

# From Resolution to Revolution: *Lessons Learned from 25 Years of the Women, Peace & Security Framework*



**C**onflicts around the world are unfolding with disproportionate impacts on women.<sup>1</sup> Rates of violence have reached historical heights, with nearly one in three<sup>2</sup> countries experiencing armed conflict and an estimated 15 percent<sup>3</sup> of women living within 50 kilometers of these hostilities. These troubling trends are occurring amidst growing backlash<sup>4</sup> against women's inclusion in politics, widespread rollbacks of women's rights, and cuts to overseas development assistance (ODA).<sup>5</sup>

In the face of these myriad and overlapping challenges, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, established by the unanimous adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), turns 25.<sup>6</sup> October of this year will mark a quarter century since the landmark resolution recognized that women are critical to achieving sustainable peace, affirming their essential roles in preventing conflict, negotiating peace, and leading recovery and reconstruction after conflict.

The run-up to the 25th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 is a time for taking stock of progress and drawing on lessons learned to enhance efforts aimed at addressing ongoing and emerging WPS threats.<sup>7</sup> Since the WPS Agenda's inception in 2000, advocates have pushed for changes and reforms that have reshaped security frameworks and helped advance the global landscape for more inclusive and lasting peace. Recognizing and celebrating these hard-won gains will be critical to moving the Agenda forward in years to come.

The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS), the Embassy of Japan, and Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA (Sasakawa USA) co-hosted a high-level event<sup>8</sup> in January 2025 to explore best practices for achieving the promise of the WPS Agenda. The event brought together government and civil society leaders, including experts, negotiators, and mediators from different parts of the world who have demonstrated leadership and innovation in advancing the WPS Agenda.

From a pioneering summit in Namibia<sup>9</sup> to a historic gathering of women in Beijing<sup>10</sup> and a trailblazing women's coalition in Belfast,<sup>11</sup> panelists highlighted how UNSCR 1325 was paved through the relentless advocacy of women. "We broke the myth that women were not prepared to stand for politics," said Dr. Avila Kilmurray, a community leader and peacebuilder in Northern Ireland and a negotiator in the Good Friday peace agreement.

For decades, women in positions of power, on the ground, and in civil society organizations have worked diligently to demonstrate that the security of a nation—and the international community—is directly tied to the security and status of women.<sup>12</sup> Many of these efforts have been led by women from the Global South.<sup>13</sup> Today, there is voluminous research<sup>14</sup> and a large and growing evidence-based case<sup>15</sup> that demonstrates women's leadership in all stages of conflict prevention, resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction leads to more durable peace.

"Having women in positions of policy and decision-making who are active advocates for the women's agenda and are aware of the nuanced issues of women in peace processes made all the difference," said Anna Tarhata S. Basman, who served as the government of the Philippines' legal chief in the Bangsamoro Peace Process. The 2014 landmark peace

agreement<sup>16</sup> between the national government in the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is widely recognized for its gender-sensitive provisions, as well as for its groundbreaking approach to women’s formal participation in the negotiation process.

Policymakers in countries like Japan have positioned the WPS Agenda as a central pillar<sup>17</sup> of the country’s foreign policy, recognizing its important role in addressing cross-cutting security challenges such as climate change and disaster response. The United States has also been a leader in advancing comprehensive legislation<sup>18</sup> enshrining WPS principles across policy, diplomacy, and peacebuilding.

But what did it take over the past two decades to move the needle and bring women’s voices into new spaces where they were previously sidelined? Panelists highlighted what has worked in their diverse contexts and offered six actionable steps the global community can take to deliver on the commitment of UNSCR 1325.

## 1. Engage parliamentarians to institutionalize and fund the WPS Agenda.

Legislators play a pivotal role in advancing the WPS Agenda by securing resources, enacting enforceable measures, and ensuring sustained oversight of government commitments. In Japan, the WPS Parliamentarians Network and Task Force<sup>19</sup> has successfully worked within the Diet and Ministries to break down bureaucratic barriers and integrate WPS across foreign, defense, and economic strategies, reinforcing a whole-of-government approach. Expanding WPS caucuses—such as those in Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom—and fostering international dialogues can further institutionalize WPS commitments within bilateral and multilateral policies and budget priorities, as well as through legislative action.

*“The legislators in every government control the purse strings. They’re the ones that can put resources toward these [WPS] National Action Plans that otherwise might sit on the shelf. These caucuses are the sort of body that we need in every country.”*

—Dr. Geeta Rao Gupta  
Former Ambassador-at-Large for the Office of Global Women’s Issues at the U.S. Department of State

## 2. Embed WPS principles into national legislation with tangible accountability mechanisms.

The United States set a global precedent in 2017 by enacting the first national WPS law, which established a whole-of-government approach to integration with formal accountability mechanisms. To move from commitments to action, other countries should follow suit by enshrining WPS principles in binding legislation with systematic integration across defense, diplomacy, and foreign assistance policies. Additionally, while 112 countries have developed National Action Plans (NAPs)<sup>20</sup> on WPS, effective implementation requires dedicated funding, sustained political will, regular civil society consultations, and rigorous monitoring mechanisms. NAPs should also be tailored to the unique security, humanitarian, and governance challenges of each country to ensure WPS commitments are operationalized in ways that are locally meaningful, such as in Japan, where the NAP in part focuses on integrating WPS into Japan’s disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts.

*“It is extremely important to advance the application of the WPS Agenda into the fields of disaster response, prevention, and mitigation to further enhance women’s participation and leadership. Japan has been emphasizing the importance of WPS in the context of natural disasters. Its efforts have gained significant interest and support from the international community.”*

—H.E. Yōko Kamikawa  
Former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Japan; Chair of the WPS Parliamentarians’ Network, Japan

## 3. Enhance coordination with local women leaders, traditional authorities, and male allies to strengthen WPS implementation.

Effective peace and security efforts must be grounded in the experiences and priorities of local women and civil society. In Southern Thailand, for example, Sasakawa Peace Foundation<sup>21</sup> supported the establishment of a women’s civil society network in Pattani to foster long-term collaboration between local NGOs, policymakers, and community leaders in conflict resolution efforts. This model demonstrates the importance of connecting grassroots efforts with higher-level negotiations through sustained, multi-level dialogues. International actors should continue to invest in long-term partnerships that empower women-led networks, strengthen communi-

ty-based initiatives, and engage men as allies through targeted workshops to challenge harmful gender norms and address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

*“We were trying to connect spaces and networks so that discussions done at the grassroots level would be brought to the higher level of negotiations.”*

—Maho Nakayama  
Director, Peacebuilding Program, Sasakawa Peace Foundation

#### 4. Build cross-sector coalitions to harness collective power for effective action.

Strengthening coalitions and fostering multi-track dialogues through neighborhood, religious, and civic associations can expand opportunities for women’s leadership and collective action. A prime example is the Women’s Coalition in Northern Ireland, where women from diverse Protestant and Catholic backgrounds overcame political divides to unite for peacebuilding. The coalition created a shared platform for women’s voices, allowing them to craft a common agenda, generate widespread buy-in for peace, and secure a place at the negotiating table. By mobilizing broad support across villages and political affiliations, the coalition ensured that key priorities, such as integrated education, victims’ rights, and reconciliation, were included in the Good Friday Agreement.<sup>22</sup> Nurturing these coalitions is critical for advancing inclusive peacebuilding and securing durable agreements that address the needs and priorities of all communities.

*“We formed the Women’s Commission, or the women’s coalition...because we felt so many issues that we’d raised consistently for decades were being ignored.”*

—Dr. Avila Kilmurray  
Community leader and peacebuilder in Northern Ireland and negotiator in the Good Friday Agreement

#### 5. Strengthen investment in women’s leadership for conflict prevention.

Women are at the forefront of preventing violence and fostering stability, yet their leadership in early warning systems and crisis mitigation remains underfunded and underutilized. Proven models like Women’s Situation Rooms (WSRs)<sup>23</sup> in Liberia and Senegal have shown how women can effectively mitigate election-related violence by tracking risks, mobilizing diverse constituencies, and mediating disputes. Expanding and replicating these initiatives across conflict-prone regions would enhance prevention mechanisms, address the root causes of violence, and lay the foundation for more sustainable peace.

*“The Women’s Situation Room has become a model that has been replicated in Kenya, Liberia and many other places.”*

—Bineta Diop  
Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security

#### 6. Adopt holistic approaches to justice and accountability for survivors.

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) is no longer seen as an inevitable byproduct of war but as a priority security concern<sup>24</sup> and a key pillar of the WPS Agenda. To deliver on commitments to prevent and address CRSV, international actors must adopt survivor-centered approaches that recognize women as active agents of change. Any criminal justice process or legal prosecution must prioritize<sup>25</sup> the dignity, agency, and specific needs of survivors. Kosovo’s model<sup>26</sup> of reparations for CRSV survivors, which integrates trauma-informed practices, serves as a successful example. Governments should also implement comprehensive strategies that combine legal redress with socioeconomic recovery, ensuring survivors receive access to compensation, recognition, and long-term support systems.

*“Kosovo’s story is a reminder of what’s possible when survivors become the architects of peace.”*

—Dr. Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu  
President of Kosovo

*These recommendations were generated in consultation with key stakeholders who attended a high-level event co-hosted by GIWPS, the Embassy of Japan, and Sasakawa USA in Washington, DC.*

## Endnotes

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