

Building Holistic Security

Addressing Security Risks of Women Peacebuilders Through Partnerships

Executive Summary

Women peacebuilders inevitably face risks and insecurity in their daily work. International partners have an important role to play in supporting their safety and protection. Understanding women peacebuilders' roles and the types of risks they face is the first step in ensuring an adequate response. The diversity of roles that women peacebuilders play, as well as the multiple factors that impact the types of risks they might face, need to be taken into account by international partners from the very beginning of a partnership.

This report identifies how international partners can better partner with women peacebuilders to address the risks and insecurity they face in the different facets of their work. The report analyzes the risks that many women peacebuilders experience and provides guidelines for international partners to help prevent and mitigate these risks. Through case studies, the report identifies challenges and opportunities drawn directly from the lived realities of women peacebuilders and their partners, as well as from experts working in the Women, Peace and Security field.

The report addresses how international partners who wish to work with women peacebuilders and support them in addressing the risks and insecurity they face need to recognize the scope and nature of peacebuilding work, which is often cross-cutting, overlapping with humanitarian response and development work. Understanding the nuances and breadth of women peacebuilders' work is crucial to identifying the risks they face and providing them with effective legal, political and financial protection — and is thereby essential to creating partnerships that mitigate and address these risks

Analyzing the security risks women peacebuilders experience and current strategies for preventing and mitigating these risks generated the following key findings:

- **Women peacebuilders experience threats at the personal and community level as well as at the institutional level.**
- **Women peacebuilders know best how they can be supported and in which ways the international community can be helpful.**
- **There is a need for institutional policies and measures implemented by international partners to prioritize women peacebuilders' security.**
- **Funding is critical for mitigating risks, but funds are often inaccessible to less well-established organizations and almost totally inaccessible to non-registered organizations or to individual women peacebuilders.**
- **Collective action and network-building can provide protective mechanisms for women peacebuilders.**



The following recommendations for international partners and funders are based on this evidence and analysis:

● Support women peacebuilders' individual strategies for security and resilience

- Recognize the scope and diversity of women peacebuilders' work.
- Be aware that women peacebuilders may not self-identify as such — and that sometimes identifying as a peacebuilder can pose a risk.
- Provide opportunities for women peacebuilders to engage in self-care practices, rest and recovery.
- Create safe spaces for women peacebuilders to gather and share and analyze risks, co-develop mitigation strategies and create solidarity.
- Facilitate psychosocial support that brings women together across existing divides rather than reinforcing those divides.
- Address structural issues that lead to burnout and fatigue, including donor expectations for results or the absence of resources for risk management
- Where appropriate, support the visibility of women peacebuilders and highlight the successes of the work they do.

● Respond to real-time changes in conflict and security dynamics

- Allow for local women peacebuilding organizations to temporarily cease operations if security conditions change and they no longer feel comfortable working in the area.
- Establish incident tracking and reporting systems to compile and share security incidents and threats.
- Provide flexibility in reporting, especially if describing activities in a different way will help reduce risks to local peace leaders.
- Jointly analyze security incidents to extract lessons learned.
- Plan for the possibility to take radical protection steps, including providing legal support or logistical support for women peacebuilders to leave their community or country, including facilitating visa processes.
- Develop digital security plans and ensure that all partners can operate in digitally safe ways. Ensure that women peacebuilders have professional VPNs, paid encrypted mail accounts and technical support on how to utilize these for digital safety.

● Create responsive funding mechanisms

- Allocate funding resources for joint security risk management and development of risk mitigation strategies with women peacebuilders and their organizations and listen to their perspectives on what constitutes risk and insecurity.
- Be willing to share risks — especially financial risks — to support risk mitigation for women peacebuilders. Be clear about the extent to which these risks can be shared or mitigated.
- Create flexible reporting requirements and allow for verbal reporting.
- Create opportunities for multi-year, flexible and core funding to allow women peacebuilders to take control of their own programming and agenda.
- Offer need-based funding grounded in the articulated needs of grassroots women peacebuilders rather than solely in international funding priorities.
- Avoid competition between local women's organizations for limited project-oriented funding and encourage groups to collaborate.
- Provide rapid response mechanisms and urgent action funds to support legal aid, emergency relocation, protective accompaniment and medical support.
- Create opportunities for cross-sectoral funding to support work on coalition-building across humanitarian assistance, protection and psychosocial programs.

● Address security risks at the root

- Ensure community buy-in and support for the activities of women peacebuilders by engaging with community leaders, men, family members, and peers.
- Include male relatives of women peacebuilders and men from the community in discussions on mitigation strategies.
- Identify, support and build national and international networks of women peacebuilders for them to share experiences and provide mutual support and solidarity. This includes collaboration between women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders by ensuring inclusive criteria for participation, where possible, for mutual reinforcement of their work.

● Center women peacebuilders' leadership and experiences in program design and implementation

- Identify and work with groups of women peacebuilders who reflect the diversity of experiences in any context (geography, in-country/diaspora, race, religion, ethnicity, education, age, sexual orientation, disability, etc.).
- Commit to partnering with groups that are marginalized, smaller or harder to reach.
- Carry out joint and inclusive context, gender and risk analyses with a diverse representation of women peace leaders.
- Apply an intersectional approach to identifying further vulnerabilities, risks and threats.
- Include women peacebuilders in all program processes, including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Create opportunities for discussions between funders and women peacebuilders about what is possible, desirable and feasible, while being clear countering anxiety around losing existing support or future funds.
- Ensure that women peacebuilders' safety is taken into consideration in program design and implementation.
- Address power imbalances between peacebuilders and funders, being aware they may create pressure on women peacebuilders or their organizations to accept and undertake risks that they would not otherwise.

About

The Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice (Kroc IPJ) launched in 2001 with a vision of active peacebuilding. In 2007, the Kroc IPJ became part of the newly established Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, a global hub for peacebuilding and social innovation.

Since 2002, the Kroc IPJ has hosted the Women PeaceMakers Fellowship program. The Fellowship offers a unique opportunity for women peacebuilders to engage in a cycle of learning, practice, research and participation that strengthens peacebuilding partnerships. The Women PeaceMakers Fellowship facilitates impactful collaborations between women peacebuilders from conflict-affected communities and international partner organizations. The Fellows also co-create research intended to shape the peacebuilding field and highlight good practices for peacebuilding design and implementation.

[Read the full report.](#)



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