

Gender-inclusive conflict transformation:

Insights from female former combatants and women associated with resistance and liberation movements

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1 Introduction

Women have played significant roles in non-state armed groups in many conflict zones throughout the world, including El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Aceh/Indonesia, Philippines, Myanmar, Nepal, Timor-Leste, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Ethiopia, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. These women join armed groups for a variety of reasons and perform multiple functions and roles, representing up to 40% of group membership. However, they are still broadly excluded from peace negotiation processes and their distinctive needs are not taken into consideration or are discarded when implementing post-war peacebuilding programmes.

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1325 (UNSC1325) with the objective of recognising the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict; UNSC1325 aims to strengthen the agency of women in peacebuilding as well as to promulgate the need for special measures to protect women during conflict. The Resolution makes cursory reference to women in armed movements in Clause 13, which “encourages all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration [DDR] to consider the different needs of female and male combatants.” However, that statement – whose focus is restricted to DDR programmes – has proven insufficient to enhance the inclusion of female combatants and their leadership in peace negotiations and post-war transitions.

The knowledge and experience of women associated with resistance and liberation movements (RLMs)¹ remains an untapped resource for the peacebuilding community. Originated in 2018, the Berghof Foundation’s project *Supporting Women in Resistance And Liberation Movements in Peace Negotiations and Post-War Transitions* has focused on creating a peer-learning network for female members of eight active and recently demobilised RLMs (Women in RLM Network). This network offers women the chance to further develop their skills and expertise in peace negotiation processes and to bolster their capacity and opportunities for post-war political and community leadership.

This report is the first in the Policy Insight Series on gender-inclusive conflict transformation,² which will be published throughout 2022 and 2023. This first issue aims to contextualise and critically review current policies and practices in peace negotiations and post-war transitions, based on testimonies shared by network members during activities conducted since 2018 (highlighted in boxes with direct quotes),³ and

¹ See Dudouet (2009: 9) for a detailed definition of RLMs: “The terminology used in the literature to qualify such movements revolves around the notions of “non-state armed groups”, “rebel movements”, “insurgencies” – seen as relatively neutral labels which avoid the partiality and moral judgement inherent in ambiguous terms like “terrorist organisations” or “freedom fighters”. From the Berghof project’s onset, its participants have noted the inadequacy of some of the above terms, and rejected their use. For instance, the label “non-state” neglects the aspiration of some movements to form separate states, as well as, at times, their quasi-governmental features as a ‘state within a state’. The label “armed groups” was found not to be appropriate either, since it fails to account for a complex set of means of political action, armed and unarmed, which evolve constantly according to circumstances and strategic calculations. We therefore decided to name such movements after their primary objectives, and opted for the inclusive terminology of “resistance/liberation movements” (RLMs).

² Gender-inclusive processes are those that take into consideration gender inequality, understood as a system of societal structures that endows more power and privilege to socially constructed male identities as well as power systems and social structures that organise social life in hierarchical, mutually exclusive categories, which lead to relationships of sub/superordination to one another (Confortini, 2006: 335).

³ Most of the quotes remain anonymised to protect the security of the network members.

complemented by relevant academic references. Through a participatory process of joint analysis, the series will present the experiences, aspirations and lessons learned from women in or associated with RLMs with regard to gender-inclusive approaches to peace negotiations and post-war peacebuilding. We will compile recommendations from the network, entry points and opportunities that emerge for the peacebuilding field, as well as best practices to support mediation teams, donor countries and peacebuilding agencies in engaging effectively with female (ex)combatants and women in or associated with RLMs during all stages of peace processes. This series thus aims to be a reliable tool for peacebuilding actors to enhance their support of the political, social and economic (re)integration of female (ex)-combatants and women associated with RLMs into democratic, peaceful and civilian life. We will place particular emphasis on the value of self-led (re)integration initiatives as a means to bolster these women's community leadership during conflict, active negotiation processes and peacetime.

2 Current Practices in Peace Negotiations

Though there exists wide consensus among the peacebuilding community in favour of inclusive peace processes,⁴ the expertise and knowledge of those who have lived through, worked on or taken part in conflicts is still not sufficiently valued in peacebuilding processes. This is especially the case for female members of RLMs, whose skills and competencies, often acquired during conflict, are rarely translated into effective contributions at the negotiation table.

"It was not really difficult to transform from being a combatant in the struggle to being an advocate for peace. It should be noted that we were university students, preparing for our careers. This [trajectory] was cut short during the struggle and now it's like going back again, with more experience, of course. Sometimes bitter life experiences make us better women, stronger women. Tragedy makes women stronger in life.

Gina, ex-combatant from Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), [video interview](#), 2020

Accordingly, the active involvement of women in armed conflict does not correlate with an active and secure spot at the negotiation table, and gender inequality is still visible in all kinds of roles: negotiators, mediators, signatories and witnesses (Shekhawat, 2015: 56). This equates to a very real missed opportunity to improve the quality and inclusivity of the resulting agreements.

"The meaningful participation of women in peace negotiations is crucial to concluding an equitable Peace Agreement that can guarantee inclusion, a gender[ed] approach and the consolidation of peace."

Amanda Ríos, ex-combatant from Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP), Public Forum [VIVAS Contamos](#), Colombia, 2021

⁴ See Dudouet & Lundström (2016: 8) for further elaboration of inclusive peace processes: "Our proposed definition of inclusivity (or its synonymous 'inclusiveness') refers to the degree of access to the various arenas of political settlements by all sectors of society, beyond the most powerful (pre-war) elites – both by participating (directly or indirectly) in decision-making, or by having their concerns addressed by the state."

The reasons **women⁵ join – or are recruited by – armed forces** are extremely varied and context-specific. Some women might be motivated by political, religious or economic factors, while others may be looking to protect themselves from violence or to fight for better living conditions and gender equality (KC and Van Deer Haar, 2019: 437). Indeed, women may be particularly attracted to those armed movements that pursue gender-emancipatory agendas and aspire to overcome traditional patriarchal structures. Their participation in military or support roles provide them with a sense of empowerment by solidifying their rights and responsibilities.

“When I heard the story of women who were helplessly raped by soldiers and being killed, I told myself that Insha’Allah, when I [grow] up, if there [is] a group willing to train military, I would not hesitate to join so that I wouldn’t experience what our Bangsamoro sisters experienced during Martial Law. So that’s one of the reasons that pushed me to join.”

Alyah Salik, ex-combatant from Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Philippines, [video interview](#), 2021

Whilst the inclusion of female combatants in negotiation processes does not guarantee gender-inclusive outcomes, it does increase the **opportunity for these wartime aspirations to be raised at the peace table** and carried over into transitional agreements and state reform processes, which can, in turn, translate into more equitable post-war societies. Moreover, the inclusion of these women at the peace table can ensure that DDR programmes, political participation schemes and other agreement provisions targeting former combatants will be responsive to their actual needs and priorities.

The Maoist insurgency in **Nepal**, for example, transformed society with regard to gendered power systems in the social, economic and political spheres, creating new knowledge and opportunities for women (Giri, 2021: 4-5). However, these wartime achievements were not brought forward within the peace process due to the marginalisation of the voices of female combatants, which is partly attributable to their lack of access to international actors and other parties involved in the negotiation process.

“Even during the war, women’s commands was rejected; there was hesitation to assign them responsibilities, and their ability to command [was questioned]. We fought against so many challenges. We had to fight even then. But the good thing was that our leaders and party were clear that women [were capable,] too. The party was supportive and we moved forward. [...During the peace process], we received support from international organisations. However, [they] did not play a very effective role in focusing on women or developing women in leadership... The support was scattered. It is because women coming out from the war had no access. International organisations also did not have access to them... First, there has to be access.”

Onsari Gharti Magar, ex-combatant and member of the House of Representatives, Nepal, [video interview](#), 2020

Female combatants still face **challenges to be recognised as valid interlocutors at the negotiation table**. The **patriarchal structures** that permeate societies worldwide hinder women’s meaningful participation. This often applies to the internal structures of RLMs, which are commonly made up of multiple hierarchical layers with male leaders at the top and in control of the central command structures. Women therefore

⁵ This report focuses on the experiences of female former combatants and other women associated with RLMs, with whom we closely work within the framework of our project. However, we do acknowledge the need to extend these parameters to include non-binary identities in our analyses and thereby refrain from reducing gender issues solely to women’s issues.

typically fill the lower-level positions within the military ranking systems or are largely invisible due to their informal roles and responsibilities. The peacebuilding community needs to account for various elements that can shape the roles that women take within RLMs: “the nature of a conflict, how society is organized, what networks exist and how they are structured, historical factors, and intersectionality (the intersection of gender and ethnicity, gender and religion, gender and class, gender and nation) in different societies can all shape the role of women in any particular conflict” (Darden, 2015: 459). The make-up of the peace table also differs from context to context and is largely determined by the competing interests of those who have the most power and status within the negotiating parties. Military hierarchy and internal leadership structures are often replicated in delegations representing the parties at the negotiation table, which lowers the chances for women to get a meaningful seat there.

“Most men think that war belongs to men. The criteria to be a guerrilla fighter and leader are based on male traits. It is a man’s world and they think that making peace is also a man’s thing.”

Female ex-combatant from FARC-EP, Expert Talk, 2020

“The struggle is not only about being a woman but also about challenging [a] patriarchal society [subject to] strong militarisation.”

Shadia Marhaban, former negotiator from Free Aceh Movement (GAM), Indonesia, Workshop, 2019

“In the Burmese peace process, [female] combatants and women who suffered from the armed conflict could not participate in the political dialogue. [Female] combatants knew only how to fight in battle, but political dialogue needs expertise...also, men thought that women should not participate in the implementation of the peace process, especially in the security sector, since women were not in an active combatant role.”

Woman in RLM in Myanmar, Expert Talk, 2021

Exclusionary practices at the peace table also leads to a failure to incorporate the specific needs and demands of women associated with RLMs within **peace agreements**.

“In the Peace Agreement, [land was redistributed] to female and male combatants. However, less than 5% of combatants who would receive the land were women. We figured out that the women were being excluded from the land distribution and we went to our male comrades to claim our rights. We [researched] why the women were being excluded (...). We discovered that males – husbands and sons – had privilege over women, so the only ones who could access land were women without husbands and with underaged sons. We presented the results of the research to our comrades and we were criticised for wanting to have access to land. After a long struggle, we finally managed to ensure that 35% of the land was distributed to the women.”

Female ex-combatant from Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador, Expert Talk, 2021

Nowadays, many peace processes include formal mechanisms such as **gender quotas** to ensure the nominal participation of women. Although quotas can be effective, they are not in and of themselves a guarantee that those women at the table will have the sufficient knowledge, power or interest to push for gender-inclusive provisions in an agreement. Indeed, in the case of **El Salvador**, while 30% of the negotiators were women, the resulting peace agreement was void of gender-specific provisions. Furthermore, quota mechanisms tend to benefit women from the political classes or civil society elite. To ensure that the

outcomes of negotiations best address the needs of women in RLMs, quotas and other inclusion measures must also be accompanied by targeted **technical support**, such as capacity building on peace process design, negotiation training and access to external expertise. As one network member advocated, female combatants at the peace table should not only be supported to reach the same level of knowledge and skills as their male counterparts, but should gain expertise on strategic topics that would increase the value of their contributions to the negotiations as well. Network members have also emphasised the relevance of access to **peer-learning** from female former combatants and women's organisations from other countries during peace negotiations. Unfortunately, female combatants rarely have access to international initiatives that facilitate peer-exchange, as these tend to primarily benefit their male counterparts.

Insights about meaningful participation in negotiations from a peer-learning workshop in South Africa, 2019:

“Each day I am more convinced that if women in RLMs [had] learned a little bit of what we have been learning during this workshop about negotiations, post-war leadership and peace processes, we would have been more successful in strengthening the role and leadership of women in the aftermath of the conflict”.

Female ex-combatant from FARC-EP, Colombia

“We need to think about the kind of expectations that are associated with women's participation in negotiations. Just because women are at the negotiation table does not necessarily mean that women's issues are going to be a priority in the agenda.”

Female ex-combatant from FARC-EP, Colombia

“Even though we have female delegates who participate [at] the peace table, it is an issue that they are not feminists. Of course, we put a lot of hopes and expectation on one woman, but if she is not a feminist, will she stand up for us?”

Woman in RLM, Myanmar

“We are negotiators not because we are women, but because we were already leaders beforehand.”

Woman in RLM, Colombia

3 Current Practices in Post-war Transitions

As previously asserted, the low level of participation by women from RLMs in peace negotiations is likely to result in DDR programmes that are neither gender-inclusive nor sensitive to gendered power dynamics. Traditionally, **DDR mandates and participant selection criteria** have relied on a narrow definition of “combatant” that is restricted to individuals who carry weapons or who have been active at the frontline, circumscribing other roles within the RLMs such as organisers, educators, social workers, strategists, construction workers, cooks, medics, nurses, spies, propagandists, communication specialists, guards, secretaries, or radio operators, among others. This practice effectively excludes women from reinsertion schemes or cash payments for demobilised combatants (Douglas and Hill, 2004). Moreover, the international peacebuilding community too often continues to frame female combatants as victims; thus, they are not considered to be a threat to society and are consequently seen as not needing to be included in

reintegration processes. These narratives result in women being de-securitised and focus being redirected to the “real threat” (i.e., male combatants) (Gade, 2019, para. 2).

“During the war, women played an important role; they were supporting rebellion movements, carrying ammunition, preparing food, and some of them were active in combat. Unfortunately, after the ceasefire in Burundi, there were challenges with the DDR programme (which was funded by the Government in partnership with the World Bank), particularly in relation to the incorporation of women. As a result, there is a significant number of women who played an active role during the war but then did not participate in the DDR programmes.”

Male ex-combatant, Burundi, Expert Talk, 2021

The fact that DDR programmes are not being adapted to the needs of female combatants prevents them from accessing implemented **compensation schemes following their demobilisation**, rendering their reintegration more difficult. DDR programmes routinely include cash payments to support the economic reinsertion of demobilised combatants into civilian life, but these resources are managed by male combatants who fail to share them with their “dependents”. Additionally, women typically have limited access to banking institutions in many countries, which restricts opportunities for them to manage cash payments (DPI, 2016). In short, women’s lack of economic independence further obstructs their proper participation in community leadership and (local or national) politics.

“During the peace negotiations and after [the signing] of the peace agreement, we need short-term solutions to empower women. We need capacity building and economic empowerment for women so they can actually engage in the peace process.”

Woman in RLM, Myanmar, Project Activity 2021

In an effort to improve conditions for female ex-combatants, the UN developed guidelines on **gender-responsive DDR** that accommodate the fact that the roles of women in armed groups can be complex, non-transparent and fulfil different functions (UNDDR Section, 2020: 11). Likewise, the United Nations Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS)⁶ also state that DDR eligibility criteria should avoid focusing solely on the handover of weapons. Rather, these criteria should address the individual’s actual membership in an armed group, whether in the capacity of an active combatant or in support roles, and “take into account these different experiences, roles, capacities and responsibilities acquired during and after conflicts” (IDDRS Module 2.10, 2019: 22). Moreover, the Council of the European Union recently published their conclusions on an EU strategic approach in support of DDR, in which they highlight the “importance of realistic, flexible, conflict sensitive and age and gender responsive DDR engagements, [...] in line with the women, peace and security and youth, peace and security, children and armed conflict agendas” (Council of EU, 2022: 5).

In discussing the needs of women associated with RLMs, it is imperative to refrain from reducing them to a homogeneous target group. **Women have multiple identities**, ethnicities, religions, ages and class backgrounds, which intersects with their gender-based identity or identities. Therefore, the classification of

⁶ See Integrated DDR Standards, latest revised in 2019: www.unddr.org/the-iddrs/.

“female ex-combatants” should be understood as a diverse category, as each of them experiences war differently and their interests and needs in post-war settlements will differ depending on the particularities of their specific situation. The specificity of each case reinforces the idea that a one-size-fits-all approach to post-war peacebuilding is doomed to fail or has limited impact on transforming the lives of female combatants (Giri, 2021: 9). Inclusive peacebuilding processes and the desire of female former combatants “to reintegrate themselves into the polity as ordinary citizens” (Rahmawati, 2021: para. 53) can both be advanced by recognising the different experiences of women combatants and developing programmes that are sensitive to the intersections of gender, social class, age and ethnicity, among other dimensions of identity.

During reintegration processes, many women also face **societal stigmatisation**, especially when female combatants are portrayed in the public imaginary as aggressive and/or highly sexual (Tarnaala, 2016). They may also be perceived as having transcended gender norms during their period of militancy in having taken on roles that do not fit conventional visions of femininity, thereby exacerbating their social stigma. Furthermore, during reintegration programmes, the topic of gender inequality tends to be relegated to a lower priority level or pushed to later phases of DDR programmes. These tendencies efface the continuum of violence stemming from gender inequality during and after armed conflict. DDR programmes typically focus on reintegration into public life and fail to incorporate elements that fall within the private sphere. This circumscription generates a triple burden for female ex-combatants in the form of productive, reproductive and political labour. Needs arising from motherhood (such as childcare provisions, maternity leave, breastfeeding or care work) are not given priority in DDR programmes, despite the fact that their fulfilment determines effective female participation (Steenbergen, 2020).

“It seems that we need to decide if we participate in post-war transitions either as a mother or as a woman, but the relation with our children is important. Many women do not participate because they do not want to leave the children behind.”

Woman in RLM, Workshop in Northern Iraq, 2021

Support schemes that uphold traditional gender roles represent an additional challenge: when vocational training courses for female ex-combatants are put in place, conventional gender roles tend to dictate how the courses are allocated – the men receive training in masonry, carpentry, mechanics and IT, whereas the women are offered courses in sewing, soapmaking or hairdressing (Gade, 2019; Steenbergen, 2020). Women in our RLM network have noted their need to receive more training courses in leadership, negotiation, advocacy campaigns and electoral processes, among other skills that would support their effective post-war transition. Inadequate reintegration training leads to a lack of employment opportunities and sustainable income for female ex-combatants, impacting their self-confidence and mental health. Furthermore, women may be compelled to resort to the informal economy, including sex work, or to return to traditional gender roles, becoming care workers, mothers and/or unpaid domestic labourers. Accordingly, another element that clearly influences the reintegration of women into the formal economy is the lack of childcare provisions. All care work is typically performed by women, preventing them from seeking labour opportunities outside their households.

“We request economic independence [for] female ex-combatants; we do not see any other way for our reintegration process. We need to have ownership [over] the land. Behind a woman, there is not only one

woman, there [are] also her family, her parents, her brothers. We are women and we want to work [for] an equal salary and the same job offers [as] men. We also request remuneration [for] household care work and support of entrepreneurial projects led by female ex-combatants. To achieve this, we need support for capacity building; we need to be trained and have more knowledge and studies to work [on] our own projects.”

Jenny, ex-combatant from FARC-EP, Public Forum VIVAS Contamos, Colombia, 2021

One of the most frequent challenges to **political reintegration** faced by female combatants is the fear of stigmatisation. Those who attempt to run for public office suffer a double stigma for having belonged to a RLM group and for speaking their mind in a patriarchal society. Many female combatants are also prevented from accessing the political sphere due to a dearth of available information on political participation and dedicated training (Tarnaala, 2016). Women also face financial hurdles when running political campaigns, as they lack access to key networks and fundraising channels. In order to circumvent the challenges linked to party politics, female (ex-)combatants often turn to informal initiatives through social activism, an alternative outlet to shape public debates and contribute to policymaking. Thus, supporting these women’s political engagement through civil society organisations and social movements should be given due consideration by peacebuilding donors and agencies (Dudouet and Cruz Almeida, 2022). These entities should support female ex-combatant associations that “actively contribute to peace-building, not only with proposals to the government but also with advocacies for a gender-responsive change from within their former insurgent organizations” (Dietrich, 2015: 240).

“I believe that society accepts a man who was active in the war more easily. Even a man who was fighting in the war can be seen [...] as a hero. But a woman who had the audacity to take up arms against a regime such as the Colombian regime is going to find herself facing closed doors right from the start. It is not the same; they do not listen in the same way [to] women’s voices, like [mine], as the voices of the men who were also in the war.”

Victoria Sandino, ex-combatant from FARC-EP, Senator to the Republic of Colombia, [video interview](#), 2021

In addition to stigmatisation, female former combatants and women associated with RLMs also face high levels of **physical insecurity** during the war and in subsequent transitions. Network participants have highlighted the lack of support available for women who work directly with survivors of gender-based Violence (GBV) in demobilisation camps, as well as the fact that this issue is still not coherently incorporated into reintegration programmes. Moreover, when GBV-related provisions are included in peace agreements and DDR programmes, their implementation is often hindered by slow bureaucratic processes that fail to protect survivors and undermine potential interest in prosecuting perpetrators. As these aspects are not effectively incorporated into official programmes, women end up taking it upon themselves to follow up on the crimes, even when they lack the required training and technical knowledge to work on the prevention and addressing GBV.

“Some women do not report [GBV perpetrators] because there is a lack of safety measures; they prefer to separate from their partners but do not denounce them because their lives are at risk.”

Female ex-combatant from FARC-EP, Colombia, Workshop on GBV, 2021

“We would like to have workshops and training on [the] technical aspects of how to deal with GBV within Internally Displaced People (IDP) and refugee camps, because we need to apply this practically to our situation.”

Woman in RLM, Myanmar, Expert Talk, 2021

4 Lessons learned

The aforementioned testimonies from women in or associated with RLMs elucidate that, in the current state of peace negotiations and post-war transitions, female (former) combatants are still underrepresented and their needs are not prioritised in peacebuilding agendas. The aim of peacebuilding is to end violence and guarantee sustainable peace. However, when this process reinforces or ignores gender inequality it perpetuates existing systems of oppression: “Neither a meaningful decrease in societal violence nor a sustainable peace among nations is possible in human society without a decrease in gender inequality” (Hudson et al., 2012: 94). Learning from our long-standing work with women from various RLMs around the world, we have drawn the following conclusions:

On Peace Negotiations

- ≡ Peacebuilding organisations, mediators, guarantor countries, negotiation parties, civil society organisations and other international, regional and national stakeholders involved in peace negotiations and/or in supporting peace agreements should conduct careful and regular **analysis of gendered power dynamics** within the negotiation parties. This is particularly the case for RLMs, whose female members need to be recognised as conflict protagonists on equal terms with their male counterparts, and whose agency should be reflected at the negotiation table.
- ≡ During armed conflict, women associated with RLMs acquire vast knowledge in different fields, from healthcare to gender equality work. That **knowledge should be recognised, validated and utilised** in peace negotiations and in post-war contexts in order to improve their transition to the field of civilian labour as well as the political sphere. Stakeholder analysis conducted with local insider experts can help **identify entry points to access female (ex-)combatants** and other women associated with RLMs in order to understand their needs and interests, and to explore their possible contributions to a peace process.
- ≡ To **advance their distinctive knowledge and expertise on the technical and strategic dimensions of the peace process**, relevant learning and capacity-building opportunities (including through tailor-made training and peer-to-peer exchange) should be provided to women associated with RLMs, thereby facilitating their meaningful contribution(s) to negotiations.
- ≡ The peacebuilding community should consider, recognise and address the triple burden (i.e., productive, reproductive and political) affecting women’s participation in negotiations. It is of the utmost importance to support measures that **alleviate the social, familial and economic pressures placed on women** both during and after negotiations. It is likewise crucial to bolster their ability to participate and emphasise their value at the table.
- ≡ Further research (including through participatory methodologies) is required to **generate in-depth knowledge** on the **challenges** that pre-empt women from joining negotiation teams, and on **best**

practices from successful contexts in which their agency was recognised or supported during peace processes.

On Post-War Transitions

- ≡ Peacebuilding programmes should move away from stereotypical depictions and narrow framings of female combatants that could exacerbate their exclusion and stigmatisation during peace negotiations and post-war programmes. Instead, these programmes should **enable the continuation of their political and social leadership**.
- ≡ Specific attention and support should be given to **self-led community-based initiatives** by women formerly associated with RLMs, as they represent a key factor driving women to continue mobilising for the complete fulfilment of their rights, especially when those aspects are left out of negotiations and peace agreements. The continuation of the “revolutionary” struggle for social justice through political engagement – including informal political practices such as civil society activism or local community action – should be acknowledged and encouraged, as it provides peaceful channels through which to amplify their voices.
- ≡ Post-war support schemes should **guarantee the safety of demobilised female combatants**. Security is paramount, as it largely determines these women’s well-being, physical and mental health as well as the opportunities for socio-economic and political participation available to them. Reintegration programmes should also adopt an holistic understanding of security that encompasses the **private sphere** and provide adequate resources for women to take part in public and social life (e.g., childcare, motherhood conciliation mechanisms).

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