



The Future of  
Security Is Women

Women, Peace, and  
Security Report  
2019



**WORLD PULSE**

# THE FUTURE OF SECURITY IS HERE

by Jensine Larsen, Founder and CEO, World Pulse

You are about to read the unheard voices and powerful perspectives that are required to bring about true global security.

When much of the world's population cannot fulfill their potential due to violence, poverty, ill health, and exclusion from power and decision-making, there will never be true peace and lasting security. The way forward can only be found by listening to those who bear the brunt of these threats and acting on their recommendations.

The following insights come from women from over 60 countries. Some respondents, like those in Cameroon, are in the midst of active conflict. Others, like those in the Philippines, are experiencing the immediate threats of climate change. Still more, like those in India, Nepal, Nigeria, the US and more are up against daily threats of harassment, assault, and limitations placed upon them due solely to their gender. Their messages are urgent; their recommendations invaluable.

Taken together, these bold, experienced voices call for nothing less than a fundamental redefinition of global, national, and human security. They also propose practical steps to resolve the complex, interconnected root causes that sabotage it.

This reframe is not idealistic. It is realistic. It is not impractical, but sensible and sure.



These recommendations are a compass for governments, businesses, and civil society leaders. Twenty years after the passage of UNSCR 1325, which aims to elevate women's role in peacemaking, too many women are still on the outside of decision-making and peace tables. Progress will come from genuine inclusion instead of lip service and rhetoric.

The following pages also make clear that women are powerful agents of change in their own right. Participants in this project shared about the work they are doing on the ground, in their homes, and in local governments to usher in a future that is truly secure. These efforts deserve strengthening and resourcing to hasten peace everywhere.

By reading these recommendations, promoting their weight, and taking action, you will be a part of reforming narrow, ineffective security strategies and creating a new, inclusive, and peaceful reality for us all.

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Throughout this report, look for this symbol which links you to the longer story by a World Pulse member on WorldPulse.com

*"I dream of a time when the sound of my footfall on a dark street will no longer carry an echo of panic, but the resounding beat of freedom."*

—World Pulse member  
Daydri in Romania  
(South African)



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### **SPECIAL THANKS TO THE CREATORS OF THIS REPORT:**

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# ABOUT THE PROJECT

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Women are often on the frontlines of conflict—not just as victims or combatants, but as powerful agents of change and peace. And yet, despite it being nearly 20 years since the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 which mandated women’s inclusion in peace processes, women remain on the outside of peace and security decision-making.

In the fall of 2018, World Pulse crowdsourced the stories, experiences, and expertise of women across the world to democratize peacebuilding and security efforts. Together with our partners Our Secure Future and the Women's Alliance for Security Leadership - ICAN, we collected women’s voices to shed light on what peace and security means to those who are immediately impacted by it. We also conducted a global survey to hear from women worldwide. Nearly 350 women responded to the survey in addition to 150 World Pulse members who shared personal narratives on WorldPulse.com.

In this report, we share the ways women are redefining security by highlighting their security concerns and priorities, their accounts of how violence affects their lives, and their recommendations for including more women in security efforts. You can also read all submitted stories online: [www.worldpulse.com/en/peace-security](http://www.worldpulse.com/en/peace-security)



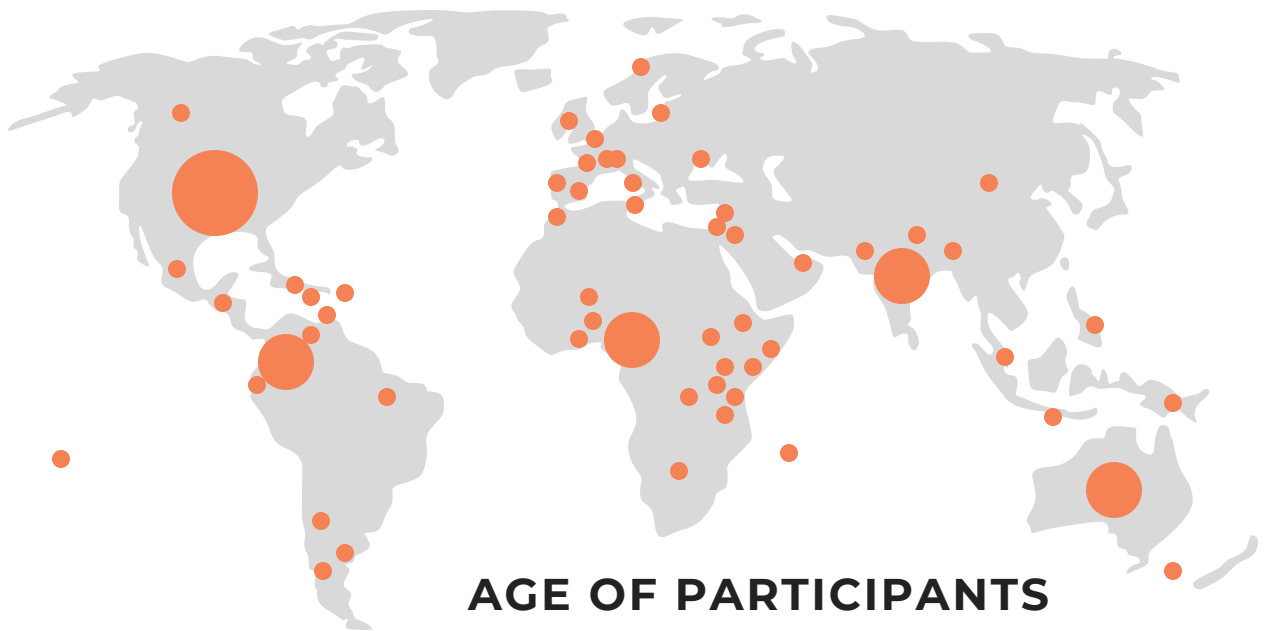
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# ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

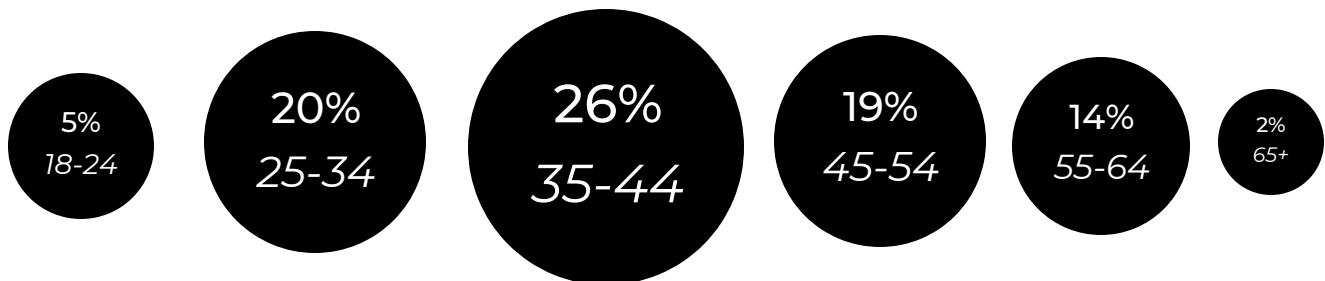
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## 344 participants from 62 countries

**5** Top five countries: USA, India, Cameroon, Australia, & Colombia

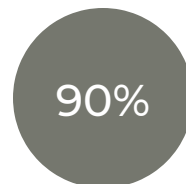
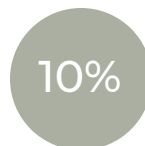


### AGE OF PARTICIPANTS



### TOP 5 PROFESSIONS

- Education
- Development and/or Peacebuilding
- Health
- Communication and Media
- Nonprofits, NGOs, and Social Enterprise





I.

# REDEFINING SECURITY



*"We need to think differently and put women at the forefront of security leadership if we want a more secure world."*

*—Survey Respondent, USA*



# REDEFINING SECURITY

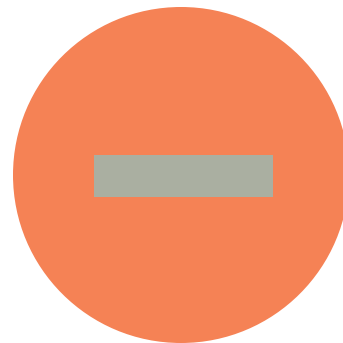
In this study, women call for shifting the definition of security away from traditional notions which tie it to physical violence, power, and the state. Women here define security holistically and inclusively, with a strong focus on the security of others. Security is also tied to the degree of confidence or trust in individuals and institutions.

**For women, security is not just the absence of fear, threat, and violence but also the continued presence of financial stability, access to basic needs, community, and much more.**



**Security =  
Presence Of:**

Basic needs  
Human rights  
Health care  
Financial stability  
Education  
Healthy environment  
Movement  
Expression  
Agency  
Community  
Justice  
Effective institutions



**Security =  
Absence Of:**

Fear  
Threat  
Harm  
Violence  
Discrimination  
Oppression  
Harassment  
Shame  
Control  
Poverty  
Hinderance  
Privacy violations



## WHAT WOMEN SAY

*"I need to feel valued. I need to feel safe when walking on the streets without looking behind me constantly. I need to feel the forces of law and order are ready to protect me when I complain about abuse. I need to feel I can access good health without problems even if I may not have the means. I need to know I will not be marginalized on the basis of my race, skin colour, disability, or linguistic difference especially in my home country. I need to feel I will not be abused for carrying out my religious beliefs. I need to have access to all the basic needs of life. I need to feel free to express my thoughts without fear of censure both online and offline."*

*—Survey Respondent, Cameroon*

*"Security to me means freedom from fear and freedom from want. This means I can live and work in a safe environment or space without being exposed to any type of harm or violence. It also means that I have access to my basic needs and wants such as food, clothing, shelter, right to pursue my passion"*

*—Survey Respondent, Kenya*

*"...It means being physically safe and my family and community being safe...It means safe under all conditions, whether I walk at night or day, whether I criticize or conform, even if I'm black, gay, young or a woman. It also means living in a society where fear is not used as a tool of social control. Finally it is having basic needs fulfilled and a healthy environment."*

*—Survey Respondent, Mexico*



# II. WOMEN'S SECURITY PRIORITIES



photo courtesy of World Bank

*“When women have a voice in shaping security, an effective holistic approach is more common, which is necessary to address the nontraditional threats to security that are challenging the security arena.”*  
—Survey Respondent, India

# WOMEN'S SECURITY PRIORITIES

Women's unique security priorities highlight the ways women's experiences of security are gendered and tied to other intersecting identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, nationality, age, ability). When women feel secure, they are more able to actively contribute to the world around them. The extent to which women feel secure has social, political, and economic consequences for families, communities, and the world.



## *Security Priorities: What women say*

### Freedom from fear

Women expressed a desire to be free of the persistent fear of gendered violence in their lives whether it be at home, on the street, on public transit, in workplaces, or in war zones.

*"My male classmates enjoyed a freedom of the sweetest kind while my sisters and I prayed every night for a sense of security, in a world where hostility was being lobbed our way from every direction."*

—World Pulse Member  
LuxG, Mauritius

### Security for family and others who are vulnerable

Women's concerns were situated around others, including their children as well as those who are most vulnerable and directly affected by violence based on their gender identity, sexuality, race, class, nationality, age, and/or ability.

*"As a mother from a country in which the human rights index is one of the worst in the world, security means not having my sons' human rights violated; getting whipped if they break 'curfew laws' that are not upheld by actual legislation, having their hair shaved off by government militias if they don't fancy their trimming style of choice, or my daughter being whipped under the dress code."*

—World Pulse Member Hamila, Sudan





## Security Priorities: What women say

### Fulfillment of basic needs and financial stability

Women define security by their financial stability and ability to provide for the basic needs of their families, including access to clean water, food, shelter, and physical and mental health care.

*"Security isn't just the absence of war. It is when women no longer die during childbirth. It is when people who are critically ill, who cannot afford treatment, get a chance at good care. This is how I define security."*

—World Pulse Member Arrey Echi, Cameroon

### Respect for human rights

Women's understandings of insecurity were tied to experiences of discrimination and inequity in education and work, as well as concerns about whether or not women have agency in their own lives and can exercise free expression.

*"Freedom of speech is non-existent even when our leaders say so. Many people have been silenced through intimidation and victimization for speaking against serious injustice against women and children especially at the household level."*

—Survey Respondent, Zambia

### Environmental protections

Women expressed concern about how climate change, environmental degradation, loss of natural resources, and natural and man-made disasters all contribute to insecurity.

*"Threats are aggravated by natural disasters: typhoons, earthquakes, flood, landslides, volcanic eruption and so on. These natural calamities disturb women's peace and security. A destruction on infrastructure or agricultural land is a lost livelihood source."*

—World Pulse Member Karen Axalan, Philippines



## Security Priorities: What women say

### Accountable and effective institutions

Women reported concerns about corrupt or ineffective political institutions and approaches to security that prioritize power and violence and exclude women and women's concerns.

*"[We need] less impunity and corruption —a society that recognizes that every life is sacred and valuable and stops the military/repressive strategies for fighting violence with violence to explore solutions that confront violence with non-violence."*  
—Survey Respondent, Mexico

### Movement through public spaces

Women reported a strong desire to be able to move freely through public spaces without harassment, threat, or violence.

*"Girls shouldn't have to think about being attacked every time they leave the house. If we are not secure in our own homes and neighborhoods, then where can security be guaranteed?"*  
—World Pulse Member Reeti, Nepal



*"For a man who has never experienced fear going out at dusk or dawn, it is easy to trivialize a woman's comment, to joke about it, or to consider it an exaggeration, that the woman is taking the victim's role. Only when there is empathy is it possible to listen attentively, to believe her, and to ultimately treat her with the respect she is fully due."*  
—Survey Respondent, Colombia





# WHAT CAN WE DO DIFFERENTLY?

Participants outlined the following recommendations for addressing security priorities.



## *Security Priorities: What women recommend*



### *Redefine security*

- Take a holistic, long-term approach to discussions of security
- Center the voices of those who are most vulnerable
- Consider differences in security needs among women
- Be alert to security needs during periods of perceived political stability
- Encourage media to represent security inclusively and to recognize the efforts of peacebuilders
- Conduct research related to women's concerns and priorities



### *Take an inclusive, bottom-up approach*

- Ensure women are meaningfully included in discussions of security [See "Security & Representation"]
- Develop and adopt participatory models to work with those who are directly affected
- Approach security threats with methods other than those that use force
- Promote education and training on women's rights
- Support and fund local organizations



### *Promote economic opportunity and financial stability*

- Encourage educational access for all
- Advocate for equal pay and opportunity for women
- Invest in women's entrepreneurship
- Promote the creation of stable employment opportunities
- Promote employment opportunities for youth who may become perpetrators and/or victims of violence
- Promote opportunities for elderly women to continue to earn income



### *Encourage good governance*

- Fully implement laws and policies in practice and not just on paper, including UNSCR 1325
- Regularly monitor/evaluate how policies are implemented and whether they are achieving objectives
- Encourage transparency and accountability in governments and the security sector
- Lead by example if you are in a position of power
- Elect leaders who demonstrate a commitment to taking women's voices on security issues seriously



### *Improve infrastructure and institutions to promote safety*

- Bring stakeholders together to address concerns
- Involve women in discussions related to the design of cities, transportation systems, workplaces, schools, and other spaces to understand what they need to feel safe
- Improve access to services like health care
- Create more secure and affordable housing
- Invest in better infrastructure to ensure access to clean water and electricity
- Increase lighting on streets
- Develop and implement effective environmental protection policies and practices
- Ensure disaster management and rescue efforts are efficient

## FEATURED STORYTELLER

Minakshi Birajdar, India



# Fighting for a Future in a 'Graveyard for Farmers'

**In a region devastated by drought, Minakshi Birajdar helps widows who have lost everything rebuild their lives.**

*"Security for a woman never comes without a good fight. So my fight is on."*

If I tell you I am from Soegaon, Aurangabad, you will probably ask, "Where?" But if I tell you I live near the UNESCO World Heritage Sites Ajanta and Ellora Caves in India, you may respond with recognition. Your knowledge helps you pin my location, my origin.

Knowledge is confidence. But for millions of women in my country, knowledge remains beyond reach. The first right to information—whether about education, career, livelihood, medical care, law, or policy—goes to men. This is not decided by law. It is not decided by any religion or holy book. But it is how it is.

The man of the house opens the newspaper first, gets the news and information on the world first. The woman? She is busy doing household work. It's only when the man has left for work, and she has finished her hundreds of duties around the house that she will have a minute to pick up the paper and look at it, provided the man has not taken it with him.

Where I live, women's lack of access to knowledge makes life especially challenging for widows who have lost their husbands to the farming crisis in my community.

People have called my region, Marathwada, a "graveyard for farmers." In my community, every man and woman has seen a cycle of drought, loss of crops, debt, and depression. The suicides of men after losing their crops have now become a part of life. To give you an idea, in 2017, more than 800 farmers died by suicide in Marathwada.

Imagine this: a woman's husband has died. There is no food at home. There will be no food coming from the field since drought destroyed it. And in addition, she has no knowledge of where she can go for help.

Now, ask the woman left behind how much money her husband earned. What size loan did he take? How much does it cost to buy seeds? What is the ideal price of grains and fertilizer? Ask any question and the only answer you will hear is, "I do not know. Only my husband knew."

She has no knowledge of what alternatives she has to get a livelihood and survive. Extreme loneliness, extreme helplessness, and extreme poverty all combine together. If this is not insecurity, what is?

It is this insecurity that I am fighting today. I am trying to free all our women—especially the single women whose husbands died by suicide—by helping them find information and knowledge. *(continued)*



The government has policies to help farmers who are affected by drought and who have lost their crops. There are also policies for families of farmers who have died in this situation. Just in 2018, the government launched four programs which include free, job-based skills training and a program for doing group farming.

What is missing is a plan to share this information with widows and explain how they can access these opportunities.

I have taken this on as my job for the past 18 years. As the president of the Integrated Agricultural Rural Development Organization, an organization dedicated to the welfare of women from rural communities, I organize meetings in villages with women and inform them of opportunities available to them. I help them write their applications and I follow up with the government officials to move these applications along until the funds are released for these women to start a new life.

This is challenging though. Convincing women to even come to a meeting is difficult. They are mourning, depressed, lonely, and frustrated with the whole world. Coming to sit and listen to someone speak, specially since I am not directly giving away money or aid, is often the last thing they want to do.

I have to try again and again and again. But this is how the road to empowerment is—it is not easy; it is hard, complicated, and sometimes frustrating.

I tell myself, I started with a mission to empower those who are not empowered. It is a mission to save lives from a cycle of insecurity. I have to succeed because security for a woman never comes without a good fight. So my fight is on.

I have a long way to go. Droughts and suicides are not showing any signs of ending. There is a thick darkness of insecurity. But just as new grass grows and new flowers bloom even on a burial ground, I dream of building a new world, even in this region. I dream of women who have the knowledge and the power of information to rewrite their destiny and create a secure future for themselves and their loved ones.

[Click here to read this story and connect with Minakshi on World Pulse.](#)





III.  
SECURITY  
AND  
VIOLENCE



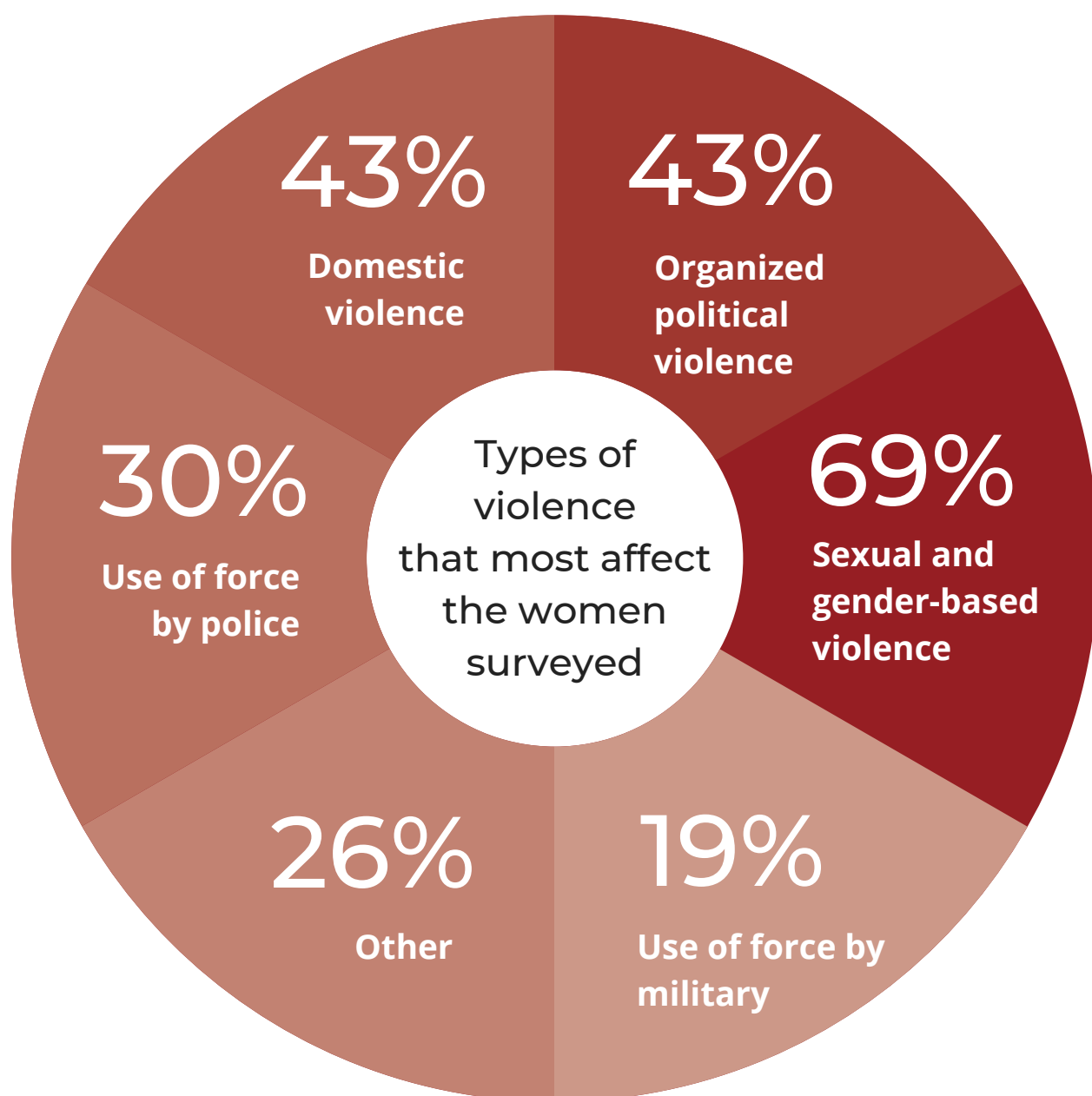
photo courtesy of PADO [www.pado.org.pk](http://www.pado.org.pk)

*“When I think of my security and that of my family, I think of the fact that any of us could be killed. I think of the fact that presently we have been displaced by war. I think of the fact that our home is no longer home for me. I think of the fact that we may end up not even having a home anymore.”*  
—Survey Respondent, Cameroon

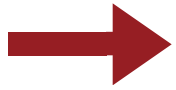
# SECURITY AND VIOLENCE

Violence is a real and ever-present threat to women's security. Women have been and continue to be affected by violence and have strong concerns about the potential for others, including their families and members of vulnerable groups, to experience violence. Responses indicated that violence is defined as not just physical harm, but also psychological, financial, environmental, and spiritual harms. Many expressed fear of being caught in the cross-fire, whether in their own neighborhoods due to gang violence or in conflict zones.

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## Concerns about Violence: What women say

### Identity-based violence

Women reported concerns about and experiences with sexual and gender-based violence and harassment, as well as violence tied to race/ethnicity, sexuality, ability, religion, and immigrant status. They also expressed concerns about increasing radicalization and extremism.

*"I had the fear in my mind that if I continue to go school, I might get kidnapped and then raped. In what kind of era we are actually living, when we girl still have to live with the fear of being mentally or physically violated?"*

—World Pulse Member Afroza Irin, Bangladesh



### Disbelief in women's accounts of violence

When women share or report experiences of violence their accounts are often dismissed. Women are often blamed and not taken seriously by others, in the media, by police, or by courts.

### Lack of justice

Women expressed concern about the lack of consequences for those who perpetrate violence. They indicated that existing laws related to gender-based violence are not adequate, they lack trust in institutions to fairly enforce existing laws, and perpetrators often act with impunity.

*"If a bully, a criminal, or someone who thinks they can act with impunity is not even touched, it's open season for everyone."*

—Survey Respondent, Argentina



## Concerns about Violence: What women say

### Abuses by security actors

Women are concerned about abuses committed by security actors. Women indicated experiences with security actors being ineffective or ill-equipped to adequately respond to incidents of violence.

*"Twice, I have been threatened, intimidated and in one of the situations in serious danger of being sexually violated by the men in black, for exercising a fundamental human right (freedom of movement) and most unfortunately for being female."*  
—World Pulse  
Member Efe, Nigeria



*"Security is not equal to more guns and police and military."*  
—Survey Respondent, Guatemala

### Proliferation of weapons and militarization

Women have concerns about proliferation of weapons of all kinds, as well as the militarization of security and of police forces specifically. They are concerned about the accessibility and movement of guns both within and across borders.

### Emerging concerns about technology

Women also identified emerging concerns related to technology-enabled threats and violence. Specifically, they are concerned about online harassment and abuse, identity theft, privacy violations, and surveillance.

*"My biggest personal security concerns would revolve around my privacy, especially when it comes to online and digitized data."*  
—Survey Respondent, USA

# WHAT CAN WE DO DIFFERENTLY?

Participants outlined the following recommendations for addressing issues of security and violence.

## *Security & Violence: What women recommend*



### *Take a stand against violence*

- Make a commitment to ending sexual and gender-based violence
- Recognize and reflect in policies and programs that violence is not just physical
- Listen to women when they come forward and report
- Implement violence prevention programs
- Reduce the proliferation of weapons



### *Change attitudes and behaviors*

- Discourage and call out harmful behaviors (e.g., street harassment)
- Provide training and education related to positive masculinity
- Encourage men to be advocates
- Amplify women's stories
- Improve relationships between ethnic groups



### *Increase knowledge*

- Talk with people directly affected by violence about their experiences and the changes they want to see
- Educate people about potential and emerging security risks
- Identify and share proactive measures individuals can take to stay safe online and offline
- Be transparent about the uses of personal data



### *Reform the security sector*

- Actively address issues of bias, discrimination, and violence committed by security actors
- Ensure oversight to keep the sector accountable to making changes
- Pay a living wage to security actors
- Offer training to security actors related to women's experiences
- Adopt protocols for handling reports and make it easier to report
- Demilitarize police forces
- Invest in cybersecurity
- Increase access to and the number of security personnel
- Increase women's representation in the security sector [See "Security & Representation"]



### *Seek justice*

- Hold those who violate the law accountable
- Remove harassers and those who perpetrate violence from positions of power
- Revise and adopt laws to adequately and fairly address sexual and gender-based violence
- Institute stricter penalties for those who commit sexual and gender-based violence
- Consider alternatives like abolishing prisons and/or adopting forms of restorative justice
- Provide support and aid for those who have experienced trauma

## FEATURED STORYTELLER

Fosah Frinwie Loveline Muma, Cameroon



# Security Begins With Women

**As a young girl, Fosah Frinwie Loveline Muma experienced violence in her home and fought for her right to attend school. Now, as conflict rages in her country, she calls for women to believe in their ability to effect change and for policymakers to heed the recommendations of those most impacted by crisis.**

*“This is how we build security. It starts with us. It starts with creating room to listen to women.”*

I was born into a world where conflicts are natural and inevitable, but my experience has taught me that it matters how we deal with conflict. Women who believe in themselves can do many things. We can use our experiences overcoming struggle to become peacemakers in our community.

I grew up in Cameroon as the youngest girl in a polygamous family of 14. My mother faced domestic and economic violence. For me, going to school was a challenge because of my family's financial struggle and because my parents believed “school is not meant for women”. What kept me going was my self-esteem, determination, and love for education..

After my brother sponsored my primary education, I was expected to marry. Instead, I enrolled in university on my own and started selling fried groundnuts to pay for my education. I was only able to pay my debts when I received an award as one of the best candidates in science at my teaching school.

I endured all of this uncertainty knowing that I could have taken a different path. Men with the resources to support me financially in school kept coming to me in search of a relationship. I rejected them because I saw women around me physically abused by the men who sponsored their education.

When I became a teacher, I realized that advocating for my own education and striving for my own well-being prepared me to make positive impacts in my family, community, and my world. I also learned that my female students were struggling academically. After digging into their stories, I found that most of the girls had stories similar to mine.

To help, I began networking with women's rights organizations. I started a program to help young girls fight against domestic violence and rights abuses. Today, I continue this work at the national and international levels, working for peace wherever I go.

Two years ago, I suddenly became a victim of conflict as violence erupted in Cameroon. My children and I have been internally displaced people at times throughout these two years. We have slept on the floor to protect ourselves from stray bullets. My children were taken far away from the four walls of a classroom and their learning process has been effected. *(continued)*



I know there are many women facing similar scenarios. I believe that women, who are most affected by hard times and crisis, have what it takes to seek solutions to peace and security when given the opportunity.

I am the only one who can speak about my situation and I need my story to be heard by decision-makers. How can you give me my security when you do not know what I went through? How can you know how to handle my problems without bringing me to the table? We need to not only transform conflicts, but transform the actors in the conflict as well.

Many women out there are asking the right questions. Peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict and the delivery of relief and recovery efforts. We need more women included in decision-making and getting involved in signing peace accords.

We need strong institutions, rights, and justice at all levels. Women can play a role in advocating for collaboration between governing institutions to promote issues at the root of lasting peace: job creation; youth and civic engagement; an end to violence against women and men; and the mutual respect of rights of all people, including indigenous people and refugees.

Self-examination is also necessary to promote peace and well-being. We can think of ourselves and our actions first before thinking of the reactions and responses of others. We can give more energy in our different communities to build peace and show love to others around us. Above all, we can show reciprocity by respecting the rights of others, irrespective of their status.

This is how we build security. It starts with us. It starts with creating room to listen to women.

Women, let's use our experiences and our struggle positively. Let's grasp for peace and take our space to influence our world.

[Click here to read this story and connect with Loveline on World Pulse.](#)





IV.  
SECURITY  
AND  
REPRESENTATION



*“While UNSCR 1325 and a human security approach has been recognised and often reaffirmed, structures and processes are not transformed beyond a militaristic and patriarchal approach; women are not being appointed to committees and engaged in a way that they feel safe and supported to contribute.”*

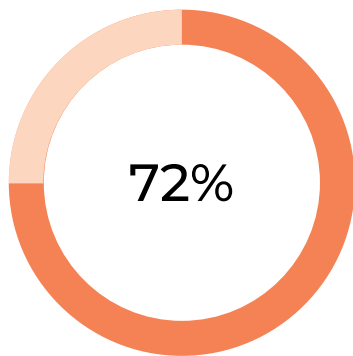
*—Survey Respondent, Fiji*



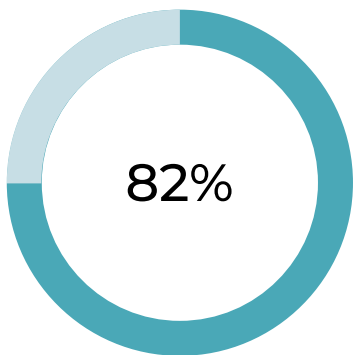
# SECURITY AND REPRESENTATION

Women surveyed overwhelmingly indicate that they do not feel adequately represented in discussions about security or among security actors. Despite UNSCR 1325 reaffirming the role of women in peace and security and urging increased participation of women at all levels, studies confirm the fact that women remain underrepresented. Significant barriers exist to women's representation in these discussions and therefore to the achievement of the commitments of UNSCR 1325.\*

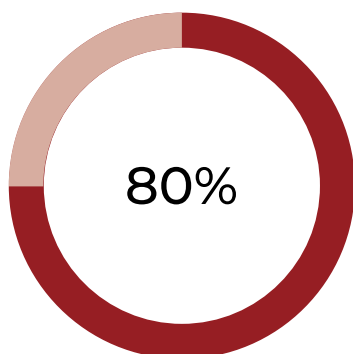
\*Women Peace and Security by the Numbers (2018). Our Secure Future. Retrieved from <https://oursecurefuture.org/publications/women-peace-security-by-the-numbers>



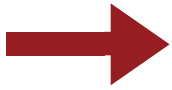
**72% of women in the survey said they do not feel adequately represented in discussions about security in their community**



**82% of women in the survey said they do not feel adequately represented in discussions about security in their country**



**80% of women in the survey said they do not feel adequately represented among security actors (e.g., military forces, peacekeeping forces, governmental agencies, police forces)**



## Concerns about Representation: What women say

### Gender stereotypes and discrimination

Women reported persistent gender stereotypes inhibit women's involvement in security discussions and the security sector and position security as a 'man's issue.'

*"There is a perception that security issues are the concerns of men, because traditionally men are believed to be strong and solution providers."*  
—Survey Respondent, Kenya

*"How can women feel secure in a country where laws, customs and traditions have been designed by the men and are being implemented by the men themselves. Who will speak for the women? .... To me, security, when relating it to insecurity of women and girls in Nigeria, isn't given a priority attention."*

—World Pulse Member  
katchuan, Nigeria



### Exclusionary structures

Women reported that structural issues constrain women's participation, including lack of access to education, pay inequalities, family obligations and lack of access to childcare, cultural barriers, and lack of inclusive laws and policies.

### Access to power

Women indicated that leaders in governments, the security sector, industries, and communities continue to be disproportionately men, and too few women are involved with decision-making.

*"Violence against women still holds very strongly in politics. It is a tool used by men to discourage women from venturing into politics. It is an easy way for men who feel threatened by women to express misogyny. It is one of the major reasons many capable women are shying away from politics."*

—World Pulse Member Mkandeh,  
United Kingdom/Sierra Leone





## Concerns about Representation: What women say

### Dismissal of women's voices

Women said they are not often provided opportunities to speak and that when they do speak their perspectives may be disregarded. Women who do participate may find themselves subject to harassment or violence.

*"The suppression of our voices, the decisions made behind closed doors in rooms that we continue to be prevented entry, have served to maintain and continue to escalate this violence and exclusion.*

*Exclusion that has resulted in poverty, lack of health care, lack of access to free education, lack of freedom of choice, lack of caring for the earth, and routinely, the death of women and girls who step out of line."*

—World Pulse Member Tam, Canada

*"Any woman wants to protect her family. That's why she escapes any discussion on security in order to create her own security, because the obstacle is that when we are involved in politics or have an interest in it, one dies so quickly."*

—Survey Respondent, DRC

### Opting out of security discussions

Women said they may also choose not to participate due to work and familial obligations, perceptions about their own knowledge and capabilities, fears about the potential risks and dangers associated with speaking out, or a lack of interest or desire.

# WHAT CAN WE DO DIFFERENTLY?

Participants outlined the following recommendations for addressing issues of security and representation.

## *Security & Representation: What women recommend*



### *Address exclusions*

- Promote equal access to education
- Provide for women's maternal needs (e.g., childcare, maternity leave, access to birth control)
- Guarantee women's safety



### *Advocate for inclusion*

- Launch awareness campaigns
- Lobby those in power
- Provide training to both men and women related to women's rights and security issues to help challenge gender stereotypes
- Encourage productive media representations of women in positions of power



### *Build the pipeline*

- Build women's knowledge and skills
- Provide outreach programs and mentorship to women and girls
- Provide resources and opportunities to support women's involvement (e.g., fellowships, internships, grants, leadership pathways)



### *Create inclusive spaces*

- Create safe and inclusive spaces and platforms that enable women's participation both online and offline
- Develop guidelines and training for facilitating inclusive discussions
- Invite women to lead and/or organize discussions
- Back up commitments to inclusion with funding



### *Invite and include women*

- Mandate and enforce representation
- Commit to making no decisions without women present
- Extend sincere invitations to women to participate
- Speak out when given the opportunity



### *Take women's voices seriously*

- Actively seek out women's voices, particularly of those who are directly affected and most vulnerable
- Listen and take women's concerns and solutions into account
- Amplify women's voices beyond the local level



### *Increase representation in government and security sector*

- Recruit, hire, and promote women into leadership positions in the security sector
- Encourage women's participation in elections
- Elect women into government



### *Support women's organizations and networks*

- Fund women's organizations and networks
- Strengthen alliances between women's organizations
- Promote and mobilize women's organizations and networks around security issues

## FEATURED STORYTELLER

Sherna Alexander Benjamin, Trinidad & Tobago



# It is Our Right to Be at the Table

**Sherna Alexander Benjamin, a tenacious advocate for survivors of gender-based violence, encourages women to take their rightful place as decision-makers.**

*“It is an affront to women when men declare peace while women and girls continue to endure insecurity, threats, and violence.”*

The Caribbean and Latin America is the most violent region in the world for women outside of conflict contexts, according to the United Nations Development Programme. Yet here, like elsewhere, men are the ones sitting around family, local, regional, and international decision-making tables. With impenitent boldness, they discuss women’s safety and security.

These forums exclude women’s voices and our visions for better lives and a just, sustainable world. This blatant disregard for women’s participation enables the global brutalization of women and girls.

Occasionally, women are invited into these male-dominated spaces. Offering us a seat around the table is not only disrespectful, it is insulting. We cannot be invited because it’s our innate right to be there.

The mere thought of using the word “invitation” when it comes to women taking their rightful places around those tables irks me. Do men invite other men to sit around decision-making tables? Men are socially conditioned to believe these tables belong to them. The invitation comes with conditions attached.

There is an expectation of conformity. When the expectations of the male oligarchy are disappointed, women feel the impact.

This is the world I have had to navigate to share my voice and contribute to the peace and security of my country.

I grew up in the Caribbean, in Trinidad and Tobago. International leaders, economists, and technocrats see no need to invest in women’s peace, safety and security in this small, island state because the country is considered “oil-rich.”

It is indeed “oil-rich,” and I hasten to tell you how rich. It’s oil-rich with poverty, oil-rich with violence against women and girls, oil-rich with insecurity, and certainly oil-rich with human rights violations. The oil-rich money circulates among the minority who own the majority of wealth in the country.

Growing up, I experienced severe childhood and adolescent abuse. Safety was that imaginary place in my mind that took me away from the reality of being sexually molested and abused. As a young adult and married woman, I endured sexual assault and marital rape.

My security required lying about the pain that I felt. I had to be silent. Exposing abusers would mean social isolation, victimization, and further abuse. I was mentally imprisoned and physically controlled; my agency and autonomy were undermined. All these experiences shaped my definition of safety, security, and peace. *(continued)*



Peace was something I never knew because my silence masked inner turmoil and wars. Between physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, I was always in a war.

Let's get it straight. Conflict and dysfunction can create colossal damage. The absence of war, bloodshed, and political and civil unrest does not mean peace is present or realized. Violence in times of apparent peace has taken as many lives as active wars, and maybe more.

While we should all strive for the dream of a peaceful world, it is an affront to women when men declare peace while women and girls continue to endure insecurity, threats, and violence—visible and invisible. Let women be the ones to declare our own state and moments of peace, safety, and security.

My story is not an isolated one. Media houses publish headlines of women being murdered, raped, and violated. Individual stories are commonly told in secret. As the names of women who have been killed continue to increase, some victims courageously speak out in public domains. Women's stories and reports of violence reside within the pages of police diaries and sit on the desks of magistrates and judges. Sadly some stories will never be told.

This reality motivates my work to bring about a more secure Caribbean and world. In 2011, I officially registered a non-profit organization called Organisation for Abused and Battered Individuals. We engage in public education; we advocate for public policy changes and support survivors; we work with women and girls, and men and boys; we actively advocate for social, economic, political, and gender justice, the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence, and the promotion of peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and women's leadership.



*"Conflict can be incredibly fertile soil for social change, but only for those with the knowledge and skills to transform it."*

Conflict can be incredibly fertile soil for social change, but only for those with the knowledge and skills to transform it.

We live in a world where institutions are governed by men and these systems enable systemic gender inequality, the violation of human rights, and the discrimination and oppression of women in every aspect of our lives. We must work to dismantle these systems, to reorganize and create new systems.

I encourage women to join me in expressing our views on peace and security in our communities. Whenever you are extended egotistical and conditional invitations to participate in decision-making, I encourage you to accept! Accept them with strategic purposes and goals in mind. Use what influence and authority you have in those spaces to perform exceptionally well. Begin conversations that lead to action. Create entry points for other women and work with men to change their views of women. Fight for women's rights, support women's voices and advancement, and push for progress. Leave no woman behind.

Do this with the knowledge that with every seat you have, every decision-making table you sit around, every forum you speak at, every leadership position you hold, it's your innate right.

Click here to read this story and connect with Sherna on World Pulse.





V.

EFFECTING  
CHANGE

*“Take time to listen to women; really listen to women. Women are the key to a healthy, prosperous, and flourishing future. We need change. The world needs change, and women are the ones that will bring it about.”*

*—Survey Respondent, Spain*



Photo: Simone D. McCourtie / World Bank

# WHAT WOMEN ARE ALREADY DOING

Women are already making strides to redefine security and promote changes in their communities. Learn more about the changes they are making and discover ways you can take action today.

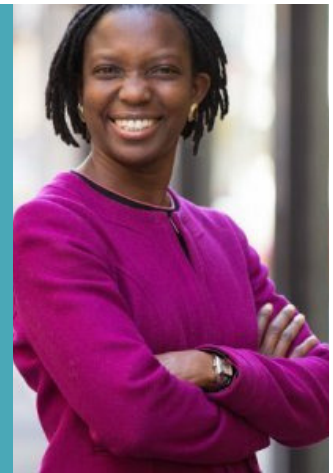


INDIA: Shatakshi Gawade is reclaiming public spaces 

*"I want to claim public spaces like roadsides, parks, bus stops, food stall corners, lakesides and river banks, and long stretches of roads covered by trees...I think the city would be safer with more and more women claiming public spaces like this... I am ready to claim my right to loiter. Will you join me?"*

UGANDA: Agnes Igoye, after fleeing from the Lord's Resistance Army, is now combating trafficking 

*"Since [2011] I have trained over 2000 law enforcement officers to counter trafficking. I founded the Huts For Peace program, which is a self-help initiative by displaced female survivors of trafficking and gender-based violence by the Lord's Resistance Army...Utilizing our talents, we all can do something to prevent human trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute offenders."*



VANUATU: Anne Pakoa ran for office and now is advocating for other women to do the same 


*"Even though I did not make it to become Vanuatu's first female president, I was at peace with it all. To me, I felt not as a loser but that I had been very courageous to step into politics by starting from the highest position in the country! I am not ashamed for taking that step but more rather proud of myself, that 35-year-old broken single mother who pulled herself up from her lowest to compete with strong and famous politicians."*



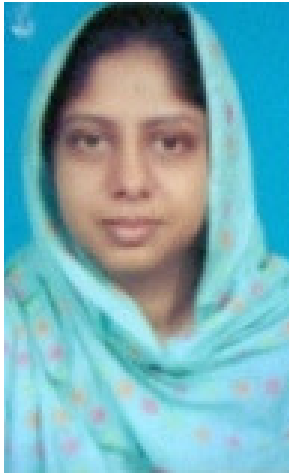



CAMEROON: Emily Miki is working across divides with other women to advocate for peace 

*"The women have formed a coalition to make their voices heard amongst the many clamouring for dialogue and a way out of the crisis... We are currently working collectively to advocate for a cease fire and dialogue between the government and the non-state armed forces and have also participated in humanitarian outreach programs to support displaced persons."*

TANZANIA: Rosemary Ntoipo is producing alternative energy to protect the environment and create jobs for women 

*"Providing security to our forests is very important and we are the best advocates to protection of "Great Mother Earth". I am doing it because I love her. She was created to provide for each one of us everywhere around the world and in "Justice for Climate Change"."*



PAKISTAN: Tahira Saleem is promoting women's participation in policymaking 

*"Being a young public policymaker and a change agent trained to analyze and formulate policies for diverse issues, I wish to see a graduated increase in participation of women in public policymaking in Pakistan and around the world for removing the barriers in their economic emancipation and empowerment thereby guaranteeing them a real secure living."*

UNITED STATES: Beth Osnes is encouraging girls in her community to raise their voices 

*"Young women understand the link between security and climate change. By connecting to their own extreme weather experiences, namely the 2013 Boulder flood that was declared a national emergency, they are able to understand how our collective security is tied to our ability to maintain a stable climate."*



# WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

Inspired to make a change? Whether you are an individual looking to make a difference or a policymaker seeking to take this report to heart, here are some ways you can take action today.

## Individually



- Change how you talk about security in your daily interactions
- Seek out and listen to the voices of women
- Share this report with others to help amplify women's voices on security issues
- Invite others to share their definitions of security, tell their stories, and speak out in forums
- Ask your policymakers to make changes and hold them accountable

## Policymakers & Institutions



- Expand discussions of security to be more holistic and inclusive
- Make a commitment to including, listening, and responding to women
- Be proactive about creating more inclusive spaces for participation
- Evaluate and improve policies and practices
- Support and fund women's organizations and networks working around peace and security



*“It’s true that a group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world, and I believe real change [will] come if women come together in such groups, in one voice, empowering one another and raising a common voice against hate, intolerance, disrespect, killings, and other forms of violence against women...”*

*—Survey Respondent, Cameroon*



# ABOUT THIS REPORT

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## Methods

The findings in this report come primarily from an online survey conducted in the fall of 2018 by World Pulse, in partnership with Our Secure Future and the Women's Alliance for Security Leadership - ICAN. Most questions for the survey were piloted in summer 2018 by our partners. The final survey, which included both qualitative and quantitative questions, was open between September and October 2018 in four languages, including English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. Most participants completed the English version. Participants were asked questions about how they define security, their security concerns and priorities, security and representation, and solutions to security concerns, as well as a series of demographic questions. Participants were recruited through World Pulse's networks as well as through promotions on social media platforms. Participants did not have to be members of World Pulse's online community; in fact, 56 percent were not current World Pulse members at the time of the survey. In total, the survey garnered 366 completed responses. In this document, we specifically report on findings from participants who identified as women. Additionally, this report is supported by narratives collected through World Pulse's crowdsourcing campaign, which yielded 150 stories from 37 countries. For more information about our methods, please contact [community@worldpulse.com](mailto:community@worldpulse.com).

## Thank you to our partners





**Find all the story submissions online and learn  
more about World Pulse and this project at  
[www.worldpulse.com/en/peace-security](http://www.worldpulse.com/en/peace-security)**



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