

WOMEN FOR NATIONAL PEACE BUILDING

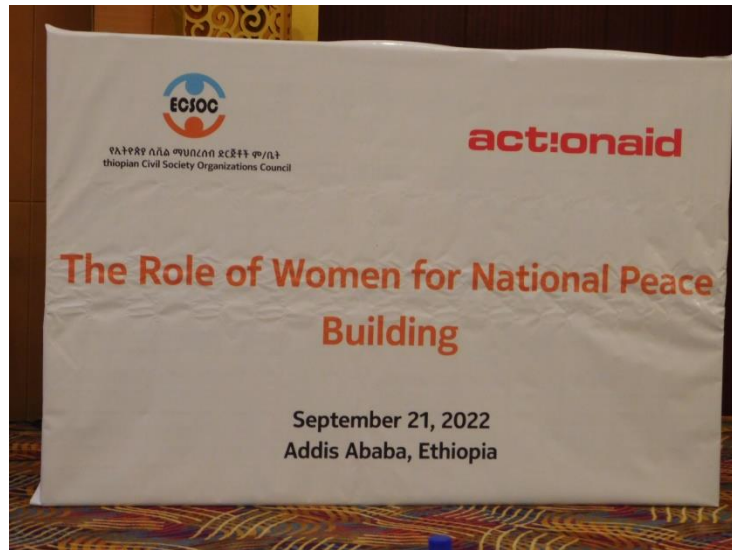


*High-level dialogue
on how to foster the
role of women for
national peace
building*

Proceeding of Women for National Peace building Dialogue Workshop

INTRODUCTION

The Ethiopian Civil Society Organization (ECSOC), legally mandated to represent, coordinate and self-regulate, the civil society sector in Ethiopia strives to the end and resolution of all conflicts and disagreements by peaceful means. In so doing, it carries out a wide range of activities and initiatives including high level dialogues and workshops. To this end, the council, in partnership with Action Aid Ethiopia (AAE) organized a half-day dialogue workshop on the theme of women's role for national peace building, September 21/2022. The workshop was held at Inter luxury hotel and was facilitated by Ahmed Hussein, Vice president to the Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Council.



OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP



The overall objective of the workshop was to hold a high-level dialogue on how to foster the role of women for national peace building. Other ancillary objectives of the dialogue included: creating awareness of international and national frameworks related to women in peace and security; understand the rationale for the involvement of women in peace processes and promote their potential as peace builders, and to finally identify the potential challenges and barriers to women's participation in peace building in Ethiopia and deliberate on measures of way forward.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

After the completion of the workshop, the hope is that participants will be equipped with an increased understanding of the role of women for national peace building. Moreover, an enhanced knowledge about the meaningful participation of women in peace and security as well as clarity about policy interventions and advocacy points to promote the role of women in peace building were envisaged as the outcomes sought with the holding of the workshop

SUMMARY OF THE WORKSHOP



Henok Melese, Executive Director, ECSOC

In his opening remark, Henok Melese, the Executive Director of the Council welcomed the participants and the theme of the dialogue. He underscored the importance of such a dialogue on the special occasion of the International Day of Peace. He also emphasized the timely nature of the dialogue given the difficult time of which the country finds itself.

In her part, Tinebeb Birhane, Vice President of ECSOC & Country Director of Action Aid Ethiopia (AAE), which financially supported the workshop, provided an account of the inception of the series of dialogue on gender equality, including the agenda of the day. She noted that the dialogue is an outcome of a panel discussion on gender equality held during the CSO week in 2021. She also applauded the



Tinebeb Berhane, Vice President, ECSOC & Country Director AAE

conduct of the dialogue on the special occasion of International Peace Day. Tinebeb noted that conflict and violence derives fragility, accentuating and smoldering the plight of women, producing more poverty, displacement and food insecurity.

Then the major part of the discussion followed with a stimulating presentation by Zelalem Eshetu, Legal and Policy Advisor at the Ethiopian Civil Society Council (ECSOC). The presentation covered a wide range of themes and topics, including the conceptualization and operationalization of the concepts of peace and peace building, the legal and normative



Zelalem Eshetu, Legal and Policy Advisor, ECSOC

foundations of women's role in peace building, the challenges and barriers of women's participation and the way forward.

Conceptually, it was noted that there is no uniform definition of peace. And yet peace is generally understood as an absence of war or direct violence. Peace should, however, also be understood beyond the absence of war or

direct violence as presence of equality, fairness, and protection of human rights. Similarly, notwithstanding the fact that there are a number of definitions, peace building is defined as a comprehensive term entailing an array of processes, approaches, and set of activities aimed at preventing, mitigating and transforming conflicts.

Three perspectives on women's role in peace process including women as victims, perpetrators and peace builders were identified. The general agreement is that women considerably engage in the business of war making but also peacemaking. Relatedly, the normative and empirical foundations for the involvement of women in peace building were discussed. Normatively, women's role is founded the basis of the following:

Women make up half of the Population – they are the core half

2. Peace is a mother investment – Generally speaking, women are naturally inclined to peace. They are more loving and more caring.
3. Women are also victims, and they have every right to take part in peace processes. At the moment, this gender lens misses out.
4. Those peace agreements where women have been involved have proved to be effective than those which were not.
5. Women's have the right to take part in peace building – it is their fundamental right and have every reason to demand for their exercise.

Moreover, while the presence of international legal and normative frameworks, notably, the UNSC resolution 1325/2000 and others is discernable, the conspicuous absence of an adequate institutional and policy framework in Ethiopia was emphasized. Despite the FDRE constitution

granting women the right to “full consultation” in matters of national importance, there is no any policy framework that directly and explicitly deals with women’s role. It is imperative that this gap is addressed.

The modalities and forms for women’s participation were also discussed. It was noted that women’s participation shall be considered is in all levels ranging from macro to meso level and all track levels.

Finally, Mr. Zelalem’s presentation outlined the challenges, facing women’s participation and the way forward. The challenges and barriers to women’s participation include:

1. Delay, there is no policy backing
2. Cultural – hindering norms and attitudes
3. Threat of violence against women
1. Existing inequalities in the field of education, income and household responsibilities
2. Lack of support from those organizations working in human rights – there is lack of support.

As a way forward, the following, among others, were pointed out:

1. Strengthening women’s engagement in peace building with proper policy framework including mainstreaming UNSCR 1325 in existing national policy and legal instruments; preparing/finalizing a national action plan for the enforcement of UNSC resolution 1325 and revisiting the national gender policy in view of the four pillars of the resolution notably, Participation, Prevention, Protection and Relief and Recovery
2. Capacity building for the security and justice sector to understand women’s unique role and advance the role of women in peace work and peace activities.
3. Advocacy by CSOs, Government Institutions, Media and women organizations to promote women’s role in peace building. Such efforts should aim at the overall transformation of the socio-economic conditions of women including in areas of education and economic empowerment and enhancing their state of inner peace.

During the Q and A and discussion session participants pointed out the existing policy gap and limitations with the existing models that promote the participation of women. Participants described the dialogue event as “timely” in view of the current situation Ethiopia finds itself. At the same time, however, it was also emphasized that the agenda should not only appear when



violent conflicts break out. The need to champion women’s cause all the time – not just at a time when conflicts erupt – was stressed

Besides, it was emphasized that women for peace at national level is key particularly considering the multifaceted conflict context which Ethiopia currently finds itself. Peace building, however, is also a local process and efforts should be

directed to local and grass root levels. At local and sub-national level, cultural and socio-economic challenges, in particular, are widespread and rife. And therefore, activities aimed at the empowerment of women need to be channeled where they are critically needed. In this regard, the importance of promoting the inner peace of women was pointed out as a key area of focus and avenue for action.

In general, the Need for rethinking Women’s Role in Conflict and Peace Processes was repeatedly stressed. It was indicated that our conception of women’s role in Peace and Conflict is often touted by a model of charity of which women are treated in “supportive” and “subsidiary” roles. This is a huge impediment to the advancement of women’s



role in society. There is, therefore, a need to counter this and adopt a human rights-based approach to women participation in peace and security. Women are key stakeholders and their participation in Peace building needs to be fundamentally considered as their right in and of



itself. In light of this, a number of speakers also underscored the inadequate legal and policy framework as a serious impediment to the participation of women and the need for addressing. Most countries have also enacted national action plan to implement UNSC Resolution 1325, Ethiopia seems to have not done so far.

The workshop was concluded with statements by the moderator, Mr. Ahmed Hussein, and remarks by Mr. Henok