The Women’s Platform of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

Field Monitoring Report in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda

August/September 2015
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Executive Summary
The Women’s Platform of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSC) Framework is part of efforts to ensure the PSC Framework regional benchmark 1.5 “to strengthen the involvement of civil society organizations and women’s groups in regional efforts aimed at addressing the sources of instability in line with Security Council Resolution S/Res/1325 (2000).” is achieved, and is in line with the priority of “Mobilization of the force vives of the region - women, youth and civil society, to build constituencies under the PSC Framework and promote a shared vision for peace and prosperity in the region”, as contained in the roadmap of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region (O/SESG-GL).

To ensure that women are fully involved, and to underscore the importance of promoting an active and visible approach of mainstreaming a gender perspective into the PSC Framework, including to respond to women’s rights and protection in a comprehensive manner in the peace process, the Women’s Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework was launched in January 2014 by O/SESG-GL. The Platform builds on the momentum that is already being generated by women’s groups and women’s movements to claim justice, peace, and security for all citizens in the Great Lakes region. The purpose of the Platform is to enable women’s organizations to actively contribute to the implementation of the PSC Framework by supporting them to strengthen their collective action, providing grants for relevant projects, and enabling women to play an active and sustained role in the overall peace process.

This is the first Monitoring Report on the progress on the implementation of the Women’s Platform of the PSC Framework since its launch in 2014. The report is based on data collected following a field monitoring exercise to Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Uganda to women’s organizations that have received grants from the Trust Fund of the Office of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region. This funding was made possible by contributions from the Dutch and Irish Governments together with subsequent contributions received from the Government of Norway, Oak Foundation and individual donors. Below is a table to show the number of grantees that were monitored:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grantees Monitored</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Republic Congo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- North Kivu</td>
<td>4 grantees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Province Orientale</td>
<td>1 grantees</td>
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<tr>
<td>- South Kivu</td>
<td>12 grantees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Katanga Province</td>
<td>1 grantee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>3 grantees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>5 grantees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>4 grantees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
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A. Findings
Overview of the implementation of the Women’s Platform activities under the Regional Action Plan of the PSC Framework

The majority of organizations received funding over six months ago and, in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, they have recorded considerable results based on the Women’s Platform thematic areas and indicators. However, it is clear that some issues must be addressed in order for the important goals of this initiative to be realized.

Below is a summary of the key findings resulting from the monitoring exercise:

- When income-generating activities aimed at empowering women are implemented simultaneously with activities on peace and security, they positively boost the peace building processes at the community, national and regional levels, including having strong potential to positively change the lives of women.
- It is highly desirable that the two instruments that inform the Women’s Platform – namely the PSC Framework and the UNSC Resolution 1325, are translated into local languages that are commonly spoken in the four core countries of project implementation – Swahili, Kirundi, Kinyarwanda etc.
- In addition to the contents of the PSC Framework and the UN Resolution 1325, advocacy for peace and security in the Great Lakes region has a greater possibility to succeed and to yield convincing results if activities are carried out in synergy and supported at all levels.
- Regionally, the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL) can facilitate collaboration between women of the Great Lakes region at the community level by adopting harmonized measures on cross-border trade.
- The PSC Framework and UNSCR 1325 are not well known by the population, local authorities, women, youth and civil society organizations and in particular in the local communities.
- In terms of communication and visibility, a particular confusion results among implementing grantees and beneficiaries at the community level about the source of funds or the origin of the support they received. Thus, neither the Platform nor the other direct Platform partners, much less the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region (O/SESG-GL) are referenced. It is important to make greater mention of the role played by the O/SESG-GL both in official platform documents and in communications with partners at all levels.
- It was noted that the amount of grants awarded are low and the duration of implementation short, which limits the impact of grantee interventions in the community and the peace process in general.
- In terms of networking and collaboration, very few organizations have worked together, or made any effort to work together to achieve more significant results in line with the vision of the Platform. It is necessary to draw the partners’ attention on the need to collaborate and involve local authorities, and other partners, such as MONUSCO where it is present in the context of DRC.
- The majority of funded organizations as well as beneficiaries do not have work plans to guide their interventions.
B. Key Recommendations

- Signatories of the PSC Framework should respect their commitments and ensure its wide dissemination in local languages and at all levels.

- Stabilization and consolidation of peace in the DRC and the region should take into account the potential of people at the community level who also have a key role to contribute to the consolidation of peace.

- The governments of the region should scale up security sector reforms, address issues of armed groups and negative forces, define parameters for assessing security and should be in a position to provide protection to vulnerable groups in the communities. A major contribution towards this could be made if people from the affected communities are given the opportunity to participate in development work in the area.

- Meetings related to the implementation and monitoring of the PSC Framework commitments should be decentralized to allow local leaders and the population at the community level to be informed.

- Women at the grassroots level should be represented at regional meetings of the PSC Framework, for instance the Technical Support Committee meeting.

- Scale-up grant amounts, expand duration of implementation of activities to at least one year and consider targeting larger women’s networks in order to reach more women beneficiaries at the grass roots for greater results and impact.

- The Women’s Platform remains an innovative, flagship and confidence building Initiative of the PSC Framework that is making a difference to improve the livelihoods of women affected by conflict in the Great Lakes region by delivering quick impact results at the grassroots level. It therefore requires additional resources to scale-up its interventions. The core implementing partners of the Women’s Platform Initiative should conduct collective resource mobilization to attract funds for more substantial grants.
1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Field Monitoring, Purpose and Objectives
In its pilot phase, the Women’s Platform has been working to ensure that women in the DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda are engaged in the implementation of the PSC Framework by: i) providing grant-making support to women’s rights organizations; ii) convening grantees for collective action and impact and shared learning; and iii) communicating the successes of women’s groups, and advocating with donors for increased resources for women’s groups and community-based solutions. Since its launch in 2014, the Women’s Platform has received approximately US$700,000 and awarded grants in the four thematic areas of i) Monitoring and Advocacy on the PSC Framework and the implementation of regional and national plans of action under UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (US$166,900); ii) Combating Violence Against Women and Supporting Women Affected by Violence (US$144,874); iii) Advancing Women’s Livelihoods and Development (US$210,056) and iv) Access to Clean Energy at the local level (US$50,000).

It was important that the monitoring of activities implemented by grantees be assessed to review progress of implementation, document successes and challenges, and make recommendations for improvement, address identified bottlenecks to increase efficiency. This is the purpose for which the field monitoring exercise was undertaken. The monitoring exercise took place 7 months after the commencement of Women’s Platform activities for grantees supported with funding from the Dutch Government and 5 months after the commencement activities for grantees supported by funding from the Irish Government.

The specific objectives of the field monitoring visit were to: (i) assess and document activity progress in relation to the goals and thematic indicators of the Women’s Platform; (ii) confer with direct project beneficiaries on their experiences and perceptions on the project activities, including to gain familiarity with the context of the community where activities are implemented; (iii) document challenges to project implementation, including internal capacity issues and external factors; provide recommendations for addressing the challenges and (v) make recommendations for improving synergies between the Women’s Platform and women’s rights groups in the Great Lakes region, including with key stakeholders.

1.2 Methodology
The field monitoring mission employed mixed-methods of collecting and reviewing information that the grantee beneficiaries and stakeholders provided to support this monitoring exercise. These methods included desk review of background documents - initiative summary; grantee matrix with thematic area; grantee purpose statement; grantee mid-term reports, grantee contact information, grant proposal and work plans, results matrix provided by the Global Fund for Women Secretariat. Interviews with grantee staff were conducted using a well-structured monitoring questionnaire. The meetings were conducted in English, French and in some cases, in Swahili. Focus group discussions were held directly with beneficiaries and local authorities in various locations. Site visits were also undertaken in selected project sites and debriefing meetings were held at the end of the Field Monitoring in each location to reflect on, and highlight, key issues that emerged from the exercise.

1.3 The Field Monitoring Report
This Field Monitoring Report is the first substantive report on the progress on the implementation of the Women’s Platform Initiative. It was compiled by Miranda Tabifor,
Senior Gender Advisor of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region (O/SESG-GL) from Summary Reports drafted by participating teams of the Field Monitoring visits (Global Fund for Women Independent Consultants in Burundi, DRC, Rwanda (Board member) and Uganda, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Regional Women’s Forum representatives, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and O/SESG-GL staff). The participating teams reviewed the consolidated Report for finalization. The Report covers the period between 6 August to 4 September 2015 when the monitoring exercise was undertaken and the report focuses on grantees that were visited. The participating team of the Monitoring exercise comprised of the following: for joint coordination: Muadi Mukenge, Programme Director for sub-Saharan Africa, GFW and Miranda Tabifor, Senior Gender Advisor, O/SESG-GL. For the DRC, Annie Bukaraba, Global Fund for Women (GFW) Independent Consultant, Maguy Kanay, Focal Point of ICGLR Regional Women’s Forum, Bessan Vikou, Political Affairs Officer, O/SESG-GL and Miranda Tabifor, Senior Gender Advisor, O/SESG-GL. For Burundi: Annie Bukaraba, GFW Independent Consultant, Eliane Mokodopo, Gender and Child Programme Officer, ICGLR Secretariat, and Madeleine Schwarz, Human Rights Officer, O/SESG-GL. For Rwanda: Tabara Ndiaye, GFW Board Member, Inmaculee Ingabire, Focal Point of ICGLR Regional Women’s Forum and Gabor Beszterczey, Senior Programme Management Officer, O/SESG-GL. For Uganda: Norah Owaraga, GFW Independent Consultant, Allan Mukungu, Senior Economic Affairs Officer, O/SESG-GL.

2.0 The Women’s Platform of the PSC Framework

2.1 Results/achievements per thematic area

Thematic area 1: Monitoring and Advocacy on the PSC Framework and the implementation of regional and national plans of action under UN Security Council Resolution 1325

i. Grassroots initiatives and strategic partnership established to promote the PSC Framework and across borders - in the DRC, theatre groups, music bands, peace clubs have been established at the community level; the PSC Framework and the UNSCR 1325 have been translated in local languages (Kinyaruanda, Kirundi, and Swahili) and disseminated. Awareness raising, information and training sessions on the PSC Framework and UNSCR1325 have been held with local authorities, religious groups, government institutions, the media, youth and women’s groups. These have collectively led to increased understanding, awareness and ownership of the content of the framework agreement, and UNSCR 1325. For instance 150 cross-border women traders belonging to 16 cooperatives were reached in the districts of Huye, Rubavu and Rusizi in Rwanda. In Uganda ISIS Women’s International Cross-Cultural Exchange (ISIS-WICCE) has partnered with AFEM (an association of women journalists) which owns a radio station that is located in the local community and also ensured wider access to data from a wider range of women for higher level advocacy. Women’s stories from Bukavu will be plugged directly into ISIS-WICCE’s regional and international level multimedia platforms.

ii. Actively and effectively engaging with government entities on the PSC Framework and UNSCR 1325 – Information on the PSC Framework and UNSCR 1325 has been used to organize community dialogues on peaceful cohabitation and democratization
process in the communities. For instance, in Uvira, South Kivu province of the DRC, feedback testimonies from the FARDC hierarchy was recorded about voluntary disarmament of young people previously involved in illegal armed groups. Grantee partners in Uganda – AMWA and ISIS-WICCE attested to their participation and contributions on strategic meetings on the implementation of different protocols and frameworks in the region which discussed broader peace and security policy issues that encompassed UNSCR 1325. ISIS-WICCE has so far produced two key reports – one on the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region protocols; and it is part of the group of international experts compiling the study on the implementation of 1325.

iii. Appropriate training and advocacy tools developed, women’s capacities and self-esteem enhanced – All grantee partners have designed their own training and advocacy materials; which they used for their activities. Some grantee partners have translated these materials into languages – French, Swahili, Kirundi, and Kinyarunda - widely spoken by project beneficiaries. Through acquired knowledge, women’s self-esteem has increased and there is increased political participation of women in decision making and political processes. In Burundi, several women have been nominated to decision making positions, and several others will be standing for elections. In Burundi, 210 women were elected of which 30 from the municipalities were elected to councils in Kirundo, three others as municipal administrators in three municipalities of Kirundo (Busoni, Bugabira, and Bwamabrangwe, positions which were initially earmarked for men) and two others as Senator and Member of Parliament.

iv. Social cohesion enhanced - The Platform has served as a tool for community cohesion, promotion of conflict resolution by women’s groups, reconciliation among women living in the Ruzizi plain especially those from the border communities such as Bugarama (Rwanda), Cibitoke (Burundi) and Kamayola, Luvungui (DRC).

Thematic area 2: Combating Violence against Women and Supporting Women affected by Violence

i. Transit centres rehabilitated and institutional capacity of grantees strengthened - Existing transit centers have been rehabilitated to host survivors of sexual violence and are used as safe spaces for women to meet and exchange on business ideas and various issues on their rights. Solar panels, office computers and furniture have been purchased to strengthen the institutional capacity of beneficiaries.

ii. Beneficiaries directly supported - Direct support provided to beneficiaries has contributed to survivors’ economic rehabilitation and empowerment, facilitating the reunification of survivors and their families, their reintegration into communities, including purchase of sewing machines, other goods, payment of fees for judicial and medical assistance for survivors, feeding survivors and children born of rape and supporting survivors of rape to pursue their studies. In Burundi, a survivor of rape has earned her bachelor's degree, in the DRC, 37 children born of rape are being sponsored at secondary school level, 31 at primary school level and 3 women at the university level.

iii. Targeted capacity building provided - Over 100 women in DRC who have undergone literacy trainings are now equipped and have the ability to read and write. Their ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, and in the
community has contributed to developing their knowledge and potential to vote for persons of their choice. They are using the same knowledge to keep proper records of their personal affairs.

iv. **Trainings have been provided** on children and women’s rights, on combatting GBV, on agriculture and animal husbandry blended with psychological rehabilitation sessions such as dances, songs, listening and counselling. These have contributed to reintegrating 100 women beneficiaries into their communities in Rwanda. In the DRC, 12 women solidarity groups and 3 groups working to end GBV have been established for the promotion and protection of women's rights in general and women and girl survivors of rape and gender-based violence. This work includes documenting, monitoring and managing cases of rape and sexual violence.

**Thematic area 3: Advancing Women’s Livelihoods and Development**

i. **Women trained on diverse topics** – Grantee partners have conducted different types of trainings - trainers of trainers in leadership, entrepreneurship and business skills, new agricultural technology and management in the region for several numbers of project beneficiaries. There are indications women who participated in the trainings are already practising best practices that they learned during the training. For instance, women have set up their own businesses including tailoring workshops, cassava and maize grinding mills, vegetables and fish stalls as well as poultry that they individually manage at the community level. They are able to distinguish between consumer issues and commercialization, they no longer produce for consumption only as they did previously.

ii. **Households empowered and women’s dignity improved** – Proceeds from sales of products are being used to pay fees and hospital bills for children, feeding families and meeting their other needs. Through knowledge gained, a Mutual Fund has been established to provide loans among women’s groups in the DRC. In Rwanda over 100 women beneficiaries used funds allocated to attend project activities and to open an individual bank account in Rwanda. Women’s self-esteem, their dignity as and their leadership skills have been improved - women actively participate and contribute in community debates on various issues.

**Thematic area 4: Access to Clean Energy at the local level (i.e., using solar energy, labor-saving technologies, etc.)**

i. Through trainings organized on clean energy (construction and installation of cooking stoves), women’s capacity and understanding has been strengthened on the need to use clean energy at a community level, in order to substantially improve family health, reduce the burden on women and support their further income generation.

ii. Several households at the village level now have access to clean energy stoves which reduces the time spent preparing meals and fetching fire-wood. Over 2000 women in Rwanda and over 400 women in the DRC have access to clean energy.

iii. In the DRC, a woman living with HIV/AIDS has built her own house from profits obtained from the grant activities on installing cooking stoves.
2.2 Successes and Good practices

i. **Collaboration, partnership and working together for results** - Some grantee partners collaborated with local authorities and other partners during the implementation of their activities while others did not. Those who did testified of the benefits for project ownership and sustainability. In Rwanda, partnership and collaboration with the authorities which demonstrated their willingness to work together towards an agreed purpose, facilitated and led to the integration of the Women’s Platform activities in each community’s local action plans in the project sites to accomplish a common mission. Getting grassroots level planning and initiatives integrated into local planning approaches leads to a more sustainable and better coordinated way of interventions for greater and long terms results.

ii. **Careful consideration of integrated approaches for results** - With the goal to reach grassroots beneficiaries in a given context and with the best combination of interventions to bring about transformation and multiple effects, grantee partners carefully considered integrating income-generating activities and trainings within outreach initiatives on the popularization of the PSC Framework and UNSCR 1325. For instance, through this approach of synergies and complementarities among the different sets of activities, women survivors of rape and violence regained their self-esteem and the community’s perception of them changed in Rwanda. In Burundi, there is a significant decrease in negative perceptions towards people living with HIV and others affected by sexual and gender-based violence. Women and girls are no longer afraid to engage in affairs formerly perceived as men’s prerogatives such as on land issues. Women participate in decision-making processes as a result of their strengthened leadership skills and have become valuable contributors and stakeholders in conflict resolutions such as land or political conflict in their communities. For instance 30 land conflicts were effective resolved mutually among neighbors living in Bunia, DRC by women.

iii. **Strategic advocacy for enhanced social cohesion and self-esteem** - Grantee partners engaged in a plethora of advocacy activities that contributed to in the social cohesion of the community. In Bunia, in the DRC, the door-to-door strategy to raise awareness on tolerance and peaceful cohabitation in the community contributed to reduce tension and sensitized the youth not to join armed groups as well as village chiefs to be committed to PSC Framework. This demonstrates that social cohesion is important for the peace and stability of communities and contributes significantly to the increase in economic production. In terms of self-esteem, one beneficiary noted that after her engagement and participation in advocacy and training sessions, she was bold enough to demand her rights for which she was promoted as Assistant Quarter Chief. She also noted that she was the only woman among the 5 men who led the advocacy for Bunia to become a full fledged province in the DRC.

iv. **Efficient Documentation and structured information sharing for advocacy** - Across the board, all grantee partners reiterated the value added of the use of documentation and information sharing to capture project results and to learn from each other. Some grantees were not doing enough on this however they noted that the different tools of documentation –use of videos, report writing, photographs, websites and social media - have been used for this purpose. Videos are used to capture some of the moments during their activities; they take pictures which they consider speak louder than words; they write reports; they record women’s stories - Oral Her Story or I-Stories – as they are told
in the women’s own words. Grantees also made reference to the cost of documentation and in-person sharing of information which is captured under the section on challenges and lessons learned.

v. **Advocacy online in real time** – In Uganda, ISIS-WICCE has recently created a human-connect centre located at their offices in Kampala. They hope that through this centre they can produce and share information online very fast. For example, they plan to take reports that are broadcast by Radio Maendeleo that is owned by AFEM and load them on their website in both French and English, accompanied by expert analysis. Furthermore, ISIS-WICCE learnt from AFEM how to link field data from communities with wider media advocacy. This was a unique initiative by ISIS-WICCE among all grantee partners.

vi. **Effective planning and regular review meetings** - These meetings reviewed results of ongoing planned activities, documented results and made adjustments to achieve desired results. In some cases, these allowed grantees to celebrate their victories and accomplishments. For instance, in Beni, the DRC, the grantee partner SOFEPADI noted through these meetings, that women counselors who were funded succeeded in their advocacy work that led to the local government’s decision to deploy 50 police officers and 25 FARDC to protect the specific communities that were vulnerable to criminal attacks and massacres. In Uganda, the deep and detail manner in which the three grantees planned their activities enabled them to overcome one of their major challenges - the language barrier. The translation of training and advocacy materials and the use of interpreters are notable practices by the three grantees.

vii. **Use of participatory approaches** – It was noted that all grantee partners conducted trainings as part of their activities. The benefit of participation led to increase in sharing of experiences, they got to know the opinion of others, beneficiaries accessed skills to analyze their living conditions, plan for themselves and they felt empowered to take concrete actions to address their situation. These approaches allowed a lot of interaction among the participants in languages in which the participants are comfortable. The use of group and plenary discussions as well as question and answer sessions enabled women to talk to each other, which was very empowering.

2.3 Initial Observed Changes

i. **Livelihoods building:** Women and girls are becoming more economically productive and are managing and controlling their own income and businesses through skills gained from targeted capacity building trainings. They are now engaged in developing the work of grantee organizations, and contributing to the effective development of their communities and their families. The proceeds from their economic activities are the main source of income for the family which they use to buy food and other items for their household, pay for school fees, health care services and rent, save in savings clubs or cooperatives and banks and reinvest in their businesses. Their contribution at the household level as well as within community is more visible.

ii. **Relationship building:** In Burundi, grantee partners testified that women of different ethnic groups (Bantu, Tutsi and Pygmy) work collaboratively. Pygmies want to learn how to read and write and are interested in going to school. They are now able to work with other tribes without reticence or distrust there is an increased confidence between
Rwandan, Burundian and Congolese women in the border communities. Cross-border women traders gained a better understanding of their rights, informing their sisters in bordering countries which demonstrates that fact that for communities to be strong, there is a need for peace. Communities can interact constructively and non-violently. There is increased acceptance for People living with HIV as well as survivors of rape who have been economically empowered and who are no longer stigmatized and excluded.

iii. **Confidence and self-esteem building**: Women and girls are no longer afraid to claim and demand their rights, especially their rights to inheritance and to participation in the affairs of the community. In Burundi, beneficiaries have succeeded to be elected by men and women alike in decision-making bodies (a senator, a deputy, three municipal administrators and other women representatives in local councils) due to several factors including their involvement in peacebuilding initiatives. In the DRC, a beneficiary testified of being selected to serve as Vice-President of the Church Trust Fund. She is also managing her family issues and contributing resources jointly with her husband. She will be standing as a candidate for the upcoming local elections.

2.4 Challenges and Lessons Learned

i. **Insecurity** - In Burundi and DRC, grantees reported that due to the presence of negative forces and armed groups, persistent massacres and killings, access to some projects sites and beneficiaries was hindered. Most of them had to rely on inter-agency humanitarian interventions to secure support for their activities.

ii. **Restricted movements due to un-harmonized travel tariffs and corruption** - Women in the region are engaged in cross border trade activities which requires them to travel often in and out of Burundi- DRC-Rwanda and Uganda. Grantees shared that they experience difficulties at the Uganda-DRC border entry points, as some officers create all sorts of unnecessary requirements in order to extort money or bribe. In addition, it was reported that the CEPGL Special Travel Laissez-Passer has a different cost in DRC, Rwanda and Burundi. DRC residents holding the Identification Cards issued in some villages are harassed by the Rwanda custom and immigration officers whenever they have to cross the border. According to the grantees, Luvungi is allegedly labelled by Rwanda as a stronghold of Mai Mai and FDLR armed groups and the population is suspected to be affiliated with them. These challenges affect the broad goals of regional economic integration and cooperation.

iii. **Limited size of funding, and duration of the grants** – According to the grantees, the amounts of grants received in the respective cohorts and disbursements from Global Fund for Women for respective project activities were very small ranging from US$7000, US$10,000, USD11,000, USD12,000, or US$26,000 etc. It required some of them to scale down their projects; it did not allow the level of flexibility and innovative interventions they would like to see happen and with in-depth results. The short duration of the grants implementation of less than one year was poorly received by the local authorities and project beneficiaries.

iv. **High administrative costs** - The grantees testified that costs related to banking transactions was high, they have spent a lot of funds over and beyond their budgets, for example in Uganda, for paying Western Union to transfer funds from across the border Uganda to DRC and internally within the respective countries.
v. **Communication – internet and telephone networks and lack of vehicle transportation** – Access to internet was a challenge reported by all grantees given that their activities are implemented in hard to reach areas, mostly in villages. Uganda grantee partners noted that communication between Uganda and DRC was difficult. Sometimes the internet is down for long periods of time on the DRC side and sometimes the phones are blocked. It thus takes longer for them to complete and conclude an exchange, which causes delays in implementation. In the DRC and Burundi, poor internet connectivity, lack of transport to access project villages and communities forced grantee partners to trek most of the time. Some of them who use community radios for awareness raising reported regular breakdown of their radios which affected implementation of their activities. Lack of means of transportation affected partners as they do not have the means to transport their agricultural produce to the markets in a timely manner for sale. This had a negative impact on their financial income due to low profits and limited flow of money in rural areas.

vi. **Low participation of women in PSC Framework meetings** – All grantees have observed that women’s participation in meetings organised by government on the PSC Framework is very low or even non-existent. Some asked how women could participate in the regional meetings of the PSC Framework, such as the Technical Support Committee, in order to share their experiences of what is happening on the ground.

vii. **Insufficient commitment by government leaders to, and lack of information on the PSC Framework** – In Uganda some grantees feel that the commitment to the PSC Framework of government leaders is low and this is evidenced by the fact that governments are not committing any resources to finance its implementation. One grantee noted that the PSC Framework is dependent on the whims of UN agencies for funding. Accordingly, grantees deduce that when initiatives are not resourced by countries, the concerned leaders are not committed. In the DRC, grantee partners asked very fundamental questions in this regard as follows: how can signatory countries be sanctioned if they do not respect their obligations in the context of the PSC Framework? How can the DRC’s decentralization process take ownership of the PSC Framework? How can the provincial development plans integrate PSC Framework commitments?

viii. **Grantees insufficient capacity on institution, project management, implementation, monitoring and reporting** - Some grantees were very honest to state that the Women’s Platform Initiative was the first intervention they were involved in at the community level. In the DRC, two grantees that had not been registered officially had challenges to get funds transferred to them for project implementation. One grantee actually received funding through another institution since they did not have a bank account, which contributed to high transaction cost. A few grantees were unable to provide quantitative data in the reporting.

3.0 **Partnerships with Stakeholders**

Very few grantee partners conducted joint activities following the holding of the Inaugural Grantee Convening held in Goma in May 2015, with the exception of groups in Bukavu that held a joint community debrief on the PSC-F and the Women’s Platform. Before then, only one partner -SOFAD in the DRC has been working at the regional level with organizations from Burundi. SOFAD organized exchanges around issues of economic cooperation across
borders between Burundian women from Rugombo, Rwandan women from Bugaramaet and Congolese women from Luvungi.

4.0 Enabling environment
4.1 Advocacy and awareness raising

In Uganda, ISIS-WICCE has translated the PSC Framework into Swahili, the language that is predominantly spoken and understood in rural communities of Bukavu. Grantees create awareness through the multiple platforms, coalitions and networks in which they belong and participate, such as the Uganda 1325 Coalition – CO-ACT.

The grantees work in collaboration with each other, with other regional and national organisations under the ICGLR Civil Society Coordination Committee to ensure that the Kampala Declaration on Sexual and Gender Based Violence is implemented. AMWA is a member of the network of African Centres of Excellence through which it has shared information with Rwanda Women’s Network; which is also implementing issues on the PSC Framework.

In the DRC, advocacy actions that targeted local authorities revolved around security, land and inheritance issues. This is the case in Beni and the plains of Rizizi and Fizi.

According to partner organizations visited during the monitoring, local authorities were interested; but most had not seen nor heard about the PSC Framework. They requested that it be translated into Swahili, the local language for more ownership.

The radio broadcasts have also attracted interest from the feedback from listeners.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations
5.1 Recommendations to Governments of the region

i. Implement the PSC Framework commitments and facilitate dissemination of information in communities. All grantee partners called upon regional governments to fulfill their commitments and dutifully monitor the implementation of their respective obligations with the goal to preserve the peace and security in the region. They also requested its wide dissemination in local languages, at all levels, including the UN Resolution 1325, and the related regional and national action plans.

ii. Financially support the Women’s Platform of the PSC Framework: Grantee partners applauded the Women’s Platform Initiative and called upon governments to recognize the initiative as a confidence building tool. In this regard, they called upon regional governments to support the Platform financially.

iii. Ensure greater participation and involvement of women in peace building processes: Regional governments should work for women's involvement in peace negotiations and processes. As part of the monitoring mechanisms, consultation meetings should be held at the grassroots level to facilitate the flow of information on peace and security issues as well as achievements.

iv. Strengthen the Women’s Platforms: - Grantees recommend that the Women’s Platform of the PSC Framework be used to strengthen the ICGLR Regional Women’s Forum.

v. Engage in more coordinated communication directly with all other stakeholders: The ICGLR has recommended that all governments should establish National Coordinating Mechanisms (NCM). The grantees urge governments to establish their respective NCMs
which include CSOs and that they should also have national action plans for the different frameworks.

vi. Focus more on human security: The grantees urge governments to budget and programme for the transformation of women’s lives, for protecting their human rights and, more specifically, renew their commitments to condemn whoever violates them.

5.2 Recommendations to the Office of the Special Envoy
Hold governments to account on their commitments to the PSC Framework.

i. The Grantees call on further advocacy from the Special Envoy and others to encourage the Heads of State – both publicly and in private meetings - to fully implement the commitments made under the PSC Framework. This will include encouraging leaders to call for accountability for those who are alleged to have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide, or are under international sanctions.

ii. Have a work plan that is clearly communicated to all stakeholders. The grantees request the Special Envoy’s office to re-engage with civil society, women and youth in the region. This could include establishing an online portal for sharing information and best practices; and a list-serve of individuals and stakeholder to whom regular communication is shared, including state agencies and CSOs, in drafting the reports.

iii. Reinvigorate the tempo of the national coalitions to support the implementation of the PSC Framework. Grantees recommend that the Special Envoy should support the establishment of Secretariats for ICGLR fora – youth forum, CSOs forum, women’s forum etc.

iv. Make your presence felt and heard in the region and particularly so in DRC. Majority of the grassroots beneficiaries have never heard of the Special Envoy and do not know the Office of the Special Envoy. They recommend to the Special Envoy’s office to have a robust political strategy of making known and heard the Office of the Special Envoy – image building. Let the staff of the Office of the Special Envoy, for example, make themselves available to participate and attend grantee activities/events when called upon. This monitoring exercise was a good example of the engagement of the staff in the Office of the Special Envoy.

v. Invest genuinely and effectively in women: The Special Envoy and the governments of the region should commit to long-term investments for women of the region and the DRC in particular and greater resources for the implementation of the PSC Framework and UNSCR 1325.

vi. Longer-term implementation: One year or two years is not enough the grantees assess. For them the O/SESG-GL needs to implement the Platform longer-term (at least five to ten years). This will require mobilization of additional resources to increase the size of grants for organizations, diversifying the interventions.
5.3 Recommendations to the Global Fund for Women

i. **Ensure maximum visibility of the Office of the Special Envoy:** Throughout the mission and visits conducted to the project grantees, it was noted that, all documents, materials have only the logo of Global Fund for Women and that of the grantee partners. The Office of the Special Envoy is not reflected nor any key implementing partner of the Platform. Grantee partners consider that funding disbursed to them is Global Fund for Women’s money. Grantee partners were systematically reminded that the Women’s Platform is derived from the PSC Framework and not from Global Fund for Women and henceforth all documents, materials, banners should reflect the O/SESGL.

ii. **Translate all communication** – Global Fund for Women should communicate to grantees in both English and French at all times. This will to enable grantees to learn from each other and compliment each other’s work.

iii. **Reduce number of grantees** – Grantees observed that there is a seeming desire to reach many grantees, but they pointed out that there is also the issue of impact. Grantees recommend to Global Fund for Women the establishment of grantee consortiums through which block funding is channelled for longer implementation periods.

iv. **Strengthen the capacities of grantees and develop adaptable procedures:** The grantees noted that their human resources capacities should be strengthened through regular workshops and experiences-sharing and networking seminars. This will help them to do their work for themselves. Additional significant funding to Women’s Platform would make this possible. The external organisations, such as the Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi based grantees, should function as capacity builders and mentors of the women organisations of DRC. Furthermore, procedures that are more adapted to the Women’s Platform should be developed to avoid making changes if the Secretariat ever changes location.

v. **Produce and publish a case study of the Women’s Platform of the PSC Framework** - Grantees recommend that GFW documents its process and experiences in implementing the Women’s Platform of the PSC Framework. This will lead to production and publishing of a case study that can be used as a tool for learning best practices as well as in mobilizing resources for the Initiative.

vi. **Monitor grantees regularly**; Field monitoring trips should be regularly conducted to assess progress, determine if grantees are on track and advice for remedial measures.

vii. **Maintain communication and develop common action plans on specific activities:** The Women’s Platform grantee partners should remain in contact through existing and easy to use communication tools such as email, Facebook, twitter, WhatsApp etc. According to the grantees, a common action plan for will enhance synergy in action, allow for cross-learning and sharing of experiences for greater impact.
## List of Grantee organizations monitored

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BURUNDI</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Burundian Women for Peace and Development</td>
<td>Bujumbura, Burundi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Développement Agropastoral Et Sanitaire</td>
<td>Bujumbura, Burundi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fonds d’Initiatives Féminines Locales</td>
<td>Bujumbura, Burundi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Association de Soutien aux Séropositives de Kinama</td>
<td>Bujumbura, Burundi</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOS Femmes En Détresse / Section De La République Du Burundi</td>
<td>Bujumbura, Burundi</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Appui aux Femmes Démunies et Enfants Marginalisés au Kivu</td>
<td>Bukavu, Congo (DR)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solidarité des Femmes Activistes pour la Défense des Droits Humains</td>
<td>Uvira, Congo (DR)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bureau Régional d’Études pour le Développement Durable</td>
<td>Bukavu, Congo (DR)</td>
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<td>Promotion et Appui aux Initiatives Féminines</td>
<td>Goma, Congo (DR)</td>
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<td>Solidarité des Femmes de Fizi pour le Bien-Etre Familial</td>
<td>Fizi, Congo (DR)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solidarité Féminine pour la Paix et le Développement Intégral</td>
<td>Kinshasa, Congo (DR), BENI (2 offices)</td>
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<td>Programme Amkeni Wamama</td>
<td>Bunia, Congo (DR)</td>
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<td>Monde d’Epanouissement et de Libération Individuelle par des Techniques Adaptées</td>
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<td>Synergie des Femmes pour les Victimes des Violences Sexuelles</td>
<td>Goma, Congo (DR)</td>
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<td>Sauti ya Mwanamke Kijijini</td>
<td>Lumumba, Ibanda, Bukavu, Sud-Kivu, Congo (DR)</td>
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<td>Solidarité avec les Victimes et pour la Paix</td>
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<td>Actions pour les Droits Humains et la Gouvernance Démocratique</td>
<td>Lubumbashi, Congo (DR)</td>
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<td>Groupement des Femmes Vivant avec le VIH/SIDA</td>
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<td>Coalition pour la Promotion des Femmes Rurales de Rutshuru (COAPROFERU)</td>
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<td>RWANDA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collectif Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe</td>
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<td>le Travail et l’Autopromotion</td>
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<td>Réseau des Femmes Oeuvrant pour le Développement Rural</td>
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<td>The Eastern African Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the</td>
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<td>Advancement of Women</td>
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<td>Isis Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (ISIS-WICCE)</td>
<td>Kampala, Uganda</td>
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<td>Akina Mama</td>
<td>Kampala, Uganda</td>
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