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abstract

Current discussions of peace and security-related policy in Africa focus disproportionately on the work of governmental actors, regional organisations, and the African Union. Implicit in such a framing is the assumption that policy change is driven primarily by state and international institutions. This paper pushes back on that assumption by showing how girls' and young women's grassroots activism can function as a source of innovative policymaking. Writing as a collective of activist-scholars on the ground in South Sudan, Sudan, Lesotho, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Kenya and the United States, we identify four key strategies driving intergenerational peacebuilding work: working on multiple scales; building networks of care and solidarity; mobilising difference as a resource; and recognising that violence takes many shapes. By identifying key threads that link women and girls' intergenerational organising work across diverse national contexts, we aim to expand core understandings of who counts as a policymaker.

keywords

peacemaking, policy, activism, transnational, feminisms

Introduction

We write together[1] in a moment of global crisis made visible by COVID-19. This pandemic has shaped all of our lives, and yet the devastation — in illness, economic precarity, and domestic violence — has not been equally distributed. Rather, this current crisis has exacerbated entrenched inequities of race, class, gender, and citizenship status (among other markers). In such challenging circumstances, we imagine a path forward as a collective of academics and activists. Focusing on everyday peace work, this focus explores how grassroots activists shape policy that addresses precisely the inequities that this pandemic so forcefully highlights.[2]

We begin by recognising that girls and women of colour have historically been central to building and sustaining peace, although this labour has often gone unacknowledged by governmental peacemaking structures.[3] Despite evidence that women's participation in formal peace processes enhances the "quality and durability of peace", women continue to be largely excluded from negotiating peace (Krause et al. 2018). Today, women are rarely

recognised as peace and security experts; girls still more rarely. Yet, every day girls and women persist in building and sustaining peace outside of official processes.

One powerful example of this practice is the Liberian women's peace movement in the early 2000s. As peace activist and Nobel Laureate Leymah Gbowee (2019) recounts, daily non-violent protest – led by Liberian women – ultimately forced Liberia's then-president Charles Taylor to the negotiating table. Once negotiations began, activists kept up the pressure, writing letters to the Chief Mediator expressing the war's toll on their own communities as well as their assessment of how the talks were progressing. The final peace agreement, signed in 2003, has meaningfully transitioned the country away from war and into the long-term process of building and sustaining peace. Gbowee (2019) suggests "that one of the keys" to the success of the women's movement in Liberia was that it stayed anchored in the experience and needs of girls and women across the country, that it "made sense to the people for whom it was meant to be of service". Such activism provides a model of how women's grassroots organising can transform seemingly intractable conflicts, and how such activism can be sustained beyond the formal end of conflict. Girls' and women's organising is thus not merely influential, but essential to policy change: grounded in deep knowledge, shared commitments, and long-term strategic planning.

Such an image of policy – as fluid, relational, reflexive, critical and grounded in networks of care – is not the dominant story of how policy is made or sustained.[4] Policy literature tends to bifurcate official policy development from grassroots organising; law from activism; formal education from experience-based education. Discussions of peace and security-related policy in Africa, for example, disproportionately focus on initiatives conceptualised and implemented by national governments, regional organisations, and the African Union. Regional expert Toni Haastrup (2019) highlights the importance of the African Union Gender Policy; other scholars have focused on particular states' National Action Plans (Hudson 2017), security sector reform (Bastick 2008), and

the inclusion of women in state or United Nations-led peace processes (Hendricks 2015). Where policy scholarship does consider civil society, well-established non-governmental organisations tend to receive far more attention than grassroots organisers (Kontinen & Millstein 2017). As Tolulope Adeogun (2018) observes, grassroots organisations are still largely seen as "third parties which can either slow down or hasten policymaking processes", rather than as knowledgeable and experienced actors within the policymaking ecosystem.

A similar oversight characterises many formal policymaking bodies. For example, the African Union's Silencing the Guns initiative, which aims to achieve a conflict-free Africa, relies almost exclusively on African Union architecture and, to a lesser extent, action by member states. The Silencing the Guns 'Roadmap' identifies more than 50 'practical steps' toward ending conflict in Africa; of those, just a few mention civil society, typically at the end of a list of other (national and regional) organisations (2018). Strikingly, women's organisations are not mentioned at all. This absence vividly illustrates dominant conceptions of policy: oriented almost exclusively around state and interstate institutions.

Decolonial feminist scholarship has worked to expand such assumptions, and to forward what Maria Lugones (2010) calls resistant subjectivities. This paper argues the policy field has not yet succeeded in embracing the range of ways that grassroots activism by girls and women is intimate, relational and structural at once. That is, this activism is not only a 'pillar' from which policymaking emerges; it is also a praxis to ensure that implemented policies remain accountable to the communities from which they emerge (Okech & Musindarwezo 2019; Aoláin & Valji 2019).

Drawing on a diverse range of examples across Africa, this paper attends to the ways in which girls and women's activism formulates new approaches to transforming conflict. By using the phrase 'girls' and women's activism' we denote two related forms of organising. First, we refer to organising directly led by girls. About half of the organisations that we

discuss below fall into this category, including those working in South Sudan, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In highlighting this form of activism, we draw on the work of Ruth Nicole Brown (2013, p. 228), who notes that girls' thinking often challenges the "academic constructs and ideas so often implicated in policymaking", which draw on more limited forms and modes of knowledge. Examining the work of girl-led organisations allows us to draw from a more diverse well of peacebuilding strategies.

Second, we use the phrase 'girls and women's organising' to refer to intergenerational organising that draws on the combined expertise of girls, adult women, and elders. We argue that these groups each have distinct gifts to bring, questions to ask, and lenses through which to analyse their shared projects. Yet given the importance of girls' distinct knowledge, we see true intergenerational activism as distinct from merely working *with* girls. Thus we focus also on organisations that treat girls' voices as central to their mission, rather than as an add-on, such as, in this paper, groups working in Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon (Vanner 2019).

We write as, and represent, a range of academic-activist collaborators working on issues including the Cameroonian and South Sudanese peace processes, school policies around sexual exploitation and abuse in Ghana, and resource conflicts in Nigeria. In each instance, we reveal how grassroots activism both shapes policy change and keeps government accountable to a community of girls and women. Attention to such approaches does not dismiss the role of state and regional organisations in working for policy change, but rather shifts the emphasis from prioritising state framings of what constitutes peace (and how to get there), to also attending to the thinking and everyday actions of activists. In doing so, this paper expands the prevailing understanding of who 'counts' as a policymaker, responding to and resisting the tendency to treat African grassroots activists as "a mere recipient of policies formulated elsewhere" (Parashar 2019, p. 831).

This paper draws on these examples to explore what is to be gained by recognizing grassroots girls' and women's daily peacebuilding work as both fundamentally connected to formal policy processes and grounded in intimate daily lives. Many policymakers assume that grassroots' women's organisations face primarily technical, material challengesMany policymakers assume that grassroots' women's organisations face primarily technical, material challenges (i.e. lack of funding, lack of infrastructure) (Okech & Musindarwezo 2019). By this logic, what women's organisations need most is capacity building to be able to participate in dominant policymaking arenas. What this paper shows instead, is that girls and women grassroots organisers are *already* peace experts, based on their everyday positions, solidarities, and multi-scalar anti-violence work. In formulating a more capacious notion of policymaking, this paper affirms the need for – as Amina Mama and Margo Okazawa-Rey (2012 p. 119) put it – "taking feminist activism beyond the demands for the mere inclusion of women in existing institutions and processes". Instead, this moment calls for a deeper recognition of activism, and (young) activists, as sources of policy knowledge and change.

Commitments across initiatives: Expanding what 'counts' as policymaking

Over a year of exchanges among 10 girls' and women's peace organisations, certain shared commitments became evident. Although these strategies look different in different contexts, all spoke to the creativity and flexibility necessary to combat everyday experiences of violence and insecurity (see Table 1).

First, the work of grassroots women's organisations is multi-scalar, complicating and disrupting the spatial orientation of a 'bottom up/top down' dichotomy

The organisations contributing to this focus piece address violence at multiple scales and sites to advance peace and justice.[5] That is, even in their national contexts, they advance work that is 'local' and 'global' at once, complicating the very concept of a 'top-down'/'bottom-up' peacebuilding spatial scheme. In their multi-

Table 1. Contributing organisations & their work areas discussed in this paper

Organisation	Country	Areas of focus discussed in this paper	Outcomes
Crown the Woman (CREW)	South Sudan	Child marriage	Multifaceted, intergenerational programme to shift community norms around child marriage
Collaboration of Women in Development (CWID)	Kenya	Sexual and reproductive health	Girl-led advocacy for access to sexual and reproductive health services
Hope for the Needy Association (HOFNA)	Cameroon	Human security	Intergenerational peacebuilding network in conflict-affected region
Institute for Young Women's Development (IYWD)	Zimbabwe	Access to justice	Intergenerational training and mentorship of young women to provide the traditional courts with a feminist perspective
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - Ghana	Ghana	Girls' safety and security at school	Intergenerational anti-violence work including school-based programming with girls about access to quality and gender-responsive education
Federation of Muslim Women's Associations (FOMWAN), Plateau State Chapter	Nigeria	Access to water	Intergenerational, interfaith 'peace ambassadors' resolving community conflict over water
Women of Sudanese Civic and Political Groups (MANSAM)	Sudan	Human security	Young women-led dialogue and education through informal coffee groups for women and girls
Réseau des Femmes en Action pour le Développement Social (REFEADES)	DRC	Gender-based violence; economic empowerment	Young women-led trainings and activities as a path to economic power for survivors of gender-based violence
The Suubi Centre, Kibuku	Uganda	Economic empowerment	Financial literacy classes for girls and young women
The Barali Foundation	Lesotho	Sexual and reproductive rights	School-based programming to shift social norms around girls' sexual and reproductive decision-making

scalar work the girls' and women's organisations in this paper problematise the spatial imagining of 'above' and 'below' by showing not only that lived experiences (i.e. experience typically deemed as 'from below') are critical for policymaking, but more importantly, that such ideas often travel and shape-shift. As such, the very framing in terms of a binary (top down, bottom up) can be, and is often, limiting.[6]

Key to this spatial orientation is an image of grassroots activism as predominantly about direct service work. But this framing misses the ways that such work is often intimately linked to policy advocacy and transformation, as exemplified by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).[7] As a member of the global network, our collaborators in WILPF-Ghana note that they work transnationally on issues ranging from health inequities in COVID-19 responses to ending the use of autonomous weapons. At the same time, the Ghana chapter has developed specific projects in collaboration with girls to promote healthy relationships, gender equality, and non-violence in the nation's schools. In Kenya, the Collaboration of Women in Development (CWID)[8] works with girls and young women to push for laws that ensure broad, non-discriminatory access to sexual and reproductive health services. Such policy and advocacy work, led by young women, fits into a larger model that centres mentorship and intergenerational leadership. In Sudan, Women of Sudanese Civic and Political Groups (MANSAM)[9] is a collective of girl and women's groups involved in the 2018–2019 Sudanese Revolution. Largely led by young women, they continue to advocate for human security needs across the country today, organising a range of channels and spaces for dialogue (such as women's coffee groups in rural areas). While it may be easy to categorise these actions into distinct 'levels' (bottom up vs top down), the structural and interlocking nature of these issues require multi-scalar strategies and innovation across multiple spheres.

Such adaptive and iterative approaches, often described primarily as 'local' or direct service work, instead operate on multiple scales, transcending ideas of policy framed primarily around sites of intervention. Attending to the circulation, exchange, and iteration of strategies used by grassroots girls and women expands notions of policy beyond individual governmental actors or 'local' sites.

A second shared commitment is developing extended networks of care – creating communities of girls and women across generations and regions, and deepening solidarity and justice work.

Consider, for example, how Crown the Woman (CREW)[10] in South Sudan works against child marriage. The group's tactics include helping married girls access legal aid, organising direct actions like silent marches against violence, and attempting to shift community norms through film, comic books, and music that address the harms of child marriage. Because several of CREW's leaders are themselves survivors of child marriage, they are particularly well situated to build trust with younger girls, both those at risk of child marriage and those already married. Thus, expertise developed through life experience enables these girls and young women to build new forms of security both for and with the younger generation.

The women and girls of Hope for the Needy Association (HOFNA) in Cameroon work in similarly expansive ways.[11] HOFNA has built a network of female leaders in Cameroon's conflict-affected North-West and South-West Regions, enabling those leaders to then replicate and extend HOFNA's work at the community level. After attending HOFNA's workshop, one participant organised a restitution workshop; another started a community-based organisation addressing the needs of elderly people and young widows in the conflict-affected regions; a third ran a 30-day online campaign to counter hate speech in Cameroon. Thus, HOFNA's initial organising produces ripple effects, which girls and women spread out to their home communities and become part of much larger (and ever-expanding) networks of care and peace work. 'If we are training one woman,' notes HOFNA Founder Christelle Bay, 'we are training at

least 50 other women, too' (personal communication 28 March 2019). Tentacles of radical everyday activism emanate from this centralized work, stretching out across West and Central Africa.

Such networks of care sometimes begin informally. The Uganda-based Suubi Centre, Kibuku, for example, began as a Sunday-afternoon conversation group, where women gathered to share common problems ranging from parenting challenges to past trauma.[12] From this beginning the Centre developed a range of community programmes focused on working alongside, and with, young women. In order to make its financial literacy classes accessible to young women with children, Suubi Centre provides care in a very literal sense: a day-care centre that allows young women to bring their children with them to Suubi and know that the children are receiving attentive care. Such networks of care offer a fresh perspective on what constitutes policy. Many assumptions about policy are predicated on ideas of the relationship between citizen and state, implicitly upholding state actors as both enforcers and initiators of policy (Mazur 2002). In this alternative view, girls and women themselves deserve to also be considered in such an ecology—through their relationships with each other, as well as with the state.

The third strategy we identify is centring coalitional work, where leveraging difference is understood as a key resource.

The organisations contributing to this paper are largely intergenerational. Girls are often central to outreach and organising; elders are honoured and respected for the roles they have played and continue to play in peace- and justice-building. These organisations leverage difference in order to build solidarity rooted in shared problems and projects. Yet although difference—such as age and generation, gender and sexuality, ethnicity and religion—can be radically generative, its value is often overlooked as a resource in dominant policy literature. Instead, myths of consensus and liberal ideas of equality privilege an image of policy as fundamentally about sameness (Fine & Torre 2019).[13]

However, we see the opposite is often true. For example, in north-central Nigeria, the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria (FOMWAN)[14] responded to conflict between Christian and Muslim communities over access to water. When a particular river became a flashpoint for conflict, FOMWAN organised girl and women 'peace ambassadors' to defuse tensions. The programme led to an interfaith women's savings group as well as interfaith meals at houses of worship. 'We ate together, we broke kola,' says Jennifer Yarima, President of Jos Centre Stakeholders for Peace, who had never entered a mosque prior to the interfaith dinners. 'Now it's been resolved … so that everyone can come, fetch water peacefully, and go' (personal communication 20 Jan 2020). Rather than assume that difference is a source of conflict, such work draws on difference as a resource: a grounding point for new ideas and connections. This shared commitment across groups speaks to what Jennifer Nash (2015) calls 'the vibrancy and complexity of difference,' which stretches the policy imagination about what girl and women's organising and activism can offer to the work of policymaking and sustaining (p. 11).

The final collective strategy evident across these groups is their embrace of a bold conception of violence: gendered, structural, political and physical.

In attending to how social structures, institutions, and history shape current day experiences (e.g. access to healthcare, effects of environmental degradation, lack of access to decision-making and economic power) these groups expand the very idea of what counts as violence.

In Zimbabwe, for example, the Institute for Young Women's Development (IYWD)[15] works to expand the political make-up of the country and to promote the participation of young women. A central project aims to transform Zimbabwe's traditional court system from within. The traditional court system is uncodified but widely recognised as having authority to resolve conflicts within and between communities. Though their leaders are disproportionately male, the courts frequently resolve cases specifically about women's rights, often in ways that institutionalise 'bias

against women and children' (Heal Zimbabwe Trust & Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust 2016). To resist such bias, IYWD trains young women to provide the courts with a feminist perspective on its cases. Through 'peace committees,' local women and girls attend court hearings, listen to both parties' arguments, and share their perspective publicly to the court's leader. Thus, the peace committees function not only as a mode of integrating young women into local decision-making structures, but also of articulating feminist legal perspectives within institutions that have historically been hostile to such perspectives. Programmes Officer Gillian Chinzete explains that IYWD's work is grounded in an understanding of peace as the eradication of 'patriarchal culture and domination,' rather than simply 'the absence of physical violence' (personal communication 18 November 2019).

This capacious understanding of peace also grounds the work of Réseau des Femmes en Action pour le Développement Social (REFEADES)[16] [Network of Women in Action for Social Development], an organisation in eastern DRC that sees peacebuilding as fundamentally tied to the support of survivors of sexual- and gender-based violence, many of whom are young women and girls. The group prioritises access to economic power, leading projects that support girls in ventures such as soapmaking. Senior Advisor Seya Wa Mwilambwe emphasizes that girls are often bound to their families of origin (or pushed toward marriage) due to economic insecurity: supporting girls' economic ventures allows them to be 'autonomous' rather than to 'wait for the man to give [them] everything' (personal communication 23 January 2020). Shifting traditional economic power structures, in turn, allows girls and young women greater power within family decision-making. REFEADES' approach thus works toward a more peaceful world by addressing a root cause of insecurity: economic inequality and disparity.

In a similar way, the Barali Foundation in Lesotho identifies engrained social norms as an obstacle to women and girl's sexual and reproductive freedom. As Maternal Health Consultant Mamello Makhele explains, 'girl children learn to be submissive because that is how [they are] socialized' (personal communication 23 Jan 2020). In order to shift such norms, the Barali Foundation works in schools and collaborates with girls and young women to offer girls new ways of thinking about their rights and relationships. The Foundation, which began as a project to reduce teenage pregnancy, now works broadly to address girls' status 'politically, economically, and [with respect to] mental and physical health' (personal communication, 23 January 2020). This holistic approach is necessary, Makhele explains, because these aspects of girls' lives are deeply interrelated: focusing solely on teen pregnancy may occlude larger structural dynamics that contribute to unwanted pregnancies. Understanding violence as historical, structural and political (as well as physical) expands ideas of the 'objects' of policy transformation beyond individuals and individual action.

Conclusion

This paper, written with and drawing on the work of 10 organisations from across Africa, identifies four key strategies driving girls' and women's contemporary peacebuilding work. First, these groups work on multiple and interlocking scales: at the 'bottom' and the 'top' (often simultaneously). Recognising advocacy work as tied to larger social structures disrupts a normative spatial scheme that imagines the 'local' as fundamentally separate from the 'global.' Second, these groups develop networks of care and solidarity that link girls and women across generational and regional divides. Such networks provide space for the reflection and sense of community that sustains activists over the long haul. Third, these groups actively build coalitions with governmental, commercial, and religious organisations. In doing so, they make strategic choices about how to collaborate across difference to build sustainable solutions. Finally, these groups embrace a bold conception of violence: gendered, structural, political and physical. They articulate and work towards a similarly expansive conception of peace, recognising that lasting solutions must address the deep as well as the proximate causes of violence.

Looked at in these ways, such activisms can be seen as principled and strategic responses to a range of injustices. These responses differ from more traditional

governmental policy work: they operate through different channels, evaluate social problems from distinct positions, and often come to divergent conclusions about how to best address a given problem. While not always recognised as such, the organisations in this paper draw on deep expertise and relational thinking—organising across generational divides to devise projects that meet the needs of girls, young women, and elders alike. Yet these approaches are often seen as quotidian acts of solidarity rather than as policymaking.

Ironically, many of these projects of strategic social change often do the very work that is conventionally ascribed to governmental policy. Consider the case of Ingoma Nshya, a multi-ethnic Rwandan women's drumming troupe founded in 2004. The intergenerational group included women whose lives had been marked by the genocide in diverse ways — as drummer Kiki Katese notes, 'we had kids of perpetrators, we had widows, we had orphans' (Ingoma Nshya n.d.). Despite these divergent personal histories, the intergenerational drummers came together to give voice to past trauma and to work towards reconciliation and national healing. Fifteen years later, Ingoma Nshya is thriving; without erasing girls and women's individual histories and relationships to the genocide, it gives girls and women the opportunity to connect *as girls and women* across those differences. The group thus addresses the very problems that the Rwandan state has attempted to resolve through a recognisably state-based policy process. Rwanda's National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, for example, has worked to foster reconciliation by mobilising connection through programmes such as *ingando* solidarity camps*, ubusabane* community festivals, and *abakangurambaga* peace volunteers (Mgbako 2005; Purdekova 2011). Ingoma Nshya's work is, on the surface, quite similar to such programmes. And yet the intergenerational women's group is uniquely positioned to foster authentic connection, in part because it is *not* affiliated with the government. More than 25 years post-genocide, many Hutu Rwandans remain sceptical of the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front and distrust the local officials tasked with implementing reconciliation policy (Thomson 2013;

Chakravarty 2014). In such scenarios, policy developed outside the state is a crucial complement to the state-based work referenced above.

So, what is at stake in broadening dominant understandings of policymaking to include girls' and young women's everyday peace work? First, this conceptual shift enables a naming of grassroots girls' and women's deep expertise, particularly insofar as it is shaped by their daily lived experiences. That is, we see girls and young women as respected partners who bring their own knowledge to bear on a range of thorny problems—not simply as the targets of particular policy interventions. Second, this reframing allows for a recognition of girls' and young women's organising as strategic, knowledgeable and oriented around crafting new solutions. To arrive at such perspectival shifts may require new forms of listening to grassroots activists, an exercise that extends far beyond the scope of this paper. By reframing peacebuilding as collective, institutional, and political work, however, we open space to ask such new questions— beginning to theorise policymaking in a more capacious way.

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Notes

1. The writers of this article are members of a larger collective of activists and academics focused on issues of gender, peace, and security. The collective also includes: Muibat Abdulrazaq, Kaltume Abubaker, Jennifer Yarima, Kabirat Abdulrazaq, Rasha Abubaker, Mazahir Ali Hassan, Afkar Nasser, Omima Alfadil, Rose Faida, Aline Sifa Mulibinge, Seya wa Mwilambwe, Sylvia Katooko, Agnes Ikasilon, Bridget Sharon Mukade, Makhosi Ntsalong, Mamello Makhele, Limpho Matlakala, Makhotso Kalake, Beatrice Sharon Ochongo, Susy Auma, Racheal Kavata, Riya Williams Yuyada, Varna Joseph Abdalla Zaki, Mary Juan, Christelle Chongwain Bay, Bantar Rinyu, Jennet Nfoh, Munteh Florence Chea, Gillian Chinzete, Constance Mushayi, Tatenda Madziro, Ayo Ayoola-Amale, Margaret Sedziafa, Mercy Osei-Konadu,

Meredith Forsyth, Michelle Fine, and Leymah Gbowee.

2. We write as a transnational constellation of women, rooted in the work of activists in Cameroon, Ghana, South Sudan, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Nigeria, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan, with a small set of academic women from the US working alongside. This project grew out of collaboration during the Women, Peace and Security programme at Columbia's Peace and Social Change Fellowship programme, organised in collaboration with the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY) – a fellowship designed to generate knowledge, build skills, advance solidarity, and facilitate knowledge exchange among frontline advocates and organisers working on issues of justice and security for all people. The Fellowship programme creates a collaborative space for participants to learn from one another and to increase the visibility of the diverse kinds of peace work by women in different communities. The WPS fellowship programme is bookended by two in-person workshops and takes an innovative approach to the very concept of 'fellowship', acknowledging that positive social change is not forged by individuals alone, but rather happens through coordination with partners, networks, and coalitions. Throughout the 6-month fellowship period the WPS programme facilitates sustained engagement across organisations through webinars, scheduled calls, and continued email exchanges to maintain a critical learning community.

3. In this paper we define peace broadly to include not just the absence of war, but genuine security for all people.

4. Here we draw on the definition of policy put forth by Cochran and Malone (2010): "political decisions for implementing programs to achieve societal goals". While 'political' is often taken as a synonym for 'governmental', it need not be.

5. This quotation, like others from January 2020, emerged from a series of group conversations among the WPS Collective over several days in Nairobi.

6. Colonial legal frameworks that rely on particular notions of the state and Euro-American law are one example of this binary framing. The scholarship of Sally Merry, Lila Abu-Lughod, Elora Chowdhury, Kiran Asher, Eve Darian-Smith, Sonia Alvarez, and Aída Hernández Castillo, among others, is useful here in lodging the critique and articulating alternative understandings.

7. WILPF-Ghana is the Ghana chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, an international organisation that addresses the root causes of violence through a feminist lens.

8. Collaboration Women in Development (formerly 'Coast Women in Development') is a grassroots women's organisation that works to improve the lives of women and children at the grassroots levels in six coastal counties in Kenya.

9. MANSAM is a network of activists advocating for the meaningful inclusion of women in Sudan's government and the promotion of women's and girls' rights. They continue to organize as a coalition for peace and stability after the political revolution of 2018-2019.

10. Founded in 2016, Crown the Woman is a South Sudanese nongovernmental organisation focused on empowering women and girls. Broadly speaking, CREW focuses on seven areas: women's rights, civic engagement, health, economic empowerment, protecting children, agricultural training, and providing humanitarian relief.

11. HOFNA is a non-governmental organisation in Cameroon with a mission to strengthen the leadership, power, and voices of women and girls from disadvantaged communities and develop them into self-reliant and socially conscious leaders.

12. The Suubi Centre is a non-profit organisation focused on providing sexual and reproductive health services and works toward ensuring greater access to education and income-generating skills for women in rural communities of Kibuku, Uganda.

13. Here we are influenced by the work and insights of Michelle Fine, whose years of working across multiple contexts holds up this principle, both in her scholarship and in practice.

14. FOMWAN was established in 1985 in Nigeria, and is comprised of chapters in 36 states and Abuja. Contributing to this project is the Plateau State Chapter from northern Nigeria, whose focus is on women's rights in education, health, and economic empowerment. FOMWAN also contains a youth wing comprised of girls.

15. The Institute for Young Women's Development is a movement of young women from rural and mining communities committed to mobilizing and strengthening women's voice and power to challenge oppressive systems.

16. Founded by five displaced Congolese women in 2009, REFEADES seeks to advocate around women and girls' rights, with particular focus on addressing sexual- and gender-based violence in eastern DRC. The group also focuses on several other areas including poverty, environmental protection, and public health and sanitation.

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