



WDO

---

Women Development Organization  
l'Organisation pour le Développement de la femme

مُنظِمةُ تَنْمِيَةِ الْمَرْأَةِ

# **Enhancing Women's Leadership in Promoting Peaceful and Inclusive Societies**

**Policy Paper**

Written by: Dr. Muatasim Ismaeel

## **Executive Summary**

The paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of women in peacebuilding within the context of Islamic countries. It focuses on aligning global frameworks related to women's role in peacebuilding with Islamic values and on empowering women to lead initiatives in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. The objective of this policy paper is to guide the Women Development Organization (WDO) actions in one of its thematic pillars: enhancing women's leadership in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

The paper begins by discussing the theoretical foundations of both peacebuilding and women's empowerment. Various theories such as structural, relational, and transformative theories of peacebuilding are analyzed to provide a nuanced understanding of how peace can be built and sustained, especially in post-conflict societies. Theories related to women's empowerment, including psychological, sociocultural, and economic empowerment, are also discussed, offering insights into how women can gain greater autonomy and active agency at both individual and social context levels. Additionally, gender theories, ranging from essentialist to social constructionist perspectives, are explored to contextualize the discussions within both international and Islamic frameworks.

Islamic perspectives on gender equality and women's leadership are central to this analysis. The paper emphasizes that while Islamic teachings acknowledge the inherent differences between men and women, they also affirm the equal dignity and value of both genders in the eyes of God. Islamic teachings on justice and equity serve as a foundation for understanding women's roles in society. By integrating these teachings with contemporary peacebuilding and empowerment theories, the paper suggests that Islamic countries can develop effective strategies for enhancing women's leadership.

Part of the paper is dedicated to discussing international frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) framework. These

frameworks highlight the critical role women play in peacebuilding efforts and provide global benchmarks for Islamic countries to utilize. The paper also includes case studies from countries

like Rwanda and Liberia, showcasing successful examples of women's leadership in post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding.

The policy paper then transitions into an examination of the initiatives and practices in Islamic countries, particularly through the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW). The paper analyzes the progress of WDO member countries based on key indicators like women's political participation, economic involvement, and literacy rates. Case studies from Islamic countries, such as Indonesia and Yemen, are provided to illustrate the unique challenges and opportunities women face in these contexts, as well as the significant impact women's leadership has on building peaceful and inclusive societies.

In its concluding sections, the paper presents a two-dimensional, four-quadrant framework for WDO's actions. This framework categorizes WDO's interventions based on the level of focus (individual or societal) and the context of the country (stable or conflict-affected). It provides a strategic roadmap for the next three years, identifying eight priority areas of action, such as supporting women's organizations, promoting psychological support for women in conflict zones, and enhancing women's participation in local governance and business.

In summary, the paper builds a strong case for the vital role women can play in peacebuilding, not only as beneficiaries of programs but as active leaders and decision-makers. By combining Islamic principles with contemporary global frameworks and practical case studies, it provides actionable recommendations for the WDO to enhance women's leadership across its member states. The paper concludes that a balanced approach, targeting both individual empowerment and broader societal changes, is necessary to foster the role of women in building and maintaining sustainable peace and inclusive societies.

# Contents

<b>Chapter 1.</b> Introduction .....	6
<b>Chapter 2:</b> Theories on Women, Peace, and Inclusive Societies .....	9
2.1 Peacebuilding theories.....	10
2.2 Women empowerment theories .....	11
2.3 Gender theories .....	12
2.4 An Islamic view on the theories of Gender, Women Empowerment, and Peace Building .....	12
2.5 An Integrated Theoretical Framework for Women Empowerment and Peacebuilding.....	14
<b>Chapter 3:</b> International Frameworks and Practices .....	15
3.1 SDG 5 (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls) .....	16
3.2 SDG 16 (Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies).....	16
3.3 WPS (Women, Peace, and Security).....	17
3.4 International case studies on the role of women in building peaceful and inclusive societies .....	18
Case Study: The Role of Women in Peacebuilding in Rwanda .....	18
Case Study: The Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace.....	20
<b>Chapter 4:</b> Initiatives and Practices in Islamic Countries .....	23
4.1 OPAAW .....	24
4.2 Performance of WDO member countries in the key indicators related to the theme .....	25
4.3 Case studies from Islamic countries.....	33
Case Study: Women's Empowerment in Indonesia through the Aceh Peace Process .....	33
Case Study: Women's Empowerment and Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Yemen through the Yemeni Women's Union (YWU).....	36
<b>Chapter 5:</b> Analysis and Policy Alternatives.....	39
5.1 Insights from the frameworks, indicators and case studies.....	40
5.2 Prioritization and evaluation criteria.....	44
5.3 Recommending specific programs of actions/initiatives .....	45
5.4 A Practical Road Map .....	47
<b>Chapter 6:</b> Conclusion.....	49
References.....	51





# Chapter 1

## Introduction

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The role of women in building and sustaining peaceful and inclusive societies has been emphasized in the development literature as well as in the work of international organizations in the last two decades. Islamic countries share the same concerns and commitment. However, they need to align these concerns with Islamic values. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has launched a ‘Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women’ (OPAAW). It also established ‘The Women Development Organization’ (WDO) to act as a dedicated organizational entity for women empowerment in the Islamic countries.

WDO is an international entity dedicated to advancing the rights and empowerment of women across OIC member states. It aims to foster gender equality and social justice, leveraging comprehensive programs and strategic partnerships with both governmental and non-governmental entities, while observing the Islamic values.

WDO focuses in its work on four thematic pillars: 1) Promoting Women Economic Empowerment and Financial Inclusion. 2) Combatting All Forms of Violence and Harmful Practices Against Women and Girls. 3) Strengthening The Role of Women in Fighting and Preventing Corruption. 4) Enhancing Women’s Leadership in Promoting Peaceful and Inclusive Societies. This policy paper is dedicated to the fourth thematic pillar <sup>(1)</sup>.

The aim of this paper is to develop evidence-based policy recommendations to be adopted by WDO in its actions and programs related to the ‘Enhancing Women’s Leadership in Promoting Peaceful and Inclusive Societies’ theme. This policy paper builds on insights from theoretical literature and from empirical data to develop solid understanding of the current state of this theme in the member states in WDO. This understanding is the basis for the practical recommendations developed and presented in the paper.

The paper continues as follows: After this introduction, the second chapter discusses some theories related to women empowerment and peacebuilding. It, also, includes a discussion of the

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wdo-odf.org>

Islamic perspective toward these theories. The chapter concludes with an integration of insights from the discussed theories and a development of a theoretical framework that guides the analysis and recommendations in this paper. The third chapter presents and discusses some dominant international frameworks related to the theme of the paper. These include frameworks like Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the ‘Women, Peace and Security (WPS)’ and its related UN resolutions. It includes, also, two international case studies related to the theme of the paper. The fourth chapter is dedicated to practices and initiatives in Islamic countries. It includes detailed explanation of The OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW). Also, it presents the performance of WDO member countries in key indicators related to theme of the paper, and it includes two case studies from Islamic countries related to the theme. The fifth chapter includes the results of the analysis done to all theories, indicators, and case studies. It proposes a two-dimensional four-quadrant framework for WDO actions. It includes, also, proposed areas for actions/initiatives in each of the four quadrants, then, the proposed areas of actions/initiatives are evaluated and eight of them are identified as priorities. The chapter concludes with a high-level and simple proposed action plan for WDO in the coming three years. Finally, the sixth chapter includes the conclusion. It summarizes the main outcomes of the paper.





# Chapter 2

Theories on Women, Peace, and Inclusive Societies

## Chapter 2: Theories on Women, Peace, and Inclusive Societies

### 2.1 Peacebuilding theories

Peacebuilding theories are used to guide the efforts to create sustainable peace especially in post-conflict societies. These theories can be broadly classified into three main categories: structural theories, relational theories, and transformative theories <sup>(2)</sup>. Each category offers distinct insights and strategies for addressing the complex challenges of peacebuilding.

- Structural theories focus on addressing the underlying social, economic, and political structures that contribute to conflict. These theories emphasize the importance of creating institutions and systems that promote equality, justice, and human rights.
- Relational theories emphasize the importance of transforming relationships between conflicting parties to achieve lasting peace. These theories focus on building trust, understanding, and cooperation through dialogue and reconciliation processes.
- Transformative theories integrate elements of both structural and relational approaches, emphasizing the need for comprehensive change at both systemic and individual levels. For instance, Human Needs Theory states that conflicts arise from the frustration of basic human needs, such as security, identity, and recognition. According to this theory, peacebuilding efforts must address these fundamental needs through inclusive and participatory processes that ensure all individuals feel valued and secure.

---

<sup>2</sup> For more on peacebuilding theories, see:

Egbe, J. A. (2024). PEACE BUILDING MECHANISMS, PROCESSES AND PRINCIPLES: AN APPRAISAL. *Oracle of Wisdom Journal of Philosophy and Public Affairs (OWIJOPPA)*, 8(1).

And:

Ndeche, O., & Iroye, S. O. (2022). Key theories in peace and conflict studies and their impact on the study and practice. *Noun International Journal of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution*, 2(2), 20-34.

## **2.2 Women empowerment theories**

Women empowerment theories are helpful in understanding the pathways through which women can achieve greater autonomy, agency, and equality in society. These theories can be broadly classified into three main categories: psychological empowerment theories, sociocultural empowerment theories, and economic empowerment theories. Each category provides distinct perspectives and strategies for enhancing women's empowerment across different domains of life (3).

- Psychological empowerment theories focus on individual-level changes and the importance of self-perception, self-efficacy, and personal agency. One key theory in this category is Self-Efficacy Theory developed by Albert Bandura, which posits that an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations plays a crucial role in how they approach goals and challenges. For women, enhancing self-efficacy can lead to greater confidence and willingness to pursue opportunities and assert their rights. Empowerment Theory, as articulated by Julian Rappaport, also emphasizes psychological empowerment, advocating for a sense of control over one's life, critical awareness, and participation in community activities as essential components of empowerment.
- Sociocultural empowerment theories highlight the role of social structures, cultural norms, and community dynamics in shaping women's empowerment. Social Capital Theory is significant in this context, as it emphasizes the value of social networks and relationships in gaining access to resources, support, and opportunities. According to this theory, women can empower themselves by building strong networks within their communities and leveraging these connections for collective action and mutual support.
- Economic empowerment theories focus on enhancing women's access to economic resources, opportunities, and decision-making power. Human Capital Theory posits that investments in education and skills development are crucial for improving women's economic prospects and empowerment. By gaining education and vocational skills, women can increase their employability, earning potential, and economic independence.

---

<sup>3</sup> Mariko Gakiya, Aimee Tiu Wu, and Tala Al-Rousan (No Date). "women leadership and empowerment for peacebuilding", Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

### **2.3 Gender theories**

Gender theories explore the complex ways in which gender identity, roles, and relations are understood and constructed in society. There are two main theoretical perspectives to understand gender <sup>(4)</sup>:

1. **Essentialism:** Essentialist theories posit that gender differences are rooted in biological and natural distinctions. This perspective suggests that men and women have inherent, immutable qualities that define their behaviors and roles. For example, essentialists might argue that women are naturally more nurturing and men are naturally more aggressive due to biological factors. Critics argue that essentialism can reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and ignore the influence of socialization and culture on gender roles.
2. **Social Constructionism:** In contrast to essentialism, social constructionism argues that gender is not an inherent trait but rather a construct shaped by societal norms and expectations. According to this theory, gender roles and identities are created and reproduced through social processes such as family upbringing, media representations, and institutional practices. Social constructionists emphasize that gender identity is fluid and can vary across different cultures and historical periods. This theory encourages a more flexible understanding of gender and highlights the potential for changing gender norms.

### **2.4 An Islamic view on the theories of Gender, Women Empowerment, and Peace Building**

The Islamic perspective on gender equality is rooted in the foundational principles of justice and equity outlined in the Quran and Hadith. Islam advocates for the inherent dignity and worth of both men and women, emphasizing that they are equal in the eyes of God. The Quran states that men and women are created from the same soul and have complementary roles <sup>(5)</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities*. University of California Press.

<sup>5</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (2010). "Islam in the Modern World", Harper One. New York.

The Islamic view based the equality between men and women on their common human nature, and their shared mission on Earth: to worship God and to create a prosperous life for human societies. However, the Islamic view does not overlook the natural differences between men and women which are incorporated in the Islamic teachings. What is essential in the Islamic view and communicated clearly in Qur'an is that these differences do not imply superiority or inferiority of any of the two genders. Rather, the only differentiation criteria accepted in Islam is piety; which can be possessed by both men and women <sup>(6)</sup>.

In general, the Islamic perspective is closer to the essentialist gender theories than the social constructivist ones. However, the variations in the interpretations of Islamic teachings regarding the role of women is a form of social constructivism, since these interpretations may be affected by their social contexts. Drawing a well-defined line between the essentialist part (which is natural, ahistorical, and cannot be changed) and the social constructivist part (which is relative and can be revised) of the Islamic view to genders is beyond the scope of this paper. However, there are some categorical positions and teachings related to gender issues that are clear and obvious for any Muslim (mainly those that are communicated explicitly in the Qur'an and Hadith). These positions and teachings are not negotiable and can form the basis for any Islamic view to gender issues. Nothing in these foundational positions and teachings hinder the development of women and their active participation in social life.

When it comes to the above-discussed peacebuilding and women empowerment theories, the Islamic perspective does not contradict any of them. These theories are mainly positivist or instrumental; they aim to explain and prescribe the best way to achieve a set of normative goals (like building peaceful societies and empowering women). Islam, as a religion, is concerned mainly with the normative question more than the positivist or instrumental questions. Consequently, any of the mainstream theories of peacebuilding and women empowerment can be congruent with Islamic view as long as Islamic teachings are respected.

---

<sup>6</sup> Al-Hibri, Azizah (2000). "Islam, Law and Custom: Redefining Muslim Women's Rights." *American University Journal of International Law & Policy*.

## **2.5 An Integrated Theoretical Framework for Women Empowerment and Peacebuilding**

The above-discussed theories of women empowerment and peacebuilding are not mutually exclusive. They can be integrated for a comprehensive understanding and action-planning. The structural approach to peacebuilding and the sociocultural and the economic approaches to women empowerment work at the social level to create the required conditions and supporting context for peacebuilding and women empowerment. On the other hand, the relational approach to peacebuilding and the psychological approach to women empowerment work at the individual level through building capacities, enhancing motivation, and spreading awareness. Finally, the transformational approach to peacebuilding can be seen as a long-term path resulted from all other discussed approaches.

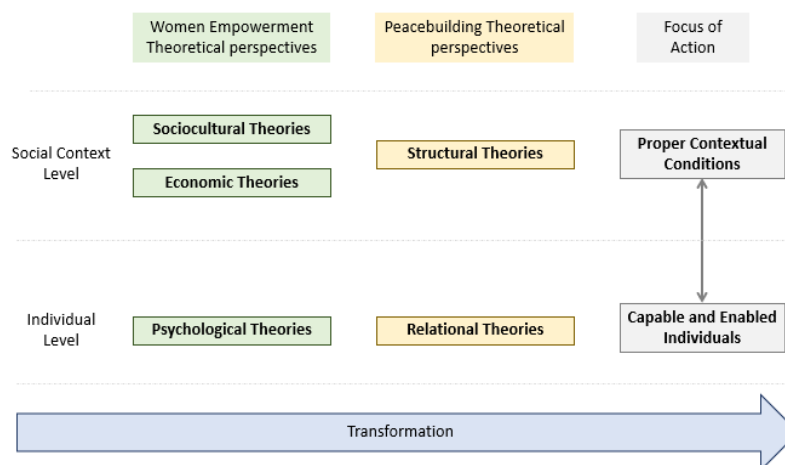


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework for Women Empowerment and Peacebuilding

This general theoretical framework is used in this paper as an analytical lens to enrich the analysis of relevant data and the development of recommended actions.





# Chapter 3

International Frameworks and  
Practices

## **Chapter 3: International Frameworks and Practices**

Several international initiatives are dedicated to the theme of women leadership in building peaceful and inclusive societies. The theme can be found directly or indirectly in UN plans, resolutions, national plans, and other multilateral agreements and initiatives. This section summarizes some of the most important frameworks related to the theme.

### **3.1 SDG 5 (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls)**

Sustainable Development Goal 5, aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030 <sup>(7)</sup>. This goal addresses the various forms of discrimination faced by women and girls worldwide, acknowledging that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. SDG 5 encompasses a broad range of targets, including ending all forms of discrimination, violence, and harmful practices against women and girls. It also focuses on ensuring women's full and effective participation in leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.

Achieving SDG 5 involves significant work in several key areas, including providing women and girls with equal access to education, healthcare, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes. Additionally, SDG 5 promotes policies and enforceable legislation for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

### **3.2 SDG 16 (Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies)**

Sustainable Development Goal 16, aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

inclusive institutions at all levels <sup>(8)</sup>. This goal addresses the need to reduce all forms of violence, end abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against vulnerable people. It also emphasizes the importance of ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels. By promoting the rule of law and ensuring equal access to justice, SDG 16 seeks to create a world where peace and justice are integral to the fabric of society.

Achieving SDG 16 involves tackling significant challenges such as corruption, bribery, and illicit financial flows, which undermine the effectiveness of institutions and erode public trust. The goal underscores the importance of developing effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels, ensuring public access to information, and protecting fundamental freedoms. Additionally, SDG 16 promotes the participation of developing countries in global governance and the strengthening of relevant national institutions to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.

### **3.3 WPS (Women, Peace, and Security)**

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) framework is a global initiative aimed at addressing the unique impact of conflict on women and girls and ensuring their active participation in peace processes. Originating from United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, the WPS agenda emphasizes the critical role women play in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction. It calls for increased representation of women at all levels of decision-making in national, regional, and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts. The framework also highlights the importance of incorporating gender perspectives into peacekeeping and humanitarian operations and ensuring the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence in conflict settings.

The WPS framework is built on four key pillars: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. Participation involves promoting the inclusion of women in peace negotiations and decision-making processes. Protection focuses on safeguarding women and girls from sexual violence and ensuring their rights are upheld in conflict and post-conflict settings. Prevention

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>

emphasizes the need to address the root causes of conflict and violence, including promoting women's rights and gender equality as essential components of peacebuilding efforts. Relief and recovery aim to ensure that the needs of women and girls are addressed in humanitarian responses and post-conflict reconstruction efforts <sup>(9)</sup>.

### **3.4 International case studies on the role of women in building peaceful and inclusive societies**

The following two case studies are selected because they provide good real-life examples of the role of women in building peaceful and inclusive societies. The first case is related to the work at the social context level, while the second is a good example of the work at the individual level. These two levels are the cornerstones of the theoretical framework adopted in this paper. However, the two levels are not fully independent; there are a lot of overlaps between them.

#### ***Case Study: The Role of Women in Peacebuilding in Rwanda***

Rwanda's history is marked by one of the most horrific genocides of the 20th century. In 1994, an estimated 800,000 people, primarily from the Tutsi minority, were killed in just 100 days. The aftermath of the genocide left the country in ruins, with deep ethnic divisions, widespread poverty, and a severely damaged social fabric. However, Rwanda has since emerged as a model of reconciliation, peacebuilding, and development. A critical factor in this transformation has been the empowerment of women, who have played a central role in rebuilding the nation and fostering an inclusive society <sup>(10)</sup>.

#### **Contextual Background**

Before the genocide, Rwandan women were largely excluded from political and economic life. Traditional norms relegated them to subordinate roles, and they had little participation in the

---

<sup>9</sup> <https://wps.unwomen.org/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> For more on this case study see:

Burnet, J. E. (2008). Gender Balance and the Meanings of Women in Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda. *African Affairs*, 107(428), 361-386.

And

Powley, E. (2004). Strengthening Governance: The Role of Women in Rwanda's Transition. *Hunt Alternatives Fund*.

public sphere. However, the genocide left many women as heads of households and primary breadwinners. This demographic shift, coupled with the new government's recognition of the importance of gender equality, created an opportunity to reimagine women's roles in Rwandan society.

### Empowerment Initiatives

1. Political Representation: After the genocide, the Rwandan government implemented a series of policies aimed at increasing women's participation in governance. The 2003 constitution reserved 30% of parliamentary seats for women, but in practice, women have exceeded this quota. In 2008, Rwanda became the first country in the world where women held a majority in parliament, with 56% of seats occupied by women. This political empowerment has allowed women to influence legislation and policies in ways that promote peace, equality, and social justice.

2. Economic Empowerment: To address the economic marginalization of women, Rwanda introduced various programs to support women entrepreneurs and improve their access to resources. The Rwandan government partnered with international organizations to provide women with training in business skills, access to microfinance, and support in establishing cooperatives. These initiatives have enabled women to contribute to the economy, reduce poverty in their communities, and build more resilient families.

3. Legal Reforms: Rwanda also undertook significant legal reforms to protect women's rights. Laws were enacted to protect women from gender-based violence and promote gender equality in the workplace. These reforms have empowered women to seek justice and stand up against discrimination and violence, contributing to a more peaceful and inclusive society.

4. Social Reconciliation: Women have played a crucial role in Rwanda's reconciliation efforts. Women's organizations have been at the forefront of fostering dialogue between communities, promoting forgiveness, and rebuilding trust. For instance, women have led local peacebuilding initiatives that bring together survivors and perpetrators of the genocide, encouraging them to engage in truth-telling and reconciliation processes. These efforts have been instrumental in healing the wounds of the past and creating a more cohesive society.

### Impact

The empowerment of women in Rwanda has had a profound impact on the nation's recovery and development. Women's increased participation in politics has led to more inclusive governance, with policies that address the needs of all citizens. The economic empowerment of women has contributed to poverty reduction and improved living standards, while legal reforms have provided women with the tools to protect their rights and dignity. Furthermore, women's involvement in social reconciliation has helped to build a more peaceful society, where people from different ethnic backgrounds can live together in harmony.

Rwanda's experience demonstrates that empowering women is not only a matter of justice and equality but also a crucial strategy for building peaceful and inclusive societies. By enabling women to take on leadership roles, participate in economic activities, and contribute to social healing, Rwanda has been able to transform itself from a nation devastated by genocide into a role-model of hope and progress. This case study serves as a powerful example of how women's empowerment can drive positive change in post-conflict settings and beyond.

### ***Case Study: The Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace***

Liberia, a West African country, experienced a brutal civil war that lasted from 1989 to 2003, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 250,000 people and the displacement of many more. The conflict left deep scars on the nation's social fabric. In the face of overwhelming violence and instability, a group of courageous women took it upon themselves to end the war and restore peace to their country. Their efforts not only contributed to ending the conflict but also empowered women across Liberia to take on more active roles in building a peaceful and inclusive society <sup>(11)</sup>.

### Contextual Background

Liberia's civil war was marked by widespread atrocities, including sexual violence, which disproportionately affected women and children. Amid this turmoil, women were often seen as passive victims, with little agency or influence in the male-dominated peace negotiations.

---

<sup>11</sup> Tripp, A. M. (2015). *Women and Power in Post-Conflict Africa*. Cambridge University Press.



However, a group of Liberian women recognized that they could no longer stand by and watch their country be destroyed. They decided to take action, believing that their involvement was crucial to ending the conflict and rebuilding their nation.

### Empowerment Initiatives

1. Formation of Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace: In 2003, social worker Leymah Gbowee and other women leaders organized the *Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace*, a grassroots movement that brought together Christian and Muslim women from across the country. These women, many of whom had no formal education or political experience, united under the shared goal of ending the war. They organized peaceful protests, sit-ins, and prayers, often at great personal risk, to demand that the conflicting parties come to the negotiating table.
2. Advocacy and Nonviolent Protest: The women's movement used nonviolent tactics to pressure the parties involved in the conflict. They staged daily sit-ins at key locations, including the Monrovia fish market, where they attracted attention by wearing white T-shirts symbolizing peace. The women also refused to leave until the peace talks, which were often stalled by political posturing, made real progress. Their persistence and visibility kept the pressure on the negotiators and garnered international attention, amplifying their demands for peace.
3. Inclusion in Peace Negotiations: Through their relentless advocacy, the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace succeeded in securing a seat at the peace negotiations held in Accra, Ghana. Leymah Gbowee and other women leaders used this platform to demand that the warlords and government officials commit to ending the violence. Their presence was instrumental in pushing the talks forward and ensuring that the resulting peace agreement was not just another temporary truce but a genuine effort to end the war.
4. Capacity Building and Empowerment: Beyond their role in the peace process, the women's movement also focused on empowering women across Liberia to take on leadership roles in their communities. After the war, many of these women became involved in local governance, education, and advocacy work, contributing to the reconstruction of their society. Leymah Gbowee and other leaders also established organizations to continue training and empowering women, ensuring that they remained active participants in Liberia's political and social life.

### Impact

The Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace played a decisive role in ending the civil war and establishing a lasting peace in the country. Their efforts resulted in the signing of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003, which led to the resignation of President Charles Taylor and the formation of a transitional government. The women's movement also paved the way for the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in 2005, who became Africa's first female head of state. Sirleaf's presidency was a significant milestone for women's empowerment in Liberia and across the continent.

The movement's impact extended beyond the immediate end of the war. It empowered women across Liberia to become more active in their communities, advocating for education, health, and human rights. The movement also inspired similar women-led peace initiatives in other conflict-affected countries, demonstrating the power of grassroots activism and the critical role women can play in building peaceful and inclusive societies.

The Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace is a powerful example of how women's empowerment can contribute to peacebuilding and social transformation. By uniting women across religious and ethnic lines, the movement demonstrated that women, even those without formal power or education, could be powerful agents of change. Their success in ending Liberia's civil war and fostering a more inclusive society highlights the importance of enabling women to build their capacities and take on leadership roles in times of crisis. This case study shows the transformative potential of women's empowerment in creating lasting peace and social progress.



# Chapter 4

Initiatives and Practices in Islamic  
Countries

## Chapter 4: Initiatives and Practices in Islamic Countries

Islamic countries are part of the international community and they share the same interests in Sustainable Development Goals and other international initiatives. In addition, Islamic countries have their own challenges related to women empowerment and enhancing peace and inclusion within Islamic societies. This section is dedicated to present and discuss the initiatives in the Islamic countries that are related to the paper's theme.

### **4.1 OPAAW**

The OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW), adopted by the OIC Ministerial Conference on the Role of Women in the Development of OIC Member States, aims to enhance women's participation across various spheres. The plan is the main outcome of several Ministerial Conferences dedicated to the role of women in OIC countries held in several cities between 2005 and 2014. This plan addresses the marginalization and exclusion faced by women and girls, emphasizing the need for their effective involvement in political, economic, cultural, and social domains. The plan highlights the historical contributions of women and stresses the importance of eliminating non-Islamic traditions and misinterpretations of religion that hinder women's progress <sup>(12)</sup>.

OPAAW sets forth nine main objectives to empower women: 1) increasing women participation in decision-making, 2) ensuring women and girls' access to quality education, 3) improving women and girls' access to quality healthcare, 4) promoting women economic empowerment, 5) improving and ensuring women social protection, 6) protecting women from violence, 7) supporting women in crisis situations, 8) providing humanitarian assistance to women during disasters, and 9) protecting women during armed conflicts. The plan includes detailed sub-objectives under each of the main objectives. In addition, the plan includes well-defined mechanisms of action to ensure implementation. It encourages member states to implement legal and institutional reforms, raise public awareness, and collaborate with various stakeholders, including NGOs, communities, and the private sector, to achieve these goals.

---

<sup>12</sup> Organization of Islamic cooperation (OIC) (2016). "OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women"

The first objective is unique since it looks to women as active social agents, on the other side, the last four objectives look to women as vulnerable subjects that need protection, while the objectives 2 to 5 focus on enabling women and building their abilities to contribute to their societies. The three approaches can be aligned through a comprehensive perspective to women needs linked to the integrated theoretical framework presented earlier in the paper, as shown in the following table:

Table 1. Analysis and Classification of OPAAW Objectives

Level of Action	How Women are Perceived?	OPAAW Objectives
Individual Level	Active Social Agents	1. increasing women participation in decision-making
Both Individual and Social Context Levels	Potential Social Agents in Need for Support	2. ensuring women and girls' access to quality education
		3. improving women and girls' access to quality healthcare
		4. promoting women economic empowerment
		5. improving and ensuring women social protection
Social Context Level	Vulnerable Subjects in Need for Protection	6. protecting women from violence
		7. supporting women in crisis situations
		8. providing humanitarian assistance to women during disasters
		9. protecting women during armed conflicts

## **4.2 Performance of WDO member countries in the key indicators related to the theme**

In this section, the performance of all of the member states and the signed states of WDO in key indicators related to the theme are presented. As of September 2024, there are 19 member states of WDO and 8 states that are signed but not ratified states. So, the total is 27 countries included in this analysis. The indicators are related to issues like women political participation, economic participation, education, and the general gender equality in these countries.

Some indicators do not include some countries, so these countries are omitted from the relevant chart.



The following two charts illustrates women political participation in each country. The first chart includes the percentage of women parliament members and the percentage of women ministers <sup>(13)</sup>. The second chart includes the percentage of women representation in local governments <sup>(14)</sup>:

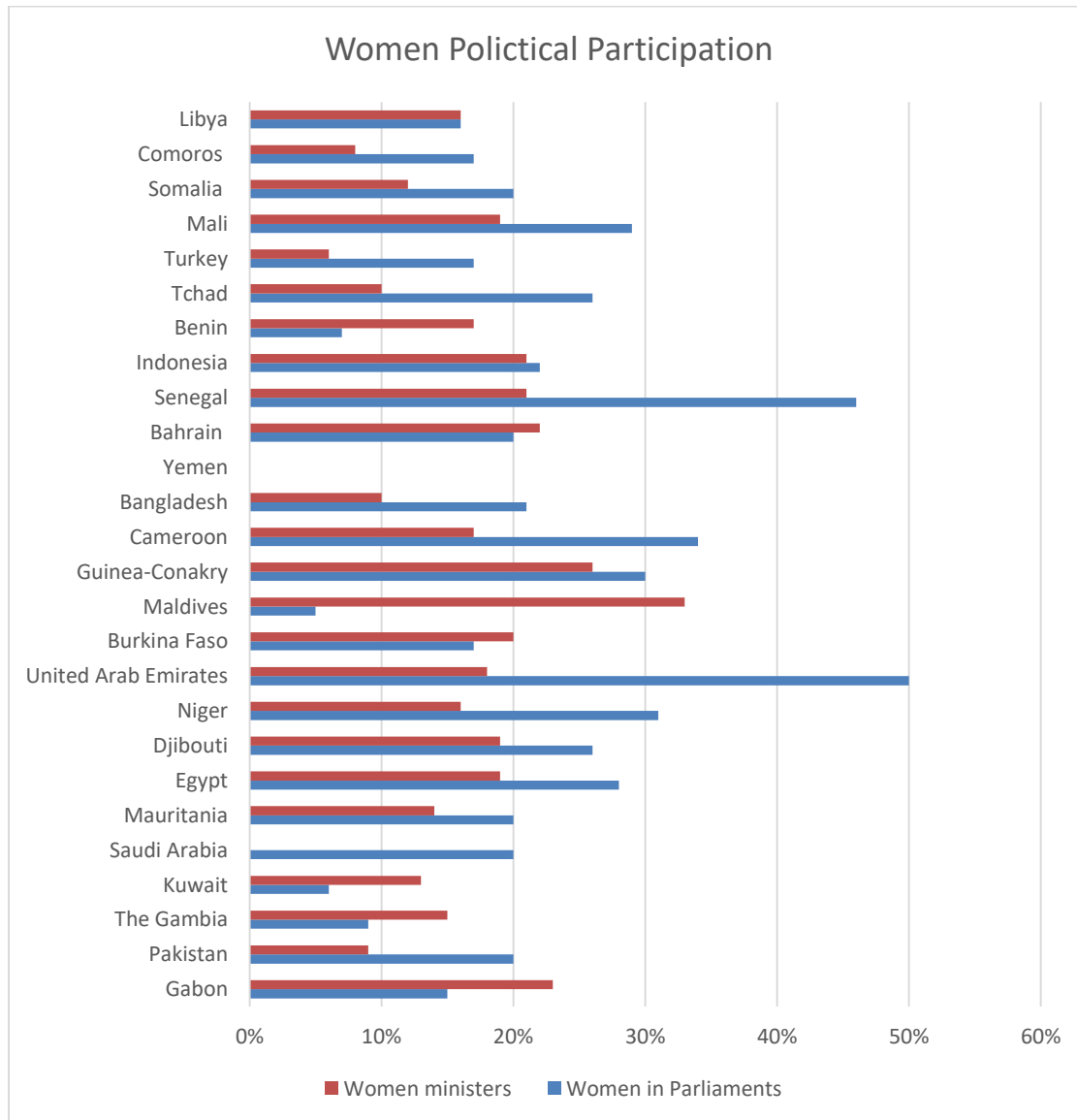


Figure 2. Women Political Participation in WDO Member Countries

<sup>13</sup> Source: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Women-in-politics-2023-en.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> source: <https://localgov.unwomen.org/>



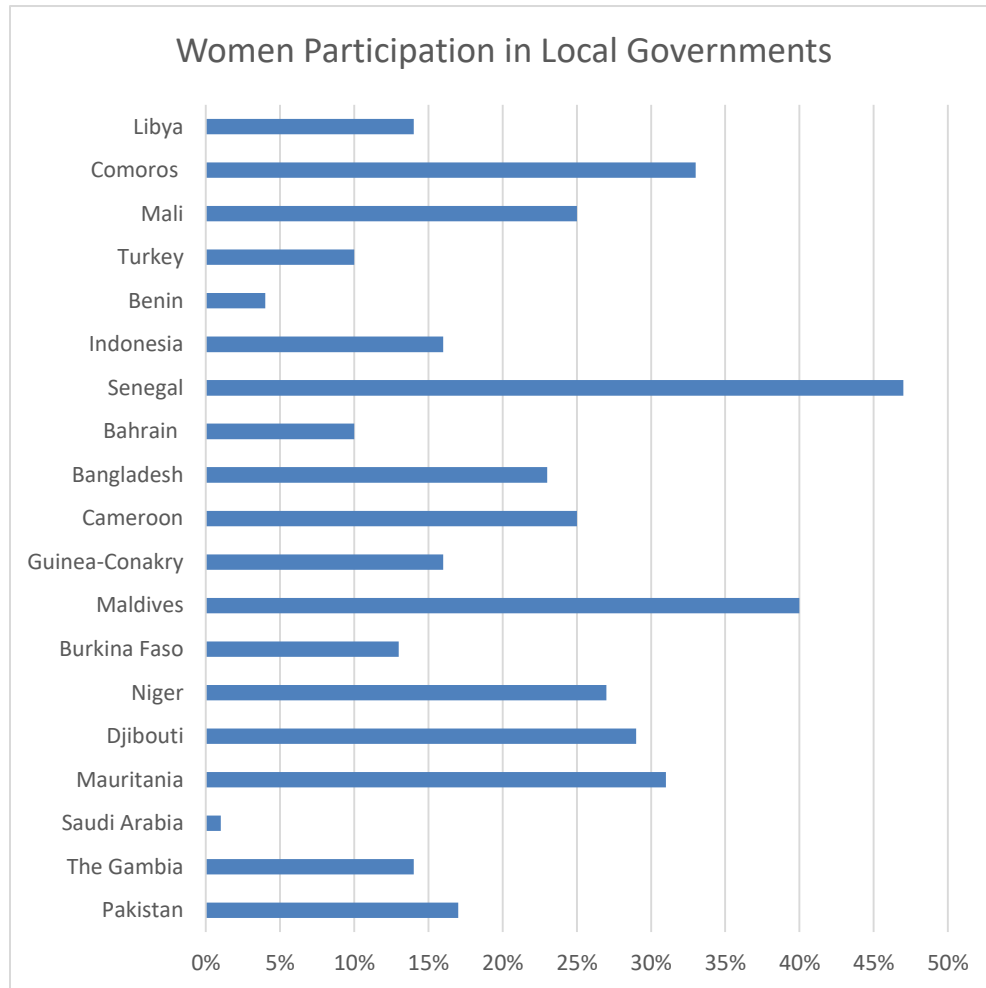


Figure 3. Women Participation in Local Governments in WDO Member Countries

In general, the performance of WDO member countries in women political participation is comparable to other countries in the world (with a few exceptions). This performance indicates the readiness of most countries for more active role of women in the public sphere.

When it comes to education, the following chart shows good literacy percentage among women in most countries, while the rate is relatively low in some countries (especially in Africa) <sup>(15)</sup>. However, it seems that the illiteracy problem in these countries is not only for women, so the factors that lead to the low percentages are not gender-related. In all cases, the performance of some countries in female literacy highlights an important area for work to enable women through education.

<sup>15</sup> source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.FE.ZS>

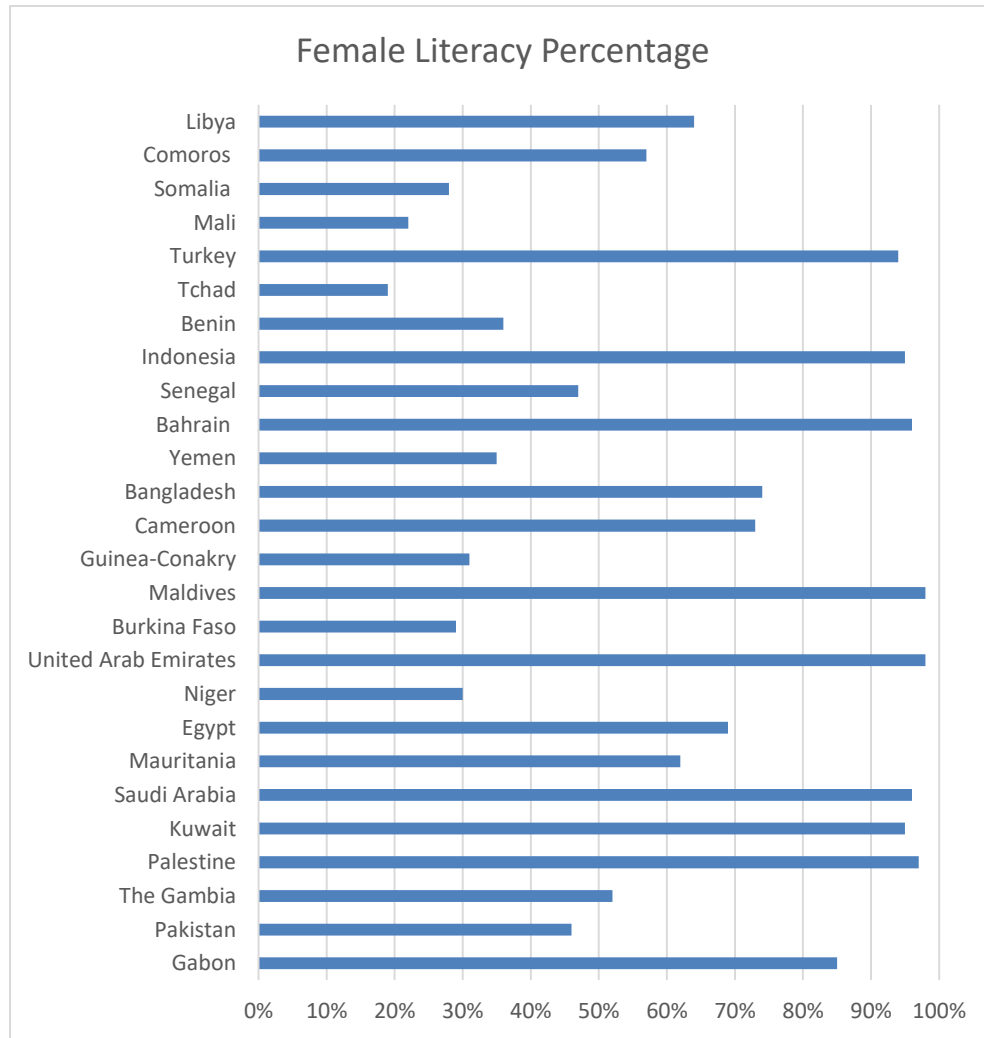


Figure 4. Female Literacy Percentage in WDO Member Countries

The following two charts cover other indicators related to women and education. In the first chart, women participation in teaching positions in pre-primary, primary, and secondary education are presented (data for some countries does not cover the three stages)<sup>(16)</sup>. The chart reflects a relatively traditional role of women. They are dominant in pre-primary stage, while their representation is less in the primary stage and far less in the secondary stage. In general, the performance in these indicators is not bad, but it reflects a need to empower women for more senior roles in teaching and education.

<sup>16</sup> source: <https://data.uis.unesco.org/>

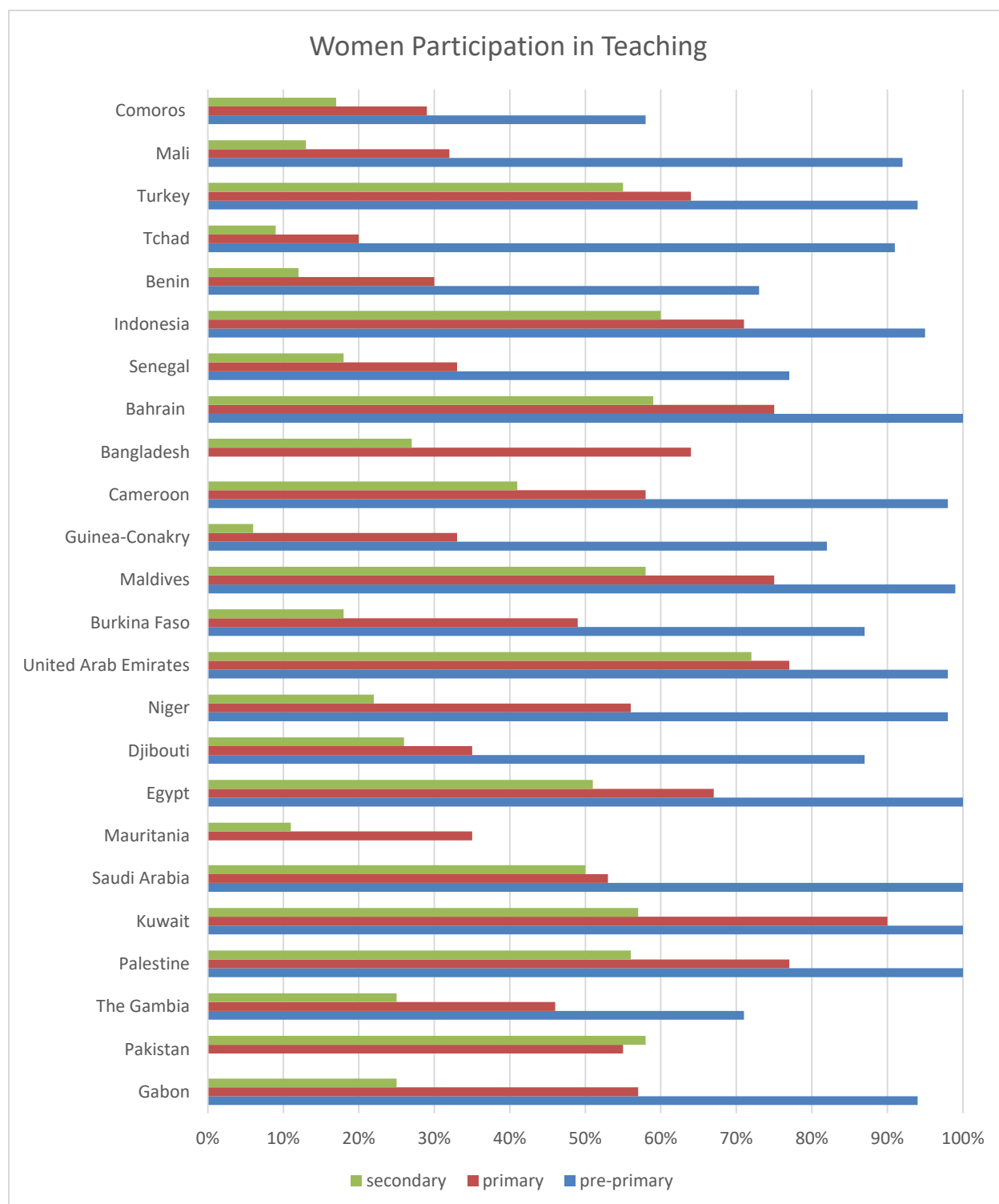


Figure 5. Women Participation in School Teaching in WDO Member Countries

The second chart related to teaching positions is concerned with post-secondary (university) teaching. Here, it is clear that there is a need for more effort to advance women in the academic sphere. With the exception of a few countries, the participation of women in university teaching is significantly low.

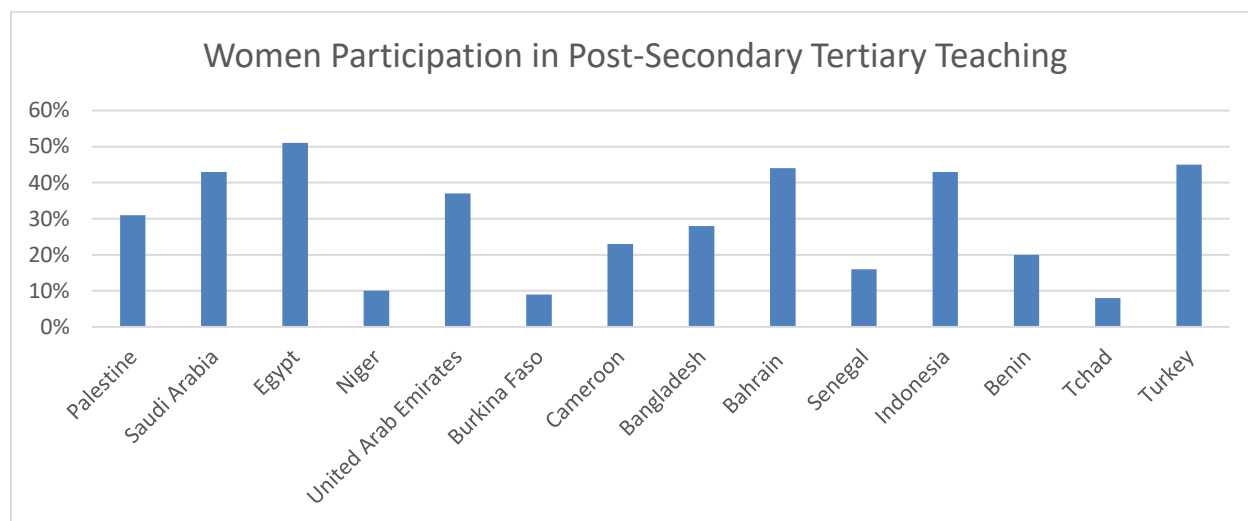


Figure 6. Women Participation in Post-Secondary Teaching in WDO Member Countries

While the previous two charts cover women work in teaching positions, the following chart shows the overall participation of women in labor force in each country <sup>(17)</sup>. In general, the performance is satisfactory in this indicator, where the percentage of women participation in labor force varies between 20% and 50% in most countries, with some extreme value in the two sides of high and low participation. These results indicate the readiness of most member countries for women participation in public issues, while some countries still need further efforts to enable women participation.

<sup>17</sup> source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>

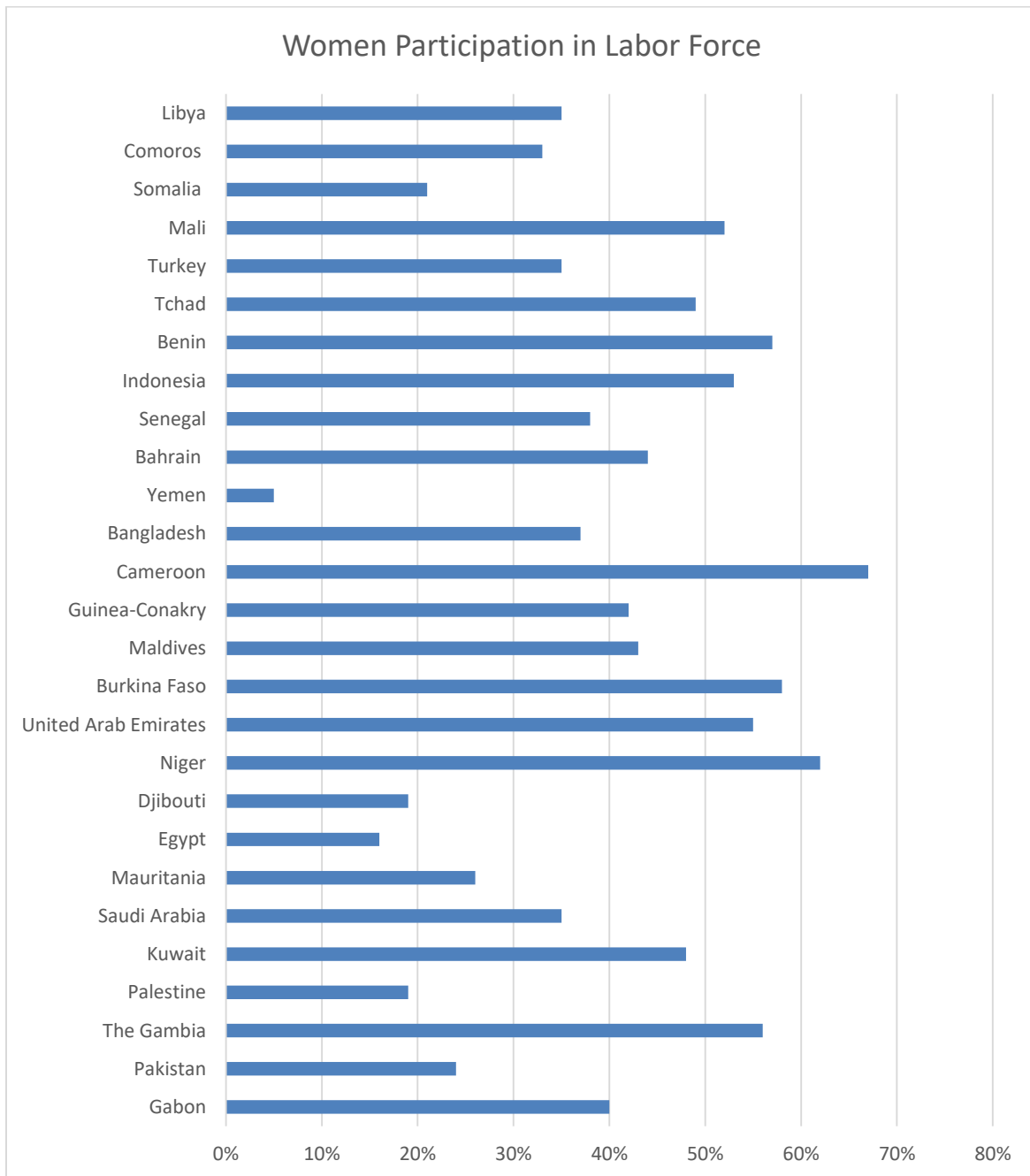


Figure 7. Women Participation in Labor Force in WDO Member Countries

Finally, to have an overall understanding of the status of women empowerment in WDO member countries, it is good to look at their results in the Gender Development Index <sup>(18)</sup>. The following

<sup>18</sup> source: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/gender-development-index?tab=table#explore-the-data>

chart includes these results. If the index value for a particular country is 1, this means an equal opportunity for males and females; both are benefiting equally from development. While a value lower than 1 means that women have less development opportunities, and a value more than 1 means that women have more development opportunities than men. Kuwait is the only member country that scored more than one, while most of the countries score slightly below 1, and some are significantly below 1 (especially Yemen).

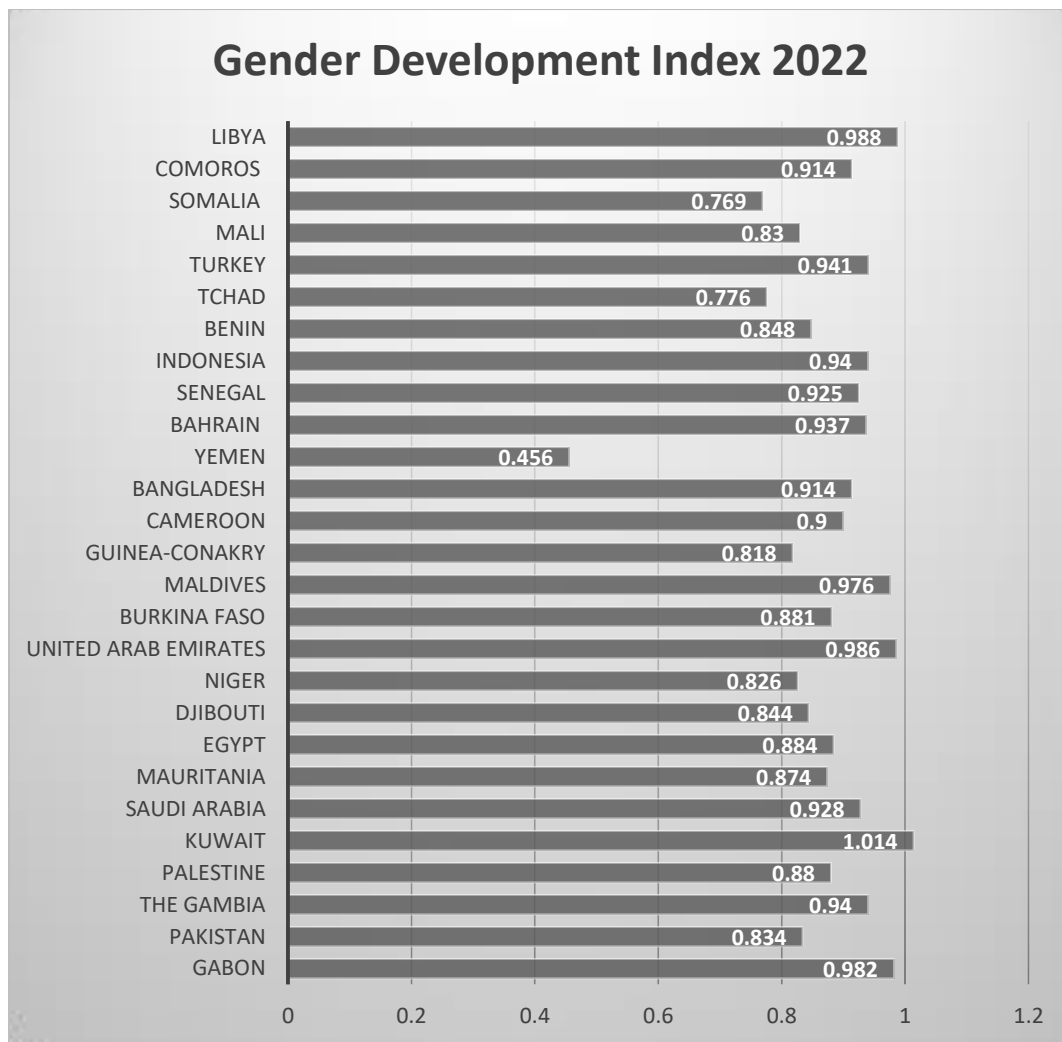


Figure 8. Gender Development Index 2022 scores for WDO Member Countries



The results of the above-presented indicators reflect a good situation for women participation in most of the member countries, with a few exceptions. Also, the results indicate some divide between stable and more economically developed countries and other countries that suffer from poverty, less development, and conflicts. The status of women and their participation cannot be separated from the overall situation of each country.

### **4.3 Case studies from Islamic countries**

The following two case studies belong to two Islamic countries. As in the international case studies presented earlier, these two case studies are selected because they provide good real-life examples of the role of women in building peaceful and inclusive societies in an Islamic context. The first case is related to the work at the social context level, while the second is a good example of the work at the individual level.

#### ***Case Study: Women's Empowerment in Indonesia through the Aceh Peace Process***

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, has seen various internal conflicts throughout its history. One of the most prolonged and severe conflicts was in Aceh, a province in northern Sumatra, where separatist violence between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government lasted for nearly three decades. The conflict, which began in 1976, claimed thousands of lives and caused widespread suffering, particularly among women. The peace process, which culminated in the 2005 Helsinki Accords, marked a significant turning point, with women playing an increasingly important role in the post-conflict rebuilding and the promotion of an inclusive society <sup>(19)</sup>.

#### **Contextual Background**

---

<sup>19</sup> For more on this case study:

Oxfam International. (2007). *The Role of Women in Peacebuilding in Indonesia's Aceh Province*.

And:

Kamaruzzaman, N. (2010). *The Role of Acehnese Women in the Peace Process*. In F. Hikam (Ed.), *Women in Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Lessons from Aceh* (pp. 19-34). Banda Aceh: The World Bank.

Aceh's conflict was rooted in historical grievances, including economic marginalization, cultural identity, and political autonomy. Women in Aceh, like in many conflict zones, bore the brunt of the violence, losing husbands, sons, and homes, and facing violence and other abuses. Despite these challenges, women in Aceh became influential actors in advocating for peace and rebuilding their communities.

### Empowerment Initiatives

1. Advocacy for Women's Involvement in the Peace Process: During the peace negotiations in Helsinki, women's groups in Aceh, such as the Flower Aceh and the Acehnese Women's League (LINA), advocated for a greater role for women in the peace process. Although they were not formally included in the negotiations, their persistent advocacy helped to ensure that women's perspectives were considered in the post-conflict reconstruction plans. Their efforts were supported by national and international organizations that recognized the importance of women's participation in achieving a lasting peace.

2. Strengthening Women's Legal Rights: One of the significant contextual factors affecting women's participation in post-conflict Aceh was the legal framework. In the aftermath of the peace agreement, women's organizations worked to strengthen the legal rights of women in Aceh. This included advocating for the implementation of national laws that protect women's rights, such as the Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence, and pushing for gender-sensitive policies at the local level. These efforts were aimed at creating a more supportive environment for women's participation in public life.

3. Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Support: Economic empowerment was another crucial area of focus for women's organizations in Aceh. Many women had lost their primary breadwinners due to the conflict and were struggling to support their families. Initiatives such as microfinance programs, vocational training, and cooperative development were introduced to help women rebuild their livelihoods. Organizations like Flower Aceh provided training in agriculture, handicrafts, and small business management, enabling women to become economically independent and more active in their communities.

4. Promoting Women's Leadership and Political Participation: Post-conflict, there was a concerted effort to increase women's participation in local governance and decision-making

processes in Aceh. Women's groups and NGOs organized leadership training programs and workshops to equip women with the skills needed to participate in local politics and community decision-making. These efforts were crucial in changing the perception of women's roles in society and encouraging more women to run for political office and take on leadership roles in their communities.

### Impact

The efforts to empower women in Aceh have had a substantial impact on the province's post-conflict recovery and development. The inclusion of women in local governance and decision-making processes has led to more gender-sensitive policies and programs that address the specific needs of women and children. Economic empowerment initiatives have helped reduce poverty and improve the standard of living for many families, while legal reforms have strengthened the protection of women's rights in the province.

While challenges remain, particularly in ensuring women's voices are heard in higher levels of governance, the progress made in Aceh demonstrates the importance of improving the contextual factors that enable women to participate in building peaceful and inclusive societies.

The case of Aceh highlights the critical role that women can play in post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding when the contextual barriers to their participation are addressed. By advocating for legal reforms, economic empowerment, leadership development, and cultural change, women's organizations in Aceh have made significant progress in creating an environment where women can actively contribute to building a peaceful and inclusive society. This case study underscores the importance of addressing the underlying factors that limit women's participation in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction, particularly in Islamic contexts.

### ***Case Study: Women's Empowerment and Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Yemen through the Yemeni Women's Union (YWU)***

Yemen has been suffering with severe conflict and humanitarian crises since 2015. The Yemeni Women's Union (YWU), established in 1965 and reactivated in the context of the recent conflict,

has been a key organization in supporting women's roles in post-conflict recovery and development. The YWU focuses on empowering women, addressing gender-based violence, and facilitating their active participation in rebuilding Yemeni society <sup>(20)</sup>.

### Contextual Background

The ongoing conflict in Yemen has led to widespread destruction, displacement, and a severe humanitarian crisis. Women have been disproportionately affected by the conflict, facing violence, loss of livelihood, and displacement. Despite these challenges, Yemeni women have been central to efforts aimed at recovery and reconstruction. The Yemeni Women's Union has played a crucial role in supporting women's involvement in these efforts and advocating for their rights.

### Empowerment Initiatives

1. **Support for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence:** YWU has been at the forefront of addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in Yemen. The organization provides comprehensive support services for survivors, including medical care, psychological counseling, and legal assistance. YWU has established safe spaces and shelters for women fleeing violence, and it conducts awareness campaigns to address GBV and promote women's rights. By offering crucial support and advocating for legal protections, YWU helps survivors recover and rebuild their lives.
2. **Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Programs:** In response to the economic impact of the conflict, YWU has implemented programs aimed at economic empowerment. These programs include vocational training, microfinance, and support for small-scale entrepreneurship. YWU provides women with training in various skills such as sewing, handicrafts, and agriculture, and offers microloans to help women start or expand their businesses. These initiatives have enabled many women to gain financial independence and improve their economic conditions.
3. **Advocacy and Policy Influence:** YWU actively engages in advocacy to influence policy and legal reforms related to women's rights and gender equality. The organization works to ensure

---

<sup>20</sup> For more on this case study:

World Bank. (2019). *Women's Economic Empowerment in Yemen*.

And:

UNDP Yemen. (2020). *Empowering Women Through Livelihoods and Economic Opportunities*.

that women's voices are included in peace negotiations and policy discussions. YWU also collaborates with national and international stakeholders to promote gender-sensitive policies and address the needs of women in conflict and post-conflict settings. Through its advocacy efforts, YWU aims to create an enabling environment for women's participation and empowerment.

4. Community Engagement and Peacebuilding: YWU is involved in community engagement and peacebuilding activities aimed at fostering reconciliation and social cohesion. The organization organizes community dialogues, peacebuilding workshops, and collaborative projects that bring together different groups affected by the conflict. These initiatives aim to rebuild trust, address communal tensions, and promote social harmony. By facilitating dialogue and cooperation, YWU contributes to creating a more inclusive and peaceful society.

5. Education and Capacity Building: Education and capacity building are central to YWU's efforts to empower women. The organization supports educational programs for women and girls, including literacy classes, vocational training, and leadership development. YWU also provides capacity-building workshops to enhance women's skills in areas such as advocacy, community organizing, and entrepreneurship. These efforts help women gain the knowledge and skills needed to actively participate in their communities and contribute to the reconstruction process.

### Impact

The Yemeni Women's Union has had a significant impact on women's empowerment and post-conflict recovery in Yemen. The support for survivors of gender-based violence has provided crucial assistance to those affected by the conflict, helping them to recover and rebuild their lives. Economic empowerment programs have enabled women to achieve financial independence and contribute to local economic development.

Advocacy and policy influence efforts have ensured that women's rights are represented in policy discussions and peace negotiations. Community engagement and peacebuilding initiatives have fostered reconciliation and social cohesion, while education and capacity-building programs have empowered women to take on leadership roles and contribute to their communities' development.

The case of the Yemeni Women's Union highlights the crucial role that women can play in post-conflict reconstruction and community development. By focusing on support for survivors of violence, economic empowerment, advocacy, community engagement, and education, YWU has empowered Yemeni women to actively participate in rebuilding their country and addressing the challenges of a conflict-affected society. This case study highlights the importance of supporting women's empowerment in countries facing conflict and humanitarian crises, where women's contributions are vital to achieving sustainable peace and development.





# Chapter 5

## Analysis and Policy Alternatives

## Chapter 5: Analysis and Policy Alternatives

### 5.1 Insights from the frameworks, indicators and case studies

Building on the above discussions of theoretical framework, international practices, case studies, and the performance of WDO member countries in the relevant indicators, two dimensions of WDO programmatic actions have emerged: The first dimension is concerned with the level of intervention; whether it focuses on the contextual level or on the individual level. The second dimension is concerned with the targeted country/society; whether it is stable country or a country suffered from conflicts and violence. The two dimensions intersect to form four quadrants that can be used to plan and organize WDO programs as illustrated in the following figure:

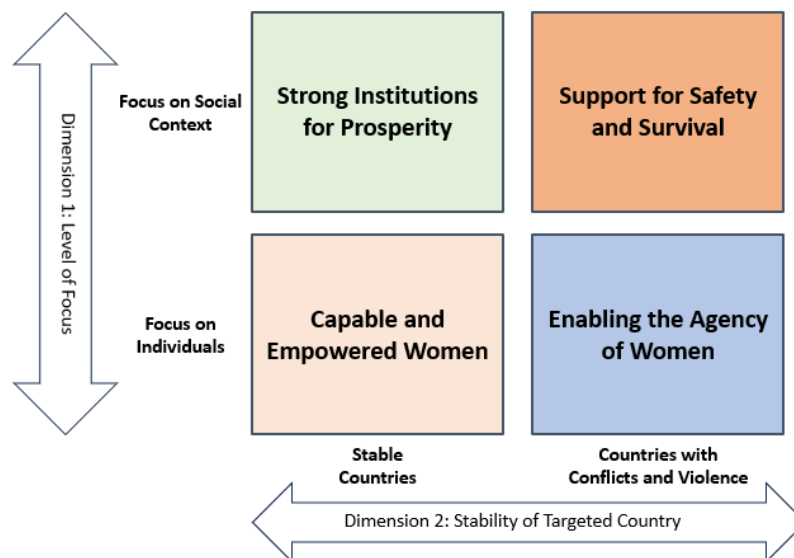


Figure 9. Four Quadrants for WDO Actions and Programs

In the remainder of this section, each one of the four quadrants is explained with a list of possible areas for actions/initiatives WDO can adopt. These options will be further evaluated in the next sub-sections.

**Quadrant 1: Strong Institutions for Prosperity:**

- Legal reform: One of the most important institutions in stable countries is the legal framework. In these countries, women are not vulnerable to extreme violations, but their prosperity and their contribution to their communities' prosperity may be affected negatively by some laws. WDO can lead the efforts to identify the needs for legal reform and initiate the reform process in coordination with other actors.
- Support for women organizations: Another important institution in stable countries is women organizations. These organizations have the experience and resources to serve women in their countries. However, WDO can support these organizations to expand their role toward active contribution to the prosperity of the whole society.
- Efforts to address social issues: Although stable countries do not suffer from conflicts and violence, they are not free of social challenges. Issues like sectarian or racial divide (even if not violent), disputes within families, challenges of raising new generations, and challenges of providing care to elderly persons are a few examples of social issues that need to be addressed in stable countries. WDO can work in partnership with other actors to identify the most important issues and initiate activities to address them.
- Efforts to address cultural issues: Cultural bias and stereotyping are common in all cultures and societies. Culture is a strong informal institution that shape the perception, thinking, motivation, and actions of people (unconsciously in most cases). WDO can work with other actors to identify and address the most important cultural issues to be addresses, whether they are related to women or to the society in general.
- Efforts to address economic issues: In stable societies, peace and security enable economic prosperity. However, economic challenges are not limited to conflicts and violence only. There is a lot of issues and challenges that may obstacle economic prosperity. For example, economic inequality, lack of training, and lack of entrepreneurial motivation are among the issues that can be addressed. WDO has another thematic pillar focused on economic empowerment of women. There is good opportunity for synergetic impact when efforts in the several pillars are coordinated. WDO can build on its work on economic women empowerment to enhance women role in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

**Quadrant 2: Capable and Empowered Women:**

- Training and personal development: To enable individual women in stable countries to contribute to peace and inclusion in their societies, they need to be trained and empowered. WDO can work with other actors to design and execute several training and capacity building interventions in stable countries.
- Support women politicians: In general, politicians have an influence on peace and inclusion in their societies. In most Islamic countries, women are participating in political life. So, supporting women politicians (like parliaments members, ministers, local government representatives ...) in stable countries can enhance their influence and increase their effectiveness. WDO can start networking efforts to establish relations with women politicians and continue with providing training and conducting dialogue forums to expand the role of women politicians.
- Support business women: Another group that can be supported by WDO programs is business women. WDO can create networking and cooperation frameworks to leverage on the skills and resources that business women have to enable their contribution to peace and inclusion in their societies.
- Support women intellectuals and scholars: This group of women is very important since they can develop and disseminate new thoughts related to women and peaceful and inclusive societies. This group includes academic scholars, religious scholars, journalists, authors and similar roles. WDO can start networking with these women and involve them in its programs through a well-designed framework.

**Quadrant 3: Support for Safety and Survival:**

- Protection: When it comes to countries with conflicts and violence (whether it is a civil war or an aggression from a foreign country), protecting lives is the first priority. There are specialized organizations work on this goal. WDO can coordinate with these

organizations to enhance the role of women in protecting vulnerable people (including vulnerable women).

- Post-trauma support: The groups that can escape from conflicts and violence, either by seeking refuge to other countries or after the end of wars and violence are still in need of support especially psychologically. WDO can work with actors in this area to support them in building effective institutions for post-trauma support.
- Basic needs (relief): People within conflicts suffer to satisfy their basic needs like food and shelter. There is a lot of organizations work on relief efforts. WDO can coordinate with these organizations to support their efforts and to increase women participation in providing basic needs to societies suffering from conflicts and violence.
- Support for justice: During conflicts, several vulnerable groups (including women) suffer from violations and aggression. Justice is an important element in building peace during and after conflicts. WDO can work with other parties to support justice institutions that contribute to peace.
- Support for women actions for peace: It is documented in several cases that women play an essential role in bringing peace to their countries. WDO can create programs to support the groups of women who are active in working toward ending conflict and violence in their societies.
- Post-conflict recovery: Any conflict will end someday. But the scars it left on societies will not heal automatically. Lot of efforts are dedicated to rebuilding societies after conflicts. WDO can coordinate with other parties to support post-conflict recovery especially in issues related to women and their role in society.

### **Quadrant 4: Enabling the Agency of Women:**

- Economic support: During conflicts, women are vulnerable to suffer from poverty. They cannot contribute to peace and inclusion in their societies while they are economically deprived. WDO can coordinate with other actors to provide basic economic support for women during conflicts and violence.

- Legal and justice support: Individual women may need legal support to protect their rights during conflicts. There are some organizations dedicated to this mission. However, WDO may initiate a program to support the work in this area, which is crucial in building peaceful and inclusive societies.
- Psychological support: Another type of support needed by women during conflicts is psychological support. Providing women with such support enable them to contribute to peace and inclusion in their communities. WDO can work with other actors to guide the efforts toward effective psychological support for women during conflicts.
- Support for grassroot women activities in local communities: During conflicts, some active women start efforts to help their local communities in an informal way and with little resources. WDO can initiate a program to support such efforts since it is directly related to building peaceful and inclusive societies.

### **5.2 Prioritization and evaluation criteria**

Before discussing the criteria that will be used to evaluate the above-mentioned initiatives, it is useful to emphasize that WDO role should be focused on setting the strategic direction for policies and programs in the theme without being involved in detailed execution of specific initiatives/projects in particular countries. The following reasons justify this approach:

- The mandate of WDO is broad with a diverse geographic scope, so it is more effective to focus on general policies and overall directions
- WDO is a new organization with limited resources, so these resources should be utilized efficiently by focusing on the strategic level and not engage in detailed execution
- Grassroot organizations and governmental and international organizations have good resources on the ground and WDO can achieve its objectives through them

To evaluate and rank the above-mentioned actions/initiatives (and any other initiatives/actions that can be proposed in future), the following criteria can be used:

1. **High Impact:** With the limited resources and as an emerging organization, it is very important for WDO to focus its efforts on and allocate its resources to high impact initiative. Impact means creating real difference in beneficiaries' lives, broad scope of beneficiaries, and sustainable benefits for them.
2. **Low Risk:** Some impactful actions may come with high risk as well, which is not recommended at the early stages of WDO work. WDO should focus on initiatives and actions with lower risks.
3. **Quick Wins:** At its early stages, WDO needs to achieve impact as soon as possible to create a momentum for its mission and to increase the awareness of its work and to expedite the self-learning process within WDO. Consequently, initiatives that can create quick impact (even at a small scale) should be given priority.

The next sub-section includes evaluation of the proposed initiatives using the three criteria, and identifying the ones that WDO should start with.

### **5.3 Recommending specific programs of actions/initiatives**

Using the three evaluation criteria, the following table includes evaluation of the proposed areas of actions/initiatives. The evaluation is done using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means that the area of actions/initiatives is weakly satisfying the criterion, while 5 means that it fully satisfies the criterion. Eight areas of actions/initiatives were identified as the priority of WDO. They are highlighted in blue in the below table. The area of actions/initiatives is selected if it achieves 10 or more (out of 15) in the total evaluation of all of the three criteria. The evaluation is somehow subjective, but it is based on sufficient understanding and careful consideration of all of the aspects in each criterion.



Table 2. Evaluation of Recommended Areas of Actions/Initiatives for WDO

Options for actions / initiatives	High Impact	Low Risk	Quick Wins	Total
<b>Quadrant 1: Strong Institutions for Prosperity</b>				
Legal Reform	3	4	1	8
Support for women organizations	4	4	4	12
Efforts to address social issues	3	3	4	10
Efforts to address cultural issues	3	4	4	11
Efforts to address economic issues	2	3	3	8
<b>Quadrant 2: Capable and Empowered Women</b>				
Training and personal development	4	5	5	14
Support women politicians	4	2	3	9
Support Business Women	3	3	3	9
Support women intellectuals and scholars	4	4	4	12
<b>Quadrant 3: Support for Safety and Survival</b>				
Protection	2	1	3	6
Post-trauma support	4	2	5	11
Basic needs (relief)	3	2	4	9
Support for justice	2	1	2	5
Support for women actions for peace	3	2	3	8
Post-conflict recovery	3	4	2	9
<b>Quadrant 4: Enabling the Agency of Women</b>				
Legal and justice support	2	1	1	4
Psychological support	4	3	4	11
Economic support	3	2	3	8
Support for grassroot women activities	3	4	5	12

So, the eight priorities to focus on in the early stages of WDO work (the first three years) are:

- Support for women organizations
- Efforts to address social issues (in stable countries)
- Efforts to address social issues (in stable countries)
- Training and personal development (of women)
- Support women intellectuals and scholars
- Post-trauma support (in countries with conflicts and violence)
- Psychological support (for women in countries with conflicts and violence)
- Support for grassroot women activities in local communities (in countries with conflicts and violence)

Of course, there is a lot of overlaps and potential synergies between these eight areas of actions/initiatives. These possibilities can be considered when developing specific projects/initiatives under each of the eight areas.

### **5.4 A Practical Road Map**

In the coming three years, WDO may follow the following three phases to start impactful actions in each of the eight areas:

Phase 1 – Preparation (6 months): in this phase, WDO can work on networking with potential parties to cooperate with. Also, it can work on identifying target beneficiaries and opportunities for specific projects/initiatives under each of the eight priority areas.

The progress in this phase can be monitored using the following indicators:

- Number of partnerships initiated
- Number of projects/initiatives ideas proposed

Phase 2 – Development (6 months): in this phase, WDO will work with its partners to develop and design specific projects/initiatives to be launched in the third phase.

The progress in this phase can be monitored using the following indicator:

- Number of approved projects/initiatives proposals

Phase 3 – Execution (2 years): WDO will launch several projects/initiatives with its partners and will adopt rigorous project management practices to ensure the success of these projects/initiatives.

The progress in this phase can be monitored using the following indicators:

- Number of launched projects/initiatives
- Average percentage of completion for the implemented projects



# Chapter 6

## Conclusion

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

This policy paper focuses on women leadership in building and maintaining peaceful and inclusive societies; one of the key thematic pillars of WDO. The paper started with a theoretical discussion and analysis. It proposes a theoretical framework that integrates the two levels of actions at the social context level and at the individual level to empower women to contribute to peace and inclusion in their societies. The integration of the two levels will lead to impactful and sustainable transformation for the benefit of women and their societies. The discussions of international frameworks and practices, initiatives in the Islamic countries, real-life case studies, and the performance of WDO member countries in some key indicators support the two-level approach adopted in this paper; work should be balanced between targeting individual women to empower them and targeting the social context to open opportunities for women. Another conclusion resulted from these discussions is the differences between WDO member countries. In general, these countries can be classified into two groups: stable countries and countries with conflict and violence. Each group of countries has different priorities related to women and peaceful societies. By combining the two dimensions of the level of focus and the country groups, four quadrants are identified; each is concerned with some areas of actions. The paper includes evaluation of several areas of actions/initiatives and identified eight of them as key priorities for WDO to focus on in the coming three years of its programs.





# References

## References

- Al-Hibri, Azizah (2000). "Islam, Law and Custom: Redefining Muslim Women's Rights." *American University Journal of International Law & Policy*.
- Burnet, J. E. (2008). Gender Balance and the Meanings of Women in Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda. *African Affairs*, 107(428), 361-386.
- Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities*. University of California Press.
- Egbe, J. A. (2024). PEACE BUILDING MECHANISMS, PROCESSES AND PRINCIPLES: AN APPRAISAL. *Oracle of Wisdom Journal of Philosophy and Public Affairs (OWIJOPPA)*, 8(1).
- Kamaruzzaman, N. (2010). *The Role of Acehnese Women in the Peace Process*. In F. Hikam (Ed.), *Women in Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Lessons from Aceh* (pp. 19-34). Banda Aceh: The World Bank.
- Mariko Gakiya, Aimee Tiu Wu, and Tala Al-Rousan (No Date). "women leadership and empowerment for peacebuilding", Sasakawa Peace Foundation.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (2010). "Islam in the Modern World", Harper One. New York.
- Ndeche, O., & Iroye, S. O. (2022). Key theories in peace and conflict studies and their impact on the study and practice. *Noun International Journal of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution*, 2(2), 20-34.
- Organization of Islamic cooperation (OIC) (2016). "OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women"
- Oxfam International. (2007). *The Role of Women in Peacebuilding in Indonesia's Aceh Province*.
- Powley, E. (2004). Strengthening Governance: The Role of Women in Rwanda's Transition. *Hunt Alternatives Fund*.
- Tripp, A. M. (2015). *Women and Power in Post-Conflict Africa*. Cambridge University Press.
- UNDP Yemen. (2020). *Empowering Women Through Livelihoods and Economic Opportunities*.



World Bank. (2019). *Women's Economic Empowerment in Yemen*.

<https://www.wdo-odf.org>

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>

<https://wps.unwomen.org/index.html>

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Women-in-politics-2023-en.pdf>