



WILPF REPORT 2020

# Stories of Feminist Peace

THE ESSENTIALS



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# MESSAGE

## From our International President and Secretary-General

This is an annual report produced in a year like no other: a global pandemic, the concept of democratic governance under attack, temperatures rising both literally and metaphorically.

As we said in our story on [WILPF's COVID-19 response](#), these events were predicted and predictable. It was always just a question of when.

Facing the struggles of 2020 head-on, WILPF re-grouped, re-strategised, and rose to the challenges before us. We were able to trust in the strength of our history and our roots, in the amazing women and allies who are our members and partners, and in the solidarity, partnership, and trust of our donors. Our shared spirit of cooperation, problem-solving, and dedication to our cause saw us through a truly extraordinary year.

Our history gave us the tools to look at how we got here. How the fusion of militarism, capitalism, neoliberalism, and social and economic inequality lead inexorably to catastrophe: predicted and predictable. We analysed and explained the systems, structures, and events that brought us to this point, and importantly what we have to do to build back differently in order to move through [Arundhati Roy's portal](#) to a better future. Our [feminist principles for a post-COVID-19 settlement](#) are meant to help guide us through that portal. We already know what needs to be at the core of that reimagined world.

This report documents the hard work we're doing to get there. Above all, it is a powerful reflection of the enduring determination of the global feminist peace movement to bring urgently-needed change to our challenged world — no matter the obstacles in our way.



This publication is a condensed summary of the most essential stories from our online 2020 report. Please visit [stories2020.wilpf.org](https://stories2020.wilpf.org) for a comprehensive and interactive look at the work of WILPF's International Secretariat and global Sections in 2020.

# WILPF COVID-19 RESPONSE: DEMANDING CHANGE

As COVID-19 began making its way around the world in early 2020, the lives and futures of millions of people – disproportionately women and girls – were immediately put at risk.

The coronavirus itself wasn't the only threat. Since that day, the vast impacts of the pandemic have pushed an ever-growing number of people into poverty, increased rates of gender-based violence (GBV) globally, and led to historic levels of food insecurity and malnutrition.

At the same time, women – and especially [women of colour](#) – are at greater risk of contracting the virus. With women representing 70 per cent of the world's healthcare workers and poor or marginalised women more likely to be diagnosed with COVID-19, women are not only struggling – they're getting sick.

With a few noble and notable exceptions, the overall responses of governments have been confused and confusing: desperately trying to protect capitalist economies, failing to protect people, and yet still managing to turn the pandemic into another opportunity to advance neoliberal policies which further deepen the inequalities so vividly exposed by the virus.

WILPF's response? To advocate, analyse, and organise for change.



In 2020, WILPF initiated collaborative advocacy efforts demanding a feminist response to COVID-19 and conducted in-depth research and analysis exposing failed government responses to the pandemic.

## Demanding a feminist response

Through advocacy efforts targeted at the United Nations' COVID-19 response, we pushed for change for women, girls, and other marginalised groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

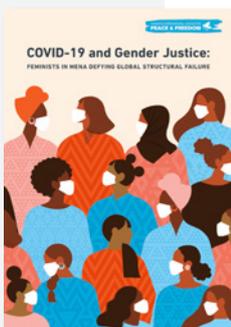
Working in collaboration with four other global women's organisations – Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, MADRE, medica mondiale, and the Nobel Women's Initiative – in 2020 we developed [Feminist Principles for an International Post-COVID-19 Settlement](#), a document presented to the United Nations demanding action on six critical areas of concern: ceasefire, gender-based violence, health, environment, economy, and militarism and security.

In the document, the five partners describe how systems of oppression – namely capitalism, racism, colonialism, militarism, and patriarchy – have led to failed policies and practices in each of the six areas of concern that disproportionately impact women, girls, and other marginalised populations.

Feminist Principles is now in the hands of UN members – those leading the COVID-19 response locally and globally. We will continue to closely monitor their approach and challenge them to take the action needed to change the world.

## Driving change through research and dialogue

We also published two major research reports examining the impacts of COVID-19 on human lives and the systems that claim to protect us.



[COVID-19 and Gender Justice: Feminists in MENA Defying Global Structural Failure](#) highlights the consequences of failed government responses to the pandemic – specifically as they relate to women's rights activists and women's organisations – in the Middle East and North Africa region. The report offers a set of recommendations intended to guide the adoption of inclusive and responsive policies that advance the stability and progress of the feminist movement in the region.



And [Locked Out During Lockdown](#), published by WILPF during the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, offers an analysis of key UN processes and forums during COVID-19. The report revealed disrupted processes, an alarming lack of transparency and civil society participation, and extensive dysfunction that threatens to directly impact international peace and security.



We also published [A WILPF Guide to Documenting and Analysing Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis](#), a document providing feminist peace activists with an overview of the key issues and concerns they should monitor and consider acting upon.



And from March to August, we published a series of [blog posts](#) exploring a broad range of topics related to the pandemic, its impacts, and the responses needed to ensure a just, equitable path forward.

### Looking beyond the pandemic – to more action

As we move through 2021 and look ahead to life beyond the pandemic, it is clear that an end to COVID-19 does not mean an end to the poverty, hunger, violence, and economic insecurity it brought to countless women, girls, and other marginalised populations around the world.

Continued action is urgently needed to address the long-term impacts of the virus and build a future in which the well-being of people and planet are placed above all else.

Every step of the way, WILPF will be there: supporting, advocating, analysing, publishing. Our mantra is that of the suffragettes: deeds not words!

# WILPF COVID-19 RESPONSE: THE SOLIDARITY FUND

In April 2020, just a month after the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic, WILPF launched the Solidarity Care Fund – a short-term funding resource offering emergency support for Sections and Groups leading grassroots initiatives in response to COVID-19.

Grants were distributed to WILPF Sections and Groups in 24 countries around the world, which used the funds to reach deep into the hearts of local communities grappling with a global crisis.

## Preventing the spread of COVID-19

Many Sections and Groups used funds to distribute sanitisers, masks, and handwashing stations to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in remote or underserved communities.

In Pakistan, Nabeela Aslam and Misbah Nazir of WILPF Pakistan purchased sewing machines and supplies to help rural women make their own masks. They also provided mobile phones and offered training to connect women with resources and loved ones in other parts of the country, reducing their isolation and ensuring they have access to the support they need.

The Section created a special [video](#) highlighting the work made possible by the Solidarity Care Fund.



## Raising awareness of gender-based violence

Supporting victims of gender-based violence and educating community members about the prevalence and effects of GBV was a primary focus for many funding recipients.

As schools, businesses, and community resources closed, millions of people around the world became locked in with their abusers. At the same time, opportunities to report violence or access support became limited or non-existent in many countries.

To address growing rates of GBV in their communities, WILPFers in Nigeria, Kenya, and Zimbabwe launched support services for victims – primarily women, girls, and members of the LGBTQ+ community – and ran public awareness campaigns to help community members understand the link between COVID-19 and GBV and recognise signs of violence.

A [video](#) created by WILPF Kenya highlights the Section’s efforts to educate students and other community members about how to protect themselves from gender-based violence, when and how to seek care, and where to go for more information.

### Protecting at-risk populations

Other WILPFers accessed the Solidarity Care Fund to support specific populations facing critical risk factors for COVID-19 and its impacts.

In Afghanistan, women peace activists focused on ensuring women, girls, and individuals living with disabilities had access to the resources they needed to protect themselves from the virus while remaining safe and connected to their communities.

The Section’s support also extended to individuals with limited literacy – [the majority of whom](#) are women and girls.

“We used the budget to develop creative awareness materials accessible to all Afghan people, whether they’re literate or illiterate, so that they can learn how to protect themselves from COVID-19,” says Jamila Afghani, President of WILPF Afghanistan.



In Italy, where the number of people arriving by sea has [increased dramatically](#) over the past year, WILPFers used funds to help them access safe temporary housing, food, and mobile phones.

“We had originally planned to use the funds to house refugees and migrants in public youth hostels, but the pandemic forced the closure of all hostels,

B&Bs, and hotels,” says Antonia Sani of WILPF Italy. “So, we ultimately housed refugees by renting rooms and apartments.”

In Cameroon, WILPF members used funds to launch awareness campaigns specifically targeted at the country’s large populations of internally displaced persons (IDPs), who have been impacted by ongoing conflicts. Living in IDP camps and often without regular access to food, water, sanitation, and hygiene, this population is critically at risk of contracting COVID-19.

“Our campaigns focused on educating IDPs about how to protect themselves from COVID-19, identify symptoms of illness, and reduce stigma surrounding the virus, which can prevent individuals from seeking or receiving the appropriate healthcare,” says Donald Nguépi of WILPF Cameroon.



## Addressing food insecurity

Other WILPFers used their funds to help address the issue of food insecurity, which has emerged as a major worldwide crisis during COVID-19.

WILPF Nigeria distributed food packages to nearly 2,200 families in 14 communities through its Citizens Rising Food Bank Delivery programme, while WILPF Zimbabwe provided food hampers to 100 families headed by elderly family members or children. In Afghanistan, over 400 food packages were distributed to families headed by women, widows, girls, and women living with disabilities.

Atalia Mapika of WILPF Zimbabwe said that the Solidarity Care Fund allowed the Section to deliver on-the-ground support during a period of great vulnerability. “As a Section, we were able to show that our communities can count on us in times of need,” she said.

## A global movement for change

The success and impact of the Solidarity Fund was driven by the tireless efforts of women activists, community organisers, and peacebuilders all over the world.

In the face of profound hardship, they mobilised and carried forward a global movement to drive change for women, girls, and other marginalised groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic – improving lives, empowering people and communities, and raising awareness of the urgent need for better solutions and a more just world.

# THINKING GLOBALLY, ACTING LOCALLY

In 2020, WILPFers around the world worked within their own communities toward a shared vision of peace, justice, and equality for all.

## WILPF Aotearoa

Together with the International Women's Caucus, WILPF Aotearoa provided input to a report assessing New Zealand's first National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security. For the second NAP, WILPF Aotearoa brought to the debate issues of disarmament and demilitarisation.

## WILPF Burkina Faso Group

In the lead-up to the national elections, members initiated new partnerships to monitor the elections and raise awareness of women's key role in electoral processes.

## WILPF Colombia

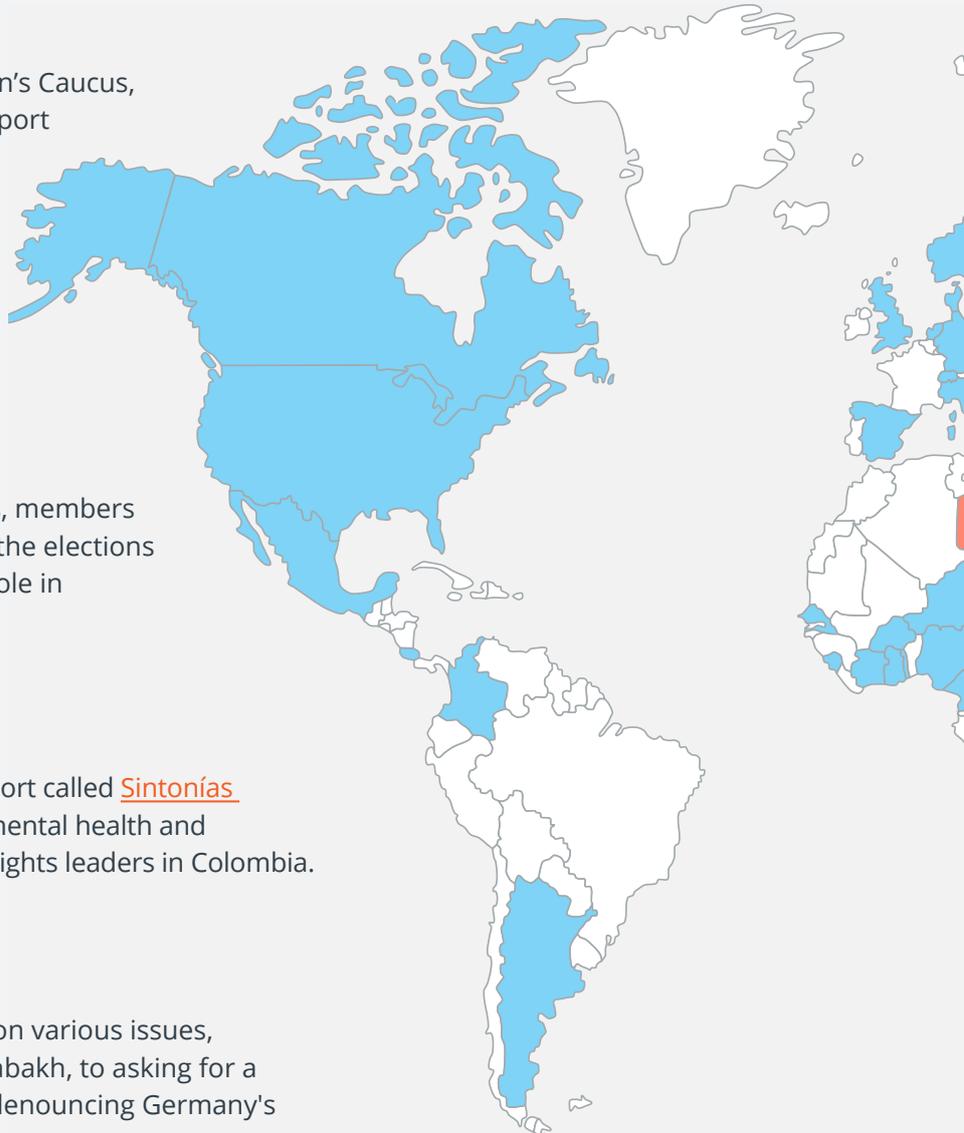
WILPF/LIMPAL Colombia released a report called [Sintonías corporales \(Bodily Harmonies\)](#) on the mental health and psychosocial issues of women human rights leaders in Colombia.

## WILPF Germany

WILPF Germany engaged in advocacy on various issues, from calling for peace in Nagorno-Karabakh, to asking for a democratic transition in Belarus, and denouncing Germany's arms production and export.

## WILPF India

Together with the Gujarat Law Society (GLS) University, WILPF India organised a [global dialogue webinar](#) on gender equality and women's rights in the COVID-19 aftermath.

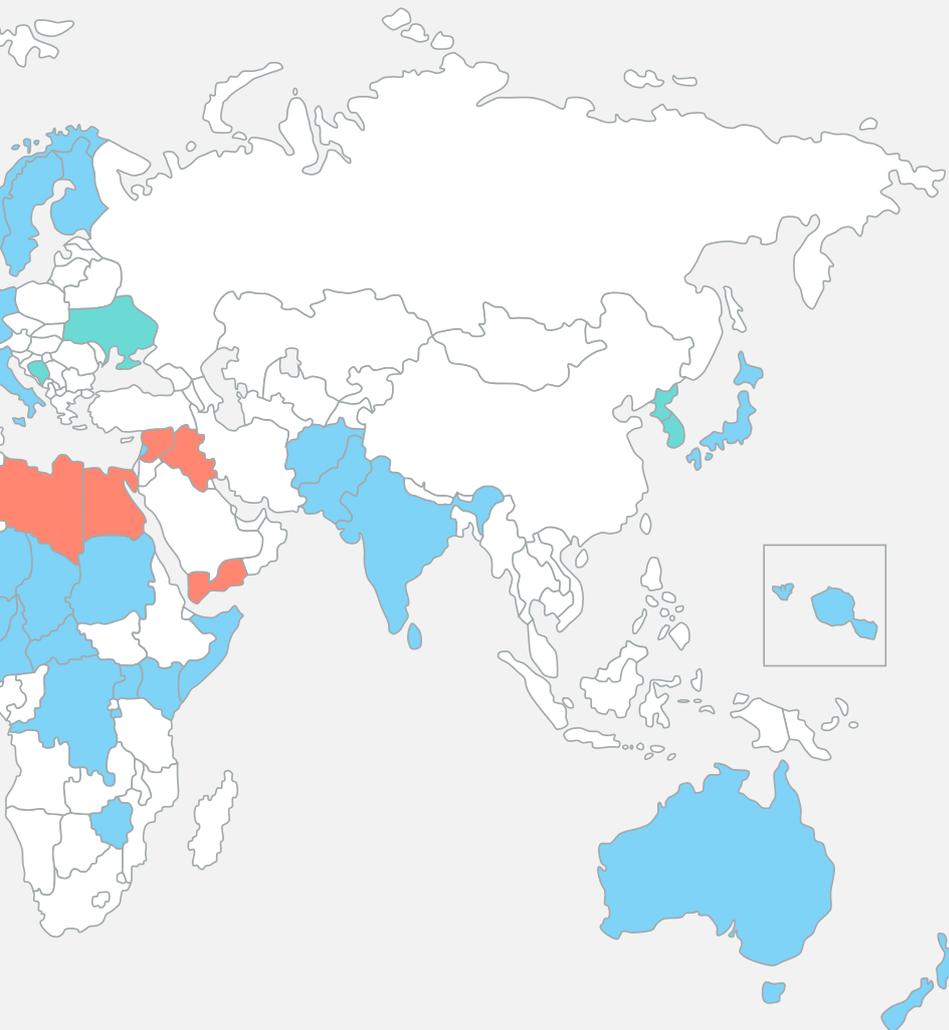


**WILPF Lebanon**

WILPF Lebanon campaigned to ban fully autonomous weapons and initiated a project to map women's experiences of small arms and identify the gaps in legislation and policies for arms control.

**WILPF US**

WILPF US engaged in advocacy activities on various issues, for example by making a statement following the murder of George Floyd and standing for systemic changes toward the ultimate goal of ending war and the causes of war.



PRESENT IN

**49**

COUNTRIES

**6,995**ACTIVISTS LIVE  
IN 59 COUNTRIES**32**

SECTIONS

**12**

GROUPS

**25**

MENA PARTNERS

**42**STAFF AND CONSULTANTS  
AROUND THE GLOBE**28**

DONORS (9 NEW)



Visit our interactive report to read more about all the [work in the Sections and Groups](#).

WILPF Sections/Groups

MENA Partners

WILPF Initiatives

# ADVOCACY AND INFLUENCE

Although the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we work and communicate, our advocacy efforts continued without pause in 2020. Our progress was a direct result of the strength of WILPF's global community – staff, members, partners, donors, and stakeholders – and the vision we share of a future defined by peace, justice, and human security.

## 52

STATEMENT  
GIVEN TO THE UN

## 27

SUBMISSIONS  
MADE TO THE UN

## 19

CONFERENCE REPORTS  
PRODUCED

## 249

ACTIVISTS JOINED ONE  
OF OUR 14 ADVOCACY  
TRAININGS



Visit our [interactive report](#) to learn more about our [advocacy and outreach](#).

## Over Two Decades Later, What Have These Women's Rights Milestones Really Achieved?

2020 marked two major milestones for the women's rights movement: the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and 20th anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. But all these years later, it's clear that meaningful progress is still yet to be made. In this story, we examine the state of women's rights today and highlight WILPF's ongoing efforts to advocate, organise, and analyse for change.

[READ FULL STORY](#) ▶



## Feminists for Nuclear Disarmament

When the United States dropped two nuclear bombs on Japan in 1945, over 140,000 people lost their lives – and the bombs' radiation has caused the harm to be felt for generations. Since then, WILPF has been a leading voice for the abolition of nuclear weapons. In 2020 – the 75th anniversary of the bombings – our years of activism contributed to the ratification of the UN's Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

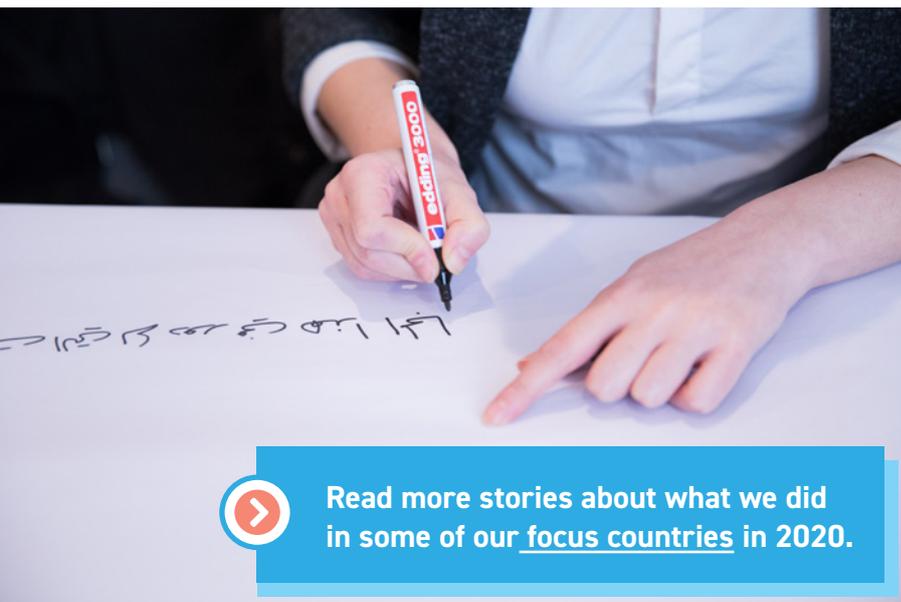
[READ FULL STORY](#) ➤



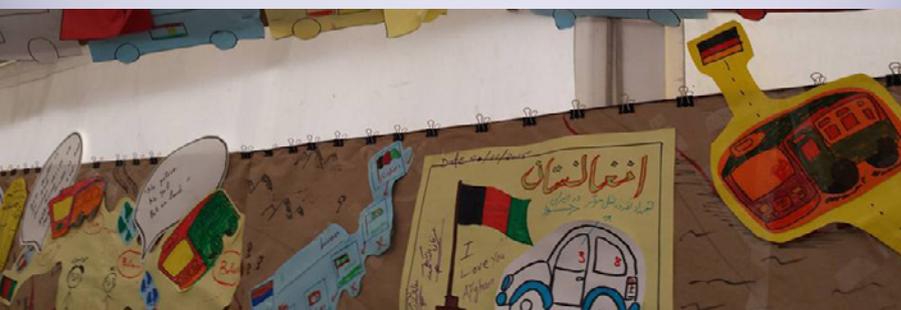
## The Women Leading Yemen's Peace Movement

Since 2014, Yemen has been in the grips of a devastating civil war that has left nearly a quarter of a million people dead. In 2020, under the added strains of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's healthcare system collapsed along with its resource supply chains. Yet in the midst of Yemen's historic humanitarian crisis, a movement for peace has emerged – and it's being led by women like Rasha Jarhum.

[READ FULL STORY](#) ➤



Read more stories about what we did in some of our [focus countries](#) in 2020.



# ENGAGING FOR PEACE

In 2020, WILPF engaged deeply with people, systems, and structures all over the world to advance the feminist peace movement. Here, we provide a glimpse into a few of our key projects and successes.

## Virtual Africa Regional Meeting

In November 2020, members from 17 WILPF Sections and Groups across Africa gathered for the first virtual regional conference of its kind.

Meeting over WhatsApp on 14 and 15 November, conference participants discussed their individual projects and their shared priorities as they work to advance the feminist peace movement in Africa.

Accompanied by a social media campaign, the event showcased the members' enduring commitment to regional cooperation and the extensive peacebuilding work taking place even in the face of instability and uncertainty.

## Mobilising Men for Feminist Peace

In 2020, WILPF partnered together with the MenEngage Alliance to launch a new initiative called [Confronting Militarised Masculinities](#).

Driven by WILPF's International Secretariat and Sections in Afghanistan, Cameroon, Colombia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the project has a goal to challenge the root causes of violence – including militarisation and gender-based violence – and advance feminist peace.

It will build alliances between women peacebuilders and men working for gender equality, create shared learning and engagement opportunities, and drive research and advocacy efforts at the local, national, and global levels.

## Peace Women Consultations

We spoke with feminist peace activists and Women, Peace and Security practitioners around the world to check in on the progress of UNSCR 1325.

Our interviews, consultations, and meetings formed the basis of a major report called UNSCR 1325 at 20 Years: Perspectives from Feminist Peace Activists and Civil Society.

The report examines the implementation of the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security over the past two decades and highlights the work that must take place to advance equity and justice for women and girls.

## Supporting and Protecting Women Human Rights Defenders

In 2020, WILPF continued to support the participation of women

human rights defenders in UN mechanisms and dialogues through training and advocacy.

With diplomatic spaces moved online due to COVID-19, we monitored this shift in partnership with other non-governmental organisations and worked to preserve civil society participation in every way possible while increasing the diversity of those participating.

We advocated for the adoption of measures to protect women human rights defenders, including those taking part in online meetings, and encouraged the inclusion of more women activists and civil society organisations in UN dialogues, taking advantage of opportunities created by the transition to virtual platforms.

## Monitoring the UN's Work on Disarmament

Throughout 2020, we continued to closely – but remotely – monitor and report on UN processes, systems, and dialogues relating to disarmament.

Covering many multilateral processes such as the International Day against Nuclear Tests, the Arms Trade Treaty, the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems, and the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, our monitoring reports offered

consistent, in-depth analysis to activists, academics, and others who follow the UN's work on disarmament.

This work also helped to ensure transparency and accountability within UN forums that shifted to different meeting modalities during the COVID-19 pandemic, and contributed to an analysis of how the pandemic has impacted their functioning. Read [Locked Out During Lockdown](#) for our analysis of UN systems during COVID-19.

## Advancing Cyber Peace

**Reaching Critical Will (RCW), WILPF's disarmament programme, is being increasingly recognised within the UN for its work on issues of cyber peace.**

In 2020, RCW partnered together with the Association for Progressive Communications to co-author a report examining the gendered impact of cyber operations and gender inequality in cyber diplomacy. The report informed discussions about gender within the UN's Open-ended Working Group on information and communications technology, and its findings were shared at several online events throughout 2020. It has also encouraged additional research on this topic.

RCW also continues to be one of few civil society groups sharing critical perspectives on the growth of governmental offensive cyber programmes ("cyber weapons") and the militarisation of cyberspace.

## Business and Human Rights: Raising Awareness

**Last year saw marked progress on the Human Rights Programme's efforts to advocate for greater awareness of the socioeconomic impacts of businesses.**

Coordinating with the Feminists4BindingTreaty, a coalition of over 25 human rights and women's rights organisations from around the world, the Human Rights Programme team continued to advocate for gender-responsive and conflict-sensitive provisions in the UN's draft treaty on transnational corporations, which led to the inclusion of several critical points in the revised text.

The team also drafted a submission to the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights focussing on how business activities contribute to human rights abuses in conflict, and engaged in advocacy efforts focusing on the intersection of disarmament, business, and human rights.

## Launching the First-Ever Gender and Disarmament Database

**In January 2020, Reaching Critical Will launched the very first database on gender and disarmament – a collection of easily accessible and searchable global resources.**

The database allows users to explore distinctive gender aspects related to disarmament, such as gender-based violence, gender norms, or gender diversity, as well

as topics of gender in connection to different types of weapon systems.

It hosts a wide range of resources, including reports, articles, books, policy documents, podcasts, legislation, UN documents, and more. RCW has been showcasing one resource each month through its e-newsletter.

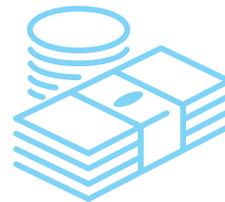
## Building Capacity, Strengthening the Movement

**Even in the face of a global pandemic, we continued to provide training and learning opportunities for Sections and partners around the world.**

Through training, education, and strategic advice, WILPF is committed to building the capacity of our global community to address local issues, navigate multilateral systems, and advance the feminist peace movement. In 2020, we found new and innovative ways to engage Sections and partners in online and remote training workshops – which sometimes proved to be a challenge due to unstable internet connections and regular power cuts!

One of our most successful training workshops was hosted for our Yemeni partners in July. Covering human rights mechanisms and international regulation of arms, the training was held in preparation for a joint submission to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women's (CEDAW) review of Yemen's compliance with the convention.

# FINANCIALS AND DONORS



In 2020, our incredible global community of donors, government partners, and private supporters once again united with WILPF and our worldwide network of Sections, Groups, and partners to advance the feminist peace movement – even in the midst of a year that brought unprecedented challenges to us all.

We extend our deepest gratitude to each of our 28 dedicated donors – including the nine who joined us in 2020. Together, we are building a future of equity, justice, and peace for all.

On our website [wilpf.org](https://wilpf.org), you can see who support our work. In addition, our latest audited financial statements are available upon request.



Our vision of feminist peace means making a world where everyone can enjoy a decent livelihood; health; freedom from violence; a flourishing natural environment; and so much more.”

Ray Acheson's blog post *COVID-19: The Pandemic of Nuclear Weapons*

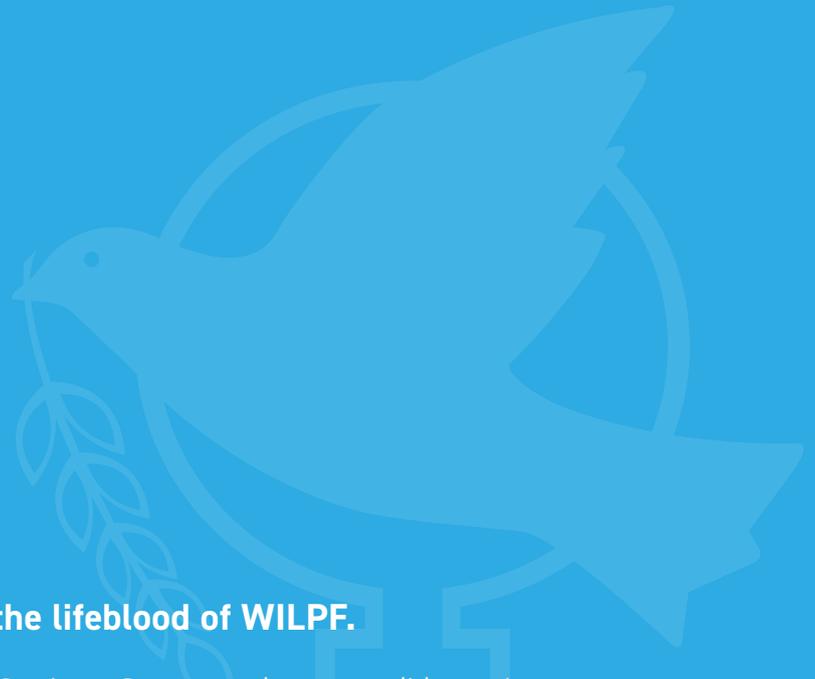
## Walking the Green Feminist Road

The impacts of climate change and environmental destruction were felt deeply in 2020. As a global organisation, we renewed our commitment to advancing climate justice – including by taking a hard look at our own policies and practices.

[READ FULL STORY](#) ➔



# MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE



## **Analysis and action are the lifeblood of WILPF.**

Throughout 2020, many of our Sections, Groups, and partners did amazing work in responding to the multiple crises that exploded during the pandemic: the pandemic within the pandemic that is gender-based violence, the lack of access to food, the collapse of basic healthcare services. The list goes on.

In addition to grassroots action, WILPFers also looked deeply into how COVID-19 exposed the structures that create and sustain gender discrimination – and how gender interacts with racism and white supremacy to compound inequalities and injustice.

In 2020, each of these intersecting challenges cried out for our collective attention with greater urgency than ever before. And we're not just listening: we're amplifying voices, advocating for change, and examining our own ways of being.

But there is still so much work to be done. 2021 has already shown us that the temperature is still too high. Calmness and clarity of purpose are needed in how we work, but so is passion. Passion to make the changes that history has shown us must be made if decency, trust, and solidarity can be made real.

As a [great poet](#) recently said, "It's the past we step into and how we repair it." If 2020 exposed the fault lines, in 2021 the tectonic plates of change are moving. The transformative repair work must now begin.





The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is a worldwide non-governmental organisation with national Sections covering every continent, an international Secretariat based in Geneva, and an office in New York.

Since our establishment, we have brought together women from around the world who are united in working for peace. Our approach is always non-violent, and we use existing international legal and political frameworks to achieve fundamental change in the way states conceptualise and address issues of gender, militarism, peace and security.



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

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