

# Women Charting a New Course on Peace and Security

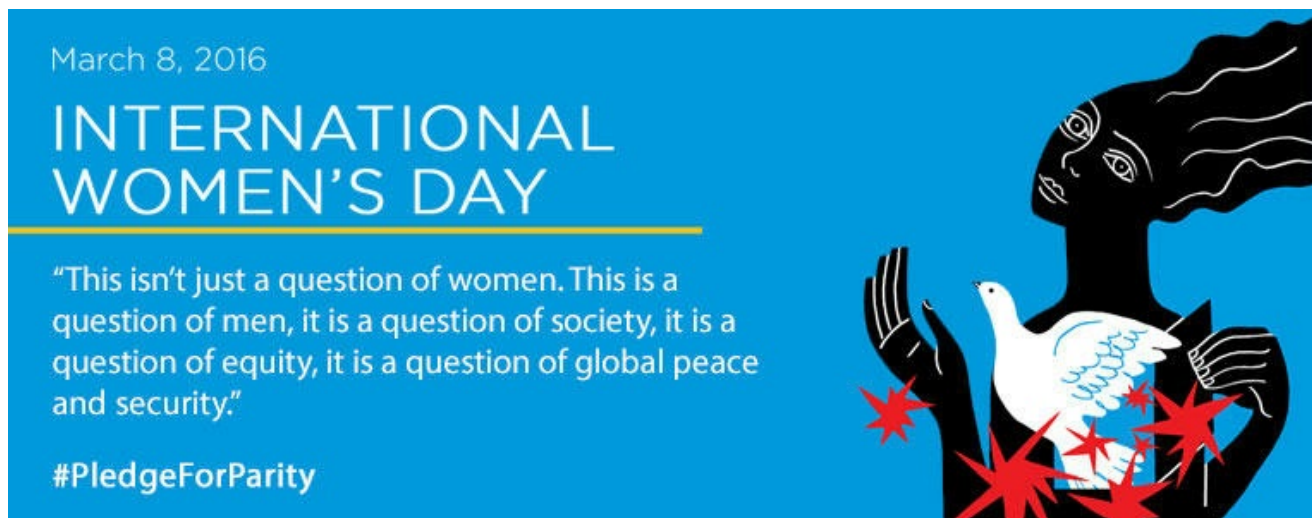
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Statistics, Global Luminaries Highlight the Patterns

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The fact that Afghanistan’s parliament has 69 female members, 27 percent of the total, illustrates the advances, albeit still tenuous, that are possible with determined efforts to support the protection and empowerment of women. At the same time, women worldwide still suffer disproportionately from conflict and violent extremism. In the run-up to International Women’s Day on March 8, USIP has collected statistics and the observations of global leaders to illustrate hard-won achievements and the devastating gaps that remain.



Various countries have observed [International Women's Day](#) since the early 1900s, and the United Nations has marked [the occasion](#) since 1975. More than 15 years ago, in 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security to reverse the broad exclusion of women from participation in [security](#) and peacebuilding, and to ensure protection for women and girls from violence in conflict.

USIP is in its seventh year of dedicated [work on these issues](#). In conflict zones, through mechanisms ranging from community dialogues to national peace processes, women’s empowerment is a catalyst for inclusive and sustainable change. Women leaders increasingly participate in political and peace processes in Afghanistan, Colombia and Ukraine; in initiatives to end sexual and gender-based violence in India and South Sudan; and in efforts to prevent violent extremism in Nigeria and Kenya. Throughout March, which the U.S. Congress in 1987 also designated as [Women's History Month](#), USIP will highlight women charting a new course toward peace around the world.

The following statistics and reflections from prominent leaders, marking the first eight days of March, help tell the story.

*“Women are essential contributors to the transition from the cult of war to the culture of peace.”*

*- Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury, a former UN undersecretary general and high*

| *representative, during a [discussion](#) at USIP in July 2015.*

In 2015, USIP supported networks of women civil society and [faith leaders](#) in 16 countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Syria, Thailand and Ukraine. The institute also conducted 16 public events on issues related to gender.

| *In the 31 major peace processes conducted worldwide between 1992 and 2011, women represented just 9% of negotiators, 4% of signatories, 3.7% of witnesses and 2.4 % of chief mediators.*

In the Colombia peace process between the government and the country's largest rebel group, USIP is supporting women peacebuilders and women-led organizations committed to non-violence and mediating conflict in the midst of war. In 2015, USIP launched a [one-year pilot project](#) that provided capacity-building to 30 women mediators from 12 different regions in Colombia. Some of these women have been invited to participate at the negotiating table in Havana, and all are developing and implementing projects and proposals at the local and national level to ensure that the voices and concerns of citizens are heard.

[On March 8](#), USIP will host a discussion of the roles women have played in Colombia's peace process.

| *Afghanistan has 69 female members of parliament (27%) in a 249-member assembly, according to the [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#), an international organization of parliaments.*

In encouraging the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, USIP has especially focused on increasing the civic and political participation of women, especially in Afghanistan. Sustainable peace requires political and social processes to be inclusive of all citizens. In 2014, USIP sponsored a groundbreaking national conference on "[Women and Elections](#)" in Kabul, offering women civil society leaders the opportunity to present recommendations to all eleven presidential candidates.

A September 2015 USIP Special Report outlined the [continuing obstacles](#) for women's leadership in Afghanistan, particularly in politics, and makes recommendations for addressing these issues.

[On March 15th](#), USIP will host a discussion with Mrs. Laura Bush, former First Lady of the United States, about the importance of the United States' continued support of Afghan women and girls.

| *"Survivors of sexual violence are [victimized twice](#): by the perpetrator, and then by the failure of the justice system."*

| *- Zainab Hawa Bangura, United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict*

As part of a global movement to [end wartime sexual violence](#), more than 80 legal, health and law enforcement leaders from six African countries met in Kampala, Uganda, in August 2015 for the [Missing Peace](#) Practitioners' Workshop. The workshop provided a rare opportunity for frontline responders—from Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, [eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo](#) and South Sudan—to discuss their work on the ground and to exchange tools and techniques they use to document and prosecute sexual violence and support survivors.

*“At a time when armed extremist groups place the subordination of women at the top of their agenda, we must place women’s leadership and **the protection of women’s rights at the top of ours.**”*

*- Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General*

Working in Kenya and Nigeria, USIP in 2013 launched a pilot project for [Women Preventing Extremist Violence](#). It was designed to increase women’s engagement and influence in strengthening the ability of communities to reduce violent extremism. Through a training program and facilitated dialogues, USIP’s staff works with partners on the ground to bring together women from civil society and the security sector to discuss the local causes of violent extremism and potential strategies for preventing it.

*In New Delhi, a 2012 study cited by [UN Women](#) found that 92% of women experience sexual assault in public spaces, and 88% reported experiencing some kind of verbal sexual harassment in their lifetimes.*

With the assistance of a USIP grant, activist ElsaMarie D’Silva supplied data from the India-based organization she co-founded, [SafeCity](#), to city police forces to encourage them to steer needed resources to places where more gender-based violence was occurring. SafeCity, a platform that documents sexual harassment and abuse in public spaces, has tracked thousands of reports of assault, identifying “hotspots” to be addressed by local communities, and creating safe spaces for women.

*In Ukraine, women make up more than **63%** of the 1.4 million people who fled the war in the east and are sheltering elsewhere in the country.*

Understanding that men and women, boys and girls are affected differently by violence and conflict, USIP formed a partnership with the Global Fund for Women and the Ukrainian Women’s Fund in November 2015 for a pilot project to understand the long-term needs of Ukrainians displaced by the fighting between Ukrainian government forces and Russian-backed rebels, and to explore the potential role of women and men in reconciliation and peace processes. Women represent [critical agents of change](#) in such a process, particularly in pressing for government reform and driving any reconciliation efforts forward.

*“This isn’t just a question of women. This is a question of men, it is a question of society, it is a question of equity, it is a question of global peace and security.”*

*- Ambassador Donald Steinberg, then-deputy administrator at the U.S. Agency for International Development, in a 2013 [event](#) at USIP.*

Engaging men in the process of ending violence against women is a critical part of sustainable peace. USIP’s [Unlearning Violence](#) project convenes men and women leaders from civil society for a series of skills-based programs that promote the use of conflict analysis based on gender and inter-group dialogue processes for local-level peacebuilding throughout South Sudan. The Unlearning Violence network works within the country to identify key stakeholders and opportunities for work toward reconciliation.

Gender Human Rights Justice, Security & Rule of Law

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