

The Somali Women's Charter and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Synergies and next steps for implementation.



Introduction

2020 marks the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on 'women and peace and security'. Unanimously passed on 31st October 2000, this resolution addresses the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women, stresses the importance of women's equal and full participation in peace and security and calls for the integration of a gender perspective in all areas of peacebuilding. Since 2000, a set of further Security Council Resolutions have affirmed, further detailed and expanded this agenda. To accelerate implementation of the 'Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda' many countries have developed dedicated national action plans.

The 20th anniversary of 1325 provides an opportunity to accelerate the realization of WPS by generating new attention, commitment and partnerships for this agenda. In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic this is particularly urgent. As highlighted in a recent op-ed by H.E. Deqa Yasin, Minister of Women and Human Rights Development, COVID-19 has deepened challenges for women in Somalia and other conflict-affected settings. At the same time, effective response and recovery depend on their full participation (Deqa Yasin, 2020). In this way, COVID-19 has only amplified the need for meaningful progress on women, peace and security.

Research and experience show that effective WPS implementation requires the selection of priorities that are relevant to the local context, strong ownership and political will, inclusive coalitions and sufficient resources. This paper demonstrates that the Somali Women's Convention and the resulting Women's Charter help provide these conditions in Somalia and therefore offer a unique opportunity for the impactful follow-up on WPS. On this basis, the paper recommends a set of next steps to seize these opportunities for WPS implementation in Somalia. In doing so, it builds on a recent in-depth analysis prepared by the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development regarding the links between the content of the Somali Women's Charter and the WPS agenda.¹

The paper is structured into four sections: The first section describes the Somali Women's Convention and Charter to establish the background for this analysis. The second section summarizes the synergies in content between the Somali Women's Charter and the WPS agenda. The third section in turn details synergies in the process for the implementation of the Somali Women's Charter, on the one hand, and the WPS agenda, on the other. The final section provides recommendations on how these synergies can be seized to accelerate WPS implementation in Somalia.

I. Background:

The Somali Women’s Convention and the Somali Women’s Charter

The Somali Women’s Convention² brought together 350 women and gender champions from across Somalia and the diaspora in Mogadishu on 04-06 March 2019. During three days of discussion, participants from local and national government, parliament, civil society, the private sector, the religious sphere and beyond identified joint demands for women’s rights in the peacebuilding and statebuilding process in Somalia. These shared concerns were compiled in the ‘Somali Women’s Charter’.³ The agenda for the Convention was developed under the leadership of the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development with a Steering Group composed of leaders who have made – and are making – critical contributions to the promotion of women’s rights and empowerment in government, parliament, civil society, the private sector and the media, ensuring full inclusivity. The First Lady of Somalia and Somalia’s Prime Minister opened and closed the event. The Convention also generated high levels of interest and discussion on social media. At the end of the Convention, Somalia’s Prime Minister expressed his commitment to make the Somali Women’s Charter a reality. He also tasked the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development to lead the development of action plans for implementation.

2. Synergies in content:

The Somali Women’s Charter identifies local WPS priorities

The joint demands identified by women and gender champions during the Somali Women’s Convention closely reflect priorities of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. The WPS agenda is commonly divided into four pillars: Participation, Protection, Prevention and Relief and Recovery. The Somali Women’s Charter provides local WPS priorities under each of these pillars, as briefly summarized below. [For a detailed analysis of these linkages prepared by the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development, see: http://www.mwhrd.gov.so/en/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Women-Peace-and-Security-Agenda-Somali-Womens-CharterEng_FA_digital.pdf].

Table 1: Brief overview of links between the demands of the Somali Women’s Charter and WPS agenda.

WPS Pillars	Key demands of the Somali Women’s Charter
Promoting women’s participation in peace-building at all levels of decision-making.	The Charter calls for ‘equal participation in all political and peacebuilding processes’, including through a 50% quota.
Protection of women’s rights during and after conflict and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.	The Charter calls for ‘zero tolerance for gender-based violence’, strengthening legal protections (including through passage of the Sexual Offences Bill, SOB), women’s full participation in the justice sector and training on women’s rights for justice and security personnel.
Addressing women’s specific needs during relief and recovery , including repatriation, resettlement, reintegration and reconstruction.	The Charter calls for women’s economic empowerment, socio-economic rights and full participation in decision-making on relief and recovery; for all development assistance to be assessed and monitored through a gender lens; and women’s leadership and full participation in transitional justice.

3. Synergies in process:

The Somali Women's Charter is inclusive, nationally-owned and backed by significant political will and will be taken forward through dedicated action plans.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda is commonly implemented through the development of a national action plan (NAP) that identifies local WPS priorities and sets out activities and responsibilities for follow-up within a defined time-frame. Research has confirmed that - beyond the technical design of the plan - effective realization of such NAPs depends on a number of inter-connected conditions. These include:

- 1. The selection of priorities that are relevant to the context:** High-impact NAPs are “Designed to fit the local context and priorities” (Inclusive Security, 2017). “In essence, NAPs should provide a tool to contextualize UNSCR 1325 and translate its objectives into national and local realities” (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), 2016). The more a NAP fulfils this purpose, “the more it resonates with the stakeholders' needs and demands, the easier it will be to foster more political will and commitment, which will, in turn, lead to better designed and implemented activities with greater impact” (Gender Associations, 2019; see also e.g. OSCE, 2016, 2020).
- 2. National ownership and political will:** For the successful adoption of a NAP, “Political will on the part of high-level government officials is essential” (Institute for Global and International Studies, 2014). Indeed, “The genuine political will of the lead agency, as well as all executing actors, is the key factor not only for the development of the NAP but the overall implementation. Without the real commitment of both policymakers and civil servants, achieving the desired results and required changes remains difficult” (Gender Associations, 2019). The Global Study on UNSCR 1325 implementation conducted by UN Women on the occasion of the resolution's 15th anniversary confirmed that “clear government commitment and leadership” are critical to success from development to implementation and monitoring (UN Women, 2015; see also e.g. Inclusive Security, 2017; OSCE, 2016, 2020).
- 3. Inclusive coalitions:** “In addition to government leadership, effective national implementation plans and strategies require broad participation of civil society organizations, academic institutions, donor partner governments, women, men, as well as local communities and populations directly affected by conflict.” (UN Women, 2015). This is because “An inclusive process both upholds women's equal human rights and also strengthens action plan content and local implementation through diverse stakeholder engagement and buy-in” (WILP, 2016; see also Gender Associations, 2019; Inclusive Security, 2017; UN Women, 2018; OSCE, 2016, 2020).
- 4. Resources:** Finally, “The planning process, measuring implementation and impact, as well as concrete activities, all need adequate resources” (Gender Associations, 2019). A lack of sufficient resources is a highly common challenge for NAP effectiveness. During research for the UN Women Global Study on 1325 implementation, for example, “Civil society groups expressed a great sense of frustration and cynicism in this regard, about NAPs just being pieces of paper and idealized concepts that will not work in underdeveloped societies. Unless plans were realistically drafted and funded... there was a danger of them falling into disuse and only fuelling cynicism within society” (UN Women, 2015; see also e.g. Inclusive Security, 2017; UN Women, 2018; OSCE, 2016, 2020; Institute for Global and International Studies, 2014)

The bottom-up development and implementation process for the Somali Women's Charter help provide these conditions and have considerable similarities with an effective process for the development of a NAP on UNSCR 1325. As noted above, the Somali Women's Convention and Charter thus served to identify WPS priorities in the local context. This was achieved through a highly inclusive, bottom-up process. The agenda for the Convention was thus designed by a Steering Group of women's leaders in government, parliament, civil society, the private sector and the media, under the overall leadership of the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development. Participants in the Convention included women's leaders and gender champions working in government, civil society and the private sector at national level, in the Federal Member States and in diaspora. Special efforts were made to ensure representation of marginalized groups, such as women living with disabilities, internally displaced, women from rural areas and youth. Male gender champions and religious scholars also actively participated in the conference. Many others engaged with the Convention on social media, where the event reached 207, 149 views.

The process has also been nationally-owned and backed by significant political will. Initiated by the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development, the Somali Women's Convention included active participation from a range of Ministries and cabinet members. The First Lady of Somalia and Somalia's Prime Minister also participated in the event. After being presented with the Charter, Somalia's Prime Minister expressed his commitment to realize it. In particular, he tasked the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development to lead the development of an action plan for implementation of the Charter.

The Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development has launched this process through a bottom-up approach: As a first step, the Ministry has worked with the Ministries of Women of the Federal Member States (FMS) to further localize WPS priorities articulated in the Somali Women's Charter and enable the development of locally-driven FMS action plans for Charter implementation. Further demonstrating national ownership, inclusivity and political will behind the process, most Federal Member States (Galmudug, Hirshabelle, South West States and Banaadir Regional Administration) have since drawn up their own action plans for Charter implementation, based on additional consultations in each region. Jubbaland just finalized its consultation and will soon share its own plan of action. In this context, the FMS have affirmed their full endorsement of the Somali Women's Charter, its relevance to the specific contexts of their regions and to the needs and circumstances of local women. Conversations on this process have also been initiated with remaining FMS. The next step will be to develop a national action plan that builds on and complements these locally-driven activities in the FMS.

To further advance collaboration for follow-up on the Charter, the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development is setting up a system of Somali Women's Charter 'champions' who will help lead and coordinate advocacy for implementation of the different areas of the Charter. UNDP has already provided resources to support this work to take forward the Somali Women's Charter. Joining hands behind this existing process as a vehicle for WPS implementation – rather than duplicating it – can ensure that sufficient resources are available for the realization of WPS priorities.

4. Next steps:

Effective WPS implementation in Somalia must use these synergies.

In summary, then, the Somali Women's Charter provides the key factors required for effective WPS implementation: It offers WPS priorities that are relevant to the local context, nationally-owned, backed by significant political will and an inclusive political coalition. What is more, the Charter will be taken forward through national action plans, that is, the process generally envisaged to accelerate follow-up on WPS. The Charter therefore provides a unique vehicle for the effective implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) in Somalia.

Overall, seizing synergies between the Charter and WPS going forward will ensure that implementation is:

1. **Meaningful**, by following-up on priorities that Somali women have identified as their most urgent concerns.
2. **Efficient**, by avoiding duplication and waste of scarce financial and human resources.
3. **Effective**, by pooling resources and leveraging an existing process with significant momentum.

To seize synergies between the Somali Women's Charter and WPS – and thereby ensure meaningful WPS implementation in Somalia - the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development envisages the following next steps:

1. **Develop a national action plan for the implementation of the Somali Women's Charter and Women, Peace and Security, which plans implementation activities for the priorities identified in the Somalia Charter.**
2. **Bring together partners interested in WPS implementation in Somalia with those supporting the Somali Women's Charter and jointly support follow-up on this process and the overall implementation of the Somali Women's Charter as the home-grown, nationally-led WPS agenda in Somalia.**
3. **At the national level, bring together leadership and advocacy coalitions for the Somali Women's Charter (the network of 'champions') and women, peace and security.**

References

Deqa Yasin Hagi Yusuf, 'In the battle against COVID-19, women make Somalia stronger', devex, 01 June 2020, available at: <https://www.devex.com/news/opinion-in-the-battle-against-covid-19-women-make-somalia-stronger-97345>

Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development, Federal Government of Somalia, 'The Somali Women's Charter and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda', 2020. Available at: http://www.mwhrd.gov.so/en/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Women-Peace-and-Security-Agenda-Somali-Womens-CharterEng_FA_digital.pdf

Gender Associations (Mirsad Jacevic), 'How can we increase the impact of National Action Plans on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325?', *Gender, Peace & Security in Brief* #3, October 2019.

Inclusive Security (Zsuzsanna Lippai and Angelic Young), *Creating National Action Plan: A guide to implementing Resolution 1325*, 2017.

Institute for Global and International Studies, the George Washington University (Barbara Miller, Milad Pournik, and Aisling Swaine), *Women in Peace and Security through United Nations Security Resolution 1325: Literature Review, Content Analysis of National Action Plans, and implementation*, IGIS WP 13/GGP WP 09, May 2014.

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Inclusive Security *Designing Inclusive Strategies for Sustainable Security: Results-oriented National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security*, OSCE Secretariat/Gender Section, 2016.

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security, *Implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the OSCE Region*, 2020.

Somali Women's Convention Report. Available at: <http://www.mwhrd.gov.so/en/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Somali-Women-Convention-Report-2019.pdf>

The Somali Women's Charter. Available at: <https://www.docdroid.net/JiIXSer/somali-womens-charter-200519-online-use-pdf>

UN Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325*, 2015.

UN Women (Aisline Swaine), *Balancing Priorities: Lessons and Good Practices from Iraq, Jordan and Palestine for NAP-1325 Drafting Teams*, 2018.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) (Ghazal Rahmanpanah and Barbara Trojanowska), 'National Action Plans: Localising Implementation of UNSCR 1325', 2016.

Available at: <https://www.wilpf.org/national-action-plans-localising-implementation-of-unscr-1325/>

1 This analysis is available at http://www.mwhrd.gov.so/en/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Women-Peace-and-Security-Agenda-Somali-Womens-CharterEng_FA_digital.pdf

2 The report of the Convention is available at: <http://www.mwhrd.gov.so/en/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Somali-Women-Convention-Report-2019.pdf>

3 The Somali Women's Charter is available at: <https://www.docdroid.net/JiIXSer/somali-womens-charter-200519-online-use-pdf>

