



IWPG

GLOBAL WOMEN'S PEACE FORUM

Program Book

Asia-Pacific

20 July 02:00 GMT

11:00 | Seoul
11:00 | Tokyo
10:00 | Jakarta

Africa & Europe

20 July 08:00 GMT

10:00 | Paris
11:00 | Nairobi /
Addis Ababa

Americas

20 July 16:00 GMT

11:00 | Bogotá
12:00 | New York
13:00 | São Paulo

South Asia & Middle East

21 July 06:00 GMT

10:00 | Dubai
11:30 | New Delhi
12:00 | Dhaka

2026 Global Women's Peace Forum for Asia-Pacific Region

7/20 (Mon) 02:00 GMT

Meet Our Speakers

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	Mujgan Tahery Founder & CEO, Uniting Circle Multicultural Community Centre Australia	Building Peace Together: Addressing Regional Challenges and Women's Voices
Panel Discussion 2	Kathleen Thein Professor, Vimutti Buddha University Myanmar	Grassroots to Global: Amplifying Myanmar Women's Voices for Peace
	Huong Nguyen Lecturer, La Trobe University Australia	Unlocking Multicultural Women's Leadership for Sustainable Peace: Evidence-Based Strategies for Inclusive Workplaces
	Suraiya Kamaruzzaman Lecturer, Syiah Kuala University Indonesia	Beyond Recovery: Scaling Women's Leadership for Peace and Community Resilience in Aceh



Panel Discussion 1

BUILDING PEACE, EMPOWERING WOMEN 2026



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Melanie Sia Lambino

Director, National Federation of Women's Clubs of the Philippines | Philippines

Attorney Melanie Sia Lambino is a distinguished Filipino lawyer, governance professional, and inclusion advocate with extensive expertise in law, business economics, corporate governance, public administration, and sustainable development. She earned her Juris Doctor from San Sebastian College-Recoletos Institute of Law and completed a Master's in Business Economics (MBE) at the University of Asia and the Pacific. She also completed her Doctor in Public Health (DrPH) with a specialization in Health Management at Our Lady of Fatima University, reflecting her multidisciplinary approach to governance and public service.

Attorney Melanie Sia Lambino has completed executive education and professional certifications in strategic business economics, corporate governance, legislative governance, and public procurement. Her expertise spans legal practice, public administration, regulatory affairs, and institutional governance, making her a strong and respected leader in both the public and private sectors. She is a Member of the Board of the National Federation of Women's Clubs of the Philippines (NFWCP), and serves as the head of the Women's Club Pangasinan, where she champions initiatives that advance women's leadership, empowerment, civic engagement, and community development. She is currently a Member of the Board of Directors of Mindanao Corrugated Fibreboard, Inc. (MinCorr), a major subsidiary of San Miguel Corporation (SMC). She also served as a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), where she has served for the past eight years. During her tenure, she has chaired the Human Resource Committee and served on key board committees overseeing governance, audit, risk management, and concession monitoring. For almost five (5) years now, She also has helped guide key initiatives as a Member of the Sinocalan-Dagupan River System Water Quality Management Area (SDRS-WQMA) Governing Board under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), working with national government agencies, local government units, and other stakeholders to strengthen water quality management, protect the environment, and promote the sustainable rehabilitation of the Sinocalan-Dagupan River System. Beyond her national government responsibilities, Attorney Melanie Sia Lambino actively contributes to regional and local development as part of the Women's Representative to the Provincial Development Council (PDC) of Pangasinan, where she helps formulate policies and strategies that promote inclusive, equitable, and sustainable provincial development. Recognized for her commitment to ethical leadership, good governance, and public service, Attorney Melanie Sia Lambino continues to champion sound public policy, environmental stewardship, corporate governance, and sustainable development through her leadership in both national and local institutions.

Abstract

This presentation highlights how empowering women contributes to building lasting peace by ensuring their voices are heard and respected. It emphasizes the importance of creating safe spaces where women can participate in dialogue, leadership, and decision-making without fear or discrimination. Through gender equality, inclusion, and meaningful participation, women become powerful agents of peace, helping build more resilient and peaceful communities.



Panel Discussion 1

VIEWING PEACE THROUGH A HUMAN RIGHTS LENS



Carole Shaw

Director, International Access Networks | Australia

Carole Shaw is the Director of International Access Networks and the Chief Executive Officer to the UN for Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW). She is a visionary executive and strategist with a demonstrated history of leadership roles focused on advancing women's rights and promoting gender equality and peace around the world.

Carole works within an intersectional human rights framework to support the capacity of national and grass roots organisations to engage and advocate for social justice, equity and empowerment of women and girls. She is a thought leader in movement building to advance the rights of women and girls, ensure gender-inclusive policies and financing, and justice, and address structural barriers to women's access to resources and advancement.

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Abstract

Peace is more than the absence of war. It is reflected in the air we breathe, the lands and communities we share, and the conditions that allow people to live safely, develop fully, and thrive. Peace is also a hard-fought political goal. In the Asia Pacific region, competition and disputes over territorial rights and maritime interests are intensifying rapidly. Geopolitical instability, together with external efforts to undermine trust between powers, increases the risk of misjudgement and conflict. These pressures affect both stable and politically fragile countries across the region. When countries move from war to peace, or face periods of political instability, human rights are experienced differently depending on gender. Men and women may therefore experience the end of violence in distinct ways. In situations of instability the risk of social fragmentation is high – strengthening of women in all their diversities in participation, governance and leadership offers a broader range of perspectives shaping peace agreements and reinforces accountability and transparency. In societies affected by conflict and war, the risk of social fragmentation is high. Stronger participation and leadership of women in all their diversity broadens the range of perspectives shaping peace agreements and reinforces accountability and transparency and strengthening human rights for all.



Panel Discussion 1

SUSHUMNA MEDITATION - A JOURNEY TO MENTAL HEALTH



Kanakagiri Yashaswini

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Yashika is a community engagement professional and meditation educator with experience across both Australian Federal and Victorian State Government. She has worked in the offices of Members of Parliament in Australia, including The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, who has served as Minister for Local Government, Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Education, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support, and Crime Prevention. Through her work in public service and community engagement, Yashika has developed a strong interest in the intersection of mental wellbeing, social policy and peacebuilding. She advocates meditation as an evidence-informed practice for strengthening emotional resilience, fostering compassionate communities and contributing to sustainable peace.

Abstract

Mental peace is the foundation of lasting peace in families, communities, and nations. This presentation explores how Sushumna Kriya Meditation offers a practical, evidence-informed approach to reducing stress, regulating the nervous system, and cultivating emotional resilience, compassion, and inner balance. By transforming individual consciousness, meditation can become a powerful pathway toward collective wellbeing and sustainable global peace. Peace starts within.



Panel Discussion 1

BUILDING PEACE TOGETHER: ADDRESSING REGIONAL CHALLENGES AND WOMEN'S VOICES



Mujgan Tahery

Founder & CEO, Uniting Circle Multicultural Community Centre | Australia

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Mujgan Tahery is an award-winning community leader and the Founder and CEO of Uniting Circle Multicultural Community Centre. Her dedication to supporting culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, refugees, migrants, women, and people with disability has been recognised through several prestigious honours. In 2025, she received the NSW Humanitarian Award in recognition of her outstanding humanitarian service and commitment to social inclusion. In 2026, she was also nominated for the Penrith City Council Mayor's Local Hero Award, acknowledging her exceptional leadership, advocacy, and positive impact on the Western Sydney community. Through her vision and unwavering commitment, Mujgan continues to champion equality, empowerment, and stronger, more connected communities.

Abstract

Peace is not simply the absence of conflict; it is the presence of justice, inclusion, equality, and respect for human dignity. While Australia is considered a peaceful nation, our communities are deeply connected to global events. Many refugees, migrants, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities continue to experience the lasting effects of war, persecution, displacement, discrimination, and violence. These challenges do not end when people cross borders—they continue to influence individuals, families, and communities for generations.

Women are disproportionately affected by these peace challenges. They often experience gender-based violence, forced displacement, limited access to education and employment, financial insecurity, and barriers to leadership and decision-making. Many refugee and migrant women also face language barriers, social isolation, cultural adjustment, and the ongoing impact of trauma. These factors affect not only their wellbeing but also the stability of their families and the resilience of their communities. Despite these challenges, women consistently demonstrate remarkable strength and play a critical role in rebuilding families, fostering social cohesion, and promoting peace within their communities.

Resolving these issues remains difficult because they are interconnected and deeply rooted in political, social, cultural, and economic systems. Armed conflict, inequality, discrimination, misinformation, and the underrepresentation of women in leadership continue to prevent meaningful progress. In many communities, violence against women remains hidden due to stigma, fear, and limited access to culturally appropriate support services. Sustainable peace cannot be achieved without addressing these underlying causes and ensuring that women have an equal voice in shaping solutions.

As the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Uniting Circle Multicultural Community Centre, I have seen firsthand how community-led initiatives can create meaningful change. Through culturally responsive programs that support women, families, young people, seniors, and people with disability, we have witnessed the positive



impact of education, empowerment, collaboration, and community engagement. When women are provided with opportunities to lead, participate, and make informed decisions, they become powerful advocates for peace, resilience, and social inclusion.

This presentation will highlight practical approaches to peacebuilding through multicultural collaboration, community partnerships, and women's leadership. It will demonstrate how local organisations, governments, educational institutions, and civil society can work together to create safer, more inclusive communities where diversity is respected and every individual has the opportunity to thrive.

The vision of the International Women's Peace Group reminds us that lasting peace cannot be achieved without the active participation of women. By investing in women's leadership, promoting equality, strengthening community partnerships, and fostering dialogue across cultures, we can move beyond responding to conflict and instead build communities founded on trust, understanding, and mutual respect. Sustainable peace begins at the community level, where people are empowered to support one another, celebrate diversity, and work together toward a future where every woman, every family, and every community can live with dignity, security, and hope.



Panel Discussion 2

GRASSROOTS TO GLOBAL: AMPLIFYING MYANMAR WOMEN'S VOICES FOR PEACE



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Kathleen Thein

Professor, Vimutti Buddha University | Myanmar

Kathleen Thein has over 35 years of ESL/IELTS, EAP teaching experience in Yangon University, Sittwe University and several international schools. Then, she worked as a principal at some international schools. She was one of the members of ELTeCS (English Language Teachers' Contact Scheme) organized by the British Council from 1999 to 2011 and conducted several workshops and presentations teachers' trainings for English Language Teachers. she has attended English Teachers' Conference in USA (California in 2004) selected from the American Center. She had conducted English Language Teachers' presentations in Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand too. Again, she attended TESOL intensive course in Canada in 2009. She is one of the Founders of MmTESOL in 2012. She has participated in ELT for over 15 years. Then she founded Ingyin May Hindu Women Network in 2015 and has been promoting women empowerment and gender equality. She was being selected "Transformative women leaders in Myanmar society in 2019" and one of the leaders from British Council in 2016. Moreover, she was being awarded a philanthropic award from Hindu Youth Association in Myanmar in 2019. She was being invited to attend at U.N (Geneva) in 2019 as a panelist for "Gender Equality and Importance of Education." Moreover, she was being invited to attend the workshops of "Gender Equality and the Importance of Education" in Norway, Denmark, UK, Switzerland, Thailand and Cambodia and Indonesia in 2017, 2018, 2019. Just as she helped many people during the COVID-19 pandemic, she personally visited the hardest -hit areas of last year's major Sagaing earthquake to encourage the victims and distributed donation funds directly to those in difficult situations. She has just retired as a Principal from Baho Private School Yangon. At present, she is volunteering as an English lecturer and serving as the Professor of the English Department at Vimutti Buddha University. She was invited as a guest speaker from a Hindu perspective at numerous events organized by HWPL since 13 years ago, and she is also a core member of IWPG. She is well respected in the several community and organizations in Myanmar as well as internationally.

Abstract

This presentation is real-life examples of women peacebuilders from different ethnic groups in Myanmar. It shows how these women face extreme dangers to report human rights abuses, deliver emergency food and medicine, and help divided communities live together peacefully. While official peace talks led by male leaders have stopped, local women are doing the real, everyday work that keeps their communities alive.

A major finding of this study is that local women's groups truly understand why conflict is happening and what people actually need. However, the international community often misses this important information. This is because these women do not have direct ways to speak to global organizations like the United Nations. This paper identifies three main problems that stop local women from being heard globally:

1. It is very hard for local groups to get international funding because of complicated rules.
2. Language and internet connection problems make communication difficult.
3. Women activists face serious safety threats and attacks.



To fix this, the study says global leaders must change how they try to bring peace to Myanmar. Instead of waiting for top leaders to agree, international organizations must fund, protect, and work directly with local women's networks. This paper offers clear steps for global policymakers, such as making safe ways for local women to speak directly to global leaders and making funding rules simpler. Ultimately, this study shows that lasting peace in Myanmar cannot happen without supporting the women who are already building it from the ground up.



Panel Discussion 2

FROM BELONGING TO LEADERSHIP: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PEACE THROUGH MULTICULTURAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP



Huong Nguyen

Lecturer, La Trobe University | Australia

Dr. Huong Nguyen is a lecturer and researcher at La Trobe University, Australia. Her research focuses on leadership, diversity and inclusion, migrant careers, and women's leadership. Drawing on extensive research with migrant and ethnically diverse women leaders, she examines how organisations and communities can better recognise talent, reduce systemic barriers, and create pathways for leadership. Passionate about translating research into practice, Dr Nguyen works with industry, government, and community organisations to build more inclusive workplaces and stronger communities that support sustainable peace and social cohesion.

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Abstract

Sustainable peace is built not only through the absence of conflict, but through creating communities where people feel they belong, can contribute, and have opportunities to lead. Drawing on my research with migrant and ethnically diverse women leaders in Australia, together with insights from community engagement, this presentation explores how belonging, recognition, and cross-sector partnerships can unlock women's leadership potential. It offers practical recommendations for governments, employers, universities, and community organisations seeking to build stronger, more inclusive, and more peaceful societies.



Panel Discussion 2

BEYOND RECOVERY: SCALING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP FOR PEACE AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN ACEH



Suraiya Kamaruzzaman

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TBC

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Abstract

Aceh's decades-long experience of armed conflict, the tsunami disaster, and post-crisis recovery has shown that rebuilding society requires more than repairing infrastructure and restoring the economy. Recovery also depends on rebuilding trust, strengthening social relationships, protecting vulnerable groups, and creating space for communities to take part in decision-making. Throughout this process, Acehnese women have played major roles in sustaining families, supporting survivors of violence, mobilizing communities, promoting and maintaining peace, protecting the environment, and supporting household livelihoods. However, much of this work is still seen as informal, remains undervalued, and has not yet given women a strong enough position in institutional and public policy decision-making.

This presentation discusses how women's grassroots leadership can be strengthened so that women can play a greater role in building peace and community resilience. Drawing on women's experiences in rights advocacy, survivor support, natural resource management, disaster preparedness, and responses to climate change, the presentation highlights the importance of linking women's local initiatives with institutional support, public policy, sustainable funding, and cross-sector collaboration. The proposed model focuses on five main actions: involving women in decision-making, strengthening community-based women's networks, supporting economic empowerment and social protection, expanding peace education and disaster preparedness, and building cooperation among government institutions, universities, civil society organizations, religious and traditional leaders, and youth groups.

Aceh's experience also shows that strengthening women's leadership does not mean applying the same model in every community. Each approach must be adapted to local conditions, culture, community needs, and trusted networks. Women at the local level therefore need access to knowledge, meaningful space, and real authority in decision-making. Their grassroots work must also be connected to formal policies and sustainable funding.

Institutional support, capacity building, and intergenerational leadership should be strengthened so that women's contributions are no longer treated merely as informal work. Moving beyond recovery means recognizing women not only as beneficiaries, but also as leaders and key drivers in building communities that are more peaceful, resilient, and better prepared to face social, economic, environmental, and climate-related challenges.

2026 Global Women's Peace Forum for Africa/Europe Region

7/20 (Mon) 08:00 GMT

Meet Our Speakers

Panel Discussion 1	Carmen Magallón Honorary President, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Spain Spain	Women Challenging Rearmament and the Normalization of War
	Monica Keke Wanneh Manager, CANAAN-RUTAWA Cooperative Cameroon	Beyond Conflict: The Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon (North West Region), 2016–2026 — Gendered Impacts, Structural Barriers, and Pathways to Inclusive Peace
	Umenjoh Vania Andoumbeni President, Association for the Promotion of Gender and Disability Issues (APGDI) Cameroon Cameroon	Beyond the Absence of War: Examining the Impact of Peace Challenges on Women's Empowerment and Sustainable Development in Cameroon
	Keng Juliet Chi Project Manager, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Peace Office Cameroon	Drug Abuse and Unwanted Pregnancy among Teenagers as the Most Urgent Peace Challenges in Bamenda: Their Impact on Women and Why They Are Difficult to Resolve
Panel Discussion 2	Sanem Arikan Head of the Department of Administrative Services, Ministry of Culture and Tourism Turkiye	Fostering a Culture of Peace Led by Women through Culture and Arts
	Regina Mutiru Mwendwa Peace and Gender Specialist, National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) Kenya	Beyond Survival: Why Women in Conflict Zones Need Psychosocial Support, Not Just Security – Case of Baringo County in Kenya
	Raveloson Tchiourson Rovahanitra Ida National Chairwoman, Coalition for Social Justice (CO.JUSTI.S Madagascar) Madagascar	Her Voice, Our Peace: Women's Leadership from Local Action to Policy Reform
	Jana Merunková Founder & CEO, yourchance o.p.s. Czech Republic	Integration through Education: Empowering Women and Youth in Development of Bussines and Entrepreneurials
	Victoria Donu Founder & President, Moldoveni.cz Moldova	Building Peace through Community, Culture and Belonging: Lessons from Moldova and the Czech Republic



Panel Discussion 1

WOMEN CHALLENGING REARMAMENT AND THE NORMALIZATION OF WAR



Carmen Magallón

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Abstract

War is not a natural phenomenon; it is a human decision. We cannot 'normalize' it, nor can we increase spending on weapons. There is an urgent need to amplify the voices of peace. Historically, women's groups have stood out among these voices of peace. Pacifist feminism was born in 1915, during World War I. The legacy of these peacebuilders must be cherished and improved. It is urgent to defend, while also reforming, the United Nations and international law. The world cannot be allowed to turn into a jungle.



Panel Discussion 1

BEYOND CONFLICT: THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS IN CAMEROON (NORTH WEST REGION), 2016–2026 — GENDERED IMPACTS, STRUCTURAL BARRIERS, AND PATHWAYS TO INCLUSIVE PEACE



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Monica Keke Wanneh

Manager, CANAAN-RUTAWA | Cameroon

Monica Keke Wanneh is a humanitarian, sustainable development expert, leadership coach, peace ambassador, and evangelist dedicated to transforming lives through service and faith. Certified by IWPG, she equips civil society organizations with peacebuilding tools and advances grassroots conflict resolution. As Coordinator for Women Empowerment at Global Goals Connection and Manager of CANAAN-RUTAWA Cooperative, she drives women's economic empowerment through sustainable agriculture, innovation, and leadership. She also contributed to validating data and recommendations for the four pillars of UNSCR agenda 1325 during the 25th Anniversary in Cameroon. Guided by peace, leadership, sustainability, and the Gospel of reconciliation, Monica inspires communities to become agents of change.

Abstract

For nearly a decade, Cameroon's Anglophone region (North West Region) has endured a protracted crisis that has profoundly tested the resilience, determination, and hope of its people. Since 2016, what began as demands for greater equity and recognition has evolved into a complex conflict involving separatist armed groups and state security forces. Despite various peace initiatives, communities across Bamenda and the wider North West continue to grapple with improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, kidnappings, school closures, population displacement, and recurring "ghost town" restrictions that disrupt everyday life. Yet amid these hardships, the aspirations for peace, justice, dignity, and a return to normalcy remain unwavering. As many local voices have observed, "the population in the crisis zones is still confronted with the same realities as prevailed before the dialogue." This study responds to that enduring concern by asking a fundamental question: What must change for peace to become meaningful and sustainable in Cameroon's Anglophone region (North West Region)?

This presentation examines the crisis through three interrelated dimensions. First, it analyzes the pressing peace and security challenges that continue to undermine stability. Armed violence remains widespread, as evidenced by recent IED attacks at Nkwen Market, mass abductions in Bamti, and persistent insecurity along strategic transport corridors such as Sabga. Beyond the conflict itself, criminal networks increasingly exploit the prevailing insecurity through extortion, illegal checkpoints, and other forms of violence that further erode public safety and economic activity. Weekly lockdowns and restrictions on movement continue to disrupt livelihoods, education, healthcare delivery, and social cohesion. At the same time, longstanding intercommunal tensions particularly farmer-herder



conflicts in Donga-Mantung and Menchum Divisions have intensified competition over land and resources. Human displacement remains one of the most visible consequences of the conflict, with more than 500,000 people displaced across the North West and South West Regions, while renewed population movements in Ako Subdivision and Menchum Valley demonstrate how fragile security gains remain.

Second, the presentation highlights the deeply gendered consequences of the conflict while recognizing the extraordinary resilience and leadership demonstrated by women and girls. Reports from internally displaced persons (IDP) sites indicate a 40 percent increase in cases of gender-based violence within a single year. Ongoing movement restrictions have reduced access to essential maternal healthcare, contributing to a 34 percent decline in antenatal care attendance and a 70 percent reduction in skilled birth deliveries. Continued attacks on education have disproportionately affected adolescent girls, exposing them to heightened risks of school dropout, early marriage, and economic vulnerability. Meanwhile, with more than 2.5 million people experiencing food insecurity across the North West, South West, and Far North Regions, women continue to shoulder the primary responsibility for sustaining households under increasingly difficult circumstances. The deterioration of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure where 69 percent of schools lack access to safe drinking water and 63 percent operate without adequate sanitation facilities further compounds the challenges facing education, public health, and child protection. These realities represent not only evidence of humanitarian suffering but also a compelling imperative to place women's protection, participation, and leadership at the center of every peacebuilding initiative.

Third, the presentation explores the structural factors that continue to impede sustainable peace while identifying pathways toward meaningful transformation. Progress has been constrained by the fragmentation of armed actors, the continued use of lockdowns and coercive measures as instruments of influence, and declining public confidence following limited implementation of dialogue outcomes. Humanitarian access remains severely restricted, leaving millions without adequate assistance. With approximately 2.9 million people projected to require humanitarian support in 2026, Cameroon continues to represent one of Central Africa's most underfunded and overlooked humanitarian crises. This has created a self-perpetuating cycle in which insecurity disrupts essential services, weakened service delivery deepens poverty and vulnerability, and growing desperation fuels renewed displacement and instability. Breaking this cycle demands a comprehensive approach that addresses both immediate humanitarian needs and the structural drivers of conflict.

Drawing upon 2025–2026 evidence from UNFPA, OCHA, and humanitarian field partners, this study argues that sustainable peace in Cameroon's North West Region cannot be achieved through security responses alone. Lasting peace requires strengthening civilian protection, guaranteeing safe and equitable access to education and healthcare, restoring essential public services, expanding humanitarian access, and rebuilding trust between communities and institutions. Above all, it requires recognizing women not merely as victims of conflict but as indispensable architects of peace as community leaders, mediators, caregivers, entrepreneurs, and decision-makers whose voices and leadership are essential to reconciliation and recovery.

The people of the North West have endured extraordinary hardship, yet their resilience continues to inspire hope. By prioritizing protection, inclusive governance, social justice, and community-led peacebuilding, Cameroon has an opportunity to transform a decade of conflict into a future defined by stability, reconciliation, and shared prosperity. Sustainable peace is not simply the absence of violence; it is the restoration of human dignity, opportunity, and hope for every community.



Panel Discussion 1

BEYOND THE ABSENCE OF WAR: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF PEACE CHALLENGES ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN CAMEROON



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Umenjoh Vania Andoumbeni

President, Association for the Promotion of Gender and Disability Issues (APGDI) Cameroon | Cameroon

Umenjoh Vania Andoumbeni is a Cameroonian gender advocate, peacebuilder, inclusive education specialist, writer and researcher with over ten years of experience promoting gender equality, disability inclusion, and inclusive education. She is the Founder and President of the Association for the Promotion of Gender and Disability Issues (APGDI) Cameroon, which has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Women's Peace Group (IWPG) to advance peacebuilding and women's empowerment. She also serves as National Vice Coordinator of the Cameroon Inclusive Special Education Teacher Training and Empowerment Program (CISETTEP). She also the principal of SENTTI -IBES Yaounde Cameroon. Through research, training, advocacy, and community engagement, she champions inclusive policies and sustainable peace for women, girls, and marginalized communities. She is a PhD research student in the area of Autism in the University of Yaounde 1. She has master degree in Special Education and bachelor's degree in women and gender studies, sociology and Anthropology (Double major) from the university of Buea Cameroon.

Abstract

Peace not only the absence of conflict or war but the ability of people to be at peace, enjoy and fulfil their human rights and freedoms. As stated by the United Nations official (2014), peace means dignity, well-being for all and not just the absence of war.

In Cameroon and Africa that is plague by conflicts and poor working conditions coupled with unemployment amongst youths it becomes very difficult to have peace. Customs and traditions relating to the reproductive roles of women further complicate the issue for women.

Peace affects many aspects of women's life such as education, health, employment, empowerment, poverty amongst others. Crisis situation such as conflict also increases their vulnerability. For instance, with the anglophone crisis that started in 2016 in Cameroon, many families flee from their homes for safety and become internally displaced persons in other towns. Some lost their belongings and source of livelihood, and the children were not able to continue education. The vulnerability of living as IDPs in different towns or not going to school for the children increases the hardship and poverty amongst women and girls. Due to no education most girls end up in early pregnancy and early marriage given that education has a way of delaying marriage. Moreover, the family responsibility of the women increased as their husbands who were the main breadwinner may have lost their lives and belongings due to the crisis. This brings psychological trauma on the women and children. Moreover, some



women in entrepreneurship lost all their investment to the crisis as the crisis open rooms for criminal steal and destroy the property of others. Crisis situations is also not a good environment for businesses. The fact that during crisis situation most school close down revealed that many people are jobless and the consequences is increased poverty especially among women. Women are unable to take care of themselves and their families. This also results in mental health challenges such as stress and stress has a detrimental negative impact on our health. Post traumatic impact equally becomes very common demanding the need for psychosocial support. Moreover, the reproductive health of women is affected in crisis situation because of non-availability of hospitals to take care of pregnant women. Poverty also restricts women access to health facilities. Some are ignorant of birth control mechanism. Moreover, cultural expectations cause women either not to go to school to a certain level, not to do certain jobs or venture into certain fields. Some traditions also prevent women from owning real property such as land because according to them women are property and how can property own property. Women are not also expected to venture into leadership positions because it is assumed the place of a woman is in the kitchen. When these structural barriers are put in place to restrict women access to opportunities, this hinders the enjoyment of their peace, create conflicts and increases poverty among women. Most often culture and traditions have caused most women to choose career path that go in line with the reproductive roles rather than with their passion. This is not satisfying at all. When women are not empowered both the family, community and the nation suffers as it is often said the education of a woman is the education of the nation. This is because an educated and empowered women will ensure proper health, proper education and good standard of living for her children and family as a whole. Given that the family is the foundation of society, once the family is in order and at peace, society will also be at peace leading to global peace. Women need to be brought to the negotiation table and their views taken into consideration because opinions matter and they can share firsthand experience that can influence sustainable development. Given that women are the primary players in agriculture, which is the main source of livelihood, when they us conflict, marginalisation, discrimination or exploitation of any kind they are the primary victims. The fact that their reproductive roles as mother's, wives and care roles in the community. If there is water crisis for example women and girls are the primary victims because carrying of water is their responsibility. This goes same when there is deforestation where trees are lacking because fetching of firewood is the responsibility of women in our community. So, when there conflict or crisis situation the burden falls more on women and girls and this is beyond their control due to the patriarchal nature of our society and the reproductive roles assigned to women due to their gender.



Panel Discussion 1

DRUG ABUSE AND UNWANTED PREGNANCY AMONG TEENAGERS AS THE MOST URGENT PEACE CHALLENGES IN BAMENDA: THEIR IMPACT ON WOMEN AND WHY THEY ARE DIFFICULT TO RESOLVE



Keng Juliet Chi

Project Manager, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon | Cameroon

Keng Juliet Chi holds a Master's degree in Public Law, specializing in Human Rights Law, International Criminal Law, and International Humanitarian Law. She is a seasoned peace advocate and serves as a Project Manager with the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, leading development and emergency response initiatives. A certified trainer in conflict transformation, leadership, and mediation, she has extensive experience in promoting conflict resolution, strengthening community resilience, and advancing sustainable peace through rights-based, inclusive, and participatory approaches.

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Abstract

Drug abuse and unwanted teenage pregnancy have become major social and peace challenges in Bamenda. These issues affect not only teenagers but also families, communities, and especially women. Drug abuse contributes to crime, violence, school dropout, and poor health, while unwanted pregnancy often results in interrupted education, poverty, stigma, and unsafe abortions. This seminar paper examines these two challenges, their causes, their impact on women, and the reasons they remain difficult to resolve. It also proposes practical recommendations for government, families, schools, religious institutions, and community organizations.



Panel Discussion 2

FOSTERING A CULTURE OF PEACE LED BY WOMEN THROUGH CULTURE AND ARTS



Sanem Arikan

Head of the Department of Administrative Services, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Republic of Türkiye | Türkiye

Ms. Sanem Arikan is an IWPG Public Relations Ambassador, current Head of Department of Administrative Services and General Directorate of Copyright at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Türkiye.

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Abstract

This presentation explores how women can play a leading role in fostering a culture of peace through culture, the arts, and cultural diplomacy. Drawing on experiences from Türkiye and international cultural initiatives, it highlights the power of artistic expression and cultural exchange in promoting mutual understanding, respect, and social cohesion. The presentation emphasizes that sustainable peace is built not only through political and institutional efforts but also through cultural engagement, where women serve as key agents of dialogue, inclusion, and community-building. Through traditional arts, intercultural cooperation, and creative education, women can help cultivate a more peaceful and connected world.



Panel Discussion 2

BEYOND SURVIVAL: WHY WOMEN IN CONFLICT ZONES NEED PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT, NOT JUST SECURITY – CASE OF BARINGO COUNTY IN KENYA



Regina Mutiru Mwendwa

Peace and Gender Specialist, National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) | Kenya

Regina M. Mwendwa is a Rotary Peace Fellow and a seasoned peacebuilding practitioner with over 14 years of experience. Her expertise and interests include community-led peacebuilding focusing on women, youth, peace and security including conducting research on gender and prevention of violent extremism. Regina has work experience in Kenya and Ethiopia and possesses extensive knowledge of Sub-Saharan Africa. She currently works with the National Cohesion and Integration Commission in Kenya.

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Abstract

Conflict in Baringo County is typically measured in lives lost, livestock stolen, and villages attacked, a framing that captures visible violence while overlooking the quieter wounds carried by survivors, especially women. As disarmament efforts bring relative calm and displaced families begin contemplating return, one dimension of recovery remains largely unaddressed: mental health. Drawing on first-hand testimonies from women in Baringo, including survivors who gave birth while fleeing attacks, hosted displaced families in secret, and rebuilt their lives only to be displaced again by floods, this presentation argues that security and disarmament address only one side of the crisis: they restore order, but not wellbeing. It examines how informal community networks, particularly women's groups, have stepped in where formal systems have not, and how unprocessed trauma continues to undermine social cohesion, reconciliation between communities, and women's ability to rebuild. The presentation makes the case that Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) cannot remain a secondary consideration in conflict response, deferred until after security, food, and shelter are addressed. In displacement and disarmament settings like Baringo, it is foundational to peace itself, since reconciliation between neighbours, and lasting cohesion, cannot take root while trauma remains unspoken and unhealed. Conflict in Baringo County is typically measured in lives lost, livestock stolen, and villages attacked, a framing that captures visible violence while overlooking the quieter wounds carried by survivors, especially women. As disarmament efforts bring relative calm and displaced families begin contemplating return, one dimension of recovery remains largely unaddressed: mental health. Drawing on first-hand testimonies from women in Baringo, including survivors who gave birth while fleeing attacks, hosted displaced families in secret, and rebuilt their lives only to be displaced again by floods, this presentation argues that security and disarmament address only one side of the crisis: they restore order, but not wellbeing. It examines how informal community networks, particularly women's groups, have stepped in where



formal systems have not, and how unprocessed trauma continues to undermine social cohesion, reconciliation between communities, and women's ability to rebuild. The presentation makes the case that Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) cannot remain a secondary consideration in conflict response, deferred until after security, food, and shelter are addressed. In displacement and disarmament settings like Baringo, it is foundational to peace itself, since reconciliation between neighbours, and lasting cohesion, cannot take root while trauma remains unspoken and unhealed.



Panel Discussion 2

HER VOICE, OUR PEACE: WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP FROM LOCAL ACTION TO POLICY REFORM



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Raveloson Tchiourson Rovahanitra Ida

National Chairwoman, Coalition for Social Justice (CO.JUSTI.S) Madagascar | Madagascar

Ida RAVELOSON is the Chairperson of CO.JUSTI.S, the Coalition for Social Justice in Madagascar, promoting social justice, human rights, inclusion and participatory governance, with a strong focus on women's and girls' rights. She recently became Head of the Peace and Security Pillar of African Women Leaders Network Madagascar.

She works on women's leadership, GBV prevention, child and youth protection, SRHR, HIV/AIDS governance and policy advocacy. She collaborates with parliamentarians, ministries, women mayors, civil society and community actors to connect grassroots realities with institutional reform and promote women's effective participation in peacebuilding and sustainable development.

Abstract

Peace cannot be built while women remain outside decision-making spaces. Drawing on Madagascar's realities of insecurity, GBV, climate stress and social tensions, this presentation highlights the gap between Women, Peace and Security commitments and practice. Based on collaboration with various stakeholders and community actors, it proposes women-led dialogue, local peace networks, small flexible grants for grassroots women peacebuilders, and policy action to move from protection to leadership.



Panel Discussion 2

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION: SCALABLE SOLUTIONS FOR LASTING PEACE



Jana Merunková

Founder & CEO, yourchance o.p.s. | Czech Republic

Jana Merunková is the director of yourchance o.p.s., a Czech public benefit organisation, where she has led work in financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and social integration since 2014. Since 2022, she has initiated and led Vítej v Česku, a programme supporting the integration of newcomers, including Ukrainian families. She has served as an expert working-group member with the Czech Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance, contributing to national financial-literacy standards. In 2025, she received the Czech National Bank Governor's Award for Contribution to Financial and Economic Literacy. An international keynote speaker, she connects grassroots practice with public policy in the pursuit of sustainable peace.

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Abstract

Education, entrepreneurship, and equal opportunity are among the most practical tools for building peaceful, resilient societies. Drawing on the experience of yourchance, a Czech public benefit organisation, this presentation explores how these three pillars work together to empower women - from classroom-based financial literacy and mentoring to international entrepreneurship programmes such as Pitch Summit, part of the EBRD financed Star&Grow project. It highlights concrete impact for women, including practical skills training, access to influential networks, and public platforms to showcase their work. The presentation argues that empowerment must go beyond the local level: proven models can be scaled, replicated across regions, and reflected in public policy to become genuinely sustainable. By connecting grassroots practice with policy dialogue, this session offers a practical pathway from individual empowerment to lasting, structural peace.



Panel Discussion 2

BUILDING PEACE THROUGH COMMUNITY, CULTURE AND BELONGING: LESSONS FROM MOLDOVA AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC



Victoria Donu

Founder & President, Moldoveni.cz | Moldova

Victoria Donu is the Founder and President of Moldoveni.cz, a nonprofit organization connecting the Moldovan diaspora in the Czech Republic through culture, community engagement and civic initiatives. She is also Co-Founder of the Kodrianka Folk Ensemble and Project Leader Europe for Sing for Hope, an international organization using the arts to create positive social impact. Originally from Moldova and based in Prague, Victoria is a musician, speaker and community leader who promotes intercultural dialogue, belonging and grassroots peacebuilding. Her work demonstrates how culture, creativity and community engagement can strengthen resilience, trust and social cohesion across diverse societies.

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Abstract

Peace is often associated with diplomacy, institutions and conflict resolution. Yet sustainable peace begins much earlier—within communities where people feel connected, respected and valued.

In this presentation, Victoria Donu shares her experience building bridges between cultures and communities through grassroots initiatives in the Czech Republic and beyond. Drawing from her work as Founder and President of Moldoveni.cz, Co-Founder of the Kodrianka Folk Ensemble, and Project Leader Europe for Sing for Hope, she explores how culture, community engagement and creative expression can strengthen belonging, resilience and social cohesion.

Through practical examples ranging from diaspora community-building and cultural diplomacy to arts-based programs supporting Ukrainian refugee children, Victoria demonstrates how local initiatives can create meaningful and lasting impact.

Her story highlights the unique role women play as community builders, cultural ambassadors and peace practitioners, proving that peace is not only something negotiated at the highest levels—it is something cultivated every day through connection, inclusion and shared humanity.

2026 Global Women's Peace Forum for Americas Region

7/20 (Mon) 16:00 GMT

Meet Our Speakers

Panel Discussion 1	Peace Udoka Anyira Founder, Global Impact Empowerment Hub Canada	From Silence to Influence: How Women's Voices Are Redefining Peace and Transforming Lives
	Mitzhajalla Torres Pimentel Psychologist, Colectiva Lila / Mentés Saludables Mexico	Mental Health as a Determining Factor in Building a Culture of Peace
	Karen Elizabeth León Romero Student, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) Mexico	From Pain and Absence: A Perspective from Mexico
	Reynalda del Carmen Cliiff Vidal Writer and Attorney Mexico	Peace Integrates with Light and Shadow
Panel Discussion 2	Ana Erika Santana González Federal Deputy, Chamber of Deputies of Mexico Mexico	From Legal Equality to Women's Economic Sovereignty
	Belkis Florentina Izquierdo Torres Magistrate, Special Jurisdiction for Peace Colombia	Territorial Peace and Transitional Justice: An Ethnic and Gender, Women, Family, and Generation Approach
	Paola Jackeline Ontiveros Vázquez Professor, UNAM Mexico	Regional Voices for Sustainable Peace: Women's Perspectives, Solutions and Policy Recommendations
	Cinthia de Carvalho Brum Manager of Disque Denúncia Mulher, Instituto MovRio Brazil	Building Peace through Women's Safety: The Disque Denúncia Mulher Experience in Brazil
	Ivonne Adriana Gaytán Bertruy Mexico Professor, UJAT Mexico	Comprehensive University Education for a Culture of Peace: IWPG-UJAT Model
	Leticia Rodriguez Serrate Business Intelligence Analyst, Mamayatech Bolivia	Engineering Sustainable Peace: Empowering Women in STEM to Drive Innovation, Inclusion and Resilient Communities in Latin America
	Angelica Serratos Zubiria Founder, HERÄ Mexico	Menstrual Rights Are Human Rights



Panel Discussion 1

FROM SILENCE TO INFLUENCE: HOW WOMEN'S VOICES ARE REDEFINING PEACE AND TRANSFORMING LIVES



Peace Udoka Anyira

Founder, Global Impact Empowerment Hub | Canada

Amb. Peace Udoka Anyira is a passionate advocate for empowerment, collaboration, and positive change. As Founder of Global Impact Empowerment Hub, Udopeny Network Limited, Girls Time Out, and a Book Club, she creates spaces that support women, professionals, and underserved communities. She also served as President of the Rotary Club of Brampton South, advancing service and community development. Through training, coaching, mentorship, and humanitarian initiatives, Peace helps individuals grow personally and professionally. Her dedication to uplifting others and helping them pursue their dreams earned her the name "Mother of Nations." Her mission is to build a better world for all.

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Abstract

Women's voices are not only shaping conversations about peace; they are transforming communities, institutions, and nations.

This presentation explores how women move from silence to influence by leading dialogue, fostering inclusion, resolving conflict, and driving social change.

It highlights the profound impact of women's leadership on advancing gender equity, strengthening resilient communities, and creating sustainable peace, while inspiring collective action toward a more just and inclusive future.



Panel Discussion 1

MENTAL HEALTH AS A DETERMINING FACTOR IN BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE



Mitzhajalla Torres Pimentel

Psychologist, Colectiva Lila/Mentes Saludables | Mexico

Mitzhajalla Torres Pimentel is a psychologist who graduated from UNAM, specialized in clinical and legal/forensic psychology, with a master's degree in forensic psychopathology and the justice system, from the National Institute of Criminal Sciences. She has expertise in human rights, gender, and mental health. She has experience providing psychological care to women who were victims of violence, as well as in designing and leading programs on violence prevention and mental health promotion. She has collaborated on research projects with civil society organizations and academic institutions on issues related to the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, and is part of IWPG.

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Abstract

Women's mental health is essential to building a culture of peace, as their circumstances have historically been shaped by violence and inequality, a situation that people are striving to change, not only on an individual level but also collectively. Protecting their mental health and that of their communities fosters dignity, connection, and nonviolent conflict resolution. This leads us to ensure accessible and culturally appropriate care, as societies strengthen social justice, resilience, and collective well-being. In this way, supporting mental health helps create the conditions necessary for lasting peace.



Panel Discussion 1

FROM PAIN AND ABSENCE: A PERSPECTIVE FROM MEXICO



Karen Elizabeth León Romero

Student, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) | Mexico

Karen Elizabeth León Romero is an International Relations student at UNAM, driven by a passion for diplomacy, human rights, and intercultural exchange. Having traveled and studied in diverse environments ranging from Canada to South Korea, she enjoys connecting with people from different countries, languages, and backgrounds. As a University Peace Representative for the IWPG, Karen seeks to empower young women to engage in activism and develop a global consciousness. She is sincerely committed to inspiring others, aiming to foster a global community where collective empathy transforms into meaningful action for peace.

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Abstract

The most urgent challenge facing Mexico is the normalization of structural violence and insecurity. This crisis, particularly regarding disappearances, has created an environment of permanent alert, where a simple daily routine like going to school or work carries the weight of uncertainty. While Mexico is a nation defined by its vibrant culture and capacity for unity, we are simultaneously living through a period of deep national trauma. Our constant protests, led by teachers, students, and searching mothers, are not merely complaints; they are the cries of a society demanding to be heard and protected.

This violence affects women most devastatingly, hitting the very heart of our families. It is the raw, agonizing trauma of a mother who gives her daughter a blessing and a hug before she leaves for school, only to have that silence become absolute when she never returns home. These mothers are often left searching for their loved ones in the streets, forced to navigate bureaucratic neglect and the cold reality of waiting for search warrants while their hearts are breaking. We are living a nightmare where too many families are left in a state of perpetual agony, not knowing where their daughters are, or even worse, never finding their bodies. This is not just a statistical issue; it is a fracture in our society that cannot be ignored.

Resolving these issues is complex due to deep-seated distrust in institutions and a history of impunity. Yet, the greatest obstacle is the lack of effective channels to translate collective empathy into tangible public policy. We must move beyond the fleeting unity of massive events and toward a permanent, organized community of solidarity. As young women, our goal is to bridge this gap, ensuring that our voices build a future where future generations can walk without fear, restoring the dignity and safety that every citizen deserves.



Panel Discussion 1

PEACE BUILT WITH LIGHT AND SHADOWS



Reynalda del Carmen Cliiff Vidal

Writer & Attorney | Mexico

Reynalda del Carmen Cliiff Vidal was born in Villahermosa, Tabasco, Mexico on January 8, 1972. A lawyer and psychologist, she is currently pursuing a Master of Science in Psychosocial Intervention at the Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco. She is a writer and poet, author of the book *Dijeron no*, and has participated in various state, national, and international anthologies. She is the creator of the page *Mujer abraza la vida*. Since 2025, she has been a member of greetings from the IWPG.

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Abstract

Peace is an inner flame that we must care for and keep safe from the assaults of an outside world that threatens to extinguish it; its light is warm, it conveys tenderness, sweetness, and comfort. The fire in primitive homes was used to protect and nourish us; it was a gathering place for women who, around it, shared life, experiences, and dreams. Knowing it, learning to control it, and limiting it prevented it from harming us. At some point, we forgot the conciliatory nature of fire and began to use it as a weapon to establish imaginary boundaries; its light stopped showing us the way and instead exposed our differences. We ceased to be a white species as we passed through the prism of cultural, political, social, economic, and religious criteria; we assumed colors and shapes that set us apart. Love became a fuel used at convenience, freedom was dressed up, and we forgot that we have no power or dominion beyond the skin that covers us; we began to look at the flame of others with suspicion, with fear.

What is needed to turn our gaze back and seek closeness, reconciliation, cooperation? Something that goes beyond simple empathy, respect, and acceptance of others—something that has to do with recognizing and integrating the light we carry and the darkness we deny. To look beyond prejudices, cultural and ideological differences, to go further than religious beliefs that, seen from the moon, only sow discord, division, criticism, accusations—ideas that foster the triumph of one reason at the cost of victims who fall in war. Criteria that limit and divide, that prevent us from seeing and recognizing the fragility of another's flame, giving way to deception that justifies the blows meant to extinguish that other light which hurts, questions, and threatens the comfort that cannot tolerate disruption.

Allow me to share an experience: years ago, I participated in a gathering of women—each different, distinct, from distant geographies, with diverse backgrounds and achievements. When night fell, they gave us a flame taken from the same bonfire, but the open-air breeze extinguished many candles.

In the end came the question: *What did you do with the light you were given?* There, under the starlight, someone spoke and said: *I integrated it into my existence, and in doing so, I helped others keep theirs lit, and together we were able to chant the same song.*



Panel Discussion 2

FROM LEGAL EQUALITY TO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SOVEREIGNTY



Ana Erika Santana González

Federal Deputy, Chamber of Deputies of Mexico | Mexico

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Ana Erika Santana González is a Federal Deputy of Mexico's Green Ecologist Party (PVEM) in the LXVI Legislature. She serves as Secretary of the Committees on Culture and Cinematography and on Governance and Population, and is a member of the Constitutional Affairs Committee. A corporate attorney specializing in compliance and corporate governance, she is also a doctoral candidate in law. She is Mexico Ambassador of LAIHA, a social activist, and founder of Slow Food Baja California. She co-authored *Victims from a Human Rights Perspective* (2018), received the 2025 CONCANACO National Award, "Woman Breaking the Glass Ceiling," and lectures on Compliance and Comparative Law in the Master's Program at Cannabishub–University of Barcelona.

Abstract

Women's economic sovereignty has become one of the defining challenges for sustainable development, democratic resilience, and peacebuilding in the twenty-first century. While significant progress has been made toward achieving legal equality, millions of women around the world continue to face structural barriers that limit their ability to build wealth, accumulate productive assets, and participate fully in the formal economy. These barriers not only undermine gender equality but also constrain economic growth and social stability.

This presentation argues that women's economic empowerment should be understood not merely as a matter of social justice, but as a strategic investment in long-term prosperity and lasting peace. Drawing on international evidence, it highlights the persistent challenges of financial exclusion, business informality, limited access to productive credit, and the lack of financial literacy, corporate governance, and compliance systems that disproportionately affect women entrepreneurs.

To address these challenges, the presentation proposes the Women's Economic Sovereignty Initiative 2035, a global partnership among governments, multilateral organizations, universities, development finance institutions, and the private sector. The initiative is built upon five measurable objectives: universal financial education for girls, reducing the informality of women-led enterprises, expanding access to productive finance, strengthening governance and compliance in businesses, and recognizing unpaid care work as strategic economic infrastructure.

Ultimately, the paper contends that advancing women's economic sovereignty is not solely a women's issue, but a global development agenda that strengthens democratic institutions, accelerates inclusive economic growth, and creates the social conditions necessary for sustainable peace.



Panel Discussion 2

TERRITORIAL PEACE AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE: AN ETHNIC AND GENDER, WOMEN, FAMILY, AND GENERATION APPROACH



Belkis Florentina Izquierdo Torres

Magistrate, Special Jurisdiction for Peace | Colombia

Belkis Florentina Izquierdo Torres is an Indigenous woman and leader of the Iku/Wintukwa people of the Sierra Nevada de Gonawindua, Colombia. She currently serves as a magistrate of the Chamber for the Acknowledgment of Truth, Responsibility, and Determination of Facts and Conducts of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP). She is a lawyer from the National University of Colombia and holds a master's degree in Public Administration, with an emphasis on governance and public policy. Her work has contributed to making visible the collective, individual, and territorial forms of violence suffered by ethnic peoples, as well as the differentiated and disproportionate harms inflicted on the Territory, women, and children.

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Abstract

The presentation analyzes how women's participation transforms transitional justice, based on the experience of Case 02 of the JEP. It examines the application of gender, ethno-racial, and intersectional approaches in judicial investigation and highlights their contributions to restorative justice, which investigates and acknowledges individual, collective, and territorial forms of violence and harm, while helping to weave peace through care and maternal love. Finally, it proposes guarantees, protection measures, and effective resources to ensure their participation.



Panel Discussion 2

REGIONAL VOICES FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE: WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES, SOLUTIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



Paola Jackeline Ontiveros Vázquez

Professor, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) | Mexico

Dr. Paola Jackeline Ontiveros Vázquez is a Mexican legal scholar, researcher, private mediator, and peacebuilder. She holds a PhD in Law from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, an LL.M. from Syracuse University, and postgraduate degrees in conflict resolution and mediation. She is a member of Mexico's National System of Researchers, a certified Private Mediator in Mexico City, and an international mediator with MIKK in Berlin. As a full-time professor at UNAM, author, and founding director of ANMECON, her work focuses on mediation, alternative dispute resolution, digital justice, and building a culture of peace.

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Abstract

This presentation explores the essential role of women in building sustainable peace through mediation, peace education, conflict management, and transformative leadership. From the perspective of a private mediator and peacebuilder, it argues that peace should not be understood as the absence of conflict, but as the capacity of individuals, communities, and institutions to manage differences constructively through dialogue, cooperation, and respect for human dignity.

The presentation emphasizes the need to strengthen the professional training of women mediators through interdisciplinary education in mediation, negotiation, emotional intelligence, human rights, restorative practices, intercultural competence, and ethical leadership. It also advocates for integrating peace education and conflict-management skills into schools, universities, public institutions, workplaces, and communities.

Furthermore, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, including mediation, conciliation, negotiation, and restorative practices, are presented as essential instruments for access to justice and peaceful coexistence. The presentation proposes concrete policy priorities: developing professional networks and training pathways for women mediators, institutionalizing education for a culture of peace, expanding access to alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and ensuring women's meaningful participation in peace-related decision-making. Ultimately, women's leadership is recognized as a powerful force capable of transforming conflicts, institutions, communities, and societies toward sustainable peace.



Panel Discussion 2

BUILDING PEACE THROUGH WOMEN'S SAFETY: THE DISQUE DENÚNCIA MULHER EXPERIENCE IN BRAZIL



Cinthia de Carvalho Brum

Manager of Disque Denúncia Mulher, MovRio Institute | Brazil

Cinthia de Carvalho Brum is Manager of Disque Denúncia Mulher at Instituto MovRio, Brazil, where she leads strategic communication initiatives to prevent violence against women and strengthen community engagement. A communications strategist and women's rights advocate, she works to expand access to anonymous reporting, reinforce protection networks, and promote collaboration between civil society and public institutions. Cinthia also contributed to Dossiê Mulher 2024, supporting evidence-based public policies on gender-based violence. She believes that communication is a powerful tool for social transformation, peacebuilding, and the promotion of safer, more inclusive communities.

Contact her:

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Abstract

Violence against women is not only a human rights issue but also a barrier to sustainable peace. This presentation explores how Disque Denúncia Mulher combines anonymous reporting, public awareness campaigns, and institutional collaboration to prevent violence, strengthen protection networks, and support public policies. It argues that protecting women also safeguards children, reinforces communities, and lays the foundation for more peaceful and resilient societies.



Panel Discussion 2

COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE: IWPG-UJAT MODEL



Ivonne Adriana Gaytán Bertruy

Professor, Juarez Autonomous University of Tabasco (UJAT) | Mexico

TBC

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Abstract

Universities transform students into agents of change. Through the university model implemented at UJAT and the initiatives carried out by IWPG, these institutions complement one another by working through a Peace Committee to provide a broader understanding of the world's social realities while strengthening the socio-emotional skills of the academic community. Together, they create a solid foundation for young people to build a future free from violence.

Education goes beyond the classroom. Universities teach students how to solve problems without resorting to conflict, helping them become global citizens—individuals who understand the world, respect others, care for the planet, and seek the well-being of the entire community.

This approach is further strengthened through the use of neuroleadership, which promotes leading others with empathy and an understanding of how the brain works. It helps students better understand how their peers think and feel, fostering more effective communication and collaboration.

By combining these two approaches, educational institutions help develop confident and responsible young people. For example, UJAT implements programs that encourage students to engage in dialogue and coexist peacefully. It also collaborates with global organizations such as IWPG to provide education and training for a culture of peace. This holistic approach to education empowers young people to become positive leaders. They learn how to engage in dialogue, mediate conflicts, and understand their own emotions. Equipped with these skills, students are able to care for those around them and contribute to building a more peaceful and inclusive society.



Panel Discussion 2

ENGINEERING SUSTAINABLE PEACE: EMPOWERING WOMEN IN STEM TO DRIVE INNOVATION, INCLUSION AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES IN LATIN AMERICA



Leticia Rodríguez Serrate

Business Intelligence Analyst, Mamayatech | Bolivia

Leticia Rodríguez Serrate is an Industrial Engineer and Business Intelligence Analyst from Bolivia. She specializes in business intelligence, data analytics, and process improvement, using technology and evidence-based decision-making to solve complex organizational challenges. She previously served as Research Director of the Industrial Engineering Scientific Society at Universidad UNIVALLE, promoting research and innovation among students. Passionate about women's leadership in STEM, she advocates for education, innovation, and cross-sector collaboration as key drivers of sustainable development, resilient communities, and lasting peace across Latin America.

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Abstract

Sustainable peace requires more than the absence of conflict; it depends on inclusive development, innovation, and equal access to opportunities. Across Latin America, women remain underrepresented in STEM fields despite their potential to address critical regional challenges such as climate change, digital transformation, sustainable industrial development, and economic inequality.

This presentation explores how increasing women's participation and leadership in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) can strengthen innovation, improve evidence-based decision-making, and build more resilient communities. Drawing from the perspective of an Industrial Engineer from Bolivia, it highlights practical and scalable actions—including mentorship, education, cross-sector collaboration, and investment in women-led innovation—that can expand opportunities while generating long-term social impact.

The session concludes with policy recommendations for governments, universities, industry, and international organizations to position women's leadership in STEM as a strategic pathway toward sustainable peace and inclusive development across Latin America.



Panel Discussion 2

MENSTRUAL RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS



Angelica Serratos Zubiria

Founder, HERĀ | Mexico

Angélica Zubiría is a Mexican young leader with a degree in International Business, committed to social impact, equity, and humanitarian development. She is the creator of HERĀ, a Women@Dior project raising awareness of endometriosis and PCOS in Mexico, recognized as the winning project for its innovation and social impact. A founding member and project coordinator at Kidma, she contributes to youth development in vulnerable settings, notably through "Cuidarnos en la Calle," advancing women's safety. Her focus: human rights, gender equality, sustainability, and lasting social change.

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Abstract

For centuries, menstruation was a taboo: something unnamed and therefore untreated. Conditions like endometriosis and SOMP affect one in ten women, yet still take eight to ten years to diagnose. Since the UN (2021) and the WHO (2024) recognized menstrual health as a human right, diagnostic delay is no longer a clinical failure but a violation of rights. And in a forum for peace, the idea is simple: there is no peace while half the population is asked to silence its pain. Believing a woman is also an act of peace.

2026 Global Women's Peace Forum for South Asia/Middle East Region

7/21(Tue) 06:00 GMT

Meet Our Speakers

Panel Discussion 1	Ghada Chreim Ata Former Minister, Ministry of the Displaced Persons of Lebanon Lebanon	From the Margins to the Table: Women, War, and the Future of Peace
	Manal Aleses Advisor, Jordanian National Commission for Women Jordan	Impact on Women
	Fawzia Koofi President of the Board, Women for Afghanistan (WFA) United Kingdom	More than a Seat at the Table: Inclusion, Not Tokenism
	Lamia Al-eryani Head, Yemen Peace School Organization Yemen	National Reconciliation and the Roles of Women in Yemen
	Huda Alkhatawy Peace and women rights advocate Iraq	Women as a Partners and Building Sustainable Peace
	Heba Haidar Founder, Global Shapers Aden Hub Yemen	From Resilience to Peace: Women Leading Community Transformation in Aden
Panel Discussion 2	Al-romissa Yaqoob Director General of Human Rights Department, Ministry of Legal Affairs and Human Rights Yemen	Empowering Women with Psychosocial Disabilities as Partners in Sustainable Peacebuilding: The Experience of Our Step Association in Jordan
	Vishakha Mashankar State Head, Bharatiya Stree Shakti Samunnatha India	India's Journey from Naxal Violence towards Peace and Development
	Amira Al Jamal Founder & Chairperson of the Supreme Council, Our Step Association Jordan	Developing Mechanisms for Enforcing International Treaties and Agreements: Regional Models for Charting a Roadmap That Promotes Sustainable Peace
	Batool Kazmi Educator Mentor Pakistan	Strengthening the Role of Women for National Development
	Maria Hajipavlou Retired Professor, University of Cyprus Cyprus	A Multilevel Intervention to Promote Social and Political Change: The Case of Gender Advisory Team (GAT)



Panel Discussion 1

FROM THE MARGINS TO THE TABLE: WOMEN, WAR, AND THE FUTURE OF PEACE



Ghada Chreim Ata

Former Minister, Ministry of the Displaced Persons of Lebanon | Lebanon

Ghada Chreim Ata, former Minister for the Displaced in Lebanon, is currently a professor at the Lebanese University specializing in Literature and Intercultural Studies. Throughout her career, she has been committed to advancing public service, education, gender equality, and sustainable development. She previously served as President of the Women in Politics Committee at the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), where she promoted women's political participation and leadership. She is also the founder of the WDG (Women Development Goals) Association, an organization dedicated to empowering communities, supporting women's leadership, and advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through advocacy, education, and partnership.

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Abstract

Women sustain communities during conflict yet remain excluded from peace negotiations and political decision-making. Although women's participation makes peace agreements more durable, they are still underrepresented despite commitments under UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Lebanon reflects this global pattern, where women lead in crisis response but hold few political seats. Lasting peace requires women's equal, guaranteed participation in shaping the future.



Panel Discussion 1

IMPACT ON WOMEN



Manal Aleses

Advisor, Jordanian National Commission for Women | Jordan

TBC

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Abstract

The future of peace begins when women are given real space to participate and make decisions, for their voices are not merely an addition but a cornerstone for building more just and stable societies. When women's experiences are heard and translated into policies and initiatives, a culture of dialogue is strengthened, rights are protected, and opportunities for sustainable development increase. Empowering women to lead peacebuilding efforts is an investment in a safer and more equitable future for generations to come.



Panel Discussion 1

MORE THAN A SEAT AT THE TABLE: INCLUSION, NOT TOKENISM



Fawzia Koofi

President of the Board, Women for Afghanistan (WFA) | United Kingdom

TBC

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Abstract

Recent peace negotiations continue to exclude many of the people most affected by conflict—particularly women, survivors of war, and marginalized communities. Looking at recent peace processes, the evidence is clear and striking negotiating tables are still overwhelmingly lacking women, no meaningful participation by those who have lived through the consequences of war.

This discussion argues that inclusion must go beyond symbolic or token representation. Women and conflict-affected communities must be equal partners in shaping peace agreements if those agreements are to be legitimate, sustainable, and capable of creating cohesive societies. While any peace is preferable to war, not every peace agreement produces positive peace. Too often, agreements simply end armed conflict while preserving systems of oppression and injustice. This distinction between negative peace—the absence of violence—and positive peace—the presence of justice, rights, and dignity is especially relevant to Afghanistan.

Some argue that Afghanistan is now more peaceful because active warfare has largely ceased since the Taliban's return to power. But for millions of Afghan women, peace cannot be measured merely by the silence of guns. Peace means justice, freedom, equality, and the ability to live with dignity.

How can we speak of peace when nearly 17 million Afghan women are confined by policies that amount to an open-air prison? Women have been stripped of their rights to education, employment, and public life, and even their voices are increasingly silenced. Being denied opportunities, treated as second-class citizens, and controlled solely because of one's gender is not peace—it is systematic oppression.

Education has always been central to this struggle. Authoritarian and extremist movements understand that educated women and children challenge systems of control, which is why education is so often among their first targets.

Despite these realities, Afghan women have never stopped fighting for peace. Our struggle continues in different forms. We continue to challenge the patriarchal ideology imposed by the Taliban. I have sat across the negotiating table from Taliban representatives, looked them in the eye, challenged their interpretations of Islam, and argued



that equality, coexistence, and pluralism are not only compatible with Islam but essential for Afghanistan's future. It is deeply troubling that many who seek to control women's lives possess little understanding of either Islamic scholarship or the principles of justice they claim to uphold.

Every war is devastating, but the Taliban's war against the rights and dignity of women is among the gravest injustices of our time. Today, we witness repeated violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law with little accountability. This raises profound questions about the credibility of the international system that was created to protect the most vulnerable.

Afghan women repeatedly ask a simple but painful question: Why are our rights treated as less important? Why is international law applied selectively? Their demands are not extraordinary. They want humanitarian assistance to reach women directly, and they want the international community to uphold the very laws and principles it has pledged to defend.



Panel Discussion 1

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN YEMEN



Lamia Al-eryani

Head, Yemen Peace School Organization | Yemen

Lamia Aleryani is the Founder and President of the Yemen Peace School, where she now works full-time after a distinguished career in government. She previously served as Secretary General of the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood (2014–2019) and as Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training, focusing on girls' education (2009–2014). A recognized advocate for peace and women's leadership, she is a founding or active member of several regional and international networks, including the Yemeni Women NGOs Leadership Network, Civil Alliance in Peacebuilding, and the Regional Network for Reconciliation and Tolerance in the Arab Region. Her work continues to center on education, peacebuilding, and advancing women's roles in conflict resolution

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Abstract

Yemen's prolonged conflict has produced deep social fragmentation, severe humanitarian suffering, and weakened national cohesion. In this context, national reconciliation is essential for sustainable peace, and women's meaningful participation is a decisive factor in its success. This presentation outlines a women-centered approach to reconciliation, emphasizing inclusive processes, restorative justice, and the protection of civilians.

Key pathways include reducing hate speech, strengthening local and political dialogue, documenting victims' experiences, and integrating feminist perspectives into transitional justice. The approach also highlights equal political participation, economic empowerment, peace education, and psychosocial support as foundations for rebuilding the social fabric.

By establishing women-led reconciliation committees, community support mechanisms, and broad partnerships with governmental and international actors, Yemen can reduce polarization, enhance women's roles in peace processes, and lay the groundwork for a more inclusive and durable peace.



Panel Discussion 1

WOMEN AS A PARTNERS AND BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PEACE



Huda Alkhatawy

Peace and women rights advocate | Iraq

Huda Rafid Ahmed is an Iraqi peacebuilder and human rights activist with more than ten years of experience in humanitarian action, women's protection, and peacebuilding. She holds a Bachelor's degree in International Relations and has managed projects supported by UN Women, UNICEF, Lutheran World Federation, Tearfund, and other international organizations. Huda is a Peace Education Trainer and member of the International Women's Peace Group (IWPG). Her work focuses on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325), gender-based violence prevention, community dialogue, and strengthening women's leadership in sustainable peace across Iraq.

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Abstract

Sustainable peace cannot be achieved without the meaningful participation of women. Across many communities in the Middle East, ongoing challenges such as economic hardship, social divisions, displacement, and gender inequality continue to affect peace and stability. Women are often among the most affected by these challenges, yet they also play a critical role in promoting dialogue, strengthening social cohesion, and supporting community resilience.

This presentation explores the most urgent peace challenges in the region, their impact on women, and the reasons why these issues remain difficult to resolve. It also highlights practical approaches to strengthening women's leadership, increasing their participation in decision-making, and promoting collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, and local communities.

The presentation emphasizes that empowering women is not only a matter of equality but also a key requirement for achieving inclusive and sustainable peace. By recognizing women as active partners in peacebuilding, communities can build greater trust, resilience, and long-term stability.



Panel Discussion 1

FROM RESILIENCE TO PEACE: WOMEN LEADING COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION IN ADEN



Heba Haidar

Founder, Global Shapers Aden hub | Yemen

TBC

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Abstract

Noor Haidar, who helped build peace through education. The women of Aden, who preserved the social fabric of their communities despite years of conflict. My experience in bringing together young people and women through entrepreneurship, community leadership, and volunteerism as a path toward unity rather than division.



Panel Discussion 2

DEVELOPING MECHANISMS FOR ENFORCING INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS: REGIONAL MODELS FOR CHARTING A ROADMAP THAT PROMOTES SUSTAINABLE PEACE



Al-romissa Yaqoob

Director General of Human Rights Department, Ministry of Legal Affairs and Human Rights of Yemen | Yemen

Dr. Alromissa Yaqoob is a PhD holder in International Humanitarian Law and a human rights and political activist with extensive experience in peacebuilding, youth and women's empowerment, and advocating for underrepresented groups, particularly persons with disabilities; she serves as the President of the National Network for Advocating the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the General Director of the Human Rights Department at the Ministry, contributing to the advancement of human rights policies and social justice.

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Abstract

This paper examines ways to develop enforcement mechanisms for international treaties, conventions, and UN resolutions related to peacebuilding and the protection of the rights of the most vulnerable groups in conflict zones. It begins by analyzing the procedural gap between international legislative frameworks and the operational reality at the regional level, showcasing lived regional models that have successfully created practical pathways to implement and activate these international obligations. Furthermore, the paper provides a methodical roadmap aimed at enhancing and developing existing treaties, linking them to flexible and scalable operational mechanisms. This ensures the institutionalization of these models and transforms international commitments into binding and sustainable executive strategies under the umbrella of international law.



Panel Discussion 2

INDIA'S JOURNEY FROM NAXAL VIOLENCE TOWARDS PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT



Vishakha Mashankar

State Head, Bharatiya Stree Shakti Samunnatha | India

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Vishakha Samir Mashankar holds a graduate degree in Human Development, Family Resource Management, and Nutrition, along with a postgraduate specialization in Family Resource Management. Born on 1st September, she has dedicated her life to social impact, sustainability, and empowerment. She actively contributes to the Prime Minister's Ban Plastic initiative through her enterprise Vishwat Ecopack, which promotes eco-friendly alternatives to single-use plastics. She is also the founder of Spiritual Spirits Studio, working to preserve and revive the ancient Indian art of Kundan and stone craftsmanship. A prolific writer, Vishakha has authored over 700 Marathi and Hindi poems, many of which have been published in magazines and books. She has also published her own Marathi poetry collection titled "Vishwat." As an accomplished orator and certified international soft skills trainer, she has trained and inspired over 15,000 individuals across corporates, colleges, and schools, conducting nearly 300 sessions. She is also a family and personal counsellor, and a master healer in Reiki and crystal healing. Her social contributions span multiple organizations, including Rashtra Sevika Samiti, Deendayal Research Institute, Utkarsh Bal Bhavan, Junior Chamber International (JCI), and Bharatiya Stree Shakti.

She has consistently been recognized with national excellence awards. She was conferred the prestigious international title Patron of JCI by Phil S. Pugsley in 2012. Her accolades include the Jhansi Rani Puraskar by Bharatiya Sanskriti Parishad (Andhra Pradesh), the Khadi Hamara Mantra Artisan Award presented by Nitin Gadkari, and the Women Excellence Award 2022. Vishakha leads the initiative "Moment Vishwat", focused on empowering the girl child to become psychologically strong and self-reliant. In 2026, she represented India at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) in New York as a delegate of Bharatiya Stree Shakti. A passionate traveler, she has explored 25 countries. Deeply rooted in her values, she actively works for societal welfare and believes in living each moment with purpose and joy. She is also a proud Karsevak who participated in the Ram Janmabhoomi movement in 1991 and was imprisoned for 7 days in Naini, Uttar Pradesh. Above all, Vishakha is a devoted mother to two accomplished sons—Anish, a software engineer based in Germany with his architect wife Riddhi, and Pratish, a software engineer at Google in California. She is an entrepreneur, writer, orator, trainer, healer, and dedicated social worker—an embodiment of purpose-driven living.

Abstract

TBC



Panel Discussion 2

EMPOWERING WOMEN WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITIES AS PARTNERS IN SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING: THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR STEP ASSOCIATION IN JORDAN



Amira Al Jamal

Founder & Chairperson of the Supreme Council, Our Step Association | Jordan

TBC

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Abstract

Sustainable peace cannot be achieved without the meaningful participation of women with psychosocial disabilities in decision-making and peacebuilding. This presentation highlights the experience of Our Step Association in Jordan in empowering women through a human rights-based approach, community inclusion, advocacy, partnerships, and policy influence. It concludes with practical lessons and recommendations to strengthen the role of women with psychosocial disabilities as key partners in building sustainable and inclusive peace.



Panel Discussion 2

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF WOMEN FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



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Batool Kazmi

Educator Mentor | Pakistan

Mrs. Batool Kazmi is an educator, peace lecturer, and sustainability advocate with extensive experience in international education, teacher training, peacebuilding, and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). She is a Pearson Master Trainer and an experienced examiner, having contributed to the delivery and assessment of international qualifications.

She serves as the IWPG Global Region 3 Karachi Peace Representative. She has given peace lectures to many through IWPG Global Region 3 platform and is also selected as a Global Sustainability Ambassador representing Pakistan through GGC platform as a member. As a Mentor and Advocate with the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network's Global Schools Program, she actively supports youth empowerment, global citizenship, and transformative education. She is an experienced educator and promotes empathy, special education and ethical values through her work. She is also a mentor with Global Initiative and do mentoring for career and as well she is a certified NLP practitioner and also does counselling sessions for parents and youth. Her talks all reflect values of Peace Education.

Mrs. Kazmi is committed to advancing peace education, women's empowerment, and sustainability initiatives, while advocating for innovative and solution-oriented approaches to address local and global challenges. Through her work with schools, educators, and international organisations, she continues to inspire the next generation of leaders and changemaker. She calls herself a lifelong learner.

Abstract

Strengthening the Role of Women for National Development Women are the foundation of the nation, yet their role is often overlooked in official data and policy decisions. They manage homes, support local economies, and face challenges like limited access to property, unequal pay, and cultural rules that limit their movement. Enhancing the influence of South Asian women is not just a social goal, it is an essential step for the country's economic stability and the well-being of all citizens. By breaking these barriers, Pakistan can tap into a vast pool of potential and energy. Women are key drivers of change in their communities, often making a difference with limited resources. They serve as the main educators for their children and leaders in family health care. Their silent but powerful efforts lead to better living conditions across the nation. In both rural and urban areas, women are at the forefront of local development. They form self-help groups where members save small amounts to start family businesses or meet urgent needs. These groups often step in where government services fall short. For example, women frequently lead efforts in sanitation and water management, ensuring their neighborhoods have clean resources. This work builds strong social networks that support the most vulnerable in the community. Women are reshaping traditional gender roles through their work in professional and creative fields. More women are entering fields like engineering, journalism, and information technology that were once dominated by men. However, this shift is not easy. They often face resistance from family and society. Still, their presence in public life challenges outdated attitudes. Every woman who holds public office or becomes a business leader serves as a role model for young girls. This inspires the next generation to pursue careers based on ability, not gender. Women are also strong advocates for the health and education of their children. Mothers often organize to demand better school facilities



or access to medical services. They know that education is the key to breaking free from poverty for their families. Even when they themselves are illiterate, many women fight to ensure their daughters stay in school. Their efforts to improve nutrition and hygiene have a direct impact on the country's health, reducing illness rates in their communities. The economic potential of Pakistani women is greatly limited by structural problems. While many work in the informal sector, they lack access to formal financial systems, which is a major obstacle. Women in the Workforce: Participation and Progress Statistics show that the participation of women in the workforce is lower than the regional average. Many women do unpaid work at home, which supports the economy but is not counted in GDP reports. In the formal sector, women are mostly found in teaching, healthcare, and textile manufacturing. However, they often earn less than men for the same jobs. Many companies do not provide safe transportation or childcare, which forces many talented women to leave the workforce early. Entrepreneurship and Financial Independence The rise of digital tools has created new opportunities for female entrepreneurs. Many women now run successful businesses from home using social media to reach customers across the country. These small businesses range from handmade crafts and fashion to food services and online consulting. Microfinance programs have also helped. These loans give women the capital to buy equipment or inventory. When women have control over their finances, they tend to invest more in their children's education and health, lifting their families out of poverty. Bridging the Economic Disparity Gap A major barrier to economic growth is the lack of property rights for women. In many areas, women cannot own land or access bank loans without the signature of a male relative. This limits their ability to start big businesses or build long-term wealth. To address this, banks should make loan requirements easier for women and offer financial literacy training. Governments should also strengthen laws that protect inheritance rights, ensuring women can hold assets in their own names. Political Engagement and Representation of Pakistani Women Political life in Pakistan remains challenging for women, but their influence is clear when they are involved in decision-making. Representation is the first step towards creating laws that reflect the needs of half the population. Barriers to Political Participation Women who enter politics often face intimidation, lack of funding, and social stigma. Many families discourage women from running for office due to safety concerns. Political parties often treat women as secondary candidates, giving them tickets only in areas where winning is unlikely. Campaigning is expensive, and most women do not have access to the same donor networks as men. These challenges make it difficult for women to gain representation in local and national assemblies. Women's Impact in Elected Office Despite these challenges, women in office have pushed for important laws. Reserved seats in the parliament have helped increase the number of women in government. These female representatives have often focused on legislation related to domestic violence, workplace harassment, and child marriage. Their presence ensures that issues affecting women and families are discussed in the assembly. Research shows that when women hold office, they are more likely to support policies that benefit schools and clinics, which helps everyone.



Panel Discussion 2

A MULTILEVEL INTERVENTION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGE: THE CASE OF GENDER ADVISORY TEAM (GAT)



Maria Hadjipavlou

Retired Professor, University of Cyprus | Cyprus

Maria Hadjipavlou was educated in the UK and the USA whereas a post-doctoral fellow at Harvard she was trained by Professor Herbert Kelman in Interactive-Problem-Solving approach to conflict resolution which she used in many countries as a Scholar/practitioner. She taught in universities abroad and in Cyprus. She published widely and her book "Women and Change in Cyprus: Feminisms, and Gender in Conflict" (2010), I.B.Tauris, became a reference book. As an activist she Co-founded Cypriot women NGOs-'Hands Across the Divide' (2001-); 'Gender Advisory Team'(2009-, and many others; Member of the Technical Committee on Gender Equality (2015-now) and Member of the Mediterranean Women Mediators/Cyprus (2017-).

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Abstract

Conflict, war, peace, and security are all gendered phenomena. Men and women are ascribed different roles and thus experience the consequences of conflict differently and have different needs, concerns, and expectations. In my presentation I refer to UNSCR 1325, WPS (2000) in the work of the Gender Advisory Team in Cyprus. GAT is a non-governmental group established in 2009 by women academics, activists and conflict resolution practitioners focusing on 1325 and its integration in the peace and peacebuilding processes in Cyprus. I will refer to some of GAT's activities and its multi-level strategy we have adopted (Hadjipavlou and Mertan 2019) and the impact this strategy has had and give some examples. The presentation finishes with some policy recommendations.



IWPG