NO CARE? NO PEACE!
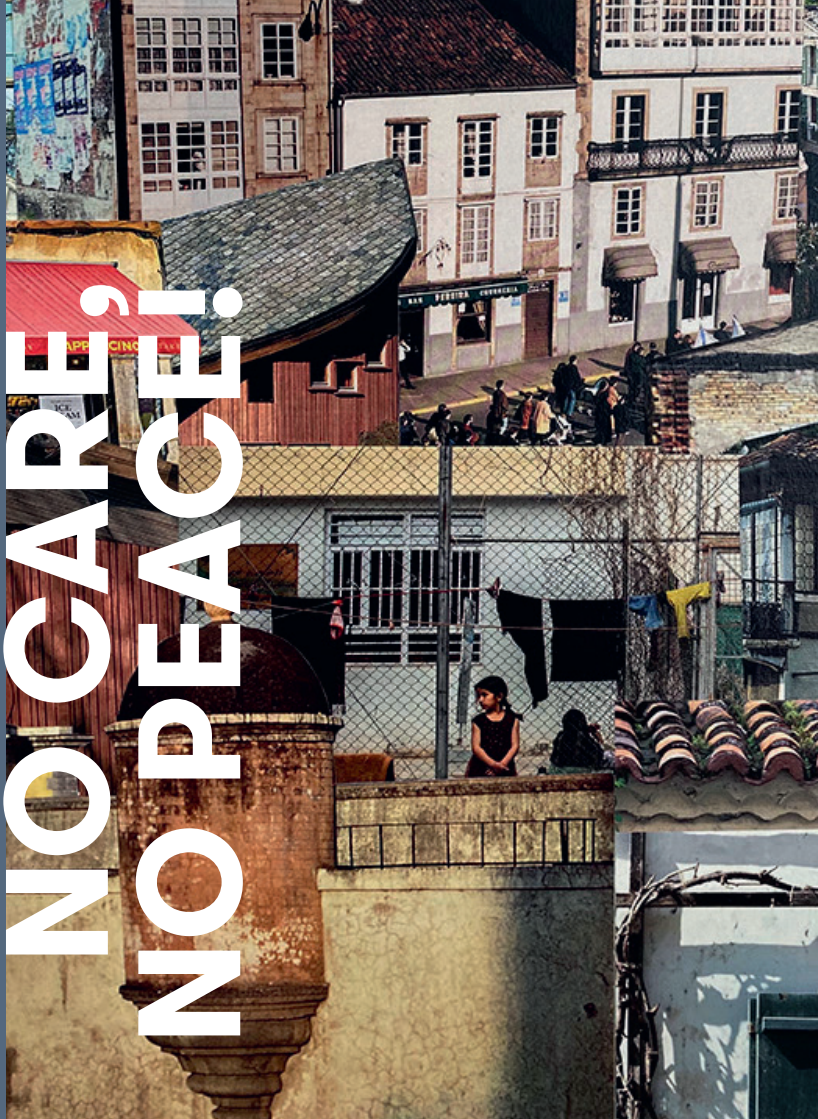
Contributions from civil society on Switzerland's implementation of the UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Resolution 1325, which initiated the Women[1], Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, was unanimously adopted by the UN Security Council (UNSC) in 2000. It is the result of the worldwide engagement of women peace activists and civil society. UNSCR 1325 calls for women's participation in conflict prevention and peace processes, women's protection during conflict, the prevention of violence against women, and their inclusion in recovery phases after conflict. It reinforces and extends the scope and the regulations on protection, participation, and gender justice proposed in international agreements such as CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, and the 2030 Agenda (SDGs 5 und 16).

1 The category of women is a social construct, which nevertheless has real consequences. We emphasize that women are not one homogenous group and recognize that women have different positionalities depending on categories of exclusion such as race, religion, sexuality, (dis)ability, age and class. By the term women, we refer to persons who identify fully or partially as female, are always or sometimes read by others as female, and/or have been/are raised as girls/women. By this definition we explicitly include trans women as well as intersex and cisgender women.

ABOUT
THE PROJECT

Switzerland implements UNSCR 1325 with a National Action Plan (NAP 1325). The project "Civil Society Contribution to the implementation of the Swiss National Action Plan NAP 1325" ensures that the expertise of civil society is gathered and fed back to policy-makers to improve the official implementation. The Swiss Platform for Peacebuilding KOFF, PeaceWomen Across the Globe and cfd—the feminist Peace Organization coordinate this policy-dialogue.

This booklet is based on desk-based research, qualitative interviews with Swiss NGO representatives and their partners, and the exchange with an Advisory Group, composed of experts from civil society and academia, on women's participation, feminist peacebuilding and the care economy.

Switzerland is currently implementing its fourth National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security. In view of the upcoming fifth NAP, this booklet gives insight in reflections and recommendations Swiss civil society collected on the question of how socio-economic barriers, and care-work in particular, hinder women's participation in political and peace processes. That way we aim to contribute to Switzerland using the full potential of the WPS agenda.

PEACE IS NOT JUST THE ABSENCE OF WAR

First of all, it's critical to understand what a feminist definition of peace entails contrary to the dominant militarized definition. We understand peace as a positive process whereby all forms of violence, not just armed or physical violence, but also structural and cultural violence, are overcome. This is the vision of a society where everyone would feel safe.

> *"Peace is not just the absence of war. Peace is only achieved when all human beings have the same chances to lead a decent life. What we have today in Switzerland is a superficial peace."*
>
> Theodora Leite, cfd

Seen like this, Switzerland is far from guaranteeing positive peace within its own borders. Structural discrimination, such as the gender inequitable distribution of un(der)paid care work, sexual and gender-based violence, racism, and exposure to violence of marginalized groups, are rooted in society. They not only create a situation of insecurity for women and other marginalized groups, but also effectively prevent them from political participation. Because if one constantly must cope with micro aggressions, institutional barriers, and limited resources and hence critically, also with a lack of time, meaningful participation is impossible. Meaningful participation is a cornerstone of feminist peace, and to allow for it, appropriate socio-economic conditions must be assured.

> *"One in sixteen households in the city of Zurich relies on domestic aid provided by a sans papier woman. That means that a lot of things would fall into pieces if we did not have this workforce. It is cynical that we benefit from their labor, and at the same time criminalize it and do not allow them to participate politically."*
>
> Bea Schwager, Zurich City Card

PARTICIPATION

The systematic exclusion of entire groups of population from political decision-making or from access to justice mechanisms is an important, but often invisible form of violence. Not only women with care-obligations face important barriers to official participation processes.
To this day, 25% of the resident population of Switzerland is excluded from the fundamental right to citizenship and therefore the right to shape the country they live in.

One of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda's pillars is that women's participation at all political decision-making levels must be ensured in order to have sustainable peace. When it comes to the domestic and international promotion and implementation of the agenda, Switzerland should therefore live up to the WPS Agenda's original emancipatory idea. That was not to make war safer for women, but to promote gender justice and transformative peace policy everywhere: at home and abroad. This is the most effective conflict prevention strategy!

WAR, GUNS, AND MONEY

If Switzerland really wants to promote the WPS Agenda outside its borders, it must focus its efforts on stopping arms exports. War material export is not only one of the major concerns in the WPS Agenda, it has a direct connection with human rights and women's rights violations. Swiss companies remain highly involved in arms trade. The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs reported that war material worth CHF 901.2 million was exported in 2020. This is a 24% increase compared to 2019 and puts Switzerland on the 14th place globally in terms of arms exports. In addition, particular military goods, as well as dual use goods are not included in these statistics. When considered, exports reach CHF 3.8 billion.
Even if war material cannot be exported to zones of conflict, it can be, and indeed has been, exported to countries involved in wars: Numerous examples show the usage of Swiss military material in armed conflict. The only solution to stop this is to ban arms exports completely.

NO PEACE WITHOUT CARE

The Covid-19 crisis has made the important role of people engaged in care-related activities more evident than before. Jobs that qualify as essential are mostly set in the care-sector (e.g., health care, retail, social work, emergency services, education). Despite their importance, care-workers are invisibilized, subjected to social and economic insecurity and precarious working conditions, and are often ignored in consultative or decision-making spheres.

We are thus confronted with a double-bind: care-work helps us survive crises, but the care economy is in a constant state of crisis. This is a fundamental barrier to political participation for anyone active in this economy.

> "*To manage this pandemic, means to depend on whether women will continue carrying the burden of paid and unpaid care-work.*"
>
> *Elvira Wiegers, VPOD*

CARE ECONOMY

As care-work is relational, investment in the care economy does not appear attractive within a capitalist logic since it does not allow accumulation. Investment in it is, however, a must if one looks at it from the viewpoint of citizens' needs and the obligation to respect human dignity, two essential factors of positive peace.

The unpaid care work provided by women in Switzerland amounts to 248 billion CHF per year. This is more than the entire national annaul budget, so more than everything the federal government, cantons and municipalities spend together. It often crosses the boundaries of legality and informality and is mostly un(der)paid and undervalued. When outsourced, it often involves people in vulnerable situations, e.g., migrant women, and is situated in the low-wage sector.

Care work is one of the most fundamental forms of participation in society. Care-workers, which are predominantly women, keep the tissues of society together and promote peace daily. To reach a gender just form of peace, we therefore have to acknowledge care-work as peacebuilding and transform the conditions under which it is performed. The better the conditions under which it is performed, the more likely it is that structures of violence can be overcome.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To expand the possibilities for shaping society comprehensively in a just way, and to create conditions that allow for equal participation in political, economic, and social life, the WPS agenda should be used in an integrative and inclusive way.

1. Recognize and follow the notion of feminist peace.

- Re-evaluate previous militarized understandings of peace and security. Interpret the term in its broadest sense - corresponding to the absence of physical, structural and cultural violence.
- Implement recommendations by relevant civil society actors regarding the elimination of institutional and structural violence.
- Conduct all work within the WPS agenda by taking an intersectional perspective.
- Tackle structural and institutional violence and multiple discriminations.

2. Make use of the WPS Agenda's domestic potential.

- In the fifth National Action Plan, Switzerland should tackle security issues for women and other marginalized groups, include domestic government and civil society actors and allocate additional funding for the domestic implementation.
- Both in all policy areas and in the private sphere of the "household", the conditions of care work must be recorded from a gender perspective in such a way that measures can be defined and implemented in the sense of a positive peace process.
- Allow for equitable fillings of posts at all levels and to government negotiations, commissions, working groups, events, and panel discussion.
- Switzerland must recognize the connection between Swiss arms exports and violent conflicts as well as sexualized gender-based violence committed with Swiss war material abroad, and therefore needs to work towards a complete cessation of arms exports.

3. Support and foster women's participation.

- Socio-economic obstacles to participation of women in peace processes and political decision-making must be better understood and subsequently tackled to enhance participation. Finance research on the care economy and the exclusion of sans papiers and migrants (and other marginalized groups) from political participation to generate more evidence and recommendations.

- Care work must be supported financially and politically to remove barriers and ensure that care workers, who most often are women, can participate in peace and all political processes. Support projects and initiatives that aim to improve the conditions for care workers in Switzerland and abroad.
- Switzerland must recognize unpaid care work and work towards its reduction and re-distribution in order to guarantee conditions which allow for political participation.
- Extend civil rights of voting and election to all residents of Switzerland.
- Recognize and legalize the resident status of people with none or precarious resident status active in care-work (sans papiers and asylum seekers).

4. Put the care-economy at the center of peacebuilding.

- Care workers are essential peacebuilding and security actors. All federal institutions involved in the NAP, from the FDFA, DDPS to the SEM and the SECO, have to analyze how the care-economy is organized, what people's needs are in terms of care in each context and orient their work accordingly.
- The actors who predominantly provide care-work should be consistently consulted and their needs included when program-ming and budgeting for peacebuilding and international cooperation.

- Conflict-affected states are rarely welfare states with social security. A minimum percentage (5%) of all money invested in a post-war economy, including that of private companies, should be automatically redi-rected for investments in the care economy.
- To facilitate women's participation in peace negotiations, it is essential to include gender sensitive measures. This includes the pro-vision of childcare, the agenda setting and format of negotiations, as well as gender just financing of reconstruction that does not focus on physical infrastructure only, but also the care economy.
- Provide long-term funding for women civil society organization that is not project-bound so that participation can be fostered over a longer period.

INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR GENDEREQUALITY

Switzerland must allocate funding to actually implement the key three international guidelines for gender equality to which Switzerland has committed.

The UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and focuses on the discrimination of women in society. It demands measures for legal and actual equality in all areas of life. It was ratified by Switzerland in 1997 and is the most important international tool for genderequality.

The Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention on violence against women was adopted in 2011 and ratified by Switzerland in 2017. It aims to combat various forms of violence at its roots and enforces the support and protection rights of those affected by violence. It defines gender-based violence as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women.

The Agenda 2030 was adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly in 2015 and contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among which gender equality is also listed. These SDGs take economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development into account and are to be achieved by all UN member states by 2030.