

Message from the Editor



Dear Readers,

July 2026 reaffirmed that the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda remains indispensable in addressing Africa's evolving peace and security landscape. From Sudan's worsening humanitarian crisis and Liberia's renewed commitment to implementing its Third National Action Plan on WPS, to Kenya's efforts to strengthen women's participation in peace and security governance and Nigeria's investment in gender-responsive policing, this month's developments demonstrate both the progress made and the challenges that remain. Regional efforts by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union (AU) and Botswana to harmonise peace initiatives in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), as well as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) work with Somalia to strengthen women's leadership in peacebuilding, further underscore the growing recognition that inclusive, coordinated and African-led approaches are essential to sustaining peace.

The stories featured in this edition underscore a recurring reality: women continue to bear the disproportionate impacts of conflict, political instability, displacement, migration, climate-related crises and shrinking civic space. In Sudan, access to basic necessities such as water has become a life-threatening journey for women and girls, illustrating how the destruction of essential services deepens insecurity and heightens the risk of gender-based violence. In Uganda, a worsening hunger crisis highlights how food insecurity and climate shocks disproportionately affect women and children, increasing unpaid care responsibilities, economic vulnerability and protection risks. In Zimbabwe, concerns over restrictions on civic freedoms raise

Inside

Rising Xenophobia in South Africa Signals a Growing Threat to Social Cohesion and Women's Security

When Water Becomes a Battlefield: Sudan's Crisis Exposes the Gendered Cost of Conflict and Failing Water Systems

Shrinking Civic Space in Zimbabwe Threatening to Human Rights, Democracy and Inclusive Peace



important questions about the ability of women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders to participate safely in public life. Meanwhile, South Africa's rising xenophobic tensions remind us that threats to peace extend beyond armed conflict and continue to undermine social cohesion, human security and the dignity of migrant women and children across the continent.

This edition also highlights encouraging efforts to strengthen institutional responses. Liberia's validation of its Third National Action Plan signals renewed political commitment to advancing the WPS agenda, while Uganda's partnership between UN Women and Equity Bank to expand women's financial inclusion and Nigeria's police reform initiatives demonstrate growing recognition that sustainable peace requires economic justice, accountable institutions and women's meaningful participation in governance and security. Similarly, regional initiatives in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region reflect increasing efforts to improve coordination, strengthen mediation processes and place women at the centre of peacebuilding and recovery.

As we continue the journey towards the twenty-sixth anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, the stories in this Bulletin remind us that progress cannot be measured solely by policies, resolutions or commitments. Lasting peace depends on translating these commitments into tangible improvements in women and girls' access to basic needs such as health, water, food and security. It requires sustained investment in prevention, protection, participation, relief and recovery, alongside accountability for those who violate women's rights. Equally, it demands that governments and institutions recognise the interconnected nature of today's security challenges—from conflict, displacement and migration to climate change, hunger, economic exclusion and shrinking civic space.

We hope this edition provides valuable insight into the evolving WPS landscape across Africa and inspires continued dialogue, collaboration and action towards building peaceful, inclusive and gender-responsive societies.

In Solidarity

Helen Kezie-Nwoha

Acronyms

ASALs	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
AU	African Union
BWERSP	Building Women's Economic Resilience for Sustainable Peace
CAB3	Constitution Amendment Bill No. 3
CLEEN	Centre for Law Enforcement Education Foundation
CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAC	East African Community
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
ICC	International Criminal Court
NAP	National Action Plan
REWiB	Researchers Without Borders
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SPAAT	Supporting Police Accountability and Transformation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
ZPP	Zimbabwe Peace Project

United Nations (UN) Security Council Renews UNMISS Mandate Amid Escalating Crisis in South Sudan: What Does It Mean for Women, Peace and Security?

On 8 July 2026, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2781 (2026), extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) until 30 April 2027. The Council reaffirmed that the mission's core priorities remain the protection of civilians, creating conditions conducive to humanitarian assistance, supporting the implementation of the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement, monitoring and reporting human rights violations, and assisting preparations for South Sudan's delayed democratic transition. The Resolution comes at a time of growing political tensions, renewed violence in parts of the country, shrinking civic space, and increasing humanitarian needs, all of which threaten the country's fragile peace process.

Several aspects of the resolution are particularly significant. First, the Security Council reaffirmed the importance of protecting civilians, especially women and children who continue to bear the greatest burden of conflict. Renewing the UNMISS mandate ensures the continuation of civilian protection sites, community-based conflict prevention initiatives, and early warning mechanisms that can reduce the risk of violence against vulnerable populations. It also enables the mission to continue documenting human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence, thereby strengthening accountability efforts and informing international responses. However, it is essential to consider the risks posed by peacekeeping personnel themselves, who in contexts like the DRC have faced serious allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, which severely undermines the mission's protective mandate and public trust.

Secondly, the renewed mandate reinforces support for implementing the South Sudan Revitalized Peace Agreement, an essential step towards restoring political stability. If effectively implemented, the Agreement has the potential to create more inclusive governance structures, strengthen state institutions, and provide greater opportunities for women's meaningful participation in political and peace processes. This aligns with the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, which recognizes that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without women's full, equal and meaningful participation in

decision-making at all levels.

Another important element is the continued emphasis on human rights monitoring and accountability. Regular reporting by UNMISS helps document abuses committed by all parties, preserves evidence for future justice mechanisms, and keeps international attention focused on violations that might otherwise go unreported. For women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, such monitoring is vital for recognition, acknowledgement of the crime, advocacy and, ultimately, access to justice. It also strengthens efforts to combat impunity by signalling that violations of international humanitarian and human rights law will continue to be scrutinized.

However, the Resolution also exposes persistent weaknesses in the international community's approach to South Sudan. While extending UNMISS provides continuity, it does not address the structural political challenges that continue to fuel instability. Similar mandates have been renewed repeatedly over the years, yet progress towards lasting peace has remained limited.

Delays in implementing key provisions of the peace agreement, continued political rivalries, localized violence, and weak state institutions continue to undermine the mission's objectives. Without stronger political commitment from South Sudanese leaders, international peacekeeping alone cannot secure sustainable peace.

The Resolution also falls short of setting stronger benchmarks for women's leadership. Although the mandate operates within the broader framework of the WPS agenda, it could have more explicitly required measurable progress on women's participation in political institutions, constitutional reforms, security sector reform and electoral processes. Women in South Sudan continue to face barriers to participating in formal peacebuilding despite being at the forefront of community reconciliation, humanitarian response and local mediation. Renewing a peacekeeping mandate without equally strengthening mechanisms for women's political leadership risks reinforcing the perception of women primarily as beneficiaries of protection rather than as architects of peace.

Furthermore, accountability remains a significant concern. Monitoring and reporting violations are essential, but they must be matched by credible investigations, prosecutions and survivor-centred justice. Continued reports of conflict-related sexual violence illustrate that documentation alone is insufficient if perpetrators continue to evade accountability. It is worth noting that Security Council mandates, however well-designed, operate through an institutional architecture in which the states most invested in South Sudan's conflict economy also hold decision-making power over its resolution. The African Union's own Peace and Security Council, alongside IGAD, remains the more proximate and accountable actor for translating this mandate into protection outcomes for South Sudanese women, and its complementary role deserves more explicit articulation than a passing reference to 'international peacekeeping'.

The renewal of UNMISS is therefore an important step in preventing further deterioration of South Sudan's security situation. It preserves an essential international presence that protects civilians, supports humanitarian operations and keeps the peace process alive. Yet the effectiveness of the mandate will ultimately depend not only on the Mission's capacity but also on sustained political will, adequate resources, and genuine efforts to place women at the centre of peacebuilding, governance and recovery. For the WPS agenda to move beyond commitments on paper, South Sudan's transition must be accompanied by concrete investments in women's leadership, accountability and inclusive peace.



From Commitments to Action: UN Security Council Calls for Greater Accountability for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

On 10 July 2026, the UN Security Council convened a high-level open debate on “Honouring the Promise of International Law to Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV).” Led by the Democratic Republic of Congo during its Council presidency, the debate brought together Member States to assess how international law can better protect survivors and end impunity for perpetrators. While delegates reaffirmed their commitment to the WPS agenda, the discussions also underscored a growing concern that legal commitments continue to outpace action on the ground.

Several important priorities emerged from the debate. Member States stressed the need for survivor-centred responses, calling for improved

access to healthcare, psychosocial support, legal assistance, livelihood opportunities and long-term reintegration programmes. Delegates emphasized that survivors should not only receive services but should also be actively involved in designing policies and programmes that respond to their needs. This represents a shift from treating survivors solely as victims towards recognising them as rights holders and partners in peacebuilding.

Secondly, the debate reinforced that accountability remains one of the strongest tools for prevention. Several countries urged the Security Council to strengthen sanctions against perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence, improve investigations, and ensure that violations are prosecuted under international law. Ending impunity was widely recognised as essential for deterring future violations and restoring confidence in justice systems. These commitments align with the objectives of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820 and subsequent WPS resolutions, which recognise conflict-related sexual violence as both a security and human rights issue.

Another key point was the importance of women’s meaningful participation in peace processes. Delegates repeatedly noted that when women participate in mediation, peace negotiations and post-conflict recovery, peace agreements are more inclusive. They also highlighted the role of Women Protection Advisers in UN peace operations and the need to integrate gender-responsive approaches into peacekeeping, humanitarian response and conflict prevention efforts.

These commitments, if implemented, could significantly strengthen the WPS agenda. Improved survivor services can help women and girls recover with dignity while rebuilding trust in public institutions. Stronger accountability measures can deter future violations and reinforce international humanitarian law.



Likewise, investing in women's leadership can transform peace processes by ensuring that recovery efforts address the lived realities of conflict-affected communities rather than narrowly focusing on political settlements.

However, the debate also exposed persistent gaps between global commitments and implementation. Twenty-six years after the adoption of Resolution 1325, conflict-related sexual violence remains widespread in contexts such as Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti and elsewhere. Survivors continue to face stigma, limited access to justice and inadequate healthcare, while many perpetrators evade prosecution. Although Member States reaffirmed their commitments, the debate produced few concrete mechanisms for ensuring stronger compliance or monitoring progress. Without dedicated funding, stronger political will and measurable accountability frameworks, many of these commitments risk remaining aspirational rather than transformative.

It bears emphasising that African-led accountability mechanisms such as the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, national hybrid courts, and AU Commission of Inquiry processes, offer survivor-centred pathways that do not depend on UN Security Council consensus, which is frequently unavailable precisely in the cases where CRSV is most severe. Strengthening these continental mechanisms, alongside international law, would promote access to justice and support for survivors.

Furthermore, discussions continued to focus heavily on protecting women from violence, with comparatively less attention given to addressing the structural inequalities that enable such violence to persist. Achieving the goals of the WPS agenda requires more than responding to violations after they occur. It demands sustained investment in women's political leadership, economic empowerment, justice institutions and inclusive governance so that women are recognised not only as survivors of conflict but also as decision-makers shaping peace.

The July UN Security Council debate reaffirmed that international law provides a strong normative framework for protecting survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Yet its effectiveness will ultimately be measured not by the number of resolutions adopted or statements delivered, but by whether women and girls in conflict settings experience greater protection, meaningful justice and equal participation in building lasting peace.

<https://transcripts.un.org/en/sc/10190>

Kenya Launches New Women, Peace and Security Programme to Strengthen Women's Leadership in Fragile Communities

The Government of Kenya has launched the Strengthening Policy Frameworks for Women's Participation in Peace and Security Governance in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) and Informal Settlements Programme (2026–2028). The initiative seeks to strengthen policy frameworks while enhancing the meaningful participation and leadership of women in peace and security governance across some of the country's most conflict-affected and marginalized regions. Implemented in partnership with development partners and civil society, the programme aims to improve women's representation



in peace structures, strengthen institutional capacity, and promote gender-responsive approaches to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The programme is particularly significant because Kenya's ASALs and informal settlements continue to experience recurring challenges including intercommunal conflict, resource-based disputes, violent extremism, displacement, climate-induced insecurity and gender-based violence. Women in these areas are often among the first to respond to crises at the community level, yet they remain underrepresented in formal peace and security decision-making processes. By prioritising these communities, the programme acknowledges that sustainable peace requires investing in the leadership of those who are most affected by insecurity.

From a WPS perspective, the programme reflects a shift from viewing women primarily as beneficiaries of protection to recognising them as agents of peace. Strengthening policy frameworks can help institutionalise women's participation in county peace committees, local governance structures and conflict prevention mechanisms. If effectively implemented, the initiative could improve early warning systems by incorporating women's local knowledge, strengthen mediation efforts through inclusive leadership, and contribute to more gender-responsive security policies. It also complements Kenya's broader commitments under the WPS agenda and its National Action Plan by promoting localisation of WPS implementation.

The initiative also presents an opportunity to strengthen collaboration between government institutions, civil society organisations and community leaders. Such partnerships can improve coordination, increase community ownership of peacebuilding initiatives and ensure that women's voices influence policy beyond national-level discussions. Investing in women's leadership at the local level is particularly important because many conflicts in Kenya emerge within communities, where women often play informal yet critical roles in mediation, reconciliation and social cohesion.

However, the success of the programme will ultimately depend on implementation rather than ambition. Similar policies and commitments have often been undermined by inadequate financing, limited institutional capacity and weak monitoring mechanisms. Without dedicated resources, measurable targets and accountability frameworks, there is a risk that women's participation will remain symbolic rather than transformative. Equally important is ensuring that women from diverse backgrounds—including young women, women with disabilities, pastoralist women and internally displaced women—are meaningfully represented rather than relying on a small group of established leaders.

The programme's long-term credibility will depend on ensuring that women's participation in county peace committees translates into budgetary and decision-making authority, not only consultative presence. Kenya's own framework offers domestic accountability tools such as county assemblies, public participation statutes, that can and should be leveraged.

The programme also highlights a broader challenge across Africa's WPS agenda: while governments increasingly recognise the importance of women's participation, structural barriers such as patriarchal norms, insecurity and unequal access to economic opportunities continue to limit women's influence in peace and security governance. Addressing these barriers requires sustained political commitment alongside policy reform.

Kenya's new programme is therefore a welcome step towards advancing the WPS agenda. By placing women at the centre of peacebuilding in fragile communities, it has the potential to strengthen conflict prevention, improve governance and foster more inclusive peace processes. Its long-term impact, however, will depend on whether the commitments announced at launch are translated into tangible opportunities, adequate investment and measurable outcomes for women on the ground.

https://www.wansom.ai/briefly/news/kenya-launches-women-peace-and-security-programme-2026-07-09_9ac63b70-c913-4912-9d7f-7d99b838488



When Water Becomes a Battlefield: Sudan's Crisis Exposes the Gendered Cost of Conflict and Failing Water Systems

Women and girls in Sudan's besieged city of Al-Obeid are facing an impossible choice between risking drone attacks during the day or sexual violence at night as they search for water. According to UN Women, prolonged conflict has severely disrupted access to clean water and essential services, forcing many women to travel long distances or wait until after dark to collect water for their families. The city's deteriorating humanitarian conditions, compounded by attacks on civilian infrastructure and prolonged insecurity, have transformed a basic necessity into a life-threatening ordeal. More than 12.7 million women and girls across Sudan are now estimated to require gender-based violence prevention and response services, reflecting the deepening gendered impact of the conflict.

The situation in Al-Obeid demonstrates that access to water is not only a humanitarian concern but also a peace

and security issue. The destruction of water infrastructure, disruption of public services and restrictions on humanitarian access have intensified existing gender inequalities, placing women and girls at heightened risk of conflict-related sexual violence, exploitation and displacement. As primary caregivers and those traditionally responsible for collecting water in many communities, women bear a disproportionate burden when water systems collapse. In conflict settings, the journey to fetch water can become one of the most dangerous parts of daily life, exposing women and girls to violence simply for trying to meet their families' basic needs.

This crisis also reinforces the relevance of the African Union's 2026 Theme of the Year, "Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063" alongside ongoing continental efforts to promote gender-responsive water governance through the WPS agenda. Access to safe water and sanitation is fundamental to human dignity, health and security. When water infrastructure is destroyed during conflict, the consequences extend far beyond shortages—they disrupt education, increase unpaid care responsibilities, heighten health risks and undermine women's participation in economic and peacebuilding activities. Protecting water systems and ensuring equitable access to water should therefore be recognised as essential components of conflict prevention, civilian protection and post-conflict recovery.

The events in Sudan also highlight why peacebuilding cannot be separated from investments in water and sanitation. Restoring water infrastructure reduces the need for dangerous journeys, lowers the risk of gender-based violence and strengthens community resilience. Equally important is ensuring that women are meaningfully involved in designing and managing water governance systems. Women possess first-hand knowledge of community water needs and can play a critical role in developing inclusive, sustainable and conflict-sensitive solutions that strengthen both service delivery and social cohesion. Sudanese women themselves, through community mutual-aid structures and emergency response networks operating even under siege, have sustained water and food access in areas where formal humanitarian access has failed. Any response framework should resource and integrate these existing community structures rather than

treating international humanitarian actors as the sole delivery mechanism.

However, the crisis exposes persistent shortcomings in international and national responses. Humanitarian assistance has struggled to keep pace with growing needs, while attacks on civilian infrastructure continue with limited accountability. Too often, discussions on Women, Peace and Security focus on protecting women from violence without adequately addressing the underlying conditions that make them vulnerable in the first place. Safe access to water and sanitation is rarely treated as a core protection issue, despite its direct links to conflict-related sexual violence, displacement and human security.

Sudan's experience is a stark reminder that water infrastructure is more than a development asset—it is a lifeline that underpins peace, dignity and security. Advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda therefore requires protecting not only women and girls from violence, but also the essential services that enable them to live safely, participate fully in society and contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding. As conflicts across Africa increasingly intersect with climate change, displacement and resource scarcity, gender-responsive investment in water and sanitation must become an integral pillar of sustainable peace.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/women-sudans-al-obeid-face-drone-attacks-rape-when-fetching-water-un-says-2026-07-24/>

Liberia Validates Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

The Government of Liberia has validated its Third National Action Plan (NAP III) on Women, Peace and Security (2026–2031), reaffirming the country's commitment to implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR1325). Developed through nationwide consultations and in partnership with UN Women, civil society organisations and development partners, the new Action Plan provides a strategic framework to strengthen women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and security processes while responding to emerging security challenges. The five-year plan is built around the pillars of prevention, protection, participation, relief and recovery, and coordination and accountability, reflecting a comprehensive approach to advancing the WPS agenda.

The validation of the Action Plan is particularly significant given Liberia's history as one of Africa's pioneers in implementing the WPS agenda. Liberian women played a decisive role in ending the country's civil war, and the country became one of the first globally to develop a National Action Plan for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325. Building on this legacy, the third NAP introduces greater emphasis on addressing contemporary threats affecting women and girls, including violence against women in politics, digital violence, climate-related insecurity and sexual exploitation in mining communities. These additions recognise that women's security challenges have evolved and require responses that extend beyond traditional conflict settings.

The new NAP has the potential to strengthen gender-responsive governance by providing clearer priorities for government institutions, security actors and civil society. If adequately implemented, it could improve women's participation in decision-making, strengthen mechanisms for preventing gender-based violence, enhance protection for women and girls during crises, and promote more coordinated responses across sectors. The plan's emphasis on accountability also creates an opportunity to improve monitoring and ensure that WPS commitments translate into measurable outcomes rather than remaining policy aspirations.

Another important feature of the new framework is its recognition that peacebuilding must respond to emerging and interconnected risks. Climate-related insecurity, for example, is increasingly fuelling resource competition, displacement and livelihood insecurity across many African contexts, while online spaces have become new arenas for harassment and intimidation of women leaders and peacebuilders. By incorporating these issues, Liberia acknowledges that advancing the WPS agenda requires adapting to evolving forms of insecurity and ensuring that policy responses remain relevant to women's lived experiences.

However, validation marks only the beginning of implementation. National Action Plans have often been praised for their ambition but criticised for limited

execution due to inadequate financing, weak institutional coordination and inconsistent monitoring. Without sustained political commitment, dedicated budget allocations and clearly defined indicators, there is a risk that the objectives outlined in the NAP will not translate into meaningful change for women at the community level. Liberia's previous NAPs generated important progress, yet challenges relating to gender-based violence, women's political representation and access to justice remain.

Liberia's experience also offers the continent a cautionary lesson: two prior NAPs generated strong frameworks but more limited implementation, largely due to financing gaps rather than design flaws. NAP III's credibility will rest on whether Liberia and its partners commit to domestic budget lines for WPS implementation as a marker of national ownership consistent with the AU's own emphasis on self-financing peace and security instruments.

The effectiveness of the new NAP will also depend on how inclusive its implementation becomes. Women from rural communities, young women, women with disabilities, survivors of conflict-related violence and grassroots peacebuilders must be meaningfully involved in decision-making, implementation and monitoring. Their participation is essential to ensuring that the Action Plan reflects the realities of those most affected by insecurity rather than remaining a national policy driven primarily by institutions.

Liberia's validation of its Third NAP demonstrates continued leadership in advancing the WPS agenda in Africa. Yet the true measure of success will not be the adoption of another policy framework, but whether it delivers safer communities, stronger institutions and greater opportunities for women to shape peace and security at every level. As the country moves from validation to implementation, sustained investment, political accountability and meaningful inclusion will be critical to transforming commitments into lasting impact.

<https://africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2026/07/government-of-liberia-validates-third-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security-unscr1325-2026-2031>

Rising Xenophobia in South Africa Signals a Growing Threat to Social Cohesion and Women's Security

South Africa has witnessed a resurgence of organised anti-immigrant mobilisation, with African migrants increasingly targeted through violence, forced displacement and intimidation. Economic hardship, political frustration,

misinformation and unresolved post-apartheid inequalities are widely cited as drivers of this trend. While migrants are often blamed for unemployment and pressure on public services, such narratives obscure deeper structural causes of poverty and inequality.

Xenophobia is not only a migration issue but a serious peace and security concern with severe humanitarian consequences. Past outbreaks of violence have shown that women and children are disproportionately affected. Many are forced to flee their homes with little warning, leaving behind belongings, livelihoods and support systems. Displaced families often endure overcrowded shelters, churches or open spaces with limited access to food, water and sanitation. Pregnant women face heightened risks during displacement, including lack of medical care and unsafe delivery conditions, while children experience disrupted education, trauma and exposure to violence. These experiences leave long-term physical, psychological and economic impacts.

Xenophobia heightens gendered vulnerabilities. Displaced women face increased risks of sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation and trafficking, particularly in informal settlements and transit spaces. Loss of income is common, as many migrant women rely on informal work that disappears during outbreaks of violence. Fear of discrimination or arrest also prevents many from accessing healthcare, reporting abuse or seeking justice. Women human rights defenders supporting migrant communities may face intimidation and harassment.

Xenophobia also undermines social cohesion, weakening trust between communities and increasing the risk of recurring violence. Addressing it requires more than reactive policing. Governments and local authorities must invest in early warning systems, counter misinformation and hate speech, and promote inclusive governance. Women's participation in mediation, dialogue and conflict prevention is essential, as they often play key roles in rebuilding community trust.

However, responses have largely been reactive, focusing on emergency relief rather than long-term prevention. Structural drivers such as inequality, unemployment and political rhetoric remain insufficiently addressed. Humanitarian support for displaced women and children is often short-term, with limited access to housing, psychosocial care, education and livelihoods. Pan-African frameworks, including the AU's free

movement protocols, offer a longer-term structural response that complements immediate humanitarian and protection measures for displaced women and children.

South Africa's experience highlights that peace is not only the absence of conflict but the presence of safety, dignity and inclusion. Strengthening the Women, Peace and Security agenda requires recognising xenophobia as a human security threat and ensuring sustained protection and support for women and children affected by displacement and violence.

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2026/jul/08/how-did-south-africa-produce-an-anti-african-movement>

Shrinking Civic Space in Zimbabwe Raises Concerns for Women's Participation in Peace and Security

Human rights violations linked to opposition against Zimbabwe's Constitution Amendment Bill No. 3 (CAB3) have intensified concerns over shrinking civic space, with the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) recording 53 human rights violations in Masvingo Province during June 2026—the highest among the country's ten provinces. According to the monitoring report, the violations included political intimidation, assaults, death threats, arbitrary arrests and restrictions on civic engagement targeting individuals perceived to oppose the constitutional amendment. Among the reported incidents was a female activist who fled her home after receiving repeated death threats following her public criticism of CAB3.

The reported abuses extend beyond individual cases and point to a broader environment in which fear is increasingly limiting civic participation. ZPP also documented restrictions on meetings between activists and public officials, arrests of community activists, and allegations of political coercion linked to access to food aid and agricultural inputs. Such developments undermine fundamental freedoms of expression, association and political participation that are essential for democratic governance.

Shrinking civic space has serious implications for women's leadership and peacebuilding. Women human rights defenders, activists and peacebuilders often face gender-specific threats, including intimidation, harassment and violence designed to silence their voices. Fear of reprisals can discourage women from participating in public consultations, advocating for community needs or seeking leadership positions, ultimately weakening inclusive governance and limiting diverse perspectives in decision-making.

The reported intimidation of a female activist is particularly concerning because it illustrates the gendered dimension of political violence. Women who engage in public life frequently face threats that extend beyond physical harm to include attacks on their families, reputations and livelihoods. Such tactics not only violate individual rights but also create a chilling effect that discourages other women from participating in civic and political processes.

However, the reported violations also expose a wider challenge: legal and constitutional reforms cannot achieve legitimacy if citizens are unable to participate freely in public debate. Protecting civic space requires more than constitutional guarantees; it demands accountability for human rights abuses, independent oversight institutions and an environment where citizens can express differing views without fear of intimidation. It also requires functioning regional accountability mechanisms, including SADC's own



human rights instruments, that can be invoked when national oversight bodies are themselves implicated in the violations reported.

Meaningful participation, protection of women human rights defenders and respect for fundamental rights remain indispensable to building peaceful, inclusive and democratic societies.

https://tellzim.com/cab3-related-abuses-push-masvingo-to-top-of-zimbabwes-rights-violations/#google_vignette

UN Women and Equity Bank Uganda Partner to Advance Women's Economic Empowerment and Financial Inclusion

UN Women Uganda and Equity Bank Uganda have launched a strategic partnership to expand women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion across Uganda. The collaboration seeks to increase women's access to financial services, entrepreneurship support, digital literacy, skills development and sustainable livelihood opportunities, with a particular focus on women entrepreneurs, underserved communities and refugee-hosting districts. By addressing barriers that continue to limit women's economic participation, the partnership aims to strengthen women's resilience and promote inclusive economic growth.

Although economic empowerment is often viewed as a development issue, it is equally a peace and security imperative. Across Africa, conflict, displacement and economic instability disproportionately affect women, limiting their access to finance, productive resources and formal employment. Financial exclusion can leave women dependent on negative coping mechanisms, increase their vulnerability to exploitation and gender-based violence, and reduce their ability to recover from crises. Expanding access to credit, savings, digital financial services and business opportunities can therefore strengthen women's resilience while enabling them to contribute more effectively to household stability and community recovery.

The partnership supports the agenda's relief and recovery pillar by recognising that sustainable peace requires economic inclusion alongside political participation and protection. Women with greater financial independence are better positioned to participate in local governance, peacebuilding initiatives and community decision-making. Economic empowerment can also strengthen women's leadership by increasing their influence within households and communities, enabling them to play a more active role in conflict prevention and social cohesion.

The initiative is particularly relevant for refugee-hosting communities, where competition over limited resources can heighten social tensions. Investing in women's livelihoods has the potential to improve community resilience, reduce economic inequalities and foster peaceful coexistence between host and displaced populations. Integrating financial inclusion with digital literacy also prepares women to participate in an increasingly digital economy, reducing barriers that have historically excluded many from formal financial systems.

However, financial inclusion alone cannot eliminate the structural barriers that limit women's economic participation. Many women continue to face discriminatory social norms, unequal property and inheritance rights, unpaid care responsibilities and limited access to markets. Without addressing these systemic challenges, access to financial services may not translate into lasting economic empowerment. The partnership's success will therefore depend on sustained investment, gender-responsive policies and continuous support that enables women not only to access finance but also to build resilient businesses and exercise meaningful economic agency.

By linking financial inclusion with women's empowerment, the partnership demonstrates that economic justice is an essential foundation for sustainable peace. Strengthening women's economic resilience is not only an investment in development—it is an investment in more peaceful, inclusive and secure societies.

<https://africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2026/07/un-women-uganda-and-equity-bank-uganda-partner-to-advance-womens-economic-empowerment-and-financial-inclusion>

Nigeria Advances People-Centred Policing to Strengthen Community Safety and Accountability

Nigeria is advancing efforts to reform its policing system through the Supporting Police Accountability and Transformation (SPAAT) project, led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Nigeria Police Force, the Global Security Sector Reform Foundation and the CLEEN Foundation. The initiative aims to strengthen police professionalism, accountability and community trust through improved training, institutional reforms and gender-responsive policing. Among its achievements are the development of Nigeria's first National Policing Plan, the training of more than 1,900 police personnel on human rights, gender, ethical conduct and community policing, and the establishment of a women's leadership mentoring programme for female police officers.

The reforms represent an important step towards recognising that effective security is built not only through law enforcement but also through public trust and inclusive institutions. The project has strengthened internal oversight mechanisms, promoted leadership accountability and integrated gender mainstreaming into policing policies. By investing in professional standards and community engagement, the initiative seeks to improve the relationship between citizens and the police while enhancing the capacity of security institutions to respond to evolving threats.

Gender-responsive policing is essential to protecting women and girls from violence and ensuring their meaningful access to justice. Police officers are often the first point of contact for survivors of gender-based violence, conflict-related sexual violence and other human rights violations. Training officers on gender sensitivity, human rights and ethical conduct can improve the quality of investigations, reduce secondary victimisation and encourage more survivors to report abuse. The initiative's investment in mentoring women police officers also contributes to increasing women's representation in the security sector, helping to create institutions that better reflect and respond to the needs of the communities they serve.

However, police reform cannot succeed through training alone. Public confidence in law enforcement depends on consistent accountability, transparency and respect for human rights. Nigeria continues to face security challenges, including armed violence, banditry and gender-based violence, while concerns over excessive use of force and limited access to justice persist in some communities. Without sustained political commitment, adequate resources and effective oversight, institutional reforms risk remaining policy achievements rather than translating into meaningful improvements in citizens' daily lives.

The SPAAT initiative demonstrates that security sector reform is a critical component of the WPS agenda. Building police services that are accountable, gender-responsive and trusted by communities strengthens not only public safety but also the foundations for sustainable peace, inclusive governance and the protection of women's rights.

<https://www.undp.org/nigeria/stories/visual-journey-towards-people-centred-policing-how-undp-reshaping-community-safety-nigeria>

SADC, African Union and Botswana Strengthen Coordination to Advance Peace Efforts in Eastern DRC

The Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union (AU) and the Government of Botswana convened a High-Level Harmonisation Meeting in Gaborone from 24–26 July 2026 to strengthen coordination among regional and continental peace initiatives aimed at resolving the conflict in eastern DRC. The meeting brought together the AU Panel of Facilitators, representatives of SADC, the East African Community (EAC) and the Independent Joint Secretariat to align mediation efforts, develop a six-month strategic roadmap and improve cooperation in implementing existing peace agreements. The initiative seeks to consolidate multiple peace processes into a more coherent, African-led mediation framework capable of addressing one of the continent's most protracted conflicts.

The harmonisation process is an important milestone for regional peacebuilding. For years, overlapping mediation initiatives have risked creating fragmented responses, inconsistent messaging and duplication of efforts. By promoting greater coordination between regional organisations and facilitators, the meeting has the potential to strengthen diplomatic engagement, build confidence among parties to the conflict and enhance the effectiveness of political dialogue. A unified approach also reinforces the principle of African-led solutions to African challenges, recognising the critical role regional institutions play in conflict prevention and resolution.

Stronger coordination presents an opportunity to ensure that women's participation and protection are embedded throughout peace processes rather than treated as secondary priorities. The conflict in eastern DRC has disproportionately affected women and girls through conflict-related sexual violence, displacement, loss of livelihoods and restricted access to essential services. Harmonised mediation efforts should therefore prioritise women's meaningful participation in negotiations, incorporate gender-responsive provisions into peace agreements and strengthen accountability for violations against civilians. Inclusive peace processes are more likely to produce durable agreements that reflect the needs of conflict-affected communities.

However, regional coordination alone will not guarantee sustainable peace. Previous agreements on eastern DRC have often struggled during implementation because of continued violence by armed groups, political mistrust and weak accountability mechanisms. Equally concerning is that women remain underrepresented in many high-level mediation and decision-making spaces despite being among those most affected by the conflict. Without deliberate efforts to include women peacebuilders, civil society organisations and local communities in the implementation of the new roadmap, there is a risk that the harmonisation process will remain a diplomatic exercise with limited impact on the ground.

The Gaborone meeting reflects renewed regional commitment to resolving the eastern DRC crisis through coordinated diplomacy. Its success, however, will ultimately depend on translating political commitments into inclusive action that protects civilians, centres women's leadership and delivers lasting peace for communities affected by conflict.

<https://www.sadc.int/latest-news/sadc-au-and-botswana-co-host-high-level-harmonisation-meeting-promote-peace-initiatives>

IGAD and Somalia Strengthen Coordination to Advance Women's Leadership in Peacebuilding

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), in partnership with the Federal Government of Somalia, convened a three-day coordination workshop in Mogadishu from 21–23 July 2026 to strengthen institutional collaboration for advancing women's participation and leadership in peacebuilding. The workshop brought together representatives from government ministries, civil society organisations, traditional and religious leaders, and Women, Peace and Security Committees to establish a National Inter-Ministerial Technical Gender Working Group that will coordinate the implementation of the Building Women's Economic Resilience for Sustainable Peace (BWERSP) Project. The initiative aims to improve coordination among key stakeholders while promoting women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding and decision-making.

The establishment of the Technical Gender Working Group is a significant step towards addressing one of the persistent challenges in implementing the WPS agenda—fragmented coordination among institutions. By bringing together government agencies, civil society and community leaders under a common framework, the initiative has the potential to improve policy coherence, strengthen institutional accountability and ensure that peacebuilding interventions are better aligned with the needs of women and conflict-affected communities. It also reinforces the understanding that sustainable peace requires collaboration across sectors rather than isolated interventions.

The initiative recognises that women's leadership is fundamental to preventing conflict and sustaining peace. Somali women have long played vital roles in community mediation, reconciliation and humanitarian response despite facing barriers to participation in formal peace processes. Strengthening coordination can help create more opportunities for women to influence peacebuilding policies, while the BWERSP Project's focus on economic resilience acknowledges that financial empowerment and peacebuilding are closely interconnected. Women who have greater economic security are often better positioned to participate in leadership, contribute to conflict prevention and strengthen community resilience.

However, improved coordination alone will not guarantee greater inclusion. Women in Somalia continue to face structural barriers including insecurity, patriarchal norms, limited access to decision-making spaces and inadequate financial resources. Unless the newly established coordination mechanisms are supported by sustained funding, measurable targets and strong political commitment, there is a risk that they will become consultative platforms with limited influence on policy implementation. Particular attention should also be given to ensuring that grassroots women, internally displaced women and young women are meaningfully represented rather than limiting participation to institutional actors.

The workshop reflects growing recognition that peacebuilding must be inclusive, coordinated and locally driven. Its long-term success will depend on whether strengthened institutional collaboration translates into tangible improvements in women's leadership, economic resilience and participation in shaping Somalia's peace and security landscape.

<https://igad.int/igad-somalia-strengthen-coordination-to-advance-womens-participation-and-leadership-in-peacebuilding/>

Hunger Crisis in Uganda Highlights the Gendered Impact of Food Insecurity on Peace and Security

The Government of Uganda has begun emergency food distribution in the Karamoja region after at least 19 people reportedly died from hunger following months of prolonged drought and widespread crop failure. With an estimated 1.5 million people facing acute food shortages and rising malnutrition, the government has allocated emergency funding to distribute relief food while pledging that no one will be left behind. The intervention comes amid growing concern that reductions in international humanitarian assistance have placed greater pressure on national authorities to respond to worsening food insecurity.

While emergency food assistance is a critical life-saving measure, the crisis in Karamoja underscores the close relationship between food security, climate resilience and the WPS agenda. Women and girls are often the first to experience the consequences of food shortages. As primary caregivers in many households, they frequently skip meals so children can eat, travel longer distances in search of food and water, and shoulder increased unpaid care responsibilities. The crisis also heightens risks of child marriage, gender-based violence, exploitation and school dropouts as families adopt negative coping mechanisms to survive.

The experiences of women in Karamoja demonstrate that food insecurity is not solely a humanitarian concern but a human security issue. When livelihoods collapse, women are often forced into informal and hazardous work to provide for their families, while children face worsening malnutrition and interrupted education. Addressing these challenges is essential for strengthening community resilience and preventing cycles of poverty, instability and displacement that can undermine long-term peace.

The government's emergency response is a positive step towards preventing further loss of life, but it also exposes the limitations of reactive interventions. Humanitarian food aid can alleviate immediate suffering, yet it does not address the structural drivers of recurring hunger, including climate change, environmental degradation, poverty, weak agricultural systems and inadequate investment in water infrastructure. Sustainable solutions require climate-resilient agriculture, improved irrigation, social protection programmes and greater investment in rural livelihoods, particularly for women farmers who play a central role in household food production.

The Karamoja crisis is a reminder that lasting peace cannot exist where communities face chronic hunger and economic insecurity. Advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda therefore requires recognising food security as a cornerstone of human security and ensuring that women are not only protected during crises but are also empowered to shape resilient, sustainable and inclusive recovery efforts.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2026/jul/27/uganda-begins-emergency-food-handouts-after-19-die-from-hunger?>

Conclusion

The developments of July 2026 reaffirm that advancing the WPS agenda requires more than responding to conflict after it occurs—it demands sustained investments in prevention, protection, participation, relief and recovery, accountability and resilient institutions. From Sudan's deepening humanitarian crisis and the gendered consequences of water insecurity, to Uganda's worsening hunger emergency, Zimbabwe's shrinking civic space, South Africa's rising xenophobic tensions and ongoing regional efforts to strengthen peace processes in the DRC and Somalia, this month's stories demonstrate that peace and security are shaped by a complex intersection of humanitarian, political, economic and environmental challenges.

At the same time, encouraging developments across the continent offer reasons for optimism. Liberia's validation of its Third NAP on Women, Peace and Security, Kenya's investment in women's leadership in fragile communities, Nigeria's efforts to promote people-centred policing, and Uganda's partnership to advance women's economic empowerment all highlight growing recognition that sustainable peace depends on inclusive governance, accountable institutions and women's meaningful participation at every level of decision-making.

Yet these initiatives also remind us that commitments alone are not enough. Policies, action plans and regional frameworks must be matched by adequate financing, strong political will, effective implementation and robust accountability mechanisms. Equally important is ensuring that women in all their diversity—including young women, rural women, women with disabilities, displaced women and grassroots peacebuilders—are not merely consulted but are empowered to shape the decisions that affect their lives and communities.

As Africa continues to confront conflict, climate change, displacement, food insecurity, democratic challenges and economic inequality, the Women, Peace and Security agenda remains one of the continent's most important frameworks for building lasting peace. It reminds us that peace is not simply the absence of violence, but the presence of justice, inclusion, human dignity and equal opportunity.

REWiB remains committed to amplifying evidence-based dialogue, showcasing African-led solutions and promoting the meaningful participation of women in peace and security processes across the continent. As we continue commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, the call to action is clear: translate commitments into action, invest in women's leadership and ensure that no woman girl, young woman, women living with disabilities and minority women are left behind in the pursuit of peace, security and sustainable development.

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