Workshop on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth Peace and Security (YPS) Programming

Summary

On 18 and 19 April 2022, the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) Secretariat – under the leadership of the Integrated office of the DSRSG/RC/HC and in partnership with UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP – organized a workshop on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) programming in Sudan. The workshop brought together over 90 participants from UN agencies, UNITAMS, INGOs, NGOs, civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) working on peacebuilding across Sudan.

The first day of the workshop focused on presentations on the current PBF portfolio and priorities in Sudan, upcoming PBF funding opportunities, the WPS global framework and the YPS global framework. The second day of the workshop included a presentation on the intersections between the WPS and YPS frameworks, and then dedicated group discussions in both English and Arabic on WPS, YPS and the intersections between them. At the end of the second day, the facilitators presented key inputs from discussions between the participants. The group discussions were facilitated around the following questions:

WPS

- What are the key **gaps and challenges** faced by women/ women activists/women leaders/women's organizations working on peacebuilding in Sudan? What are their main barriers to access decision-making?
- What are the key **priority areas** to invest in to support women working on peacebuilding in Sudan? What are some entry points for WPS programming in Sudan?
- Can you share some **examples** of successful/innovative projects working on WPS? Or do you have any innovative project ideas that could strengthen women's contribution to peacebuilding?

YPS

- What are the key **gaps and challenges** faced by young women and men/youth activists/youth leaders/youth working on peacebuilding in Sudan? What are their main barriers to access decision-making?
- What are the key **priority areas** to invest in to support young people working on peacebuilding in Sudan? What are some entry points for YPS programming in Sudan?
- Can you share some **examples** of successful/innovative projects working on YPS? Or do you have any innovative project ideas that could strengthen young people's contribution to peacebuilding?

- What are the key **gaps and challenges** faced specifically by young women working on peacebuilding in Sudan? What are their distinct barriers to access decision-making?
- What are the key **priority areas** to invest in to support young women working on peacebuilding in Sudan? What are some entry points for programming? How can we engage young men in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment?
- Can you share some **examples** of successful/innovative projects working on the intersection between WPS and YPS? Or do you have any innovative project ideas that could strengthen young women's contribution to peacebuilding?

PBF visit to **Umm Al - Khairat** village in Yassin locality, East Darfur, March 2022

The below summaries aim to capture the key inputs and common trends identified during the group discussions:

Women, Peace and Security

Challenges/gaps/barriers:

1) **Patriarchal society and cultural/social norms:** In Sudan, there is a patriarchal society with cultural/social norms around gender and age that stereotypes and underestimates women's roles and limits their access to decision-making spaces. When women do participate in certain structures or dialogues, it is often tokenistic, with their voices not meaningfully heard, and without any contributions to decisions. In some areas, public spaces are reserved mainly or exclusively for men. Religious extremism can also be used to exclude women from participating in public discourse. While there are differences in the cultural/social/gender norms depending on the state, tribe, or community, overall there is a lack of recognition of women's contribution to their communities. Colleagues mentioned that nomadic populations

are particularly conservative when it comes to gender equality and women's empowerment, and identified Darfur and the East as key areas with a lack of progress towards gender equality.

2) **Insecurity and conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence:** Conflict-related and gender-based violence affects many women, young women and girls and often goes unreported. Social stigma surrounding this violence also limits access to justice for victims. There is a lack of human rights organizations that can monitor the situation, analyze trends, and suggest appropriate recourse for victims. There is also a lack of psycho-social support and rehabilitation centers to help survivors. Insecurity and fears of this violence also limits the movement of women and their ability to engage with communities.

3) **Domestic burdens and livelihoods:** In many parts of the country, women take on considerable domestic roles and responsibilities, including caring for children and taking care of the household, as well as providing an income for their family. This does not leave any spare time for other activities such as active engagement in political or community issues.

4) **Literacy and information/ knowledge:** High rates of illiteracy in Sudan, especially in rural communities and especially affecting women, young women and girls, limits the availability of knowledge and information, for example in terms of their rights.

5) **Capacity/Expertise, Resource and Sustainability:** There are many capacity gaps when it comes to organizations working on WPS, from UN agencies, to INGOs, NGOs, CSOs, and CBOs. For many organizations there is a lack of technical gender expertise and understanding of how to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and how to implement projects in a truly gender-responsive way. There is also a lack of resources for local organizations working on WPS, especially women-led organizations. Many peace initiatives are started by UN agencies and implementing partners, but after the project ends these initiatives are not able to continue due to lack of resources and technical expertise.

6) **Visibility/awareness and coordination:** There is a lack of visibility and awareness regarding WPS work, platforms, networks and funding opportunities. There is no clear mapping of the work of different actors on WPS and many organizations, especially women's groups, are often not aware of the funding opportunities available to them. There are also no well-functioning mechanisms to coordinate the work on WPS and different funding streams.
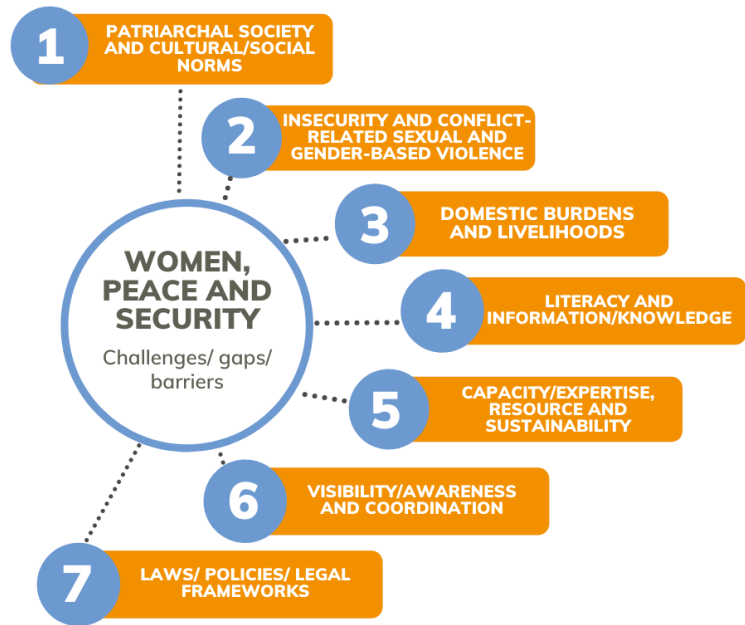
7) **Laws/policies/legal frameworks:** For most of the above challenges to be sufficiently addressed, there is a need to advocate for or lobby government to develop policies which support women's empowerment, participation, equity and women's affirmative action. This includes amending current laws to better support women and eliminating laws that go against gender equality and women's empowerment. This also includes ensuring the state's commitments to implement women's entitlements as spelled out in the Constitutional Declaration and Juba Peace Agreement.

Priorities/entry points and existing examples:

1) **Awareness:** Raising awareness on women's rights and the importance and benefits of gender equality and women's empowerment for the entire population, including their participation in decision-making. This can include the use of radio, social media, and materials for illiterate individuals.
2) **Capacity building:** Training women and women's organizations on claiming their rights, leadership skills, political participation, confidence building, conflict resolution, fundraising, project sustainability, identifying peace strategies, etc. As much as possible this should focus on strengthening existing organizations rather than establishing new ones. Strengthening the capacities of humanitarian, development and peace organizations in the design and implementation of gender-responsive programmes.
8) **Coordination, partnership and women's leadership**: Include gender equality and women's empowerment in existing coordination platforms. Ensure coordination at national, state and local levels and include INGOs, NGOs, CSOs, CBOs and women's groups/women-led organizations in UN coordination platforms. Strengthen/establish equal partnerships with women's groups/women-led organizations, including those led by young women, and support the implementation of activities designed and led by women themselves.
3) **Alliances and networks:** Build alliances and networks between women across Sudan. Conduct a mapping of women's organizations, including creation of a database of women activists and organizations. Embrace the diversity of different groupings and movements, without the need for a single movement with one agenda, but still working towards finding common ground on key priorities. Build alliances with male champions for gender equality, including young men, to support awareness raising and knowledge sharing.
4) **Investment:** Ensure dedicated resources for women's groups/women-led organizations as well as longer-term and larger funding allocations towards gender equality and women's empowerment.
5) **Education:** Promote access to education for girls and literacy training for women, including young women, as a right and as an entry point for accessing civic spaces.
6) **Economic empowerment:** Livelihoods and income-generating activities, including micro-finance and entrepreneurship, specifically targeting women, including young women, to support empowerment and independence.
7) **Access to land:** Support the implementation of existing policies and community-level awareness raising regarding land registration, including targeting women-headed

households. Also ensure inclusion of women in land registration committees and other land institutions.

8) **Policies and legislation:** Support the adoption and implementation of policies and legislation that support women's specific needs and promote women's rights, empowerment and participation. Support the implementation and monitoring of Resolution 1325.

9) **Infrastructure and basic services**: Invest in infrastructure depended on by women, including roads necessary to travel to markets, and hospitals.

10) **Additional entry points:** community volunteer policing committees to monitor protection issues in IDP camps, strengthening women-led early warning mechanisms, supporting female police officers, working with female farmers and establishing cooperatives, community events to celebrate local culture and interact with other communities, working with Hakamat women to sing for peace rather than war.

Women in Umm Al - Khairat village in Yassin locality, East Darfur

Youth, Peace and Security

Challenges/gaps/barriers:

1) **Cultural/social norms:** Cultural/social norms in Sudan with regards to gender and age limit the involvement of young women and men in decision-making as elders (who are always men) are viewed as the authority. There is a lack of intergenerational dialogue and distrust between young people and elders, for example native administrations. Sometimes young men are included in committees or dialogues, but elders will always have the final say. Young women are systematically excluded from decision-making structures and dialogue platforms. Young people are also rarely included in peace, political or electoral processes, and if they are it is mostly tokenistic without real follow-up.

2) **Civic space and protection:** While civic space had been opening following the revolution and the appointment of the transitional government, since the military takeover of 25 October, civic space has been shrinking and there has been an

increase in human rights violations and retributions against political activists, including sexual- and gender-based violence.

3) **Capacities, resources and networks:** Young people and youth organizations have limited capacities and limited opportunities to network and organize themselves. There is also a lack of YPS funding and technical expertise on YPS, making it very difficult for youth groups/youth-led organizations to receive needed additional support.

4) **Education:** There are many out of school children and youth, especially due to the ongoing political and economic struggles in the country. This educational deficit affects children and youth's political involvement and ability to secure sustainable livelihoods.

5) **Livelihoods:** There is high youth unemployment in Sudan and limited livelihoods opportunities. Armed groups, including the RSF, are also providing a lucrative alternative for young men.

6) **Legal:** There is limited access to legal institutions for youth, including those related to civil documentation which are necessary for accessing many basic services.

7) **Crime:** Criminal activities often involve or affect youth, such as drug smuggling near porous borders

8) **UNSCR 2250:** Sudan is not implementing the resolution and there is no national action plan.

Priorities/entry points and existing examples:

1) **Awareness:** Raising awareness on YPS work, the importance of youth inclusion and participation, existing youth-led initiatives, etc. across Government and communities. Use of social media to spread awareness/information and expand digital networks to support youth-friendly online processes as a multiplier for messages of tolerance and peace.

2) **Capacity building:** Need for capacity building of and investment in young people and youth groups/youth-led organizations on leadership skills, public speaking, peacebuilding strategizing, fundraising, etc. Also need to strengthen capacities of UN, INGOs, NGOs, CSOs, CBOs on how to implement strong youth-responsive peacebuilding programmes and how to better support youth-led initiatives.

3) **Coordination, dialogue, and networks:** Include young people in existing coordination and dialogue platforms. Encourage intergenerational dialogue and engagement of gatekeepers/elders. Create safe spaces exclusively for young people to come together and network, discuss ideas, strategize, etc. Also support exchanges between Sudanese youth and youth from other countries, including through using social media.

4) **Protection:** Strengthen protection and accountability frameworks and protect civic spaces for young people to express themselves freely without fear of reprisal

5) **Education:** Improve young people's access to quality education, including peace and human rights-specific education

6) **Economic empowerment:** Help provide livelihoods and income-generating activities to empower young women and men, including linking them to micro-finance institutions.

7) **Nomad-specific priorities:** Pay special attention to supporting nomadic youth and engage them in the work of the UN, INGOs, NGOs, CSOs and CBOs

8) **Investment:** Provide more flexible and longer-term funding to youth groups/youth-led organizations and CBOs working on youth issues.

9) **Policy and legal:** Advocate and support the development of policies and legislation that promote the participation of young women and men and address their specific needs and challenges.

WPS/YPS intersection

Challenges/gaps/barriers:

1) **Cultural/social norms:** Young women are subjected to discrimination based on *both* patriarchal gender norms and hierarchical age norms. This affects them in terms of access to education, livelihoods, and the public sphere more broadly. It is often young women who are the target of hate speech, harassment, both online and offline, and sexual and gender-based violence, especially when they try to break with these gender and age norms.

2) **Employment and unemployment:** Employment and unemployment uniquely affect young women, including their specific responsibilities for voluntary or income-based work, which also affects their ability to engage in peacebuilding.

3) **Targeting:** Peace and development interventions often do not specifically target young women, instead focusing either on "women" or "youth" (which often means young men in practice), or even more generic "women and youth". When the

specific experiences, challenges, needs and opportunities of young women are not taken into consideration during the design of interventions, they will not be effective in supporting young women in implementation.

4) **Policy:** Gender-blindness in YPS policy frameworks and age-blindless in WPS policy frameworks mean that young women are often left behind in discussions around policy and programming.
5) **Violence:** Young women activists are routinely subjected to state-sanctioned violence
6) **Resources, capacities, and coordination:** There is a lack of dedicated funding to support young women in peacebuilding, as well as mechanisms to help unify and/or coordinate these efforts

Priorities/entry points and existing examples:

1) **Analysis and strategy:** Conduct a mapping and needs assessment of WPS/YPS networks and actors in Sudan to bring them together and shape strategies for action together. Also conduct further research and data analysis to address critical knowledge gaps.
2) **Engagement:** Work together with communities to deconstruct patriarchal social norms and address the specific barriers for young women.
3) **Inclusion**: Reflect the diversity of young women by being inclusive of different marginalized groups, including young women with disabilities. Include quotas in peacebuilding programmes for young women's participation.
4) **Capacity-building and opportunities:** Strengthen leadership skills of young women and support an enabling environment for young women's meaningful participation. Trainings need to lead to actual opportunities.
5) **Resources:** Advocate for increased financial resources to support organizations, networks, movements and initiatives focusing on young women, especially led by young women.
6) **Organization and networking**: Support networks and coalitions of young women to organize for action and to exchange experiences, knowledge and resources. Bring together government actors and young women-led organizations and networks to promote their inclusion in government structures.
7) **Economic Empowerment:** Support young women's meaningful broader economic inclusion and advance the development of conflict-sensitive, inclusive employment programs targeting young women.
8) **Civic space:** Large-scale campaigns to promote participation of women and young people and highlight the positive work of young women on peace and security and strengthen civic trust
9) **Mental health and psycho-social support:** Invest in psycho-social and mental health support for young women.
10) **Partners:** Amplify the voices of role models/champions in community to support young women.