POLICY BRIEF

# EU ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY (WPS): OXFAM'S KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS


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## 01 INTERSECTIONAL, DECOLONIAL AND STRUCTURAL APPROACH

> **KEY FACT:** *9 out of 10 peace negotiations at national level are dominated by men as the decision-makers, while research shows that peace agreements are 64% less likely to fail when women participate (Oxfam 2025).*

- **Apply intersectionality in practice:** Move beyond rhetorical commitments to ensure that race, class, ethnicity, migration status, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) are central to programme design, implementation and evaluation.
- **Address the structural drivers of conflict and inequality:** Connect WPS to economic, climate and care justice, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and LGBTQIA+ rights. Challenge militarization, unlawful occupation and denial of self-determination, excessive military spending, arms transfers, extractive economic models, austerity policies and shrinking civic space that deepen human insecurity and weaken women's meaningful participation in leadership, peace processes.
- **Acknowledge and include the realities of LGBTQIA+ people in the WPS agenda:** Ensure LGBTQIA+ people and organisations are explicitly named in WPS policy frameworks and funding mechanisms. Challenge and transform the structural, legal, political and institutional barriers that perpetuate violence, discrimination and exclusion, while preventing the WPS agenda from reproducing cis-normative, heteronormative and gender-binary assumption.

- **Halt arms transfers that enable violations:** EU Member States must stop transfers prohibited by the Arms Trade Treaty or EU Common Position, including where applicable risk thresholds are met. Explicitly assess risks of serious violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights, including serious gender-based violence, and suspend transfers accordingly.
- **Decolonise knowledge, redistribute power and ensure accountability:** Challenge the colonial and unequal power relations that shape whose knowledge, experiences and priorities inform the WPS agenda. Redistribute decision-making power and resources to locally led feminist movements and organizations, including grassroots women's rights, LGBTQIA+, and Indigenous rights movements. Ensure their leadership in defining priorities and in producing and owning knowledge, and guarantee their safe and meaningful participation in all stages of the public policy cycle, from design and implementation to monitoring and evaluation, supported by sustained, flexible and accessible funding and equitable partnerships. Hold the EU accountable for addressing the power imbalances reproduced through its foreign, security, development and funding policies, including donor-driven priorities and extractive research and partnership practices.
- **Strengthen international legal and monitoring frameworks:** Promote recognition of LGBTQIA+-based persecution under international law and integrate such recognition in peacekeeping mandates, UN resolutions and transitional justice systems.

## 02 PARTICIPATION, LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE

> **KEY FACT:** *Only 23 out of 100 countries with National Action Plans (NAP) include considerations on LGBTQIA+ people in their NAPs, and even fewer address these issues meaningfully in implementation (Oxfam 2026).*

- **Ensure meaningful, not tokenistic, participation and leadership:** Women in all their diversity must hold real decision-making power and be recognised as agents of change at every stage of peace processes, from early negotiations to implementation, monitoring, and post-conflict reconstruction.
- **Shift power to local and grassroots leadership:** Recognise the expertise of women and encourage their leadership at community level and give Global South women-led organisations control over agendas, priorities and resources, not just implementation or participation roles.
- **Institutionalise women peacebuilders' and civil society's influence on EU foreign policy:** EU Delegations, EEAS and relevant Commission services should establish regular, safe and meaningful consultation mechanisms with diverse local women peacebuilders and WHRDs and demonstrate how their recommendations influence EU political dialogue, programming, sanctions, humanitarian action and peace and mediation efforts. Civil society consultations, including meetings of the EU Task Force on WPS, should be regular, inclusive of local organisations, accessible and held in a safe space, with feedback on how input is taken up.
- **Support development of National Action Plans:** Support countries in developing, updating and implementing their National Action Plans (NAP) on WPS by providing dedicated technical and financial assistance, and ensure local women's organisations drive the process from within and are resourced to hold governments accountable for their commitments.
- **Bridge the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus:** Integrate the leadership of women in all their diversity across humanitarian response, recovery, anticipatory action and peacebuilding.

Safeguard humanity, impartiality and independence, ensuring assistance is based on need and is not subordinated to political, military, security or migration-control objectives.

## 03 FINANCING AND LOCALISATION

> **KEY FACT:** *Of the $148 million in gender, conflict, peace and security (GCPS) aid that donors reported under the OECD purpose code for women's rights movements and organisations in 2023, just $4.7 million (3.1%) was initially channelled through recipient women's organisations. This means only 0.06 per cent of all GCPS aid can be shown to go directly to recipient women's rights organisations or women-led organisations. (Oxfam 2025).*

- **Ensure funding reaches local women's organisations directly:** Set measurable targets for the proportion of EU WPS and humanitarian funding reaching local women-led and women's rights organisations, including survivor-led organisations.
- **Ensure predictable and flexible funding:** Provide multi-year, core and rapid-response funding to local organisations, including women's rights organisations, women-led organisations, youth-led groups, refugee-led groups and LGBTQIA+-led organisations.
- **Increase transparency and remove barriers:** Require transparent reporting on funding flows, intermediaries and final recipients while protecting sensitive organisational and personal information. Reduce administrative and compliance barriers that exclude smaller grassroots organisations.
- **Fund women's movements in restrictive contexts:** Ensure long-term financial support, with adapted funding modalities and diversified financial channels, for women's rights organisations and women human rights defenders operating under authoritarian regimes, military rule, occupation or severe restrictions on civic space, including those working in exile or across borders.

## 04 PROTECTING FEMINIST CIVIC SPACE AND COUNTERING ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS

> **KEY FACT:** *Just three anti-LGBTI organizations received more funding in 2021-2022 than all 8,000+ LGBTI globally in the same time period (Oxfam 2025).*

- **Provide comprehensive protection for women HRDs and peacebuilders:** Scale up funding for legal, physical, digital and psychosocial protection, legal defence and reparations, emergency relocation and flexible emergency support, including for those facing criminalization, online attacks and technology-facilitated gender-based violence, while strengthening diplomatic protection through EU Delegations, including regular contact with WHRDs, observation of trials, public and private diplomacy and rapid responses to threats and criminalisation.
- **Sustain women's movements under authoritarian rule and political repression:** Ensure long-term political support for women's rights organisations and women human rights defenders operating

under authoritarian regimes, military rule, occupation or severe restrictions on civic space, including those working in exile or across borders.

- **Recognise anti-rights actors as a security threat:** Acknowledge that coordinated, well-funded anti-rights actors erode democratic institutions, human rights and human security, fuel violence and undermine the WPS agenda by instrumentalising issues such as sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), the rights of LGBTQIA+ persons and migration to roll back gender equality and human rights more broadly.
- **Counter disinformation, hybrid and cyber threats:** Integrate gender analysis into EU assessments and responses to hybrid threats, recognising that mis- and disinformation campaigns (including AI-generated media and deepfakes), cyberattacks, hate speech and technology-facilitated gender-based violence disproportionately target women, LGBTQIA+ people, human rights defenders and civil society actors. Prevent and respond proactively to disinformation coming from inside and outside the EU, ensure appropriate protection measures, clearly enforce EU digital legislation and increase funding and political coordination.
- **Enable the full spectrum of civic freedoms:** Fund and provide support to initiatives for all dimensions of civic space, including promotion and protection of freedom of association, peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and access to information, freedom to seek and receive resources, freedom to participate in meaningful consultations, freedom of movement and access to public spaces, protection of equal access to justice and reparations, protection of the autonomy of Civic Space Actors (CSAs) and special protection of vulnerable activities.

## 05 SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV) AND SRHR

> **KEY FACT:** *Verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence rose by 50% in 2023, yet only $149 million, or 2% of gender, conflict, peace and security aid, went to ending violence against women and girls (Oxfam 2025).*

- **Strengthen accountability for SGBV and human rights violations:** Support survivor-centred documentation and access to justice for SGBV, with informed consent, confidentiality, survivor choice and protection against reprisals. Address discriminatory laws that enable impunity for conflict-related sexual violence: support governments and women's rights organisations to reform laws and justice systems that prevent survivors from accessing justice, including discriminatory definitions of sexual violence, marital rape exemptions, evidentiary requirements and barriers arising from parallel formal and customary justice systems.
- **Guarantee survivor-centred, holistic and intersectional services:** Ensure survivors have access to comprehensive, multisectoral support, including medical care, mental health and psychosocial support, legal aid, safe shelter and economic empowerment, delivered in a way that is long-term, community-based, culturally appropriate and trauma-informed. Access to services must not depend on reporting violence or participating in legal proceedings.
- **Protect access to essential services during conflict:** Ensure women, girls, non-binary people and marginalised groups can access medicines, healthcare, SRHR, age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), food and other essential services during conflict, displacement and economic crisis, and address the gendered impacts of unlawful restrictions on humanitarian access and essential services. Press parties of conflict to uphold IHL, protect civilians, humanitarian and

medical personnel and essential civilian infrastructure, and facilitate safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access.

- **Recognise SRHR and Care as human rights, social and public good; and essential to WPS:** As crisis and conflict disrupt care systems and endanger access to sexual and reproductive health, putting bodily autonomy, health and lives at risk, the new Action Plan must recognise both SRHR and Care as integral to sustainable peace and human security. It must uphold SRHR in full, including the "R" for rights, and go beyond health services to address unequal and unpaid care responsibilities, protect access to essential care services, and recognise, reduce, redistribute unpaid care work. This must be backed by sustained investment in gender-transformative public services and care infrastructure, including healthcare, childcare, eldercare, water, sanitation, education and social protection, to ensure that care is adequately resourced and the responsibility for sustaining life does not fall disproportionately on women and girls in conflict settings.
- **Acknowledge the role of SRHR providers as essential responders:** Midwives, nurses, community health workers and grassroots SRHR providers deliver life-saving care, including safe delivery, contraception, safe abortion and post-abortion care, and support for SGBV survivors.

## 06 CLIMATE SECURITY

> **KEY FACT:** *At COP29 in 2024, women represented only 35% of delegates, highlighting persistent gender gaps in climate governance spaces that are central for determining adaptation, loss and damage, and finance priorities (Oxfam 2026).*

- **Treat climate change as a central security concern:** Recognise climate change as a risk multiplier for conflict and insecurity, with distinct gendered impacts. Adopt rights-based, justice-oriented approaches to gender equality and climate-related matters.
- **Ensure meaningful participation of women in climate decision-making:** Women, particularly from conflict-affected and climate-vulnerable communities in the Global South, and Indigenous communities, must be meaningfully included in climate negotiations, national climate policies and security-related decision-making processes at all levels.
- **Champion WPS-aligned climate action at COP and beyond:** Use diplomatic weight at COP and future climate negotiations to advance gender-responsive, peace-oriented climate action, including WPS principles embedded in decisions on adaptation, loss and damage, and just transition.
- **Make climate action conflict-sensitive:** Ensure climate responses are conflict-sensitive and avoid exacerbating exclusion, displacement or competition over resources.

## 07 ACCOUNTABILITY, RECONCILIATION AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

> **KEY FACT:** *Of the 26 peace agreements signed in 2023, only 8 contained gender provisions, and none had a women's group or representative as a signatory (Oxfam 2025).*

- **Ensure accountability during and after conflict:** Ensure EU and Member State foreign, trade and security policies comply with IHL and human rights obligations and do not enable serious violations. Support independent accountability mechanisms, including the ICJ and ICC, comply with binding court decisions and fulfil applicable cooperation obligations. Ensure gender-responsive remedy and reparations.
- **Put survivors at the centre of transitional justice:** Ensure women in all their diversity, including survivors of SGBV, participate meaningfully in designing, implementing and monitoring truth commissions, tribunals, reparations programmes and reconciliation processes.
- **Guarantee access to justice for all and reform discriminatory laws:** Remove legal, financial, linguistic and social barriers that keep women, people with diverse SOGIESC and marginalised groups from seeking justice and fund legal aid, community-based paralegals and women's rights organisations that support survivors through formal and informal justice systems. Support the reform of discriminatory laws and justice systems that deny women and marginalised groups equal protection.
- **Ensure access to healthcare and mental health and psychosocial support:** Integrate long-term, survivor-centred healthcare, including SRHR, and mental health and psychosocial support into transitional justice and recovery frameworks, ensuring that services are community-based, culturally appropriate and trauma-informed.
- **Preserve memory and document violations:** Support survivor-led documentation, archiving and memorialisation initiatives, while ensuring data protection and informed consent. These efforts preserve evidence for future accountability, counter denial, and recognise survivors' experiences.