




BEING IN THE MIDDLE:

WOMEN IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

11-12 MARCH 2023
BAKU, AZERBAIJAN



This discussion brief has been produced in the framework of “Peacebuilding through Capacity Enhancement and Civic Engagement: Phase 2” (PeaCE-2) programme funded by the European Union under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP). Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

The views expressed in this document are produced from the discussions among the participants and do not necessarily represent any organization’s or particular individual’s views.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
- INTRODUCTION
- FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY AS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR AZERBAIJAN? - SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES AND POLICIES
- HOW TO ACHIEVE A GENDER-SENSITIVE APPROACH IN THE RECONCILIATION PROCESSES AND PEACE AGREEMENTS? NEW APPROACHES TO WOMEN`S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS
- THE PROTECTION AND REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PEOPLE. HOW TO PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THEIR NEEDS?
- RECOMMENDATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper summarises the findings of the project "Being in the middle: women in the reconciliation process" implemented in the framework of the "Peacebuilding through Capacity Enhancement and Civic Engagement: Phase 2" (PeaCE-2) program funded by the European Union under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP). It is based on discussions held within the project on 11-12 March in Baku, Azerbaijan.

We would like to acknowledge all participants for providing their time as well as continuous support in the overall process to accomplish discussions and produce this paper. The full list of the participants: Farid Mehralizade, Kamila Gorkhmazova, Leyla Jahangirova, Mia Guliyeva, Nargiz Mukhtarova, Parvana Mammadova, Rena Tahirova, and Sabina Aghayeva. Additional thanks to Parvana Mammadova for moderating the discussions.

Our special thanks to Topchubashov Center for providing the venue for discussions and the team for their support during the implementation of the project.

Finally, our sincerest thanks go to the Eurasia Partnership Foundation Azerbaijan for their endless supervision, technical support, and guidance throughout the project.

This report is prepared by Gulkhanim Mammadova.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The process of women's inclusion in peacebuilding, as well as protection and representation of female refugees and IDPs requires a comprehensive, holistic approach that addresses the unique challenges they face and that involves networking, education, activism, building strategies, and dialogue. By working together, women can play a critical role in promoting peace and building more inclusive societies.

In turn, a feminist foreign policy approach in Azerbaijan could help in this direction by focusing on gender equality, human security, and inclusivity in the country's international engagements. This may involve promoting women's rights and gender-sensitive development policies, prioritizing the needs of refugees and internally displaced persons and engaging with civil society organizations and marginalized groups in foreign policy decision-

making processes. It also requires achieving a gender-sensitive approach in peace agreements by recognizing the different experiences of women and men in conflict, addressing the root causes of gender inequality, and ensuring that gender-sensitive provisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Applying a comprehensive, holistic approach.
- Ensuring gender-sensitive provisions in peace agreements.
- Establishing open communication among the community, civil society, governmental and international organizations.
- Supporting networking among women across different communities and regions.
- Promoting policies that support women's economic empowerment, including increasing access to finance and training, promoting women's entrepreneurship, and addressing gender discrimination in the workplace.
- Monitoring and evaluation, as well as measuring the progress of interventions.

INTRODUCTION

This discussion brief focuses on three main topics: feminist foreign policy as an alternative for Azerbaijan, achieving a gender-sensitive approach in the reconciliation processes and peace agreements, and the protection and representation of female refugees and displaced people.

The first topic of the brief discusses the concept of feminist foreign policy and how it can serve as an alternative approach for Azerbaijan. The experts emphasize the importance of adopting a gender-sensitive approach in foreign policy and decision-making processes. They argue that feminist foreign policy can provide a more inclusive and holistic framework that prioritizes human rights, equality, and non-discrimination.

The second topic of the brief highlights the need for shifting perspectives and policies to achieve a gender-sensitive approach in reconciliation processes and peace agreements. The experts emphasize the importance of involving women in decision-making processes and ensuring their meaningful participation at all levels of the reconciliation process. They also discuss new approaches and strategies that can enhance women's participation, representation, and empowerment.

The third topic of the brief focuses on the protection and representation of female refugees and displaced people. The experts highlight the particular challenges faced by female refugees and displaced people and

discuss new approaches to address their needs. They emphasize the importance of ensuring that women's rights and needs are adequately addressed in the reconciliation process and that their voices are heard.

The brief concludes with a set of recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and civil society organizations to improve women's participation and representation in reconciliation processes. These recommendations include promoting feminist foreign policy, ensuring women's meaningful participation in decision-making processes, providing gender-sensitive support to female refugees and displaced people, and enhancing the capacity of local women's organizations to engage in reconciliation processes.

FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY AS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR AZERBAIJAN? - SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES AND POLICIES

Feminist foreign policy is an approach to international relations that prioritizes gender equality and the empowerment of women and marginalized groups. It is based on the idea that traditional foreign policy has been designed and implemented through the lens of patriarchy, which has led to the marginalization and exclusion of women and other marginalized groups.

In the context of Azerbaijan, feminist foreign policy could provide an alternative approach to the country's current foreign policy. Azerbaijan is a patriarchal society where women and marginalized groups face significant barriers to political and economic empowerment. A feminist foreign policy could help to address these inequalities by prioritizing the needs and perspectives of women and marginalized groups in the country's international engagements.

Feminist foreign policy could lead to a shift in Azerbaijan's perspectives and policies in several ways. Firstly, it could lead to a greater focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in the country's foreign policy objectives. This could involve promoting women's rights and gender equality in diplomatic negotiations, advocating for gender-sensitive development policies, and supporting women's leadership in international organizations.

Secondly, a feminist foreign policy approach could lead to a greater emphasis on human security and the protection of vulnerable populations in Azerbaijan's international engagements. This could involve prioritizing the needs of refugees and internally displaced persons, who are often disproportionately affected by conflict and displacement, and promoting the protection of women and girls in conflict situations.

Thirdly, a feminist foreign policy approach could lead to a more collaborative and inclusive approach to diplomacy. This could involve engaging with civil society organizations and other marginalized groups in the country's foreign policy decision-making processes and prioritizing the participation of women and marginalized groups in international forums and negotiations.

There are ways in which a feminist foreign policy could be applied to Azerbaijan. For example, a feminist foreign policy could prioritize the inclusion of women in peace negotiations and conflict resolution efforts, as women are often disproportionately affected by armed conflicts. Additionally, a feminist foreign policy could prioritize efforts to combat gender-based violence, which is a significant issue in the country.

In order to make a feminist foreign policy alternative for Azerbaijan in the future it is important to promote joint efforts and dialogue among public institutions, civil society, community, and community leaders. In this

regard, encouraging open communication, and fostering cooperation and partnerships can become the first steps in efforts to raise awareness about the importance of feminist foreign policy values and promote gender equality and women's empowerment in foreign policy. By working together and promoting dialogue, cooperation, and advocacy, public institutions, civil society, community, and community leaders can make progress towards promoting feminist foreign policy values in Azerbaijan.

HOW TO ACHIEVE A GENDER-SENSITIVE APPROACH IN THE RECONCILIATION PROCESSES AND PEACE AGREEMENTS? NEW APPROACHES TO WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS

Research shows that when women participate in peacebuilding, peace becomes more sustainable and long-lasting. This is one of the main reasons why it is important to ensure inclusiveness in peacebuilding processes. About 50 percent of the world's population are women, but their participation in various platforms does not correspond to this percentage. In particular, this is more obvious in the process of peacebuilding. It can be observed it not only in the Karabakh conflict but also in other cases such as the Russo-Ukrainian war. If it is evaluated from the Azerbaijani context, there is not enough involvement in the process at the «Track I» level as well. This

trend is observed not only in the bilateral negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan but also in the representation of the co-chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group. As for public diplomacy, there is a certain level of participation of women there, and some positive results achieved by them in the process can serve as an example. In addition, the overall political participation of women in Azerbaijan is extremely low, not only in peacebuilding. As an example, the conditions in the recruitment process, if attention is paid to ANAMA admission, it can be seen that women must have either military or mine clearance experience. The active inclusion of women in the negotiations on the peace treaty is also not on the agenda.

According to the narratives of men, women themselves do not want to participate in these processes, and they do not know their rights. One can agree with this on one point because women have no confidence in participating in these processes. Because women's opinions are not accepted, their participation is viewed discreetly and thus confidence is lost. Even if the participation of women in the management process of peacebuilding projects is noticeable, there are quite a few women trainers in the field, and the specialization in this regard is significantly low.

There has been a peacebuilding process in place for many years. The procedure appears to be comparatively covert and locked off to society. Shouldn't women strive to participate in this process so that women's voices can be heard?

Looking at several parallel examples, the international representation of women around the globe is not observed either. In turn, what are the factors which limit women's participation in peacebuilding, and how they can be addressed?

First, there is a problem of lack of equal opportunities, when women are expected to fulfil traditional gender roles such as taking care of the family and household. This may limit women's opportunities to participate in public life, including in peacebuilding activities. For instance, one simple example is the lack of kindergartens, which leads to the lack of opportunities for participation. Household chores also lie on the shoulders of women, for instance during the pandemic, according to research, women had fewer articles than men. One such study, published in the journal *Nature Index* in November 2020, analyzed research output across different countries and found that women's publishing rates had dropped more than men's during the pandemic.¹ The study also found that women's productivity was more affected in countries with higher levels of gender inequality. Another study, published in the *Journal of Informetrics* in January 2021, found that women's research productivity had decreased more than men's during the pandemic and that this was particularly true for women with young children. Household duties do not allow women to develop their competencies in

different spheres including peacebuilding. At the same time, women may have limited access to education, particularly in rural areas, which may limit their ability to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in conflict transformation.

In turn, to address these factors, it is important to promote gender equality in all aspects of society, including education, employment, and politics. This can help to challenge traditional gender roles and promote women's participation in public life. At the same time, women should be provided with education and training opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in peacebuilding activities. This can include training on conflict resolution, mediation, and negotiation. In this regard, it is also crucial to encourage women to take on leadership roles in peacebuilding activities through mentorship programs, leadership training, and the promotion of women's voices and perspectives in decision-making processes. World experience shows that the participation of women in process of return of IDPs is quite positive and beneficial. That is why women should be involved in return policies as well.

The process of women's inclusion in peacebuilding requires a comprehensive, holistic approach. This approach involves several key elements, including networking, education, activism, building strategies, and

¹ Larivière, V., Ni, C., Gingras, Y., Cronin, B., & Sugimoto, C. R. (2020). *Bibliometrics during a pandemic*. *Nature Index*, 1(1), 1-3.

most importantly dialogue. Networking involves connecting women across different communities and regions to share their experiences, knowledge, and resources. By networking, women can build supportive relationships and find common ground for advocacy and action. Education is another critical component of women's inclusion in peacebuilding. Women need access to education and training to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to participate fully in peacebuilding processes. Education can also help women gain a better understanding of their rights, the root causes of conflicts, and the various peacebuilding strategies available. Activism among women is also crucial for promoting their inclusion in peacebuilding. Women can engage in a variety of activism activities, including protests, advocacy campaigns, and community mobilization. By taking action, women can raise awareness about issues affecting them. Building feasible and cohesive strategies is another key element of women's inclusion in peacebuilding. This process involves identifying the root causes of conflict, developing action plans, and measuring progress toward achieving goals. There is also a need for dialogue, which requires a tight cooperation between the community, government, civil society, and international organizations to ensure that women's voices are heard, and their needs are addressed. Successively, to achieve a gender-sensitive approach in peace agreements it is needed to ensure gender-sensitive provisions in peace agreements: Peace agreements should include

specific provisions that address the needs of women and promote gender equality. These may include provisions related to women's participation in decision-making, protection from gender-based violence, and support for women's economic empowerment. However, it is crucial to monitor and evaluate the implementation of these gender-sensitive provisions to ensure that they are being implemented effectively. This may involve collecting gender-disaggregated data, tracking progress toward gender equality, and ensuring that women's perspectives are incorporated into monitoring and evaluation processes.

THE PROTECTION AND REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PEOPLE. HOW TO PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THEIR NEEDS?

Conflict-affected women in Azerbaijan face significant barriers to economic participation as well, including gender discrimination in the workplace, limited access to credit and financing, and limited opportunities for entrepreneurship. Azerbaijan can work to promote policies that support women's economic empowerment, including increasing access to finance and training, promoting women's entrepreneurship, and addressing gender discrimination in the workplace.

Protecting and representing female refugees and displaced people is a critical issue that requires a multi-faceted, holistic approach. To pay special attention to their needs it is

important first of all to provide safe spaces, where women and girls can seek refuge and support and have access to basic services like mental health support and education. At the same time, it is crucial to provide opportunities for women's education and employment to help them to become self-sufficient and independent, reducing their vulnerabilities.

Increasing the number of women in the justice and security sector can have a significant positive impact on the lives of IDP and refugee women. In addition, when women are present in the justice and security sector, they can help to build trust with other women who may be hesitant to come forward and report problems. This is particularly important in conflict-affected areas, where women may be reluctant to report incidents of violence or abuse due to fear of retaliation or stigma. Having more women in the justice and security sector can also help to address the issue of gender bias and discrimination that can exist in these spheres. Women who have experienced gender-based violence or other forms of discrimination may be more likely to trust and feel comfortable speaking with female law enforcement officials or judges. It can be achieved through targeted outreach programs, which will encourage more women to consider a career in the justice and security sector. This could involve working with schools and universities to raise awareness of the opportunities available, as well as partnering with community groups to provide information and support to women who may be interested in pursuing these careers.

There is also a need to develop and implement gender-sensitive protection measures, including providing safe spaces for women, particularly those who have been affected by the conflict; to train service providers on gender-sensitive approaches to service delivery, including ensuring that women's voices and needs are heard and taken into account in program design and implementation; engage with local communities and leaders to promote gender equality and challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes. At the same time, the legislative base for women's protection should be improved. In this regard, there is a need to allocate adequate resources to law enforcement and the judiciary to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable. Also, another approach can be adopting new laws and policies that address emerging issues related to women's rights.

In turn, to tackle the problems and come up with interventions there is a huge need for data and information on risk factors. Understanding the specific risks and challenges faced by IDP and refugee women from different regions of the country can help inform policies and interventions to protect them from harm and meet their needs.

It is also crucial to provide targeted relief and recovery assistance that addresses the specific needs of IDP women; support women's economic empowerment by providing training, financial support, microcredits, and access to markets and job opportunities; engage with women's groups and organizations to ensure

that their voices and needs are heard and considered in relief and recovery efforts.

Along with the aforementioned suggestions, it is important to encourage and empower women from this community. Presenting women's role models can be an effective way in this direction. Seeing successful and

empowered women who have overcome obstacles and achieved their goals can inspire IDP and refugee women to believe in themselves and their own abilities. In addition, connecting IDP women with mentors and other successful professionals can provide them with guidance and support as they pursue their goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Feminist foreign policy could offer an alternative approach to Azerbaijan's current foreign policy by prioritizing gender equality and women's empowerment. The implementation of feminist foreign policy could lead to a greater focus on gender equality, human security, and collaborative diplomacy, which implies to use of dialogue, negotiation, and consultation to develop mutually beneficial solutions by the building of partnerships and coalitions between governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders, in Azerbaijan's international engagements. However, much work remains to be done in this direction. In turn, it is evident that the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security has the potential to significantly improve the lives of conflict-affected women and girls. Firstly, it recognizes the impact of armed conflict on women and girls and calls for their full and equal participation, the implementation can lead to more inclusive and effective peace processes that address the root causes of conflict and promote sustainable peace. Secondly, the implementation of UNSCR 1325 can help address gender-based violence (GBV) in conflict and post-conflict situations. The resolution calls for measures to prevent and respond to GBV, including through the deployment of specialized gender advisors and women's protection advisors in peacekeeping operations. Lastly, the implementation of UNSCR 1325 can help ensure that the needs and perspectives of women and girls are taken into account in humanitarian assistance and post-conflict reconstruction efforts (UN Women).¹ In this regard, there is a need for a comprehensive, holistic approach and the following recommendations based on the four pillars (participation and representation, protection, prevention, relief and recovery) of UNSCR 1325 are put forward:

In general, there is a need to establish a national platform, organized by the public institutions, where community leaders, experts, policymakers, media, NGO representatives, and international organizations can establish open communication, collaboration, and dialogue. This type of platform can provide a space for these groups to share their perspectives, exchange ideas, and work together towards common goals. The key is to ensure that the platform is inclusive, accessible, and designed to foster constructive dialogue and collaboration.

Participation and representation pillar:

Increasing the number of women in the justice and security sector can positively impact the lives of conflict-affected women by making these spheres more inclusive, responsive, and effective in addressing their needs. To achieve this, training and development opportunities are needed to support women in the justice and security sector. This could involve providing mentorship programs, leadership training, and skills development programs to help women build the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in these roles. At the same time, it can be useful to identify and address the barriers that may be preventing women from entering the justice and security sector. This could include addressing cultural and social norms that may discourage women from pursuing these careers and addressing logistical barriers such as lack of access to childcare.

Empowering women from IDP and refugee communities. One way to achieve this is to provide them with role models who have succeeded in various fields despite facing challenges. Additionally, connecting IDP and refugee women with mentors and other successful professionals can provide them with guidance and support as they navigate their personal and professional goals.

Protection pillar:

Develop and implement gender-sensitive protection measures, to train service providers and humanitarian actors on gender-sensitive approaches to service delivery, engage with local communities and leaders to promote gender equality, and challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes.

Providing safe spaces for women and girls.

Prevention pillar:

Gathering data on risk factors and challenges faced by women. By gathering data and information on potential risk factors, policymakers, and humanitarian organizations can design interventions and programs that specifically address the needs and vulnerabilities of IDP and refugee women in Azerbaijan. It can help to ensure that these women receive the support and resources they need to thrive, even in the face of significant challenges and adversity.

Relief and recovery pillar:

Providing targeted relief and recovery assistance that addresses the specific needs of IDP women by engaging with women's organizations to ensure that their needs are met and considered post-conflict reconstruction.

Providing training, financial support, microcredits, and access to markets and job opportunities for women. In this regard, it is important to promote policies that support women's economic empowerment and address gender discrimination in the workplace.

Establishing networking among women across different communities and regions to share their experiences, knowledge, and resources.

It is important to develop clear and accessible communication channels to disseminate information about funding allocations and program outcomes to stakeholders, including donors, government agencies, civil society organizations, and affected communities. This can help to promote transparency and accountability and encourage greater support for interventions that benefit IDP and refugee women.

Baku, Azerbaijan

2023