Policing Oversight Authority to report and prosecute cases of police brutality;
  - Issue public service announcements with the message that violence against women and girls will not be tolerated during the pandemic and that perpetrators will face severe consequences;
  - Improve response strategies and measures to be more gender responsive; and
  - In partnership with international actors, ensure that essential services providers from all sectors, including civil society organizations, have the necessary level of personal protective equipment and protocols in place to protect themselves and others from the spread of COVID-19, without compromising the level of service accessibility, availability and responsiveness.

- International actors should
  - Include essential COVID-19-related funding into humanitarian support, especially for refugees and IDPs, and factoring in the disproportionate risks for displaced women;
  - Make urgent and flexible funding available for support services operated by State and especially civil society and women’s rights organizations; and
  - Provide economic and livelihood support (for example, cash transfers, tax relief, unemployment insurance, vouchers for provisions or assets) to reduce financial strain and poverty, both of which are risk factors for abuse.