



BUILDING PEACE AND ADVANCING WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND THE GREAT LAKES REGION

I. Executive Summary

Over the next three years, the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (WP) - under the direction of former Irish President, Mary Robinson, the United Nations appointed Special Envoy for the Great Lakes -- will work to ensure that women in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the region are engaged in the implementation of the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSC). The PSC is a hallmark peace agreement intended to bring sustainable peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Great Lakes Region of Africa after 17 years of war.

Women's Platform function is to support key women's groups through the provision of grants while advocating for more strategic donor contributions to women's groups in the region. To advance this goal, Women's Platform will carry out three core activities:

- Provide grantmaking support to women's rights organizations;
- Convene organizations for capacity-building and shared learning;
- Communicate and advocate with the philanthropic arena for increased resources for women's rights groups playing a critical role in the peace process in the Great Lakes.

Women's Platform will advance four areas of focus through its grantmaking:

- Monitoring and Advocacy on the PSC Framework and the implementation of regional and national plans of action under UN Security Council Resolution 1325;
- Combating Violence Against Women and Supporting Women Affected by Violence;
- Women's Livelihoods and Development; and
- Access to Clean Energy at the local level.

Women's Platform will be managed by Global Fund for Women as the designated secretariat. The other implementing partners for WGLP include: The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General to the Great Lakes (OSESG_GL), Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG), and Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises (FFC).

The Platform aims to award direct grants of \$2.5 million per year over three years, and has the capacity to make an additional \$3 million in grant recommendations over the same duration. Global Fund for Women seeks \$3.7 million per year for the operational costs of the secretariat, for a total just over \$11 million. The Platform invites donors to capitalize on the combined expertise of implementing partners by committing funds in support of this historic commitment to women's human rights in the Great Lakes Region. By pooling resources, the Platform assures the best utilization of donor funds, effective capacity-building in support of a viable women's movement, and regular communication on best practices to multiple stakeholders. As a result of this dedicated

initiative, Women's Platform objective is a sustainable peace process in the Great Lakes Region where the women's movement in the DRC becomes stronger and is able to challenge violations of women's human rights in impactful and effective ways.

II. WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY: THE FRAMEWORK OF HOPE

The Great Lakes Region has witnessed egregious violations of women's rights in the context of civil and inter-state wars, foreign intervention in Congolese politics, and gross state mismanagement. These realities, combined with the intense demand for the DRC's natural resources in the global economy, have resulted in perpetual tensions that have prevented or curtailed important social, economic, and political development locally. Following 32 years of dictatorship, in 1996 the DRC entered a period of political instability and violent conflict that has seen the deaths of over six million people. At its height, the war involved 11 African countries. Since the signing of peace accords in 2003, the country elected new leadership, revised its Constitution, and is currently embarking on consolidating political structures.

During this period of protracted war, widespread, systemic violence against women has gained particular prominence as groups vie for political and economic control. Many women fear denouncing sexual crimes because of the norm of stigmatization and rejection by communities, and due to lack of justice. Despite international and domestic laws criminalizing sexual violence, its prevalence remains at extreme proportions in northeastern DRC. Similarly, despite a wealth of natural resources, the DRC has some of the world's worst statistics in terms of life expectancy, education, standard of living, and key health indicators, such as maternal and child mortality (International Rescue Committee 2011).

In February 2013, the governments of the Great Lakes and the international community collectively committed to ending the conflict once and for all. Brokered by the UN and the African Union, the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the DRC and the region -- signed in Addis Ababa in February 2013 -- brings 11 nations of the region into a comprehensive pact to stop the cycles of conflict by resolving their root causes and fostering trust between the DRC and its neighbors. The UN Secretary-General appointed Her Excellency Mary Robinson, the former president of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, to lead implementation of the PSC Framework.

SESG Robinson has been highly active since her appointment in raising awareness about the agreement and in seeking to galvanize governments and their leaders to translate its broad guidelines into tangible actions for peace. Calling it a "Framework of Hope" for the peoples of the Great Lakes, she has pointed to a number of reasons for optimism that, this time, peace efforts will be more successful than in the past. First and foremost, the accord requires a comprehensive mix of actions by all who have responsibilities, nationally, regionally, and internationally. This means, for example, that while the DRC is called upon to enact serious security sector reforms and to strengthen state authority in the East, its neighbors have also pledged non-interference in the DRC and a severing of any support to armed groups in the region.

A long-time advocate for women's human rights, the appointment of SESG Robinson as the Special Envoy presents a unique opportunity for the UN's existing Women Peace and Security Agenda to be strongly integrated into peace-building efforts in the Great Lakes region. In Bujumbura in July 2013, the Special Envoy hosted consultative meetings with 60 women leaders from the Great Lakes

to assure women in the DRC of their critical role within the peace process, to a commitment to involving them in meaningful ways, and to encourage governments to fulfill the commitments they made under the PSC Framework. The key outcome of the meeting was to announce the establishment of the Women's Platform (WP) through which expertise and funding will be channeled to projects of local women's organizations supporting the peace process. Women's Platform provides a unique mechanism for donors to make significant commitments to the peace process, and enables the priorities of the women's groups in the Great Lakes to take center stage.

Importantly it also represents the ushering in of a new era of respect for human rights, gender equality, and good governance. The Special Envoy has named the Global Fund for Women as the secretariat for the Women's Platform.

This concept paper lays out the context for the Platform's focus on women's organizations and movements, and describes a proposed structure, timeline, and core activities for the Women's Platform secretariat, as well as the resources necessary to implement the initiative.

III. WOMEN'S RIGHTS AS A STRATEGIC AREA OF INTERVENTION FOR BUILDING PEACE

Responding to women's rights and protection in a comprehensive, holistic manner will involve measures that tackle the root causes of the conflict in DRC and serve to stabilize the region. Thus, the **Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework** will build 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. Evidence has shown that women's rights organizations are a necessary and effective vehicle for establishing and maintaining peace and security in the Great Lakes Region, as was the case during the 2003 Inter-Congolese Dialogue when women mobilized for peace. Over the last decade, the women's movement in the DRC has been rapidly emerging and coalescing, and today, there is a critical mass of women-led groups effectively working together to advance women's rights and social justice.

As an example, in the past 10-15 years, Congolese human rights groups, including local women's groups, have made ending sexual violence and promoting rule of law part of the national discourse. Effectively addressing the commission of sexual violence requires a holistic approach that tackles the root causes of conflict, which are multiple and complex. For example, Congolese women's groups worked collectively to secure a watershed ruling in 2012 by a military court in the DRC which sentenced Colonel Kibibi Mutware, three officers, and five soldiers to 20 years in prison for a mass rape of some 60 women in Fizi on New Year's Day 2011.

Women's organizations are critical to the successful implementation of the Framework. Women's groups have demonstrated that collectively, they are effective agents for social change. Also, because they are already situated within local communities and have been working to tackle difficult issues over the past several decades, women's groups are integral to rebuilding community trust and strengthening community cohesion, which are key aims of the peace process. These women's groups have been employing multiple strategies including conducting community outreach, advocacy campaigns, holding leaders accountable, and legal education to build peace, respect for the rule of law and a deep and sustained commitment to securing gender equality. Finally, because women's groups on the whole have carried on their work with very little funding, they present an opportunity to donors to scale successful efforts with relatively modest levels of investment.

Of Global Fund's 245 grants to groups in Burundi, DRC, and Rwanda over the past 9 years, we note

the following highlights:

- 97 percent of grants supported groups to spread awareness on women's rights and gender equality through training, advocacy, and community mobilization.
- 89 percent of grants supported groups to organize public education activities and information sharing to shift public opinion to promote women's rights by holding community dialogues on issues such as sexual harassment, early marriage, and the value of girls' education.
- 74 percent of groups conducted advocacy including advocating for women's participation in peace processes, national politics, monitoring implementation of United Nations resolutions, and disarmament processes.
- 50 percent of groups conducted legal education to assure justice for communities, particularly women rape survivors, and train paralegals to reach communities with information on the 2006 Sexual Violence Law, the new Parity Law, the new Constitution, and the revised Family Code.

The Great Lakes region cannot witness peace until a culture of impunity ends and political stability is established with accountability at all levels of society. Global Fund's experience of investing in solutions that stem the tide of sexual violence, mitigate conflict, and build security affirms that women must have resources and support in order to empower themselves to fully participate as citizens in economic, political, and social life.

IV. OVERVIEW OF THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM FOR THE PEACE, SECURITY AND COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

Women's Platform mission is to support women's groups to contribute to the peace process in the Great Lakes Region. This includes implementation of the February 2013 Peace Agreement, also known as the Framework for Hope, and UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The Framework offers a new opportunity for collaboration to empower women's groups to be part of this critical peace process, and to enforce mechanisms for state and non-state parties to adhere to their commitments. However, there remains little funding available for women's rights in general, and inadequate funding for seemingly intractable issues such as politically-motivated sexual violence and for the women's organizations addressing these issues.

Over the next three years, the Women's Platform will work to ensure that women in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda are engaged in the implementation of the Framework. As a result of the successful implementation of the Women's Platform over these three years, the intended outcome is for women to play a significant role at all levels towards a successful peace process in the Great Lakes Region. Progress towards this outcome will be measured by improvements in specific indicators designed to complement existing indicators for the peace process.

The Platform's specific mandate is to support women's organizations and movements through the provision of grants and to advocate for expanded donor contributions to women's groups in the region. To advance these goals, WGLP will carry out three core activities:

- Provide grant support to women's rights organizations to play an active and integral role in the peace process in the Great Lakes;
- Convene organizations for capacity-building and shared learning toward the stated goals of the Platform;
- Communicate and advocate within the philanthropic arena for increased resources for

women's rights organizations working to advance the peace process.

The Women's Platform aims to award approximately 60 direct grants totaling \$2.5 million per year over three years to women's organizations in the Great Lakes Region. This includes grants to implementing partners. In addition, for interested donors who wish to grant directly to women's organizations but who wish to take advantage of the grantmaking expertise of the WGLP secretariat structure, it has the capacity to make an additional \$3 million in grant recommendations over the same duration. Grant making will focus on the following four intersecting areas, agreed by the consortium of five participating partners and the office of the Special Envoy at the 2013 Bujumbura meeting, which reflect a holistic approach to framing the root causes of violence in the region:

- Monitoring and Advocacy on the PSC Framework and the implementation of regional and national plans of action under UN Security Council Resolution 1325;
- Combating Violence Against Women and Supporting Women Affected by Violence;
- Women's Livelihoods and Development; and
- Access to Clean Energy at the local level.

Please see Appendix 1 for a detailed description of these thematic funding areas.

Beginning in January 2014, the Women's Platform will begin to roll out activities to set up and carry out the core functions of the Platform. The expected duration for the Secretariat is four years, which would include post-conflict consolidation and a year of wrap-up activities. The WGLP would be launched in late January 2014. (See Appendix 2 for a detailed timeline of activities.)

To support implementation of the Platform, Global Fund for Women requires \$3.7 million per year to oversee the secretariat, for a total of \$11 million over three years. The Platform invites donors to capitalize on the combined expertise of implementing partners to participate in this historic commitment to women's human rights in the Great Lakes Region. By pooling resources, the Platform assures the best utilization of donor funds, effective capacity-building of a viable women's movement, and regular communication on best practices to multiple stakeholders. Please refer to Appendix 3 for a detailed budget. Appendix 4, an accompanying budget narrative, is still under development as GFW explores staffing requirements in the DRC and clarifies donor reporting expectations for the Women's Platform.

V. THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM FOR THE PEACE, SECURITY AND COOPERATION FRAMEWORK: STRUCTURE

The Women's Platform will be managed by Global Fund for Women as the designated secretariat. The other implementing partners for the Platform will include: a) The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General to the Great Lakes (OESG_GL); b) Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS); c) the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC); and d) Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises (FFC).

Since July 2004, Global Fund has supported 105 women's organizations in the DRC with more than \$1.8 million in grants, 24 organizations in Burundi with nearly \$290,000 in grants, and seven organizations in Rwanda with \$77,000 in grants. Global Fund has helped shape a network of grantees that are working to end sexual violence, build peaceful communities, and facilitate women's economic activities. Over the past six years, Global Fund has connected groups in the DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi through convenings that provide opportunities for sharing, skills-building, and planning. These convenings have aimed to

strengthen movement building by enabling women in conflict zones to speak with one voice, organize in larger numbers, and deepen their impact in a context where women's rights are often marginalized. Muadi Mukenge, Global Fund's Program Director for Sub-Saharan Africa, has advised numerous donors on strategic engagement in the region. She has also undertaken public education and advocacy with peer donors to increase resources for the Great Lakes Region. In Spring 2010, Global Fund released an impact report, *Funding a Women's Movement Against Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo: 2004-2009*. This was an in-depth study of the underlying causes of violence in the DRC and how Global Fund support has strengthened women's groups to promote women's leadership, peace, justice, and respect for human rights.

Role of the Secretariat: Global Fund's participation in the Women's Platform is a direct outgrowth of our extensive work in the region over the last decade. In assuming this role, Global Fund will provide in-depth regional expertise, support a strong network of results-driven women's rights organizations, and boost the capacity and effectiveness of women's rights organizations to further progress towards peace and security.

As Secretariat, Global Fund will coordinate – 1) communications; 2) grantmaking (intake of proposals, due diligence and engagement of the Advisory Board, and grants processing); 3) co-organization of convenings; 4) ensure monitoring and evaluation; and 5) facilitate reporting from implementing partners and other stakeholders to donors, all to advance the mission of the WGLP.

Role of Implementing Partners: The four implementing partners for Women's Platform together have many years of experience working at the community, national, and international level to advance women's rights in the Great Lakes. They bring expertise in grantmaking, policy advocacy, partnership building, capacity-building, and community mobilization. Capacity statements on each participating partner (including Global Fund for Women) and a description of their respective roles is provided in Appendix 5.

Advisory Board: In addition, the Women's Platform will have an Advisory Board that will support the communication and participatory aspects of the platform and help to identify the projects to be funded through the Platform in the four areas of focus. The Board membership will comprise the following organizations, which have the relevant expertise and have expressed the willingness to serve in this capacity:

- The Office of the Special Envoy of Secretary-General (SESG)
- Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC)
- International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) – Regional Women's Forum
- UNDP
- UNEP
- UN Women
- Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS)
- Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANPRAN)
- Global Fund For Women (Observer status)

Together, the secretariat, implementing partners, and advisory board, will ensure that all of the activities are in alignment with the goals, core functions, and intended outcomes of the Women's Platform.

The Governance of the Women's Platform will be covered by the Advisory Board and Management Committee (the Secretariat and the Gender Expert of SESG), reporting to SESG-GL. The Advisory Board will conduct a conference call every two months. In addition, each of the implementing partners will regularly

report internally and then to the SESG-GL. By December 2013, Global Fund as secretariat of the Women's Platform will convene a donor conference call and an Advisory Board conference call. We will also meet with the UN Special Envoy's Office. We expect that the first donor disbursements to the Secretariat to be due mid-December 2013, and then we will begin to recruit for the open personnel positions. We will launch the secretariat and begin accepting applications 60 days after disbursements from donors. We expect that applications can be accepted in February 2014.

VI. THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM FOR THE PEACE, SECURITY AND COOPERATION FRAMEWORK: CORE ACTIVITIES

The Women's Platform will carry out three core function areas: grant making, convening, and communications and advocacy. By each function area, the key activities will include:

Grant making

Women's Platform will provide grants to organizations that are conducting programs to advance the following thematic areas:

- Monitoring and advocacy on the PSC Framework and the implementation of regional and national plans of action under UNSCR 1325 addressing prevention, protection and participation;
- Combating Violence Against Women and Supporting Women Affected by Violence;
- Women's Livelihoods and Development; and
- Access to Clean Energy at the local level.

For a detailed description of the WGLP's grantmaking process, please see Appendix 6.

The main activities under the grantmaking function include:

- Linking of the Advisory Board members and the Donors Group with potential beneficiaries.
- Initiating call/invitations, receipt of applications, application due diligence, processing, and payment for all direct grants.
- Providing a communications mechanism for all women's groups that are funded through this initiative.
- Ensuring that grants are used in line with the proposals' objectives, through monitoring, follow up, and evaluation.
- Providing an overall reporting function to all donors on the progress being made as a result of the funding provided to women's groups.
- Supporting communication between donor and grantees.
- For grantees that are not funded directly, provision of recommended grantees to donors group.

Descriptions of some sample grantees are provided in Appendix 7.

The first disbursement to groups will occur in April 2014. The cycle will begin with applications accepted starting in February 2014, processing, and disbursement to grant partners in April 2014. Future disbursements will take place in August and December 2014. This cycle will occur annually for three years of grantmaking.

Reporting to donors will happen quarterly as noted above and annual reports will be available in by

January 31 of 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018, and/or as otherwise required by donors.

Convening

The Women's Platform will organize convenings of the women's groups, including the 1325 Great Lakes Regional Action Plan (RAP) Steering Committee, to strengthen the impact of women's engagement in the peace process. During 2014, the Platform will convene women's groups eight times to launch the Initiative throughout the region:

- Commencement meeting in January-February 2014
- DRC launches in four provinces.
- Burundi launches in Bujumbura.
- Rwanda launch in Kigali.
- Uganda launch in 2 regions

The Secretariat will collaborate with ICGLR-Regional Women's Forum, Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises, and Femmes Africa Solidarité in the organization of convenings. The Secretariat will participate in the Women's Forum of the ICGLR and other major sub-regional initiatives related to women's engagement in the peace process.

Communications/Advocacy

The Women's Platform will undertake communications and advocacy activities to advance the goal of the initiative.

Core activities include:

- Manage communication with institutional, bilateral, multi-lateral donors, and concerned UN agencies, including providing quarterly progress reports on the initiative.
- Support the Gender Advisor of the SESG in keeping the four Ministers in charge of gender of Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda informed on a quarterly basis on the progress achieved by the platform.
- Coordinate twice annual reporting to GIMAC (Gender is my Agenda Campaign), to be attended by identified stakeholders and the Global Fund for Women.
- Support the OSESG_GL in reporting on the initiative to UN Secretary-General and Security Council as appropriate.

In addition, the Women's Platform will leverage increased attention to the DRC through media attention and highprofile advocacy actions, and raise awareness and accountability of corporations that have been sourcing conflict minerals. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recently released findings from a 10-year mapping exercise of the most serious violations of human rights by Congolese actors and foreign parties, including military or armed groups from Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, and others.

VII. CONCLUSION

A significant investment to advance women's rights and participation in peace processes in the Great Lakes at this moment in time would be strategic for the following reasons: It would take advantage of the current political openings created by shifting global and national attitudes toward the impunity of crimes of sexual violence, inadequate rule of law, and the lack of medical, psychosocial, and financial services for sexual violence survivors. It would also leverage Global Fund's, and implementing partners', strategic investments and advocacy focused on stemming the tide of sexual violence in wars and armed conflicts. Such an investment would also build on the momentum that is already being generated by women activists and women's movements to claim

justice and reparations for violence survivors.

We hope that you will join with the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to mobilize the power of women's leadership and social change movements to end sexual violence, build peace, and advance women's rights and local development throughout the Great Lakes Region.