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# Implementation of UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace, and Security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Through the National Action Plan 2019-2022

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***Abstract***
*The purpose of this paper is to eradicate sexual violence committed by members of the Congolese Police and to address sexual violence in the DRC, particularly by fighting impunity and providing protection for victims and witnesses. This paper analyzes the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the DRC through the lens of the WPS framework. A qualitative research method is employed, using literature study as the primary data collection technique. The result is that implementation of the NAP is structured around four WPS pillars including participation, prevention, protection, relief and recovery. In the participation pillar, efforts include appointing women to legislative institutions and revising electoral laws. The prevention pillar focuses on disarmament, demobilization, and recovery programs. The protection pillar emphasizes safeguarding the rights of women with disabilities, indigenous women, and survivors of sexual violence. The relief and recovery pillar centers on gender mainstreaming in peace processes. The suggestion is to improve the effectiveness of the NAP implementation in Congo, the government needs to allocate an adequate national budget to avoid dependence on external donors. Oversight of policy implementation must be strengthened, particularly in legal protection and the prevention of gender-based violence. Furthermore, it is crucial to eradicate patriarchal culture through gender equality education and expand psychosocial recovery services in conflict-affected areas.*

***Keywords:*** *Democratic Reopublifc of the Congo, National Action Plan, UNSCR 1325; Women, Peace, and Security*

## INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a country located on the African continent. It is the second-largest country in the Central African region, with its capital in Kinshasa. According to data from UN Women, the population of the DRC was 111 million in 2022, with 49% of that population being women (UN Women , 2023). The DRC is exceptionally rich in natural resources. Numerous minerals can be found there, including

gold, diamonds, metals, cobalt, and coltan. However, more than 50% of its population lives below the poverty line. This is largely due to the prolonged conflict that has affected the country.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has a long history of armed conflict, beginning in 1996, which has led to numerous issues such as human rights violations, increased mortality rates, malnutrition, and more. These problems have created an environment that is particularly unsafe for women and girls in the DRC (Bundu, 2023). The First Congo War took place in 1996, followed by the Second Congo War in 1998 (Ikasari, 2019). he situation for women has worsened significantly since the outbreak of the conflict. The war in the Congo has become synonymous with acts of violence and rape committed against women. Sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war, with armed groups targeting civiliansespecially womento forcibly displace them from contested areas. Rape in the DRC is often employed as a means to assert male dominance over women (Lubunga, 2016).

The Congolese war officially ended in 2003. However, in the years that followed and continuing to the present, the rate of violence against women resulting from conflict has remained high. One of the main causes of this violence is the continued presence of militant groups left over from the Second Congo War (Najiha, 2019). In 2018, 35.6% of women aged 15–49 in the DRC had experienced sexual violence (UN Women, 2024). Women's participation in government in the DRC also remains low. As of 2018, only 10.3% of government seats were held by women50 out of a total of 485 seats (IPU Parline, 2018).

Recognizing the need to end the ongoing impacts of prolonged conflict, the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) decided to move toward an era of peace, stability, and development through the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which established the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. Resolution 1325 is the first resolution that launched the WPS agenda, urging all actors to enhance women's participation and integrate gender perspectives into all United Nations peace and security efforts. The resolution also calls on all parties involved in conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from all forms of sexual violence, particularly gender-based violence and rape in armed conflict (UN, 2004).

The government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) adopted the WPS agenda through its first National Action Plan (NAP) in 2010, titled "The Government's Action Plan of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the Purposes of Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council." This initial period was later revised in 2019. The Ministry of Gender, Family, and Children of the DRC launched the most recent plan, the "National Action Plan for Implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, 2nd Generation ," which was implemented from 2019 to 2022. The second NAP provides a detailed framework to evaluate the implementation of the first plan. It aligns with the National Gender Policy, which emphasizes the human rights of women and girls during and after conflict.

The primary goal of the second NAP is to create a safe environment and ensure inclusive and equitable participation for women, men, and youth in peacebuilding efforts in the DRC (The DRC Ministry of Gender, 2019). While the previous NAP had ten intervention areas, the second NAP features a more structured and organized approach, following the four core pillars of the WPS agenda including participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery, which are closely related to women's issues.The second National Action Plan (NAP) highlights specific issues faced by women, such as the rights of those who are vulnerable due to armed conflict, including indigenous women and women with disabilities. Compared to the previous plan, the second NAP demonstrates a higher level of precision. This is evidenced by the inclusion of expected outcomes, indicators, activities, and designated responsible actors for each outlined objective (Landaluze, 2022).

The author uses several journals for the literature review. The first journal is titled *"The Role of Women's Leadership in Islamic Elementary Schools: A Gender Perspective Study"*, written by Aang Kunaepi, Yusuf Isnan, Nasikhin, and Abdulraya Panaemalae, published in the *Muwazah* journal in 2024. This journal discusses women's leadership in educational institutions and shows that women possess leadership capacities that may even surpass those of men. It helps the author understand the implementation of the participation pillar and highlights that women can take the lead despite social and cultural challenges. The second journal is titled *"Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Against Men in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Effects on Survivors, Their Families and the Community"*, written by Mervyn Christian, Octave Safari, Paul Ramazani, Gilbert Burnham, and Nancy Glass, and published in the journal

*Medicine, Conflict, and Survival* in 2011. This journal explores the phenomenon of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), particularly cases where men were the victims during the conflict in the DRC. It aids the author in considering the complexity of gender-based violence against men. Although UNSCR 1325 primarily focuses on women, this journal contributes to a broader understanding that a holistic and cross-gender perspective is essential in designing effective protection policies.

This paper will analyze the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda by the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo through its second National Action Plan during the 2019–2022 period. The data collection technique employed in this paper is literature review, which involves gathering knowledge, data, and information relevant to the research topic. Data collection is generally categorized into two types: primary data collection and secondary data collection. In this research, the author utilizes secondary data collection techniques. Secondary data collection techniques are techniques that collect data obtained from literature studies, official websites, online articles, journals, and previous research (Neuman, 2014). The data used in this paper is obtained from previous research, news reports, articles, journals, official reports, and online websites. The information gathered serves as the foundation for explaining the efforts to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) through its National Action Plan during 2019–2022. The author applies a qualitative data analysis technique. This method is closely related to analyzing phenomena connected to specific regions, countries, organizations, or individuals (Lamont, 2015). Based on the description above, the author considers qualitative data analysis to be the most appropriate approach for this paper.

The author argues that the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 by the Congolese government through the National Action Plan (NAP) during the 2019–2022 period represents a significant step in advancing the role of women in the pursuit of peace and security. Although there were several challenges in carrying out the four pillars, the government has demonstrated considerable competence in applying the WPS 1325 agenda within a context of ongoing conflict. Furthermore, in the course of its implementation, the author believes that the Congolese government has shown strategic insight by seeking assistance from other actors to overcome obstacles and effectively execute

the planned initiatives. The purpose of this paper is to eradicate sexual violence committed by members of the Congolese Police and to address sexual violence in the DRC, particularly by fighting impunity and providing protection for victims and witnesses.

## DISCUSSION

### National Action Plan of the DRC in the Framework of Women, Peace, and Security

The National Action Plan (NAP) is a policy document created by the government that outlines actions, priorities, and commitments related to various topics or conflict-affected areas (IHRB, 2022). The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a post-conflict country for the past 10 years, yet several armed groups still exist. The eastern region of the country has the highest concentration of these armed groups. Numerous incidents involving human rights violations occur, particularly in cases affecting women. Due to the ongoing armed conflict, the rate of sexual violence against women remains high and continues to persist. In response to the high number of such cases, the Congolese government has not remained passive. The government agreed to support United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which addresses women, peace, and security. This resolution, adopted on October 31, 2000, aims primarily to achieve gender equality.

The first generation of NAP 1325, implemented in 2010, was based on the National Gender Policy vision developed by the Ministry of Gender, Family, and Children. This initial NAP drew on the positive values rooted in Congolese culture, with the goal of achieving gender equality in the DRC. After eight years of implementation, several conclusions emerged from the first NAP: low public awareness about the NAP; limited representation and participation of women in negotiations and decision-making bodies due to cultural reasons; the continued occurrence of sexual violence and other violations of women's rights; low participation of women in command positions within the army, police, and other security-related institutions; minimal government uptake of the NAP; weak support from implementation partners; lack of involvement and insufficient integration of young women and women with disabilities in the NAP implementation process. As a result, a second-generation NAP was developed to address these issues, including: ensuring fair involvement of women, with a focus on including vulnerable women, young women, and girls in decision-making bodies and mechanisms for conflict prevention and peaceful resolution; broader

dissemination and public awareness of the second-generation NAP and legal texts that guarantee women's rights; reducing acts of violence; eliminating impunitywithout exceptionfor perpetrators of violations against women's rights; and increasing women's participation in security-related decision-making bodies.

The second National Action Plan (NAP) was launched eight years after the first, more precisely in 2018. Several reasons necessitated the development of this second NAP. One key reason was the need to align with United Nations requirements, which recommend a revision every four years. This revision is essential for the DRC to sign onto several key documents, such as the *New Deal* objectives; UN Security Council Resolution 2250 concerning youth, peace, and security; the Continental Framework Guidelines that emerged from the African Union's meeting on the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, the AU Agenda 2063, and to address the evolving social and political landscape since 2010. Eighteen years after the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the efforts made by Congolese government institutions supported by the international community have begun to yield results, despite the country having faced an economic crisis. One of the main outcomes of these efforts is the establishment of a national legal framework that supports women's rights. Currently, the second-generation NAP has been formulated with clear definitions and boundaries related to its priority intervention pillars, reflecting the government's current priorities. These include four pillars of intervention. NAP 1325 outlines 11 specific objectives derived from Resolution 1325 and aligned with the *New Deal*, the AU's continental framework on Women, Peace, and Security, AU Agenda 2063.

The development process of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's National Action Plan (NAP) for the 2019–2022 period involved several key stages. It began with the formulation of a roadmap through workshops held in November 2016 and March 2017. These workshops were organized by the National Secretariat for UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, in collaboration with UN Women, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), and TROCAIRE. The second stage took place in April 2017 and focused on developing the initial draft of the second NAP. During this phase, an evaluation of the first NAP was conducted by identifying its obstacles, challenges, and opportunities. This was followed by the third stage, which involved forming a dedicated working group to oversee and support the development and implementation of the plan.

The fourth stage consisted of data analysis aimed at measuring the implementation level of the first NAP while also identifying broader orientations and goals that would shape the second NAP. Finally, the process concluded with the drafting of the official NAP document(The DRC Ministry of Gender, 2019).

Gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women for the purpose of building sustainable post-conflict peace require an actionable framework capable of addressing both institutional and structural barriers. Therefore, the development of this NAP is essential and has undergone a comprehensive, time-consuming process. This NAP serves as a refinement of the previous WPS-related plan, which had not fully addressed women's rights in areas of security, social welfare, and economic participation. It also tackles persistent issues such as poverty, gender inequality norms, impunity, and violence, all of which have hindered women's ability to participate in and benefit from post-conflict recovery efforts (True, 2013).

**Table.** Goals of*National Action Plan*DRC 2019-2022

| No. | Pillar of WPS 1325 | Goals | Gender Mainstreaming |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Pillar of Participation | 1. To increase the participation of women and young women by up to 20% in institutions and mechanisms at the local, provincial, national, regional, and international levels for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts. | Advocacy to ensure the meaningfulrepresentation of women at negotiation tables, within institutions, and in national, regional, and international mechanisms aimed at preventing, addressing, and resolving conflicts. |
| | | 2. To support the increased participation of women and young women in decision-making bodies within social, political, economic, public, and private institutions by up to 20%. | - The national legal framework, particularly the Electoral Law, is designed with gender sensitivity in mind to promote women's participation in political governance.<br>- Transformative leadership of women and young women is strengthened through the empowerment of indigenous women and women with disabilities. |

| No. | Pillar of WPS 1325 | Goals | Gender Mainstreaming |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2. | Pillar of Pervention | 3. To enhance widespread dissemination of legal instruments that promote women's participation in political and public governance, as well as NAP 1325. | The organization of awareness campaigns on women's political rights and the culture of peace. |
| | | 4. To build community-based mechanisms for early warning and peaceful conflict resolution. | - Conducting capacity-building workshops across all 26 provinces.<br>- Implementation of various initiatives to establish early warning mechanisms. |
| | | 5. To reduce the recruitment of child soldiers in armed groups | Conducting public awareness campaigns on the wrongdoing of recruiting underage children into armed groups. |
| | | 6. To support the increased participation of women and migrant workers in decision-making bodies within security institutions. | Advocacy to relevant authorities to promote and enhance the participation of women in security services. |
| | | 7. To strengthen control and reduce the circulation of small arms and light weapons. | Organization of knowledge-sharing workshops between the NAP 1325 and the commission responsible for small arms control, along with amnesty campaigns for the collection of small arms and light weapons. |
| 3. | Pillar of Protection | 8. To ensure respect for the rights of women and vulnerable groups (persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, refugees, and displaced persons) during and after conflicts. | Organization of workshops to enhance the skills of justice system personnel in handling cases related to violations of the rights of women and girls. |
| | | 9. To combat impunity for sexual violence and violations of women's rights during and after armed conflicts | Capacity building and skills enhancement for staff and support personnel in the justice sector in handling cases of sexual violence. |
| 4. | Pillar of Relief and Recovery | 10. To integrate the gender dimension into the | Integration of a gender perspective into recovery projects and programs. |

| No. | Pillar of WPS 1325 | Goals | Gender Mainstreaming |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | management and peaceful resolution of conflicts. | |
| | | 11. To ensure the socio-economic empowerment of women and street children who are victims of conflict. | - Reintegration of girls and young women affected by conflict into the education system.<br>-Conducting advocacy to promote the renovation and/or construction of schools in displacement camps. |

*Source :* Ministry of Gender, Family and Children DRC on the National Action Plan 2019-2022 Documents

Based on the **table** above presents the eleven objectives outlined in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) 2019–2022 National Action Plan (NAP). These objectives are categorized according to the four existing WPS pillars: participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery. The NAP document also specifies gender mainstreaming indicators and activities associated with each of these objectives.

**Pillar of Participation**

***Appointment of Women as Leaders in Legislative Bodies***

According to data from the Global Data on National Parliaments, in 2019, the percentage of women in the national government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was 12.8%. Although this figure had not yet met the 20% target set by the National Action Plan (NAP), it represented an increase from 10.3% in 2018, prior to the implementation of the NAP (IPU Parline, Democratic of the Congo National Assembly, 2019). The DRC has made significant progress in terms of women's participation in decision-making bodies. In the National Assembly, women held only 11% of the seats in 2020. However, in 2019, the DRC experienced a historic event in leadership when, for the first time, a woman was elected as the head of the country's second highest institution, serving as President of the Bureau of the National Assembly. Additionally, three of the 26 Provincial Assemblies specifically in the provinces of Maniema, Tanganyika, and Equateur are legislative bodies led by women. The 2020 report from the DRC's National 1325 Secretariat highlighted that women have been involved in human rights mechanisms and have contributed

effectively through advocacy efforts, resulting in the integration of gender considerations within decision-making bodies (Secretariat National Parlement 1325, 2021).

***Revision of the Electoral Law Regarding Female Candidates***

In June 2022, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) enacted a revision of its electoral law. The major reform was found in Article 13, which promotes the participation of female candidates in elections. The wording of Article 13 was changed from "The non-representation of the woman or people with disabilities does not constitute a reason for inadmissibility of the list concerned" to "A list in which at least 50% of the constituency is women is exempted from the payment of the deposit." This change means replacing the previous provision, which did not require political parties to meet a certain percentage of women on their lists, with a new rule that waives registration fees for political parties that include 50% women in their candidate lists (UN Women, DRC: The Electoral Reform and Women's Political Participation, 2023). However, despite these efforts, the law's practical implementation differs. In the 2023 elections, the percentage of female candidates increased, though not significantly. As of 2024, the percentage of women holding parliamentary seats stands at 13%, representing a 0.2% increase from 2019.

In practice, the revision of the electoral law has not brought significant changes to women's political participation, despite the crucial role women play in peacebuilding processes. Women have been shown to positively impact peace efforts. Their presence as signatories, witnesses, or negotiators increases the likelihood of a peace agreement lasting at least two years by 20%, and the probability of sustaining peace in the long term by up to 35%. This underscores the importance of women's meaningful influence in negotiations, as it significantly enhances the chances of both reaching and implementing peace agreements(Tickner & True, 2018). Traditional perceptions and prevailing societal norms in the DRC have hindered the achievement of this goal. Patriarchal cultural values and the frequent association of women with marriage and domestic roles have contributed to the perception that women are unfit for political structures and leadership positions.(Ekota, Féron, Barumwete, Kazoviyo, & Onawoma, 2024).

The increase in the number of women in the DRC government following the 2023 elections, after the conclusion of the 2019–2022 NAP period, indicates that the implementation of the NAP has made progress and contributed to tangible change. This development aligns with the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, particularly its participation

pillar, which emphasizes the inclusion of women in all aspects of decision-making. When discussing women's participation, policy recommendations often center on placing more women in governmental positions. The empowerment and participation of women in mediation processes are essential to achieving global security and stability (Almagro, 2017).

**Pillar of Prevention**

***Dissemination of theNational Action Plan 2nd generation***

The dissemination of the National Action Plan (NAP) is one of the key objectives outlined in the DRC's NAP. Efforts to disseminate the second-generation NAP for the 2019–2022 period were carried out through the establishment of 1325 Provincial Secretariats in 21 out of the 26 provinces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1325 NAP Peacewomen, 2021). Meanwhile, the National 1325 Secretariat has been established since 2015, based in the capital city of the DRC, Kinshasa. Its establishment was carried out gradually, with the aim of supporting the implementation, coordination, monitoring, and dissemination of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda within the framework of the NAP.

***Establishment Agency for the Prevention and the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons (APLTP)***

The Government of the DRC has taken preventive measures against human trafficking, particularly involving women and girls. One of the key steps was the establishment of the Agency for the Prevention and the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons (APLTP) in 2019. APLTP serves as a national coordinating body under the Office of the President, responsible for formulating, monitoring, and evaluating government policies related to combating human trafficking. Following its creation, APLTP developed and launched a National Action Plan against human trafficking. In addition to the establishment of APLTP, in May 2020, the DRC's Minister of Labor temporarily shut down 116 recruitment and placement agencies due to concerns over potential human trafficking activities. According to the 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report, while the DRC had not yet fully met the minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking, the country demonstrated significant efforts toward that goal. These efforts included an increase in investigations and prosecutions of trafficking cases, particularly those involving sex trafficking and forced labor (U.S. Department of State, 2020).

***Efforts to Minimize the Recruitment of ChildSoldiers***

In August 2020, the government of the DRC issued a decision known as the "zero tolerance decree," reaffirming that there is no tolerance for support by the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) to armed groups that recruit child soldiers. Although the involvement of government armed forces in human trafficking crimes remains a significant concern, the military initiated prosecutions in 2020 against two FARDC soldiers accused of abducting children for sexual slavery. Additionally, a commander of the NDC was sentenced to life imprisonment for charges related to the recruitment and use of children as soldiers (Stimson, 2024).

Efforts to address the recruitment of child soldiers have been largely undertaken by UN agencies, such as MONUSCO. In 2022, MONUSCO assisted in facilitating the release of 235 children who had been held by armed groups since January 2021 in Ituri Province (UN Peacekeeping, 2022). Despite the existence of the second NAP, the FARDC and rebel groups continue to recruit child soldiers. Following the implementation of the second NAP in early 2025, there are still 400 children in the eastern region of the DRC who have been recruited by armed groups, with the youngest being 14 years old. It is known that these recruitments occur through schools and on the streets (Save the Children, 2025).

***Disarment, Demobilitation, Community Recovery and StabilizationProgramme (PDDRC-S)***

On July 5, 2021, the government of the DRC established a national strategy for arms control and reconciliation called the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery, and Stabilization Programme (PDDRC-S). This strategy is a merger of the National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Programme (UEPNDDR) and the National Stabilization and Reconstruction Programme (STAREC) (United Nations Security Council, 2021). The PDDRC-S was established with the purpose of implementing programs related to demobilization, disarmament, along with community recovery and stabilization. The primary focus of PDDRC-S is on former combatants, including the collection and destruction of weapons from former fighters, as well as assisting their reintegration into society despite the ongoing conflict. The United Nations stabilization mission in the DRC, MONUSCO, which supports the national PDDRC-S program, reported that from early 2022 until September, a total of 191 former combatants have been demobilized. The process

begins with awareness-raising sessions. After voluntarily laying down their weapons, former combatants receive support, including psychological care, health services, and nutrition at mobilization camps. Since July 8, 2021, MONUSCO has adopted the UN strategy to provide support to this program (MONUSCO, 2022).

In various provinces of Eastern Congo, the mission has been highly active in Community Violence Reduction (CVR) projects, which aim to reduce the high levels of violence in Congolese communities and achieve security and stability goals. CVR works in collaboration with and complements MONUSCO's ongoing support for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) activities, with a priority focus on the reintegration of former armed group members into society during the transition between demobilization and reintegration phases. By offering socioeconomic opportunities to demobilized fighters, CVR potentially reduces cases of re-recruitment among these former combatants and youth. The implementation of CVR significantly contributes to the disarmament and demobilization strategy.

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) framework places a strong emphasis on prevention, particularly in addressing the root causes of conflict. However, this focus extends beyond armed conflict to include efforts aimed at preventing all forms of violence directed at women and girls, both during conflict and in post-conflict settings. The prevention pillar of WPS highlights the importance of integrating gender perspectives into early warning systems, including the implementation of preventive measures against gender-based violence. (Kusuma, 2022). In addition, the WPS agenda advocates for stricter regulation of arms trade in order to minimize its impact on security, particularly for women and girls (Tickner & True, 2018).

**Pillar of Protection**

***Law on the Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Persons with Disabilities***

The parliament passed a bill on the protection and promotion of the rights of the indigenous "Pygmy" peoples, an ethnic group characterized by their generally short stature. This law is the first to officially recognize and protect the rights of indigenous communities. It guarantees easier access to justice and social services, as well as rights to land and natural

resources that they own, occupy, or use in accordance with applicable laws. The expected outcome of this law is to significantly increase the recognition of land rights for women and indigenous peoples (WPS Helpdesk, 2022).

The next implementation effort by the DRC government was the appointment of a minister for persons with disabilities for the first time in 2019. The drafting of the law on the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities was led by a disabled woman who had previously campaigned on this issue. Although the law does not specifically detail the rights and measures for women and girls with disabilities, Article 6 states that the state will "define, adopt, and implement policies aimed at strengthening and promoting the rights of women with disabilities."

***Adoption of the PNC's Action Plan***

The adoption of the PNC's Action Plan, or the National Police of Congo's Action Plan to combat sexual violence, took place in November 2019. Its purpose is to eradicate sexual violence committed by members of the Congolese Police and to address sexual violence in the DRC, particularly by fighting impunity and providing protection for victims and witnesses. The action plan is based on six main priorities: prevention, accountability, protection, capacity building, communication, and monitoring and evaluation (UN, 2019).

One of the challenges faced during the implementation period of the NAP was the escalating conflict situation in North Kivu and Ituri, leading President Felix Tshisekedi to declare a state of emergency in May 2021. As a result, the president ordered the DRC's national army and police to take over political authority, including allowing military courts to try civilians. This order aimed to combat armed groups and protect civilians. However, according to Amnesty International, the intended purpose of this directive was not achieved. Instead, the military authorities acted contrary to this goal by using their power to violate people's rights with impunity, including freedom of expression and the right to justice. Meanwhile, attacks by armed groups against civilians continued to increase (Amnesty International, 2022).

***Protection Of Survivors of Sexual Violence***

In 2021, more than 50 national and international non-governmental organizations held demonstrations urging the government to prioritize the fight against impunity (Human Rights Watch, 2021). They demanded the dismissal of security forces personnel and other

officials involved in serious human rights violations. Additionally, the demonstrators called for recovery programs for victims of international crimes, including survivors of gender-based sexual violence. These non-governmental organizations believe that the DRC government has not shown an open commitment to these issues.

In protecting survivors of sexual violence in the DRC, in 2019 the Global Survivors Fund, together with the Panzi Foundation, launched a pilot program focused on temporary reparative measures for survivors of sexual violence. The aim of this pilot program was to implement a national reparations policy for survivors in the DRC, including the establishment of a National Reparation Fund managed and financed by the state, working closely with survivors and civil society. The program ran for two years and successfully assisted more than 1,000 survivors by focusing on recognition, compensation, and rehabilitation. In 2021, the Global Fund for Survivors of Sexual Violence held a panel discussion in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, as part of the pilot project to contribute to the development of national policies for survivors in the DRC (Global Survivors Fund, 2021).

The Parliament of the DRC ultimately enacted Law No. 22/065 in 2022, which specifically regulates the fundamental principles related to the protection and compensation of victims of crimes against peace and security. This law represents a significant step forward in upholding the rights of victims of serious crimes, sexual violence in conflict, and combating impunity (Physicians for Human Rights, 2024). The law also established the National Reparation Fund for Victims of Sexual Violence (FONAREV), which operates under the supervision of the ministry responsible for human rights. This institution aims to support the recovery of victims and prevent the recurrence of violence in order to build sustainable peace (Devex, 2024). However, to date, this institution has yet to provide reparations for many survivors. (Physicians for Human Rights, 2024).

The WPS approach not only highlights the impact of armed conflict on women but also promotes concrete measures to protect those affected. Generally, the protection pillar within the WPS framework refers to efforts aimed at preventing and addressing various forms of sexual violence experienced by women in conflict settings (Taylor & Baldwin, 2019). This is crucial, as sexual violence is often used as a tool to intensify and prolong conflict. (Tickner & True, 2018). Furthermore, the concept of protection is not limited to

interventions during times of crisis, but also includes safeguarding women from various forms of threats as they engage in political processes and advocate for peace (Taylor & Baldwin, 2019).

**Pillar of Relief and Recovery**

***Gender Mainstreaming In Peacebuilding***

Community Violence Reduction (CVR) is mandated by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2612 (S/RES/2612(2021)) to support the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) activities, as well as the repatriation of foreign combatants. CVR is a MONUSCO program aimed at reducing armed violence at the community level, supporting the reintegration of former combatants, and preventing their re-recruitment into armed groups. The program involves clear identification of armed actors as well as the needs, interests, agendas, resources, and capacities of the communities involved. By building mechanisms for social cohesion and accountability, CVR ensures a gender-responsive approach that addresses the specific needs of women and girls. Gender is considered a crucial component to create impact, with a minimum target of 30% female participation in all projects. The roles of both men and women are consistently taken into account throughout the entire CVR process, from planning to implementation (MONUSCO, DDR/RR, 2022).

In the second National Action Plan (NAP), no budget was allocated for the pillar of assistance and recovery as outlined in Resolution 1325. Additionally, initiatives to promote women's rights remain limited. The government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continues programs for school rehabilitation and infrastructure development, but there is no detailed data indicating how many schools have been built or rehabilitated. The government has improved access for girls to education and integrated gender training modules for children into school curricula as well as higher education or universities. However, a noticeable gap remains between urban and rural areas, especially in regions with higher conflict intensity. Regarding conflict-related empowerment programs, 80% of these programs are underfunded, with only 20% receiving financial support (Secretariat National Parlement 1325, 2021).

### *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Program (MHPSS)*

Regarding the empowerment of women victims of conflict, most efforts have been carried out by international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental. One such organization is Doctors of The World, which in 2020 implemented the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) program to help address trauma caused by conflict. They have assisted 2,052 women experiencing distress by providing healthcare services and psychosocial support consultations to communities affected by conflict (Doctors of The World, 2020).

The relief and recovery pillar encompasses a range of measures aimed at addressing the specific needs of women and girls, while prioritizing their roles in post-conflict recovery, justice, and economic rehabilitation. These measures include disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and the provision of humanitarian assistance. In its implementation, this pillar emphasizes the importance of strengthening women's active participation in each stage of the relief and recovery process.(Kusuma, 2022). Within the WPS framework, women are recognized as agents of community resilience and recovery (Tickner & True, 2018).

### Challenges in the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 within the National Action Plan

In implementing UNSCR 1325, which focuses on the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) faces various challenges. These obstacles affect each pillar of the WPS agenda differently. The participation pillar, although showing some improvement compared to previous years, still encounters significant issues. One of the main problems preventing the National Action Plan (NAP) goals from being fully realized is the deeply rooted patriarchal structures and norms that undermine the protection and promotion of women's rights. This results in structural discrimination, gender-based violence, and the exclusion of women from decision-making processes(NGO Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security, 2020).

In the implementation of the prevention pillar, the main issue is the lack of budget allocation from the outset in this NAP period, which has become a major obstacle to achieving the planned objectives (Secretariat National Parlement 1325, 2021). Additionally, the ongoing occurrence of sexual violence also hinders the realization of the goals within the prevention pillar, as this sexual violence is extreme and systematic in nature. The main issue

faced in the implementation of the protection pillar is the increasing intensity of conflict in the eastern regions of the DRC. In May 2021, a state of emergency was declared due to the worsening conflict situation. Attacks by armed groups doubled compared to the previous year. This situation has made it difficult to achieve the protection goals outlined in the NAP. Sexual violence has also escalated, even being used as a tactic in armed conflicts.

In the final pillar relief and recovery there has been a noticeable lack of attention from the DRC government. This is evident in the absence of significant changes or progress within this area. Moreover, no concrete efforts have been reported by the government under this pillar. The main issue once again lies in the lack of budget allocation to support post-conflict recovery processes, despite the fact that such support is a critical component for achieving the goals set in this pillar. Most of the funding has come from international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental.

According to Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True, the Women, Peace, and Security agenda holds significant potential to drive social change, particularly in the areas of conflict prevention, the protection of human rights, and recovery from conflict and insecurity (Davies & True, 2019).The principles of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda have since evolved into four main pillars: participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery (Tickner & True, 2018). When the WPS agenda was formalized by the UN Security Council through Resolution 1325 in 2000, it marked a critical milestone for the global adoption of the agenda, including by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The adoption of the WPS agenda through the DRC's National Action Plan (NAP) in 2019 represents a significant step forward in mainstreaming gender in a conflict-affected context such as the DRC. Through journals written by Al Fausi Rahmat (2022) and others, the gender perspective refers to a critical perspective on how gender especially women is represented, positioned, and treated in political spaces through social media, especially regarding stereotypes, marginalization, and involvement in online political discussions.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) through its 2019–2022 National Action Plan (NAP) is a strategic step in mainstreaming gender in the post-conflict context. Through four

main pillars, participation, prevention, protection, and recovery and rehabilitation the DRC government seeks to increase women's involvement in decision-making, reduce gender-based sexual violence, strengthen protection for vulnerable groups, and integrate a gender perspective into the peace and reconstruction process. Despite progress, such as increased women's participation in legislative bodies and a more gender-sensitive revision of the election law, the implementation of the NAP continues to face significant challenges. These include insufficient budget allocation, ongoing conflict, and the persistence of patriarchal structures. However, this second-generation NAP is considered more structured and measurable than its predecessor, with clearer indicators and collaboration between national and international actors. Overall, the implementation of NAP 1325 in the DRC reflects the government's commitment to realizing inclusive and gender-sensitive peace, although strengthening is still needed in terms of funding, implementation on the ground, and grassroots empowerment to achieve long-term aspirations.

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