



MEETING BRIEF

Gender Equality and Peaceful Societies: From Evidence to Action

From scholarly research to peacemakers' experience on the ground, the evidence is mounting that gender equality and peaceful societies are inextricably linked. While quantitative research shows that women's physical security is associated with states' security, there are also numerous examples of women's practical contributions to building peace and preventing violent extremism.

Nonetheless, twenty years after the Beijing Platform for Action, many barriers to both gender equality and peaceful societies remain. While policy frameworks have played an important role in this regard, the focus may now need to turn to men's roles in recognizing women's contributions and to building stronger movements for gender equality and peace within and across societies.

These were the key themes that emerged at a policy forum at the International Peace Institute on March 12, 2015, co-organized by the Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations and IPI. The discussion offered the following insights:

- Quantitative analysis shows that the **physical security of women is a better predictor of a state's peacefulness**—in its relations with its neighbors and with the international community—than levels of democracy or wealth. In fact, the overall health of a nation is closely linked to the status and treatment of women in a number of ways. The societies where women are treated the worst have the worst life expectancy for men, not just for women. Women's subordinate status also cripples economic prosperity: the larger a nation's gender gap, the worse its rate of economic growth.
- The relative **absence of women in high-level peace processes can also be linked to the recurrence of conflict** and the focus on short-term stabilization rather than long-term peace. Nonetheless, women have played important roles in exerting pressure on conflict parties to achieve peace agreements—as seen in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Liberia. In South Sudan and the Central African Republic today, women are the ones reaching across ethnic and religious lines to drive reconciliation, even as formal peace processes struggle.
- **Women are developing alternative approaches to countering terrorism** in North Africa, where some are using their leadership in the home and developing their leadership in society to prevent violent extremism before it takes hold. For example, female imams versed in the Qur'an in Morocco and Algeria are engaging in discourses around the misinterpretation of scripture to prevent extremism among young men.
- Twenty years after the historic Beijing Platform for Action, legal frameworks and the implementation of gender mainstreaming have been valuable tools for advancing women's empowerment in the area of peace and security. Other elements that will matter for advancing progress in the next twenty years include **men's recognition of women's contributions** to peace and stronger independent women's movements across society.

Panelists at the event included Bineta Diop, African Union Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security; Irene Santiago, Lead Convener of Women Seriously; Valerie Hudson, Professor at Texas A&M University and co-author of *Sex and World Peace*; and Youssef Mahmoud, Senior Adviser at IPI. More information and a video recording are available [here](#).

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