




WOMEN TRANSFORMING PEACE





2020 is the 20th anniversary of the adoption of United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Implementation of WPS priorities is a political commitment in the Secretary General's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) Initiative. In 2019, the UN Department for Peace Operations (DPO) documented how women leaders from Mali, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic are engaging in local and national peace processes and partnering with UN peacekeeping missions. Women leaders and women's organizations are the true guardians of the WPS agenda and core partners of DPO in the operationalization of the agenda. Their stories are presented in this booklet.



WOMEN CLAIM STRATEGIC SPACE IN PEACE PROCESSES

“When you open the peace agreement, you can identify the exact language from the 18 women who were present.”

Fatoumata Maiga, President of the Women's Organization for Peace Initiatives

Women were not formally involved when Mali's peace process began. Yet women were on all sides of the conflict, including in armed groups, *“We were at the heart of the conflict and should also be negotiating,”* explains Bintou Founé Samaké, President of Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF). With support from MINUSMA, Bintou and other women leaders mobilized



women's organizations. They updated women on the peace process, developed unified positions, lobbied and met with the Malian Government, African Union (AU) representatives, the UN Secretary-General and UN Security Council members. Women were then invited to undertake formal mediation training ahead of the peace negotiations in Algiers in 2015. Of the 12 women trained, four were supported by the Malian Government to be part of the negotiations. MINUSMA supported an additional 14 women to attend.

As Bintou notes, *“It is thanks to the pressure of women that civil society was heard in the negotiations in Algiers. We worked with MINUSMA on developing gender provisions for the peace agreement. This allowed for some language to enter into the final agreement, including on sexual violence and women’s rights.”*

WOMEN EXPAND THEIR INFLUENCE AND LEADERSHIP IN PEACE PROCESSES

“It is a question of political will. It is not a question of women’s capacities, there are lot of capable women.”

Me Saran Keïta, Network on Peace and Security for Women in ECOWAS

Me Saran Keïta | Adama Mallé



Despite women’s participation in the Algiers peace negotiations and a law establishing a 30% quota for women in appointed and elected positions in Mali, women were absent from the Peace Agreement Monitoring Committee (CSA) and related mechanisms. To address this, MINUSMA created a platform for women to craft recommendations to strengthen women’s participation. Then, Me Saran Keïta explains, *“We met all the relevant ministries. We met the armed groups. We are now establishing an observatory of women to monitor the implementation of the peace agreement. There is a possibility for an opening for women on the CSA. We have lobbied for this.”*

In response, the CSA established a working group co-chaired by MINUSMA that endorsed the women’s recommendations: the direct participation of women in all monitoring mechanisms and the establishment of an independent Women’s Observatory. In a June 2019 meeting with European Union (EU) and UN principals, the signatory parties affirmed their commitment to include women in official implementation mechanisms.

MALI

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF LOCAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

“Women can contribute to changing mentalities and behaviors, we initiated Case de la Paix for women to start working together to create confidence between communities.”

Mama Koite Doumbia, President of the Women's Platform

In Gao, diverse groups of women jointly promote peace and social cohesion. Women created Case de la Paix, bringing together 76 women's associations with support from MINUSMA and UN Women. Once unimaginable, *“Case de la Paix is for every woman who wants to work for peace regardless of their ethnic background,”* explains Hawa Samb, President, Women's Consultative Committee.

Tuore Mouna Awata, President of Case de la Paix, agrees, *“The women in Case de la Paix participate in the process of consolidating peace through dialogue. Intercommunity dialogues allow for a diagnosis and enabling communication to change behavior. It touches on all four pillars of (Security Council Resolution) 1325.”*

Case de la Paix demanded armed groups implement a local ceasefire. They raised awareness of the 30% quota for women in elected and appointed government roles-increasing the number of women elected to Gao's local councils.

With MINUSMA's support, Gao's interim authorities established a permanent consultative committee of 64 women leaders, including members of Case de la Paix. For the first time, women across ethnic groups and communities work together for reconciliation in a government structure.



Mama Koite | Adama Mallé

WOMEN CREATE POLITICAL SOLUTIONS AT LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS

“My personal journey started with the liberation movement and I started working with women, and when the formal door to peace opened, I represented the Jonglei women.”

Hon. Mary Nyaulang of the Nuer Community Women for Peace, Reconciliation and Development Initiative Network

After the collapse of South Sudan’s 2013 peace agreement, women leaders and women’s organizations came together to lobby for peace between the warring factions. *“We engaged with them, individually and in meetings, we played a very great role in merging the two factions”* Mary explains.

Grassroots women organized and successfully engaged in reconciliation work and political advocacy. *“We came to realize that communal approaches are useful and accepted by the community,”* recalls Mary. UNMISS organized meetings with women in Protection of Civilians sites to ensure their experiences also informed advocacy and political messaging.

Since the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) was signed in 2018, women’s groups have raised local communities’ awareness of the agreement and put pressure on national and international actors to implement it. UNMISS has supported women’s efforts by connecting local women politicians and women leaders with national leaders. *“Before women were not involved in decision-making in the country. Now women’s voices are heard in the peace process,”* shares Rebecca, Bor Joint Women’s Working Group.



Mary Nyaulang | UNMISS/PIO



WOMEN LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONS CHAMPION INCLUSIVE PEACE PROCESSES

“The 35% quota is not a privilege. It is something we have worked for.”

Hon. Rachal Nyadak Paul, Nuer Women’s Leadership Forum



Rachal Nyadak Paul | UNMISS/PIO

SOUTH SUDAN

In 2018, women from different ethnic groups, political affiliations, and regions in South Sudan came together to claim their right to participate in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development led peace process and hold formal political roles. Theresa Siricio, Party Leader of SANU National reflects, *“In the Revitalized Peace Agreement, women from all walks of life worked tirelessly to make sure the 35% quota (on women’s representation) was reached. UNMISS, UN Women and women themselves organized platforms for women to come on board, and we managed to break through to get 35%.”*

While the Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangement Monitoring and Verification Mechanism exceeds the quota, no other committee comes close to it. Theresa warns, *“How to improve women’s engagement is in the peace agreement, but there is no mechanism, no political will or commitment.”*

UNMISS facilitated meetings for women in business, faith-based groups, and academia, amongst others, with UN and national leaders such as President Salva Kiir to push for implementation of the R-ARCSS and its 35% quota. Hon. Mary Nyaulang shares, *“We are worried about the 35%. We are asking women in political parties to influence decision makers. We have the experience where political parties did not bring women. We have to make sure our efforts are influencing the decisions.”*

WOMEN ENSURE RECONCILIATION THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY

“We shall lead this country because enough is enough.”

Justice Perpetua Ajonye, South Sudan Civil Society Alliance

Women leaders and organizations in South Sudan oppose further extensions of the country’s pre-transitional period and are advocating for the urgent formation of a transitional government. *“We cannot have another extension”* argues Dorothy Drabuga, Executive Director of Voice for Change, voicing the concerns of women across South Sudan. To advance the Pre-Transitional Committee’s work and build confidence in the R-ARCSS, women launched a national campaign *“Tim Ana”* (Enough is Enough).

Dorothy explains, *“Women are really pushing (for a transitional government) because it is them who are facing repercussions of this conflict. Women continue to face challenges like sexual and gender based violence and there must be justice and accountability. Unless there is accountability, women will never be at peace. If these people are convicted, then it will be easy for forgiveness and reconciliation to take place.”* Dorothy commends UNMISS for supporting women leaders and addressing their security concerns. Dorothy notes, *“I feel scared but for the love of my country and the women I keep doing it.”*

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT OF WOMEN EX-COMBATANTS BUILDS POLITICAL LEGITIMACY

“For the agreement in Khartoum, I have done a lot of work, especially at the national level and with regard to women.”

Guettel Moiba Esther Adrienne, ex-combatant, President of the Central African Women’s Organization and signatory to the Central African Republic (CAR) Peace Agreement

Esther is the only woman signatory to CAR’s Peace Agreement and the only woman on the commission to implement the agreement. She is also an ex-combatant who joined an armed group to build a different future for her country. Felizia Tabela Kpakata another ex-combatant explains, *“There are women who always hold arms in their hands who pushed people to protest because they do not yet have their rights.”*

Recognizing women ex-combatants’ ability to mobilize their communities, peacekeeping missions are partnering with them to create political solutions. Esther recalls, *“I was engaged in social affairs and this pushed me to approach the leaders. I advised them, and they listened to me. I was also talking to opposing groups and they listened to me.”*

With support from MINUSCA, Esther and four others became the first women engaged in CAR’s AU led peace process, integrating key priorities including gender provisions into the final agreement. Esther calls for more women in decision making, *“We have talked about gender parity with 50-50 representation, this has to be respected.”*

Guetel Moïba Esther Adrienne | Geoffrey Dieu Beni Banthas Bata / MINUSCA



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