

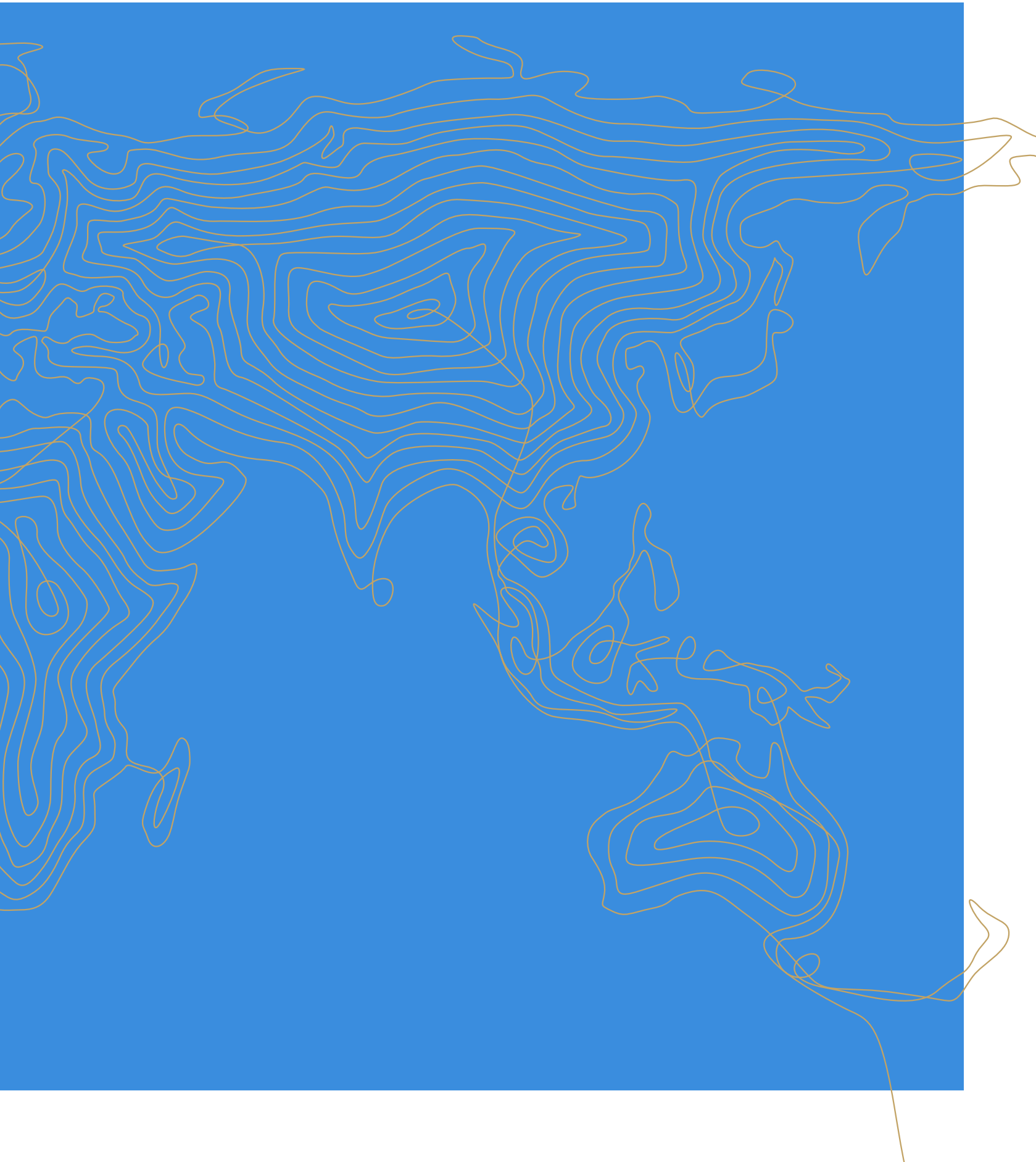


SHE *Stands for Peace*

20 YEARS, 20 JOURNEYS

A thin gold outline map of the African continent is positioned behind the text, with the word "SHE" overlapping its northern part and "Stands for Peace" overlapping its eastern part.









SHE *Stands*
for Peace

20 YEARS, 20 JOURNEYS



UNOAU

United Nations Office to the African Union



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



She Stands for Peace. 20 Years, 20 Journeys

This book is jointly published by the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) and the African Union Commission (AUC), made possible by the generous support of the Government of the Kingdom of Norway.

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This book commemorates 20 years of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). It captures 20 journeys of African women and organisations contributing to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Africa.

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The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1325 (2000) calling for participation of women in the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict. The resolution calls on all actors involved to adopt a gender perspective when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, and further calls on all parties to armed conflict to fully respect international law applicable to the human rights of women and girls, as civilians and as refugees. A general view of the meeting as the vote is taken.

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Keeping law and order, a Somali Police traffic warden regulates traffic in the streets of KM 4 roundabout in Mogadishu.

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Sincere gratitude to those who supported, populated and responded to the open call for nominations, including everyone who nominated outstanding African women to be featured in the book and those who took the time to apply themselves.



The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to the African Union and Head of UNOAU, Hanna S. Tetteh and the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Minata Samate Cessouma hold a meeting at the African Union Headquarters in May 2019 at which the conceptualisation of this book was discussed.

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THE JOURNEY OF UNSCR 1325 IN AFRICA

FOREWORD

by AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON
MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT

The last two decades have been marked by events and initiatives that have held great promise for the promotion of the rights of women and girls in African countries.

With the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, the international community acknowledged that women are not only the targets of mass violence in situations of armed conflict whose protection needs to be enhanced, but also that their participation in peacebuilding has a strategic and positive impact on the stabilisation and reconstruction of post-crisis countries.

For the very first time, women are no longer regarded as mere, hapless victims, but as real protagonists in numerous fields related to peace and security. 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of this landmark resolution, which constitutes a turning point in the recognition of the impact of conflicts on women and their involvement in all efforts designed to maintain and promote peace, security and stability.

In Africa, it is evident that despite the existence of a plethora of instruments which enshrine the right to gender equality, progress remains limited and is not yet sufficient to achieve the aspirations expressed in these instruments. Women and girls are victims of socio-cultural constraints. Very often, this reality hinders their effective inclusion in decision-making processes and weakens their social position.

Furthermore, one major reason for this lack of progress lies in the fact that women's efforts and actions in the areas of peace, governance and development are very seldom heard or shared in the public life of our countries. To remedy this situation, the African Union and the United Nations took the initiative to publish a book, which seeks to showcase African women who have given their all, at various levels, for the advancement of peace and security.

The publication and launch of this collective work provide us with an opportunity to appreciate and witness the trajectories of some of these icons, peace activists as well as proponents of the rule of law, stability and inclusive development. They stand out as true leaders who exemplify a certain ideal of life in a rapidly changing world that has lost its bearings.

They are a tangible example of success in their respective fields, while continuing to face situations of vulnerability and fragility. The strength of their commitment is equal to their conviction, which often surpasses atrocities, fragility and crises or conflicts. They are a source of pride, hope and expectation. They offer a smile to orphans, warm the hearts of displaced persons or refugees and restore hope to survivors of gender-based violence, as well as to child soldiers.

It is a pleasure for me to write the foreword of this kaleidoscopic book that depicts the stories of these brave, multifaceted women.



Moussa Faki Mahamat
© AU Photo/Office of the Chairperson

The publication of this book is a strong testimony that should bring international recognition, thus crowning the investment made by women for their fellow men. We must pay far more attention to them and lend them all our support. These icons expect a concrete commitment from our leaders, States and regional, continental and international institutions to ensure that women regain their place at the heart of our peacebuilding processes and public action.

The African Union Commission will spare no effort to honour and support the initiatives of our valiant women leaders depicted in this book as well as many other active women who have put in a lot of work behind the scenes. Women and girls richly deserve our consideration, support and respect. Our Organisation's Member States should step up their respective efforts in domesticating the relevant regional, continental and international standards as well as legal instruments.

I would like to conclude by commending the AU and UN teams for their efforts that culminated in the production of this important collective work. I remain convinced that the priority given to gender issues is one of the prerequisites for the achievement of the *Africa We Want* by 2063, an Africa representing a dynamic force in the community of nations.

An AMISOM police vetting officer takes blood from a new recruit during a Jubaland police recruitment exercise in Kismayo, Somalia.
© AMISOM Photo/ Barut Mohamed



FOREWORD

by UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL
ANTÓNIO GUTERRES

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 was a landmark. Its origins lay in mobilisation by civil society and in leadership by Namibia, which took this agenda to the Security Council. The resolution, which led to what is now termed the Women, Peace and Security agenda, recognises the need for peace and security to be inclusive in order to be sustainable. It emphasises conflict prevention, gender equality, and women's meaningful participation in all stages of conflict management and resolution and in all aspects of post-conflict reconstruction and development.

As we mark the twentieth anniversary of the resolution's adoption, we note the wide-ranging efforts to realise its implementation, including through the extraordinary leadership by African women, from those providing services in front-line communities, to women mediators and political leaders, to those briefing the Security Council to ensure the voices of affected communities are heard.

Yet this milestone is also an important moment to recognise that we still have far to go to realise the intentions of resolution 1325, which was not to make war safer for women, but to prevent violence, conflict, injustice and inequality in general. We have much work to do in ensuring that our analysis of conflicts, our scanning for solutions and the composition of our peace tables always include women. Indeed, inclusivity is the key to lasting peace. We need to scale up our efforts and ambition to bring this understanding to life.

The United Nations is honoured to celebrate, together with the African Union, twenty women

and organisations who have displayed inspiring bravery and commitment in their work for peace across the continent.

The United Nations welcomes the determination of the African Union to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The collaboration between the two organisations that has led to the publication of this book is just one example of our increasingly close partnership since the signing of the Framework Agreement on Peace and Security between the United Nations and the African Union in April 2017.

I salute the women who are profiled within these pages for their outstanding leadership, while acknowledging that for each one profiled here, there are countless others whose stories are yet to be formally told. Women all over Africa continuously demonstrate courage as they fight for human dignity and rights for all, even when it feels like no one is listening.

The objectives of the Women, Peace and Security agenda are integrally linked with the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2063 and the Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative. Through our continued cooperation and partnership with the African Union, we look forward to supporting women across the African continent to rightly take their place in shaping their lives, communities and countries towards a more peaceful and prosperous future. I have no doubt that together we can build the Africa we want.



António Guterres
© UN Photo/Mark Garten

FOREWORD

by MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF NORWAY
INE ERIKSEN SØREIDE

Women are never just observers of conflict. Women's lives are deeply affected by growing unrest and rising levels of violence, by disruption to services and infrastructure, and by the tearing apart of the social fabric. Women are often the first responders, the ones who start the process of mending, even while the violence continues. Women reach out to seek reconciliation, because, more often than not, it is them who will play an important role in rebuilding their communities.

Women's involvement in peace and security did not begin with the adoption of UNSCR 1325 twenty years ago. Women have always been both victims and perpetrators in conflicts, as well as peacebuilders and key actors in conflict prevention. UNSCR 1325 merely recognised these facts, and by adopting the resolution, member states made a commitment to adjust their peace and security efforts accordingly.

We may be frustrated by the slow progress – the persistent gaps, women's continued suffering, and their underrepresentation in our peace and security structures. And we should be, because the failure to include women and integrate their needs, rights and priorities is not only unjust, it also makes our efforts less effective.

At the same time, as we prepare for the next 20 years, we should not overlook what has been achieved. There are now clear expectations, and

there are policies in place. Gender and women's rights, human security, civil society involvement, women's participation – these are concepts that have operational implications. Training has changed, monitoring is improving. We are still far from where we need to be. But it is becoming easier to do the right thing, and harder to disregard our obligations.

We have seen a similar development in peace processes. The Women, Peace and Security agenda did not feature prominently in the Oslo process between the Israelis and the Palestinians, despite Norway's consistent focus on women's rights in other contexts. Today, such an omission would be unthinkable. We now have too much data and too much experience to not take this into account. We know what is required of us, and women – including local activists – know this too.

The UN is increasingly promoting women's participation and rights in peace and security efforts. Regional and sub-regional organisations are following suit. They have to, because a growing number of regional actors are taking the lead in peace and security matters. If they fail to include women and women's rights, we will not see the results we need.

The African Union, African sub-regional organisations and African countries are undoubtedly key players. We are pleased to be cooperating with SADC, IGAD



Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Eriksen Søreide

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and others in concrete processes and on policy development. We are working with a number of countries to prepare and implement national action plans, and sometimes even local ones. This is a comprehensive and long-term task.

Women, Peace and Security has been a focus area for Norway's cooperation with the African Union for many years. We have developed strategies and learned together, not least through our cooperation with the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. The African Union is leading the way with its Continental Results Framework for UNSCR 1325, which holds countries accountable and streamlines reporting. The Training for Peace programme has progressed, and has become a key tool for increasing women's representation in peace operations. The development and active use of networks of women mediators are priorities for us, and both the Nordic network and the Norwegian branch are resources of competence and capacity. As the Global Alliance of Regional Networks of Women Mediators has evolved, we are benefiting from close cooperation with FemWise-Africa.

FemWise-Africa has a vast pool of expertise. It is worth noting that the African Union has started deploying network members through formal security structures. This is the kind of action we need.

The fact that women are still vastly underrepresented in peace and security efforts does not reflect any lack of competence on their part. Lack of access for women is the crucial issue, and we are spending far too much of our time challenging the 'gatekeepers' of peace processes.

While women may struggle to gain access to some of the informal spaces for male interaction, other spaces may be more open to them. It is important that we consider the gendered challenges and opportunities that both women and men face, and work strategically with our whole teams to make processes as effective as possible.

This book is a call to action and a guide to reverse trends, for example, the tendency to sideline women peacebuilders as a process moves from the grassroots level to the national or global level; the tendency to overlook women mediators when nominations are made; and the fact that women's successes are too seldom noticed, or even more rarely recorded.

The stories in this book provide a record of valuable experience gained, lessons learnt and best practices. It is a book about peace, and about the women who have led the way. It seeks to increase women's visibility in peacemaking and to build a platform for others to stand on.

Women discuss their commitment to the peace process Timbuktu Mali.
© MISAHEL Photo



INTRODUCTION

This book is a tribute to the women of Africa – the peacemakers, the mediators, the activists and human rights defenders, the humanitarians, the visionaries, the leaders.

It is an expression of admiration and deep respect for all these heroines who fight tirelessly for peace and security, justice and equality, for positive change and sustainable development, and for creating the Africa we want.

Moreover, this book is a product of partnership. What began with a conversation in the early 2019, at a dinner hosted by Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Norway to the African Union and the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Morten Aasland, soon grew into a joint vision – shared by African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui and three African women leaders – the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Minata Samate Cessouma, the African Union Commission Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Bineta Diop, and the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to the African Union and Head of UNOAU, Hanna S. Tetteh.

The officials agreed that despite the tremendous achievements by women in peace, security and development, their contributions remained largely unrecognised, and their stories untold and in all likelihood forgotten in history.

United in the commitment to create a space for women to share their journeys, elevate their voices and promote their aspirations, they decided to jointly spearhead the initiative to publish this book. The project provided a unique opportunity for engagement between the African Union and the United Nations as part of the two organisations' growing partnership in peace, security and development.

Over the course of one year, a diverse cross-organisational and inter-departmental team, formed by the AUC Departments for Peace and Security and Political Affairs, the Office of the AUC Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security and UNOAU jointly brought this project to fruition. Together, the team conceptualised the publication, conducted a continental outreach campaign calling for the nomination of and applications by women to be featured in the book, completed a thorough selection process, and facilitated support to the successful candidates to write their respective stories.

Apart from the commitment to ascertain an inclusive nomination and balanced selection process, the task team also ensured a writing process marked by ownership and authenticity.

While an editorial consultant assisted the selected candidates in compiling their contributions, the content and writing style of this publication



HANNA S. TETTEH
Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to the African Union and Head of UNOAU
© UN Photo/Manuel Elias



MINATA SAMATE CESSOUMA
AU Commissioner for Political Affairs
© AU/Department of Political Affairs



SMÂÏL CHERGUI
AU Commissioner for Peace and Security
© AU/Department of Peace and Security



BINETA DIOP
AUC Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security
© AU/Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security

is entirely shaped by the women who decided to share their journey with us. What you read is their story, what you hear is their voice. We are deeply grateful to them for this.

She Stands for Peace portrays women from all walks of life, of different ages, across different sectors and from different regions of the continent. It features stories of women who have taken up prominent roles in politics, diplomacy and mediation, of activists who promote peace through sports and technology, and of leaders who fight violence, especially gender-based violence, at community-level. The book includes stories of individuals and of women's organisations, and recognises work conducted at different levels – from grassroots, to national, sub-regional and regional levels.

The timing for this commemorative publication is no coincidence.

The year 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security. The landmark resolution recognises that conflict affects women differently and calls for the protection of women and their meaningful participation in peace and security processes. It further emphasises the need for an increased role of women in preventing and resolving conflict and underlines the imperative of addressing gender inequality as one of the root causes of violent conflict.

Together with a series of other United Nations and African Union policy instruments, UNSCR 1325 is part of a broad spectrum of norms, widely known as the Women, Peace and Security agenda. In commemorating the 20th anniversary of this milestone resolution, *She Stands for Peace* sheds a light on some of the achievements made thus far. At the same time, it reminds us of the long way that lies ahead and echoes the urgent call for action to ensure the full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Achieving this vision is crucial, not only for the promotion and maintenance of peace and security, but for achieving the goals set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 more broadly. It is further imperative for realising the aspirations set as part of the African Union's flagship initiative 'Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020' – particularly in this crucial year where greater emphasis is being placed on its implementation.

Finally, this book aims to send a message of encouragement to all women out there – those seasoned and those emerging, those in the spotlight and those whose names may never be widely known, those filled with hope and those close to giving up: Your contribution matters. Your voice counts. And your story deserves to be told. It is YOU, who stands for peace. This is just the beginning.

Women in Abu Shouk Camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) near El Fasher, North Darfur, attend English classes conducted by volunteer teachers and facilitated by the police component of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Nearly 100 women, many with children, attend these classes three times a week in a school in the camp with materials (exercise books, notebooks, blackboards and chalk) provided by UNAMID Police.

© UN Photo/Albert Gonzalez Farran



“In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted the landmark resolution 1325. This heralded a turning point as it was the first time that the international community had formally recognised our central and multifaceted contributions to realising peace and security across our world.

Twenty years on, we see progress but let us go beyond giving women a seat; the power structures and the status quo need to be challenged. We need National Action Plans to bring the Women, Peace and Security agenda to the grassroots, narrowing the gap between rhetoric and reality, and addressing unmet promises.

Let us sustain the good momentum!”

President Sahle-Work Zewde,
President of Ethiopia

20 20 *Years*
Journeys



A female UN Police Officer celebrates with a peacekeeping colleague at the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID)'s celebration for the International Day of Peace and the Year of Peace and Security in Africa, in El Fasher, Sudan.

© UN Photo/Olivier Chassot

DAVIDICA IKAI GRASIANO AYAHU



Davidica is the Chief Executive Officer of ITWAK Women Empowerment Organisation. She has extensive experience in documenting, mapping and addressing inter-communal conflict. Davidica was instrumental in identifying key participants of the Tiragore Peace and Reconciliation Dialogue in Torit East County.

I was born on 12 December 1960, the fifth child to what would eventually be a family of six. It was a time of great turmoil in what was then united Sudan, with the South Sudanese fighting to liberate themselves from northern Sudan. My father, Grasiano Ohucoli Ayahu, died in Juba, the current capital of South Sudan, in 1964, and we would spend the next nine years living in exile in Uganda. Life as a refugee was not easy. I had to learn new cultures and languages but speaking and writing in Acholi became easier for me because all subjects in school were taught in Acholi. I recall an incident in school in 1969; I got 98% in History and in response, my classmate Mohammed slapped me. When I asked why, he said because I was a refugee. The significance of war and the importance of peace dawned on me from that day.

One Friday night in 1970, the Ugandan army surrounded our residential area. They accused residents of storing weapons and ammunitions for the separatist rebel army, Anyanya. They searched every house. I was half-asleep when they arrived at our house. Startled and afraid, I ran, and they shot after me. Fortunately, I managed to escape to a river where I hid. I was 10 years old.

I had just started Junior Secondary School when we returned to Juba in 1974. The Addis Ababa Peace Agreement had been signed in 1972. After completing my secondary education in 1981, I enrolled as a Field Cooperative Officer in the Regional Ministry of Cooperative and Community Development in 1982. However, war broke out between Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in 1983. Women became more vulnerable because they had to look after their children and find safe places to hide and find food. Many took refuge in Uganda and Kenya, others in Khartoum and Juba. I was in Khartoum. Jobless, I illegally produced alcohol. One day, the police caught me red-handed and I spent two weeks in prison.

It was in 2007 at a Peacebuilding and Conflict Mitigation Training Course in Ikotos, a town in Imatong State, South Sudan that three

others and I developed the idea of a community organisation that empowers women to contribute to peacebuilding, security and development.

ITWAK Women Empowerment Organisation (ITWAK means morning star in Lutoko language) was established on 20 November 2009, with me as its Chief Executive Officer. Our mission was simple; we wanted to work with communities by empowering women to participate in fostering community peace, security and socio-economic development. An important mission for a country that had known only war for decades. At this point, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) had been signed, in January 2005, between the Government of Sudan, the SPLA and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). This led to the independence referendum and consequently the separation of South Sudan from Sudan on 9 July 2011. Unfortunately, for South Sudanese people, independence from the North did not result in instant peace as we had hoped. A power struggle between the leaders of Africa's youngest country led to further conflict in December 2013, leading to more bloodshed and displacement of people. I developed a variety of awareness-raising activities targeting the armies, to highlight the importance of peace. This included producing a radio talk-show on peacebuilding.

From my perspective, the challenge for South Sudan has not only been about the integration of conflicting political ideologies between its leaders, but also the differing perceptions of its citizens whose experiences during the conflicts at home, and in the refugee and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, were still so vivid. The objective of ITWAK Women Empowerment was to educate communities to coexist peacefully despite their differing understandings of life. We worked in Torit County, Torit East and greater Ikwoto Counties in Torit State. I had to map out the conflicting villages and understand the root causes of the various inter-village conflicts, which often led to revenge attacks.



“For all we have been through, and continue to support each other to get through, women of South Sudan are heroes.”



© Jane Shila

My first encounter in challenging girl-child blood compensation was when a seven-year-old girl was compensated to a family because her mother killed a member of another family. Challenging this practice, like many traditional practices, was extremely difficult. I developed a series of awareness-raising campaigns aiming to both, promote human rights, particularly the right of the girl-child, and to ensure the communities understood that the South Sudanese Constitution and Child Act of 2009 opposed the girl-child blood compensation practice. I engaged local governments, chiefs, commissioners and policy-makers, especially the Ministry of Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs. I mapped the conflicting villages of Torit East County like Hiyala Payam. I can remember once asking a group of villagers to close their eyes for a minute and tell me what they saw. Darkness, they said. For them, dialogue and reconciliation was urgent. During that time, I also interacted with children, sensitising them about peace.

HITO Resolution came from the peace dialogue and reconciliation of Tiragore people. HITO is an abbreviation of the names of villages in which peace dialogues were conducted: Hiyala, Ikwoto, Tirangore, and Oudo. The State Parliament combined the resolutions from the four different peace dialogues into one document, and this is referred to as the “HITO” resolutions. It was no easy fete, taking almost three months to achieve. What has resonated with me the most is the way the State Assembly adopted the resolution at every level.

The Tiragore Peace and Reconciliation Dialogue took place from 7 December 2015 to 16 March 2016 in Torit East County. Conflict in the area had been ongoing for several months before this intervention. ITWAK Women Empowerment intervened by bringing the two camps of Ifarang and Tagul to dialogue. My role was to consult and identify the key people who would participate in the talks. After the talks, and with the agreement signed by both camps, it was now necessary to restore the environment, which was destroyed during the conflict. ITWAK Women Empowerment facilitated this.

As conflict resolution and mediation is usually perceived as a male domain in the country, we were waiting for somebody to initiate a peace dialogue among the communities, but it was taking too long, nobody was coming forward to face the challenges on the ground, and people lived in constant fear. We at ITWAK Women Empowerment decided to take the challenges on.

I led a group of women and a few men to conduct a needs assessment in seven villages affected by the conflict, to ascertain the effect of conflict on the local communities. We found out that two girls and one medical personnel had been killed. The latter in revenge for the girls. About eight hundred houses were burnt down, the entire community displaced; there was strict restriction of movement and conducting trade between the conflicting communities was virtually impossible. ITWAK successfully sought funding from the Catholic Relief Services to support our interventions. We started to consult with the various



© Davidica Ikai Grasiانو Ayah

community leaders, including the members of parliament, county commissioners, local chiefs and religious leaders.

We faced many challenges at the beginning, because the local culture does not permit women to initiate peace dialogue. It therefore took a while for the community leaders to understand that we were a neutral body. Focus and consistency saw us through, and they eventually began to trust our team.

I was actively involved in mobilising community leaders who came out from the seven villages to attend the peace dialogue. Over 2,000 people were in attendance. During the dialogues, I was the main facilitator, and played a mediation role. After three months of peace dialogue, the conflicting communities signed a peace resolution, and they agreed to live peacefully among themselves. People started to move freely between villages, and children returned to their schools because they could now move without fear of attack. The entire community started cultivating their farms. The community members were very happy about my role in peacebuilding and expressed their joy by singing a song in my name and the name of our organisation, saying, we are the “planters of the seed of peace”.

I continued to train women on the importance of girl-child education, and the evil of early child marriage, I also supported women empowerment activities. Following our training in Ikwoto, over 60 girls were enrolled to primary school, one girl was rescued from early child marriage, and one woman was elected as a Community Chief for the first time. After five years of training,

the community started to value women, getting them involved in decision-making.

I am proud that my work has made a difference and inspired women. My ability to speak multiple languages, including Otuho, Acholi, Arabic and English, has helped me to reach many different communities. Nevertheless, deep down I want to do more. A South Sudanese proverb says, “*what makes a woman to deliver a baby is the strength of a fellow woman.*” For all we have been through, and continue to support each other to get through, women of South Sudan are heroes. Resilient, strong, and patient, I remain committed to my calling to help.



MARWA AZELMAT



Marwa is a feminist peacebuilder, law graduate and IT engineer bridging the gaps between Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and the broader Women, Peace and Security agenda. She is a consultant on gender, armed conflict and ICTs, specialising in international security.

Our journey of change often begins in small forgotten places; it might be the home where you grew up, the class you attended for the first time, your grandma's place where you used to have a weekly food gathering, or yourself, deep down where the real magic occurs. We often take our inner power for granted, whereas without it we could not have overcome the different challenges to get to where we are today. It takes guts to face the society with a bold willingness to change the norms, to say 'No!' when everyone says yes, and to believe in what we do despite the heavy self-questioning we are constantly facing. At the end, none of this matters because it is the achievement that takes the spotlight, however, let us ensure we pay tribute to ourselves for enduring in silence for the sake of making change happen. Our peacebuilding journey does not necessarily start with activism. Mine started with counselling of friends on their family issues, sometimes providing them with refuge in my home for days when they needed it.

I accidentally ended up advocating for the rights of my peers; I would say it is that feeling of injustice that I always rejected and fought against that channelled my rebellion into a full-time activism embraced with my pan-Africanism. As an indigenous woman coming from the extreme northern part of Africa, I have had a hard time identifying where I belong. The media has always portrayed the Sahara as a means to divide us so that we would be called North African whereas the "others" are Sub-Saharan. It is geographically correct; however, such separation has significantly turned into a stigmatisation hampering our collective potential to build the Africa we want. In the course of time, I have found resilience in owning my African narratives, narratives that sell our peace agency, picture our different shades and emphasise the desire to lead the change ourselves. It is the confluence of all these details, along with

considerable life-changing events that pushed me to do more in relation to peace and security in Africa.

When I first decided to study Information Technology Engineering, I had my own digital security in mind because I felt somewhat unsafe with my online presence. I had to do something about it and pursuing a Masters in IT was a perfect solution, as it would allow me to master technical skills and own my digital space. At that time, I did not consider the social barriers and patriarchal nature of the job market that was awaiting my graduation. That was until I participated in the first Africa Code Hackathon for girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), organised by Microsoft Africa in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Egypt. There were five groups of six young women; each representing different regions of Africa. We headed to Sharm El Sheikh to design tech-driven solutions in response to one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), under the guidance of industry experts, leaders and engineers. The Ivory Coast team won the prize for their innovative mobile application that tackled illiteracy through voice notes. Although the idea seemed ordinary for some, it is undoubtedly revolutionary for those born into poverty with lesser access to education. It is in that specific context that I knew I was granted the opportunity to work with the most vulnerable and the least privileged. I realised the concern was not only about my own digital security, but rather the gaps between policy-making and the wider needs of society.

It was also the moment I embraced my desire to see a feminist Africa where women celebrate their leadership. I started delivering a series of workshops and speaking at a number of national conferences to leverage female students in IT with the unwavering support of relevant stakeholders, such as Microsoft



Ta3mal Morocco, Silatech and academic institutions, including my school, the National School of Applied Sciences of Kenitra. In conjunction with promoting a feminist STEM, I joined an energetic youth-led team aiming at linking African grassroots youth leaders to a platform called the “African Youth Leadership Summit”, under the auspices of MasterPeace Morocco and HEM Business School Marrakech. After a multitude of fundraising calls, we succeeded in bringing 100 participants from all over Africa to discuss the vital role Africa plays in the implementation and realisation of the SDGs. The convening was an opportunity for me to call for regional commitment to establish a virtual network of peacebuilders. Therefore, I did, and I not only facilitated the process but also began mainstreaming their active citizenry into other grassroots movements by engaging them in local debates, national events and high-level discourses. In 2017, I was nominated and appointed to serve at the UN Women Gender Innovation Agora, within the Peace and Security Working Group. It propelled me into another type of advocacy thanks to the unparalleled guidance of Emad Karim, Programme Specialist, and Advocacy & Innovation at UN Women.

Returning to my graduation and to the professional work experiences that I had in the IT industry, where I had to justify my competencies rather than to do my work alongside my male colleagues. Aside from my own experiences, I also witnessed those of female friends who were forced to give up on their

careers because of gender-based discrimination, exhausting family pressure, social biases and other patriarchal factors. This endemic situation has pushed me to rethink the intersectionality of my activism, the sustainability of the impact.

I would like to achieve, and the extent to which I can push the Women, Peace and Security agenda forward in Africa. Therefore, I decided to target different pillars of the UNSCR 1325 to cover peace and security related cross-cutting issues, such as gender justice, Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), decent work and decision-making.

Promoting gender equality in Africa was crucial for my advocacy as a means to unleash the peace dividend; without having a good understanding of the different ways women and men react to synergies of conflict, we cannot provide efficient and measurable policy responses. In a digital age, peacebuilding gets even more complex with the rise of virtual actors, new audiences and unlimited spaces of communication and knowledge production. I have always noted this with concern, and raised awareness on this. My mission went beyond peacebuilding to rethinking what peacebuilding should look like in the digital age. From bringing issues around the digital divide to the fore, through addressing the lack of gendered data, and highlighting the inextricable linkages between the UNSCR 1325 and the developments of ICTs in the context of international security. I strived for a digitally resilient Africa, for the offline and the online

environments are often intertwined and being mindful of this point is of utmost importance in the current times. As far as I am concerned, my academic background has leveraged my capacity to lift the lid on the relations between emerging technologies and peace and security. Hence, promoting women into STEM would not only empower them economically but also enable them to uncover their democratic participation in a connected age. Furthermore, my active participation in high-level settings has allowed me to contribute to policy-making.

I recall the Internet Society Fellowship an excellent opportunity to dive into internet-related governance processes, managed by the kind Ms. Alejandra Prieto. I also recall the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Going Digital Project Summit, where I provided my inputs on the gender digital divide in front of policy-makers and governmental representatives thanks to Carolyn Nguyen, Technology Policy Director at Microsoft who advocated for my participation in such a high-level convening. Having senior leaders' support along the way was crucial for me to occupy spaces I thought were not for myself.

I have always put the Decent Work Agenda as my top priority. Although Africa has a large youth population, African youth are often merely getting by. Economic fragility enhances the perception of injustice in some small forgotten places that I mentioned at the start of this chapter, consequently pushing the most affected to seek recognition and gainful employment elsewhere. In Africa too, climate insecurities make it difficult to imagine a future without conflict escalating. The demographic bulge, if not merged with proper human investment, cannot become a youth dividend. There is a lot to do, and we must speak up for those without the agency to do so. That is why mobilising women has been the core of my journey, because women have to tell their stories, women have to stop working in the shadows and women have to stand up for themselves. Developing partnerships with informal groups was a revelation for me, as I had the opportunity to listen to real voices of those who do good things without expecting something in return.

Involving men in smashing the patriarchy has been the highlight of my journey so far, engaging men in the conversation and not singling them out is essential to healing patriarchal wounds. Fortunately, a group of feminist men surrounded me. People like Mirza Dinnayi, an award-winning Yezidi activist whose story has awakened many around the world on the atrocities minorities still face until today. Seeing him capturing the stories of ex-ISIS women captives has sparked hope in my life whenever I feel down and knowing more about his fight has revived the warrior in me to never give up! Likewise, provoking a change in mindset of those who disagree with my beliefs has been rewarding and

“Building peace in Africa needs outspoken change-makers who cannot stand being observers”

time worthy. An interesting mediation perspective, I would say! However, it needs to be ethical and objective.

Showing resistance is vital to picking ourselves up!

Our contribution to peace and security in Africa is about the failures and the frustration we have in between all of these events. It is also about the stolen moments we genuinely dedicate to shaping our vision, and putting our actions into place. Ultimately, it is about the blurry sights we often have on the future of peace in Africa. None of this should push us backwards! This is how overwhelming the process can be, and I can assure you that it is worth the sleepless nights, the long flights, intense negotiations, the rejected proposals, and the loneliness one can feel while standing for peace.

The thought of having lives saved, conflicts ended, and progress made after our hustle is what we should focus on. However, we cannot ignore that such results necessitate collective efforts, people-centred actions and strong partnerships for the SDGs to cover all the aspect of peace and security where women should be on the forefront. Such efforts need a reminder, and this book as the cornerstone of our feminist peace legacy, is reminding us to own unapologetically our African narratives to build the Africa we want for the generations and ourselves to come. We shall not forget!

BETTY BIGOMBE



Betty is currently the Special Envoy of Uganda to the South Sudan Peace Process. She was the former Minister of State for Northern Uganda and chief mediator between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government. Betty is the recipient of many international awards for her longstanding commitment to peace and humanitarian affairs.

“Peace is possible!”

Although we had heard of injustices during the government of Milton Obote (1980-85), my first personal experience was when the brother of our housekeeper was travelling in a taxi and was stopped at a roadblock. He was suspected of being a supporter of Yoweri Museveni, who would later become president. He was taken away, and no one has seen him since. As the persecution, arrest, torture and extra-judicial killings of those who belonged to the wrong tribe or were suspected of being a Museveni supporter became widespread, I could no longer remain passive. Grave injustices like this drove me to act. In 1986, I was appointed Deputy Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister. I was the first woman in this position, a northerner at that, and so it was generally perceived as symbolic. Three women were appointed to the first Museveni government, but I was the only one in the Office of the Prime Minister. Museveni is from western Uganda and his government was mostly composed of people from the west and south of the country. Therefore, having a northerner as part of his administration created an image of national solidarity. In reality though, there were no defined responsibilities and I was not satisfied with this. I felt marginalised and when I protested to Prime Minister Samson Kisekka, he promised to look into it. I was given documents to read, though my opinion and analysis of said documents was not requested. It felt like I was being kept away from the real work.

Prior to my appointment as Deputy Minister, I had overseen various African Development Bank projects that included travelling to rural areas. I had heard of ex-combatants who were frustrated and had lost their livelihood. Therefore, a little over a week as Deputy Minister, I jumped at the chance to meet with the President and threatened to resign if I continued to be held back from making a meaningful contribution. Two weeks

later, I returned to him with a proposal for the Disarmament and Demobilisation Program for ex-combatants, and impressed upon him how this could be the start of an uprising.

There were a number of rebel groups, but at the time of my becoming Minister of Pacification for the North and Northeast in 1988, the Uganda People's Democratic Army, which was composed of Obote loyalists, had surrendered. Alice Lakwena, a young woman in her twenties, seen as a type of Joan of Arc figure, professed to lead Uganda according to the Ten Commandments. She had been defeated, and the remnants of these groups joined Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), who at the time were still a small uprising.

The challenges ahead of me in my new position were numerous, not least because of my gender. The rebels perceived the government sending a female negotiator as an indication that they were not being taken seriously. The appointment made me a target, and I was seen as a traitor to the people of the north who were hostile to a government dominated by the western and central regions. There were several attempts on my life including roadside bombs, and full-frontal assaults on the military base where I was housed. Unsurprisingly, many people saw the appointment as my death sentence.

From the onset, I knew it was important to win the trust of the civilians in northern Uganda living in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, and for me to hear first-hand from them what the underlying issues were. They lived in squalid conditions in the camps, with severe food shortages despite support from organisations like the World Food Programme (WFP). When I first started living in the camps and held meetings, women did not attend because they were trying to get food to support families and tending to the sick and their children. While in the camps, I encouraged open discussion. I said, “if you want to insult me or insult the president you are welcome to, this



is a place for open speech". A woman once told me, "*You are going to fail because you are only talking to the men, and they will tell you all the right things, but they don't act. We women feel the impact of war differently.*" It was from that point on, that women became the focus of my engagement, and our grassroots approach worked. My time in the IDP camps helped me understand that everyone there had family members in the bush war, and that the people of the north had issues that needed addressing. They had lost their lands and livelihood, and they felt disenfranchised. However, by winning the trust of the community, and by involving women at the grassroots, I gained a better understanding of how to communicate with the LRA. I changed my message from one of surrender to one of peace. I wrote personal letters to the fighters guaranteeing their safety and resettlement if they defected. Their relatives at the camps were instrumental in getting my letters to them. The result was over 250 defections in three months.

The people in the camps helped me organise secret meetings with commanders under the leader of the LRA, Joseph Kony. My first meeting took place on Mount Ajulu, at 5 a.m. on 2 May 1992. I travelled on foot with Yusuf Adek, an Acholi chief who had arranged the meetings. To say we were afraid would be an understatement. Yusuf scouted ahead the night before, tying pieces of grass on the trail to indicate it was safe. I followed his trail. The meetings were important because I wanted to test the resolve of the fighters, to understand their motivations and appetite for peace. With that knowledge, I started sending letters to Joseph Kony himself. Initially, his responses were hostile, fearing it was all a trap. It took two years of communication before his tone softened, but it was not until I got a radio to him for us to communicate daily that I really won his trust. We set the stage for a face-to-face meeting. These talks with Joseph Kony would later be called the 'Bigombe 1 Talks'.

Joseph Kony and I eventually met. A small number of brave, unarmed civilians accompanied me. Initially, he would make grand entrances and four-hour long speeches. We finally talked one-on-one, with his personal guards pointing their rifles at me. We sat on logs, in the dark, his tone going from ranting to respectful. He referred to me as 'mother' as our conversation progressed, and shared his concerns about resettlements for him and his family. He wanted forgiveness from the government and from his victims.

The 'Bigombe 1 Talks' resulted in a ceasefire that lasted nine months. It was broken when the Ugandan army launched a pre-emptive strike against the LRA. Kony disappeared but in his last message to me, he said he knew I had acted in good faith. The outcome of the renewed fighting was the massacre of 400 civilians. I suffered a complete breakdown at the sight of lives

lost. I left Uganda for Harvard in 1996, and joined the World Bank in 1998.

The LRA was to massacre a further 300 civilians. I watched the report on CNN; the reporter mentioned my name as someone who once almost succeeded in ending the conflict. I was in Washington D.C. and preparing to travel to Burundi the next day when I saw the news. I changed my plans and went to Uganda to see Museveni and to restart the peace process. Unfortunately, it was a very different environment now with additional actors. I was also no longer a minister, and after all these years, my standing with the LRA was not solid. The International Criminal Court now had a warrant out for Joseph Kony.

In the end, I decided to use my personal finances, and embarked on the long process of persuading stakeholders. I involved the international community this time, recognising it was a mistake not to have included them in the first place. I initiated the discussions, brought all the parties together, and convinced them to talk peace. I stayed out in camps in Sudan to reach out to Joseph Kony and convince him to come back to talks, I persuaded the international community to get involved to give the talks the importance it required. I went to the International Criminal Court to ask them to rescind the warrant against Kony. I then went to Omar al-Bashir, then President of Sudan. It was a process of persuasion, negotiation and addressing the wants and needs of the different stakeholders. Eventually, I was able to kick-start the 'Bigombe 2 Talks' that led to the Juba Agreement. Although Kony did not sign it, the agreement led to peace in northern Uganda that lasts to this day.

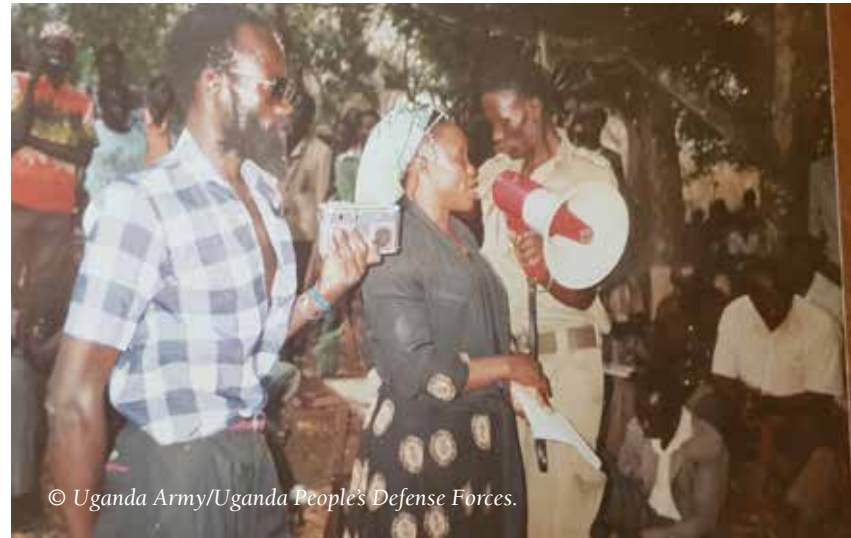
Peace is possible!

There is a saying in my language "*Gwok ma dako bene mako lee*" - *one does not take a female dog to hunt*, but I was driven by the desire to end violence in Uganda. Witnessing the squalid living conditions in IDP camps gave me the determination. Peacemaking and peacebuilding is my passion. I have dedicated my life to fighting for human rights and justice for the disadvantaged people, and vulnerable groups like women and children. I have succeeded in reconciling fractured communities, and reconciled communities affected by war, helping them rebuild their communities and subsequently their nation.

There were setbacks along the journey, and many lessons learnt, but what resonates most with me, was the courage and resilience of the women and children that I encountered in these war-torn regions. Mentoring young women to build peace and mediate, not only at an international level, but also at the grassroots level, continues to motivate me and fills me with hope for the future.

We must invest in conflict prevention for a peaceful future. Billions have gone into humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping missions, and more needs to be done to leverage early warning mechanisms. All too often, dialogue with the parties begins only after escalation into full-scale conflict. A paradigm shift is needed, focusing on grassroots conflict prevention, and on empowering women at the grassroots level. Women were key to successfully ending the war in northern Uganda.

“I have dedicated my life to fighting for human rights and justice for disadvantaged people, and vulnerable groups like women and children.”





AYA CHEBBI



Aya is a multi-award-winning pan-African feminist. She is the first African Union Special Envoy for Youth. She is the founder of multiple platforms such as Youth Programme of Holistic Empowerment Mentoring (YPHEM) and Afresist, a youth leadership programme and multimedia platform documenting youth work in Africa.

Looking into my journey in retrospect, I believe I had three turning points that have shaped my identity as a pan-African feminist and defined my mission for peacebuilding in Africa. I grew up in a religiously conservative Muslim family. I come from a small village in the northwest of Tunisia, on the Tunisian-Algerian borders where a traditional ritual called *tasfih* (the locker) is practiced on girls. The ritual is believed to safeguard the girls' virginity and prevent them from having sexual intercourse. At the age of nine, just before entering puberty, my female cousins and I underwent *tasfih*. Dragged into a room, an elder scratched my knees seven times with a razor blade, and made me eat seven dried grapes dipped in the blood from my knees. I ate the grapes whilst repeating the words: "I am a wall and he is a thread" and "blood from my knee, close my little hole." The spell shall be lifted the day before the girl's wedding day, by doing the same practice while saying "he is a wall, I am a thread".

Enduring *tasfih* was the start of a long-term trauma for me. The violation of our bodies might heal from the physical pain, but the psychological trauma and the damage to our minds and violation of our right to choose is very difficult to heal. There was no time to heal in a society that does not consider trauma healing as a necessity for the growth of children! After crying that night, I realised at that young age that I had gone through some form of violence because of my gender. Years later, I became convinced that practices like *tasfih* were weapons of patriarchy used to keep women trapped in inequality. My activism, standing up for my rights and challenging traditional norms, started at that moment.

Since then, I have been perceived as a rebel in my extended family as I cracked the ceilings to live differently from what culture and society expects. As an only child, my father, a retired Colonel Major who served 40 years in the Tunisian Armed Forces, imbued in me a strong sense of self-worth and the

innermost conviction that I deserve the same chances in life as anyone. He used his privilege and power as a man, as the "head of family", to pave the way for me. He provided that protection for the consequences of my "radical" actions (in the perception of others), regardless of our fundamental disagreements, the right of choice was guaranteed. He nurtured my courage to be bold and it really takes a lot of courage in our societies, as young women, to speak up. It takes courage every day to reveal our fullest truth to the world. When I think of a feminist man, I think of my father. In 2010, the "rebel" in me matured into a political voice that could manifest during the revolution, in ways I did not think possible. They called it the "Arab Spring", but that is a western narrative.

We call it the "*Revolution of Dignity*" because we revolted for dignity and freedom. Being part of the Revolution of Dignity made me believe that change can happen with young women like me at the forefront. I was fearless, nothing seemed impossible to me. We took to the streets, unafraid to die for freedom. Despite a history that steered towards depriving women of equal opportunities, we decided to re-write this history and make it right for the next generation. I embraced the conviction that we should stop watching and blaming systems of oppression be it economic, political or patriarchal, and take responsibility for our future, because change eventually will be bottom up, youth-female-led, and with people's power. During the revolution, I also learnt to own my narrative. I started a blog called *Proudly Tunisian*, read by millions of people, reporting to the world what was happening in my country, speaking out against injustice and challenging mainstream narratives. I found power in my voice and everything digital has become my tool to tell my version of the story calling for peace and equality. The blog stimulated debate and informed policy on issues of gender-based violence, spotlighting issues of rape, racism, and unequal inheritance, whilst documenting our contribution as young women.

I created many other platforms for young women to speak out and have access to the digital space. One of them is the Voice of Women Initiative, a feminist collective where we train correspondents from around the world to document the stories of ordinary women doing extraordinary things. As a feminist collective, we laid the groundwork for a new culture of debate. The use of online tools and the conquest of the digital space is key to my activism and in revolutionising the way we campaign and organise activism. Our efforts are informed by our multi-layered sense of identity; mine as a young, female, Tunisian, Mediterranean, Maghrebian, with Amazigh indigenous roots, Arabic tongue, living in post-colonial Africa, who experienced harmful practices, gender-based violence and dictatorship. But there was a missing piece of my identity – my Africanity.

Few weeks after Tunisia's revolution, a Senegalese *Y'en A Marre* movement and Burkinabè *Balai Citoyen* movement, among other African countries, started raising the same slogans "*Dégage!*" I put my skills to use for the next eight years. My vision for peace took me to over thirty countries in Africa where I supported, trained and worked with thousands of social movement leaders, feminist groups, artist collectives and youth activists across the continent on nonviolent mobilisation, blogging and leadership all of which I learnt by doing. Crossing colonial borders, living with people I have never met before, and experiencing Africanity, made me feel at home in every corner of Africa. I started to see myself as a bridge, across languages, cultures, stories and beats, across the Sahara, which is a place meant to bridge us not divide us.

Our African history has taught me that there is no pan-Africanism without feminism. It is anti-pan-African to reduce women to maternal functions or to seek to control their bodies, minds and desires in the name of culture, faith or any other excuse. It is anti-pan-African to objectify women. Objectification derives its roots from colonialism and racism against which Africanism emerged to fight. Therefore, patriarchy is a threat to pan-Africanism.

The more I travelled, the more I realised that in our shared marginalisation as African youth, we could develop a sense of common identity and a critical consciousness that would enable us to challenge the status quo and to lead. This is how Afrika Youth Movement (AYM) was born. I created a Facebook group on 7 August 2012, adding inspiring youths that I met or trained. On 15 July 2014, I launched the first Google Hangout with a vision to build a bold African youth community and bridge North Africa with the rest of the continent. The vision and mission of the movement were shaped through inclusive online participatory dialogues, social media conversations and series of Google hangouts for the first six months. Many inspiring young Africans availed themselves to work with me to make this vision a concrete

“Our African history has taught me that there is no pan-Africanism without feminism.”



Solidarity Visit at the POC Site 3, Juba, South Sudan
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reality and turn their frustration, anger and consciousness of political and economic struggles into a collective positive action for Africa. Today, the movement has grown from 500 online members to over 10,000 grassroots leaders from forty-two countries across Africa and the Diaspora.

We celebrated many victories supporting youth elected into office, preventing election violence, protecting human rights defenders, changing the narrative and radicalising more youth to our pan-African movement instead of violent extremism. However, we have also gone through hard times in the past decade, where many around me lost hope in peace because of the rise of terrorism on an unprecedented scale, where young activists have been falling into desperation and depression. Some young people's energy was channelled into violent extremism like my 22-year-old cousin who was recruited by *Daesh*, others were dying in the Mediterranean. Realising that young people need to see models and positive stories to reflect on their understanding of violence and its impact, I launched *Africa Inspire Project*. I produced my first long documentary called *Kenya's Conscious Transformation*, with one camera, a broken tripod and a cheap microphone. The documentary is centred on the role of youth and women in the peacebuilding process of the 2013 elections compared to the previous 2007 post-election violence. I promoted Kenya's model of choosing peace over violence. The documentary has been screened and debated in many African countries, schools and universities.

In November 2018, I was appointed as the first African Union Youth Envoy. From the start, I realised that we could only achieve the United Nations' 2030 Agenda and the African Union's Agenda 2063 by collaborating across generations. I promoted a concept that I call "Intergenerational Co-leadership". The average age of African leaders is 64 years old and the average age of the population is 20, a 40-year generation gap in leadership on the

continent. The political system tends to see the youth as a threat, while young people feel they are not being heard, and their needs are left unmet. We need to bridge this gap and turn it into a powerful space for action. Co-leading is not about inheriting systems we do not understand, it is about co-designing and reforming the system together. The existing intergenerational tensions of power relations can be bridged through generational cooperation.

As the AU Youth Envoy, my role is to build dialogue on the importance of co-leadership by supporting opportunities in countries in democratic transition where young people, especially young women, lead positive change and peaceful revolutions, and deserve to take their rightful place in leadership and in society.

I will continue to stimulate intergenerational solidarity as an approach for conflict prevention, to reform decision-making, to address current and emerging crises, and bring the voices of the youth to the table. It will enable the leadership to realise the urgency and the necessity to meet the aspirations of their youthful population. By helping to build a relationship of trust with institutions, the latter would avoid rejection by the youth, which could result in long-term upsurge of violence.

We all have different and unique journeys to peacebuilding and this is mine. I come from a bold generation that started the first set of peaceful revolutions of the 21st century, and changed the course of history. I genuinely hope to continue to make my small contribution in building the 'Africa We Want' by uniting and galvanising the collective power of African youth around positive action, and by creating pan-African spaces for young people to thrive, co-lead and harness their energy and creativity. Peace is possible because we do not need permission to serve our continent.

EUPHEMIA

AKOS DZATHOR



Euphemia is a development practitioner in the area of Women, Peace and Security, and community development. She has several years of experience managing women's empowerment programmes at community, national and continental levels. She is Queen Mother and traditional leader of Alavanyo-Deme in the Volta Region of Ghana.

Ghana is often described as an island of peace among turbulent West African countries, but it has had its fair share of internal violent conflict, with devastating effects on the affected communities. My community, Alavanyo, a town 174 kilometres from the capital Accra, has been battling with a neighbouring town, Nkonya, over land rights for almost a century. The dispute degenerated into intermittent and sporadic violent attacks resulting in casualties, and leaving orphans and widows in the community. As a woman, I never thought I could contribute in any way to end the conflict beyond my prayers.

In September 2003, I took a job with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Ghana, working on a Peace Education Project on Buduburam Refugee Camp, 44 kilometres west of Accra. The camp housed thousands of Liberians who had fled the conflict in their country. The Peace Education Project was an eye-opener that offered so many insights into the role of women in conflict situations and the fact that women could also be perpetrators and not only victims of violent conflict. It was also my first encounter with UNSCR 1325. The project involved building the capacity of refugees and especially empowering women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes. I organised a number of workshops aimed at instilling a culture of peace among the refugees, and shared skills for harmonious living within the camp.

In February 2007, I became Queen Mother of my community (Alavanyo Deme), with traditional authority over a population of about 1,500 people of which about 51 percent are female. The community has two levels of leadership, namely the Chief and the Queen Mother. My role as Alavanyo Deme is to provide wise counsel to the Chief and his elders, usually on matters affecting women and girls, keeping an eye on the social conditions within the community, and to serve as a role model for the women and girls in the community. I saw it as an opportunity to leverage on

my position and authority to deal with patriarchy and maintain peace and security in my community. I devised a three-pronged approach to localise the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

The first approach is to ensure the participation of women in conflict management processes within the community. I set up a team of elders, and tasked them to mediate in the day-to-day conflicts that occur among women in the community. Traditional wisdom and practical experience helps them achieve this, with inputs from modern conflict resolution processes from me. So far, they have managed to restore harmony among women in the community.

My second approach is advocacy and awareness-raising of community members to respect and promote the human rights of women and men, boys and girls. Even though I do not live in the community, each visit is an opportunity for me to talk to the people on the need for parents to meet at least the basic needs of their children and prevent them from engaging in the Alavanyo and Nkonya conflict. I also talk about the effects of gender-based violence and violence against women within the community. Personally, I have supported some of the women in paying school fees for their children, and supported the economic empowerment of some of them.

A third and more strategic approach is to restructure education in the community, ensuring that as many youths as possible receive an education that will allow them access to gainful employment, and hopefully limiting their interest in fighting. I believe strongly that when young people get a good education and are in employment, their interest in the land conflict will wane and this will eventually end the conflict. Therefore, in partnership with the educational authorities and the district administration, I have lobbied for teachers to be posted to the school in the community. Most of the teachers had left the school because of the attacks and new ones were not willing to accept posting





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“I know I cannot change the world, but my persistent advocacy and awareness creation will one day build the critical mass of women in my community who will champion the course that I have taken upon myself.”

to the community. I raised funds to provide some furniture for students and teachers, and built the capacity of teachers through in-service training.

In 2015, together with 13 respected men from Alavanyo - I was the only woman - we managed to identify some well-meaning and peace-loving citizens of Nkonya and formed the Alavanyo-Nkonya Peace Forum. We engaged in individual community advocacy for peace, especially among the youth and held periodic joint meetings to share experiences. We also organised joint visits to both communities to meet with opinion leaders, impressing upon them the need to prevent the youth from joining attacks. I am proud to say that all these efforts have contributed to the

prevailing peace and security in the two communities today, with no reported attacks in the past two years.

In June 2007, four months after I became Queen Mother, I got a new job as the Africa Regional Coordinator of the Women Peace Makers Program (WPP-Africa), proudly hosted by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) for four years. The Millennium Development Goal Three (MDG3) project, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was an Africa-wide programme in which I had the responsibility of designing and coordinating projects in all regions of Africa. The aim was to empower women through gender-sensitive, active and nonviolent peacebuilding. I must say that this job was the icing on the cake for my career as a Gender, Peace & Security and Community Development practitioner. With an overall objective of promoting active and nonviolent peacebuilding in Africa with women as key players, I worked with women from 36 countries in four regions of Africa. I focused mainly on capacity-building of women in peacebuilding processes with a commitment to active nonviolence and to improving peace in Africa. Women from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Angola, Eritrea, and Sudan received special attention due to the conflict and post-conflict situations in their countries.



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By providing physical and virtual spaces for meetings and the sharing of experiences and ideas, I was able to create platforms for networking, and the women used the opportunity to generate issues for advocacy and lobbying in order to influence public policy on peace issues in their countries.

Globally, the programme received recognition as one of the exemplars for the implementation of UNSCR 1325; hence, I participated in several international meetings on these instruments and became a member of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP). Other achievements under this programme included the development of a standard training manual on gender and nonviolence and the publication of a book titled *“Every Woman Has a Story”*, which was also translated into French. The book is a compilation of the lived experiences of African women peacemakers on gender-sensitive, active and nonviolent peacebuilding.

Even though I have been retired since 2016, I am still called on to do work relating to Gender, Peace and Security within Ghana. I continue to participate in regional and continental meetings on peace and security. I played a role in the development of Ghana’s first National Action Plan on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 called GHANAP 1, and I have led the process of developing

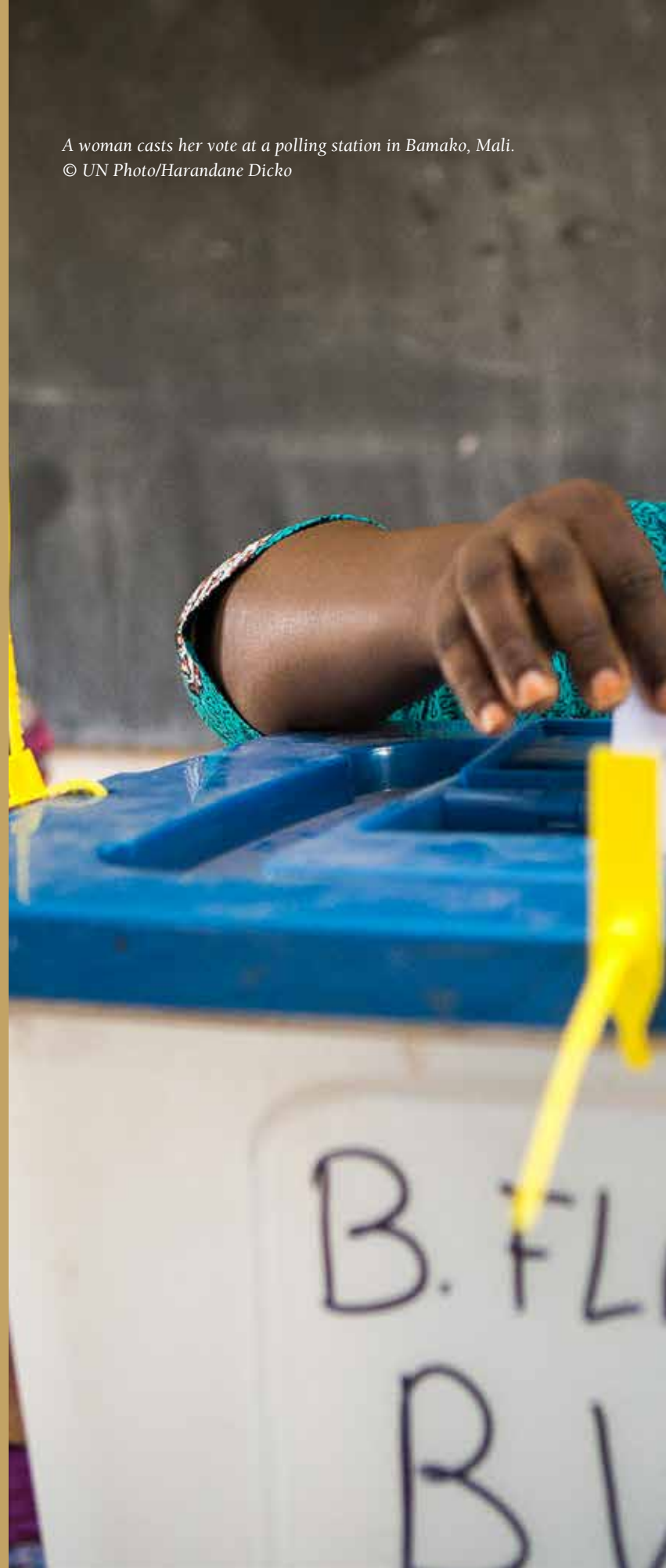
GHANAP 2. I have had the opportunity to support the activities of the National Peace Council through capacity-building of their council members, staff and some community members on how to integrate gender into their peacebuilding efforts. In 2019, I had the privilege of developing a gender policy for the Ghana Police Service, as part of its transformation agenda.

Reflecting on my journey so far, I feel there is still a lot more I can do to get women, especially those in my village, to accept and take the initiative for promoting peace, and to take on the entrenched patriarchy and its perceptions and norms around gendered roles. I know I cannot change the world, but my persistent advocacy and awareness creation will one day build the critical mass of women in my community who will champion the course that I have taken upon myself. Rome was not built in a day. Surely, surely, we shall overcome.

"Women's political leadership is improving decision-making processes. We should capitalise on the wealth of African women's experiences to enhance their contribution to development and to maintain peace and security and effective political, economic and social processes on the continent."

Catherine Samba Panza,
Co-Chair, FemWise-Africa,
Aswan Forum, 2019

*A woman casts her vote at a polling station in Bamako, Mali.
© UN Photo/Harandane Dicko*





ABOU 604

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DR. OBIAGELI EZEKWESILI



Obiageli 'Oby' co-founded the #BringBackOurGirls Movement and fought tirelessly for the release of 276 Chibok schoolgirls that were abducted by Boko Haram in 2014. She also served in various leadership roles and is currently in the process of building a citizens' good governance coalition and establishing an Academy of Politics and Governance with Africa-wide focus.

When the war started in 1967, I was four years old, and living in Port Harcourt. My family had to flee to our hometown in Ukpokwu, south of Anambra State. This was to be my first experience of conflict, and is core to why I deeply empathise with people in northeastern Nigeria, who are living under the onslaught of the Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram. I have not ceased to speak up about the conditions they face and continue to insist that our government should do right by the Nigerian citizens that are affected by terrorism.

When the Chibok Girls were abducted in April 2014, I felt we owed it to them to ensure their swift rescue. When the government failed to do that, I leveraged my global voice to draw attention to the abduction of these girls and the plight of their families. I was unrelenting in calling on the government to take the right action.

About two weeks after the abductions, I co-hosted a UNESCO event, which inaugurated the city of Port Harcourt, capital of Rivers state, southern Nigeria, as the World Book Capital 2014. I used the opportunity to ask all 2,000 people present to stand up and show their support, calling on then President Goodluck Jonathan and the government to rescue the girls. It was shocking that so much time had gone by with no action from the government. The author and Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka was the keynote speaker at the event, and coincidentally chose to speak about religion, civilisation and knowledge. The next thing we heard him say was: "... and the girls who went to school and nobody knows their whereabouts". I do not believe in serendipity, but it was an intriguing moment. As soon as he came off the stage, I went up with the Executive Secretary of the Book Readers Club. Together, we asked the audience to join us in adopting the stance that the government must bring back our daughters, the children who went to school and did not return. I told them about my journey as Minister of Education

and programmes I led in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe as the key states in northern Nigeria where I implemented the gender parity in education program. To know that the abducted girls had been schooling in one of these states and not see a credible rescue measure for them in place was completely unacceptable to me. Therefore, in Port Harcourt, I asked the audience in the hall and viewers at home to join us in chanting: 'bring back our daughters'. One of my followers on Twitter, a young lawyer who was watching us live, then tweeted what I said. It was how the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls was born.

When I stepped off the podium and saw his tweet, I retweeted it and followed up by asking my huge number of followers to join us in tweeting "#BringBackOurGirls". In a matter of hours, the hashtag began to trend worldwide. An initiative followed through a women's network for a #BringBackOurGirls protest in Abuja, Nigeria's capital. We asked everyone to hold marches in their various locations around the world on 30 April 2014. The global response and support far exceeded our expectations as many cities around the world joined and organised protest marches. Over the last five and a half years, the BringBackOurGirls group meet daily at Unity Fountain in Abuja to demand the rescue of the Chibok Girls and other abducted citizens like Leah Sharibu. We made a commitment not to stop until they are found. Of the 276 Chibok girls that were abducted, 112 are still missing as of the end of 2019. I monitor the progress and education of those that were rescued and released respectively. Some are studying to be lawyers, doctors and teachers, and they are doing very well in school. Nevertheless, we must not forget those who are still in captivity, and whose families need our support.

The idea of universal access to education is that it is non-discriminatory. Therefore, opportunities for education should be equally accessible to both, boys and girls. Unfortunately, in parts of our country, many more boys are in school than girls.

Often due to economic, cultural or religious reasons, some societies prioritise educating boys, whilst preparing girls for marriage. While I was Minister of Education from 2006–2007, I found this practice to be common in the northern states of Nigeria like Adamawa, Borno, Sokoto, and Jigawa, and to a lesser extent, Kano. The completion rates for the girls were terrible, at just thirty percent, often because they had to drop out of school to get married. Education of girls is and should be as important as the education of boys, and this was the motivation behind the gender parity programme that I ran whilst Minister. When girls are educated, they are able to make choices that enable them to later take care of themselves and their children, and to advance communities and nations. The benefits of girls' education are too numerous for any society to ignore.

I set out to make sure that in those states that were lagging behind, we did something to change the narrative that girls'

education did not matter, because it does! Determined to address the gender disparity in education, I hired Aisha Umar to lead the gender equity and equality effort under my guidance. Before I left that position, we witnessed a significant reduction in the number of out-of-school children, who were mostly girls.

When children go to school, their minds become unavailable for those trying to recruit them for violence. They have the agency to reason better and therefore not easily misled. The cumulative knowledge of their community increases, as do its prospects. Therefore, it becomes harder for that community to be an environment for social dislocation. Education helps to protect these communities and is definitely a preventive measure against violence.

When I held different ministerial positions, from 2000–2007, I was involved in a Women Waging Peace initiative, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Some



Deputy Secretary-General with MDGs Africa Working Group

Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro (centre, front) with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Africa Working Group, at UN Headquarters in New York. Front row from left: Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); Obiageli Ezekwesili, Vice President for the Africa Region, World Bank; Ms. Migiro; Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA); and Mohammed Ennifar, Director of Operations Planning and Services Department of the Islamic Development Bank. Back row from left: Louis Kasekende, Chief Economist of the African Development Bank; Jeffrey Sachs, Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on the Millennium Development Goals; Abdoulaye Bio-Tchané, Director of African Department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF); Gilbert Fossoun Hounoubo, Assistant Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Director of UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa; Bernard Petit, Deputy Director General, Direction General for the Development, European Commission; and Maxwell Mkwezalamba, African Union Commissioner for Economic Affairs.

United Nations, New York

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of what I learned from that initiative helped me ensure that findings were well reflected within the sectoral policies of the administration I worked in. I was the Minister of Solid Minerals in 2005, and later the Minister of Education from 2006–2007. In both positions, more representation of women was a key issue for me. One of the initiatives we designed addressed gender-based violence in the mining sector. I launched that program as part of the Sustainable Mining Sector Initiative aiming to establish practices that supported women entrepreneurship and tackled violence against women.

Beyond Nigeria, as Vice President of the World Bank’s Africa Region program, I was privileged to lead numerous programmes that supported women in conflict and post-conflict environments. This included Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, the Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Burundi, and, to a lesser degree, Rwanda, because they were already coming out of the conflict. For other countries, such as Liberia, we had programmes to support economic capacity development and the financial inclusion of women. We also looked at physical infrastructure to enhance the productivity of women entrepreneurs. I wanted to ensure we supported women’s mobility into economic leadership. In terms of the roundtables necessary for peace dialogue, we made sure women leaders had a place at the table. We knew that the more women were represented at those talks, the better the quality of information received and solutions developed would be. Therefore, it became an important aspect of my work to advance the causes of women in conflict and post-conflict environments and to ensure their strong presence and participation.

One of my most memorable interventions in support of women participation was in Côte d’Ivoire. It was 2011, and a political situation with former President Laurent Gbagbo had reached a climax. We at the World Bank supported the design of the National Reconciliation Programme, and my major objective was to ensure that women were fully included in the management of the reconciliation process. We focused on cocoa, a key aspect of the Ivorian economy. Women farmers played a significant role here, but were marginalised and only generated a poor income from their endeavours because of the role of government and intermediaries. I went out to meet with the cocoa farmers and was very glad to find that many of the women who had suffered a decline of their farm productivity were re-emerging through our support that improved their farm practices. One of the key interventions we made was to change how the government priced the cocoa and to support the removal of intermediaries who made more profit than the women farmers. Our efforts to increase the earning potential of women were also based on the empirical premise that women in these communities who

“When girls are educated, they are able to make choices that enable them to later take care of themselves and their children, and to advance communities and nations.”

earn a higher income, invested in the education and health of the children. Evidence exists that women are great helpers for countries that wish to accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in the areas of education and health. Furthermore, economic power of women can directly support better political representation. For example, from among those women farmers in Côte d’Ivoire, we had representation in the National Reconciliation Program of that country. One thing is clear: Our world today has all the data proving the benefits of giving full attention to the rights and needs of women. The hard evidence shows that including women as an equality strategy for development can no longer be a mere sentimental notion for which we need to “beg governments to support women”. There is proof that societies that economically empower women, support girls’ education, encourage women to use their voice, and decisively prevent as well as tackle incidents of violence against women are at the top of both, global economic league tables and rankings of harmonious and stable countries. It means we can conclude that elevating women in any society is simply smart economics. It is something every country that wishes to continuously prosper and remain stable must do. It is not a gift to only women; it is a gift to all of society.

NETUMBO NANDI-NDAITWAH



Netumbo is the Deputy Prime Minister of Namibia, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, and Vice President of SWAPO Party. She has served the Government of Namibia in several portfolios, including as Minister for Women and Child Welfare, Information and Broadcasting, Environment and Tourism. She was a key player in bringing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 to life.

Both my life in the community and the liberation struggle has made me realise the important role women play in all sectors of public life. Whether by design or default, women are the main players in conflict resolution particularly at the family levels. I believe women can use the same skill used at family level to shape their input in public life.

The political set up in Namibia dictated by apartheid laws had a special negative impact on women. While black people were treated inhumanly as all the rights and services were based on one's colour, women suffered double agony when males were taken to work in mines, factories, farms and domestic settings for months on contract, leaving women to take care of the families on their own. My own brothers have also experienced the contract, and the most painful thing for me as a young person was that when they came home they had little to offer to the family's well-being. This experience shaped my approach to the liberation struggle.

It is natural that, where you have two or more people, conflict cannot be ruled out, and it is the responsibility of the leader to ensure that such a conflict is solved amicably. My leadership positions started during my school days. I was elected as the chairperson of the Young Christian Movement Association, served as captain of the school's netball club, and led the school Home Riggers (Girl Guide). It was during that time that I came to learn that young people, in particular young women, are great assets to the nation.

Under my leadership, and of course working as a team, our school became one of the good performers in sports such as netball and other social activities like school competitions in the north central region. At the time, activities had to be regionally centred, due to the apartheid colonial system of the South African government. National school competitions were not common, hence my focus on the north central region (Ovamboland).

My inspiration also came from my namesake, Netumbo Francina Kanime who was married to the Secretary to the Oukwanyama Tribal Authority and a Headman of Omhedi District. At the beginning of the liberation struggle, more often than not, arrested political activists were sent for imprisonment to the headmen. In one instance, one senior member of South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), Eliaser Tuhandeleni (also known as Kaxumba Kandola), was arrested and brought to headman Kautwima. Hearing that Tuhandeleni was in the holding cell, Netumbo Kanime, who was married to headman Kautwima, confronted her husband and demanded that instead of keeping Tuhandeleni in a cell, he should instead be brought into the homestead to await his trial, since he had been fighting to bring peace into the country. Tuhandeleni was brought into the homestead. This story reminds me of the role women can play in public life and peacebuilding when they are empowered. It was in the 70's when the liberation struggle in Namibia reached a decisive point. At its Consultative Conference held at Tanga, Tanzania, from 26 December 1969 to 2 January 1970, SWAPO decided, among other important decisions, to form Party Wings. Those Wings are SWAPO Elders Council, SWAPO Women's League and the SWAPO Youth League. As a young person, I became an active member of the SWAPO Youth League and was later elected to be its chairperson in north central Namibia, a position I held until I went into exile in May 1974 with the aim of joining other SWAPO members to prepare us to fight for the independence of our country.

Peaceful demonstration was the main approach we used as young people. We used this to show our disapproval of the racist apartheid regime of South Africa in Namibia. The 70's in Namibia had seen a number of student demonstrations and the public started to take part. At times, we experienced fierce confrontations between the youth and the occupation force.

*Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia, addresses the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda.
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“As we mark the 20th anniversary of Resolution 1325, Namibia will open an International Women, Peace and Security Centre to contribute to the advancement of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.”

However, the principle of peaceful demonstrations was upheld to the extent that as young people we did not resort to the destruction of properties. No doubt, the success of that peaceful principle has to be attributed to all young people who were involved. However, as a leader I had a responsibility to keep the team together and focused. The advisory opinion of 21 June 1971 by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was also a motivating factor for us young people in Namibia. It said, “The continued presence of South Africa in Namibia being illegal, South Africa was under obligation to withdraw its administration from Namibia immediately and thus put an end to its occupation of the Territory.”

In 1972, Dr. Kurt Waldheim, then Secretary-General of the United Nations, visited Namibia to review the implementation of the 1971 ICJ advisory opinion on Namibia. As chairperson, I led the youth when SWAPO organised a mass demonstration at Ondangwa, a town in central northern Namibia, to welcome Dr. Waldheim during his visit. When that same year, in August 1972,

Dr. Alfred Escher visited Namibia as Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, I made a presentation to him on

behalf of the youth and women of Namibia. The core message then was the call for the South African regime to leave Namibia and allow the people of the country to exercise their right to self-determination to manage their own affairs and ensure that peace and stability prevails in the country.

Due to my political activities, I was arrested in 1973, with many other SWAPO leaders and activists. Upon my release, I was sentenced to a three-year suspended sentence, which meant that should I be arrested on political grounds again, I would be immediately imprisoned. To enable me to continue contributing to the liberation of my country I decided to join other SWAPO members in exile. Hence my departure from Namibia in May 1974 to Zambia via Angola. As chairperson of the SWAPO Youth League in my region, I was leading a group of five people, four men and myself. The journey to Zambia was long and torturous.

With a tall and slim stature, most comrades in exile on meeting me would exclaim, “*Is this the tiny tall young girl who has been terrorising the “Boers” in Namibia*”. On my arrival to Lusaka, Zambia, my first assignment was to serve as Assistant

Administrator in the office of the SWAPO Administrative Secretary Comrade Moses Garoëb. That gave me the opportunity to understand and appreciate better the operation of the Party and to make my inputs. Administration being the heart of any institution, I felt relevant in that office, as serving the people is my great passion.

In September 1974, I was part of the SWAPO delegation to the 29th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA). The delegation was led by Comrade Peter Mweshihange, then SWAPO Secretary for External Relations, and included five comrades who had just arrived from Namibia; two men and three women. The women were Ulitala Hiveluah (Namusega at the time), Taati Ithindi and myself.

The mission to the UN was an exposure that opened a new chapter both in my personal and political life. Politically, it was my first direct contact with the international community and I was given an opportunity to address the Decolonisation Committee to update the UN on new developments in Namibia in relation to the struggle for independence. The trip was also my first time on a plane, a very long journey from Lusaka via Rome to New York.

While at the UN, the guidance we received from comrades like Hage Geingob, who worked for the UN Council for Namibia at that time and is the current President of Namibia, and Theo Ben Gurirab, who represented SWAPO at the UN and the Americas, was very useful. When I attended the 29th UN General Assembly, little did I know that one day I would be part of the SWAPO team for the negotiations that led to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435 on the independence of Namibia.

My second international exposure was when I attended the Young Women Conference that took place in Moscow, in the then USSR, in 1975. That was also an interesting mission and different from my UN experience, as I was the only representative from SWAPO/Namibia and the focus was on women and youth empowerment. However, I was able to put the message across with particular reference to the conditions of women in Namibia and their participation in the liberation struggle. From that conference, contact and cooperation between Namibian women through SWAPO Women's Council and women from the socialist countries and organisations with socialist ideology grew.

I also attended the Third World Conference on Women that took place in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985, where I led the SWAPO/Namibian delegation to the NGO Forum while comrade Pendukeni Iivula-Ithana led our delegation to the governmental meeting. Women emancipation dominated the discussion. While I learnt a lot from that conference, I was also able to share my experience on women issues.

At the Fourth World Conference on Women that took place in Beijing in 1995, the issue of women and peace was highlighted particularly at the NGO Forum. As leader of the Namibian

delegation to the Beijing Conference and its Rapporteur General, I made my contribution to the timely finalisation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to ensure that Africa concerns are taken into the final documents.

After the UN supervised election in Namibia that was won by SWAPO, time was needed to work on the constitution. At this time, I went to my village deep in rural Namibia. One morning while busy in the field, a car stopped in front of my in-laws' home. Comrade Sam Nujoma, then President-elect had asked that I be brought to Windhoek. The journey to Windhoek was nerve-racking as I wondered why I was being taken there.

It turned out that the President-elect had formed a shadow cabinet and had appointed me to the position of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, thus becoming the first Deputy Minister in that portfolio at independence. While serving in that position, Namibia was elected to the UN Commission on Women, and the Namibian President appointed me to represent Namibia to the Commission for three years. It was in the year 2000 when Namibia was elected to the UN Security Council, and comrade Theo Ben Gurirab, then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Namibia, asked me what Namibia's focus during our time on the Council should be. Due to my conviction on the positive role women can play in public life and my commitment to world peace, my response to him was that Namibia must bring to the table the issue of women and peace. He agreed, and staff of the Namibian mission at the UN were mandated to work on the concept paper. Comrade Selma Ashipala-Musavyi, the current Executive Director of the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation who at the time served as the Deputy Permanent Representative led the process. Subsequently, on 31 October 2000 under the Chair of Ambassador Martin Andjaba, Permanent Representative for Namibia and Chair of the Council for the month, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security.

Today resolution 1325 has been central to the development of global and regional peace agenda programmes and projects as well as National Action Plans (NAPs). Namibia is one of the UN Member States that has put in place a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. In addition, as we mark the 20th anniversary of resolution 1325, Namibia will open an International Women, Peace and Security Centre to contribute to the advancement of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

I am honoured and humbled to have contributed to the success of this important endeavour.



MARIE KINYABUKU



Marie co-established the Ntarambirwa Association, which welcomed, supervised and educated more than 5000 orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Bujumbura. She led the mobilisation of women to participate in the inter-Burundian dialogue, and initiated the implementation of a project to create women's speaking spaces.

I was six years old when Burundi's Prime Minister, Prince Louis Rwagasore, was assassinated on 13 October 1961. I had just started my second year of primary school at the Institute of the White Sisters, a boarding school in Mugeru, Burundi. The assassination shook the country, and what followed were decades of socio-political crises. For many, Prince Louis Rwagasore was the hero who had laid the foundation for the country's independence from Belgium on 1 July 1962. A few days after the assassination, my father, Kinyabuku Roger, came to see my siblings and I in school. He brought with him a little girl called Jeanne. She was five years old, and the sister of another pupil, Rose. My father was not smiling as usual, and the faces of the reverend sisters changed too. I was uncomfortable. We were later told that Jeanne and Rose's father had been killed. My father left without saying goodbye. He had rushed home to find my mother and other siblings, and therefore had entrusted Jeanne in the care of the White Sisters. During the unrest, my parents helped widows and elderly women in our community. This incredible self-sacrifice is reflective of the upbringing we had, and one that has been the foundation for much of my work in peace and security in Africa. The image of my father, a wealthy medical technician at the time, arriving at my school with little Jeanne remains with me until today.

In the early years of the Burundian Civil War (1994-2005), my family and I fled to Uvira in South Kivu Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo. After the civil war, a period during which I met many unaccompanied children, orphans and destitute widows, my perspective and approach to helping the most vulnerable in my community changed. At that time, I noticed that downtown Bujumbura, a city and a main port of Burundi, was full of beggars, mostly women and children. A consequence of the war. My heart bled for them, I wanted to help, but realised that I could not do it alone. Many international

organisations came to the country to help. Many local organisations were also created.

Towards the end of 1998, in Kinama, a province in Bujumbura, a group of women approached me. They wanted us to create a women's association that would fight poverty and help the children affected by the war. Association Ntarambirwa (Prevention Association) was born, supporting women, and orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).

Our first job was to raise awareness within the provincial administration and amongst parents so that the children of Kinama and the surrounding areas no longer needed to beg in town. We supported about 53 percent of these children, most of whom had dropped out of school, and had then passed the school age. It was important to find a way to keep them occupied whilst awaiting their reintegration into school. This required the intervention of parents and the provincial administration.

We started with our own contributions but after a while, the ministry in charge of national solidarity provided much needed support. By September 2000, all the children we had taken off the streets were reintegrated into schools. We had rescued 621 children of whom 406 were girls. This was our first success, and we did everything we could to keep the children in school with some doing vocational training like sewing. We also provided support for orphans who had contracted the HIV/AIDS and young girls who had been raped. We worked with organisations like the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the French Association for Solidarity, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Government of Burundi. The government constructed housing for women and orphans. Today, several orphans and vulnerable children that we supported have finished their studies. Many of them earn a good living, embracing the opportunities available to them.

I was first called Mother OVC by a soldier in 2005. A truck carrying soldiers passed by my home and shouted from atop the truck, “mother, mother”. I turned around and he said, “mother OVC, thank you, you helped me. It was you in Ntarambirwa...” When I narrated the story to the association, I discovered that everyone knew that nickname except me. Even local government officials used it when they came to pick me up.

When the population began to resettle in Kinama in 1997, it was made up mostly of destitute women, widows and the elderly. The men were afraid to return. Most of the women we worked with were widows. Kamenge, a town five kilometres northeast of Bujumbura, and the surrounding neighbourhoods had been a battlefield. The women had witnessed and suffered many atrocities there and when they fled, their rights had been viciously violated. At some point in 1999, these atrocities continued in Kinama. People fled, and returned shortly after.

In February 2001, Kinama experienced another major attack, people fled again, though some stayed on the outskirts waiting for the guns to go silent. It lasted three months. The houses were destroyed again. I fled with the others and the women and orphans of Ntarambirwa became a concern for me. Two days after the attacks, three young orphans, aged between fifteen and sixteen years old, whom we supported, came to see me where I was staying with a host family. What struck me was their maturity as we talked about the prevailing situation.

After four months, people returned and resettled again. The orphans and vulnerable children were displaced, and the women bruised once again. We were back at square one. The headquarters of Ntarambirwa were looted like the other houses. No school materials, no sewing machines. Nothing. Nevertheless, the other women and I did not want to give up. We persevered, and little by little, the movement resumed. However, we had to find solid and moral support. We sought to work with other women. The challenges were many. How do you begin to help women whose rights have been repeatedly violated? How could you help these women reimagine their future?

The Collective of Associations and Women's Nongovernmental Organisations of Burundi (CAFOB) was to help find certain solutions. I knew CAFOB from afar, because some of my friends were members and had bravely participated in the peace dialogue in Arusha, Tanzania from 1999 to 2000. We openly discussed the peace agreements with Honorable Euphrasie Havyarimana and Catherine Mabobori, both very active and influential in the group of women in Arusha. I had a history with both women; Honourable Havyarimana saw me in exile in Congo in 1995. She also saw me in a bad situation in Kinama. Catherine Mabobori had been my pupil at a secondary school in Busiga, northern

Burundi. We had the same vision on the position of women and approaches to solutions, particularly around the participation and representation of women in peace talks. Women who traveling to Arusha were considered as observers. Despite this, I managed to speak with the mediator and even on one occasion, with the late President Nelson Mandela, whom I had written to about the women's peace proposals. I was proud to contribute in this manner. The day that the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi was signed was indescribable. It was on 28 August 2000.

In 2003, we joined CAFOB, and started a large capacity-building programme began for women on female leadership. We participated in many workshops on women and conflict, peaceful resolution of conflict, the search for peace and the reconstruction of the country. The female members of my association understood the effects of war on women and children. We had experienced it and it was an opportunity to share our experiences. We had learned to support women and girls who had suffered from sexual and gender-based violence. We now had the same vision and similar concerns. I was hopeful.

CAFOB was for me personally, a school where I got to know myself and to situate myself in time and in geographic space, in the context of my country as a woman. I gradually discovered my real identity and my mission. Faced with what I had experienced at Kamenge and at Kinama, I wanted to act for peace. CAFOB's mission to fight for the promotion of the rights of women and girls interested me. I understood that what I was doing for orphans, children and vulnerable women was also a way to contribute to their recovery and their rights. I wanted to go further. I wanted to advocate for lasting peace. Advocacy projects for the respect of women's rights were of particular interest to me. I had the necessary skills in capacity-building. I got to work by participating in high-level meetings to represent CAFOB. I was entrusted with the implementation of women's campaign projects that I had initiated, for the elections in 2010 and 2015. Other associations asked me to lead workshops, especially for peace. I was part of CAFOB's executive committee twice from 2008 to 2011. I was recruited as a female facilitator to lead in dialogue frameworks, organised across the country for young people and for adults in a project piloted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). I mobilised for peace.

Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), which was founded in 1996, has greatly helped Burundian women to understand their role in conflict resolution and in the search for peace. FAS was a partner for CAFOB. The women of FAS came to Burundi to speak with us in depth about UNSCR 1325. They supported us to sensitise the Government of Burundi for its implementation. The first steering

committee on UNSCR1325 was installed with their support. Today, I am on this committee and I represent Ntarambirwa. In 2004 and 2006, I had the privilege of having trained twice on the UNSCR 1325 in Dakar at the invitation of FAS. I listened to Madame Bineta Diop, the African Union Commission's Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, several times. She helped and accompanied Burundian women in their mediations towards the Arusha peace dialogue.

It was based on these training courses in Dakar and following exchanges of experience with other African women that I decided to help to ensure that gender mainstreaming is included in the basic documents of Burundi. As soon as I returned to Burundi, I started to talk about it with CAFOB and another association called Dushirehamwe. Before starting to advocate for the cause, we developed and implemented capacity-building projects on gender mainstreaming in the country's program and policy documents. The participants were from ministries and commissions, and participated in the development of the country's programs and policies.

Starting with the Arusha Peace Accords for Burundi in 2000, the question of the rate of participation of women in decision-making bodies had become a daily concern for women. The minimum quota of 30% for the representation of women in the electoral posts granted by the constitution is the basis of encouragement that must be exceeded for equality. All the women of CAFOB and other associations agree on this. In 2005, we organised the first elections after the crisis of 1993. We had to make women aware of their rights and duties, including the right to elect and be elected. We mobilised around the Synergy for the Political Participation of Women (SPPDF), working in teams.

In 2010, CAFOB took the lead in the mobilisation campaign and commissioned a study on women's expertise. The campaign was called "SHE MAY Campaign" and I was the project manager. We wanted to prove that there were enough skilled women to make up the 30% quota, something that some had disputed. We proved it.

Shortly before the scheduled Burundi presidential elections in May 2015, a political crisis erupted with an attempted coup. The voices of women were once again silenced. Faced with this situation, the Women, Peace and Security Platform (WSPS) was created. WSPS is a consortium of associations working together to fight for the rights of women and contribute to the consolidation of peace. The women almost unanimously chose me to coordinate this platform.

As part of WSPS, I participated in the inter-Burundian dialogue. Unfortunately, the unity among women that I witnessed during the 2000 Arusha dialogue had disappeared.

“CAFOB was, for me personally, a school where I got to know myself and to situate myself in time and in geographic space, in the context of my country as a woman.”

I tried to bring some of these women together so we could agree on how we would collectively answer the questions posed by the mediator. Working towards cohesion was a difficult task. Others doubted me, but I persevered. Nevertheless, gradually we began to develop a common agenda for peacebuilding. We constituted what we called Women Group, which brought together the two factions. Burundian women representatives sent a common message to the facilitator of the dialogue during his visit to Burundi under the name "Message of the Women Group" in May 2018. UN Women greatly helped in the development of the Common Agenda.

Fortunately, the Platform received a little funding of 60 million Burundi francs (USD31,920) from the French Embassy in Burundi in September 2019. Our project is entitled "Creation of women's speaking spaces to raise their voices loud and clear in the 2020 electoral context". Women are mobilising. The political situation is very delicate, but we are resilient.

TEGLA CHEPKITE LOROUPE



Tegla is the founder of the Tegla Loroupe Peace Foundation (TLPF), which champions peaceful co-existence through sports. She is an athlete and long-distance track runner, and the first African woman to win the prestigious New York City Marathon.

I was born in a remote, hilly and chilly, Kapsait village, in Lelan Division, West Pokot County, Kenya. Life in the village was not a bed of roses; my parents struggled to make ends meet. We relied entirely on small-scale farming for food, and lived in a simple grass-thatched mud house, sleeping on animal skins on the floor. I shared an old blanket with one of my sisters. I did not sleep on a real mattress until I went to boarding school as a teenager.

I started running when I was in primary school. Due to my athleticism, I was admitted to Nasokol Girls, one of the best schools in West-Pokot County. From here, I went to college in Nakuru County where I continued taking part in sports, racing in Kenya and internationally. In 1994, I became the first African woman to win the prestigious New York City Marathon, which had been dominated for years by elite European and American runners. I had always heard and seen records set and broken, but I never imagined that one day I would do so myself. I won in 2 hours, 27 minutes and 37 seconds. I successfully defended it in 1995, and won the Rotterdam Marathon three times between 1997 and 1999. In 2000, I won the Rome Millennium Marathon and the London Marathon.

In 2003, the Indonesian Minister for Tourism, Gede Ardika, invited me to Bali, to participate in a peace race. Over 200 people, mostly tourists, had been killed in Indonesia in a bomb attack. The country remained a security zone. Indonesia had decided to use sports as a way of uniting people and restoring confidence among tourists. Speaking with the Minister, we agreed that sports can unite people more than anything else could. The peace race in Indonesia was a great success and it showed me how sports can unite people and heal old wounds. I borrowed a leaf from there and came home to establish the Tegla Loroupe Peace Foundation (TLPF) that champions peaceful co-existence through sports.

Our foundation's key mandate revolves around peacebuilding efforts among the pastoralists, the animal herding farmers. We have been able to pull warriors out of cattle-rustling menace through sensitisation meetings. I visited hostile areas such as Alale where I talked to Pokot and Turkana warriors. I also held meetings between the Pokot and Sebei in Adurkoi and went to Moroto in Eastern Uganda to meet Turkana and Karamojong warriors. I came to Kapedo and Lomut where I held meetings with local residents.

To enhance our peace programs and reach a wider population, we formed over 25 local groups to foster peaceful co-existence among the pastoralists. About 1,000 former warriors were trained as peace ambassadors, and were empowered with livelihood skills and knowledge. The foundation facilitated the formation of Peace and Development Committees in Pokot, Marakwet and Turkana. Local residents spearheaded the initiative. TLPF only came in to support them materially and ideologically.

When I first embarked on peace missions in 2004, I found it very difficult to bring warring parties together. Some showed outright resistance, while others paid lip service. Sometimes they attacked each other immediately after meetings. This was a great setback, but I never gave up preaching peace. One such case happened along the Pokot-Turkana border in 2005. We had received reports of clashes between Pokot and Turkana herdsmen in Marich and Orwa, all the way to Turkwel and Kainuk. We arranged a meeting between the two communities in Kainuk to unite them and ease tension. Over 500 people attended and we spent the whole day talking about peace. We cooked food and ate together. Pokot and Turkana women sang and danced with joy. The meeting was successful, the message positive.

I went back to Kapenguria, tired but happy. I had travelled with women from Kapenguria who sang all the way home. The next morning, I woke to hear that about ten people had been killed



“As a woman and peace ambassador, I believe that the biggest form of liberation that Africans need is to be unshackled from the bondage of armed conflicts.”



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and hundreds of animals stolen. I received reports that Pokots had vowed to carry out a revenge attack. It was discouraging and disturbing. We kept pressing on, preaching the same message of peace repeatedly.

Generally, we have witnessed positive results because of our resilience, and I consider the success of this foundation as one of my greatest achievements. I have been able to touch thousands of lives and I thank God for having chosen me to be His instrument of peace. I now strongly believe that blessed are the peacemakers. Since its inception in 2003, the Peace Foundation has organised annual peace races in West-Pokot, Turkana, Tana-River and Moroto, Uganda, among other volatile areas. We have rehabilitated thousands of reformed warriors by encouraging them to live differently. We train them in sports, agriculture, carpentry, tailoring, masonry, among other skills. We champion the rights of girls, sensitising people on the need to discard retrogressive cultural practices such as female circumcision. We have also been engaged in HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns, and in sensitising the community members in arid and semi-arid areas on how to prevent environmental degradation.

In 2003, I visited West-Pokot and Turkana. During meetings with local residents and the security forces, the name Robert Matanda popped up regularly for the wrong reasons. I was told he was a very dangerous cattle raider who commanded a huge group and was at the top of the police's wanted list. Through private contacts and secret investigations, I discovered Matanda's hideout in Katikomor, 430 km from Nairobi. In early 2005, I decided to visit and urge him to abandon his nefarious activities. We drove from Kapenguria to Katikomor until we got as far as our vehicle could go. We parked and walked for an hour deep

into the bush. I was with a teenage boy and another woman. We were scared and mostly silent. Finally, I came face-to-face with Matanda, clutching his AK-47 rifle. I greeted him and introduced myself as a peacemaker. I tried to say some nice words, but he was not interested, and asked how we found him. I dodged that question and went straight to my point: *“I beg you my brother, stop killing people, stop cattle raids and come back home.”* He looked at me with bloodshot eyes and commented casually: *“Are you attempting to lure me out of this place so that the police can capture and kill me?”*

The encounter in the jungle took less than 15 minutes. At the end, Matanda miraculously softened up and felt remorseful but he asked me to assure him of his safety. Convinced that he was willing to surrender, I went to the Kapenguria District Commissioner and requested a letter of amnesty stating that no cattle rustlers who were willing to surrender would be prosecuted for past deeds.

When Matanda came out of the bush, I took him to my home in Siyoi, the location of the Tegla Loroupe Peace Academy, where he went through a series of rehabilitations on how to lead a normal life. He started training in athletics, and took part in the 2005 Nairobi Standard Chartered Marathon.

In 2006, the TLPF started a Warriors Rehabilitation Program (WAREP) to offer reformed warriors a soft landing into a conventional life. I appointed Matanda as chair, with a duty to establish peace committees to promote peace activities among pastoralists. Most importantly, WAREP was a tool for removing warriors from the bush. By 2015, we had over 25 peace clusters spread across Marakwet, East-Pokot, Chesegon, Masol, Samach, Nasolot, Kamrio, Katikomor, Kanyarkwat, Adurkoit, Nauyapong, among other areas.



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Matanda became a pillar of TLPF. He gave his testimony in many peace forums and urged residents to live in peace.

They say whoever intends to move a mountain must start by carrying away small stones. Through sports and local peace meetings, I slowly and patiently carried away small stones and eventually succeeded in moving the mountain. The Foundation has now staged about thirty peace races, bringing together thousands of pastoralists from Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and other warring communities. The races are for local communities to compete with each other, showcase their talents, have fun and bond. They are about running, and about the quest for peace. It seeks to create the gradual appreciation for each other, and foster an understanding of the negative effects of violence. At the end, armed warriors often surrender their illegal arms and pledge to live in peace.

I consider armed cattle rustling to be the most unfortunate thing that has ever happened to pastoralists. As a woman and peace ambassador, I believe that the biggest form of liberation that Africans need is to be unshackled from the bondage of armed conflicts. It is impossible for women to engage in meaningful livelihood activities in a society of violence. Women and children are always vulnerable in conflicts. They are sexually abused and suffer psychological trauma. We need to champion peace as a way of protecting women.

Today, I serve as Oxfam (GB) Ambassador for Peace to the Darfur region, a Goodwill Ambassador for the UN Children Education Fund (UNICEF), a UN Athlete for Peace Ambassador, and a member of the International Olympics Committee (IOC). In 2016, I was appointed the Chef-de-Mission (Head of Delegation) for the Refugee Team that took part in the Rio Olympics. I will take the same team to the 2020 Olympics in Japan. It gives athletes who have been forced to migrate from their motherland an opportunity to continue in sports. The athletes come from South Sudan, Syria, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Though I broke records and won many races, the real marathon is the one I have embarked on today, the race to restore peace among pastoralists in the Greater Horn of Africa. I hope to win it eventually.



JULIENNE LUSENGE



Julienne is the President/co-founder of Female Solidarity for Integrated Peace and Development. She was instrumental in obtaining the conviction of Germain Katanga for sexual slavery and of Thomas Lubanga for enlisting child soldiers by the International Criminal Court. She was also instrumental in obtaining the conviction of 800 perpetrators of sexual violence against women at the national level.

I have worked to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and the Great Lakes Region, since 1976. My inspiration stems from my childhood. My father encouraged me to speak up and never be afraid to use my voice. My parents gave us the room to stand up for ourselves, and this has informed my inspiration to stand up for others, never standing idly by when I witness suffering. Those early lessons also fuelled my commitment in my early years as a radio journalist, a time when I worked with little to no pay to ensure that women in Eastern DRC's most far-flung villages had access to crucial human rights and health information. It also fuelled my conviction that all women should have the right to speak up and speak out without fear.

In 2001, after witnessing extensive violence against women during inter-ethnic conflict in Ituri, a province in the DRC, between the Hema and Lendu communities. I co-founded the Women's Solidarity for Peace and Integral Development (SOFEPADI), a non-governmental organisation working for the promotion of the rights of women and girls, sexual and reproductive health rights, and establishing peace in the conflict-ridden eastern region of the DRC. When the war began in the villages surrounding the city of Bunia, the capital of Ituri, women fleeing violence with children were sleeping in the open air without any assistance. I hosted a radio show through which I mobilised women in the city to help those who were destitute, and to dissuade them from letting their children join armed groups. We organised several meetings with women from all ethnic groups, and encouraged them to report what was happening. We sent several memos to the American, British, Belgian and Congolese Governments, and to the United Nations. Professor Ntumba Luaba, Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), who was then sent by the Congolese Government, told me he

had wondered, if I was aware of the risks. I was only looking for peace. The rest did not matter to me.

Under my leadership, SOFEPADI organised several peace awareness raising events. I ran the organisation for over three years using my own resources. Other members gave when they could. However, I understood there was a need for broader women's rights advocacy. We stepped up our support for survivors and the ex-combatant girls, but the resources simply were not there. Not for us, and not for other women's organisations like us who were also supporting survivors. That was why we created the Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises (FFC) – the Fund for Congolese Women – in 2007, to mobilise funds from international donors so that grassroots women's initiatives could be resourced. FFC works in six distinct yet overlapping pillars of advocacy: women's empowerment, women's political leadership, conflict transformation, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, climate justice and environmental protection, and sexual and gender-based violence.

Working against rape and sexual violence when the war came to Eastern DRC, I encountered several harrowing cases. In 2002, I worked with a young couple in Eastern DRC, who were still in their teens, and whose baby had been gang-raped by four men. The baby died from her injuries. In the face of such brutality, I could not stand by and not act. I contacted the police, urging them to investigate.

My multifaceted strategy to combat sexual violence and promote the rights of women and girls starts with supporting survivors and educating men, women and children, traditional chiefs and religious leaders at the community level in Eastern DRC, and goes all the way to Kinshasa, Geneva, Brussels, Paris, New York, Washington D.C., Montreal and Ottawa. I urge those at the highest levels of government and in key international bodies to do more for women and girls in the DRC. Having



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worked for several years in the communities as a journalist for a socio-cultural programme, I gained a lot of information about the situation of women and girls. I knew that the wars had exacerbated the sexual violence that existed in our villages. I also knew that there were external forces that use armed groups based on different reports and testimonies from different actors and survivors. I mobilised funds to allow SOFEPADI to implement awareness-raising activities under my leadership.

With traditional and local leaders, we organised training and awareness-raising sessions about the law, and the consequences of sexual violence on the community, the family and the individual, and on women's rights and gender. To the international community, my message was clear: I did not come as a victim, but as a change agent. I presented the suffering of Congolese women and the changes they were bringing about. My mantra was 'women's bodies have now become the battlefield'. I demanded that this ceases. I have spoken twice before the UN Security Council about Women, Peace and Security in the DRC. On both occasions, I used the opportunity to reiterate calls to Member States to do more, not just in protecting women and girls, but to facilitate a seat for women at peace talks. It was important for sexual violence to be in the peacekeeping mandate, in order for council members to adopt UN Security Council Resolution 1820. In sum, my advocacy for women and girls in the DRC goes beyond imploring community and global leaders to help end rape and sexual violence; it includes emphatically calling for the political rights and participation of women in decision-making roles in the public sphere.

One of my most memorable meetings was in August 2000. We had organised a mediation between Lendu and Hema women at the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Bunia, the capital city of Ituri Province in the DRC. The Ituri war had led to massacres in both tribes, and the women no longer spoke to each other, which meant they were not participating in the activities developed to support them. Therefore, we initiated the Ituri Mothers' Forum (FOMI), a platform that brought together several women's associations. This forum still exists today. Our aim was to bring these women together, so they could try to understand what led to the inter-ethnic conflicts that divided them. By the end of the meeting, we all cried because none of us could comprehend the causes of the war. We saw no point to it. Women who had previously stopped engaging because of their tribal differences agreed to talk to each other. They developed their own action plan to raise awareness in their individual communities. We learnt a great lesson that day about the ability of women to transcend tribal barriers for the benefit of their communities.

My greatest victory was when I organised a dance at the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Beni, a city in the north of the DRC. The theme was Peace and Cohabitation. Lendus and Hemas ethnic groups were oppressed in the camps as they were outside of them. For the dance, we asked everyone to compose songs in their own language. Everyone participated. Of course, the dance came with training on conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence. Participants in the courses were a mix of displaced women, indigenous men, and traditional and religious leaders.

Women took the leadership, and the ensuing peace groups that were developed because of our intervention, have been instrumental in resolving conflict in other IDP camps and villages, often at the request of village chiefs and territorial administrators. Another big win for us was that this rapprochement between the displaced and the indigenous communities has made it possible for displaced people to marry into local communities. After the dance, I also encouraged and facilitated the creation of a football team made up of displaced youth and youth from Beni territory. Several matches were played, bringing the displaced and local population closer together. The peace groups have now expanded to several villages in the intervention zone of SOFEPADI and even to some universities in the country.

Unfortunately, sexual violence continues to spread across Eastern DRC. After receiving many reports that members of the armed groups were raping women in my community, I took action. I started documenting cases, and challenging the local leaders of the armed groups to stop using violence against women as a weapon of war. I asked to meet one of the warlords of the Ituri wars, and about ten women accompanied me. I told him about the cases of rape that had happened in the Kindia district in the city of Bunia. He promised to punish the perpetrators, but he did nothing. Instead, he went after me, told the militias to kidnap me. I had many narrow escapes thanks to the support of the communities. On several occasions, I was forced to leave my family and sleep in the bush, fearing for my life. We found ourselves moving to Beni and neighbouring villages. We did not give up, contacting international organisations for financial support. Urgent Action Fund sent us USD10,000 and this allowed us to pay rent for each member and to support our operations. At the end of each month, we received grants of USD 50-80 to feed our families.

From 2006-2009, I investigated and reported the crimes to the International Criminal Court (ICC). I documented the crimes of each militia group, listening to the testimonies of their survivors. I took their stories to The Hague, holding meetings with the Prosecutor's Office, and other units. With funding from the Women's Initiative for Gender Justice, I recruited two experts to further help with the investigation. I went to the most remote villages like Gety, Zumbe, Bogoro, and Kilo in Ituri Province, to meet the survivors, some of whom I put in contact with ICC investigators. In 2008, I initiated mobile court hearings, bringing judges to villages where crimes of sexual violence have been committed, so that the perpetrators could be tried. The local population was urged to attend the hearings. The judges took the opportunity to educate the population and answer their questions.

“These efforts to bring perpetrators of rape and other crimes and human rights violations to justice have not been without significant risk.”

These efforts to bring perpetrators of rape and other crimes of human rights violations to justice have not been without significant risk. I am not an exception. Female human rights defenders like me are typically more at risk than their male counterparts and even more so in countries like the DRC. My conviction to fight sexual violence remains strong despite this. I am committed to doing my part in changing the narrative of DRC's reputation as the “rape capital of the world,” and I will not rest until I succeed. Many of these ex-rebels are now integrated in the national police and military, leaving me in an incredibly precarious situation when I conduct advocacy with these bodies.

Nevertheless, we continue to advocate for the establishment of a special tribunal for the DRC to punish those who have committed sexual violence and other serious crimes. In addition, organisations that have benefited from the support of the Congolese Women's Fund are organising meetings with militia leaders, urging them to leave the bush.

My family and I relocated on several occasions due to threats and attempts on my life. I am grateful to friends and neighbours who on many occasions have put themselves at risk by protecting me when armed men arrived at my home. My colleagues have not been spared either. When a co-worker was attacked in her home by an assailant wielding a machete, I helped evacuate her to Uganda and then to South Africa for medical treatment. While my efforts have brought significant changes to the lives of thousands of women and girls in the DRC - not only in terms of making their communities safer, but also in terms of empowering them to take control of their lives and influence their communities. There is so much more work to do. At national and international levels, I have worked to raise awareness of the staggeringly high rates of sexual violence in Eastern DRC and put pressure on the Congolese government and international bodies, including the United Nations, to prevent and respond to these atrocities and end impunity for the perpetrators. The challenge remains that while there is a lot of funding intended to help the DRC, it is not yet having the desired impact.

Across all regions of Africa, women are playing critical leadership roles in political life, social cohesion, economic revitalisation, and peace. Gender equality and greater representation of women at all decision-making levels is critical to progress and is key to meeting the sustainable development goals. From gender parity cabinets in Rwanda, Ethiopia and South Africa to some of the highest numbers of women in peacekeeping globally, and incredibly innovative women entrepreneurs and climate activists, African women are leading the change we need to see in the world. Let's build on the positive lessons from the past and empower our young women as leaders of peace and development efforts. Commendable efforts like the African Women Leaders Network champion this.

Women's leadership and participation makes our societies more stable and just, and our communities safer.

Including half of our populations in all that we do is the only way we can ensure a better future for all.“

Amina J. Mohammed
UN Deputy Secretary-General





The United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, Amina J. Mohammed and the African Union Commission Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Bineta Diop embarked on a joint African Union–United Nations solidarity mission to the Horn of Africa in October 2019. In Ethiopia, they met with the Mothers for Peace, a group of women working at grassroots level to mitigate conflict and spread messages for sustainable peace.

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CANDICE MAMA



Candice works in the field of trauma, forgiveness and reconciliation and is dubbed a 'Forgiveness Advocate'. She is passionate about using media as part of peacebuilding and is the author of 'Forgiveness Redefined'. She is the 2017 recipient of the Human Dignity Award at Columbia University and was listed as one of the world's most inspiring women by Vogue Paris.

The old proverb "prevention is better than cure" remains as true in today's society as it did the first time it was said. Yet what happens when we cannot prevent the circumstances that mould and shape us into the people we become in the world? That is when we need the tools and skillsets to find relief from our pain, and recover from our trauma. Storytelling is something I have found to be a powerful tool for connecting and subconsciously giving others the permission to share and heal the wounds of their own lived experiences.

I was born in 1991 in South Africa, a country that was gripped by the grossly violent and oppressive system of apartheid and which would go on to gain its freedom only three short, but impactful, years later. In September 2014, the National Prosecuting Authority reached out to my family to ask if we would like to meet Eugene de Kock. Nicknamed "Prime Evil", Eugene de Kock was a former South African Police Colonel, a torturer and assassin for the apartheid government, later sentenced to 212 years in prison under 89 charges. As many would imagine, this was not a decision we came to without many family discussions and some trepidation from family members. We agreed to schedule our meeting for the following Tuesday. In the days to come, a sense of self-reflection enveloped me. My dad, Glenack Masilo Mama, was brutally murdered in a vicious and unjust time in our country's history. My memories of him were nothing but compilations of stories from different people, and pictures we had collected over time. However, the one thing I knew for sure about him was that he had been tortured and burnt alive by Eugene de Kock.

I went on to read numerous articles and books about Prime Evil, who was destined to become the face and embodiment of an unjustifiable system of hate and oppression. I chose to learn and to confront my past. Growing up in a house where reading and introspection were encouraged allowed me to be able

to contextualise my dad's killing, which, in my mind, made his death mean something. He died fighting a system and wanting a different country for my brother and myself. This made me realise I could not hate De Kock because love and hate cannot operate in the same space. If I wanted to resent him, I would never be able to enjoy fully the life for which my dad and so many others willingly or unwillingly died. He had robbed me of a father and I had subconsciously given him 16 years of my anger, anguish, sleepless nights and bouts of severe depression, endless thoughts and attempts at suicide. One day I just refused for him to take away my joy and enthusiasm for life anymore than he already had. Therefore, I did what I had to do, and I forgave him.

At 23 years old, there I was with my family, ready to meet the man who took away not only my father but also so many others. I was surprised at how I froze and allowed my mum to lead the line of questioning until I became present again. With every question asked and every answer given, my empathy grew for a complete stranger who spoke so sincerely that I could not help but let my defences down. I looked on in awe as I witnessed myself crying, not because of whom I had lost, but because I saw a man who was created by a regime, and who took the fall for a government. A man who lost so much more than I could bear had I been in the same situation. I left having felt he was also a victim to a system of indoctrination. I had forgiven him then, but having met him, I can say this encounter changed me forever.

A few days later, I went on to write an open letter to our judicial system with the following excerpt:

"The African National Congress' strategic objectives are to build a united non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society. I believe in order to do that and fulfil the vision of the greats like Nelson Mandela, we have to go through the reconciliation process as a country, because there can be no progress without reconciliation. As was the mantra within the struggle: "The main enemy is the



“How do you change the world? One spark of inspired action at a time.”

system and those who continue to support the system.” Therefore, should we not extend a courtesy of fairness to a man who was ordered to commit those atrocities in the same way we extended a courtesy of fairness to those who ordered him to commit them? This does not make Eugene de Kock a martyr in any way, shape or form. It does, however mean we remove the venom in our system as a country to move forward uncrippled by the past. As former statesman Nelson Mandela said: “Holding onto anger is drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.”

I recall being invited to share my story at the University of the Free State, South Africa with all the first-year students.

As I concluded my talk, groups of students approached me and shared the trauma they too had experienced. What surprised me the most was that by sharing my story, they felt able to also share theirs, have a voice and engage with the idea of forgiveness. When I first engaged in the peacebuilding space, I felt intimidated by my age, experience and inability to know how to be a part of change. Yet I realised that every one of us has the innate ability to do something within ourselves. I found that sharing my story helped others see the importance of releasing resentment when coming out of a post-conflict country whereby one is plagued with reminders of the past. It is crucial to remember that to change the future, one must learn from, and not be controlled by the past.

The peacebuilding work I have engaged in around the world, specifically in Africa, is something I truly feel honoured to do, engaging in reflective dialogue and meeting remarkable people to work alongside, such as Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, Research Chair in Historical Trauma and Transformation at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, whose work has helped me tremendously. As I continue to travel and work in the space of forgiveness and reconciliation, I find myself constantly learning more about myself, as well as about the tenacity of the human spirit, as those I engage with share their stories with me. I have learnt that there is power in how we narrate our lived experiences, and through which lens we choose to view it. Are we simply victims of what has happened to us, or are we victors over what has happened to us? One course allows us to trust in our ability to move past pain, while the other keeps us trapped within the web of pain.

Taking on the decision to work with already established NGOs, and assisting them to grow their visions and develop programmes of healing, has allowed me to see that there truly is space for more peacebuilders. Working with Tears Africa, a Johannesburg-based organisation that supports survivors of rape and sexual abuse, over the last few years, has opened me up to a different dimension of trauma outside of post-conflict, and encouraged me to take on the task of getting the message of forgiveness out there in multiple creative forms. I decided to write a book, create a documentary, and to write a stage play in order to assist others to see that forgiveness is not about the perpetrator, it is about freeing yourself from the emotional attachment you hold to a particular incident. I have come to the realisation that whenever we remember an offence we have not yet forgiven, it becomes a repeat offence. This inadvertently gives the incident and perpetrator power over our emotional beings. Having worked with local children and sexually abused women, it dawned on me that no matter the age or situation, many people grapple with the idea of forgiveness. Forgiving does not mean forgetting or condoning, but instead freeing yourself from the pain and taking back power. My efforts in the peacebuilding space is to grant people the freedom of choosing to live their life according to a different narrative.

While speaking at the Institute of Justice and Security, in South Africa, with former Judge Albie Sachs, we agreed that what each of us can do is to spark the thought of change in others, so they can choose to change their life. This realisation became my Aha! Moment. We need to engage from a place of love, knowing that sparking a single mind at a time is what inevitably brings about change. As I have come to find, the beauty of it is that as you walk the path of peacebuilding, you begin to understand there is nothing too small to do for one another. It all adds up, and it all matters.





JACQUELINE MASSENGUE



Jacqueline is a retired General Controller of Police who has dedicated 42 years of her life to the police service, including six and a half with the United Nations. She is Chair of the Women Leaders Caucus for the Promotion of Gender, and Legal Affairs Delegate of the organisation of Central African Women. Jacqueline is also a member of the steering committee of the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN), and member of the Board of Women Lawyers

I am a professional police officer and lawyer; I worked in the National Police in the Central African Republic (CAR), from 12 February 1975 to 31 July 2017. In 1989, the Minister of the Interior appointed me to represent women in the security department within the Ministry of Social Affairs. Since then, I have worked for the promotion of women's rights. My position was reinforced when I was named President of the Women's Rights Commission in the Association of Women Lawyers of Central Africa. In this role, I trained women about their rights, and assisted the survivors of gender-based violence by referring them to judicial services where the perpetrators received prison sentences, and paid damages to the survivors.

I was also appointed the Vice President of the National Committee to Combat Traditional Practices and Violence against Women and Girls. I led several awareness-raising activities about Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) leading to many families changing their minds about the practice. As Director of the Judicial Police Services from 2013–2017, I helped many female survivors of sexual violence, ensuring that they had access to the necessary medical care, whilst helping them through the legal process. I remember the case of a pastor who raped several girls in his congregation. This was in 2016. He was sentenced to three years in prison.

My mission with the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC - now the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)) began in July 2005. My motivation was to help survivors of gender-based violence to know their rights. The International Federation of ACATs (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture), FIACAT, trained me as a trainer on human rights. My specialty was the fight against traditional practices that are harmful to the health of women and girls. Given this background, I became a police focal point and advisor to the Inspector General and the Congolese Police. This meant collaborating with all sections

of the Mission, particularly the Gender Section, Human Rights, Public Information, Congolese women's organisations, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). I participated in meetings with women from civil society and female Congolese politicians, in collaboration with the gender office at MONUC. Our focus was to advocate for the importance of the political participation of women. Our interventions with these women favoured their admission into political parties and many were candidates elected in legislative elections.

There were three advisers to the Inspector General of the Congolese Police, two men and myself. My mission was to train and sensitise the police on human rights and the rights of women. In particular, I had to popularise the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. In view of the resurgence of cases of violence against women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). At MONUC's police level, we developed a concept note for the creation of brigades to combat sexual violence. These brigades were to be created in the following locations: Goma, Kinshasa, Bukavu, and Kisangani. The brigade in Goma, the capital of North Kivu Province in the DRC, was operational before my time with the mission ended. Following my intervention with the Congolese Police, we sent the first contingents of police officers to the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire in 2007/08.

As leader of the gender team for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps at the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), I served for two and a half years. Its mission was to train women on their rights in the event of sexual and physical assault. Its work in the IDP camps was particularly difficult given the distress of those who had lost their loved ones and property following the earthquake. Public awareness campaigns have led to a decrease in violence against women, and women are starting to file complaints against their attackers, whereas before they did not do so for fear of reprisals.



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Back in Africa, I relied on UNSCR 1325 to build our training and awareness for the involvement of women in conflict resolution. On 24 March 2013, armed groups carried out a coup to overthrow President Bozize. Many Christians were killed. A group called Balaka retaliated against Muslims, resulting in killings, rapes, and other atrocities in our provinces, from both sides. Women leaders and several non-governmental organisations stepped up to sensitise the rebel groups and the population. Following a series of talks between the CAR government and the armed groups, a peace agreement was signed. My best moment was witnessing the women we trained going to the Muslim quarter after the crisis to raise awareness of social cohesion between Muslims and Christians. Another big win was seeing a parity law passed and promulgated. As Vice-President of women leaders who were lobbying in the CAR, I conducted advocacy, in collaboration with my colleagues, with the authorities, namely the deputies of the National Assembly, the Constitutional Court, and the heads of the political parties. Accordingly, under the new electoral code, a quota of 35 percent of women candidates is required for elections.

Our country, the Central African Republic has experienced recurrent crises for more than a decade. The weapons used by belligerents are unfortunately still hidden in communities. Even though women make up 50.2 percent of the population in the CAR, only a few women are involved in conflict resolution as provided for by UNSCR 1325. From my experiences, I have observed that women and children are the main victims. In an effort to help the CAR government restore state authority, we created the Association of Women in CAR in 2018 to fight against the proliferation and illegal circulation of arms on the Central African territory. Our mission is to educate people and convince them to surrender their weapons. For now, our focus is on fundraising, so we can train trainers and commence our activities.

Regarding the representation of women as observers during discussions that led to the Khartoum Agreement of 6 February 2019 on CAR, only the three women Ministers and one of the armed groups observed the discussions. The Prime Minister reported to us every evening. I represented Central African women with Annette Ouango and the representative of the Archbishop of Bangui, Brigitte Izamo, but we were not associated with the discussions.

I carried out several missions in our provinces to train women on peace, development and democracy, especially in Bambari, which is located in central CAR. There has been a strong presence of armed groups in Bambari. However, following our mission, security is gradually returning, and the women of the Central

“We continue to raise awareness so that women will make up 35 percent in all decision-making bodies.”

African Women’s Organisation, of which I am the delegate for legal affairs, continues to raise awareness for social cohesion. I have organised training activities in other cities such as Sibut, Bossangoa, Kaga Bandoro, Ndele, Bria and Birao in the east of the country.

Unfortunately, despite the signing of the peace agreement by the CAR government and armed groups, the latter remain very active on the ground, and periodically there are clashes, and there are victims. The Central African Republic has ratified international legal texts on the protection of women. Article six (paragraph three) of the Constitution of 30 March 2016 stipulates that the law guarantees equal rights to men and women in all areas. In addition, the law on parity was voted for and promulgated on 24 November 2016, however its application has been a problem given the socio-cultural gravity.

We continue to raise awareness so that women will make up the envisioned 35 percent in all decision-making in the Central African Republic.

MENNA MOSBAH



Menna is the founder of the Young Egyptian Feminists League, Co-founder of the WOMES platform and researcher in gender mainstreaming studies. An AMENDS Fellow, she is a member of NAMATI Global Legal Empowerment Network and Women Democracy Network.

I grew up in Alexandria, Egypt, where as Simone de Beauvoir wrote: *“one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”*. I was surrounded by various manifestations of sexism in decision and peace-making, which have been shaped and transferred in my community from one generation to another. Since 2008, I have been involved in a wide variety of civil society national programmes, but my real journey as an activist began in 2011, with the beginning of the Arab Spring Uprisings, which unfolded in Tunisia and moved to Egypt and Libya in 2011. We started to see real changes, and the voices of women finally became amplified.

As a woman, I felt my voice was heard for the first time in my life.

Egypt witnessed the highest percentage of women's participation in demonstrations ever recorded across the country. I protested in the demonstrations against the injustices during the 25th revolution, as a youth defender of women and human rights. I did this with other defenders of human rights, who called for new legislations against sexism. From 2011 to 2014, I voted three times during constitutional amendments.

Inspired by a revolutionary spirit, I was awakened to the urgent need for gender justice and decided to devote my activism to striving towards a society of 50:50 equality and equity. In addition, the peer experiences of neighbourhood revolutions in Tunisia and Libya brought me together with other activists, standing side by side to reshape the future of our region. Feminist movements across North Africa succeeded regionally, taking huge strides forward in standing against sexism.

Unfortunately, the rapid changes of political regimes in 2013 threatened the progress we had made. Once again, women in North Africa were constrained by male domination in politics by the time the radical Islamic parties came to power. The armed conflict that had ravaged Libya made its way to Egypt and Tunisia. These conflicts led to killings, sexual exploitation and the brutal rape of women and girls. According to a 2017 International

Labour Organization (ILO) report, with the rise of the extremist group 'Daesh' (more popularly known as ISIS) human trafficking in the region increased by 39 percent. Even though, 55 percent of Isis's victims were women and girls, women leaders were excluded from peace negotiations, agreements and conflict prevention processes with limited representation at decision-making positions.

While the structure of my region was changing, analysing the unmet basic needs of women and youth became my top priority. I strongly believed that the socio-political empowerment of female youth leaders was the key to drive change towards sustainable peace. That is why in 2015 I founded the Young Egyptian Feminists League (YEFL). YEFL strives to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality, SDG16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and SDG17 on Partnerships for the Goals. It is fully committed to the African Youth Charter and the 20 goals of the African Union's Agenda 2063. My aim was to build the capacity of women and female youth in Egypt.

Back in 2013, YEFL used to be the Young Egyptian Feminists Movement (YEFM) and was initiated by a group of female youth who believed in gender justice, eliminating discrimination between genders and achieving social justice. However, in December 2015, due to the shrinking of civic spaces, YEFL board members decided to register YEFM as YEFL to be a women's youth-led non-profit organisation, providing an alternative space for sharing and exchanging peer-to-peer knowledge.

In late 2017, YEFL projects expanded regionally, building new partnerships and collaborations with civil society organisations in Tunisia, Morocco, Libya and the United States. This expansion started with the production of some gender studies, data analysis and visualisation for gender statistics based on evidence-based approaches. As a researcher in gender mainstreaming studies and the founder of a women youth-led organisation, I believed in the urgent priority for data provision in gender themes. In particular,





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“As a researcher in gender mainstreaming studies and the founder of a women youth-led organisation, I believed in the urgent priority for data provision in gender themes.”

I wanted to overcome the lack of gender statistical reports in the region. Providing Women Human Rights Defenders with recent statistics is essential if they are to proceed with their missions in the field and to bring about the expected results related to peace and conflict prevention or sustainable development.

In addition to helping to facilitate some regional workshops for youth of both genders in themes related to gender equality in 2017, I developed partnerships with a range of similar organisations. These included Youth Lebanon, Networks of Mediterranean Youth, (NETMED) Women Democracy Network (WDN) in Washington D.C., CIVICUS: Innovation for Change Network, Euro Mediterranean Women's Foundation in Spain and the MADA Centre for Humanities and Studies Research in Casablanca, Morocco.

In April 2018, I was interviewed by Dr. Gayle Kimball, Professor at California State University, for an Oxford University Press book, "Women's Journey to Empowerment in the 21st Century: A Transnational Feminist Analysis of Women's Lives in Modern Times". In her chapter on "Women's Voices in Egypt and Globally", I highlighted YEFL's role after the revolution in Egypt, explaining how

we stand against sexism from a genderism, futurism perspective through empowering Egyptian and Arab Women Youth Leaders across Egypt governorates and North Africa, and how YEFL pushes its efforts nationally and regionally towards changing the stereotypical image of women as victims. In late 2018, I pushed on behalf of YEFL's consultation research team, a research on gender mainstreaming in peace and decision-making in the Middle East and North Africa, to the Youth for Peace Africa (Y4P) Program of the African Union Commission. The research tackled critical challenges of sexism in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, and suggested new mechanisms that emphasise women's role as key actors for maintaining and sustaining peace in post-conflict situations. The research was included in the regional report of the Framework on Youth, Peace and Security in Africa 2024 under the five key priorities of UNSCR 2250. Moreover, YEFL presented during the consultation on the study in Tunisia, and the validation in Accra, Ghana. In 2019, I became an AMENDS Fellow. AMENDS is the Middle Eastern Network for Dialogue, an initiative by Stanford University for bringing together promising youth change agents from across the Middle East, North Africa, and the United States to learn from each other. My journey with AMENDS began back in June 2019 in Tunisia where I presented a prototype for an online platform, WOMES for active women youth leaders in peacebuilding and decision-making at the Middle East and Africa. WOMES, which was launched during the annual conference of AMENDS at the Culture city in Tunisia, is a gender digital initiative designed to introduce a new tactic of connecting women youth leaders to the realm of digital technology. It does this through provisioning various online resources, serving



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the unmet needs of women and developing leadership potential. In conjunction with the four-pillar approach of UNSCR 1325, WOMES provides three different categories of online resources: data basing, digital documentation, and capacity-building.

In December 2019, on behalf of YEFL, I presented WOMES platform at the African Union's continental meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, for African women-led Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that are active in peace and security on National Action Plans under UNSCR 1325. The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) organised a meeting in partnership with the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC). The objective was to develop a road map for the engagement of CSOs in advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda through existing mechanisms at the African Union. We reviewed gaps, gains and challenges for developing criteria for the implementation of the agendas across the continent.

I gave a presentation on the objectives of WOMES, outlining our vision and mission in empowering African women youth leaders who are active in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and decision-making. Moreover, YEFL has taken part in shaping the future direction of the meeting by setting up mechanisms for regular consultations on Women, Peace and Security issues, road mapping how gender, peace and security plans can utilise CSOs in the advancement of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

In all that I do nationally, regionally and at a continental level, my activism and efforts are dedicated to the empowerment of female youth and to helping to build their potential capacities, develop their skills and to fill in the gap of leadership. My hope is that those who are empowered will do the same for others in local

and rural communities. This is the main theme for the dream of a planet of 50:50 equality. Our stance against sexism is central to our commitment to peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams" (Eleanor Roosevelt).



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JOSEPHINE KAVIRA NZAIRA MALIMUKONO



Josephine is a women's rights activist in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She is member, Co-Founder and Director of the League for Congolese Solidarity, and Chair of the Board of Directors of the Coalition of Women's Associations for Development (CAFED) in North Kivu Province.

My voice counts for peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and in Africa. Within the specific framework of peace and security, my journey started in 1994 with the objective of engaging with women and girls who were survivors of conflict, supporting them to raise their voices so that we can put an end to armed conflict in the DRC. Part of my approach was to document and monitor peace and security issues in the east of the country. This allowed me to play a role in conflict resolution in accordance with UNSCR 1325. I was greatly encouraged by the fact that the Security Council "urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms" for peace.

In 1995, I co-hosted the organisation "Campaign for Peace" in the North Kivu Province of Eastern DRC. My role was to educate women about the roles they can play in fostering a culture of peace in their communities. I set up a training and documentation centre for peace in the Rutshuru territory in North Kivu Province. Approximately 1,830 women and girls passed through this peace-training centre. At the same time, we started working on documenting serious violations of women's rights and other peace and security problems in North Kivu Province. To date, 75 reports on the situation of women and children have been drafted and shared with local authorities. Throughout 1996, I continued with the strategy of organising documentation meetings, and analysing reports of violations of the rights of women, girls and children in the context of conflict. Twelve context analysis reports were written for use in advocacy. By 1997, the war had intensified, especially in Goma, North Kivu Province, where I was. The rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo (AFDL) occupied North Kivu Province and the only means of communicating with anyone outside was through memos. With other women of a collective of associations, I wrote a memo to

the international community, the United Nations, and the African Union (then Organization for African Unity, OAU), to demand the return of peace and security. In May 1997, the AFDL rebels, led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, took Kinshasa, the capital of Zaire (now the DRC), forcing President Mobutu Sese Seko into exile. Just as we began to anticipate peace, a new armed struggle began. I continued my communication with the international community, raising the issue of conflict in Eastern DRC, and its impact on women and children. In addition, a series of ten recommendations were formulated and addressed to the armed group Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD). I wanted a public outcry at the suffering of these women and girls. Peace was eventually restored.

The year 1998 saw another round of meetings on insecurity and demands for peace. Every month, I would gather women so we could do a context analysis, and plead with the rebels to stop fighting. Annually, we put together twelve context reports, which helped in our communication with the rebels. I was at the head office of the League for Congolese Solidarity (LSC) in Kiwanja, a town in Rutshuru in North Kivu Province. I attended these meetings with Justine Kahindo, area manager of Kiwanja, Jacques Mukanda, Mariette Nzaira, Kabugho Jeanine and Guilaine Kahambu as psychosocial assistants. These women were always there to support actions and develop the daily reports. They are still by my side today, supporting our initiatives for peace and security advocacy for the promotion of women's rights.

I also supported the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, which led to the formation of the transitional government following the signing of the Global and Inclusive Agreement in Pretoria, South Africa on 16 December 2002. The accession of the DRC to UNSCR 1325, and the arrival of MONUC (now United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or MONUSCO) in the country were of great importance for the peace and security of women in the DRC.



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“I have worked hard to use documentation, monitoring and advocacy to curb the worst situations.”

In 1999, I collaborated with women such as Julienne Lusenge and Brigid Inder, in documenting the situation in the country. I found it difficult to work alone at a local level without having national and international support. Working with Julienne Lusenge, President of the nongovernmental organisation, Women's Solidarity for Peace and Integral Development, and Director of the Congolese Women's Fund (in French: Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises - (FFC)), was important. Our documentation reports were sent to her for action at national level. With Brigid Inder, of Women's Initiative for Gender Justice, her advocacy supported us at international level. Such collaborative practices are key ingredients in peace and security work.

I supported the social assistance efforts developed by Concentration of the Collectives of Associations working for the Promotion of Women of the Great Lakes countries (OFAFEM/GEL).

Here I had a strategy of using UNSCR 1325 as a far-reaching tool for our everyday work. This is what I considered positive in the work with the consultation of collectives of women's associations for the Great Lakes Region. Therefore, for any activity, conference, project and even celebrations of international days, I refer to UNSCR 1325. This is what makes me strong. I continue to work with women and girls who want to embark on the path of peace, and be community educators in the territories of Masisi, Rutshuru, Lubero South, Nyiragongo, in North Kivu Province. At the peace-training centre in Rutshuru, I listen and help to reduce the trauma of survivors of conflict. The centre acts as a transit house for female survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Between 2004 and 2008, it supported 1,500 women.

By 2009, having supported many women and girls, I had gathered an extensive body of stories documenting their experiences. This enabled me to present evidence to the International Criminal Court, including images of hostilities, and the testimonies of women and girls. In 2012, I worked with the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice and other partners, including WITNESS, to co-produce the film “Our Voices Matter”. The data collection was done on the ground in Rutshuru, Masisi, Lubero and Beni, territories in North Kivu Province, with the objective of collecting testimonies from women and girl survivors of conflict and making advocacy actions. The film was seen by more than 15,000 people.



Every March since 2013, I have organised advocacy trips to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York, to present the situation of women to technical partners who can act as intermediaries and advocate for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the DRC. Each year, there have been noticeable improvements in the situations reported.

On 15 May 2015, I led two advocacy missions in Kinshasa to meet with Jeanine Mabunda, who later came to be the first woman appointed to lead the DRC's National Assembly in 2019. At the time she was the Special Representative of the Head of State in the fight against sexual violence and child soldiers. The missions were successful, and, as a consequence, Jeanine Mabunda travelled to the North Kivu Province and visited the Transit Centre in Rutshuru territory. From 2015 to the present day, as part of the global campaign '16 Days of Activism', I have launched activities with the aim of encouraging women and girls and the broader local community to fight against gender-based violence. During the 16 Days of Activism in 2019, I made a plea for the provincial government to close 54 houses throughout the province where more than 350 girls are victims of sexual abuse.

From 2015 to 2018, I got involved with the women's movement, in particular through the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), UNSCR 1325, and Sustainable Development Goal 5. The aim was to

raise awareness on the participation of women, girls and the broader community in contributing to peace. As the focal point of the 'Nothing Without Women Movement', which aimed to encourage women participation in elections and the electoral processes, I succeeded in raising awareness and gaining support for more than 7,500 people and 150 organisations in support of the movement.

Over the years, I have worked hard to use documentation, monitoring and advocacy to curb the worst situations. I faced many challenges along the way, but I believe that before long we will have lasting peace, especially if women are sufficiently represented in decision-making bodies. There is undoubtedly still a long way to go. Nevertheless, I am proud to have made my contribution to promoting peace and security in the DRC. It is a right and a duty for women to make a positive contribution to peace, security and democracy. Peace becomes lasting only when it has known the participation of women and when it has taken into account the specific needs of women.

ELIZA MARIA TAVARES PINTO



Eliza is a civil society activist and President of the Guinea-Bissau chapter of the ECOWAS Women, Peace and Security –Network (REMPSECAO-GB). She is also a founding member of the Network of Women working in the maritime and port sector of West and Central Africa.

After a turbulent period of armed political conflict from 1998 to 1999, and the 2003 coup d'état, there was need for peacebuilding and reconciliation in Guinea-Bissau. In response to this, the office of First Lady Rosa Robalo, created peace clubs in schools called *Crianças Exercito da Paz* (Children's Peace Army). I, as the first assistant to the First Lady's office, developed awareness-raising programmes bringing peace messages to schools and communities with the aim to change behaviours and mentalities, and acquire a culture of peace and non-violence. We also wanted to help children to be less afraid of soldiers.

At the end of each engagement with a school or community, a children's peace club was created. In June 2004, I coordinated the clubs to meet for a fifteen-day interaction event, which we called a 'Fortnight of Children for Peace'. Several tents were set up at the National Heroes Square in the capital Bissau, and each had its own focus related to the promotion of peace. The tents were open all day, with cultural and recreational activities ranging from lectures and film screenings to signing the peace book. At the end of each day, people invited by the cabinet and the First Lady herself would deliver speeches. I felt that after these celebrations, many teenagers and young children were inspired and able to adopt new social behaviours. I was hopeful that children's voices would be able to influence the behaviour of actors of conflict and instability. I built my confidence in public speaking and, with renewed strength, continued my mission to contribute to the social welfare of my country.

The ECOWAS Women, Peace and Security Network, (Portuguese acronym: REMPSECAO-GB) was launched in 2009. The committee organising the launch included Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Cadi Seidi, the journalist Fernanda Pinto Cardoso, and Helena Saide, a representative of the Women's Ministry. Due to my work and experience in promoting women's

participation in decision-making, I was invited to contribute as a voluntary peace activist. And so, my collaboration with the Network began. The instability in Guinea Bissau meant that we could not hold the network's first constituent General Assembly until 2013. Due to the successive political-military conflicts, our intervention began with sensitisation in the barracks, under the coordination of Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Cadi Seidi. The meetings provided room for reflection on how to find lasting solutions to return the country to constitutional order. Discussions at the barracks focused on the role of the armed forces in promoting and maintaining peace, and the women in the armed forces and police benefited from trainings on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

My active and effective participation in REMPSECAO-GB began after the General Assembly in 2013, where I was elected Chief Administrative and Financial Officer. This coincided with another very troubled period in the country following the military coup d'état of 12 April 2012. From then on, the Network began its intervention on the ground, aiming to promote dialogue between the parties of the transitional military regime and politicians for the preparation of the elections. From 2014 to 2017, when the Network's President Dr. Cadi Seidi was appointed Minister of National Defence, I temporarily took over the presidency of the network, and in 2018, through the Network's General Assembly, I was reappointed. During this period, our main objective was to promote lasting peace in Guinea-Bissau and to implement initiatives to promote human rights and women's participation in decision-making.

In 2014, the newly elected government drafted and approved a development program to facilitate peace and stability. It was a turning point in the history of Guinea-Bissau, and it was only fair that the Network contributed by promoting debates and community dialogues on education for a culture of peace,



and by publicising the government's development program. The school attendance by disadvantaged children increased and there was also a reduction and settlement of community conflicts by consensus, without the need for legal proceedings.

I led REMPSECAO-GB operations with virtually no financial resources, using my home as its base. It was an honour to contribute, especially considering how much I have grown since I took over the presidency of the Network. I was concerned about the country's unstable situation caused by violations of fundamental human rights. Therefore, promoting and sharing emergency intervention initiatives that helped maintain a peaceful and stable climate in the country was natural to me. Through our partnership with the Ministry of Interior, we have identified areas in the capital and beyond that are vulnerable to conflict and are working closely with communities to carry out peacebuilding activities.

During the institutional political conflict in the Ninth Legislature that began with the fall of the government in 2015, and after several unsuccessful attempts at internal solutions, I requested the support and intervention of the Goree Institute, based in Dakar, Senegal. We needed their help to strengthen the capacity of Civil Society Organisations in conflict prevention and resolution, and to seek strategies for our intervention. One of the interventions we made during the election period was to promote dialogue between the National Election Commission (CNE) and four presidential candidates, resolving a deadlock between them.

Through my years of experience in peace and security in Africa, I truly believe that we must prioritise reconciliation within our society. It must be a reconciliation anchored in unity. Indeed, there is no alternative opportunity for sustainable economic development if we do not pacify the spirits of the injured, and if we do not wipe the tears of those who mourn.

“Through my years of experience in peace and security in Africa, I truly believe that we must prioritise reconciliation within our society.”

Peace is more than the silence of arms. It begins with justice and resides in the dignity of every human being. In turbulent times, we must remain true to the fundamental values of peace. We work to strengthen a culture of peace and nonviolence through dialogue and promoting reconciliation. We empower young people, girls and boys, to change their behaviour and attitudes and act peacefully. To the evildoers in the world, to the violators of women's fundamental rights, the time has come for a self-assessment and self-criticism of your behaviours and your benefits. However, the context of political and governance instability has been a barrier to the adoption and implementation of public policies and processes that address the constraints that prevent women from fully enjoying their human rights, particularly their civil and political rights.

Moreover, the processes of emancipation and the socio-political empowerment of women in Guinea-Bissau are challenging, as far as justice and social solidarity are concerned. It is a global challenge that must be taken by all of us, articulating our structures and synergies, for the construction of our solidarity and equitable community space.



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“One of the most remarkable changes in Africa is ostensibly filling a void left by a much earlier generation of active participation of women working along the values of peace, development with amazing dedication, courage and strength. The realisation of the project of women's empowerment is a lifetime obligation. Women's active engagement in elections and governance structures continues to strengthen democracy.”

Brigalia Bam
Former Chairperson,
Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa

*The Second Round of the Presidential
Election in the Republic of Guinea Bissau
on 29 December 2019
© AU Photo/Gamal Ahmed Karrar*







HAJER SHARIEF



Hajer is the Co-founder of the 'Together We Build It' Organisation and a member of the UN Women group of champions on Women, Peace and Security. She was the recipient of the Student Peace Prize in 2017, and was included in the personal shortlist for the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize by Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) Director, Henrik Urdal.

I survived war!

When I was 16 years old, I decided to study medicine and become a doctor. Now, the fact is I was not that fascinated by the science of medicine as much as I was fascinated by the impact a doctor can have on the lives of people. What is more rewarding than saving someone's life? After high school in 2010, I enrolled in medical school for two years, and then the Libyan civil war broke out in 2011. Before living through the war, wars and violent conflicts to me were like natural disasters that hit other countries, not mine. It did hit my country and recovery for us is still a long road ahead. I lived close to the central hospital in my city at the time war broke out. Many of the staff could not get to the hospital due to the armed conflict in the streets. I volunteered, seizing the opportunity to practice my passion to help others.

Admittedly, I was excited by the idea of a revolution, but when what started as peaceful protests turned bloody, I had no parameter through which to understand the consequences of using violence as a means of liberation. Today, I understand that nothing can justify the use of violence, and a vast majority of people do not really want war.

For several months during the armed revolution, we witnessed the loss of life. My first day volunteering at the hospital showed me a completely different reality of war. The first patient I was assigned was a man in his late 70s. He was in a coma, after being injured by shrapnel from an airstrike on his way to buy groceries. How could such a simple task be so dangerous? He died a few days later. I still remember the tearful lamenting words of his son: "what did my dad do to them?" Standing there, I was both ashamed and heartbroken. I could not sleep that night thinking, "am I one of them?", "what did he mean by them?", "who is them?" Questions I still ask until today, because sometimes I feel

that being silent and not opposing war and violence empowers the few voices and individuals who decide to go to war on behalf of their nations. Until this day, I wonder if I am guilty for not opposing the war and violence when it first started in 2011.

I did not become a doctor. Instead, I studied law at Tripoli University in Libya and became a peacebuilder. I studied law because I strongly believed in peaceful and justice-driven approaches to addressing conflict. I wanted to understand more about how people gained rights, and how to help them protect those rights. After my time at the hospital, I realised that we were presented with a great opportunity for my country to become civil and democratic, and that meant it was time that we took seriously the human rights of all Libyan citizens. My eureka moment uncovered a new passion inside me for peacebuilding, and I co-founded an organisation called 'Together We Build It', a local NGO working to empower women and young people to promote peacebuilding, and to advocate for their participation in formal and informal peace processes.

Having a passion to contribute to peacebuilding is one thing, knowing how, was quite another. None of us at 'Together We Build It' had any experience nor knowledge of peacebuilding. We simply relied on our hope, courage and commitment that we must do something. We realised the value of ensuring that those women and young people that we sought to empower not only knew that they have agency, but also learned how to exercise it in a way that could bring about positive change to their communities and the country. We did so by building up the capacity of different groups to lead initiatives in peacebuilding in their own communities and by providing them with advocacy opportunities on national and international level to deliver their perspective and opinions on peacebuilding in Libya to different stakeholders.

Co-founding my own organisation has helped me grow both personally and professionally. Many events happened while I was

“I had to live and survive a violent war to understand how easily they spill over, and as a survivor, I take it as my mission and responsibility to be relentless in promoting peace and eradicating violence.”

working with the organisation, which taught me major lessons on peace and security. One of these lessons is that the majority of people are willing to take action for peacebuilding if they are provided with an opportunity, and that regardless of their loss and pain they will still try to stop war. One event that touched my heart was in 2014 during the Constitution Drafting Assembly elections. I was at the polling station monitoring the elections with an organisation. A family walked into the room to vote and they brought cake. On the top of the cake was written something along the lines of ‘this is from a martyr family, please do not let us down’. The family had lost their son during the war of 2011, seeing them celebrating a peaceful election by remembering the sacrifice of their son to his country made me realise that fighting for peace and democracy never ends regardless of how much pain and loss one might endure.

In 2016, I had the privilege to meet the late Kofi Annan. I worked with him on advocating and promoting the role of young people in peace and security through the Extremely Together Initiative. From Mr. Annan I learned the importance of intergenerational partnerships in peacebuilding. The exclusion of people only paints a partial picture of peace! Through our work, we managed to reach thousands of young people from all over the world, and encourage them to play an active role in peace and security and reach the highest levels of diplomatic and political decision-making to amplify the voices of young women in peace and security.

In August 2016, I was appointed as member of the advisory group on the global study on youth, peace and security mandated by UNSCR 2250 (2015). Being a member of the advisory group was an honour and privilege because I had the opportunity to contribute to shaping the agenda and roadmap on youth, peace and security. Moreover, it was a great opportunity to empower the synergies and intersections between women, peace and security, and youth, peace and security. A matter very close to my heart!

The instability in Libya was another dark moment in my life. We elected a new parliament in Libya, and I was extremely happy to see the democratic process moving forward regardless of all the political shortcomings. However, the conflict in Libya made me lose hope because it marked the end of a peaceful democratic transition, and the fall into a long-lasting civil conflict. Armed men assassinated Tawfik Bensaud, a young peace activist and friend of mine, in 2014; it was yet another dark moment for me. Tawfik had reached out to me just before his death, asking that we co-write an article about peacebuilding in Libya. He would focus on the role young people can play in peacebuilding in the country, while I focused on the role women could play. We never wrote our article, but I hope that through my story others are inspired to become peacebuilders and collectively call for peacebuilding instead of violent conflict. I had to live and survive a violent war to understand how easily they spill over, and as a survivor, I take it as my mission and responsibility to be relentless in promoting peace and eradicating violence.



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No to destroying public institutions

MOTHERS FOR PEACE



Mothers for Peace is an Ethiopian women's network, comprising of members from all regions of the country, which uses traditional approaches to peacemaking and dialogue. The Mothers for Peace are active across Ethiopia and predominantly engage with youth and student groups to mediate conflict.

The Mothers for Peace network was conceptualised at a national campaign event organised by the Ethiopian Ministry of Women, Children and Youth under the theme 'ጅግነት' or 'Jegnit' on 4 November 2018. Jegnit is an Amharic word that symbolises bravery, in this case the bravery of women. The Jegnit programme advocated for women to contribute towards building sustainable peace. Some of us already knew each other before the meeting; but the event was really the catalyst that helped us connect. We kept in contact and after two months of communication, Mothers for Peace was initiated with the slogan 'Mothers are a symbol of Peace'. We had three contributors—Genet Assefa, Abeba Tegegn, and Yodit Tesfaye – who served as points of contact.

We were eager to contribute and work together for peace and security in the country by promoting unity among the people. We come from all nine regions and two city administrations of Ethiopia.

Our first priority was to organise ourselves. At the very beginning of our journey, we agreed to meet with specific groups in communities, including, but not limited to, religious leaders, elders, women, youth, university students and regional leaders among others. To facilitate our mission, we received a support letter from the Ministry of Peace and the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs. We first went to Bahir Dar, the capital of the Amhara region in northern Ethiopia. It was logistically more convenient to start our journey in this city. Moreover, months before, the region had experienced some deadly ethnic clashes. In Bahir Dar, we met with the President of the region and handed over our peace banner to persuade the leadership to pledge for peace. Our banner is white in colour and has a dove in the middle of it with the word 'ሰላም', which translates as 'peace' in one of the local languages, Amharic.

We were fortunate that we went at a time when several other meetings were being held with women and youth in the city. That gave us the opportunity to share our message of peace. Some of these meetings had brought youths from across the country together. Similarly, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism had also organised a meeting of religious leaders.

Our first conflict intervention took place in Assosa University, which is located in Assosa, the capital of Benishangul-Gumuz region in western Ethiopia. The city was in conflict, and it had spread to the university campus. There had even been reports of loss of life. On arriving at the university, we found that students had gone as far as demarcating territories in their student halls in line with ethnic origin. Students would not even sit and eat together in the common dining hall. We met with the University's administration and asked them to convene students. Our aim was to make these students understand how, as mothers, we felt about the conflict and ethnic division. We wanted them to know that we value their lives and to remind them that their own mothers had worked hard to get them to where they were. We knelt down and begged them to reconcile and live peacefully. A statement we often make at these kinds of gatherings translates as; "by the breast that has fed you and the back that has carried you, make peace because you are valuable to every one of us." A mother needs you to take care of her when she is old, and someone to inherit the fruit of her labour, no matter how small it might be. And so, we knelt down in front of the students. Overwhelmed and shocked by the gesture, some students quickly came to lift us up from the ground, in tears, asking us to get up because a mother never has to kneel in front of her child. Feeling remorseful for breaking a mother's heart, they wept with us and made a pledge to end conflict and bring peace amongst themselves. They promised to end the conflict, and to bring peace amongst themselves.



*The Mothers for Peace in Amhara region in the northern part of Ethiopia hold their peace banner as well as the national flag of Ethiopia while they sing their song bearing messages of peace
© Mothers for Peace*



“By the breast that has fed you and the back that has carried you, make peace because you are valuable to every one of us.”

Representatives (top and bottom right) of the Mothers for Peace speak on activities the group undertook all across Ethiopia to spread messages of peace and reconciliation
© UNECA/Abraham Tameru

In the time since the network was established, we have met with government officials, faith leaders, university students and youth in communities we have visited. In each case, we adopted the strategy for engagement that we used in Assosa University. With government officials, we met with leaders and held dialogue on peace efforts in respective regions, while encouraging greater outreach to populations at grassroots levels to better understand the sources of conflict and find solutions together. In these conversations, we also advocated for the right to peace. Amongst faith leaders, we pleaded with them to intervene in community disputes to bring peace using their influence.

On a visit to Adama University, in the Oromia regional state of Ethiopia, we discovered that students had been boycotting classes for ten days. The situation was different in comparison to Assosa. Here it was difficult to get the students' attention at first so we carried our peace banner chanting our poems around the campus. At first, the students did not take any notice of us because they thought we had been sent by government. Eventually, convinced of our mission, we spent a whole afternoon with the students. We sat with them, and tried to understand their grievances. We communicated these to the University's leadership. We ensured the University authorities followed through on their promises to the students. Two days later, students returned to class. In the end, they reconciled with the University administration. The students produced a banner in appreciation of our intervention bearing the message, 'we value our mothers'. In another university in the Somali region of Ethiopia, we intervened in an ensuing conflict by involving the regional president who also joined us and got onto his knees to plead with students to put an end to the violence. Prior to our visit, the region had experienced conflict along religious lines

that had left churches burnt to the ground, and while some people had been forced to leave their homes, others had lost their lives.

Here, we were able to bring together religious leaders from both the Christian and Muslim faiths for dialogue. Through our intervention, peace prevailed over the university campus. However, a few days after we left, conflict broke out again amongst students. The regional president, whom we had met with while in the region, followed our approach and went to the university. There, he got on his knees in front of students and reminded them of the conversations they had had with us, the Mothers for Peace, just a few days before. The conflict soon came to an end and students resumed their studies.

Another region we visited was Gambella in western Ethiopia. By the time we got there, there were visible tensions in the city in a context where the regional president had only recently assumed his duties. In our discussion, the president told us that he had barely had a night of rest for about 32 days since the time he had taken office. He said that he hoped that peace would be achieved. Miraculously, a day after we had our discussions with conflicting parties, it rained. We were told that it was rather an unusual time for rains. In our hearts we knew that this was a sign from God that he was with us, in this journey for peace.

To connect with youth, we have worked with government officials to bring young Ethiopians together into stadiums for dialogue and to deliver our messages of peace. We share the negative impacts of violence and promote media literacy by advising youth to analyse what they hear or gather from social media before joining violent activities and fights. In many instances, we have had to kneel in front of influential leaders, youth, and university students as a way of pleading with them



The Mothers for Peace shared their story of building peace within communities in their country in a meeting held with UN and AU women leaders during a joint UN-AU solidarity mission that focused on the Horn of Africa in October 2019. Here, the Mothers for Peace pose for a picture soon after the meeting with the UN Deputy-Secretary-General, Amina J. Mohammed, the AUC Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Bineta Diop, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to the African Union, Hanna Tetteh, the African Union Permanent Observer at the United Nations, Fatima Kyari Mohammed, and the AU Youth Envoy, Aya Chebbi. © UNECA/Abraham Tameru

to heed our message of peace. It is known in our culture that mothers only kneel for two reasons: when in labour, and when praying. We have added a third reason: to beg our children to embrace peace. We always find that before we each kneel, they run up to us and plead with us not to. It is an emotive experience. They are often in pure shock. We kneel and remain in that position until we are lifted from the ground. It never takes long, and is always full of tears. But it works!

We have also held conversations with other mothers to talk about peace and how to raise children who respect ethics and understand peace. Because of these interventions, there has been a noticeable decrease of violence in the universities we visited. In Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, clashes between football fans at matches is a frequent occurrence. We have intervened at final matches. In one such case, we were invited by the Minister for Peace of Ethiopia to the football pitch to share our messages of peace. The Minister herself and other government officials joined us in this endeavour.

Our message is simple "peace is the basis of everything, no one should hurt the other, and a mother should not cry because of losing her child." We also added that everyone should take responsibility for the growth of one's country, for the unity of people and for keeping their country from destruction that disputes can bring. We encourage conflicting parties to take a pledge under the Ethiopian flag and our peace banner, which are both delivered to government officials and regional presidents

as a symbol of peace. In return, we accept their promise and pledge to go into communities to understand issues and address them to ensure peace.

These successes have come at a cost, and with many challenges that we have had to face. We have had to travel in areas where security was tenuous and walked into situations of conflict many times. Moreover, we have received threats through social media platforms, and have been told not to go into some areas. From this, however, we have learned that people are generally not the problem, but there are several influences that can lead to conflict. Often, during our visits, we were incorrectly associated with politics, and it was always a challenge to convince others that we were acting out of our own initiative and will. Some regional leaders would sometimes refuse to speak with us, keeping us waiting for hours or even days before finally agreeing to dialogue – a number of times only for us to be told that we were not needed. Most of us have had to leave our children, families and life behind to spread our message of peace.

In as much as we, the Mothers for Peace, are actively promoting the peaceful resolution of conflict in Ethiopia, getting media coverage has been difficult. This we believe would have been a means to spread our messages to more people. We plan to continue our journey and reach all the corners of Ethiopia, and, in the long run, even beyond our country to advocate for peace – for Ethiopia and for Africa.



LIBYAN WOMEN'S PLATFORM FOR PEACE



The Libyan Women's Platform for Peace is a movement that actively promotes inclusive democracy and peace in Libya, with a focus on women's participation and empowerment. The group builds the capacities of individuals and organizations and fosters strategic partnerships with institutions. Their campaign for inclusive electoral law in Libya contributed to women winning 16.5 percent of seats in the first elected National Congress in 52 years.

Over thirty-five women from different cities and backgrounds launched the Libyan Women's Platform for Peace (LWPP) in October 2011 to ensure that women are a vital part of post-Gaddafi Libya. Doing so with an emphasis on inclusive transitions, women's rights, youth leadership, advancement and security as related to women's political and economic participation and constitutional reform. Our experience is far reaching, ranging from constituency-building, mobilisation, network facilitation and management, as well as successful advocacy and lobby activities in the fields of women's political leadership and participation.

With a belief that *'there is no real empowerment of women without the disempowerment of warlords'*, our focus is on advocating for the protection and the effective participation of women along with ending impunity of warlords. Securing the political will has proved challenging, and in light of this, we launched advocacy campaigns and implemented projects centered on demilitarisation. We organised the first consultation meetings on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of armed groups. We joined forces with many youth leaders, and mobilised societal actors against militarisation, which was plaguing the Libyan society. This has put us at great risk and led to the tragic loss of several members and affiliates of LWPP. Five armed men murdered Salwa Bugaighis, a co-founder of LWPP, in her home on 25 June 2014. Until the last hour of her assassination, Salwa was mobilising people to participate peacefully in the democratic process by voting to ensure a peaceful transfer of power. No one has been held accountable for her murder, as there has been no independent investigation for her assassination.

The involvement of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the peace negotiations and national dialogue in Libya, particularly of women and youth, remains limited and virtually absent. A challenge that has steered CSOs to adapt a new approach guided by strengthening civil society cooperation across Libya, and to

target horizontally a trust-building approach at grassroots level. At the crux of our framework at LWPP, is the view that such levels of cooperation between CSOs and local communities are critical to reposition the two vertically with political forces in Libya. This would broaden the space for a more proactive direct involvement in Libya's peacebuilding and state-building process. For us, community trust is critical to enhancing the role of CSOs as change-makers in Libya.

In the last nine years, we have reached out to, and built the capacities of more than 100 organisations and individual activists in Libya and in the Diaspora. Our aim is to form and solidify a critical mass of CSOs and activists to develop, guide and influence a constructive upward and downward dialogue stream towards peacebuilding, whilst ensuring human rights in Libya.

Building on our strategic partnerships with institutions like al-Azhar and Zeituna universities, the oldest Islamic universities, our aim has been to build a trusting relationship between women's rights activists and religious leaders and create a common space where both can be trained and build a 'common word'. These partnerships are built to fulfill our aim to support a nation-building process by establishing a platform for dialogue between religious leaders and civil society leaders, particularly women and minorities, in order to achieve an inclusive peace process and social cohesion. Through the 'relationship' approach rather than a simple 'dialogue' approach, we have worked on creating community outreach activities in Benghazi between the local council, military and civil society to focus on aspects of human security, address ways of healing the traumas of war, and build sustainable trust relationships.

In partnership with the World Organization of Al-Azhar Graduates, we launched the 'Fostering Wasati Islam in the Libyan Nation' program in December 2016 with the aim to support prevention of violent extremism in Libya. Two workshops were



© Libyan Women's Platform for Peace

“Through the ‘relationship’ approach rather than a simple ‘dialogue’ approach, we have worked on creating community outreach activities.”

held in 2016 titled “The Personal Status Law between Human Rights and Islamic Perspectives.” The second in 2017, “Monitoring and Refuting Extremist and Takfiri Fatwas and Ideas,” for Libyan bloggers and human rights activists. In support of the “wasati” program, we successfully secured 50 academic scholarships for Libyans from al-Azhar University under the auspices of Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb, the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar.

Working with the Libyan Military Engineering Unit and local activists, we produced a series of three documentary films in 2017 that highlight individual, social, and economic long-term effects of war in general, and the need to combine social and psychological rehabilitation with reconstruction of physical infrastructure. The first documentary in the series, titled “The Hidden Enemy”, highlighted the deadly situation in some residential neighbourhoods of Benghazi due to landmines and explosive remnants of war, and the military demining unit’s lack of resources and mine-clearing equipment. The second film “Symphony of Death” highlighted

the effects of landmines through interviews with a number of landmine victims in Benghazi. The third film “A Tale of Resilience” tells the stories of victims of the armed conflict and post-traumatic stress disorder in Benghazi.

We also advocate for the freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly of activists, CSOs, and journalists. Our approach and strategy focus on strengthening their network capacity, while emphasising greater influence at the community and grassroots level by building a trusted working relationship with CSOs and communities. Repositioning our approach at the grassroots level is critical in a sense as it seeks to strengthen greater and more practical linkages across CSOs and local communities, often referred to as the horizontal integration. Therefore, we seek to broaden our network across other active CSOs in Libya and the Diaspora, and other community stakeholders such as local councils, religious leaders, individual activists, journalists and private sector, by creating an active and practical community-based activities that aim to engage collectively all the targeted stakeholders.

Over the years, we led many successful campaigns. For example, in 2011, the National Transitional Council drafted a controversial election law that was criticised for its exclusivist, patriarchal, tribal mind-set. We joined other organisations to protest the election law, and identified legal experts to form an independent committee tasked with producing an inclusive electoral law to guarantee equal representation of women and men. The committee proposed an electoral law based on “zipper lists,” or political party election lists, which alternate vertically and horizontally between male and



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© Fariha Berkawi a congresswoman later assassinated in July 2014, compassionately greeting a mother of a martyr of the Libyan revolution and peace activist in the Peace Platform organised by LWPP in December 2013.

female candidates. The initiative was adopted and was successful. Libyan women won 16.5 percent of the positions (thirty-three seats, of which thirty-two were acquired through party lists) in the first elected National Congress in fifty-two years.

In 2015, LWPP launched a 'Justice for Salwa is Justice for All' campaign, in partnership with Karama and Equality Now. Together, we lobbied the UN Secretary-General and UN Security Council members to initiate an independent investigation into the assassination of Salwa Bughaighis and the other women who were also assassinated, and urged the President of the General Assembly to prioritise the security of women leaders, women's organisations and human rights defenders as a well in the post-2015 development agenda. As part of the campaign, we produced a documentary with the support of Karama that addresses human rights violations in Libya, militarisation, impunity and lack of local and international accountability, security for women and human rights defenders, and the struggle to continue Salwa's legacy for a just, free and inclusive Libya.

We have also contributed extensively to the research literature on Libya's transition. Our report "*Libya after Seven Years of Impasse: Prospects for The Transitional Period and The Roadmap*" provides insights into the challenges in Libya's

transition and how to establish stabilisation and sustainable peace. Our research is aimed at amplifying the voices of the local community regarding the peace process. We found that there is an urgent need to reassess the Libyan crisis and the proposed roadmap by the international community. Our research concluded that the crisis in Libya is not merely a political one; hence, the solution must be multi-dimensional, and employ a comprehensive integrated approach.

Our "Women Peace Mediators" awareness-campaign that we launched in 2018 aimed at introducing and boosting actual examples of active participation by women in reconciliation and successful mediation that is deeply rooted in Libyan heritage and customs. The underlying objective was to underscore the role of women in local and national mediation and reconciliation in Libya in the past and present.

Our mission continues. We work towards establishing an inclusive sustainable peace in Libya.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN IN THE HORN OF AFRICA (SIHA NETWORK)



The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) is a network of Civil Society Organisations from Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Uganda. As a sub-regional network of human rights and gender equality activists, SIHA is in a unique position to move this vision forward as one of very few indigenous coalitions born and nurtured inside the Horn.

The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA Network) was established in 1995 by a coalition of women's rights activists with the aim of strengthening the capacities of women's rights organisations and addressing women's subordination as well as violence against women and girls in the Horn of Africa. We have grown substantially and comprise of close to 90 member organisations.

Over the past two decades, we have contributed to unlocking the massive potential of the women's rights movement in the Horn of Africa, by strengthening the learning of Civil Society Organisations to build a strong collective that advocates for systemic change. In this way, we work through, and in support of, broad coalitions of grassroots members to campaign and advocate for women's rights and equality.

SIHA envisions women and girls in the Horn of Africa to live in a peaceful, just environment, with the ability to exercise their equal rights as human beings. As a sub-regional network of women's human rights and gender equality activists, we are in a unique position to move this vision forward as one of very few indigenous coalitions born and nurtured inside the Horn of Africa. Strong ties and connections with women and their communities drive our work across the region. After more than 20 years of working to advance women's human rights in highly patriarchal contexts frequently characterised by insecurity, our expertise is rooted in our familiarity with the socio-political situations around the Horn of Africa, and the grassroots work of members. Our membership continues to grow steadily, evidencing our enduring relevance and effectiveness, and the ongoing urgency of advancing women's human rights in the region.

Through this experience, we have realised that influencing change in the Horn of Africa in relation to gender equality and improving the situations of women requires cross-sectoral

engagement with the overall socio-political situation in the region. Culturally and ethnically, countries in the Horn of Africa and their populations share a broad range of similarities. The greater Horn countries also share the unfortunate characteristic of having fragile and often disintegrated state structures that suffer from a lack of democracy, absence of transparency, corruption, poor rule of law and systemic human rights violations. This, intertwined with recurrent conflicts, makes the region one of the most unstable in Africa, or indeed the world.

Within the Horn of Africa region where SIHA is working, either rule of law institutions do not exist, or there are instances where these institutions are manipulated to serve the interests of the ruling governments. This, accompanied by militarisation and pockets of armed conflicts spread throughout the region, is destabilising communities, violating human rights, and threatening their well-being. Women bear the brunt in very bleak circumstances. Conversely, poverty and economic degradation because of armed conflicts and corruption amongst state and non-state actors reduce women's opportunities for employment and financial stability.

With our story of persistence, the grassroots women movement in the Horn of Africa consistently attempts to manoeuvre around structures and systems of power.

While advancing implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the Horn of Africa, we consider the following matters critical: Firstly, addressing the unrelenting patriarchy and toxic masculinity. This is important because women in the Horn of Africa are reduced to victims or passive spectators of political and social decision-making. In reality, however, violence is gendered in complex ways and violent masculinities shape both, institutions and intimate lives. Secondly, the militarisation of institutions and rural and urban spaces. Militarism is underpinned





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by the assumption that the use of force or the threat thereof is the most appropriate response to conflicts. These ideas are fuelled in large part by profitability and the African continent is being used as a proxy continent. Finally, social and economic injustice. Unequal access to, and distribution of social, economic and ecological resources results in injustice which in turn has direct and indirect links to the causes and consequences of violence and conflict, all of which are gendered.

For the past two decades since adoption of UNSCR 1325, we have worked, and continue to deepen our work, on challenging violence against women and girls; promoting economic, social, and cultural rights and access to justice; and combatting trafficking; as well as the all-encompassing building of inclusive women's rights movements. The areas of focus are interconnected and interdependent. In addressing them, we leverage our ability to work at intersections, such as the intersection of human rights frameworks with traditional, cultural and religious dogma, and the intersection of oppression based on gender with oppression based on all other forms of marginalisation and discrimination.

As far as the UNSCR 1325 is a global commitment to ensuring that women and girls are more systematically and sustainably integrated into peace and security, over the years we have acknowledged that prioritising the Women, Peace and Security agenda requires concerted efforts to implement the resolution. It is also important to note that in the midst of a context that normalises violations of women's rights, the Horn of Africa has nurtured an extremely active women's human rights movement. At the forefront of conflict and post-conflict issues are women's issues and addressing the violence committed against women

“A grassroots women's movement advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda at the frontline in the Horn of Africa”

and girls and impunity in such contexts by building a parallel grassroots-led narrative that emphasises the importance of civil society's influence in peace and security processes with a specific gender justice goal. It is therefore our position that cyclical reinforcement of societally engrained inequalities – that are intrinsically gendered – undermines potential for development, growth, and eventually any possibility of equality and lasting peace and security in the region.

Based on our long-term experience prioritising women living in conflict and post-conflict settings, and their access to justice, civil space and engagement in decision-making during post-conflict transformation, one of the major challenges is the lack of coordination and poor engagement between women's organisations. Our experience has accentuated that sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is largely a political challenge driven by power relations and structural patriarchy, which aims at reducing women into victims and essentially ostracising them from participating in public life and in decision-making. Prioritising women and girls, living in (post-) conflict settings, and challenging national and regional barriers to access to justice, stifling civil space and gendered civil engagement in



Young women at the first Sudan Women Protest in Khartoum.

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decision-making during political transitions, is fundamental for sustainable mechanisms that aim to tackle SGBV and establish peace and security legislative and policy change. In all of our interventions, the necessity for negotiating and influencing negative masculinity and misogyny that inflates, finds legitimacy within, and perpetuates conflict and post-conflict times is clear. There is an urgent demand for transformative change in the approach of regional peace and security initiatives in the region to be inclusive by incorporating the intersectionality of gender relations, SGBV, access to justice and enabling civil space. We insist on the importance of creating safe spaces for grassroots women and allowing them the opportunity to magnify their voices and opinions, lead within those spaces, and establish avenues for them towards decision-making.

Through our work, we emphasise that grassroots women-led activism must develop the capacity to recognise and document all forms of SGBV that occur in (post-) conflict situations in a systematised way. Through establishing evidence, local protection mechanisms were built through which SGBV survivors can gain access to the support that they need. However, in the Horn of Africa, particularly in Somalia, Somaliland, and South Sudan (as well as the cross-border region shared with northern Uganda), the challenge and repercussions of years of militarisation and impunity around security organs that are predominantly perpetrators of SGBV, have fortified obstacles. These obstacles have undermined the effectiveness of high-level peace discourses and initiatives to address SGBV and therefore establish sustainable security. Instead, such discourses, during instability or within post-conflict transformation measures, are

driven by perpetrating parties or those greatly removed, rather than integrating grassroots women and girls who experience the brunt of SGBV. In recent years, we have started to see grassroots women begin to substantively participate in the (post-) conflict decision-making processes; repositioned in peace processes from merely being represented to being systematically integrated to influence security agendas. Our experience with the movement has revealed that by strengthening the capacity of grassroots women-led intercommunal peace collectives who are those most affected, particularly to negotiate with the rule of law, and involving their voices at all stages of peace initiatives, can the region begin to construct meaningful accountability around the UNSCR 1325.



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IDPS IN MOGAD...**

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Venue: Hawo Tako 1 C...
Date: 23-24 February

THE SIXTH CLAN: THE SOMALI WOMEN'S PEACE BUILDING INITIATIVE



The Sixth Clan is a women's initiative that advocates for the participation of women in political processes and peace promotion in Somalia. It was part of the committee that drafted the first ever gender-friendly charter that provided for a women's quota in the parliament. Through the efforts of the Sixth Clan, the Government of Somalia created the Ministry of Gender and Family Affairs.

The Sixth Clan is a Somali women initiative that emerged from the experiences of Somali women in peace promotion and political participation amid armed conflicts. Though established in May 2000, the idea of The Sixth Clan dates back to early 1993, from the Chairperson, Asha Hagi's yearning to see justice done for the Somali women living in deplorable conditions amid the conflict. Children and women ended up as the target and prime causality of all forms of inhumane atrocities rape, torture, robbery, killings.

Somalia is a poor country located in the Horn of Africa, bordering Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti. Armed opposition groups have engulfed the country in civil war and political upheaval since the overthrow of the late President Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991. This gave birth to clan hostilities led by warlords from different clans that threw the country into total anarchy.

Those who suffered most were women from cross-clan marriages. Both their clans of origin and marriage rejected them, since neither clan would confide or trust in them. They underwent emotional and relationship stresses. Therefore, Save Somali Women and Children Organisation (SSWC) was born out of anger, pain, and the frustration of Somali women during the civil war. The founders were women from different clans, different political affiliations, and different socio-economic backgrounds. However, they shared common commitments and concerns about the promotion of peace and the empowerment of women. Since its inception in 1992, SSWC has been actively involved in mitigating and resolving inter-clan conflicts. It has used women to bridge between the warring clans and used the positive side of the inter-clan relations as a tool to promote a culture of peace, thus women becoming ambassadors for peace. These vital activities on the ground enabled SSWC to mobilise, organise and prepare women and articulate their agenda towards peace. In line with its objectives, the organisation made

tremendous achievements, but one of the most historic and notable achievements was the formation of The Sixth Clan.

Our aim was to establish a safe space for women to participate in the political process as an independent force to consider when it comes to political process, and overcome the sad reality of 4.5 formulas whereby only four major clans and one smaller clan are considered in current power-sharing. During the Somali conflict there had been many international and regional attempts to bring the warring factions together and solve the Somali political crisis. Thirteen conferences had been held between 1991 to 2000 and all failed because they were all warlord-oriented conferences, which meant that only armed groups had the right to participate, and excluded the participation of other actors from civil society, including women.

In the year 2000, the Djibouti President convened the first all-inclusive national reconciliation conference aimed at ending clan hostility and coming up with a comprehensive national solution. Unlike previous attempts, the participation in the Arta/Djibouti conference was clan-based. Again, women were excluded, as women have no space or room in the traditional 5-clan structures because in patriarchal and patrilineal societies women have neither the responsibility to protect the clan while at war nor the right to represent the clan at the negotiating table. Unfortunately, that resulted in our total exclusion of that important national reconciliation conference simply because we were women and did not represent any clan. We refused to accept that position and were vehemently opposed to that unfairness and social injustice. We stood up for our rights. It was the courage, tenacity, vision, activism and dynamism of SSWC, which led to us organising the women beyond the clan boundaries and brought them together to form The Sixth Clan as an identity enabling us to participate fully in the national solution-seeking process. We demanded our rightful place in

“It was the courage, tenacity, vision, activism and dynamism of SSWC, which led to us organising the women beyond the clan boundaries and brought them together to form The Sixth Clan.”

the national reconciliation process. It was our strong conviction that our contribution was vital and valuable. We mounted pressure on the host country (Djibouti), paramount clan elders, religious leaders, and built strategic alliances with some of the clan leaders, Islamic scholars, politicians, and other key actors from different clans to support our cause. After a tremendous struggle, eventually our participation was recognised.

Since women were now an integral part of the conference, we acted as binding glue among the warring clans and our contribution helped the conference to succeed and made history as after thirteen attempts, this was the first one to produce positive results. We took women from the periphery to the negotiating table as equal partners in decision-making. We took women from passive observers to the heart of the discussions as active participants. We challenged the social and cultural paradigms and carved out women's political space in the national political arena. We helped in drafting the first ever gender-friendly charter that guaranteed the allocation of a women's quota, which was 25 seats in the previous parliament.

Since the government that was installed at the Arta/Djibouti Conference did not last long, yet another conference was convened by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) under the auspices of the Kenyan Government and was held at Eldoret and Mbagathi in Kenya. This finally gave birth to the Transitional Federal Government in 2004. The spirit of the Sixth Clan once more enabled the women to participate on equal footing which resulted in the recognition of women's benefit in the political arena. During the negotiations in Kenya, we vigorously lobbied for a women's quota in the Charter and secured the allocation of twelve percent for women.

In subsequent conferences held in and outside the country, further steps were taken to ensure the recognition of women's roles in the political arena.

In the first Federal Government of Somalia in 2012, women had an allocation of 30 percent but due to the circumstances surrounding, we had a parliamentary representation of 14 percent of the total parliament. This is the ninth parliament of the Federal Republic of Somalia. In the tenth and current

Parliament, women are represented at 24 percent. A 10 percent increase from the previous parliament.

The Sixth Clan's agenda has become a rallying point for women to reclaim their position in the political arena, and it has transformed from women supporting decisions made without them, to including women in decision-making processes. Our main agenda now is women empowerment through political participation. Women's participation in Somali politics has traditionally been low, and a controversial topic in the country. Somali society typically ascribes to conservative notions about the role of women in the family, and in community life. It rarely envisions a position of political leadership. This has been changing, but there is a long road ahead. Generally, women in Somalia who wish to pursue a political career struggle with several factors. One is the Somali clan system, which permeates political life and is a male-dominated institution. Clan elders are almost exclusively male, and clans themselves struggle to accept changes to this.

Despite these challenges, women's groups in support of The Sixth Clan, like Save Somali Women and Children, are demanding their fair share – not content with just 30 percent of the vote, but advocating for 50 percent. The increasing share in each passing election signals their success, but also the ingrained difficulties in reaching this quota.

Despite the sufferings, killings, torture and marginalisation, women did not resign themselves to always be victims but rather took risks for peace, mobilised their communities, developed new peacebuilding strategies and demanded a place in peace negotiations. Women can make a positive impact and play an active role, making a huge difference if they unite their voices, articulate their agenda, put aside their differences and focus on their just cause. Peace, reconciliation and security efforts remain more sustainable when women become equal partners in the prevention of conflicts, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts in forging of lasting peace.



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Peacekeepers provide escort to civilian population in Bangui, Central African Republic
© UN Photo/Herve Sereffio



“Conflict affects women differently from men because women and men are socialised in different ways. “Omwaavu tatesa” is a Ugandan proverb which translates into... “A poor person cannot negotiate”. Women’s meaningful participation in peace and security processes will be realised when effective investment into their education and skilling is meaningfully coupled with economic support. In the short run, required are policies and programs that unravel and address societal elements which trigger and fuel conflict at all levels. Women are best placed to effectively contribute through a Human Security lens, as they mother the Africa we want.”

Speciosa Wandira Kazibwe
Co-Chair FemWise-Africa

The journey of UNSCR 1325 in Africa

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted unanimously on 31 October 2000. It is the Council's first resolution on Women, Peace and Security, and calls for the protection of women, their meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making as well as for an increased role of women in preventing and resolving conflict.

Resolution 1325 was followed by nine other resolutions 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2010); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019), establishing a broad spectrum of norms which came to form the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Along with other policy frameworks, including regional instruments, they guide efforts aimed at promoting gender equality, protecting women's rights, and strengthening the participation of women at all levels.

AFRICAN UNION MEMBER STATES WITH NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

National Action Plans (NAPs) are critical instruments to localise implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. To date, 25 African Union Member States have developed National Action Plans¹:

Côte d'Ivoire (2007)
Uganda (2008)
Guinea (2009)
Liberia (2009)
Rwanda (2009, revised in 2018)
Democratic Republic of the Congo (2010, revised in 2018)
Guinea-Bissau (2010)
Sierra Leone (2010)
Senegal (2011)
Burkina Faso (2012)
Burundi (2012, revised in 2017)
Ghana (2012)
Mali (2012, revised in 2017)
Nigeria (2012, revised 2018)
The Gambia (2012)
Togo (2012)
Central African Republic (2014)
South Sudan (2015)
Kenya (2016)
Angola (2017)
Cameroon (2017)
Niger (2017)
Mozambique (2018)
Tunisia (2018)
Namibia (2019)





SHE *Stands* for Peace

20 YEARS, 20 JOURNEYS



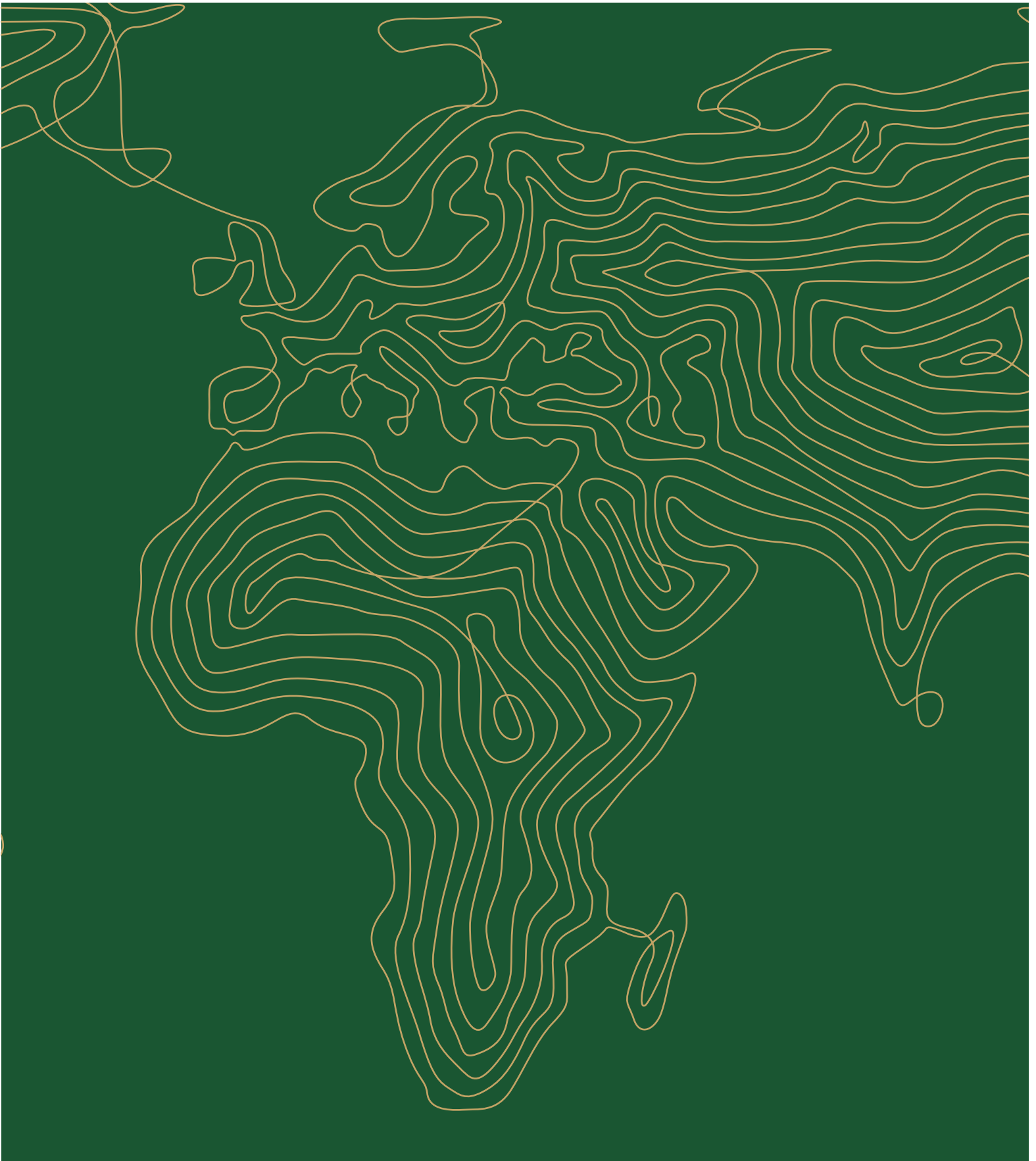


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SHE *Stands* *for Peace*

20 YEARS, 20 JOURNEYS

She Stands for Peace: 20 Years, 20 Journeys captures the stories of outstanding African women who have worked tirelessly towards the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda on the continent.

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