Morocco and the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda: Goals, Opportunities and Challenges

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The United Nations Security Council (UNSC)'s adoption of Resolution 1325 on October 31, 2000 was one of its most pathbreaking decisions, as for the first time, it was recognized that women's participation was key to resolving conflicts and securing peace. Since then, UNSCR 1325 has often been described as one of the crowning achievements of the global women's movement. This paper analyzes Morocco's approach to peace and security, by understanding how the Kingdom has implemented UNSCR 1325, and highlighting the recent adoption of its National Action Plan (NAP) in March 2022. As an African, Arab, Mediterranean, and Global South country, Morocco has promoted the WPS agenda in numerous ways, considering its own specificities by adopting a global and integrated approach to security and by supporting a 'culture of peace'. Hence, the first part of this paper analyzes the advances made by Global South actors in the implementation of the WPS agenda, highlighting their understudied role in driving forward and shaping this agenda, despite not contributing to its funding at the same scale as Global North countries. The role of the African Union (AU) in advancing the agenda and in making concrete steps towards its implementation is also presented. The second part of the paper focuses on the Kingdom of Morocco's implementation of UNSCR 1325, and actions taken around the four pillars of the resolution. As implementation requires the adoption of a NAP, an assessment is also done of the first Moroccan NAP, in which the civil society played a crucial role. Finally, the third part of the paper focuses on specific recommendations on the way forward to further implement UNSCR 1325, moving beyond the 'women as victims in need of protection' narrative and more towards women's inclusion and full participation.

INTRODUCTION

Women have only very rarely participated in the discussions, negotiations, and decision-making processes on peace and security, despite being directly impacted by war and insecurity. Nonetheless, their lack of inclusion has not deterred them from continuing to play a role as agents of peace, reconciliation, and development, whilst mobilizing and advocating for the adoption of a resolution that would recognize gender equality at the heart of international peace and security. In 1969, the Commission on the Status of Women, a body of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, questioned whether women and children should be afforded special protection during conflict. Five years later this was answered positively through the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict. However, the recognition of women as essential participants and active agents of peace, whose voices, interests, and capabilities must be heard, did not come until the UN World Conferences on Women, held between 1975 and 1995, which enabled the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) adoption of Resolution 1325 on October 31, 2000 was one of its most pathbreaking decisions. For the first time, it was recognized that women's participation is key to resolving conflicts and securing peace. Since then, UNSCR 1325 has often been described as one of the crowning achievements of the global women's movement. Hence, it was not until 2000, that the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda was adopted as a commitment to address the multiple ways in which women and girls are impacted and targeted in war, and the critical roles they play in both conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

Since this groundbreaking resolution, nine others on WPS have been adopted: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019). These address issues from sexual violence as a weapon of war, to implementing mechanisms for women's participation in peace processes. However, as argued by Newby and O'Malley (2021), between 2000 and 2012, all resolutions passed "*were dominated by a heavy focus on protection and prevention*," and focused almost exclusively on perpetrators and not enough on survivors. It was not until 2019, with resolution 2467, that the focus was shifted to a survivor-centered approach, although their participation was still—to some extent—excluded. There is, therefore, still much to do to make approaches to the prevention of violence against women more participatory, and not only victim-focused.

This paper analyzes Morocco's approach to peace and security, by understanding how the Kingdom has implemented UNSCR 1325, and highlighting the recent adoption of its National Action Plan (NAP) in March 2022. As an African, Arab, Mediterranean, and Global South country, Morocco has promoted the WPS agenda in numerous ways, taking into account its own specificities by adopting a global and integrated approach to security and by supporting a 'culture of peace'. Hence, the first part of this paper analyzes the advances made by Global South actors in the implementation of the WPS agenda, highlighting their understudied role in driving forward and shaping this agenda, despite not contributing to its funding at the same scale as Global North countries. The role of the African Union (AU) in advancing the agenda and in making concrete steps towards its implementation is also presented. The second part of the paper focuses on the Kingdom of Morocco's implementation of UNSCR 1325, and actions taken around the four pillars of the resolution. As implementation requires the adoption of a NAP, an assessment is also done of the

first Moroccan NAP, in which the civil society played a crucial role. Finally, the third part of the paper focuses on specific recommendations on the way forward to further implement UNSCR 1325, moving beyond the 'women as victims in need of protection' narrative and more towards women's inclusion and full participation. As Rajagopalan (2016) states, "*in security policy-making there is still a huge disconnect between those who make the decisions and those who live with them*"[1].

UNSCR 1325 VIEWED FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Historically, leadership among Global South countries on the question of women's rights has been essential for the progression of gender equality worldwide. Countries such as Mexico and Kenya, in which the two UN World Conferences on Women were held, but also Nigeria and India, have played important yet largely understudied roles in promoting the agenda of women's rights[2]. As Soumita Basu (2016) explains, advocacy by African civil society organizations (CSOs) helped in setting up the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in New York, which includes founding member Femme Africa Solidarité. This "*was preceded by a number of transnational deliberations on WPS*", either the discussion on women and armed conflict at the Commission on the Status of Women, or the International Alert's Women Building Peace Campaign, launched at the 1999 Conference at the Hague 'Appeal for Peace'[3].

While it is true that Canada and Japan have been at the forefront in promoting the idea of human security in the international policy discourse, Global South countries including Bangladesh, and Jamaica—then members of the Security Council—played an important role. It was under Namibia's presidency of the UNSC that resolution 1325 was adopted unanimously, as the country chose women, peace, and security as a topic of the month for its presidency[4]. But before the adoption of the resolution, a study was carried out by the Lessons Learned Unit at the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), in close cooperation with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues (OSAGI), on UN peacekeeping and gender mainstreaming, of which the preliminary findings were presented and discussed at a workshop on May 31, 2000. This workshop proved to be extremely important to further advance women's rights in the security field and resulted in both the Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations[5]. These two documents were, in turn, essential inputs into the open debate in the Security Council in October 2000, and the subsequent adoption of UNSCR 1325[6].

Global South actors have also adopted a dynamic approach to the implementation of the

1. Rajagopalan, S. (2016). "The 1325 Resolutions: From Thought to Action." In Opening for Peace: UNSCR 1325, Women and Security in India, edited by Asha Hans, and Swarna Rajagopalan, 8-32. New Delhi: Sage.

2. Adami, R. (2020), "Women and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" London: Routledge, in Newby, V. F. & O'Malley, A. (2021) "Introduction: WPS 20 Years On: Where Are The Women Now?" *Global Studies Quarterly*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksab017

3. Basu, S. (2016). "The Global South Writes 1325 (too)." *International Political Science Review* 37 (3): 365.

4. Olsson, L. (2001), "Gender Mainstreaming in Practice: The United Nations Transitional Assistance Group in Namibia," in Louise Olsson and Torunn L. Tryggestad, eds., *Women and International Peacekeeping*, Cass Series on Peacekeeping. London: Frank Cass, 97 – 110.

5. Pratt, N. and Richter-Devroe, S. (2011), "Critically Examining UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 13 (4): 489 – 503.

6. Stiehm, J. H. (2001), "Women, Peacekeeping and Peacemaking: Gender Balance and Mainstreaming," in Louise Olsson and Torunn L. Tryggestad, eds., *Women and International Peacekeeping*, Cass Series on Peacekeeping. London: Frank Cass, 39 – 48.

WPS agenda, as shown by their strong leadership in the development of NAPs and in the application of the agenda (Basu, 2016). Indeed, as of November 2022, within the Global South, NAPs had been adopted by 32 African countries, nine in South America, 10 in Asia-Pacific and six in the Middle East[7]. Global South members have continued to push for further development of the WPS agenda. However, it is worth noting that, as argued by several experts in different contexts, local actors (usually women) have "*gone beyond merely implementing the tenets of WPS and have actually sought to develop different structures and forms of cooperation to overcome their distinct local, national and regional challenges*"[8]. These local actors have sought to interpretate the WPS agenda within their specific contexts and perceive the agenda as a flexible instrument instead of what Newby and O'Malley qualified as "*a static set of principles which must be thrust into an action plan*"[9], which allowed them to mobilize, enact their participation, and practice non-violent resistance. As Soumita Basu argued, "*the assumption that the norms and practices developed from 1325 are Western-driven has not only served to ignore the agency of Global South actors but actually limits the potential of the WPS agenda by creating the impression that it is incompatible with local norms and different cultural values*"[10].

Fighting against this invisibility, all 54 African countries have demonstrated their commitment to the WPS agenda and have made some progress in including women in peace and security issues. While holding the Presidency of the Security Council, South Africa pushed for UNSCR 2493 (2019), which strengthens the existing normative framework of WPS by asking the UN to develop context-specific approaches for women's participation in all UN-supported peace processes, and by urging member states to ensure and provide timely support for the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in all stages of peace processes[11]. The African Union Commission (AUC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) responded to the call and launched respectively the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa report[12], and the ECOWAS Plan of Action for the Implementation of UNSCRs 1325 and 1820 in West Africa[13], and most recently, the Guidelines on Women, Peace, and Security[14].

The African Union recognizes that the achievement of its Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want can only be completed once its member states attain gender equality and empowerment of women, and that all efforts towards peace and security can only succeed through the meaningful participation and leadership of women. Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 recognizes the centrality of women to Africa's development. Furthermore, the African organization

7. Women's International League for Peace & Freedom, *National Action Plans by Region*. Available at: https://1325naps.peacewomen.org/index.php/nap-overview/.

8. Newby, V. F. & O'Malley, A. (2021) "Introduction: WPS 20 Years On: Where Are The Women Now?" Global Studies Quarterly, pp. 7. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksab017.

9. Ibid.

10. Basu, S. (2016). "The Global South Writes 1325 (too)." *International Political Science Review* 37 (3): 362-74.

11. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2493 (2019), S/RES/2493(20109). Available at: https://www.un.org/shestandsforpeace/content/united-nations-security-council-resolution-2493-2019-sres24932019.

12. Abdulmelik, S. (2016). "African Union Commission Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa." Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, African Union Commission. Available at: https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/pubs/2016womenpeacesecurity-auc.pdf.

13. 1325+10 Women Count for peace in West Africa, The Dakar Declaration and ECOWAS Plan of Action for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 in West Africa, Outcome Documents of the Regional Forum on Women, Peace and Security, Dakar, September 2010. Available at: https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/dakar_declaration_0.pdf.

14. ECOWAS Press Release, "ECOWAS Commission Launches Guidelines on Women, Peace and Security", 21 April 2021. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/report/benin/ecowas-commission-launches-guidelines-women-peace-and-security.

also puts a special emphasis on the fact that the integration of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda will make efforts towards silencing the guns, enhancing good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice, the rule of law, and a peaceful and secure Africa, more successful[15]. However, despite the dynamism of African countries in further pushing the WPS agenda, it is important to highlight that, according to the AUC, the impact of the agenda on the lives of women is unclear because of the lack of monitoring on the progress, achievements, and weaknesses in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions. Moreover, there is still a certain reluctance on the part of, or limited efforts by, African states to include gender aspects in monitoring and evaluation of different sectors of peace and security; states also have a limited capacity to collect data and report on gender issues in conflict-affected areas[16].

MOROCCO AND WOMEN

For two decades, women's rights in Morocco have made significant progress on the legal, economic, and social fronts, supported by the highest authority in the country thanks to a clear political willingness. Civil society has been a key player in the various reforms carried out. The 2011 constitution confirmed Morocco's desire for gender equality, with the announcement of the establishment of a mechanism for parity and the fight against all forms of discrimination, as well as the supremacy of international conventions over national laws.

Over the past decade, the Moroccan government has put in place a 2012-2016 plan called 'ICRAM', aimed at implementing the provisions of the Constitution as well as Morocco's commitment at the international level, in particular the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. This plan also constitutes a convergence framework for integrating women's rights into the various public policies at the national, regional, and local levels. This plan revolves around eight axes:

1. The institutionalization of the principle of equality;
2. The fight against all forms of discrimination and violence against women;
3. The upgrading of the education system;
4. Equitable access to health services;
5. The development of basic infrastructure to improve the living conditions of women and young girls;
6. The social and economic empowerment of women;
7. Equal access to political and economic decision-making positions;
8. Equal opportunities in the labor market.

Despite its ambition, the ICRAM (2012-2016) plan has not been fully implemented for numerous reasons, including the fragmentation of initiatives, the lack of commitment from institutional and non-institutional actors, a redundancy in the implemented initiatives and a lack of coherence in their actions, existing limits of the governance mechanisms put in place, lack of synergies between involved actors, and limitations in terms of human and material resources.

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15. African Union, Continental Results Framework for reporting and monitoring on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa (2018 - 2028). Available at: https://au.int/en/documents/20190204/continental-results-framework-reporting-and-monitoring-implementation-women-peace.

16. Commission de l'Union africaine, « Rapport sur la mise en œuvre de l'agenda Femmes, paix et sécurité en Afrique », octobre 2019. Available at: https://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/6817.

The second ICRAM plan (2017-2021) focused on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, adopting a human rights-based approach. It aimed on one hand to overcome the shortcomings of the implementation of the first ICRAM plan, and on the other hand, to strengthen the framework of economic equality between women and men, to reconcile professional and family responsibilities, to strengthen women's economic empowerment, to facilitate women's access to property and their ability to work in both the private and public sectors, capacity building for their professional and scientific qualification, to establish a culture supporting the work of women and girls in the various sectors, particularly telecommunications and new technologies, etc.

ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION 1325: WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED UNTIL NOW IN MOROCCO?

As mentioned above, Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security was adopted by the Security Council on October 31, 2000, laying out four central engagement pillars for women in conflict settings: prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery.

Since then, Morocco's commitments to human rights and gender equality have been implemented through several efforts to harmonize the national legal framework with the universal system of women's rights, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The partial reform of the Penal Code in 2003, and the Family Code (Moudawana) in 2004, made the abolition of legislative provisions that discriminated against women possible. The adoption of the 2011 Constitution further enshrined the principle of equality between women and men, and of parity (Article 19), prohibited discrimination based on sex, and guaranteed the physical and moral integrity of the individual (Article 22). The Constitution also affirms in its preamble the supremacy of international human rights treaties over national legislation, and criminalizes all violations of human rights (Article 23).

Participation

Although women have always participated in peace negotiations and peacebuilding, their participation has always been limited to the informal level and has completely lacked visibility. Resolution 1325 recognizes women as actors who can provide important resources and powerful voices of peace for the prevention and resolution of conflicts and highlights their essential role in peacebuilding efforts. Research shows that the inclusion of women in peace processes is linked with more durable and stable peace; however, women are still largely excluded from formal peace processes. Between 1992 and 2019, women constituted, on average, 13% of negotiators, 6% of mediators, and 6% of signatories in major peace processes around the world[17]. In the specific case of North Africa, mediation has traditionally been limited to family affairs only, but networks of women mediators have continued to evolve and connect across regions as a way to enhance the influence of women throughout the duration of peace processes, providing an important resource for linking knowledge and capacity across mediation efforts locally and globally. As Morocco is a Mediterranean, Arab, and African country, Moroccan women mediators are part of the three existing regional networks. The rationale behind creating a Moroccan network was to expand it to other areas that were not included in the mediation actions that already

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17. Council on Foreign Relations (2020). Women's Participation in Peace Processes. Available at: https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/.

existed, including mediation in family matters, in public services, and in business structures. The aim is to expand it to encompass conflict prevention, resolution, and post-conflict construction.

In relation to peacekeeping, research shows that the participation of women in peacekeeping operations (PKO) improves the effectiveness of missions, ensures better access to local communities—particularly women—and better promotes human rights and the protection of civilians. Women's participation has increased slowly over time: in 1993, women represented 1% of deployed uniformed personnel. By November 2021, women were 5.6% of military contingents and 19.57% of military experts, military observers, and staff officers. Nonetheless, continued efforts are essential to increase the representation of women at all levels of PKOs.

On another hand and touching on what was stated above about the invisibility of Global South actors, it is worth noting that data shows that uniformed personnel from the Global South have, in fact, played a significant role in UN peacekeeping—an essential component of the WPS agenda. As Basu explains, this invisibility is further enhanced by the fact that the UNSC formulates the mandates of peace operations and, as such, "*relatively less powerful troop/police-contributing countries do not have much of a say in the proceedings*," even though "*labour for peacekeeping work, including female peacekeepers, comes primarily from the Global South*"[18]. In this sense, the Kingdom of Morocco is one of the oldest Troop Contributing Countries in the world, as it started to participate in UN Peace Operations in the 1960s. Contingents of the Royal Armed Forces (FAR in French) are currently deployed in the DRC, Central African Republic, and South Sudan. Morocco has acknowledged the essential role of female officers during peacekeeping missions, as they have helped facilitate the integration into the new environment of humanitarian assistance, medical and paramedical activities, in reaching minorities. In line with the gender parity strategy for uniformed personnel outlined by UN Secretary General Guterres for the period 2018-2028, Morocco has decided to increase the participation of female FAR personnel in UN operations, either at the level of Moroccan contingents or for UN expert positions[19]. Despite their presence, Moroccan women's participation in PKOs does not exceed 3%[20].

Morocco's commitment to increase the number of women in the FAR is part of the gradual feminization of the army, in line with the principle that the defense of the territory is the responsibility of both women and men. The feminization of the FAR must be understood as a process in which the competent authorities have started increasing the number of women in the army, while establishing a legal framework that has redefined women's status as complete equals, and which has allowed women to take part in the decision-making and in peace-making operations (see Dahir n°1-12-50 of May 10, 2013).

Protection

Morocco's latest periodic report was considered by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in June 2022. The Committee Experts praised the Kingdom for introducing legislation that prohibits discrimination based on gender, sex, color, language, and disability. Since it ratified the CEDAW in 1993, Morocco has implemented

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18. Basu (2016) : 367.

19. Abdelwahed Rmich, « Maintiens de la paix dans le monde : voici les cinq engagements du Maroc », *Le Matin*, 9 December 2021. Available at: https://lematin.ma/express/2021/maintien-paix-monde-voici-cinq-engagements-maroc/368773.html.

20. Morocco's National Action Plan (2021-2024) : 18.

several measures to ensure broader protection for women and girls against different types of discrimination and violence. The approach is based on the 4Ps: protection, prevention, care and prosecution of perpetrators. First, violence against women and girls is criminalized through numerous laws[21], and through the amendments to the penal code. Second, a national policy to combat violence against women and girls by 2030 was adopted in June 2021. Third, numerous anti-violence mechanisms and programs have been strengthened, such as the national strategy on human trafficking, the national commission for the care of women victims of violence, the national observatory of violence against women, support systems for counselling and guidance centers for women victims of violence, etc.

Prevention

This pillar focuses on the "*prevention of conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations*", by integrating gender considerations into conflict early-warning systems, and involving women in conflict prevention and disarmament activities. Although internationally this pillar has received reduced attention, Morocco has made preventive diplomacy processes a priority in its diplomatic action, focusing on what is called a 'culture of peace'. Known as a religiously tolerant and moderate country, the Kingdom's diplomatic institutions and representatives have launched and participated in numerous initiatives for the promotion, dissemination, and institutionalization of a culture of peace, such as the training of female and male African and European religious leaders, adhesion to regional mediation initiatives and networks, and the adoption of international normative frameworks prohibiting advocacy of national hatred, racial or religious, discrimination, hostility and violence (the Rabat Plan of Action and the Fez Plan of Action).

In specific relation to the WPS agenda, Morocco has focused its actions to prevent conflict and violence against women on the following five areas:

1. Reform of the justice system, which includes the creation of family-affairs sections within the judiciary, the creation of reception units at the Ministry of Justice for women and children victims of violence, and the training of justice professionals on human trafficking;
2. Reform of the security sector: since 2002, women can access all ranks of the General Direction of National Security (DGSN in French). New provisions in the special status of FAR offices have been added to include women officers into the planning and operations functions within the forces' headquarters, the recruitment policy within the army has been redefined to promote equal opportunities and to integrate gender-specific requirements, cells within the DGSN have been created to protect women and girls victims of violence, and, in line with Morocco's commitment to gender equality, the number of women in positions of responsibility among the officials of the Ministry of Interior has been increased;
3. A culture of peace based on women's contributions and gender equality: Morocco is one of the few Muslim countries that train female preachers—known as 'Mourchidates'—as it acknowledges the transformative role they can play in preventing and combating violent extremism. Training is provided to Moroccan and foreign Mourchidates and their male counterparts, Mourchidines, to equip them with the necessary tools and knowledge to transmit the precepts of the Islamic Sharia in a spirit of moderation and tolerance. In line with its engagement with its fellow African countries, especially

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21. See Moroccan law n°103.13 on the fight against women; law n°27.14 on the fight against human trafficking; law n°19.12 on the conditions of employment of domestic workers; law n°79.14 relating to the authority for parity and the fight against discrimination.

those in conflict and/or in which there is a presence of violent extremist organizations, Morocco has trained thousands of preachers from Mali, Senegal, Nigeria, Guinea, Gambia, and Chad to counter the extremist narrative[22];

4. Education programs in schools and other institutions on gender issues, peace building, and conflict resolution through the adoption of a Strategic Action Plan for the institutionalization of gender equality in the education system, which includes institutionalization of the concepts of equality and gender, development of gender-sensitive communication strategies and tools, and gender-sensitive budgeting, as education plays a huge role in shaping the skills, attitudes and beliefs of individuals.

5. Raising public awareness of gender-related security issues.

Relief & Recovery

The fourth and last pillar of the resolution is deeply intertwined with the participation and prevention pillars, as it aims to ensure that the specific relief needs of women and girls are met (repatriation and resettlement, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs (DDR), design of refugee camps, support for internally displaced persons (IDPs), and delivery of humanitarian assistance, among others). This pillar also promotes the reinforcement of women's capacities to act as agents of relief and recovery processes in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

After the terrorist attacks of May 2003 in Casablanca, Morocco confronted a new wave of violent extremist activity by relying heavily on its law-enforcement and intelligence agencies to dismantle terrorist cells, arrest violent extremist actors, and bring them to justice. However, as part of a holistic approach, the Kingdom also decided to launch a comprehensive program to tackle violent extremism, the Moussalaha Program in 2016. The program is in line with the assumption that terrorism is just a symptom, and that in order to tackle it, it is imperative to address the root causes of radicalization, such as socio-economic inequality, whilst changing the religious narratives of extremists. The Moussalaha Program's strategy is based on five pillars, each led by an expert from the involved stakeholders: the ideological/religious, the legal, the psychological, the socio-economic, and the practical[23]. As explained by Dalhou et al (2020), the program has seen two versions. The second was marked by the addition of new partners based on the lessons learnt in the first edition. These new partners include the Mohammedia League of Scholars, leading the day-to-day operations; the General Delegation of Prison Administrations and Reintegration, which launched the program and manages the prisons in which participants are housed; the High Council Ulema, which is tasked with issuing fatwas and includes the highest religious scholars in Morocco; the Ministry of Habous/Endowment and Religious Affairs, charged with managing mosques throughout the country; the National Council of Human Rights and the Ministry of Human Rights; the Mohammed VI Foundation for Reintegration of Former Prisoners; and different experts in psychology, economics, and other fields[24].

Since 2017, four series of the program were conducted, in which hundreds of participants participated. The latest series was specific to female prisoners, imprisoned for being active or passive participants in jihadist activities.

22. Ahmed Eljechtimi, "Morocco trains foreign student sin its practice of moderate Islam," *Reuters*, 23 April 2019. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-religion-idUSKCN1RZ1JP.

23. Mohammed Abu Dalhoum, Duran Delgadillo, Hamza Elanfassi and Shannon Walker (2020), "Deradicalization of Retunees to Jordan and Morocco: Limitations, Strengths, and Lessons for the Region". Middle East Studies Program and Institute for Middle East Studies, The Elliot School of International Affairs, The George Washington University, p. 15. Available at: https://imes.elliott.gwu.edu/app/uploads/2021/10/Deradicalization-of-Returnees-to-Jordan-and-Morocco.pdf.

24. Ibid.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION 1325: ADOPTION OF THE FIRST NATIONAL ACTION PLAN (NAP)

Adopting UNSCR 1325 is not enough to ensure women's full participation in peace and security processes. In order to translate these efforts into effective participation—in other words, to implement the resolution—each country is invited to adopt a National Action Plan, a roadmap that outlines the country's priorities and course of action for implementing the UNSCR 1325, to secure the human rights of women and girls in conflict settings, prevent armed conflict and violence, and ensure the meaningful participation of women in peace and security.

Hence, the document was the result of numerous efforts to ensure the full participation and inclusiveness of all stakeholders, from institutions, to ministries, to civil society groups. Indeed, in June 2019, Morocco set up an Interministerial Steering Committee for the preparation of the NAP 1325. Each ministerial department then designated focal points to monitor this process within the Committee. A month later, the Interministerial Steering Committee met to adopt its terms of reference, with the mandate to produce a NAP 1325 for submission to the United Nations, and also adopted a roadmap to submit the NAP 1325 by 2021. Each Ministerial Department then submitted its respective contributions to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to establish the first draft of the NAP. In accordance with international good practice, the Interministerial Steering Committee organized a national consultation with civil society organizations, with the aim of enriching the NAP with targeted recommendations for action. A workshop was also organized in June 2021, to identify international good practices and lessons learnt from the experience of pioneer countries for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Experts from Mexico, Tunisia, Norway, and Jordan took part in the workshop. Morocco's NAP was drafted with the support of UN Women, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation, and Moroccans Living Abroad, and was presented at the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly in March 2022.

In this sense, the recently adopted NAP serves as a framework for the convergence of national policies and programs in areas related to the WPS agenda, with the aim of contributing to inclusive peace by ensuring the protection and integral development of men and women at the national and international level[25]. Morocco's NAP is based on three priority pillars:

- Preventive diplomacy, mediation, and peacekeeping;
- Promotion of a culture of peace and equality;
- Women's economic participation.

The two first pillars are in line with Morocco's position as a promoter of a moderate version of Islam. Following the 2003 Casablanca attacks, Morocco introduced a series of reforms to limit the influence of extremist narratives. These reforms included the restructuring of religious institutions and the creation of new ones, such as the Mohammed VI Institute for Training of Imams, inaugurated in 2015, created to provide training for religious preachers and imams from the Sunni rite. Since its creation, it has trained imams from different nationalities and genders to allow the spread of a tolerant and moderate Islam.

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25. NAP 2022 Morocco.

The three pillars are interconnected, as the empowerment of women and the advancement of gender equality builds a solid foundation for a more peaceful world[26]. The economic participation of women is not only at the heart of the NAP's priorities, but also at the core of Morocco's new development model. The New Development Model (NMD) Report calls for the economic empowerment of women to be made a national priority and a guarantee for the establishment of the foundations for inclusive development. To achieve this, several targets are identified in the report, in particular, a gradual increase in the female labor-force participation rate to 45% by 2035 (it currently is of 21 percent)[27]. According to a recent report published by the Moroccan Department of Studies and Financial Forecasts (Direction des Etudes et des Prévisions Financières, DEPF), the contribution of the female population over 25 years of age to the growth of real GDP per capita remains positive and higher than that of men in the same age cohorts. In fact, women aged 25-44 and 45-59 contribute to the improvement in the standard of living by +6.6% and +5.5% respectively[28]. The results obtained suggest real possibilities of positive inflection of the standard of living in Morocco. The same report states that, even if the structure of the real GDP per capita remains unchanged from its level in 2019, the increase in the activity rate of women to 45% by 2035 could generate an additional average increase in the GDP per capita of 1.7 percentage points during the period 2022-2035[29].

It is widely acknowledged that women's economic power "*can drive the growth that countries need to remain stable and peaceful*"[30], a claim corroborated by McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), which states that women's participation in the economy at the same rate as men could add up to $28 trillion to global GDP by 2025[31]. Aware and convinced of the crucial role women's economic empowerment plays in achieving gender equality, poverty eradication, the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the establishment of social peace, despite women's low participation rate in the labor market (latest data from 2020 shows that they are only 21% to participate in the labor market), Morocco has made efforts to bridge the gap, especially in terms of legislation. It has introduced gender-sensitive policies in order to strengthen access to economic opportunities and has passed laws to protect women and girls from all types of discrimination. However, as there often is a gap between legislation and mentalities—as laws do not change ways of thinking—and the principle of equality is not only limited to law, but Morocco has also made in recent years numerous efforts to change mentalities in order to fight against gender stereotypes, notably through education and sensibilization campaigns.

26. Klugman, J., Nagel, R., Viollaz, M. (2021). *Women's empowerment as a Path to Peace: Understanding the Relationship between Gender Equality and Organized Violence*. Report. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. Available at: https://giwps.georgetown.edu/resource/womens-empowerment-as-a-path-to-peace/.

27. Médias 24, « HCP : 8 femmes sur 10 restent en dehors du marché de travail, » March 11, 2022. Available at : https://medias24.com/2022/03/11/hcp-8-femmes-sur-10-restent-en-dehors-du-marche-de-travail/

28. « Analyse genre de la contribution de l'utilisation de la main d'œuvre à l'amélioration du niveau de vie : Analyse retro et prospective à la lumière des recommandations du Nouveau Modèle de Développement », Direction des Etudes et des Prévisions Financières, March 2022. Available at : https://depf.finances.gov.ma/2022/03/02/communique-de-presse-publication-du-policy-brief-relatif-a-lanalyse-genre-de-la-contribution-de-lutilisation-de-la-main-doeuvre-des-femmes-a-lamelioration-du-nive/.

29. Ibid.

30. Buvinic, M. ; Furst-Nichols, Rebecca ; Courey Pryor, E. (2015). "A Roadmap for Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment." United Nations Foundation, in Hudock, A., Sherman, K. and Williamson, S. (2016), *Women's Economic Participation in Post-Conflict and Fragile Settings*. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. Available at: https://giwps.georgetown.edu/resource/women-economic-participation-fragile-states/.

31. McKinsey & Company (2015). "How advancing women's equality can add $12 trillion to global growth.", in Hudock, A., Sherman, K. and Williamson, S. (2016), *Women's Economic Participation in Post-Conflict and Fragile Settings*. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. Available at: https://giwps.georgetown.edu/resource/women-economic-participation-fragile-states/.

CONCLUSION

The advances made by Morocco in the field of gender equality are undeniable. This is evidenced by the reforms undertaken over the past two decades carried out by the highest authority in the country and partially implemented by the various governments.

On one hand, Moroccans must protect the achievements which have required long years of struggle in terms of gender equality, and on another hand, encourage a new narrative involving men and women together to work for a just, inclusive, and egalitarian society. Provoking a mindset shift is crucial in order to deconstruct gender stereotypes and the consequent bias in order to move from exclusion to inclusion. Therefore, efforts must focus on the present and on the future by integrating the concept of positive masculinity into the curricula of the education system to prepare young boys to be allies of the feminine question. This requires commitments from the State to achieve gender parity in the decision-making bodies and to allocate the necessary funds for the training of women in the areas of negotiation and mediation. Deeply committed to silencing the guns, their involvement makes the difference and allows for a more lasting peace.

Although Morocco's geographical specificities allowed it to be part of three different networks of women mediators, it is crucial that all relevant institutions support the role of women mediators, and their engagement in peace talks must be included in the terms of reference of every mediator, envoy, and/or diplomat. Their empowerment does not rely solely on being present at the table, but in ensuring their voices are heard and incorporated into the peace processes. There cannot be a comprehensive and inclusive process if women are not involved.

While it is true that Morocco has made gender equality a pillar of its development, the current NAP has remained general and has not disclosed in detail the different steps the Kingdom was making to advance the WPS agenda. Several challenges the country is facing could have been deepened, such as the necessity to include women in the pillars of prevention and relief and recovery, as women play a role in certain violent extremist organizations -either as perpetrators or as agents of radicalization- and because their role is still not fully understood due to the existing unconscious bias on gender roles. Moroccan women have been part, either directly or indirectly, of violent extremist organizations, but very few of them have benefited from Deradicalization, Demobilization and Reintegration programs. Moreover, the next NAP should highlight the mechanisms put in place to strengthen the commitment of all relevant actors, so they have a meaningful participation during specific phases of the different processes, and to include women's perspectives and gender-responsive provisions in all meetings, consultations and agreements.

Having adopted a humanitarian approach to migration, it is crucial that in the future NAP, the gendered dimensions of both migration and climate change are taken into consideration. Women are disproportionately more affected by climate change, as its negative effects pose a direct threat to their lives. Focusing on climate change, access to energy and to water, and migration are challenges the next NAP should focus on and address, as they expose underlying discrimination and inequality, but also the exclusion of women from being part of decision-making and of policy-making, despite being more vulnerable to their impacts. As the plan will be reviewed in 2023, there is hope that the second NAP will be more complete and will address the remaining challenges whilst bridging the gap. Women should no longer be seen only as victims, they are also strong human rights defenders, negotiators, mediators and peacemakers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Inclusiveness: lasting peace and security are dependent on achieving gender equality and abolishing all forms of discrimination. However, women remain largely discriminated against, and are not included in decision-making processes. Including women remains an essential prerequisite, especially in the post-pandemic context. The Kingdom must pursue its efforts and ensure women's equal access to, and full participation, in power structures and decision-making.

Participation: the role of women in the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 is critical, as evidenced by the role of mediation and, in particular, of women mediators in the resolution and prevention of conflicts, as well as the maintenance of peace, security, and social cohesion. Moreover, it is imperative to include a gendered approach in all public policies to eliminate inequalities and discrimination, sources of violence, and conflict. Experiences on the ground have shown that the participation of women in negotiations, and their resilience, makes peace more durable. The Moroccan network of women mediators, which is present in the Mediterranean, African, and Arab networks, has a crucial role to play thanks to the sharing of experiences and the exchange of information and good practices within the various networks, and should be encouraged by the relevant Moroccan institutions. As part of civil society, the Moroccan network of female mediators will contribute to the sensitization and training of female mediators at the national, regional, and continental levels, and could recognize and incorporate different challenges to peace and security that are being experienced by specific populations.

Prevention: Preventing conflicts also means taking an interest in young people, who play an essential role in peacebuilding and must be supported. Raising awareness and educating young people on the principles of equality is essential in order to eliminate unconscious biases and stereotypes about women and to act upstream on the sources which can generate conflicts.

Gender and climate change: geographically, Morocco is located in one of the regions most affected by climate change, despite its very low contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions. The International Organization for Migration states that in North Africa, there could be up to 19.3 million internal climate migrants by 2050 because of the rise in sea levels and water scarcity. Decreasing access to water will pose significant risks to communities, farmers, pastoralists, and other segments of the population, further exacerbating their vulnerabilities. Women continue to be disproportionately affected by the adverse effects of climate change, but responses to these challenges are too often not inclusive. Morocco is called to make more efforts to include women in policy responses, especially since women's unique qualities and resilience are often overlooked as a key component of any adaptation and mitigation measures that could have a real impact on their communities. In this sense, raising the importance of sex-disaggregated data is essential to inform evidence-based policies. The recent Moroccan initiative within the African Union, the creation of the Group of Friends on the intersecting challenges of climate change and the WPS agenda, is an important step in bringing gendered perspectives to the continent's shared challenges.

Moreover, empowering local and grass-root female initiatives for the preservation of scarce resources in the Kingdom must be encouraged, as should further strengthening of national plans that include a gendered response to climate change, such as Plan Maroc Vert, among others.

Accountability and transparency: good governance and the coordination of the various departments, the monitoring and evaluation of these policies, and accountability, are the

conditions for the achievement of the objectives of the NAP, and for sustainable peace and security. The Moroccan NAP should be reviewed as announced in 2023, as the review process is an opportunity to evaluate the progress made towards the implementation of the WPS agenda in the Kingdom, while addressing current gaps and developing more constructive recommendations that would contribute to the prevention of conflicts, and the building and sustaining of peace.

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