



IN BRIEF



SUPPORTING SYRIAN WOMEN’S ENGAGEMENT IN THE SYRIAN POLITICAL PROCESS: BUILDING A CONSTITUENCY FOR PEACE

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The Issue

A pooled funded approach to consensus building and dialogue for ensuring women’s voices and priorities in Syria’s future.

As the international community continues to support a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned process to seek a just resolution to the conflict under the framework of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), it recognizes the importance of fully inclusive political dialogues as evidenced in the Geneva Communiqué (2012) and resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2122 (2013).

The Syria crisis has had a differential impact on women and men, girls and boys. Inside Syria, profound demographic changes have led to a sharp increase in women-headed households, combined with a deterioration in social services that are fundamental to creating a level playing field for men and women, and for enabling women to enter the work force. School drop-outs and child marriages have increased, and widespread and systematic forms of rape, trafficking and slavery have been documented by international investigative bodies. Outside Syria, a series of reports by UN Women on the status of female Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq highlights increasing vulnerability, combined with isolation and increasing rates of domestic violence.

In addition to taking roles as breadwinners, and local negotiators on ceasefires, prisoner exchanges and humanitarian access, Syrian women continue to be a strong constituency for

peace and a political solution to the conflict. They have been amongst the first civil society actors to come together around a minimum common denominator – the right to women’s engagement and a desire for an end to the bloodshed – which transcended sectarian and political divisions. This has opened opportunities for Syrian women from various political backgrounds to work together to build coalitions with support from the international community. Yet women’s engagement at both the national and international level has remained woefully inadequate, with their demands continuing to go unmet in key policy and deliberation forums.

UN Women’s Partnership with the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria, and to the Syrian Women’s Advisory Board

The Women’s Advisory Board was established in 2016 by the Office of the Special Envoy for Syrian, with support from UN Women, as an advisory body to Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. While falling short of direct representation, it offers a vital laboratory for ideas, dialogue and understanding, and access to high-level political negotiations and stakeholders. It provides the Special Envoy with critical political insights and gender language and guidance for negotiations.

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UN Women's approach

With generous funding from the Governments of Norway and Finland, UN Women is working to build tolerance and trust across women's groups, women leaders and women's rights actors operating inside and outside Syria to build strategic alliances around key issues and processes that will likely shape the future of Syria. This includes building common priorities and alliances around:

- The political economy of recovery
- Transitional justice (including issues of detainees)
- Returnees and IDPs, including children of ISIL fighters
- And the political roadmap and broader constitution drafting process.

This builds on work UN Women began in 2014, with the launch of the Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy (SWIPD), that bring together diverse women's groups and networks. To complement this, in 2016, UN Women convened more than 130 Syrian women leaders from diverse ideological, religious, ethnic and political backgrounds in Beirut for exchange on building common priorities for peace.

Since then, UN Women has sought to broaden its engagement, reaching out to previously under-represented groups across Syria and elsewhere with the aim of building the largest possible women's coalition. In 2017 and 2018, in its Thousand Voices for Peace project, UN Women consulted nearly 1000 women in and outside Syria to identify common priorities. This process culminated in June 2018 in a conference coined Beirut II, where UN Women facilitated the largest convening to date of Syrian women, gathering over 180 Syrian women from across the political spectrum. As a result, 62 common priorities were identified across five priority areas, namely political, legal, economic, social, and safety/security, including 47 priorities without reservations.

What's next

Building on its previous engagement and through generous funding from the Governments of Norway and Finland, UN Women will continue its support in 2019 through:

- **Coordinated advocacy and alliance-building for women's direct representation in the peace process** and support to the next generation of the WAB through technical assistance, a structured fellowship programme, and logistical and administrative support to enable their meaningful role in support of the Special Envoy's mediation efforts and other stakeholders;
- **A two-year long-term dialogue process** in- and outside Syria, bringing together the Syrian women's movement around common goals with a particular focus on common messages and strategic alliances to influence an inclusive and just constitutional process, justice, and the political economy of recovery using peacebuilding and trust-building techniques;
- **Based on its coordination mandate** and to build support and knowledge on thematic issues, convening an informal but regular coordination mechanism among international actors engaged in strengthening women's role in the Syria peace process.



2013
UN Women
support starts



2014
SWIPD
launched



2016
Beirut
II



2016
WAB
established



2017-2018
In-Syria
consultations



2018
Beirut
II



2018
First WAB
rotation