



Policy Brief

Localizing UNSCR 1325: The Role of Jordanian Women-Led CSOs

2024

About the Brief

This Policy Brief outlines the analysis drawn from the research “*The role of civil society organizations with women leadership implementing UNSCR 1325 and JONAP in Jordan*” conducted from April to August 2023 by the Al Nahda Women Studies Unit Team at ARDD. Serving as the primary foundation for the reasoning and recommendations developed herein, the research sheds light on the challenges encountered by women-led civil society organizations (WLCSOs) while also

identifying diverse opportunities inherent to the localization process. Emphasizing the crucial role of WLCSOs in overcoming challenges and capitalizing on opportunities in the localization of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, this brief aims to inform policies and practices that empower WLCSOs and promote their role in the sustainable implementation of the Jordanian National Action Plan

Introduction

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, initiated by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, aims to enhance women’s participation and leadership in peace and security efforts globally. **In Jordan, the adoption of the National Action Plan (JONAP) reflects the commitment of the country to integrating gender perspectives into peace and security initiatives.** However, despite commendable efforts, challenges persist in translating global principles into local contexts effectively. This policy brief seeks to uncover the external dynamics hindering the meaningful engagement of women-led civil society organizations (WLCSOs) in the localization process and to provide actionable insights regarding their role in localizing the WPS Agenda into the Jordanian NAP. Targeting a diverse audience (including policymakers, government officials, civil society organizations, academics, practitioners, donors, and international organizations involved in the WPS agenda implementation) the brief sheds light on the contributions of civil society actors to the localization process. The pivotal role played by WLCSOs in bridging the gap between international frameworks and on-the-ground realities needs focused attention. Understanding the obstacles faced by WLCSOs is paramount to developing successful strategies in localizing of the WPS agenda. **By presenting evidence-based findings, the brief informs about the significance of civil society engagement and provides recommendations to enhance collaboration with these actors.** As Jordan progresses into JONAP II, the pivotal role of WLCSOs in navigating challenges and unlocking opportunities for a more impactful localization process becomes evident. Insights gained from this policy brief are expected to inform policies and practices that empower WLCSOs and advance sustainable peacekeeping outcomes in the country.

Policy Context: The Transformative Role of WLCSOs in Localizing the WPS Agenda

In Jordan, a pioneering effort to localize the WPS agenda materialized in the form of the Jordanian National Action Plan, adopted in 2018. The JONAP aims to promote gender equality and empower women in various facets of peace and security process-

es by underscoring the link between women’s meaningful and sustainable involvement in peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations. Jordan’s success in developing and implementing its National Action Plan showcased the collaborative efforts between government bodies and civil society organizations. The Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) led the process by adopting a participatory approach and ensuring the active involvement of relevant stakeholders to guarantee the integration of different perspectives. In this sense, civil society organizations were a driving force behind the NAP development process, and among them, Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) played a key role in facilitating the coordination of advocacy efforts thanks to the establishment of the Jordan National NGOs Forum (JONAF) in 2016. Drawing from insights gathered from the lessons learned report following the conclusion of the initial project under JONAP I, as well as from the literature review on civil society’s involvement in the implementation of the WPS agenda, **WLCSOs emerged as agents of change, driving the localization of the WPS agenda in Jordan and globally. These organizations, operating at the grassroots level, hold a nuanced understanding of local dynamics and needs.** Recognizing them as key actors in the localization process of UNSCR 1325 is imperative for bridging the gap between international frameworks and on-the-ground realities. **Their engagement ensures that the WPS agenda becomes deeply embedded in the fabric of Jordanian communities, reflecting diverse perspectives, fostering inclusivity, and ultimately contributing to the sustainable and transformative advancement of peace and security.** However, despite many efforts having been made for the active engagement of WLCSOs in the development of the NAPs, **challenges and gaps persist** in effectively recognizing their role in its implementation.

Bridging Gaps in the Localization of WPS Agenda in Jordan

The core issue highlighted in the research analysis stems from the inherently international nature of the WPS agenda, which **frequently fails to account for local power dynamics and gender hierarchies in the Global South.** The concern revolves around the question of **whose perspectives and experiences are given prominence**

and heard in this localization effort. Therefore, examining the terms of engagement becomes crucial, delving into the determination of the frameworks, methodologies, and strategies employed in the process. The discourse emphasizes the need to analyse the distribution of power in shaping and implementing localized approaches, assessing whether local actors possess an actual agency and decision-making power or if the process remains dominated by external actors. It prompts a critical exploration of power dynamics, representation, and inclusivity to ensure that localization efforts are transformative, equitable, and genuinely beneficial for women and communities in diverse contexts worldwide.

The research has found a gap in knowledge dissemination, particularly among effective grassroots organizations that work in peacekeeping for their communities. These organizations, operating organically and often outside the global spotlight, align with the principles of the WPS agenda without significant recognition. The conceptual gap arises when localized translations of UNSCR 1325 may not adequately address the specific needs and realities at the local level. Bridging the gap between the international and the local is not solely achievable through the creation of an enhanced WPS agenda, as any international policy inherently falls short in capturing the complexities of diverse local contexts. The dominant WPS narrative, shaped predominantly by interpretations of UNSCR 1325, coexists within a larger discourse on WPS, necessitating a more nuanced understanding.

Against this backdrop, the establishment of networks and coalitions becomes crucial for enhancing the capacity of civil society organizations to engage effectively and negotiate with international NGOs and governmental institutions. In this sense, in 2016, ARDD took a proactive step by establishing the Jordan National NGOs Forum (JONAF), aiming to foster coordination and collaboration among diverse entities while championing the localization and decentralization of humanitarian and development work in Jordan. The emphasis on the role of women as active players in security and peace, coupled with the promotion of UNSCR 1325, underscores the significance of this coalition. However, challenges persist, particularly in ensuring that the vital role of WLCSOs is acknowledged, and that their contributions are effectively integrated into the broader discourse on peace and security. This problem statement seeks to unravel these complexities and drive attention to the urgent need for a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to localizing the WPS agenda in Jordan.

Significant obstacles in adapting the WPS agenda to local contexts, especially within Jordan's setting, were unveiled by the interviews ARDD conducted.

Firstly, a discrepancy emerged in the understanding and perception of the WPS agenda, UNSCR 1325, and JONAP among WLCSOs. While international organizations demonstrate a clear understanding and integration of these frameworks into their programs, CSOs in Jordan exhibit varying levels of comprehension, with some viewing them primarily through the lens of conflict and post-conflict situations rather than recognizing their relevance in non-conflict settings. **This limited perspective suggests a gap in the localization process, where global norms may not effectively resonate with local contexts and priorities.** Additionally, there were significant advancements in gender mainstreaming, in particular within the military, security, and governmental sectors through JONAP I. WLCSOs have contributed to the implementation of the JONAP, especially during the COVID-19 response, however, measuring their impact faces challenges due to limited data accessibility. While significant progress in gender mainstreaming is acknowledged by donors and the government, CSOs highlight the need for a clear assessment of their contributions in light of the persisting discrepancies in the perception and understanding of their role by external stakeholders, the government, and CSOs themselves.

Moreover, the localization of UNSCR 1325 faces additional obstacles in terms of CSOs' capacities, bureaucratic hurdles, and funds allocation. Often, CSOs are donor-driven and extremely linked to international agendas, following the possibility of additional resources rather than developing their agendas. The data indicates a concerning disparity in funding allocation, with only 30% directed towards civil society organizations. This limited investment raises questions about the unequal distribution of resources and the potential marginalization of less structured CSOs. Out of Jordanian CSOs, only five received funding from the JONAP I pool fund, leaving many organizations without support. **This imbalance poses a significant challenge to the localization of UNSCR 1325, especially considering the crucial role women-led CSOs play in driving its objectives.** However, the current funding distribution not only hampers CSOs' capacity-building efforts but also perpetuates dependency on external actors and donor-driven agendas.

Additionally, they expressed concerns about **shrinking civic space and the need for simplified government procedures in project approvals.** A significant challenge lies in grappling with the technical language of these international frameworks and therefore of JONAP. Women-led CSOs and their communities often perceive these mandates as externally imposed, raising questions about their autonomy in implementation. Driven by **grassroots initiatives, local organizations aspire for transformative change beyond mere compliance, seeking to challenge prevailing power dynamics.**

Regarding the participatory approach, the research indicates that involving civil society organizations (CSOs) in the development of JONAP I and II was highly suc-

cessful. JNCW conducted 16 consultations with CSOs to gather input, demonstrating effective engagement. Yet CSOs lacked access to the final version of the document, raising accountability concerns. While appreciated for their role in the development phase, CSOs displayed limited engagement during implementation. There remains ambiguity regarding the specific roles of women-led CSOs in driving JONAP I and II. **This disconnection between the development and implementation stages highlights challenges in maintaining ongoing collaboration and communication between CSOs and other stakeholders.** Moreover, this lack of clarity prompts questions about the expectations and responsibilities placed on women-led CSOs in guiding the implementation of national action plans. Respondents emphasized the need for clearer guidance and support to comprehend their role and contribution to achieving JONAP's objectives.

Conclusions

The localization of UNSCR 1325 and JONAP in Jordan represents a critical step towards achieving gender justice, women's empowerment, and sustainable peacekeeping in the country. This brief has revealed the challenges faced by WLCSOs in contributing to the localization process, emphasizing the need for transformative change beyond mere compliance with external mandates. Engaging WLCSOs throughout the localization process of the WPS agenda is crucial for a comprehensive and inclusive approach, requiring mechanisms for involvement, clear guidance, and collaboration opportunities with all the stakeholders. Long-term commitment and resources from donors, international organizations, and the Jordanian government are essential for sustained progress and ensuring meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

Recommendations

For Policy Makers:

- Establish quarterly dialogue sessions with CSOs to foster a common understanding of WPS agenda principles and ensure inclusive discussions.
- Strengthen M&E mechanisms by establishing a dedicated task force to develop standardized indicators, data collection tools, and reporting templates. Additionally, regular capacity-building workshops should be organized to train relevant stakeholders on M&E procedures and ensure their active involvement in the process.
- Simplify language and streamline processes to ensure CSO participation by providing them the room to engage in policy dialogues, attend consultations, and access funding opportunities.
- Establish online platforms or portals where CSOs can easily find information, submit proposals, and track the progress of their applications.
- Foster participatory decision-making processes that involve CSOs with women leadership in the allocation and management of funds and other strategic discussions

For Donors:

- Enhance the centralized online database that houses comprehensive information on JONAP implementation progress, including key milestones, activities, budgets, and outcomes. Ensure that this platform is accessible to all stakeholders.
- Provide targeted and comprehensive capacity-building support to civil society women-led organizations concerning organizational skills (management, planning, and advocacy).
- Design equitable funding mechanisms.
- Increase the allocation of funds to civil society organizations to enhance their meaningful participation in the implementation of JONAP.

For Civil Society:

- Foster coalitions and networks among civil society organizations to strengthen collective advocacy efforts, leveraging shared resources and amplifying their impact in advancing the localization of UNSCR 1325 and JONAP.
- Prioritize the inclusion and active participation of marginalized women in decision-making processes related to the localization of UNSCR 1325 and JONAP, ensuring their voices, perspectives, and experiences are central to all aspects of the implementation process.
- Establish continuous engagement platforms for peer-to-peer learning and knowledge management.
- Enhance knowledge production for a more localized understanding of UNSCR 1325.