



## The Women's Situation Room

### Women and youth partnering for peace to secure free and democratic elections

Thursday 8 November 2018

10:45 to 12:00 noon

Palais des Nations, Room IX (9), Geneva, Switzerland

Violence during an election cycle is an all-too-frequent phenomenon in many countries, and may be triggered by political or socio-economic frustration, ethnic tensions, or flawed electoral processes. Electoral violence takes many forms: from intimidation and harassment, to more violent incidents and sometimes even killings. All too often the security forces are implicated in the violence, by omission or commission. Youth, especially those who are living in fragile conditions, are often at risk of being instrumentalised for violence during electoral cycles. Women, particularly those in rural areas, are frequently intimidated through massive threats and sexual violence around electoral processes. Lack of electoral integrity slows the consolidation of democratic norms and reduces the prospects for long-term, durable peace, conditions which are necessary for economic development and political stability. It follows that preventing and managing elections-related violence is critical for building sustainable peace.

### The Women's Situation Room

Various civil society-based initiatives have attempted to prevent electoral violence. Among them is the Women's Situation Room (WSR) – a women- and youth-led approach to mitigating, reducing and managing violence during the electoral cycle, and in some countries assuming a conflict management approach in the post-election period. Through real-time interventions, the WSR has contributed to peaceful and more inclusive elections in Ghana, Kenya, Liberia (2x), Nigeria, Sierra Leone (2x), Senegal and Uganda.

Born out of urgent necessity in Liberia in preparation for presidential elections in 2011, the WSR builds on the lessons learned from devastating violent conflicts in the country and the region. The WSR was adopted by the African Union in 2012 as a best practice under their "Gender is My Agenda Campaign", and recommended for replication in all African countries. The UN Security Council in 2016 endorsed the WSR, emphasizing that it has "...helped to prevent or mitigate the eruption and escalation of violence, inter alia through observing and monitoring, and engaging stakeholders in constructive dialogue and peace advocacy".

Actively engaging all key stakeholders - including political parties, state entities, security forces, civil society, youth gangs and media - to promote peace and mitigate violence, a Women's Situation Room (WSR):

- is initiated by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), driven by local women in close cooperation with youth from all walks of life
- collaborates and partners with existing initiatives, enhancing the capacity of women and youth through training and information on electoral processes, thereby ensuring their impactful involvement during the country-wide roll-out

- is 100% locally owned: all WSR initiatives are developed by key stakeholders in the respective country, responding directly to local dynamics and addressing country-specific “hot spots” for violence prevention
- is not only observing, but intervenes real-time before, during and after elections: the WSR is directly linked to conflict early warning and early response systems and engages actively in conflict resolution
- encourages ordinary citizens to take responsibility for peaceful processes in their direct neighbourhoods, brings marginalized youth to participate and buy-in to peaceful elections and builds powerful networks at various levels
- is an example of the effective implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 2250 which affirm the crucial role of women and of youth in peace processes in their countries.

## Geneva Peace Week 2018

The Angie Brooks International Centre (ABIC) Liberia, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and the Kofi Annan Foundation will host a discussion of the Women’s Situation Room. Four speakers will share their personal practical experiences and ideas on the prevention of violence and provision of security in election times.

### ► Ordinary citizens taking responsibility for peace and security: the making of the Women’s Situation Room

**Yvette Chesson-Wureh**

Establishment Coordinator, Angie Brooks International Centre (ABIC), Liberia

### ► Key challenges for electoral peace and security in fragile environments: an international perspective

**Alan Doss**

President, Kofi Annan Foundation, Switzerland

### ► Linking the Women’s Situation Room with Security Sector Governance: regional perspectives from Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America

**Sandy Africa**, Former Head of the Sub-Saharan Africa Division

**Cristina Hoyos**, Head of the Latin American Countries Unit

Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), Switzerland

The dialogue will be moderated by **Achim Wennmann**, Executive Coordinator, Geneva Peacebuilding Platform. Discussions will explore:

- How has the Women’s Situation Room (WSR) evolved? What distinguishes it from other conflict prevention approaches? What has it achieved?
- How has youth participation changed the WSR initiatives? Have there been changes in youth’s perception of democratic processes, of local security issues or of their own potential to initiate change?
- Do Women’s Situation Rooms and other locally driven initiatives contribute to the strengthening of accountability of security providers? Have they contributed to the integrity of elections? How do they impact security sector reform in fragile environments?
- How feasible or desirable is the “institutionalization” of WSR initiatives?
- Can WSR tools and approaches be used in other contexts with high risk for outbreak of violence? Under which conditions could they be used in Europe or Latin America?

To provide the opportunity for further exchange and networking, tea and coffee will be served after the discussions.

For information on the WSR: <http://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/womens-situation-room-africa>

For a detailed report on the 2017 WSR in Liberia: [http://angiebrooksintlcentre.org/images/3\\_report.pdf](http://angiebrooksintlcentre.org/images/3_report.pdf)

**Contact:** Sabine Meitzel, horizon2030, tel: +41 79 7729924, mail: [meitzel@horizon2030.com](mailto:meitzel@horizon2030.com)