

WOMEN AND POLITICAL TRANSITION: The Risk of Replicating Inequality and the Fundamental Need for Gender Parity in Decision-Making



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A briefing paper by
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Women and Political Transition: The Risk of Replicating Inequality and the Fundamental Need for Gender Parity in Decision-Making
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About IFES

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) supports citizens' right to participate in free and fair elections. Our independent expertise strengthens electoral systems and builds local capacity to deliver sustainable solutions.

As the global leader in democracy promotion, we advance good governance and democratic rights by:

- Providing technical assistance to election officials
- Empowering the underrepresented to participate in the political process
- Applying field-based research to improve the electoral cycle

Since 1987, IFES has worked in over 145 countries – from developing democracies, to mature democracies.

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Introduction

*“The most challenging gap that remains concerns the participation of women in peace processes and post-conflict political transitions, even as empirical evidence reveals a strong connection between the inclusion of women in peace processes and more durable and stable peace.”*¹ – High-level Review of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) includes gender equality and women’s empowerment programming as a key facet of its democracy-building work in countries transitioning from violent conflict to more stable political processes. IFES has programs on the ground in flashpoint countries such as Libya, Burkina Faso, and Syria, as well as countries striving to end the cycle of conflict such as Côte d’Ivoire and Myanmar. These countries represent a critical cohort of transitional states, which need tailored conflict and political transition interventions well in advance of credible, transparent and inclusive elections. Research has shown that gender equality is a bulwark for democracy – ensuring the resilience of democratic institutions that represent the needs of all their constituencies –and IFES works with partners to ensure women and men from all segments of society are part of the political and electoral process.

Work in conflict and unstable democratic settings will continue for the foreseeable future and a commitment to inclusive democracy will be challenged by these settings in unique ways. The legal framework for elections and political processes are often shaped, drafted, or reformed during peace processes and political transitions. IFES is committed to programming that integrates gender equality and women’s empowerment into all political and electoral technical assistance, including evolving and complex transitional contexts. This is critical for two reasons:

1. Excluding women from the nascent stages of conflict resolution is a missed opportunity to have all voices influence the blueprint for peace and democracy in their countries, and
2. Excluding women from political transition processes risks replicating gender inequality in new structures and perpetuating it in societal attitudes.

IFES implements gender-specific programming that examines and responds to points along the continuum of crisis, political transition and stable democracy. Gender analysis and survey data is used to determine specific responses for engaging with women interested in politics, but lacking the opportunity or facing significant barriers. For example, in the “Libya Status of Women Survey 2013,” findings revealed that 71 percent of the women surveyed were interested in political activities, but only 11 percent had taken part in a political activity within the last year, a year that saw the country’s first democratic elections and significant government institutional development.²

Indeed, Libya illustrates the risks mentioned above. The systemic and cultural vanquish of women’s rights happening in post-Arab Spring countries is exemplified here, where the 10 percent gender quota proposed in the 2012 draft electoral framework was replaced with a legislated candidate quota in the final law and subsequent efforts to introduce a gender quota in government institutions have

¹ High-Level Review of SC Resolution 1325 (2000): From Rhetoric to Effective Results. (2015, October 13). p. 3. Retrieved from http://wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un_women/wps/highlights/wps_hlr_open_debate_concept_note_october_2015_edited.pdf.

² Abdul-Latif, R. (2013, September). Libya Status of Women Survey 2013. p. 18. Retrieved from http://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/libya_status_of_women_survey_report_final2_2.pdf.

IFES implements the women, peace and security agenda as part of its approach to mitigate setbacks and support good governance processes and durable democratic practices.

failed.³ At the same time, Libyan women who rebuff increasingly conservative roles face harassment, intimidation and, in the case of Salwa Bugaighis, assassination for human rights and political activism.⁴ Simultaneously, the country is now in open conflict with successive political crises that continue today.⁵

Sustainable peace is often hampered by violent setbacks and painstaking negotiations on legal frameworks and broader governance issues. Vigilance, commitment to the rule of law and the adoption of universal human rights are critical for securing lasting democracy. IFES implements the women, peace and security agenda as part of its approach to mitigate setbacks and support good governance processes and durable democratic practices.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda

An important advancement for gender equality was the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (UNSCR 1325) in 2000, which “urges member states to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict.”

UNSCR 1325 and subsequent supporting resolutions recognize that women and girls experience the most extensive and brutal impacts of violent conflict.⁶ It emerges from earlier platforms for gender equality created by the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action established at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. It recognizes that when included alongside men in societies transitioning from violent conflict, “women offer a vital perspective in the analysis of conflict as well as providing strategies toward peacebuilding that focus on creating ties across opposing factions and increasing the inclusiveness, transparency, and sustainability of peace processes.”⁷ As an international law adopted by the UN Security Council and many national legislatures, it mandates women’s participation in peace processes, and it establishes clear terms for the protection of and justice for women and girls exposed to conflict-related violence.

³ Libya’s NTC adopts election law, drops women quota. (2012, January 28). Agence France Press. Retrieved from <https://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/01/28/191161.html>.

⁴ Stephen, C. (2014, June 26). Libya in shock after murder of human rights activist Salwa Bugaighis. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/26/libya-shock-murder-human-rights-activist-salwa-bugaighis-benghazi>.

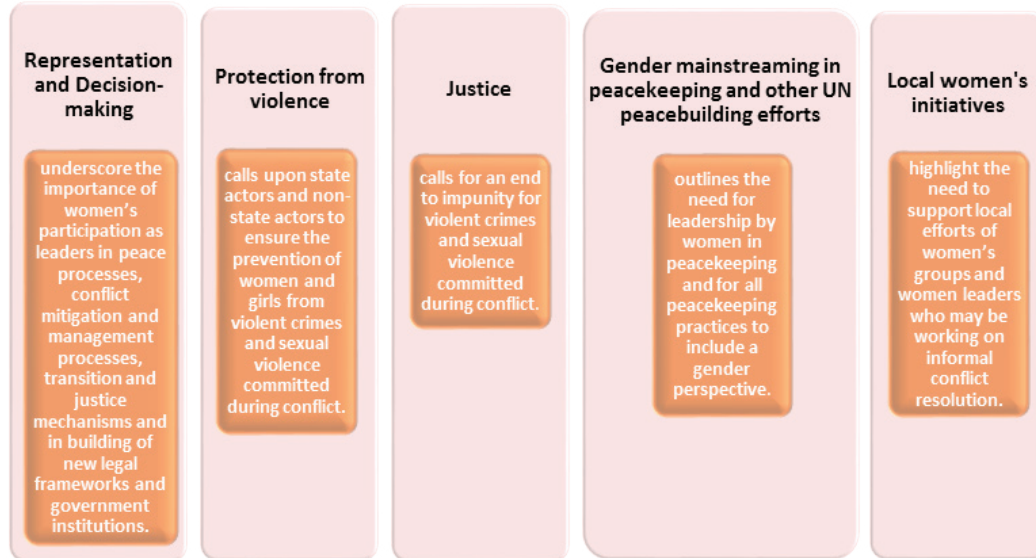
⁵ Libyan women launch Libya’s first minimum peace agenda. (2015, November 10). UN Women. Retrieved from <http://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/11/libyan-women-launch#sthash.TrkAzEba.dpuf>.

⁶ Including UN Security Council Resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013).

⁷ What is U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 and Why is it so Critical Today? (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.usip.org/gender_peacebuilding/about_UNSCR_1325.

Key Elements of UN Security Council Resolution 1325

Figure 1: UNSCR 1325 mandates the following:



Women, Peace, Security and Political Transition

It is important to reinforce an obvious point: women are half of the population and by right they must be included in political processes.⁸ Equally as important, women's voices are critical in the resolution of any conflict, be that a local village debate about healthcare, a national policy dialogue about economic security or a high-level peace negotiation. A 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation stated, "the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy."⁹

Demand and opportunity for women's inclusion during conflict and peace processes will have a profound effect in determining the successful outcome of a country's transition of power, security, and justice. The engagement of women must extend beyond the peace process and into the definitive political transition processes that follow, such as constitution drafting, the development of a legal framework and the establishment of the political and electoral system that will govern the country. As government institutions and processes solidify, so do the rule of law and power dynamics that determine the course of the country. Women must also be included as architects when laws are being written and rights are being enshrined to guarantee their rights will be preserved. Including women in decision-making roles contributes to the overall stability in society and their involvement signals a keystone of stable democracy.¹⁰

⁸ This is stated implicitly in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All Human Beings Are born free and equal in dignity and right" and explicitly in Article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): "... On a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

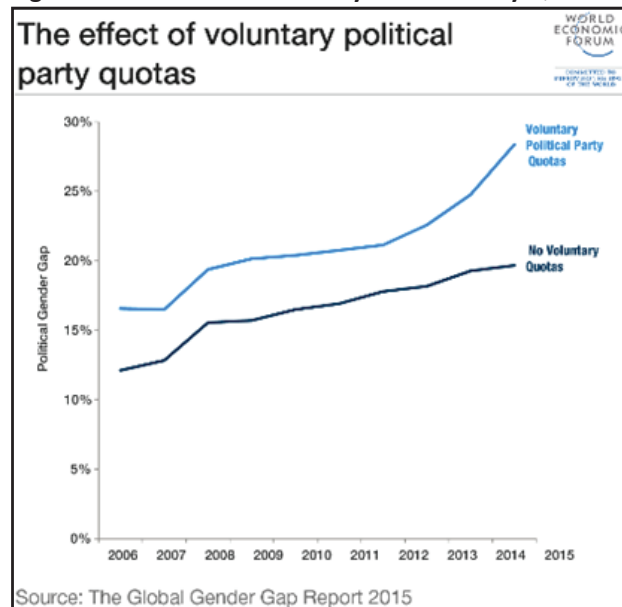
⁹ UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/66/130. (2012, September 17). Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/ga/66/resolutions.shtml>.

¹⁰ Hudson, V. M., Lee Bowen, D., & Lynne Nielsen, P. (2016, March). We Are Not Helpless: Addressing Structural Gender Inequality in Post-Conflict Societies. *PRISM*, 6 (1). p. 125. Retrieved from <http://cco.ndu.edu/Publications/PRISM/PRISM-volume-6-no1/Article/685045/we-are-not-helpless-addressing-structural-gender-inequality-in-post-conflict-so/>. pg. 125

There are many effective strategies for increasing women's leadership as countries emerge from conflict, chief among them is the adoption of gender quotas in new political structures that emerge from peace talks such as constitutional, parliamentary and voluntary political party gender quotas. Gender quotas are increasingly included in the broader suite of recommendations provided during political transition that are anchored in international best practices and standard operating procedures to create governance structures inclusive of all citizens.¹¹

There is clear evidence that gender quotas, especially when coupled with other gender equality strategies are effective not only in increasing women's leadership in politics, but also in the participation of women in all political activities.¹² The presence of women in political decision-making roles benefits all people.¹³ Research demonstrates that when women are empowered as political leaders, countries experience positive developments in education, infrastructure and health.¹⁴ Furthermore, women's political participation leads to "citizen-responsive legislatures and a pro-democracy agenda."¹⁵ Women's voices bring depth and perspective to representing the needs of an entire community.¹⁶ This helps bring new issues to the table and clarity to existing obstacles, which resonates more broadly across a population and makes solutions more sustainable.¹⁷ For example, in Kenya in 2008, the Women's Consultation Group and other women leaders in civil society advocated during the formal peace negotiations. The women pressed for the formal agenda to include root causes to the conflict in Kenya, such as poverty, sexual violence and the need for political reform. They were successful because they were organized, and because they presented these issues with research and

Figure 2: The Effect of Voluntary Political Party Quotas



¹¹ Hughes, M. M., Lena Krook, M., & Paxton, P. (2015, June). Transnational Women's Activism and the Global Diffusion of Gender Quotas†. *International Studies Quarterly*, 59(2). Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/isqu.12190/abstract>. Also see Dahlerup, Drude and Pippa Norris, "On the Fast Track: The Spread of Gender Quota Policies for Elected Office." (2015, July) Harvard Kennedy School Faculty Research Paper Series. pg. 2

¹² Hughes, M., Ashman, D., & Pournik, M. (2016, April 12). Women in Power Project Summary Report. p. 9. Retrieved https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/USAID-WiP-summary-report_FINAL.pdf

¹³ Hunt, S. (2016, May/June). Let Women Rule. *Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2007-05-01/let-women-rule>.

¹⁴ Beaman, L., et. al. (2007). Women Politicians, Gender Bias, and Policy-making in Rural India. UNICEF. p. 11–16. Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/french/sowc07/docs/beaman_duflo_pande_topalova.pdf.

¹⁵ Cammisa, A. M., & Reingold, B. (2016, June 20). Women in State Legislatures and State Legislative Research: Beyond Sameness and Difference. *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*, 4(2). Retrieved from <http://spa.sagepub.com/content/4/2/181.abstract>.

¹⁶ Conflict Prevention and Resolution. (n.d.) UN Women. Retrieved from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/conflict-prevention-and-resolution>.

¹⁷ Coomaraswamy, R. (2015). Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. UN Women. p. 41-42. Retrieved from <http://wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>.

positioned themselves as a resource on issues available to all sides of the conflict.¹⁸

Community Sensitization

The exclusion of women and girls from political transition also risks replicating gender inequality and perpetuating discriminatory attitudes in communities. As efforts are made to dismantle structural gender inequality, simultaneous efforts must be made to engage communities to reduce ever-present cultural attitudes and in the case of conflict countries, conflate violence and gender inequality to create a powder keg of violence against women.

Figure 3: Ranking of Main Obstacles preventing Advancement of Women

Ranking of Main Obstacles Preventing Advancement of Women IFES Global Survey of Women's Organizations 2012-2013				
"What are, in your view, the main obstacles preventing the advancement of the status of women in your country?"				
	South & Southeast Asia	Eurasia	Africa	MENA
1	Cultural beliefs/social attitudes/patriarchal mentality	Cultural beliefs/social attitudes/patriarchal mentality	Cultural beliefs/social attitudes/patriarchal mentality	Cultural beliefs social attitudes patriarchal mentality
2	Obstacles relating to women's political influence	Obstacles relating to women's political influence	Legal obstacles	Religious beliefs
3	Religious beliefs	Poor civil society capacity	Obstacles relating to women's political influence	Legal obstacles

An IFES global survey of women's organizations indicated that across all regions of the world "cultural attitudes" were the top barrier to women's political participation.¹⁹

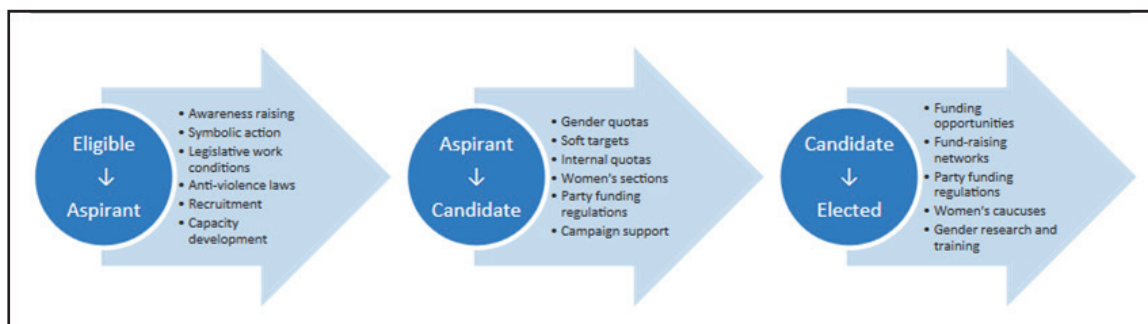
There is no simple fix to this challenge; long-term systemic approaches are needed involving protective legal frameworks, targeted women's empowerment programming and public sensitization strategies that underscore the importance of gender equality for everyone. For example, although data confirms their efficacy in bringing women into decision-making processes, gender quotas are still often viewed as unfair rather than as mechanisms to alleviate systemic discrimination against women's political leadership, because there is a perception that women are not earning positions through the same process as men.²⁰ Perhaps more intractably, gender quotas also challenge stereotypes about men and women's roles in politics.²¹ This underscores the need for a host of interventions alongside gender quotas to encourage all

¹⁸ Chang, P, et al. Women Leading Peace. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. p. 88-92. Retrieved from <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/sites/giwps/files/Women%20Leading%20Peace.pdf>.

¹⁹ Abdul-Latif, R. (2012) IFES Global Survey of Women's Organizations. International Foundation for Electoral Systems.

²⁰ Sojo,V., et. al. (2016, January). "Reporting requirements, targets, and quotas for women in leadership." The Leadership Quarterly. p. 529.

²¹ About Quotas. (2009). Retrieved from <http://www.quotaproject.org/aboutQuotas.cfm>,

Figure 4: Intervention Points and Strategies (Mona Lena Krook and Pippa Norris)

members of society to engage and support gender equality as a strategy for political stability.²²

Efforts to reach and engage women who dwell primarily in households and other private spaces must be made. Furthermore, women from all aspects of society must be given a voice, including those facing compounding barriers, such as women with disabilities, women from minority communities, poor women from rural villages or inner cities, transgender women and others. Other challenges, such as economic insecurity, the threat and practice of violence against women and a persistent lack of access to information and education highlight the need to collaborate with partners working on gender equality and women's empowerment in different sectors, such as health, education and economic security. For example, in Syria, women's groups are responding to the increase of female-headed households by providing income-generating activities. Some groups include Arabic and mathematics education alongside these vital economic empowerment activities to ensure that women maintain their education, which has been interrupted by conflict, so that they can participate in all aspects of life inside Syria.²³

Operationalizing The Women, Peace and Security Agenda During Political Transition

Although heralded for its visionary outline of meaningful participation and protection for women during conflict, the women, peace and security agenda leaves significant room for improvement in actual implementation.²⁴ As countries descend into or emerge from conflict, women hear the same thing time and time again: women's issues are important, but peace and security must be tackled first. Examples of this "not now, but soon" argument occur in every place where there is conflict and transitional democracies around the world.

As countries descend into or emerge from conflict, women hear the same thing time and time again: women's issues are important, but peace and security must be tackled first.

²² Lena Crook, M., & Norris, P. (2014, March 20). Beyond Quotas: Strategies to Promote Gender Equality in Elected Office. *Political Studies*, 62(1). Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-9248.12116/abstract>.

²³ Huber, J. (2015, December 9). Crisis in Syria: Now is the Time to Seek Male Allies for Leadership Equality. International Foundation for Electoral Systems. p. 8. Retrieved from http://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes_2015_crisis_in_syria_now_is_the_time_to_seek_male_allies_for_leadership_equality.pdf.

²⁴ Chang, P, et al. Women Leading Peace. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. p. 13. Retrieved from <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/sites/giwps/files/Women%20Leading%20Peace.pdf>.

A stark, recent example was the exclusion of all but a few women from participating in the Syrian peace talks that took place in 2013 and 2014 in Geneva and subsequent talks in Austria, Saudi Arabia and other places.²⁵ This visible exclusion of women sparked social media backlash and intensive advocacy to right this wrong.²⁶ As this author has noted:

“There is much talk about the end result of gender parity at ‘the peace table.’ Convincing arguments are being made from both a human rights perspective (i.e., women, by a matter of right, should be at the table), as well as a value proposition perspective (i.e., women will improve prospects for peace by broadening the agenda to include perspectives of the entire Syrian community). Counterarguments are made that qualified women are hard to identify. Furthermore, who would be willing to give up their seat at such a powerful table to let women in?

To support the ultimate and critically important outcome of gender parity at the peace table, steps can be taken now which could soften the distance between interested women outside the talks and the men on the inside track to future negotiations.”²⁷

While the intention of the women, peace and security agenda is clear, in Syria and other countries, implementation of the pillars of the women, peace and security agenda has been less stellar. Women are often left out of key decisions and processes for the future. A study of 33 peace negotiations showed that women made up only four percent of participants of peace processes.²⁸ Yet, the outcome of these processes impacts women at least as much as men. In fact, women are often left to pick up the pieces of societies broken by conflict, while their voices in decision-making are muted. Identifying and leveraging access points to peace and political transition processes is key to advancing this agenda.

National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security

As of June 2016, 60 countries, including the United States, have adopted national action plans on women, peace and security to implement their commitments to UNSCR 1325 and concretize progress toward these commitments.²⁹ Globally, local and international civil society engagement has been key to holding governments accountable and supporting women and men on the frontlines of peacebuilding. National action plans are the operational link between gender equality and sustainable peace. They are being adopted to push countries and multilaterals beyond rhetoric and mitigate the challenges of

²⁵ Williams, K. (2014, February 6). The Women of the Syrian Peace Talks. Inclusive Security. Retrieved from <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/the-women-of-the-syria-peace-talks/>.

²⁶ The Elders started and encourage the use of #Wherearethewomen to identify occurrences of exclusion of women from critical conflict resolution and political roles. This initiative was launched on November 5, 2014: <http://www.theelders.org/article/building-lasting-peace-where-are-women>.

²⁷ Huber, J. (2016, January 6). Women at the Syrian Peace Table. International Foundation for Electoral Systems. Retrieved from <http://www.ifes.org/news/women-syrian-peace-table>.

²⁸ Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence. (2012, October). UN Women. pg. 2. Retrieved from <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2012/10/wpssourcebook-03a-womenpeacenegotiations-en.pdf>.

²⁹ National Action Plans for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. (n.d.) Peace Women: Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. Retrieved from <http://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>.

implementing the women, peace and security agenda. The United States’ National Action Plan (NAP)³⁰ on Women, Peace and Security works across all U.S. institutions to integrate 1325 into policy and practice.

Figure 5: National Action Plans



According to the U.S. NAP:

“Evidence from around the world and across cultures shows that integrating women and gender considerations into peace-building processes helps promote democratic governance and long-term stability. In order to achieve these goals, women need to be able to play a role in building and participating in the full range of decision-making institutions in their countries. These institutions, from civil society to the judicial and security sectors, must also be responsive to and informed by women’s demands.”³¹

The U.S. NAP, and others like it, help strengthen the impact of 1325, the challenge now is to measure and demonstrate impact.

³⁰ United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. (2011, December). Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/email-files/US_National_Action_Plan_on_Women_Peace_and_Security.pdf.

³¹ Ibid.

Women, Peace and Security Programming at IFES

As an effective and respected leader in inclusive democracy and governance, IFES works to fortify women in political and electoral processes as candidates and elected leaders, technical electoral experts, engaged civil society leaders and informed voters. IFES is concerned that compared to other development indices, political participation of women remains the sector with the largest gender gap, and in countries experiencing conflict or undergoing transition, political participation is not prioritized by local and international actors.³²

IFES implements innovative women's empowerment activities to increase women's political participation and leadership. IFES uses gender analysis, data and technical leadership to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment activities into our democracy and governance work by providing gender-sensitive technical assistance and analysis on electoral legal frameworks, election systems and the administration of elections. IFES consults with a broad range of women's groups and leaders and takes into account the specific local contexts.

IFES and our partners in the Consortium for Elections and Political Processes Strengthening, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, are currently implementing the U.S. Agency for International Development Global (USAID) Elections and Political Transitions (EPT) Program. This program works to empower local partners to build resilient government institutions, political parties, and electoral processes in fragile states and developing democracies. A key cross-cutting priority of the EPT is the meaningful inclusion of women as decision-makers and active participants in all aspects of the democratic process. In many countries, IFES works with stakeholders on different aspects of political transitions that lead up to or result from Election Day, including but not limited to constitutional drafting processes, electoral reform initiatives, and peace processes.

The most direct reference to IFES' core mandate comes in Paragraph 8, Section C of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which:

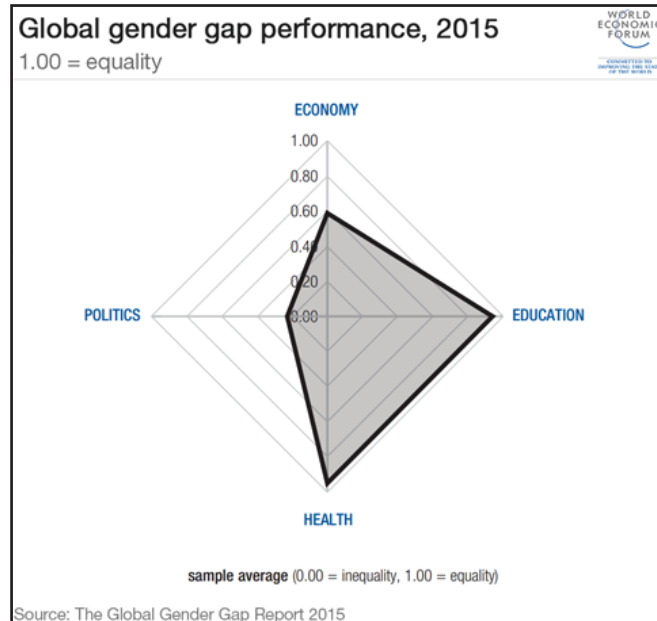
“Calls on all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including, inter alia:

...(c) Measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary”

The women, peace and security agenda is a catalyst for IFES' gender equality and women's empowerment programming in conflict and transitional contexts. IFES endeavors to explicitly address

³² The Global Gender Gap Report 2015. (2015). World Economic Forum. Retrieved <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/>.

Figure 6: Global Gender Gap Performance



A key cross-cutting priority of the Global Elections and Political Transition Program is the meaningful inclusion of women as decision-makers and active participants in all aspects of the democratic process.

the intersections between gender, democracy, and conflict as part of its work to develop and support good governance.

Examples of IFES Programming on Women, Peace and Security:

IFES integrates technical assistance on gender equality and women's empowerment as part of its holistic approach to supporting political transitions and democratic development. In addition to this approach, IFES implements supportive programming, including:

USAID/Global Women's Leadership Fund (GWLF): The GWLF program was designed to support the participation of women in peace processes and political transition negotiations relevant to conflict prevention and resolution and democratic development. Under this program, IFES conducted activities in Myanmar, Côte d'Ivoire, and Libya. In total, IFES trained 174 women and men and conducted women's empowerment trainings with advocates from throughout each country, including leaders of the women's rights movement and women who advocate for gender equality within their local communities. Each training was informed by analyses to further understand the status of women in each country during transitional processes, and tailored to fit country specific contexts. The trainings allowed the women to learn from each other's experiences and bolster their confidence in advocacy techniques and leadership skills.

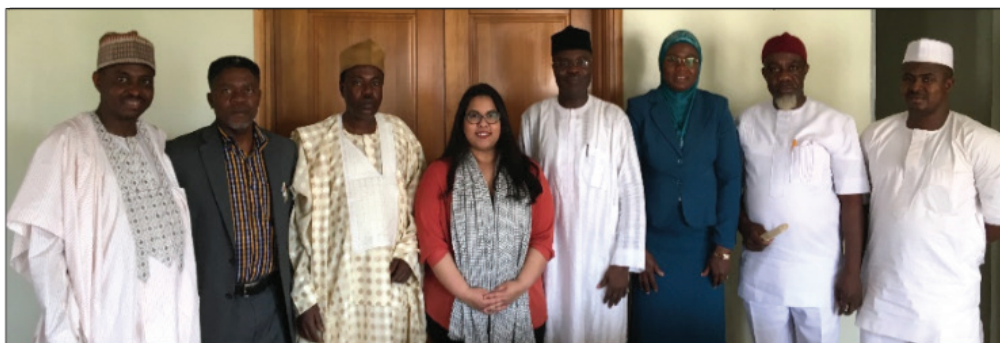
IFES connected each group of women with government institutions, such as election management bodies, civil society organizations, leaders, and policymakers in an effort to ensure their collective voices and concerns were heard. Throughout this process IFES utilized technical expertise, provided mentorship, and encouraged continued dialogue beyond the end of the program. As a result, the women continue to advocate for gender equality and the inclusion of women in political and electoral processes.

Since the trainings, participants have met with high-level policy and decision-makers to build relationships and continue to identify ways to work together to ensure the voices and needs of women are included in negotiations and transition processes. In Myanmar, the election commission created a gender-integrated strategic plan ahead of the 2015 elections. In Côte d'Ivoire, a women's network was formed and now advocates with key policymakers, including the President of the Parliament, for a parliamentary gender quota. Finally, in Libya, women from the program were successfully placed in internships and subsequently employed by various institutions, including the Office of the Prime Minister. In each of these countries, women's empowerment programming has continued beyond the life of GWLF through the lens of women, peace and security.

Male Allies for Leadership Equality (MALE): The perspectives of men must be understood in order to achieve gender equality. Working with political institutions and their generally male leaders, interventions through IFES initiatives can provide opportunities for women to promote change from within the system and to gradually alter traditional attitudes about the role of women in public and

political life. IFES has developed the MALE Module, an addendum to IFES' women's leadership training curriculum developed under the GWLF program. This module puts into practice a systemic and practical approach to work toward the understanding that gender equality and women's empowerment will only be achieved when women and men work together toward that goal.³³ The MALE module works simultaneously to sensitize women and men to the importance of working together to lead political processes and democratic development and will develop a practical approach on how to share power, provide an organized approach to training men on women's rights and leadership, and demonstrate how to create opportunities for alliances and coalitions between men and women working on democracy and governance within their respective countries.

The MALE module incorporates male allies at the household level because supportive household environments are vital for women's participation in leadership development. Engaging family members is critical to maximizing women's participation by eliminating basic barriers, such as household responsibilities and restrictions on the freedom of movement. Equally important, the MALE module engages with male allies at the institutional level, including supportive government officials as well as men who may not have previously considered gender equality in the workplace or those who have obstructed women's leadership in a systematic way.



IFES Gender Program Coordinator Tazreen Hussain with participants of a focus group discussion in Nigeria on male allies for leadership equality.

Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWIE): IFES recognizes that violence against women in elections can affect women's participation in the electoral process as voters, candidates, election officials, activists and political party leaders and therefore threaten the integrity of the electoral process, as well as the commitment of governments to a free, fair and inclusive democratic process. IFES developed the VAWIE Framework, which will help election stakeholders to enhance knowledge and improve analysis in relation to gender, development, and conflict through the design of an expanded typology, an assessment and monitoring tool, and program recommendations based on desk and original research findings.

At the core of this framework is a definition of VAWIE, which draws upon definitions of electoral violence, violence against women, and examples from IFES' research of the violence that women face on the ground:

“Any harm or threat of harm committed against women with the intent and/or impact of interfering with their free and equal participation in the electoral process during the electoral period. It includes harassment, intimidation, physical harm or coercion, threats, and financial

³³ Engaging men & boys. (n.d.). United Nations Population Fund. Retrieved from <http://www.unfpa.org/engaging-men-boys>.

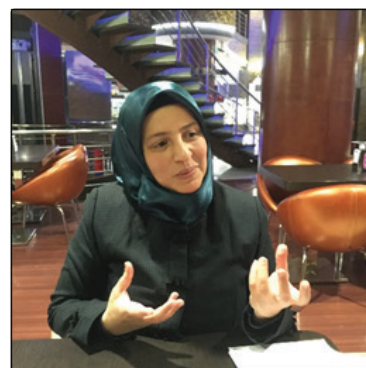
pressures, and it may be committed in the home or other private spaces, or in public spaces. These acts may be directed at women in any of their roles as electoral stakeholders (e.g., voters, media, political actors, state actors, community leaders, electoral officials).”³⁴

1325 Advocacy: With the Office of Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, IFES co-hosts a bi-monthly “Women, Peace and Security” breakfast series. The series explores current issues affecting women and girls in conflict and illuminates their determination and leadership to find peace. Each conversation provides an opportunity for civil society, government representatives and others to engage on specific topics framed in the context of United Nations



Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and the U.S. Government’s NAP on 1325. Topics explore women at the peace table; increasing leadership of women and girls in political transitions; preventing and responding to violence against women in conflict; engaging men and boys as allies in peacebuilding; women, conflict and the environment; codifying inclusive human rights in transitional legal frameworks; women with disabilities; women, girls and human trafficking; and women in the military. IFES is also a member of the civil society working group on women, peace and security hosted by the U.S. Institute of Peace.

Syria: Men and women in Syria point to the critical role of women during the revolution and their actions that supported the movement. So why doesn’t the acknowledged importance of the role of women in the revolution translate to a greater role in leadership and decision-making in Syria’s political transition and in Syrian society?



Ahlam, a civil society activist, describes women’s roles in the Syrian Revolution.

Under the USAID-funded GWLP and the “Promoting Inclusive and Democratic Engagement II” program, IFES conducted a joint Syria-Gender team mission to Gaziantep, Turkey with the goal of addressing this question directly with men and women seeking solutions to the crisis. The women IFES spoke with embraced this exercise as relevant and especially important for tackling gender inequality alongside the colossal peacebuilding and political challenges Syria is facing. The men IFES spoke with were quick to support gender equality, but many were also quick to explain it away through concerns about control and power, cloaked in explanations of “safety” and “qualifications.” The true concern it seemed, which is often true when engaging men in any context around the world, is the zero-sum assumptions that it is “us” or “them” in discussions about gender equality. Responding to and finding ways to alleviate this concern will be critical to the success of alliances between men and women in the resolution of Syria’s conflict. For more on IFES’ work please see our report analyzing the outcomes and providing recommendations from this mission entitled “Crisis in Syria: Now is the Time to Seek Male Allies for Leadership Equality,”³⁵ and an

³⁴ Huber, J. & Kammerud, L. (forthcoming) “Against Women in Elections: A Framework. International Foundation for Electoral Systems. p.4.

³⁵ Huber, J. (2015, December 9). Crisis in Syria: Now is the Time to Seek Male Allies for Leadership Equality. International Foundation for Electoral Systems. Retrieved from http://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes_2015_crisis_in_syria_now_is_the_time_to_seek_male_allies_for_leadership_equality.pdf.

article entitled “Women at the Syrian Peace Table,”³⁶ describing the specific issue of women’s participation in formal Syrian peace negotiations.

Myanmar: IFES is supporting “She Leads,” a women’s leadership program led by Yaung Chi Thit, a local civil society organization, to train over 500 women in all 14 states and regions of the country.³⁷ She Leads empowers women to become leaders at all different levels of their communities. Participants in She Leads have conducted their own voter education initiatives, including voter education at hospitals and mobile clinics, as well as in villages and schools, training tens of thousands of community members. For the November 2015 elections, over 70 participants became polling stations staff or observers, six ran as candidates and one participant won a seat in the national Parliament.



She Leads participants show UN Goodwill Ambassador Angelina Jolie how to check the voter list.

Conclusion

Where there is conflict around the world, women and men actively seek peace. In Syria, Libya, Liberia and many other places, women take to the streets in peaceful protest, are elected to public and lead their communities in the name of sustainable peace. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions are groundbreaking in their recognition not only that women and girls must be protected in conflict, but that they are valuable agents for sustainable peace and security. IFES takes a long view by engaging in countries emerging from crisis through good governance and democracy building programs. IFES’ women, peace and security programming provides a framework for interventions in these early stages to ensure that gender equality is an essential building block, not an afterthought to the democratic process. The risk of an approach that discounts or ignores this inclusive approach is too great.

³⁶ Huber, J. (2016, January 6). Women at the Syrian Peace Table. International Foundation for Electoral Systems. Retrieved from <http://www.ifes.org/news/women-syrian-peace-table>.

³⁷ Ryan, K. (2015, November 6). She Leads: Mobilizing Voters for the Myanmar 2015 General Elections. International Foundation for Electoral Systems. Retrieved from <http://www.ifes.org/news/she-leads-mobilizing-voters-myanmar-2015-general-elections>.



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