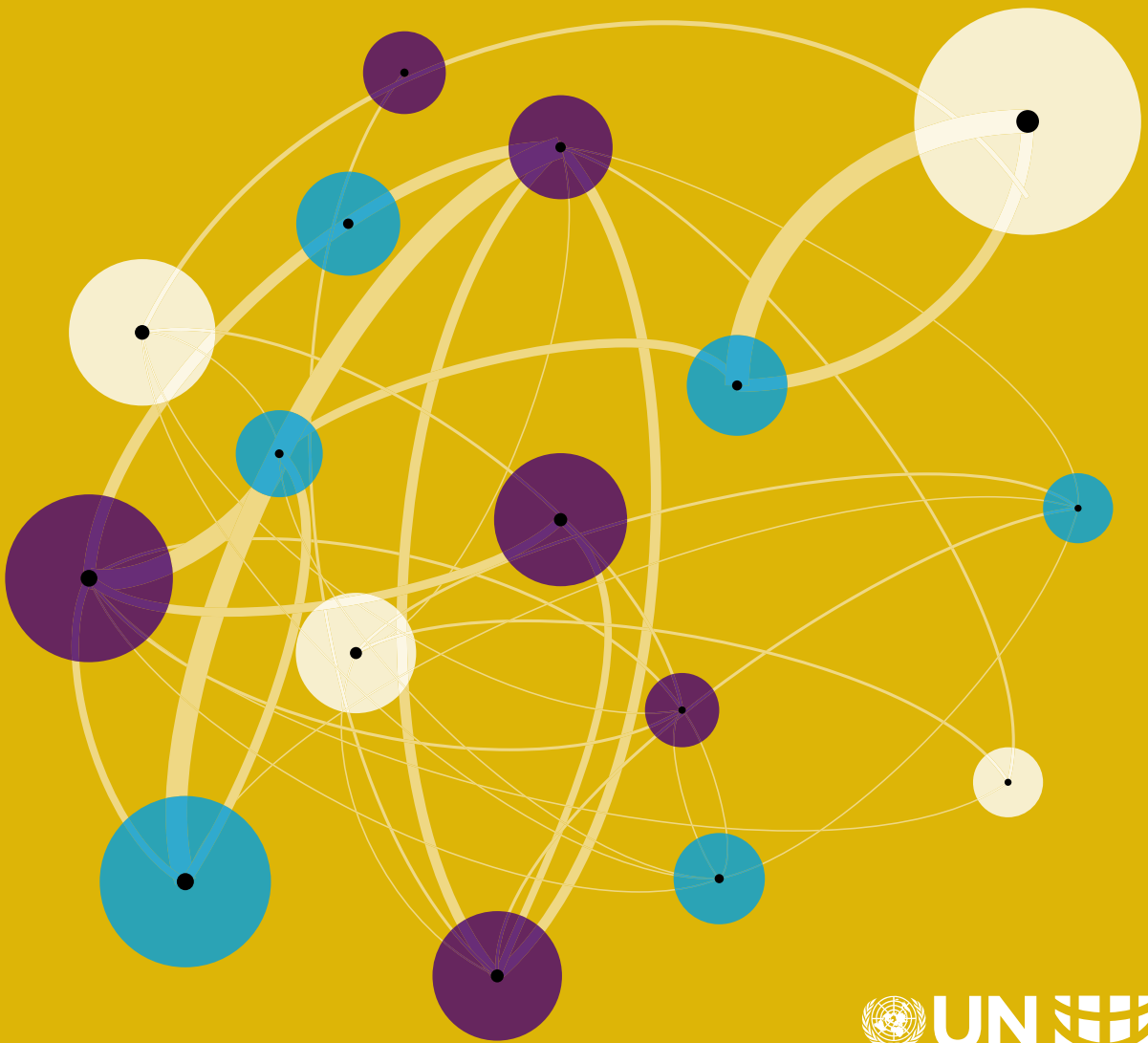


UN WOMEN

# PEACE SECURITY AND RESILIENCE

2023 Highlights



## Foreword from Executive Director Sima Bahous



↑ UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous.  
Photo: UN Photo/Evan Schneider

*In a world where conflict is rampant, women's role in preventing conflicts, finding new paths towards dialogue, building peace, and reducing disaster risk is more important than ever. Many of the most contentious issues about human rights, democracy, and civic space that underpin today's conflicts have to do with gender equality.*

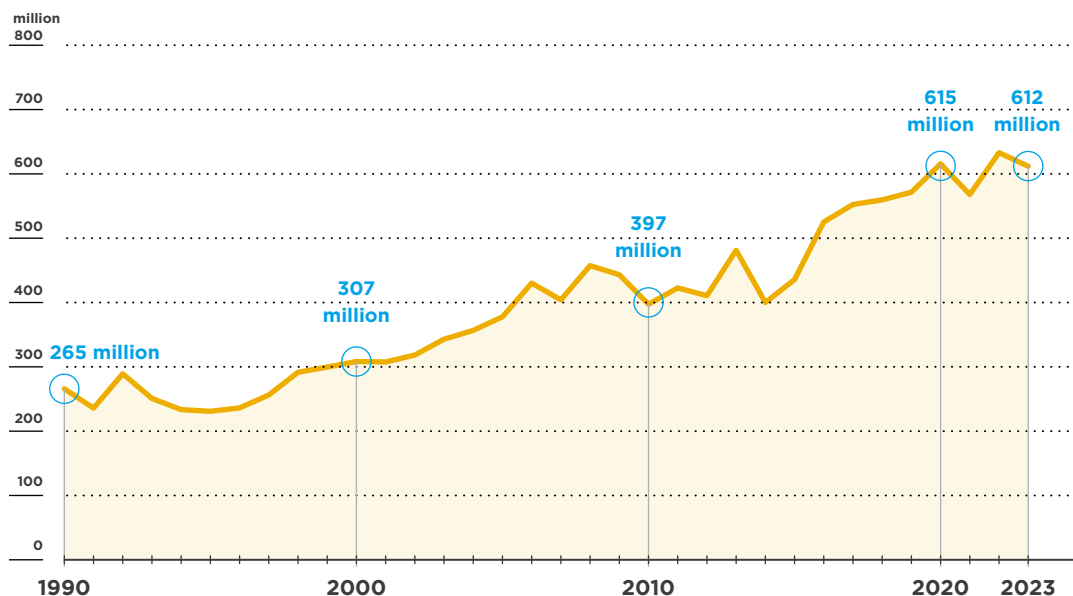
*2023 was a tumultuous year. More than 170 armed conflicts were recorded, directly affecting approximately 612 million women and girls. Conflict-related sexual violence increased by 50 per cent, and the proportion of women killed in armed conflicts doubled. International human rights law and their special protections for women and children were openly ignored. World military expenditure increased for the ninth consecutive year, while the share of bilateral official development assistance with gender equality objectives dropped after a decade on the rise. Several governments and armed groups imposed new limitations on women's freedom of movement and right to work and restrictions on the use of gender-related terminology that has been universally accepted for decades, with serious consequences for the work of the United Nations and women-led civil society organizations.*

*This proliferation of conflicts should make it more important and urgent that women participate meaningfully in peacemaking, but in reality exacerbates the pressure to exclude them. In this difficult context, demand for UN Women's support has only grown, and our work on peace and security, humanitarian action, and disaster risk reduction was once again our largest area of expenditure. As women continue to be marginalized from key negotiations for peace, we convened safe spaces for thousands of women peacebuilders and activists to meet with each other and make their collective demands known to decision-makers. We channeled tens of millions of dollars to women's organizations in the frontlines of crises, and directly supported thousands of women human rights defenders at risk. We supported women to address local conflicts and influence global policy. As this report shows, these efforts are not futile. Sometimes they lead to greater representation of women, whether in the halls of power or in local peace committees or as uniformed peacekeepers. In other examples, they lead to better policies and laws that can have a very direct impact for women and girls, such as reparations for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. And in every case, we make sure that atrocities and injustices against women and girls are duly investigated and documented, and that the voices of those holding the line for gender equality are amplified and heard.*

*Thank you for your interest in our work and for being a partner for gender equality and sustainable peace.*

In 2023, the world faced unprecedented challenges. Climate-driven crises and conflicts—both new and old—have put hundreds of millions of women and girls at risk.

### Estimated number of women and girls living within 50 kilometers of armed conflicts worldwide, 1990-2023



Sources: Calculation by Peace research institute Oslo, using Uppsala Conflict Data Program Georeferenced Event Dataset, Global version 24.1. and CIESIN (2018) Gridded Population of the World v.4.11.

Despite these difficult circumstances, UN Women stayed and delivered to meet these challenges head on. UN Women teams remain on the ground supporting local civil society and government partners working for conflict prevention, peace and resilience.

UN Women is uniquely positioned to do this work because we:

- Partner with local women leaders and organizations to implement programmes and feed information, lessons learned, and urgent needs up to national, regional, and global policy-making spaces;
- Support national governments, and regional and global bodies to promote gender equality and empowerment and rights of all women and girls through set global standards, and ensure these norms translate into actionable policies and strategies;
- Coordinate within the UN system to ensure the entire UN system centres gender as foundational to building peaceful, resilient societies.

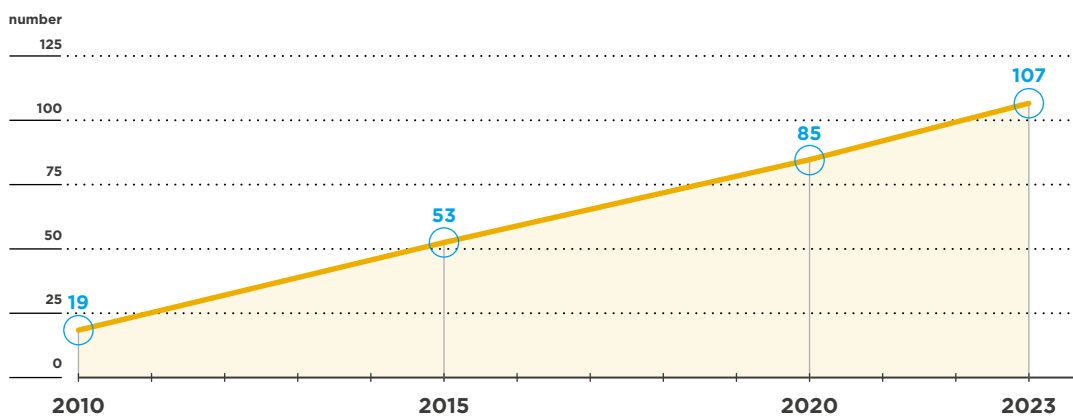
From Afghanistan to Ukraine, from the Pacific Islands to Haiti, from the Occupied Palestinian Territory to Sudan, UN Women stays in times of crisis and delivers for women and girls. In 2022-2023, women, peace and security, humanitarian action, and disaster risk reduction was UN Women's largest area of work, with a total combined expenditure of \$217.62 million globally. Much of this is implemented through UN Women's country offices in partnership with local civil society organizations and aligned to UN Women's strategic objectives at the country level.

## UN Women supports Member States...

Fulfilling women, peace and security commitments is the duty of Member States. UN Women works hand-in-hand with governments to deliver on their national and global commitments to peace. In 2023, UN Women provided concrete support in the development and improvement of WPS National Action Plans (NAPs) in 30 countries: Albania, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burundi, Chile, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, El Salvador, Georgia, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Morocco, Moldova, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. As Secretariat of the WPS Focal Points Network, UN Women supported the network's 100 members in 2023 (90 member states and 10 regional organizations) in developing their WPS Action Plans to better serve as effective tools for peace.

UN Women's advocacy at the Security Council is key to supporting Member States to meet their global commitments on the WPS agenda. UN Women serves as the Secretariat for the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on WPS to the Security Council, which ensures that Member States are informed on WPS in country-specific situations. The IEG organized eight country-specific meetings focused on critical situations, including in Somalia, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan, the Middle East as well as the group's first visit to South Sudan.

### Growth in the number of national action plans on WPS



Sources: WPS Focal Points Network (<https://wpsfocalpointsnetwork.org/>)

UN Women strongly advocates for women CSO members to brief the Security Council, and in 2023, 45 women from civil society were invited to share their perspectives there. UN Women's Executive Director also briefed the Security Council six times.

## UN Women empowers women to prevent conflict...

Women's inclusion is essential to conflict prevention. UN Women partners with and helps provide capacity-building opportunities for women mediators and peacemakers in countries like Colombia, DRC, Georgia, Myanmar, Sudan, Syria and others. For example, in 2023, UN Women continued to support the Women's Advisory Board (WAB) on Transnistria in Moldova, and the formation of Ibero-American Network of Women Mediators, comprising 11 countries from throughout Latin America to ensure women's participation in Tracks 1, 2 and 3 mediation and peace processes.

### RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF REPRESSION IN AFGHANISTAN

Since the Taliban took power over the country in 2021, women have been almost completely erased from public life, stripping Afghan women and girls of their rights as citizens.

Despite the extremely challenging and restrictive environment, in 2023 UN Women country office worked across its thematic areas to safeguard and amplify the voices and priorities of Afghan women and women's organizations, by documenting ground realities and providing recommendations to the international community in ways that prioritize their safety. In addition to our partnerships with women-led organizations, we also support private actors to identify opportunities for women business owners and to enhance the employability of Afghan women within the private sector.

UN Women supports women to be included in regional processes and platforms and urges countries and organizations to align their support to Afghan women, supporting the creation of a new "human rights + security" narrative to protect women and human rights in Afghanistan, and preventing the rise of extremism and fundamentalism.

Despite UN Women's sustained support to strengthen local peace initiatives and women peacebuilders, women's participation in peace and mediation processes has declined since 2020. To address this, UN Women worked with UN Department of Peace and Political Affairs and Department of Peace Operations to endorse a minimum target of one-third female participation in UN-led mediation and peace processes<sup>1</sup>. To track this, we began collecting data with our partners for the "Women in Peace Processes Monitor", which we will launch in 2024.

Including young women in decision-making increases the effectiveness and sustainability of peace and fosters more inclusive, resilient societies. In 2023, we supported frameworks like the Youth, Peace, and Security Strategy by the League of Arab States and the African Women Leaders Network, with its special focus on making young women leaders more visible and connecting them to high-level political actors.

Women have much to contribute when it comes to prevention of violent extremism. In 2023, UN Women engaged extensively with UN Member States during the eighth review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, strengthening consultative processes and civil society involvement. UN Women helped ensure that the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy retained strong language on gender and women's rights, recognizing women's risks and contributions to preventing violent extremism.

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1. See Operational Paragraph 104 in the 2023 Women and Peace and Security Report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/725), available here: [Women and peace and security : \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/womenandpeaceandsecurity)

## UN WOMEN RESPONDS: CRISIS IN THE SAHEL

The Sahel region faces enormous security challenges, which are compounded by political, geopolitical, socio-economic and environmental factors. This situation has also led to a growing humanitarian crisis and the region has become an epicenter of violent extremism.

The complex nature of this situation has impacted communities and contributed to a lack of public confidence in state institutions, which, in turn, has been a driving factor behind a series of military coups in the region. The Sahel crisis is multidimensional and requires multi-sectoral responses, including the contributions of all stakeholders, towards building peace. Women's contributions to the civilian response to the crisis is essential. This is where UN Women comes in. In 2023, UN Women facilitated discussions to identify more effective strategies to strengthen women's leadership for peace. As a result, in May, UN Women helped organize a 3-day conference in Niger to allow participants to reflect on and develop strategies to effectively adapt the women, peace and security agenda to the situation in the Sahel. Participants included researchers, defense actors, regional organizations, and leaders of women's organizations, and they shared lessons learned and identified new approaches best suited to the context.

Starting in 2023, UN Women committed to building a strong movement of 100 women's organizations to promote peace in the Sahel. UN Women has created spaces for exchange and sharing of experiences on the participation of women in political transition processes through webinars and forums. The objective is to transform these transition contexts into opportunities to advance women's rights and improve governance in these countries. While the region remains in crisis, UN Women is actively working with local partners to build the foundations for peace in the future.

## UN Women helps put women and gender at the centre of reducing risk from disasters...

UN Women works with Member States, the UN and civil society across various fronts to enable women and gender equality to be centred in disaster risk reduction (DRR). In 2023, UN Women collaborated with UNDRR and UNFPA in the development of [the Sendai Framework Gender Action Plan \(Sendai GAP\)](#) which provides guidance for gender-responsive policy and programming on disaster risk reduction.

### REDUCING DISASTER RISK IN THE PACIFIC

*"The support (by UN Women) has helped us to move and significantly assisted us in expanding our outreach to vulnerable communities in Savo Island at community level, acknowledged as having the most serious volcanic hazard in the Solomon Islands."*

\_\_\_\_\_ **Civil society partner** representing people with disabilities from the Solomon Islands

The Pacific is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world. Disaster risks converge with critical socio-economic vulnerabilities, environmental degradation, climate change, making it a disaster hotspot. Pacific Island women are deeply impacted by these crises due to traditional gender roles, which can limit their access to information and resources. Women's economic activities, such as farming and market selling, are typically informal and thus undervalued and significantly affected by disasters. This not only deepens existing inequalities but also keeps women out of crucial decision-making processes related to disaster and climate resilience.



↑ UN Women/Sarika Chand

Women's Resilience to Disasters Pacific regional CSO orientation in June 2023 with 30 participants from Fiji, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to share and report on good practices across programme implementation.



Our Women's Resilience to Disasters (WRD) programme has been instrumental in ensuring that Pacific women are represented on the global stage. The WRD programme supported Pacific women to attend and participate as part of country delegations at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) that took place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates in 2023. UN Women provided delegations with language and other technical support during the negotiations, which contributed to gender mainstreaming in both COP28 outcomes and processes.

At the local level, in 2023 the WRD Programme provided women in the Pacific with greater access to increased financial support and security through UN Women's partnerships with a women-focused national micro-finance institution in Vanuatu, which directly contributed to increased recovery for women from the twin cyclones that hit the country in 2023. The WRD programme also partnered with the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) in Fiji which enabled 128 women to have access to microinsurance products. In addition, the programme has supported innovative climate and disaster resilient businesses for women, like in Fiji where 36 women received training around sustainable waste management practices and in Vanuatu where 100 women received training on building resilient livelihoods through solar products.

The WRD programme works at the national policy level, as well. In 2023, the programme helped to advance gender-responsive development, adoption and implementation of disaster and climate policies and strategies in the Pacific region by building the capacity of disaster management authorities through a UN Women gender-transformative DRR training for government representatives from Kiribati, Fiji, and Vanuatu to collect and analyze Sex, Age, Disability Disaggregated Data.

The [WRD Knowledge Hub](#) and [WRD Policy Tracker](#) provide government officials and DRR practitioners with access to tracked policy progress and tools, resources and knowledge from around the globe on gender responsive DRR. In 2023 the Hub had 39,511 unique visitors and included 1,746 resources in the WRD library. The Hub also hosts a WRD Community of Practice (CoP), which boasts over 1,100 members, to exchange experience, share good practices, resources, and tools.



## UN Women works with partners to foster peace...

UN Women works to ensure women's engagement in peace and security operations to build peaceful and more inclusive societies.

UN Women supports women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders to protect themselves from attack and reprisal for their work. In Colombia, UN Women collaborates on the ProDefensoras Programme to create safe spaces and environments for women leaders, their organizations, and communities. As of 2023, the ProDefensoras programme provided support and training for over 6,000 women leaders and human rights defenders on collective prevention and protection.

### SUDANESE WOMEN LEADING THE CHARGE FOR PEACE AND UNITY

*"My participation in the Kampala conference for Sudanese Women...reignited my hope and determination to advocate for women's inclusion in the peace processes through these powerful platforms. I recognize that women are the most affected by the war in Sudan, and we play a pivotal role in contributing to peace efforts. I also believe in the inherent power of women to make a difference and vow to continue my meaningful work in this regard."*

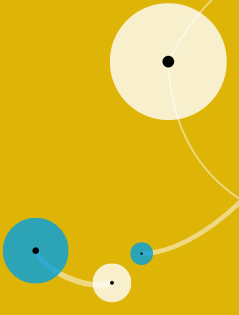
**Mariam Hamid**, Women's Rights Activist

Women were at the forefront of Sudan's 2019 revolution, culminating in the ousting of President Omar al-Bashir after three decades of rule. Their activism is just one chapter in a longstanding tradition of women advocating for peace and justice in Sudan.

The return of violence in the country in 2023 has resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis, exacerbating gender-based violence, mass-displacement, and worsening living conditions. Food prices are soaring, water and electricity are scarce, and the population is traumatized by ongoing violence. Despite the despair, over 49 women-led organizations formed the Peace for Sudan Platform, advocating for peace and the protection



↑ UN Women/James Ochweri  
Participants interacting at the Conference with Sudanese Women Leaders in  
Kampala, Uganda.



of women and girls. UN Women, along with partners such as the African Union (AU), DPPA, The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) and working also closely with the UN Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa and International Women Peace Centre actively support Sudanese women's efforts to end the war and engage strategically in the peace process.

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UN Women and the AU as partners in the AWLN held a virtual solidarity mission in support of Sudanese women's calls to end the ongoing conflict. Following the solidarity mission, a high-level WPS Taskforce was established comprising Sudanese women peacebuilders, IGAD, the AU, and the UN, calling for an immediate end to the war, gender-sensitive humanitarian aid, and meaningful participation of women in peace processes.

UN Women and partners also contributed to the "Kampala Feminist Declaration" - produced by over 400 women articulating their demands for engagement in the political process, humanitarian assistance, and security and safety for all Sudanese. This is a significant step in recognizing the crucial role of Sudanese women in shaping peaceful societies - and UN Women is by their side.

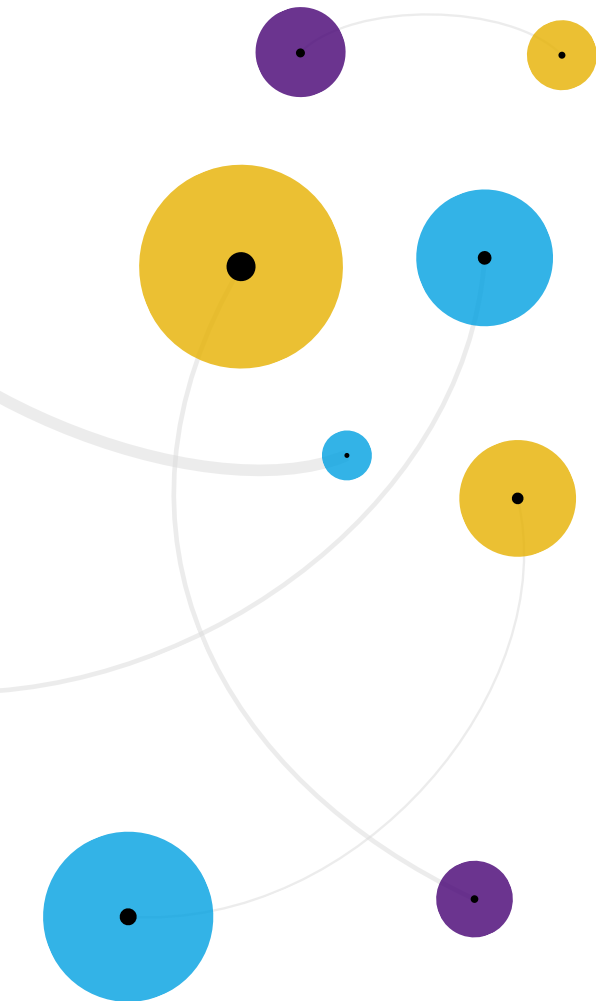
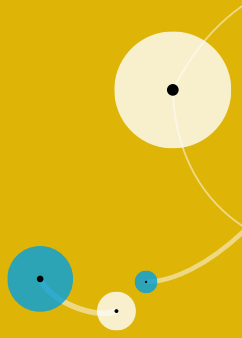
In 2023, UN Women also played a key role in supporting women's participation in peace processes. For instance, in Yemen, in partnership with the Office of the Special Envoy, UN Women coordinated a series of consultations for nearly 200 Yemeni women leaders, peace advocates, and CSO representatives to contribute to the country's peace negotiations and highlight the importance of gender in humanitarian response there. Regarding Afghanistan, UN Women advocated for strong language in Security Council resolution 2721 on Afghan women's participation in peace efforts and mobilized for women's involvement in peace talks in countries like Sudan, DRC, Colombia, Myanmar, Syria, and Georgia.

UN Women bolsters women's participation in uniformed national security organizations and helps build a pipeline of women to be deployed as UN Peacekeepers. We serve as secretariat of the Elsie Initiative Fund (EIF) for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations, which supports women in uniform by identifying barriers to their participation and providing grants to Troop and Police Contributing Countries to increase women's meaningful participation. In 2023, the EIF supported the deployment of three gender-strong units that include significant representation of women, including in leadership, command, and technical positions. These efforts supported Ghana in deploying its second gender-strong military battalion with over 800 military peacekeepers, of whom 20 per cent are women, and supported Senegal in deploying two gender-strong Formed Police Units with 20 per cent women, combined. You can learn more about the work of the EIF in its [2023 Annual Report](#).

## ENABLING WPS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: TRANSITIONING FROM PEACEKEEPING TO PEACEBUILDING

As the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) began drawing down from eastern DRC, UN Women stepped in to provide WPS support by opening a new office in South Kivu. UN Women is part of the formulation of the United Nations Support Plan for the Transition in South Kivu and has provided strategic inputs into the identification of four transition priorities for the area, which will be taken into consideration in the preparation of the new Cooperation Framework between the DRC and the United Nations for 2025-2029. UN Women provided strategic guidance on the new UN Joint Justice Reform Framework in DRC (2025-2029) and is strategically positioned to participate as active partner with specific expertise in the new Framework.

UN Women's efforts in DRC have enabled women leaders in different provinces to undertake various preventive diplomacy missions in-country engaging some critical actors. In 2023, UN Women focused on fostering gender-responsive peacebuilding and strengthening women's capacity for the promotion of Women's Participation in Peace Processes, informed by the failure to achieve women's meaningful participation in the Luanda and Nairobi peace processes. UN Women's key priority for the transition is to support women's role in conflict prevention, social cohesion, and transformation, facilitating women's political access and funding support, and building linkages across local, national and regional peace initiatives to maximize impact.



## UN Women empowers women to recover from crises...

Even before conflicts and crises abate, UN Women works with national governments and local actors to ensure that communities are rebuilt with peace, justice, and equality at the centre, to ensure peace is lasting and to prevent conflict from re-igniting. In 2023, UN Women supported women-led initiatives to create spaces for dialogue between communities, such as in the Transnistrian region in Moldova bordering Ukraine, and reconciliation processes to heal from collective trauma in Lebanon.

### FROM HEALING TO LEADING: WOMEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF RECONCILIATION IN LEBANON

UN Women started doing women-led reconciliation work in Lebanon in 2019. Trauma is a part of Lebanon's past and present. UN Women wanted women not only to heal from it, but to lead others towards reconciliation. UN Women identified 60 women from different regions, sects, and ages to come together for an intergenerational dialogue on the Lebanese Civil War, on the need to ensure that this war does not happen again and to scale up the role women can play in peacebuilding and de-escalating conflict. This type of women-led conversation is unprecedented in the country. Half of the women committed to taking this dialogue to their own communities. And nine have now become full-fledged professional facilitators of dialogue.

There has been a radical shift because of this process; women are reconciling with their own experiences in war and understanding their roles going forward. There's healing in coming to terms with the past. And it provides tools for addressing the present. Lebanon remains in crisis, but the younger generation of women are interested in understanding the past. They have inherited generational trauma that they actively want to undo. They feel they have a duty to make sure that the country does not go back to war. And when the country is ready for a national-level peace and reconciliation process, these are the young women who will be at the table, as leaders.



↑ ICTJ (International Center for Transitional Justice)  
A discussion with Beirut (Nabaa) dialogue group on issue of missing and forcibly disappeared.

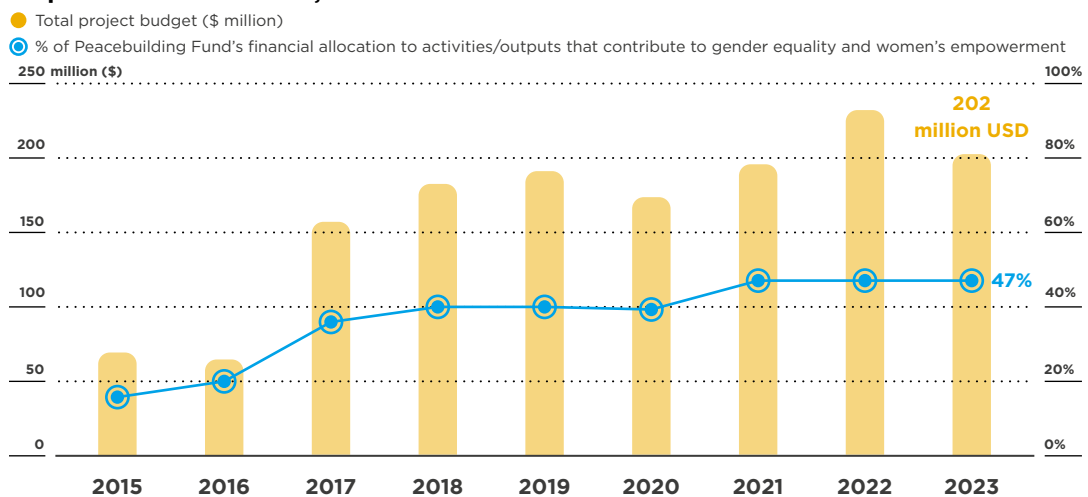
UN Women helps women gain access to justice, reform legal frameworks, and take on greater roles in transitional justice processes. An important part of this work is the deployment of gender experts to Human Rights Council mandated Commissions of Inquiry and fact-finding missions to document gender-based crimes and human rights violations. This work contributes to the aim of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence receiving the reparations and justice they deserve. We provide support to drafting transitional justice strategies for everyone to be heard when it comes to seeking justice and finding peace.

### UN Women catalyzes investment in women, peace, security, and resilience...

Amid a global context of increased military spending and stagnating or decreasing support for bilateral aid for feminist, women-led and women’s rights organizations, UN Women addresses funding gaps by redirecting resources to countries and organizations in need. UN Women is proud to serve as the secretariat to the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) that supports local women’s organizations in crisis-affected countries, enhancing their capacities in gender-responsive peacebuilding to help them achieve contextualized and sustainable solutions for peace. The WPHF mobilized \$45.8 million, launched 21 new Calls for Proposals and approved 188 new grants in support of 293 civil society organizations (CSO) distributing close to \$38 million in support of local women’s organizations across 31 crisis-affected countries in 2023 alone. You can learn more about the WPHF’s impacts in 2023 in [their Annual Report](#).

UN Women works closely with the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) through a Gender Adviser seconded by UN Women. This partnership has contributed to the PBF approving \$202.5 million in support for peacebuilding initiatives in 36 countries, of which over 47 per cent (\$95.9 million) was focused on supporting gender equality. The Fund’s application and monitoring of the gender equality marker, which UN Women helped design, remains a model for other funds.

### UN Peacebuilding Fund funds allocated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, 2015-2023



Sources: UN DPPA Peacebuilding Support Office.

## UN Women improves access to evidence and information...

UN Women is the global thought leader on WPS and gender-responsive DRR. UN Women advances the WPS and gender in DRR agendas through strengthening the evidence base for women's participation and inclusion, providing policy advice and technical guidance, documenting good practice and impact, and, crucially, telling the stories of women and girls as powerful agents of peace and resilience. In 2023, UN Women produced over 40 reports, gender and situation alerts, policy analyses, case studies, policy briefs, guidance note, toolkits, and other knowledge on WPS and DRR worldwide.

UN Women produced gender alerts providing humanitarian and peace and security assessments of the situations unfolding in the [Occupied Palestinian Territory](#) and [Sudan](#), and rapid analysis of the refugee crisis in Armenia as well as in-depth analysis and data collection on ongoing crises, such as [Afghanistan](#), [the refugee crises in Cox's Bazaar](#), and [Ukraine](#).

Our research also takes deep dives into different areas of work like [transitional justice](#), [inclusive peace processes](#), [women in peacekeeping](#), [hate speech and misogyny](#) and [financing the WPS agenda](#), and provides insights to emerging areas of work, like [gender and cyber security](#) and [Artificial Intelligence](#).

To ensure UN Women is working at the leading edge and to support our partners and stakeholders continually improve our efforts, we publish lessons learned on programming, such as [preventing violent extremism in Asia Pacific](#) and guidance notes and toolkits, such as [localization of the regional action plan on WPS in ASEAN](#) and policy analysis and guidance looking at topics like [the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young peacebuilders](#) and [International Criminal Court's revised policy on sexual and gender-based crimes](#). You can explore the full range of UN Women's publications in [our digital library](#).

## Looking ahead...

UN Women's work contributes to incremental and meaningful changes that help communities move towards lasting peace and stability. UN Women fosters environments where women can contribute to peace and development effectively and equitably, illustrating that progress and resilience can emerge even in the most challenging circumstances.

For 2024, we stand strong against backlash, oppression, and attacks on women's fundamental rights and freedom and access to justice. We stand next to the brave peace and human rights advocates who do not back down. We stand with countries to promote women, peace and security and with women leading climate and disaster resilience. As we look to the future, the commitment to breaking the cycle of violence and fostering a world built of peace, justice, and equality for all remains more crucial than ever. This can only take place when everyone contributes to it. It is crucial that women are part of building that future. That is where we continue working as UN Women.





