

# Global feminist cooperation during a pandemic

WILPF AFRICAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE 2020



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR  
**PEACE & FREEDOM**

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**Front page photo:** WILPF Africa conference in Cameroon 2019.

2021

**The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)** is

an international non-governmental organisation with National Sections and Groups covering every continent, an International Secretariat based in Geneva, and a New York office focused on the work of the United Nations (UN). Since our establishment in 1915, we have brought together women from around the world who are united in working for peace by non-violent means and promoting political, economic and social justice for all. Our strength lies in our ability to link the international and local levels.

## WILPF Africa

### Sections:

WILPF Cameroon  
WILPF Chad  
WILPF DR Congo  
WILPF Ghana  
WILPF Kenya  
WILPF Nigeria  
WILPF Uganda  
WILPF Zimbabwe

### Groups:

WILPF Burkina Faso  
WILPF Burundi  
WILPF CAR  
WILPF Cote d'Ivoire  
WILPF Niger  
WILPF Senegal  
WILPF Sierra Leone  
WILPF (emerging group) South Africa  
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# Introduction

Last year, the Beijing Platform for Action turned 25 years and it was 20 years since the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted. But instead of a global anniversary for gender equality, we saw a backlash for women's rights and global security. In the light of global rearmament contributing to increased tension, anti-feminist movements growing stronger, the democratic space shrinking, and threats to women's activists rising, we stress the importance of human security, conflict prevention, and a progressive realization of the agenda for women, peace and security.

While the Covid-19 pandemic has further highlighted the shortcomings of global and national structures, with disproportional effects on women, we witness the tremendous work and progress of women rights and peace activists across the globe.



**"THANK YOU WILPF  
AFRICA, FOR THE SHARING  
OF EXPERIENCES AND  
MUTUAL ENRICHMENT OF  
SECTIONS AND GROUPS."**  
WILPF BURUNDI

As a global feminist peace movement, with a history of over 100 year of working for peace, and with national Sections and Groups in close to 50 countries around the world, we within WILPF continue to mobilize to face old and new challenges to just and sustainable feminist peace.

WILPF in the African region has over the past decade grown from two to 18 Sections and Groups in the region. Thousands of women rights and peace activists are now mobilized within WILPF, questioning patriarchal structures, challenging militarisation, advocating to counteract the proliferation of arms, promoting women's political participation, social justice, and bringing forward conflict preventive measures.

The key to the successful growth and development of WILPF in the African region is not solely the courageous women rights peace activists that work tirelessly day and night, but also the movement building that happens when you work for a common cause, strengthening each other through sharing experiences and expertise across country borders, language barriers and cultures. This is when the magic happens - when we come together and jointly work towards a peaceful world for all.

This report has sprung from the annual WILPF Africa regional conference in 2020 and gives some examples of the work done in the region. It also contains the statement conducted by 18 WILPF Sections and Groups on common challenges, critical areas for change, and ways forward.



**“REGIONAL COOPERATION IS KEY AS WOMEN ARE UNITED IN THEIR DEMANDS FOR PEACE WORLDWIDE AND COMMITTED TO BUILD A STRONGER PEACE NETWORK. IT CONSIDERS THE NEED TO BUILD ON THE OUTSTANDING WOMEN’S WORK FOR PEACE IN AFRICA. MOREOVER, AFRICAN WILPFERS’ STRONG COMMITMENT HELPS STRENGTHENS TIES BETWEEN WILPF SECTIONS AND GROUPS TO ADVANCE PEACEBUILDING AND WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION.”**

WILPF CAMEROON

# The challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has had great impact on most, if not every, sector of society. Conflicts, poverty, and famine are expected to increase in the wake of a shrinking global economy. The progress on equality and sustainable development has been disrupted. Decades of progress is in the risk of being rolled back. There have been reports<sup>1</sup> of gross human rights abuse and disrespect to democracy, and Covid-19 related measures have led, in some cases intentionally, to restrictions of the freedom of expression, women's political participation and civic space.

Today, several studies have shown that the pandemic has increased already existing structural inequalities between men and women, and other social categories like ethnicity, and/or migrant status, income, and (dis)ability Data also show a rise in gender-based violence and that access to sexual and reproductive health and rights has deteriorated. Women's unpaid work and increasing presence in the informal sector adds to the pandemic's disproportional effect on women.<sup>2</sup>

**"COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS HAVE SERIOUS EFFECTS ON WOMEN BY INCREASING THEIR FRAGILITY AND VULNERABILITY. ESPECIALLY WOMEN IN CONFLICT AFFECTED COUNTRIES, AS MOST OF THEM ARE POOR AND DISPLACED WITH MARGINAL JOBS IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR. THEY ARE NOT ABLE TO COPE WITH THE RESTRICTIONS."**

WILPF SUDAN

Restrictions due to the spread of Covid-19 have led to organizations being forced to suspend planned activities, due to reduced civic space, but also due to the shift from rights-based work and political advocacy to more humanitarian efforts to meet the urgent needs of the public during the pandemic. Strategic and political processes that would normally

Foto: Evelina Romnäck



have included women's rights activists, are now taking place behind closed doors or digitally. Although many digital meetings and processes have been successful, it is a challenge to make them inclusive and secure. State and non-state actors have referred to Covid-19 to justify increased digital surveillance as well as increased collection of data from civil society<sup>3</sup>. The security of online meetings and sensitive information that may put activists in danger is a severe and urgent problem. This lack of security in digital forums has caused many consultations with civil society organisations (CSO's), for example with the UN, to be cancelled.

Further, we need to keep a critical eye on the pandemics effects when it comes to violence, militarization, and repressive measures, populist and anti-democratic ideas, and the financial incitements and consequences of policies and action programs.<sup>4</sup>



**"COVID-19 HAS TAKEN A LOT FROM US, LET US ENSURE WE ADHERE TO THE PROTOCOLS, THAT WAY WE WILL BE SAVING A LIFE. THAT LIFE COULD BE YOUR OWN, OR SOMEONE WHO MEANS A LOT TO YOU. JUST LIKE WAR, COVID-19 HAS CAUSED SO MUCH PAIN TO MANKIND, LET US DISARM THE VIRUS AND STAY SAFE"**

WILPF NIGERIA

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1 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/04/covid-19-pandemic-sparked-year-rights-crises>

2 <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621149/bp-the-inequality-virus-250121-en.pdf>

3 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2020/pandemics-digital-shadow>

4 [https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Documenting\\_and\\_Analysing\\_Responses\\_to\\_the\\_COVID\\_19\\_Crisis\\_MN-1.pdf](https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Documenting_and_Analysing_Responses_to_the_COVID_19_Crisis_MN-1.pdf)

# WILPF Africa's work during the pandemic

In the midst of the crisis, people are carrying out acts of solidarity, questioning structural injustices, and mobilizing for change. Women's rights peace activists have come together at the local level and used their existing networks, crucial in providing immediate support, but also in contributing to long-term conflict prevention and peace-building. Many WILPF Sections and Groups in the African region have identified similar challenges in their respective contexts during the pandemic. Sharing experiences across borders, both positive and negative, have had a great impact on the work carried out at the local level in where WILPF Sections and Groups in the African region operate.



**"WITH THE HARSH REALITY OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, THE WOMEN OF WEST AFRICA WANT TO MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD AND ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CRISIS FOR A BETTER AND MORE EQUAL WORLD FOR ALL."** WILPF BURKINA FASO

Being an international organisation, with presence on all continents, has been an important support to WILPF's members. At a very early stage of the pandemic, WILPF could identify, through their members, the acute need of humanitarian support and the need to temporarily shift focus

to contribute in preventing the spread of the virus and mitigate its effects on society. Thanks to

donors stepping up and allowing more flexibility to current funds, WILPF set up a Solidarity Fund that allowed for Sections and Groups to carry out initiatives in relation to the effects of the pandemic.

Being part of an international organisation has proven valuable to members in a variety of ways. Access to a network of people in similar situations, through global and regional virtual meetings, has reduced the feeling of fear

and isolation that many feel during the crisis. WILPF has also published a guide on how to document and analyse the underlying structural causes of the challenges societies face during the Covid-19 crisis.

WILPF Sections and Groups in the African region have found new ways to organize their work and methods to face the challenges imposed by the pandemic. While many WILPF Sections and Groups have engaged in distributing necessities such as water, buckets, soap, hydroalcoholic gels, masks, and food, they have also carried out different activities to address different aspects of the crisis. This work has been carried out alongside their work on women's participation, conflict prevention, and disarmament. Below are some examples of areas that WILPF Sections and Groups in the African region have found important to address during the pandemic.

**"WILPF REGIONAL COOPERATION ENCOURAGES ALL MEMBERS AND SECTIONS TO FOCUS ON WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE A COMMON GOAL FOR THE BENEFIT OF HUMANITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT. WHERE COOPERATION FAILS, OBJECTIVES REMAINS, BUT MERELY SWORD LESS WORDS."** WILPF GHANA

Foto: Li Grebäck



Solidarity Care Fund, Chad.



# Awareness-raising on Covid-19

Many WILPF Sections and Groups describe that it has been easier to get hold of false information about Covid-19 than facts. Rumours and jokes are circulating about the virus, both on its origin, its severity, and on protective measures. During this period of crisis, some Sections and Groups have been committed to promoting facts on the virus and information on how to protect yourself through preventive measures enacted by the health authorities, by providing support to the local communities through awareness-raising activities. The activities have primarily targeted those most vulnerable to Covid-19. Campaigns have targeted primary schools, women shelters, orphanages, hospital staff, Women's Traders Union Associations among others. Awareness has also been raised through media.

WILPF members have travelled to remote areas not reached by public services, distributing protective materials and information leaflets door to door.

**"WITH WILPF AFRICA,  
TOGETHER HAND IN HAND,  
THE SECTIONS AND  
GROUPS OF AFRICA ARE  
BRINGING PEACE TO THE  
WORLD BY PROMOTING  
MULTILATERALISM AND  
THE CONSOLIDATION  
OF PEACE."**

WILPF TOGO



**"BETTER TO KEEP QUIET  
THAN TO SPREAD THE  
IDEA THAT COVID-19  
DOES NOT EXIST."**

WILPF CAR



# Stigma and discrimination

Work has been done to educate the public to reduce fear, stigma, and misinformation about the virus. WILPF has been in the forefront in many countries to warn of the dangers of stigma and discrimination in the response to Covid-19. Stigmatisation of people who had contracted Covid-19 was many times recognised by CSO's long before it was addressed by public institutions, such as the health ministries. Social media campaigns have also been used to keep people updated on the latest developments, the barrier measures and how to combat stigmatisation.

In the work to prevent and combat stigmatisation and discrimination some Sections and Groups have focused their work on the specific vulnerability of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) during the Covid-19 pandemic. IDP's who have been forced to flee conflict areas to live in the big cities have been identified as especially vulnerable to stigmatisation.



**"INSECURITY WORRIES MORE AND MORE PEOPLE IN OUR REGION. THE TIME HAS UNDOUBTEDLY COME TO QUESTION OURSELVES, TO REFLECT, AND TO TAKE RESOLUTIONS THAT ALLOW US TO IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES THAT WILL MAKE MORE ROOM FOR WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF GENDER AND HUMAN SECURITY."** WILPF COTE D'IVOIR



**"WOMEN HAVE BEEN AFFECTED GREATLY BY THE COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS. MANY WOMEN SURVIVE BY SELLING THEIR CRAFTS AND PRODUCTS FROM GARDENS, WITH COVID-19 THE OPEN MARKETS WERE CLOSED AND THIS HAS LED TO SERIOUS FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS, AND FAILURE TO PROVIDE MEALS FOR THEIR FAMILIES."** WILPF ZIMBABWE

# Gender based and domestic violence

By now, the linkages between Covid-19 restrictions and gender-based and domestic violence are well known. WILPF members and other women rights activist called this out at the very start of the pandemic. This has been a focus area of many WILPF Sections and Groups, particularly during the more extreme lockdowns. Support has been given to victims and their families. In order to raise awareness of domestic violence and intervene in the rise of cases, campaigns have been carried out at the community level, for example via radio programmes. Some WILPF Sections and Groups have also opened toll free helplines to help and support victims

of domestic violence. Understanding and predicting

the strong nexus between food insecurity and domestic violence, Sections and

Groups focused their support to help women who were experiencing

abuse in their homes, by creating a platform for online dialogue for women to share information and support each other. In some

rural areas, talks to engage both men and women to discuss the negative impacts of domestic violence where village leaders

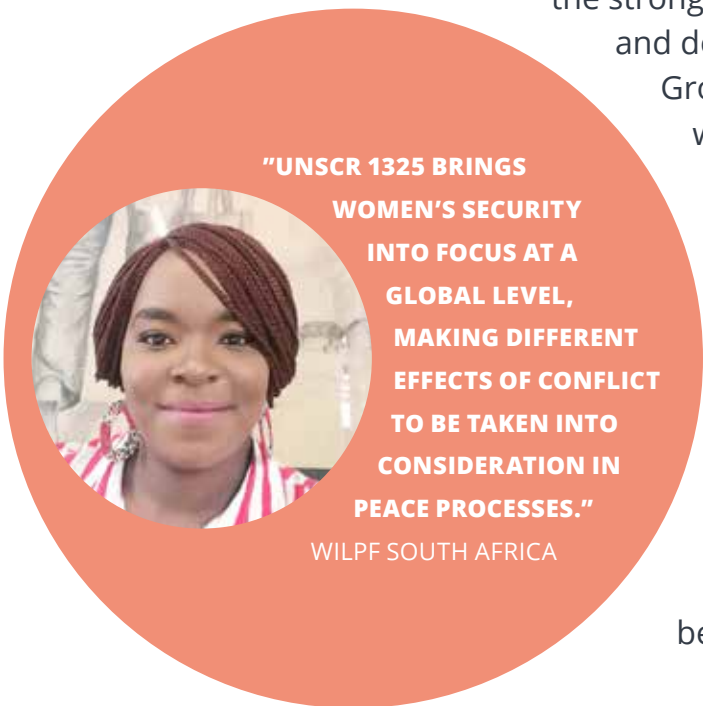
attributed most cases of violence to patriarchal practices have also

been conducted.



**"UNSCR 1325, ALLOWS US TO CREATE AWARENESS ON PEACE AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL."**

WILPF UGANDA



**"UNSCR 1325 BRINGS WOMEN'S SECURITY INTO FOCUS AT A GLOBAL LEVEL, MAKING DIFFERENT EFFECTS OF CONFLICT TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION IN PEACE PROCESSES."**

WILPF SOUTH AFRICA

# Women in the informal sector

A majority of workers in the informal sector are women. Women in this sector have been greatly affected by the pandemic and its restrictions. Due to curfews and lockdowns, many have had to close down their businesses, seldom with any social unemployment support by the state, or savings to rely on. WILPF Sections and Groups have played an active part in developing Covid-19 response programmes that focus on sensitisation and adoption of proper barrier gestures, and advocacy has been carried out at state authorities for improved measures and care for the most vulnerable groups, in particular women in the informal sectors. Workshops and meetings to come up with advocacy strategies have been conducted, for example on how to establish a social protection system that adapts to the situation of women in the informal sector.



**"WOMEN SHOULD BE MORE INVOLVED IN BUILDING THE BLOCKS FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND SECURITY."**  
WILPF SIERRA LEONE

**"NO STRUGGLE FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD CAN SUCCEED WITHOUT THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN. LET US REMAIN UNITED AND STRONG SISTERS IN AFRICA AND THE WORLD."** WILPF SENEGAL



# WILPF Africa regional conference

– inclusive digital transition in the light of Covid-19

On 14-15 November 2020, WILPF Africa's annual regional conference was held. A digital conference that brought together 70 women rights activists from 18 countries in the region. The conference was an inspiring meeting with trainings, presentations, discussions, and lively interaction. Despite the many unforeseen challenges that had to be overcome due to the pandemic, the end result became a historic moment, with more women rights peace activist gathered for a regional WILPF conference in Africa than ever before.



**"ALL OF US SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE. IT IS OUR RIGHTFUL DUTY. IN LINE WITH UNSCR 1325 WE DEMAND GLOBAL PARTICIPATION!"**

WILPF KENYA

The conference was originally scheduled for Nairobi in May 2020, but was cancelled due to the pandemic. A decision was made to conduct the conference digitally.

Challenges with poor internet connection in most countries with participating Sections and Groups required us to come up with new ideas and to think outside the box. Instead

of conducting the conference as a live video conference, Sections and Groups sent in contributions during the months before in the form of videos and slide shows that was translated (in French and English respectively) and compiled into a conference kit. The kit was compressed to the extent that it was possible to share it with all the meeting participants via chat apps beforehand. Participants could download the kit to a computer at a time when they had access to reliable Internet. This way, at the time of the conference, everyone had access to all the conference material without being dependent on Internet.



**"AS WOMEN ACTIVISTS, WE MUST TRY, DURING THIS CONFINEMENT PERIOD, TO DEVELOP APPROACHES THAT CAN PROGRESSIVELY REDUCE GENDER INEQUALITIES TO OFFER THE WORLD SOCIAL JUSTICE AS WELL AS SUSTAINABLE PEACE AFTER THE PANDEMIC. WE WILL COLLECT ALL THE PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE THAT THE PANDEMIC HAS GENERATED. WE WILL ANALYSE THEM, PRIORITISE THEM, AND, AS A RESULT, WE WILL BEGIN TO ADVOCATE BEFORE OUR INSTITUTIONS, NAMELY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, THE PARLIAMENT, THE GOVERNMENT, AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT."** WILPF DRC

The thematic areas in focus for the conference were; 20 years of UNSCR 1325, Covid-19 and its impact on the space and work of women rights activists, confronting militarized masculinities, killer robots, and regional cooperation. Digital trainings on human rights, communication, and democratic organisational structures were also included. During the conference, the participants took part of the material at the same time, according to an agenda synchronized for four time zones. Regional communication took place between countries through a joint live Chat-app group, with greetings, reflections, and inspiring tips, simultaneously translated between the two languages. All WILPF Sections and Groups also conducted national group discussions throughout the conference.

In connection to the conference, we also created a parallel social media campaign, to further strengthen a WE and HERE feeling, despite the long distance between us. The campaign also functioned as an important tool to provide visibility to women's rights peace activists work in the African region.

**"WE CANNOT BE AT PEACE IF WE LIVE IN POVERTY. CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD INSECURITY CONTINUES TO BEAR ITS VISIBLE IMPACTS ON WOMEN AND THE POPULATION IN THE LAKE CHAD REGION."**

WILPF CHAD



As a result of the extensive contribution from Sections and Groups into the making of the conference kit, a great variety of material is now compiled and accessible for women's rights peace activists to share, revisit and use to strengthen and facilitate their future work.

Through hard work, new working methods and technical skills, close communication between Sections and Groups, and through cooperation between WILPF's regional representatives in the African region, WILPF's international office, and the co-organisers WILPF Sweden, we managed to overcome some of the challenges that the pandemic poses for our global feminist organization, and conduct a conference with historically high participation, broad ownership and much joy.

WILPF African regional conference in Cameroon 2019.



# Concluding remarks

Africa is a continent of over 1.3 billion people. WILPF members have committed themselves to solidarity and, in accordance with Agenda 2030, to “leave no one behind”, with a focus on building a more inclusive movement for an inclusive world.

During the regional conference, members described the noticeable shrinking of civic space, while health, economic, and socio-political challenges also continue to prevail to realise the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

The scope of the work is expanding as well as the task. We are now faced not only with the continuous impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also with rising insurgencies from West, Central to the North of Africa, with violent extremism and dictatorial regimes that respond to social unrest with power grips leading to even more socio-political chaos. All these challenges might have slowed down our work but we remain clearheaded of what is needed to forge change.

The growing consensus around women’s participation in decision-making has been greeted with optimism. However, if no immediate efforts are made, even the little achievements on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 might be short-lived because of the shrinking civic space and the existing multifaceted challenges.

Recognising that change is not a solo act, WILPF has an expanding network of partners in Africa like the MenEngage Alliance, the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control (GENSAC), and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) to maintain momentum on civic activism and direct political advocacy.

Action is also required to match with the growing new generation of members, by offering convincing processes of engagement and different ways of mobilising.

We have “talked the talk” for years now, but this is the time to “walk the walk”.

Collaboration has been strengthened, the movements have been built on



women, peace, and security and conventional social norms that undermine equality and inclusion. African women are ready to stand up and address the root causes of conflict, advocate for the removal of the shackles of servitude, to fight the endless vices that women suffer as violence continues to increase in different forms and with different impacts.

The way forward remains “walking the walk” notwithstanding the shrinking civic space, challenges, and fears to realise the dream of every woman: a society where women have a say in decision-making processes. A world that is inclusive, participatory, and equal! A world of Feminist Peace! The world we want!

2021 is the threshold of hope for our aspiration as a feminist peace movement, and we call on everyone to be part of the process. Never forget that our diversity is our strength.

Stronger Together.

**Sylvie Ndongmo**

Regional Representative of Africa,  
WILPF International Board

# WILPF Africa unified Statement

The statement below was agreed upon by women peace activists, members of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), in 18 countries in the African region, during WILPF Africa's (virtual) regional conference on November 14th-15th 2020.

## United in our efforts – 20 years of UNSCR 1325

20 years after the historic adoption of the UNSCR 1325, we celebrate the tremendous work carried out by women across the globe to advance women's rights and women's participation in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and political processes, and to demand and enhance security for women. We celebrate the steps taken and the progress made. We reflect upon the challenges posed by patriarchal structures, gender inequalities, power relations, militarized security, and lack of political will, continuously hindering the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda. United in our efforts, WILPF women's rights, and peace activists are determined to continue the hard work and collaboration across the African region, to mobilize women, call upon stakeholders, and influence the political will towards the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the broader WPS agenda.

- ◉ **We call on governments, institutions, and multilateral fora to promote** the participation of women in national, sub-regional, and international structures of decision-making, peacekeeping, and conflict prevention, as well as in defence and security structures.
- ◉ **We urge governments to accelerate** the domestication and effective and efficient implementation of UNSCR 1325, including its incorporation into Local Development Plans. As well as greater popularization of UNSCR 1325, through translation to local and national languages, training, and awareness-raising.
- ◉ **We call on governments to adopt UNSCR 1325** National Action Plans (NAP), and/or to accelerate and communicate national strategies for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 NAPs.
- ◉ **We ask governments, international partners, the African Union as well as agencies of the United Nations System, to facilitate** support, and strengthen women's organisations working on the WPS agenda, through increased communication, enabled synergies and allocation and facilitation of funding.

# The Impact of COVID-19 and the application of the Leave No One Behind principle

Most countries in Africa have, since the beginning of March 2020, been confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic. This global pandemic is a health crisis, as well as a socio-economic, and food and security crisis, with significant repercussions for nearly all people within societies. However, several assessments of the effects of this crisis reveal that there are strong disparities in the effects, particularly with regards to gender, state of health, situations of distress and vulnerability, sector of activity, civil and migratory status, age or socioeconomic status.

The pandemic has further brought to light underlying structural injustices and challenges to sustainable peace and security. We are severely concerned with women's increased exposure to violence, challenges to women's economic and political empowerment, and the shrinking democratic space for civil society in particular women's rights activists. As WILPF activists, we will provide analysis, speak up, and forge change in the direction of feminist peace. In view of the above and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which aim to leave no one behind (LNOB):

- **We urge the international community and the United Nations to give priority** to human security, by reallocating military spending to humanitarian causes, mobilizing substantial resources to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on human rights and human security.
- **We urge governments to include women** and gender analysis in decision and policy making in planning and management of crises, such as health emergencies, natural disasters, and conflict.
- **We call on states and the international community to ensure in-depth analysis** of those left behind, and to integrate the LNOB approach into all development processes, with analysis, implementation, monitoring, accountability, and effective participation in the LNOB principle.
- **We urge governments to have a more equitable distribution** of support and financing to populations in vulnerable settings, to reduce disparities and disproportionate effects of the pandemic, and to promote economic empowerment of women to face COVID-19 challenges, with specific regards to those excluded from civil registration and to women in the informal sector.
- **We urge governments to commit to placing higher importance** on the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, to foster feminist domestic and foreign policies, and provide protection and support to women in conflicts and fragile settings.

# Confronting militarized masculinities and strengthening disarmament

We recognize the links between toxic masculinity norms, militarization, violence, and gender-based violence, proliferation and use of arms, and conflict. Harmful gender norms must be challenged and transformed, through community education, peace education and peace culture, demilitarized policing, and arms control. The culture of war continues to spur the production and development of arms, with the unrelenting development of lethal autonomous weapons systems, known as Killer Robots. WILPF Africa is determined in the struggle to transform militarized masculinities, prevent new forms of violence, counteract arms proliferation, and ban weapons systems such as Killer Robots.

- **We call on the governments of African countries to resort**, without delay, to mediation and dialogue as means of conflict resolution, to the detriment of military responses, which, beyond the exacerbation of violence, reinforce the culture of militarized masculinity.
- **We urge the African Union, as a priority on the agenda of the next summit of heads of state, to encourage governments to prevent** armed violence in all its forms, in particular by recommending the implementation of existing legal instruments to counteract the proliferation of SALW, and a commitment to ban lethal autonomous weapon systems.
- **We call on governments to challenge the power balance** between men and women, to actively engage in transforming negative masculinities, specifically urging men and boys to end gender inequality, gender-based violence, and rigid ideas and practices of the socialization of masculinity, key factors in the production of violence and recruitment into armed groups.
- **We urge governments and their partners to establish programs** and policies of alliances that strengthen the mobilization of men with women for feminist peace.
- **We welcome the ownership of civil society** in issues related to confronting militarized masculinities, the enhancement of women groups to advocate for women's human rights, and the support for feminist movements to grow.

# Respect for public freedoms

We are witnessing people coming together in various parts of the world, exercising their fundamental right to make their voices heard and protest against structural injustices, racism, police and/or military violence, limitations to women's rights, neglect of human rights, and a shrinking democratic space. We are witnessing violence, captivation, and ridicule in responses to peaceful protests. Across the African continent, people are coming together, standing up for their fundamental human rights. As women rights and peace activists, WILPF Africa condemns violence and oppression and encourage dialogue, mediation, demilitarized solutions, feminist approaches, and respect for human rights.

- **We call for all to respect the freedom** of expression, freedom of assembly, and peaceful protests, and we urge governments to respect and promote fundamental and public rights and freedoms, in accordance with constitutions and other national, regional and international legal texts and instruments.
- **We urge governments to raise awareness** and update training programs for law enforcement officers and administrative authorities on the exercise of fundamental freedoms enshrined in our laws and international conventions, to protect rights stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- **We call on governments to revise legal frameworks** that hinder democratic expression, such as anti-terrorism laws that may undermine the freedoms of demonstrations and assembly.
- **We urge governments to prevent violence** of all kinds linked to the deprivation of public freedoms.

## WILPF Sections and Groups standing behind the statement

WILPF BURUNDI	WILPF CAR
WILPF DRC	WILPF SENEGAL
WILPF SUDAN	WILPF NIGERIA
WILPF BURKINA FASO	WILPF CHAD
WILPF GHANA	WILPF SIERRA LEONE
WILPF TOGO	WILPF UGANDA
WILPF CAMEROON	WILPF COTE D'IVOIRE
WILPF KENYA	WILPF SOUTH AFRICA
WILPF NIGER	WILPF ZIMBABWE

# Background

For over 105 years, the Women's International League for peace and Freedom (WILPF) has been bringing women together to work for a world free from violence and armed conflict. National WILPF sections and groups in almost fifty countries across the globe work every day to educate, inform and advocate for sustainable peace-building by increasing women's meaningful participation, respect for human rights and intensifying disarmament and arms control efforts.

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MEETING  
AGREEMENTS

**M**  
BUILDING A FEMINIST  
MOVEMENT



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR  
**PEACE & FREEDOM**