

Mapping Women, Peace and Security in the UN Security Council: 2019

The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (NGOWG), a project of Tides Center, is a coalition of 18 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda at the United Nations and around the world. Since 2000, we have been working to bring the voices of women’s rights defenders and local peacebuilders into the New York peace and security discussions. We serve as a bridge between women’s human rights defenders and peacebuilders working in conflict-affected situations and senior policymakers at UN Headquarters.

NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security members are: Amnesty International; CARE International; Center for Reproductive Rights; Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights; Cordaid; Global Justice Center; Global Network of Women Peacebuilders; Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict; Human Rights Watch; International Alert; MADRE; Nobel Women’s Initiative; OutRight Action International; Oxfam; Refugees International; Women Enabled; Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom; and Women’s Refugee Commission.

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Introduction

The overall aim of this policy brief is to assess the implementation of the women, peace and security (WPS) policy framework in the work of the United Nations (UN) Security Council. The analysis and recommendations build on our well-established policy guidance project, the Monthly Action Points (MAP) on Women, Peace and Security, as well as broader advocacy throughout 2019. This policy brief also highlights key trends that are addressed by the recommendations presented in the [NGO Working Group's 2020 Civil Society Roadmap on Women, Peace and Security](#).

The WPS agenda reaffirms numerous international instruments that articulate standards of gender equality, justice, equitable political participation and civilian protection that have normative authority as a matter of international human rights and humanitarian law.¹ Taken holistically, this agenda recognizes that a gender-blind understanding of conflict significantly undermines international peace and security efforts. The WPS agenda is, therefore, not only a set of principles but a call to action to the Security Council, Member States and the UN system.

Over the last 20 years, the ten resolutions on WPS adopted by the Security Council have formed a strong foundation for the operationalization of the WPS agenda by the UN system and Member States. Some notable developments during this period include:

- The development of a robust **normative framework of the WPS agenda** that includes 10 resolutions, which span a broader range of issues than any other thematic area on the Security Council agenda. WPS resolutions cover gender-responsive peacebuilding, survivor-centered approaches to gender-based violence, women's meaningful participation in peace processes, and supporting women peacebuilders and civil society leaders as critical actors in the resolution and prevention of conflict. In 2019 alone two resolutions, Resolutions 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019), were adopted.
 - **Resolution 2467 (2019)** included the most explicit articulation of a survivor-centered approach by the Security Council to date; however, it omitted specific mention of sexual and reproductive health and rights, a critical component of such an approach. Resolution 2467 (2019) also strengthened previously defined linkages between women's meaningful participation and leadership in peace processes, peacebuilding and humanitarian action, and the prevention and occurrence of sexual violence.
 - **Resolution 2493 (2019)** served to standardize the phrasing women's "full, equal and meaningful" participation, underlining the need for structured and formal inclusion of women so that they are in decision-making positions and have influence over the outcomes of the processes they are participating in. Additionally, the inclusion of language recognizing the importance of ensuring women civil society leaders, peacebuilders, politicians and human rights defenders are able to carry out their work safely and without interference was a considerable advancement.²
- Adoption of **mandates that mainstream gender as a cross-cutting issue** for 14 peace operations between 2010 and 2020, which include provisions related to partnerships and collaboration with women's civil society and the promotion of women's meaningful participation and leadership.
- Briefings by **women civil society representatives at country-specific meetings** in increasing numbers, growing from two women in 2016 to 26 women in 2019. However, this upward trajectory was disrupted by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 and the Security Council's subsequent move to virtual meetings — we have [reported](#) a concerning 38.9% drop in total women civil society briefers between January–June 2020.

- Development of a deeper understanding of the gender-dimensions of country-specific situations through **meetings of the Security Council Informal Expert Group (IEG) on WPS**, resulting in a positive, albeit incomplete, improvement in outcomes and discussions within the Security Council as a whole.

Despite these positive developments, repeated commitments by the UN system and Member States, and a wealth of evidence on the importance of ensuring gender equality and women's participation in peace and security efforts, our analysis shows that the Security Council's approach to WPS remains superficial, ad-hoc, inconsistent and subject to the individual efforts of Security Council members who have a commitment to the agenda as part of their foreign policy. Although the establishment of institutional structures within the UN system and at the national level have aided progress so far, challenges remain on the issues that were most difficult when Resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted, such as conflict prevention, protection of women's human rights and advancing women's meaningful participation and leadership in peace processes. In addition, it is clear that without pressure from civil society, support from allies on the Security Council and the institutionalization of WPS within the UN system, WPS issues would remain overlooked and unaddressed. The failure of the Security Council to systematically integrate WPS into its actions reflects both a lack of accountability and a lack of willingness to tackle the harder and more complex issues under the WPS agenda.

The following policy brief will address several key trends in the Security Council's discussion of WPS in 2019:

- Our analysis shows that WPS tends to be reflected most strongly in Security Council outcomes and discussions when it receives **robust gender-sensitive analysis**, including via briefings, reports and missions by Council members, subsidiary bodies and senior UN officials.
- **Women's meaningful participation is still marginalized** in discussions related to peace and political processes and is often framed as a way to increase the effectiveness of a peace process rather than the realization of women's rights.
- Despite repeatedly emphasizing its support for women's civil society, **the Security Council failed to take forward concrete recommendations** related to strengthening meaningful engagement and consultations with women's civil society.
- **Women are continuously viewed as a homogenous group by the Security Council**, resulting in the marginalization of the views and experiences of women and girls with disabilities, young women, displaced women and girls and Indigenous women and girls.

While this policy brief focuses on trends in 2019, it is important to note the considerable impact of COVID-19 in 2020 for women and girls living in countries mired in conflict, many of which are on the Security Council's agenda. As we highlighted in a [recent blog post](#) in April 2020, women's rights and gender must be central to any effective response to COVID-19, as well as to the Security Council's own response to the pandemic. We already know that humanitarian crises in conflict countries disproportionately affect women and girls; COVID-19 is likely to place them at even greater risk.³ During this 20th anniversary year of Resolution 1325 (2000), for the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility as the primary body responsible for the maintenance of peace and security, to defeat COVID-19 and to rebuild a better, more equitable world, dedicated attention to the rights and needs of women and girls and advancement of the WPS agenda has never been more important.

Factors that influence implementation by the Security Council

When collectively reviewing the Security Council's implementation of WPS over the last 20 years, it is undeniable that there has been progress. At the normative level, advancements in codifying key dimensions of the WPS agenda in outcomes adopted by the Security Council have been considerable. In addition, throughout the UN system there has been an effort to institutionalize and root the WPS agenda within its peace and security architecture.

There has also been an increasing trend of utilizing additional mechanisms to complement and deepen the understanding of the WPS dimensions of country-specific situations, including through the Security Council IEG on WPS, "solidarity missions" by senior UN leadership and briefings by other relevant bodies, such as the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). Further, in 2019, the number of civil society speakers briefing during country-specific meetings continued to increase, with civil society representatives providing vital, previously unheard, and diverse perspectives and expertise to inform the Security Council's deliberations.

Consistent implementation of the WPS agenda means that all components of the agenda are fully and holistically reflected in all aspects of the Security Council's work: resolutions, presidential statements, discussions in formal meetings, reports of the Secretary-General and the work of subsidiary organs, including sanctions committees and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. WPS discussed in one context should be reinforced in all other contexts, build and progress over time, and result in a strong, consistent cycle of meaningful impact at the local level.⁴

A key factor that tends to influence the extent to which Security Council members discuss WPS issues publicly and reflect them in adopted outcomes is how well WPS issues are reflected in information received by the Security Council. Based on our analysis, strong WPS information in the reports of the Secretary-General and the briefings delivered by Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG) have the strongest influence on the extent to which WPS is discussed by the Security Council as a whole, with additional factors also strengthening consideration of specific dimensions of the WPS agenda.

Reports of the Secretary-General: Inclusion of WPS information and analysis, including both in its own dedicated section and also mainstreamed throughout these reports, as well as reflection of WPS in the observations of the report, are baseline expectations that determine the quality and strength of WPS in reporting. Recommendations in country-specific reports of the Secretary-General are important because they are utilized as the basis for Security Council action. Failure to include specific recommendations, even when there might be detailed information on WPS, is not only an indicator of inconsistency in the implementation of WPS, but also an example of the extent to which WPS is often considered a lower priority when it comes to recommending concrete action. Another important consideration is the extent to which WPS is mainstreamed throughout the report, in addition to the inclusion of a specific WPS section. Both are required in order to capture all relevant WPS information and activities fully. In 2019, very few reports included WPS information in more than one or two sections; usually, information was concentrated in the portion of the report detailing information on human rights and protection of civilians.

Briefings delivered by heads of peace operations, i.e. SRSGs and Special Envoys: We found a clear correlation between such briefers raising WPS issues, and subsequent statements with references to WPS

"Recognizes the need for consistent implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in its own work and intends to focus more attention on women's leadership and participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, including by monitoring progress in implementation, and addressing challenges linked to the lack and quality of information and analysis on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peacebuilding and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution."

Resolution 2122 (2013), OP 1

within the same meeting, most notably on issues related to women's protection and sexual and gender-based violence. Without briefers raising WPS in their statements, there would be far fewer references overall, and those references would be less substantive. In meetings where WPS was not raised by the breifer, WPS was often overlooked. Although it is positive to see this influence of briefers, attention to WPS is the responsibility of Security Council members as well. There must be systematic embedding of WPS by each Security Council member in their statements and their understanding of every agenda item. Further, it is essential to emphasize that although it is mainly briefers who raise WPS, which increases the chances of WPS issues being reflected in statements, there is still no guarantee that those issues will be reflected in Security Council action.

Regular briefings by women civil society representatives: Our analysis has found that issues related to WPS are less likely to be raised if they are not raised first by a civil society breifer. In 2019, there was a significant increase in the number of briefings overall, as well as the number of briefers for a particular country. The impact of briefings by civil society speakers is clearest on the issue of women's participation in peace and political processes. In meetings where there were women civil society briefers, Security Council members were more than twice as likely to raise the issue of women's meaningful participation compared to meetings where there were no civil society briefers. This increase often is sustained for several meetings, and further reinforced if multiple civil society briefers from a specific country are invited over the course of a year, indicating the importance of ensuring that there are frequent and regular women civil society briefings in addition to strong information and analysis from other sources.

In meetings where there were women civil society briefers, Security Council members were more than twice as likely to raise the issue of women's meaningful participation compared to meetings where there were no civil society briefers.

Discussion and engagement by the IEG on WPS: The Security Council is not fully leveraging the outcome of the IEG on WPS meetings in its work. Out of the 13 countries under consideration by the IEG since its creation in 2015,⁵ the Security Council held meetings on 11 of those countries in 2018 and 2019, including three meetings each on both the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Libya.⁶ Although countries that are subject to discussion by the IEG on WPS do see positive outcomes in terms of attention to WPS by the Security Council as a whole, particularly regarding integration of language in mandate renewals, significant outstanding issues remain unaddressed year after year in the outcomes adopted by the Security Council. For example, issues related to women human rights defenders have been repeatedly raised in IEG meetings, particularly in the context of Libya, yet the Security Council has failed to address those concerns in subsequent formal meetings. Similarly, the discussion on the situation in Yemen within the IEG has repeatedly focused on the role women's civil society organizations have played in providing critical services and engaging in local conflict resolution, mediation and negotiation. Yet the eventual resolutions adopted on Yemen have included only minimal, generic language on women's participation. Further, across all country-specific meetings, it is often the co-chairs of the IEG on WPS, along with a small number of other elected members, who have typically expressed strong support for WPS, indicating that it isn't for lack of access to information that WPS is not being included in statements.

Briefings delivered by chairs of relevant subsidiary or other bodies, such as the PBC: For the seven countries and regions on the agenda of the PBC, there was a clear benefit to having parallel, complementary discussions on the gender dimensions of the situation at the Security Council. This was the case in 2019 for Burundi, for example, for which the gender-blind report of the Secretary-General and gender-blind briefings by the SRSG were supplemented with strong WPS information in all three briefings by the Chair of the Burundi PBC configuration. Further, Security Council members who sat on the PBC

largely reflected the messages communicated by the Chair of the PBC configuration in their briefing, as well as other PBC meetings on Burundi. Similarly, the influence of having strong briefings and reporting from both the senior UN official and the PBC Chair can be seen in the discussion on the Great Lakes region. Security Council members included robust points on WPS, reflecting the strong information communicated to them by multiple briefers.

Additional sources of information: Additional sources of information that result in increased discussion on WPS include briefings delivered by senior UN officials, such as the head of UN Women or the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict, mainstreaming WPS in the terms of reference of and engagement with women's civil society during visiting missions and field visits by the Security Council, and high-level solidarity missions and follow-up briefings by senior UN officials. Our analysis shows that for situations that have one or more of these over the year, there is a reflection of WPS in the outcomes and discussion on that country. Looking specifically at solidarity missions, during and after the meetings that featured briefings, such as during and after the briefing on the solidarity mission to Afghanistan and Somalia, there was much stronger acknowledgement of the role of women, and also of the root causes of violence and discrimination. Further, in several instances, information reported to the Security Council following solidarity missions was referenced several months later by Security Council members. For example, in meetings on West Africa and the Sahel in 2019, both Germany and Canada referenced the value of those solidarity missions and highlighted some of the analysis raised by the Deputy Secretary-General in her briefing on the solidarity mission she led in July 2018. Similarly, in meetings on Afghanistan in September 2019, multiple speakers referred to details shared during the Deputy Secretary-General's July 2019 briefing on the solidarity mission to Afghanistan. The ongoing reflection of these key points in future statements delivered by Security Council members reflects the long-term impact and influence of such information.

Superficial attention to women’s meaningful participation

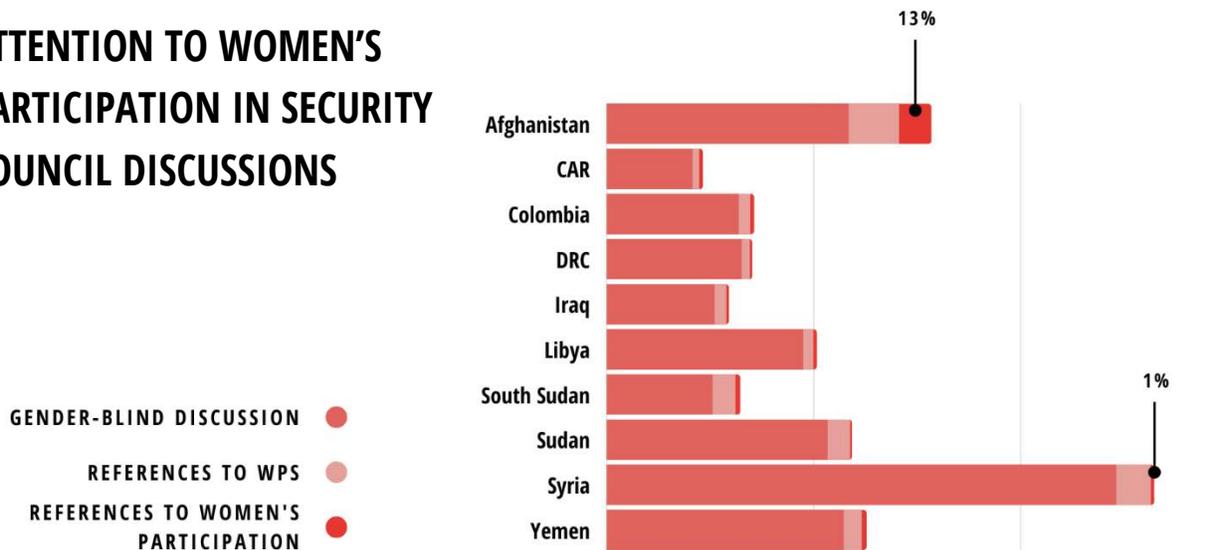
Women’s participation in peace processes and conflict resolution, foundational to the WPS agenda, continues to be one of the largest gaps in terms of WPS implementation. Despite articulating regular support for women’s meaningful participation, it has long been clear that it is easier for the Security Council to focus on protecting women from violence rather than addressing root causes of violation of their rights and enabling their participation in all spheres of public life.⁷ This can be seen in the ways in which women’s participation is discussed across the work of the Security Council, as well as the ongoing failure of peace processes to ensure women’s inclusion and leadership.

“Reiterating the need for the full, equal and effective participation of women at all stages of peace processes...”

Resolution 1889 (2009), PP 6

Women’s participation is referenced using multiple phrases, but increasingly consistently as “women’s full, equal and meaningful” participation. Although undefined by the Security Council, this is generally understood to encompass participation in leadership roles with influence during all stages of a peace process. This language, which first appeared in thematic presidential statements and resolutions in 2013, has become the standard formulation over the last two years in outcomes adopted by the Security Council.⁸ Women’s meaningful participation started to be referenced in country-specific resolutions in 2015,⁹ but it was not until 2019 that the phrase “meaningful participation” was integrated into the mandates of peace operations.¹⁰

ATTENTION TO WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN SECURITY COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS



In 2019, there was attention, in some form, to women’s meaningful participation in 20 countries on the Security Council’s agenda,¹¹ including in outcome documents adopted on Afghanistan, the Central African Republic (CAR), Cyprus, Mali, Libya, Sudan, Sudan/South Sudan, South Sudan and Yemen.¹² Although the Security Council frequently expressed its support for women’s meaningful participation, these expressions of support remained superficial in the face of repeated calls for urgent action by women’s civil society to address the exclusion of women from peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements in those countries.

In 2019, our analysis identified several trends regarding the Security Council’s attention to women’s meaningful participation.

Women’s role in peace processes is typically framed as a means by which to increase the effectiveness of a peace process, rather than the realization of their right to participate in such discussions. This draws on an essentialist framing of women as agents of peace or change, and ignores the valuable expertise and knowledge that women and women’s civil society bring to such discussions.¹³ In fact, with the exception

15 peace operations are mandated to support women’s meaningful participation in peace, security and political processes.

of women civil society briefers, women’s right to participate in peace and political processes was only referenced three times over the entirety of 2019.¹⁴ Further, framing women in essentialist terms also results in placing the responsibility for bringing up women’s rights on those women who are able to participate; discussion within the Security Council repeatedly emphasized that without women at the peace table, women’s rights and violence against women wouldn’t be addressed, thereby releasing all parties from any obligation to uphold fundamental international human rights norms.

References to meaningful participation occur in only 1% of all discussions of country-specific peace processes within the Security Council. When references are made, they are superficial, focus on the number of women who were in the room and frame women’s contribution as supplemental or an ‘add-on,’ rather than central to inclusive and meaningful processes. The focus on the numbers overlooks the importance of women’s leadership. References to women’s leadership or roles in peace processes in positions of influence occurred infrequently, and were primarily concentrated in discussions on Afghanistan, Colombia and South Sudan — due in part to the emphasis on women’s leadership in sources of information flowing into the Security Council, including briefings by women civil society representatives.¹⁵ The most common reference to women’s participation by Security Council members was in the form of a simple statement without any commitment, action or analysis. Security Council members repeatedly noted that they support women’s participation in standard phrases and sections of statements, yet rarely called out parties that were failing to uphold their obligations or articulate specific actions they would take either as members of the Security Council or in their individual capacity.

In 2019, only 1% of the Security Council’s discussion of country-specific situations included mention of women’s meaningful participation in peace and security processes.

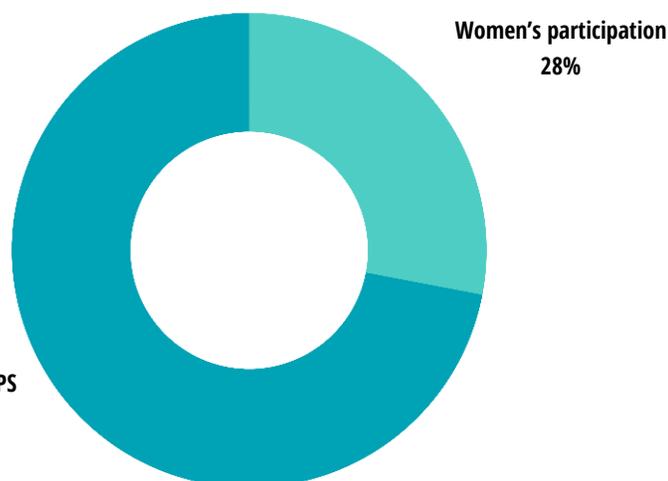
Informal means of engagement by women in peace and political processes tend to be emphasized over women’s formal participation in high-level discussions. There were multiple references to UN support for and engagement with a range of structures aimed to facilitate women’s participation and influence in the peace process through informal paths in Afghanistan, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen. The format of these mechanisms varies and includes networks and advisory boards. Networks discussed by the Security Council include the Council of Women Facilitators for Dialogue and the Women’s Mediator Network in Guinea-Bissau,¹⁶ the G5 Sahel Women’s Platform, the Peace and Security Network for Women in the Economic Community of West African States region¹⁷ and the Libyan Women’s Network for Peacebuilding.¹⁸ A more recent trend has been the establishment of women’s advisory boards to advise on specific peace processes. These boards include the Women’s Advisory Group on Reconciliation in Politics in Iraq, Syrian Women’s Advisory Board and Yemeni Women’s Technical Advisory Group. Although the development of parallel or complementary means through which women leaders and women’s civil society can participate is critical, these efforts are not and must never be represented as a replacement for women’s formal participation. The lack of information flowing to the Security Council via reports and

briefings of senior UN officials on women's meaningful participation, including the barriers to their participation, poses a considerable challenge. By focusing on the efficacy of women’s participation, the barriers to participation are overlooked. The root causes for the lack of women’s participation, including inequality and discrimination, are detached from necessary discussions on how best to support and increase women’s participation. In addition to lacking analysis, such information is often lacking entirely. For example, there was little to no mention of the four women who participated in the process that resulted in the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR in February 2019. Although one woman ended up signing the Agreement, there was no significant reference to women's participation in the process and no analysis regarding barriers to women's participation.¹⁹

REFERENCES TO WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION BY SENIOR UN OFFICIALS

The vast majority of statements delivered by senior UN officials failed to recognize the challenges related to women’s participation in formal roles within peace processes.

All other mentions of WPS
72%



Women civil society leaders, peacebuilders and human rights defenders

Civil society, including conflict-affected communities, peacebuilders, women-led and women's rights organizations, and human rights defenders ("women civil society"), are an integral part of the WPS agenda, forming a core constituency that advocated for the adoption of Resolution 1325 (2000). Ensuring full, meaningful and diverse participation of women's civil society and undertaking timely, systematic, transparent, inclusive and substantive consultation in formal and informal processes, is vital.

"Taking note of the critical contributions of civil society, including women's organizations to conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding and in this regard the importance of sustained consultation and dialogue between women and national and international decision makers..."

Resolution 2122 (2013), PP 13

Recognition of the role of civil society

In 2019, the Security Council's record on strengthening and supporting the role of women's civil society in peace and security processes was mixed, overall failing to meaningfully act on information and analysis from reports of the Secretary-General and briefings by civil society and senior UN officials. Positively, there was new language added to the mandates of the peace operations in CAR and the DRC expanding the scope of activities in which the mission should partner with women's civil society. The new mandate provisions were heavily advocated for by international NGOs, including the NGOWG and its members.

Since 2000, the Security Council's recognition of the important role of women's civil society has evolved from mere acknowledgement to directing actors to consult and partner with women's groups, including in the mandates of peace operations. Overall, references to women's civil society in both information flowing to the Security Council and outcomes resulting from the Security Council's discussions generally fell into several categories:

- General expressions of support for women's civil society;
- Updates regarding activities and consultations undertaken with women's civil society;
- Recognition of the importance of women's civil society in peace and political processes;
- Calls for the UN and governments to support, partner with and include women's civil society in processes, programs and discussions; and
- Expressions of concern regarding barriers to the participation and engagement of women's civil society, including the harassment and intimidation of civil society organizations and human rights defenders.

In 2019, our analysis identified several trends regarding the Security Council's consideration of women's civil society in its work:

- Although there is standard guidance directing peace operations to consult with women's civil society,²⁰ based on our analysis, there is a **clear correlation between explicit language in mandates and reported activities involving women's civil society** in terms of inclusion of information and recommendations related to women's civil society.²¹ The 11 peace operations that do not have a mandate to engage with women's civil society included little to no information on such activities.

9 peace operations **are** mandated to consult with women's civil society

11 peace operations **are not** mandated to consult with women's civil society

- Only the SRSs and Special Envoys for the peace operations in Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, Iraq, Syria and Yemen **partially met their obligations to update the Council on their engagement with women’s civil society** per Resolution 2242 (2015). Further, similar to previous years, even when information was provided, it varied widely in terms of quality focusing largely on indicating meetings and events that women’s civil society participated in, while overlooking barriers to their participation in other spaces. There was rarely detail regarding why women’s civil society was excluded or what follow-up actions might be taken following consultations.
- Positively, there are **increasing references to engagement with women’s groups** in processes not focused exclusively on WPS, which reflects growing recognition of the expertise women bring to all aspects of peace and security, particularly in the context of the Central Africa region, Guinea-Bissau, Somalia and the West Africa region.

Civil society engagement with the Security Council

In our 2018 Policy Brief, we reported that the number and frequency of women’s civil society invited to brief the Security Council had steadily increased since 2015, when Resolution 2242 (2015) was adopted.²² Since the NGOWG began tracking civil society briefers at the Security Council in 2003, over 125 women civil society representatives have briefed the Security Council.

In 2019, 52 civil society representatives briefed the Security Council. The highest number and most diverse representation of women’s civil society briefers, in both country-specific and thematic discussions, were seen in 2019, with 41 women sharing their expertise on 19 different conflict-affected countries.²³ Their briefings took place in 22 country or region-specific meetings and 13 thematic discussions. This represents a 70.9% increase in the number of women civil society representatives invited to participate in Security Council discussions compared to 2018, when 24 women briefers delivered statements at 12 country-specific meetings and 12 thematic discussions, sharing their experiences from 14 different conflict-affected countries.²⁴

“Expresses its intention to invite civil society, including women’s organizations, to brief the Council in country-specific considerations and relevant thematic areas...”

Resolution 2242 (2015), OP 5(c)

Compared to 2018, the number of women civil society representatives invited to participate in Security Council discussions in 2019 increased by 70.9%.

Germany’s April presidency and the United Kingdom’s November presidency led the Security Council in terms of women civil society briefers, with 11 and six women briefers, respectively. February, under Equatorial Guinea, and May, under Indonesia, were the only months in 2019 during which there were no women civil society briefers. In total, eight monthly Security Council presidents invited women civil society to brief on country-specific or regional discussions. It is noteworthy that the number of women civil society briefers far surpassed that of men in 2019, as only 11 men civil society representatives briefed the Security Council.

Of the 41 women civil society representatives who briefed the Security Council in 2019, several were the first representatives of women’s civil society to either address that country or represent their communities in these briefings:

- In April, [Loune Viaud](#), Executive Director of Zanmi Lasante, became the first woman civil society representative to brief the Security Council during a country-specific discussion on Haiti.

- In April, [Rosa Emilia Salamanca](#), Co-Director of Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Economía, became the first Colombian woman civil society representative to brief the Security Council during a country-specific discussion on Colombia.
- In April, [Nujeen Mustafa](#) became both the first Syrian activist and the first person with a disability²⁵ to formally address the Security Council during a country or region-specific meeting. Until 2019, no civil society representatives had ever been invited to formally address the Security Council on Syria (humanitarian or political). Importantly, in 2019, there were five civil society briefers on Syria, all of whom were women.
- In November, [Assitan Diallo](#), President of the Association des Femmes Africaines pour la Recherche et le Développement, became the first woman civil society representative representing Mali to brief during a country or region-specific meeting at the Security Council.

The sharp increase in invitations to women’s civil society to brief the Security Council in 2019 signaled continuing recognition of the importance of having their perspectives inform Security Council discussions on thematic and country-specific issues.²⁶ However, in the first half of 2020, there has been a precipitous drop in civil society access and participation under COVID-19. As of 1 July 2020, [we reported a 38.9% drop in civil society](#) compared to the same period in 2019. The limitations facing the Security Council as it conducts its work virtually under COVID-19 undoubtedly pose challenges to civil society participation. However, since the Council began working remotely, it has become clear that these were not merely technical challenges but reflected a deprioritization of the voices of independent civil society despite Security Council members’ claims of women’s critical role in ensuring peace and security. Given that civil society is critical to providing the Security Council with valuable information, updates and perspective on specific conflicts and issues, and that our analysis has shown that without their briefings, certain issues are less likely to be raised, this is a trend that must be urgently reversed.

Women civil society briefers at the Security Council in 2019

| Month | President | Thematic | Country-specific | Total women CSO speakers |
|--------------|--------------------|-----------|------------------|--------------------------|
| January | Dominican Republic | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| February | Equatorial Guinea | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| March | France | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| April | Germany | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| May | Indonesia | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| June | Kuwait | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| July | Peru | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| August | Poland | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| September | Russia | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| October | South Africa | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| November | United Kingdom | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| December | United States | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | | 18 | 23 | 41 |

Failure to reflect women and girls in all their diversity

An intersectional approach to gender equality is fundamental to the WPS agenda. Race, ethnicity, religion, class, sexual orientation and gender identity, age, marital status, pregnancy status, disability, migratory status, geographic location, economic status and other characteristics must be recognized and addressed in order to achieve gender equality.²⁷

Yet women are primarily referred to as a monolithic group throughout the work of the Security Council. Our analysis shows that the experiences of particular groups of women and girls comprised less than 7% of all references in outcome documents and less than 6% of all references in reports of the Secretary-General in 2019, reflecting little acknowledgment of the unique challenges they face.

These omissions demonstrate a persistent underlying issue: that the Security Council tends to view women and girls as a homogenous group without fully recognizing the varied impact of conflict on women from different communities or of different identities. This reinforces deep-rooted inequalities, results in continued exclusion, repression and violence against these groups, and therefore undermines efforts toward sustainable peace.

The experiences of diverse women and girls comprise less than:

6% of all references to women and girls in reports of the Secretary-General.

7% of all references to women and girls in resolutions and presidential statements.

4% of all references to women and girls in statements delivered by Security Council members.

Women and girls with disabilities

Women and girls with disabilities experience specific types of discrimination and challenges in conflict settings, including increased risk of gender-based violence and routine exclusion from decision-making processes, even those with a direct impact on their lives and communities.²⁸

Over 15% of the global population — an estimated 1.5 billion people — are persons with disabilities, while nearly one in five women (19.2%) is a woman with a disability.²⁹ In conflict-affected contexts, this proportion is likely to increase to 18-20% for all persons and likely an even higher percentage of women.³⁰ Disability intersects with other marginalized identities such as gender, age and refugee status, resulting in layers of discrimination for persons with disabilities and their families.³¹ Inadequate global reporting and analysis of data on disabilities, particularly gender-disaggregated data in humanitarian contexts, result in limited meaningful discussion of and outcomes addressing gender and disabilities in conflict settings.³² Furthermore, conflict-related disabilities are not specific to women and girls, but women and girls “are more likely to become disabled because of violence, armed conflicts, aging and gender-biased cultural practices.”³³

In June 2019, under its protection of civilians agenda item, the Security Council adopted its first-ever resolution focused on persons with disabilities. Resolution 2475 (2019) called for assistance to civilians to be accessible and inclusive, for the full and meaningful participation of people with disabilities in humanitarian action, peacebuilding, conflict resolution and prevention efforts, and included a short operative paragraph focused on ensuring that the specific needs of women with disabilities are met. The adoption of this resolution marked a shift in the Security Council’s narrow and infrequent attention to people with disabilities solely as a vulnerable group, making it a significant normative advancement.

In 2019, the Security Council failed to consider the rights and participation of women and girls with disabilities in any formal discussion or outcome adopted on a country or region-specific situation. Reports of the Secretary-General also failed to include any information on women and girls with disabilities, with the exception of three reports on Haiti and Colombia.³⁴

Positively, in 2019, the Secretary-General requested that stronger information regarding women and girls with disabilities be integrated into peacekeeping and special political missions’ reporting.³⁵ The outcome of the IEG on WPS meeting on Myanmar in 2019 also referred to the fact that women and girls with disabilities is an important issue, reflecting the recommendations put forth by civil society, including previous civil society speakers on Myanmar.³⁶

“Underlines the benefit of providing sustainable, timely, appropriate, inclusive and accessible assistance to civilians with disabilities affected by armed conflict, including reintegration, rehabilitation and psychosocial support, to ensure that their specific needs are effectively addressed, in particular those of women and children with disabilities.”

S/RES/2475 (2019), OP 4

There were general references to persons with disabilities in:

5 thematic, and

12 country/region-specific discussions.

0% of Security Council country/region-specific outcome documents referred to women and girls with disabilities.

General references to persons with disabilities occurred most frequently in the context of the Security Council’s work on Colombia, the DRC, Haiti and Somalia, but overall, there were small references in 12 country and region-specific agenda items and five thematic agenda items.³⁷ The mandates for the peace operations in the DRC and Somalia include provisions on supporting persons with disabilities.³⁸ In the DRC, the mission is mandated to ensure protection for persons with disabilities in the context of existing civilian protection efforts, and as of 2019, the mission in Somalia is requested to support the participation of persons with disabilities in conflict prevention and resolution efforts, peacebuilding and elections.³⁹ When reports of the

Secretary-General, briefings by senior UN officials and statements by Security Council members reference persons with disabilities, their remarks vary in specificity and substance, but tend to be superficial. For example, most references occur in the lists of “vulnerable groups,” who require specific protection. The few substantive references were concentrated in reports on Colombia and Somalia, in which there were references to the participation of youth with disabilities in civil society organizing and persons with disabilities, more broadly, in political processes.⁴⁰ The only references to the importance of the participation of persons with disabilities occurred in the context of reports of the Secretary-General on Somalia and Colombia.⁴¹

Displaced women and girls

The experiences of displaced women and girls require special attention. Women and girls are at higher risk of violence in often overcrowded and underfunded displacement and refugee camps.⁴² Displaced women and girls are also particularly marginalized in decision-making processes regarding their own protection and security, and are often excluded from peace and security processes that will have a direct impact on their lives. Age as a defining factor is important because women, adolescents and girls all have different needs and are all affected by displacement in unique ways. Girls who are displaced are often unable to continue their education, which can keep them in poverty,⁴³ reinforce harmful gender norms and pause their development, thus also halting the development of their communities.⁴⁴ Women and girls as caretakers and leaders in contexts of displacement enrich their communities and require proper care and resources to continue to do so.

“The Security Council recognizes that refugee and internally displaced women and girls are at heightened risk of being subject to various forms of human rights violations [...] and discrimination. [...] [and] urges [all actors] to ensure [their] meaningful participation [...] in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes [...] at all stages of the displacement cycle.”

S/PRST/2014/21

In 2019, the Security Council failed to address the gender-dimensions of displacement, only referring to displaced women and girls in three country-specific resolutions documents on CAR, South Sudan and Western Sahara, and broadly failing to highlight the issue in statements during country-specific meetings.⁴⁵ These references largely focused on the impact of conflict on displaced women and girls, mirroring the information flowing to the Security Council via reports of the Secretary-General and briefings by senior UN officials. The focus of the Security Council on displaced women and girls has long been gender-blind despite repeated calls from women civil society representatives. In 2019 alone, the Security Council heard from women civil society from Afghanistan, Haiti, Libya, South Sudan, Sudan and Syria, as well as additional analysis and recommendations during meetings of the IEG on WPS on Iraq.

The Security Council referred to displaced women and girls in the following countries:

Afghanistan
Burundi
Central Africa region
CAR

Libya
South Sudan
Sudan

Syria
Western Sahara
Yemen

Young women

Roughly one in four young women and girls are currently living in situations where they are exposed to violence or armed conflict.⁴⁶ The Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security recognized that young women are often stereotyped as “passive victims at best, invisible at worst” — a characterization which deprives them of their agency.⁴⁷ Despite the risks, young women comprise about half of all young people working in peacebuilding and conflict prevention at the local level.⁴⁸ However, their efforts remain unrecognized and unsupported. Both women- and youth-led peacebuilding are severely underfunded. In

2019, 0.2% of bilateral aid to fragile and conflict-affected countries went directly to women's organizations.⁴⁹ Furthermore, 49% of youth-led organizations operate under \$5,000 per annum.⁵⁰

According to the Secretary-General's report on Youth, Peace and Security in 2020, there are 1.8 billion young people ages 10-24 in the world, with 90% living in developing countries; roughly half of which are young women.⁵¹ Independent recognition of young women as their own group, separate from youth or children, is critical to ensuring the rights and concerns of young women are reflected.

In 2019, young women played a prominent role in protests for equality and justice, and against oppressive regimes. In April 2019, Alaa Salah, who would later [brief](#) the Security Council for the open debate on Women, Peace and Security in October, gained international attention for her role in the protests that eventually overthrew erstwhile dictator Omar al-Bashir in Sudan.⁵² However, even with a rich history of women being involved in and leading peace efforts, young women are continually overlooked and marginalized in formal peace processes and discussions, dismissed as too young and inexperienced despite their critical role in determining the future of their communities.

“Recognizing the challenges faced by youth which put them at particular risk, including gender inequalities that perpetuate all forms of discrimination and violence, and persistent inequalities that put young women at particular risk, and therefore reaffirming the commitment to the empowerment of women and gender equality.”

S/RES/2419 (2018), OP 17

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- ² For more on Resolution 2493 (2019), please see our blog post: <https://www.womenpeaceandsecurity.org/blog-analysis-of-the-2019-women-peace-and-security-open-debate/>
- ³ UNFPA, ‘As pandemic rages, women and girls face intensified risks’, 19 March 2020, <https://www.unfpa.org/news/pandemic-rages-women-and-girls-face-intensified-risks>.
- ⁴ Report of the Secretary-General on WPS (S/2019/800)
- ⁵ The countries on the agenda of the IEG on WPS are: Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Lake Chad Basin, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.
- ⁶ IEG on WPS meetings in 2018 and 2019 include: Sudan (16 December 2019); South Sudan (17 October 2019); Libya (29 August 2019); Afghanistan (10 July 2019); Myanmar (4 June 2019); Democratic Republic of the Congo (25 March 2019); Yemen (4 March 2019); South Sudan (28 February 2019); Libya (28 April 2018); Central African Republic (18 October 2018); Democratic Republic of the Congo (4 September 2018); Mali and the Sahel (5 June 2018); Libya (13 April 2018); Iraq (29 March 2018); Democratic Republic of the Congo (28 February 2018); Lake Chad Basin (30 January 2018).
- ⁷ Goetz, Forward: Toward Strategic Instrumentalism, New Directions in Women, Peace and Security, 2020, p. xxii. <https://bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/new-directions-in-women-peace-and-security>
- ⁸ SALW (S/RES/2117 (2013), OP 12); WPS (S/RES/2122 (2013), OP 14; S/PRST/2014/21, para. 10); Conflict prevention (S/RES/2171 (2014), PP 21)
- ⁹ 2015: Syria; 2017: West Africa, Libya, South Sudan, Western Sahara, Somalia; 2018: Yemen, Liberia, Afghanistan, Mali; 2019: DRC, Haiti, Cyprus, Lebanon, Sudan / South Sudan, CAR.
- ¹⁰ Afghanistan (S/RES/2489 (2019), OP 5(f)); CAR (S/RES/2499 (2019), OPs 32(b)(iv), 44); DRC (S/RES/2463 (2019), OP 32; S/RES/2502 (2019), OP 32); Haiti (S/RES/2476 (2019), OP 3); South Sudan (S/RES/2514 (2020), OPs 5, 31); Sudan / South Sudan (Abyei) (S/RES/2497 (2019), OP 19); West Africa (S/2020/85);
- ¹¹ Afghanistan (S/2019/193, paras. 34, 37, 38, 5, 57, 61, 7); (S/2019/493, paras. 12, 15, 34, 36, 37, 60, 61); (S/2019/703, paras. 16, 17, 18, 66, 79); (S/2019/935, paras. 21, 22, 50, 52); CAR (S/2019/147, paras. 11, 4, 86, 99); Central Africa (S/2019/430, paras. 58, 74); (S/2019/913, paras. 69, 74); Colombia (S/2019/265, paras. 51, 63); (S/2019/530, paras. 3, 71, 72); (S/2019/780, paras. 32, 63); (S/2019/988, paras. 70, 94, 98); Cyprus (S/2019/322, paras. 25, 8); (S/2019/37, paras. 29, 38, 49, 62); (S/2019/562, paras. 29, 38, 45, 41); Cyprus (S/2019/883, paras. 14, 24, 30, 8); DRC (S/2019/6, para. 14); (S/2019/776, para. 65); (S/2019/905, paras. 10, 31, 46); Great Lakes (S/2019/229, paras. 71, 72, 73); (S/2019/783, para. 62); Guinea-Bissau (S/2019/115, paras. 20, 46, 61, 62, 69, 70, 72, 73, 89); (S/2019/664, paras. 10, 50, 67, 68, 69, 73, 8, 85); Haiti (S/2019/198, paras. 43, 53, 63); (S/2019/563, para. 55); (S/2019/805, paras. 17, 18); Iraq (S/2019/101, paras. 24, 26, 66, 77); (S/2019/365, paras. 12, 37, 42, 43, 44, 45); (S/2019/903, para. 91); Kosovo (S/2019/102, paras. 28, 34, 38); (S/2019/461, paras. 30, 37); (S/2019/797, paras. 4, 41); Lebanon (S/2019/237, para. 72); (S/2019/343, para. 34); (S/2019/574, para. 27); (S/2019/819, para. 54); (S/2019/889, paras. 104, 30, 62); Libya (S/2019/19, para. 76); (S/2019/682, paras. 38, 69); Mali (S/2019/207, paras. 11, 17, 47, 48, 50, 52, 54, 6); (S/2019/262, paras. 3, 9); (S/2019/454, paras. 51, 7, 8, 87); (S/2019/782, paras. 100, 3, 6); (S/2019/983, paras. 2, 36, 38, 39, 90); Somalia (S/2019/393, paras. 24, 84); (S/2019/661, paras. 24, 2581); (S/2019/884, paras. 31, 32, 34, 96); South Sudan (S/2019/191, paras. 66, 88, 34); (S/2019/491, paras. 69, 70, 71); (S/2019/722, paras. 27, 67, 80, 81); (S/2019/741, para. 27); (S/2019/936, paras. 77, 78, 79, 98); Sudan / South Sudan (S/2019/319, para. 45); (S/2019/817, paras. 25, 26, 27); Sudan - Darfur (S/2019/44, para. 50); (S/2019/759, paras. 26, 33, 38, 9); (S/2019/816, paras. 20, 30, 5, 51); Syria (S/2019/321, para. 11); West Africa / Sahel (S/2019/1005, paras. 39, 79, 82); (S/2019/549, paras. 16, 38, 41, 44, 93)
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- ¹² Afghanistan (S/RES/2489 (2019), OP 5); C CAR (S/RES/2499 (2019), OPs 8, 32(b) (iii), 44); Cyprus (S/RES/2453 (2019), OPs 5(e), 10); (S/RES/2483 (2019), OP 4); Libya (S/RES/2486 (2019), OP 5); Mali (S/RES/2480 (2019), OPs 5, 28, 56; S/PRST/2019/2); South Sudan (S/RES/2459 (2019), OPs 4, 8, 38; S/PRST/2019/11); Sudan/South Sudan (S/RES/2469 (2019), OP 19; S/RES/2497 (2019), OPs 18, 19); Yemen (S/PRST/2019/7)
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- ²² Pursuant to Resolution 2242 OP. 5(c), we interpret “civil society, including women’s organizations” to refer to a range of actors based on certain criteria, which are detailed in the methodology section. These criteria are applied in all subsequent counts of briefers reflected in this section.
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