



Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations (NEWA)

Terms of Reference (TOR)

For

Consultancy service call to Conduct a compressive assessment on the challenges and opportunities of the Women Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) in Ethiopia

February 2025

Addis Ababa Ethiopia

1. Background and Context

Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations NEWA is one of the pioneer national civil society networks in Ethiopia working for the respect of women's political, economic, social, and legal rights. Currently, NEWA has 38 member associations/organizations operating all over the country whose primary objective is creating an enabling environment for the empowerment of Ethiopian women and girls. Its member associations aim to advance women's rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment in Ethiopia. NEWA has experience in leading women's rights issues in Ethiopia through advocacy, research, capacity building, and monitoring government compliance with Gender Equality. As a network organization, NEWA has been advocating for the development and proper implementation of gender-sensitive policies, laws, and programs at the national and regional levels.

1.1.Context in brief

Ethiopia, the second-most populous country in Africa, has long been a complex variety of ethnic diversity, religious plurality, and political divergence. Its recent history, however, has been stained by persistent instability, deep-seated ethnic tensions, and violent conflict, culminating in the devastating Tigray war, which erupted in 2020. The conflict in Tigray not only triggered a national crisis but also reverberated across the broader East African region, contributing to a growing humanitarian disaster. According to the United Nations (UN), more than 2.5 million people were displaced within Ethiopia by early 2021 due to the conflict, and over 5.2 million were in urgent need of food aid and protection services (UN OCHA, 2021).

The conflict has exposed Ethiopia's longstanding governance challenges, including the failure to peacefully resolve political tensions and the inadequate capacity of institutions to mediate between competing regional and ethnic groups. The causes of recurrent conflict in Ethiopia are multifaceted, driven by historical grievances, political power struggles, disputes over land and resources, and deeply entrenched ethnic divisions. Regional militias have become active participants in the public unrest and resistance, and conflict, alongside formal military and political entities. External actors, including Egypt and Eritrea, have further fuelled the unrest, seeking to leverage Ethiopia's internal fragility for their own geopolitical gains (International Crisis Group, 2022). The conflict and insecurity situation then gained a regional scenario.

Despite the establishment of Ethiopia's Ministry of Peace in 2018, tasked with promoting peace, security, and conflict resolution, the situation has continued to deteriorate. According to the **Global Peace Index** (2020), Ethiopia ranks 133 out of 163 countries, signalling a sharp decline in peacefulness and security. The country's political instability, combined with the impact of the Tigray war, has also exacerbated social and economic vulnerabilities, particularly among women and girls. Women and girls account for a large proportion of the 3.2 million displaced people in 2018, many of whom are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2020).

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, established by the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, calls for the protection and participation of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes. Ethiopia, however, lags in implementing this agenda.

While the country began drafting its National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS in 2019, the process has stalled for over five years, leaving significant gaps in addressing the gender-specific impacts of conflict. Ethiopia's delay in adopting a comprehensive NAP stands in stark contrast to neighbouring countries like Kenya and Uganda, which have made notable progress in advancing women's participation in peace and security initiatives (UN Women, 2022).

Ethiopia's political and security challenges are compounded by socioeconomic hardships, which disproportionately affect women. Chronic poverty, food insecurity, limited access to education, and weak health infrastructure have left millions of Ethiopians, especially women and marginalized communities, in unwarranted conditions. According to the World Bank, despite reductions in national poverty rates over the past two decades, the country's poorest regions, particularly the northern and central highlands, continue to face significant challenges in resilience due to the confluence of conflict, climate change, and economic stagnation (World Bank, 2021).

Women and girls in Ethiopia are not only victims of violence but also bear the brunt of the country's sociopolitical and economic instability. Gender-based violence (GBV), including rape, sexual slavery, and trafficking, has surged during the conflict. Yet, despite the critical role women play in peacebuilding and their disproportionate exposure to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), they have been largely excluded from formal peace processes.

In response, civil society organizations (CSOs) such as the Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations (NEWA) have been at the forefront of advocating for women's rights, peace, and security. Their efforts include pushing for the inclusion of gender perspectives in national dialogues, capacity-building for women's participation in governance, and supporting survivors of GBV and CRSV. However, these organizations face significant obstacles, including insufficient funding, and ongoing insecurity that limits their ability to operate effectively.

1.2. Introduction

Despite the international community's strong commitment to the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, as enshrined in landmark resolutions like UNSCR 1325, and the tireless efforts of Ethiopian civil society organizations (CSOs) to promote the WPS agenda, including the pursuit of a National Action Plan, women remain notably absent from formal peace negotiations in Ethiopia. This exclusion, exemplified by their absence from critical peace talks, represents a significant gap, particularly given the documented impact of conflict on women and girls and the crucial role they play in peacebuilding and reconciliation. This absence highlights a critical disconnect between policy commitments to WPS and the realities on the ground.

This gap persists despite the valuable contributions of many organizations like the Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations (NEWA) to advancing the WPS agenda in Ethiopia. NEWA has implemented impactful initiatives that demonstrate the potential for women's leadership in peacebuilding. Their work includes empowering women peace builders through capacity building and grassroots initiatives, fostering dialogue and peacebuilding through culturally relevant projects like "Buna Le Selam" (Coffee for Peace), and advocating for women's inclusion in transitional justice processes and national dialogues. These efforts highlight the crucial role women play in fostering a more peaceful and just future for Ethiopia.

However, despite these important contributions and the clear evidence demonstrating the positive impact of women's participation in peacebuilding, women continue to be excluded from formal peace negotiations. This persistent exclusion reveals a systemic challenge that goes beyond the valuable work being done by organizations like NEWA. It suggests that deeper structural barriers, including political will, cultural norms, and entrenched power dynamics, continue to hinder women's meaningful participation in formal peace processes.

The challenge, therefore, lies not only in supporting the work of CSOs, but in addressing the underlying systemic factors that prevent these policies and initiatives from translating into tangible improvements in women's participation at the highest levels of peace and security decision-making. NEWA, in partnership with ACCORD and AWPSI, with financial support from FCDO, is implementing a project advancing the WPS agenda through a national focus, tailoring their approaches to meet the specific needs of Ethiopian women. As part of this project, NEWA intends to conduct an assessment to identify the challenges and opportunities in Ethiopia. This assessment will aim address the challenges, including recommendations for changes to improve the work of CSOs and, more importantly, address the systemic factors hindering women's participation.

2. General Objective

The primary objective of this work is to conduct a comprehensive baseline assessment on the opportunities and key challenges facing the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda at grassroots in Ethiopia.

2.1. Objectives of the Assessment

- ✓ To identify and discuss existing opportunities at grass root level that can be leveraged to advance WPS implementation in Ethiopia.
- ✓ To identify the key challenges hindering the effective implementation of the WPS agenda at national and grassroots level.
- ✓ To develop specific and actionable recommendations for a range of stakeholders, including the government, CSOs, international organizations, and communities to strengthen WPS implementation and ensure that women's voices are effectively included in all peace and security efforts in Ethiopia.
- ✓ To Map Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) and grassroots peace building actors working on different regions
- ✓ To produce policy brief related to WPS challenges and opportunity in Ethiopia

3. Scope of Work

The scope of this assessment is designed to be comprehensive and focused, providing a thorough understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda in Ethiopia targeting grassroots peace actors and national level actors. It will delve into the complexities of WPS implementation, acknowledging the interplay of various factors that influence women's participation in peace and security.

The geographical scope of the assessment will center on Ethiopia in general, taking into account the unique context and dynamics present within the nation. Although it is

important to recognize that conflict and peacebuilding initiatives may have regional consequences, the main emphasis will be on the national level, analyzing policies, practices, and experiences that occur within the confines of Ethiopia.

Thematically, the assessment will center on the core pillars of the WPS agenda, including:

- ✓ **Participation:** This will be a key area of focus, specifically examining women's inclusion in formal peace negotiations, but also considering their involvement in other peacebuilding activities, such as conflict resolution, mediation, and post-conflict reconstruction. The assessment will explore the barriers that prevent women from accessing these spaces and the factors that enable their participation.
- ✓ **Protection:** The assessment will consider the protection of women and girls from conflict-related violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. It will explore the existing protection mechanisms and identify gaps and areas for improvement.
- ✓ **Prevention:** Understanding the root causes of conflict and promoting peace are crucial aspects of the WPS agenda. This assessment will examine efforts to prevent conflict and build peace, considering the role of women in these initiatives and how their contributions can be strengthened.
- ✓ **Relief and Recovery:** The assessment will also touch upon the specific needs of women in post-conflict settings, including access to humanitarian assistance, economic empowerment, and justice and reconciliation processes.

4. Methodology of the Assessment

Methodologically, the assessment will employ a mixed-methods approach. This means it will gather data from a variety of sources, including:

Document Review

- ✓ Existing policies, reports /UN women report, UK-FCDO report/, academic studies, and other relevant documents related to WPS in Ethiopia will be reviewed to understand the policy landscape and identify existing evidence.

Key Informant Interviews

- ✓ Interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders, including government officials, representatives from CSOs (particularly women's organizations like NEWA), international organizations, grassroots women peace actors, community leaders, and importantly, women themselves who have experience in peacebuilding and conflict. These interviews will gather diverse perspectives and insights on the challenges and opportunities related to WPS implementation.

Focus Group Discussions

- ✓ Focus groups will be held with women in different communities to explore their experiences, perspectives, and priorities related to peace and security. This will ensure that the voices of women at the grassroots level are heard and incorporated into the assessment.

Finally, the assessment will be forward-looking, aiming to provide practical and actionable recommendations. It will not only identify the problems but also propose concrete solutions and strategies for strengthening WPS implementation in Ethiopia. These recommendations will be targeted towards different stakeholders, empowering them to take concrete steps towards achieving gender equality in women peace and security. The assessment will be a valuable tool for NEWA, ACCORD, AWPSI, and other actors working to advance the WPS agenda in Ethiopia.

5. Deliverables

The consultant will deliver the following outputs within the specified timeframe:

- 4.1. Inception Report: Within five days of the agreement signing date. A concise report demonstrating the consultant's understanding of the assignment, including the proposed methodology, a detailed work plan, and a clear timeline for completion.
- 4.2. Initial Assessment Draft: Within 20 working days of receiving feedback on the Inception Report. A comprehensive initial draft of the assessment, incorporating any necessary revisions based on the feedback received on the Inception Report.
- 4.3. Final Assessment Report: Within fifteen working days of receiving feedback on the Initial Assessment Draft. The final assessment report, mapping directory, policy brief, incorporating all feedback received on the initial draft and representing the consultant's finalized analysis and recommendations. the final assessment report, incorporating all feedback received on the initial draft and representing the consultant's finalized analysis and recommendations.

6. Qualifications of the Consultant

The consultant should possess the following qualifications:

- ✓ Advanced degree (Master's or PhD) in a relevant field, such as gender studies, international relations, peace and security, human rights, or development studies.
- ✓ Demonstrated experience in conducting research and assessments on gender, peace, and security issues.
- ✓ Strong understanding of the WPS agenda and its implementation challenges in Ethiopia and globally.
- ✓ Excellent analytical, writing, and communication skills.
- ✓ Fluency in English and Amharic, (if possible other local languages) is required.

Application Process

Interested candidates are requested to submit the following documents to the NEWA office.

- ✓ A cover letter outlining their qualifications and experience relevant to the consultancy.
- ✓ A detailed CV.
- ✓ A proposed methodology and work plan.
- ✓ A technical and financial proposal.
- ✓ Updated License with TIN

Date of final submission Friday, **March 14, 2025**, at 5:00 PM. Any application sent after this date and -time will not be considered.