





Sarah Douglas, UN Women, Deputy Chief, Peace and Security. UN WOMEN/RYAN BROWN

bias, prevent further undermining of women’s rights, and ensure inclusive and sustainable peacemaking and peace-building.”

“When women are meaningfully included in peace negotiations, the resulting agreement is 35 percent more likely to last 15 years or more,” Yifat

Susskind, Executive Director of [MADRE](#) explains women, as essential first responders in conflicts, meet communities’ most urgent needs. “Even as war rages, through community organizing, they create dialogues and open spaces for people to share their needs and hopes.”



Yifat Susskind, Executive Director of MADRE. MADRE

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*Recognizing Women Peace-builders: Critical Actors in Effective Peacemaking* report—by the International Civil Society Action Network ([ICAN](#)) and Women’s Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL) members—confirms women’s “overwhelmingly absent role from track one negotiations,” says ICAN Founder and CEO, Sanam Naraghi Anderlini.



International Civil Society Action  
Network (ICAN) Founder and CEO,  
Sanam Naraghi Anderlini. ICAN

While funds for women peace builders are limited, the international community in 2019 spent \$1.9 trillion on militarization—which fueled extremism not peace.

## Flexible Funding And Women’s Inclusion Is Critical

Between 1992 and 2019, women constituted, on average, 13 percent of negotiators, six percent of mediators, and six percent of signatories in major peace processes worldwide. About seven out of every 10 peace processes did not include women mediators or women signatories, according to [UN Women](#).

While the pandemic exacerbated existing gender inequalities, undermined sustainable peace and development, diverting resources for girls and women that limit their participation, Douglas says, “Women’s experience of conflict and their efforts at preventing, mitigating, mediating and recovering from conflict is routinely ignored, in favor of engagement with armed combatants, government and others, who also tend to be men.”

Suskind explains how “The impact of such failed promises is evident in Colombia’s recent surge in violence only four years after they signed a historic peace agreement. They failed to center the leadership of local women peace-builders and to advance their solutions.”

Mossarat Qadeem Executive Director, [PAIMAN Alumni Trust](#) says some international aid organizations “come with their own agendas.” Recipients of large aid from multiple donor countries and agencies, like Pakistan are “still struggling for a stable democratic practices, good governance, rule of



Mossarat Qadeem Executive Director  
PAIMAN Alumni Trust MOSSARAT QADEEM

law, quality and good education for all, poverty alleviation, improved health services and more,” she says.

Large international aid organizations landing in a conflict zone often lack respect and trust of local women peace-builders’ work explained [Muna Luqman](#) of Yemen’s Food4Humanity. This hinders collaborations with first responders aware of “humanitarian corridors, able to negotiate access, and

who know the real needs of the Yemeni population.”

Visaka Dharmadasa, Founder of Sri Lanka’s Association for War Affected Women ([AWAW](#)) knows, “No one funds anything for nothing—it is how best we use the funding that matters, but some donor agencies can ruin countries’ agriculture, health systems, etc., so we have to be very careful in those areas.”



Visaka Dharmadasa, Founder of Sri Lanka’s Association for War Affected Women (AWAW) VISAKA DHARMADASA

International aid can negatively [hinder](#) locally sustainable socio-economic opportunities, leading to aid dependence—elevating the rich, further oppressing the poor, and fueling corruption cycles. In his *Guardian* article, [Haiti and The Failed Promise of US Aid](#), Jacob Kushner investigated failures of foreign aid to Haiti over four decades of Hillary and Bill Clinton’s involvement in “combining foreign aid with diplomacy.”

“While local NGOs lack resources and funds for major projects, large aid organizations don’t necessarily always succeed,” ICAN’s Program Director,



France Borgan, ICAN's Program Director,  
Innovative Peace Fund. FRANCE BORGAN

Innovative Peace Fund, France Bognon says INGOs' cumbersome grant application process hinder local NGOs' funding because of their limited resources. INGOs also offer higher salaries, taking away local NGOs' productive staff support.

For utmost impact, AWAW, not its donors, selects, designs and implements projects. "When projects focus on gender and women empowerment, grants should fund women's organizations, instead of men-led NGOs. And funding should also be available out of capital cities," Dharmadasa says some organizations have integrated these concerns, but suggests NGOs and INGOs must have mutual understanding of their limitations and remain flexible.

ICAN's Innovative Peace Fund (IPF) supports women peace-builders where it matters the most. From strategic advice, to training in developing budgets and project proposals, to technical assistance, it helps WASL partners secure funding from elsewhere while flexible trickles of funds reduce financial oversight burden and help sustain war-zone NGOs that fall through the cracks. With ICAN's flexible grants, local NGOs achieve more results. Using a 5-6 months project and small grant, PAIMAN built the capacity of over 120 women in leadership to help prevent violent extremism and mediate marketable livelihood skills.

"This is what the community needed, and we addressed it through our project and ICAN funding," Qadeem opts for equitable funding partnership between local women peace-builders and donors with flexibility to divert funds to meet critical needs, core funding for sustained activities and continued advocacy for implementing the WPS Agenda. "It requires a change in approach from current funding model which hinders effectiveness

and an understanding that peaceful change requires donors to build alternative mechanisms for channeling support and ensuring accountability both from their own staff as well local NGOs.”



Aaron Brent, CARE's Yemen Country Director. SAM BOLITHOCARE

Aaron Brent, CARE's Yemen Country Director, explains how their \$50 million 2019 budget realized 50 projects, reached 2.8 million beneficiaries in 13 governorates. Brent was unable to list the NGOs supported “due to the sensitivities of working in Yemen and the ongoing conflict.”

CARE's “multi annual programming frameworks” in consultations with local stakeholders, beneficiaries, government, and humanitarian organizations, align with such countrywide frameworks as the U.N. Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Covid-19 prevention has been integrated into all CARE programming to meet the immediate needs.

With competitive expression of interest amongst local NGOs, CARE evaluates interests on “pre-defined criteria by a selection committee.” It puts local NGOs “through due diligence capacity to ensure fiduciary, financial and programmatic capacities to implement the activities in alignment with donor and local legal requirements.” CARE communicates through the Humanitarian Cluster coordination system managed by OCHA in Yemen to allow partners with relevant expertise and/or funding to address needs they can't fulfill. With funding shortfall in Yemen, many needs will go unmet, says Brent.

## Governments Must Include Fair Representation

“Investing in local NGOs who put their lives in danger result in far greater achievements than imposing limits—or funding workshops that offer no hands-on results,” says Anderlini.

An equitable relationship and trust is essential, says Bognon pointing out the innate “mis-trust – a run-off of colonialism” among western aid organizations that keep them working and trusting people “who look like them.” Donor-imposed cookie-cutter obligations and siloed funding don’t always reflect the realities on the ground, says ICAN’s Senior Editorial Adviser and Strategic Communications Director, Rana Allam.



Rana Allam, ICAN’s Senior Editorial Adviser and Strategic Communications Director. RANA ALLAM

“Ongoing peace-building is essential, as is listening to the women sounding off the warnings.”

“For the sake of humanity—we need to create more just societies beginning now,” Douglas argues that government and parties to conflict should not use COVID-19 as an excuse to repress women’s rights. It is imperative to maintain women’s access to comprehensive health services, and “economic resiliency planning” to ensure women’s equal representation on political stage.

Since pandemic policy responses have again sidelined women’s needs, MADRE’s [toolkit](#) educates leaders in policy, international humanitarian, and philanthropic spaces to grasp how *all* objectives are undermined by the continued prevalence of domestic violence.

ICAN’s [Protecting Women Peacebuilders: The Front Lines of Sustainable Peace](#) offers range and sources of threats women peace-builders face, the strengths of and gaps in existing protection mechanisms, and offers operational guidance for states and multilateral institutions to protect women peace-builders. ICAN’s [10 steps](#) of recommendations for governments supporting peace processes offers ways

to secure women peace-builders' inclusion in track one peace processes for sustainable peace.

In 2021, UN Women and its partners will launch *Compact for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action* to drive implementation on existing extensive normative frameworks and commitments, and strengthen coordination across existing mechanisms, systems, networks, partnerships and capacities. “The architecture is in place—we want to make sure it fulfills its purpose,” says Douglas.

Susskind confirms feminist organizing provides the tools for enforcement and implementation of 1325 and other resolutions and agreements, tying to the needs and priorities of local communities. For effective channels between feminist civil society and policymaking spaces, she says “allied policymakers and organizations should actively seek to create those channels for feminist organizers to influence policy formation and feed information back to evaluate the effectiveness of those policies,” which is a key focus of MADRE’s *Feminist Policy Jumpstart* initiative.

“Once we silence the guns, we can hear each other. We can start building trust, and peace,” effective response to crisis, Douglas says is only possible when women can fully, equally, and meaningfully participate in decision making and have opportunities, protection, and access to resources and services. “Member States must display leadership, accountability and provide adequate financing to deliver on commitments. Women must not just be consulted but heard, not just invited but included, and not just engaged but ensured rights and justice.”

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**Jackie Abramian**

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I'm committed to ensuring women have a seat, or two, at the table and are on "the menu" during all negotiations. I'm the founder of Global Cadence PR/Social Media...

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