

THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM FOR THE PEACE, SECURITY AND COOPERATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE DRC AND THE REGION



WOMEN HAVE THE SOLUTIONS IN THE GREAT LAKES

2014 – 2016

FOREWORD



As we move towards achieving the peace, stability and development goals of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the region signed by the Heads of state of the region in January 2013, it is crucial that women and girls are at the centre of peacemaking and development in the region. To resolve the roots causes that have plagued the eastern DRC and the region for over 22 years and bring about sustainable peace, women and girls of this region are crucial players whose voices must be heard and whose roles must be recognized and promoted.

Women's contribution are essential to durable solutions in the promotion of sustainable peace and development. I am pleased to see that the Women's Platform for the PSC Framework, launched by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, in January 2014 has proven to be a valuable tool which brings together key actors to promote meaningful and effective participation of women and girls in peace and development in the Great Lakes region.

This report reflects the results-driven engagement of the Women's Platform for the PSC Framework, and highlights the impact it is having on the lives of women and girls and the communities they live in. It provides us with lessons learned and challenges faced, and offers hope for how together we can use the Women's Platform to move women's empowerment to the next level and increase the effective participation of women in all sectors of society.

I urge donors to see the Women's Platform as an important, unifying tool that will help ensure women's grassroots organizations have the funds they need to enable them to play an active and integral role in the economic development of their communities. Equally, and perhaps even more importantly, this Platform is a forum which allows women to lead and fully engage in formal and informal peacebuilding processes at community, local, national and regional levels. Let us come together to support and be part of this exciting initiative that puts girls and women where they belong at the center of peacemaking and development processes in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

SAID DJINNIT

Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region

March 2016

WHAT IS THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM FOR THE PSC FRAMEWORK?



On **24 February 2013**, recognizing the recurring cycles of conflict and violence that permeate the eastern DRC, the Heads of State of the countries of the Great Lakes region of Africa and South Africa signed the PSC Framework.

Since it came into existence, this Framework has represented an avenue of hope for the people of the region to build stability by addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering trust between neighbors.

A UN Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region was appointed to lead, coordinate and support the Heads of State in the implementation of their commitments under the Framework.



Mary Robinson

Former Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region

One of the first initiatives taken up by the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region was **the creation of the Women's Platform for the PSC Framework**, launched in Addis Ababa in **January 2014**.



The Women's Platform is an unparalleled vehicle to ensure that Great Lakes women's voices are heard and that they actively participate in decision-making, as well as in socio-economic development in the region."

UN Secretary General (2015)

The Women's Platform aims to **ensure that women in Burundi, the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda play a significant role, at community, local, national and regional levels, in achieving successful peace building in the Great Lakes region.**

Women and girls must be at the forefront of finding lasting solutions to the root causes of violence in the Great Lakes region. The Platform operates on the assumption that support to grassroots women's organizations through grants and advocacy, will allow women and girls to fulfill this crucial role.

The vision of the Platform is a regional one that allows women and girls from neighboring countries to work together and engage in four key areas:

1. **Monitoring and advocacy** on the PSC Framework and the implementation of the regional and national plans of action under UN Security Council Resolution (UNSC) 1325
2. **Combating violence against women and supporting women affected by violence;**
3. **Advancing women's livelihoods and development initiatives;** and
4. **Increasing access to clean energy.**



THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM - IMPACT (2014-16)

The Women's Platform allows women organizations to actively contribute to the implementation of the PSC Framework and to take on their active and sustained roles in peacebuilding in the Great Lakes region, through the provision of project grants which support the organizations to strengthen collective cross-border action.

Since becoming fully operational towards the end of 2014 with a Secretariat run by Global Fund for Women and a budget of approximately US \$700,000, the Women's Platform focused on disbursing grants to women's organizations in Burundi, the DRC, Rwanda and Tanzania to enable them to carry out activities that could provide peace dividends for the women, their families and their communities, but which also had cross-border impact. By April 2015, 40 grants had been disbursed to 34 women's groups. Activities undertaken by grant recipients impacted on over 1500 people.

An overview of the variety of activities that have been supported by the Platform is listed on the next page.



THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM - IMPACT (2014-16)

1. Monitoring and advocacy

Increasing understanding, awareness and ownership of the goals of the PSC Framework and UNSCR 1325 is key to greater engagement between women and political leadership

- The Platform promotes grassroots initiatives and strategic partnerships, including theatre groups, music bands, training and awareness raising sessions with local authorities, religious groups, government institutions, media, youth and women's groups. These activities contribute significantly to raising awareness on the PSC Framework and UNSCR 1325 at community levels. The activities promote a practice that brings women from different communities and across borders together to share their experiences in peacebuilding and to develop a vision for strengthening cross-border and community relations that can lead to a more peaceful future.
- Through greater awareness and understanding of developments in the region, and through increased self-esteem gained via these initiatives and partnerships, women's organizations are increasingly involved in dialogue on peace and security issues and in strengthening the number of women being nominated to decision-making positions and standing for elections.
- The Platform has served as a tool for community cohesion, promotion of conflict resolution and reconciliation among women living in the Ruzuzi plain in eastern DRC and other border communities.

Testimony



*"Meetings, trainings, and debates on collaboration, reconciliation, peace, and security...nothing interested me and to me seemed to be the concern of men and politicians...I was invited to become president of the peace committee. Previously I would have never accepted this role because in my mind Burundi and Rwanda are countries that attacked the Congo...After the training with women from Burundi I accepted the role. **Today I am very proud of myself and the work I'm able to do with the women in Burundi.** Currently, I participate in meetings with leaders, civil society, and elected officials...I also express myself in these discussions, something that our mothers never had the chance to do due to our conservative customs."*

Women beneficiary of grantee group SOFAD (DRC)

THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM - IMPACT (2014-16)

2. Combating violence against woman and supporting women affected by violence

Directly empowering survivors helps ensure victims of sexual violence are protected within their communities and can fully participate in the future of the Great Lakes region

- The Platform has provided grants to innovative groups supporting reintegration activities for survivors of sexual violence. The activities advance women's economic potential, help women and girls to heal, reunify with family members and regain their dignity, purpose and rightful place in their communities.
- Education and access to legal assistance is crucial to combating sexual and gender based violence, and helps to effectively fight impunity for these crimes which have been the norm for so many years in the Great Lakes region. Through activities funded by the Platform, survivors are gaining greater understanding of the legal options available to them, while at the same time, community members are becoming more engaged in the fight against gender-based and sexual violence.
- Activities in this category also focus on bringing survivors from different ethnic groups together which helps promote a more cohesive approach to peace-building the border communities.

Testimony



"I regained the respect and confidence that I lost in the eyes of my community, and even from my husband. Today I am proud of my role as a facilitator in charge of outreach in the CBO...which enables me to...guide women for their promotion of and participation in women's rights and sustainable peacebuilding in the Fizi Territory."

SGBV Survivor and Grantee Beneficiary in DRC

IMPACT (2014-16) of THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM

3. Advancing women's livelihoods and development

Empowerment and increased ability to cover family expenses results in strengthening self-esteem and helps women claim their rights, demand that their voices are heard, and become more active participants in debates on peace, security and other key issues that affect the well-being of their families and communities.



- Lasting peace requires that men and women are able to engage in sustainable economic initiatives on an equal footing. Grants provided by the Platform have encouraged women to work together to strengthen their potential as entrepreneurs in their communities, including through improving crop harvest and marketing, animal raising and breeding, creating and managing cooperatives with women from other ethnic groups, and developing financial and computer skills. That women take up such roles and develop such skills is critical to ensuring that post-conflict situations can return to a level of normality and be free from conflict.



- Women grantees have reported an increase in women's economic independence and greater awareness of their rights.

Testimony

"With greater economic resources and ability to contribute to household expenses, women are strengthened in their ability to participate in household decisions, ensure their daughters are sent to school, and take pride in their status as economic contributors to their communities."

Field Monitoring Report in Burundi , the DRC, Rwanda & Uganda



IMPACT (2014-16) of THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM

4. Increasing access to clean energy

will ensure that women, their families and communities live in healthier environments and that they together create a cleaner, more sustainable future for their children.

The Platform provides opportunities for Women to understand the importance of clean energy, better sanitation, alternative technologies and renewable resources, all of which will reduce energy expenses, promote protection of the environment. Women benefiting from these grants are becoming the leaders of their communities in clean energy initiatives that will benefit their children and communities in the long run.



Good Practices THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM

The Women's Platform sends a clear message that women's leadership and grassroots participation is as vital as women's leadership at the upper echelons to ensure the success of the PSC Framework.

Women's Leadership and Participation in the PSC-F: Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities, Niamh Reilly & Roslyn Warren

The Women's Platform has been able to highlight key practices needed to ensure long term results that allow women and girls to their full potential in peacebuilding in the Great Lakes region.



- **Collaboration and partnerships are key to success.**

Working with women and girls from various ethnic communities or from across borders as well as local authorities and other partners, towards an agreed purpose will lead to sustainable initiatives that reflect the goals of a greater number of women in communities, and ultimately lead to lasting results

- **Careful consideration should be given to the types of income-generating activities and trainings to be promoted.**

Taking a holistic approach that goes beyond economic incentives and looks at reinforcing self-esteem, encouraging self-respect and promoting self-dignity will ensure women and girls are proud of what they have accomplished, strengthen their leadership skills, and help them become valuable contributors and stakeholders in conflict resolution and decision-making processes in their communities.

- **Responding holistically to issues of sexual and gender based violence**

in a manner that ensures women and girls' psycho-social well-being is protected but also ensures they gain knowledge on and access to their legal, social and economic rights, will empower women and girls and helps them regain the confidence they need to become self-sufficient, independent and respected full-fledged members of their communities.

- **Information and experience sharing are valuable tools for the promotion of greater involvement of women and girls in decision-making.** Documentation, information and experience sharing is crucial to ensuring women and girls have a deep understanding of the challenges they face and a stronger appreciation of their rights. And how they might go about achieving them. Sharing experiences builds relationships across ethnic and border lines, and helps women push for constructive and non-violent interaction with persons formerly perceived to be enemies.

Good Practices THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM

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- **Relationships are built by bringing together people from different backgrounds and sides to a conflict.**

On a daily basis, women are building peace in their homes, neighborhoods and communities. Women are paramount to mediating disputes in all these domains. It is important to build on this role.

- **Strengthen key players already operating in the region.** It is crucial to build on and strengthen key players and organizations already working in the region, as they have the knowledge needed to tailor programmes to beneficiaries and guarantee the sustainability of the undertaken actions .
- **Empowerment, confidence and self-esteem is increased** when women and girls become more economically productive and manage and control their income and businesses independently.
- **Women's organizations can and should play a key role in monitoring and driving progress** toward the implementation of the PSC Framework.
- **Regional initiatives such as the Women's Platform which allow for meaningful participation of a wide cross-section of women's organizations** can provide an inclusive, open, transparent and important forum for dialogue when inter-state relations are poor.



The Advisory Board THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM

The Advisory Board provides guidance on the implementation of the key objectives of the Women's Platform and supports the Secretariat to deepen its understanding of the interplay between the peace processes in the Great Lakes Region and the role of the women's movement.

The Board is composed of the implementing partners of the Women's Platform:

- The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes
- Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS)
- The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
- Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises,
- Global Fund for Women,
- UN agencies,
- The Ministers of Gender of Burundi, the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda.

Donors

Funding from the Irish and Dutch Governments and the Oak Foundation has been integral to the success of the first 2 years of the Women's Platform.

Meet some of our grantees

Actions des Femmes pour les Droits et le Développement
Actions pour les Droits Humains et la Gouvernance Démocratique
AFIA MAMA
Association de Soutien aux Séropositives de Kinama
Association des Femmes pour la Promotion et le Développement Endogène
Burundian Women for Peace and Development
Cadre Permanent de Concertation de la Femme Congolaise
Femmes Africa Solidarité
Fonds d'Initiatives Féminines Locales
Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises
Isis Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange
Monde d'Epanouissement et de Libération Individuelle par des Techniques Adaptées
Appui aux Femmes Démunies et Enfants Marginalisés au Kivu
Bureau Régional d'Études pour le Développement Durable
Développement Agropastoral Et Sanitaire
Solidarité pour l'Epanouissement des Veuves et des Orphelins
Promotion et Appui aux Initiatives Féminines
Solidarité des Femmes de Fizi pour le Bien-Etre Familial
Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises
Groupement des Femmes Vivant avec le VIH/SIDA
Shalupe Foundation
Solidarité avec les Victimes et pour la Paix
The Eastern African Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women



Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe
Programme Amkeni Wamama
Sauti ya Mwanamke Kijijini
Shalupe Foundation
Solidarité avec les Victimes et pour la Paix
Solidarité des Femmes Activistes pour la Défense des Droits Humains
Solidarité Echange pour le Développement Integral
Solidarité Féminine pour la Paix et le Développement Intégral
Solidarité pour le Développement en Afrique
SOS Femmes En Détresse / Section De La République Du Burundi
SOS Réseau Associatif de Femmes pour le Droit et le Développement
Synergie des Femmes pour les Victimes des Violences Sexuelles



Office of the Special Envoy
of the Secretary-General
for the Great Lakes Region



Office of the Special Representative
of the Secretary-General on
Sexual Violence in Conflict



For more information

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