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"*La Lutte Continue*": the Role of the UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan in Promoting Women's Participation in Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Abstract

This thesis intends to understand the effects of the launch of the Women Peace and Security National Action Plan in the context of peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, looking at the limitations and how local organizations can overcome these limitations. Using the politics of scale lens, it emerged that due to the limited funding, the socio-cultural burdens, and the inability of the National Action Plan to be effective on the local level, its impact in the field of promoting a fair inclusion of women in peacebuilding remains mainly symbolic. However, organizations use this symbolism to overcome its limitations by playing on different scales and using the narrative of how things "should be". This results in an increased role of women's organization when promoting women's inclusion in peacebuilding in the 1325 resolution context, which not only increases their space of dependence locally, but also produces spaces of engagement by installing "network of associations" to reach their goals in a more effective and impactful way. As a result, they become interlocutors on different scales -local, national, and international- becoming a Congolese political actor and representing the country as whole.

Keywords: Resolution 1325, National Action Plan, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Peacebuilding, Women's Organizations

Summary

List of Abbreviations:

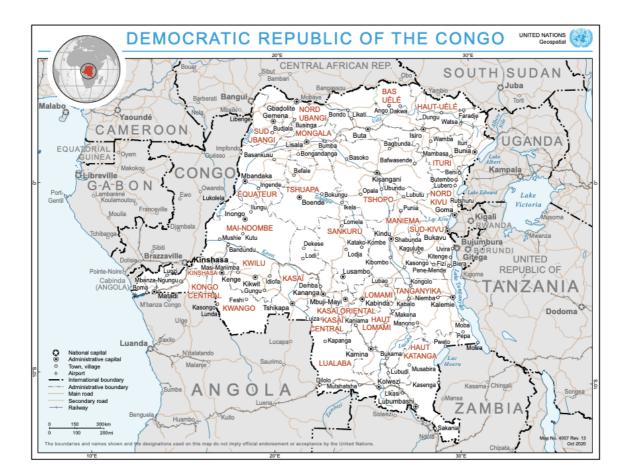|	
AYW	Adolescents and Young Women
CIRGL	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DRC	The Democratic Republic of the Congo
FMMDI	Femme Main dans la Main pour le Développement Intégral
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GII	Gender Inequality Index
MONUC	United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
NAP	National Action Plan
RSLF	Rien Sans les Femmes
TA	Thematic Analysis
UN	United Nations
UNSCR 1325	United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WPR	What's the Problem Represented to Be?
WPS	Women Peace and Security

Figure 1 The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Reliefweb 2020

1   Introduction

In October 2000, the first UN Security Council Resolution on Women Peace and Security (WPS), United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), was adopted unanimously. This Resolution represented a cornerstone as, for the first time, the UN Security Council formally acknowledged that conflict had a different impact between women and men, and it was necessary to respond to these differences with more inclusive peace processes and peacebuilding initiatives (Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security | UN Peacemaker).

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is positioned at the 151st place out of 179 countries according to the 2021 Gender Inequality Index (GII). The GII represents a composite measure of gender inequality that uses reproductive health, empowerment, and the labor market as key dimensions: only 14.3% of parliamentary seats in the DRC are held by women (Changing social norms and values to end widespread violence against women and girls in DRC, World Bank, 2022). Starting from the mid 90s, DRC was hit by a conflict that ended in 2003 with the Sun City Agreement and the creation of a transnational government. However, the violence and instability perpetrated by militias in the eastern regions persists and affects the whole country (Instability in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Global Conflict Tracker). To support the government and limit the effects of the instability and violence produced by the militias, the UN Security Council launched the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) that took over from the previous UN peacekeeping resolution -MONUC- from 2010 with the aim to stabilize and consolidate the peace in the area (About, MONUSCO). In the same year after the MONUSCO mission was launched with a UN Resolution, in 2010, the first Women Peace and Security National Action Plan was adopted by the ministry of Gender, Family and of the Childhood, with the aim to adopt the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda to guarantee the implementation of the four pillars of the WPS agenda at a national level. This strategic implementation would aim for a collaboration with the civil society to localize the action of the agenda. Generally, these documents outline objectives and activities taken by country to secure human rights in (post-) conflict setting and promote a meaningful participation of women in peace and security (National Action Plan at a Glance, WILPF). The country adopted its first National Action Plan (NAP) in 2010, whereas the second and most recent NAP was adopted in 2018 for the period 2019-2022 (DRC, WILPF).

1.1 Introduction of the topic

Congolese women due to political instability and cultural reasons, such as the dominant position conferred to men by society (Gender Inequality and Social Institutions in the DRC, PeaceWomen), face significant barriers both in economic opportunities and empowerment and by experiencing high rate of gender-based violence (GBV): the three major factors that are highlighted when considering the gender gaps are "control over land, voice and agency, and risk and uncertainty including vulnerability to shocks and GBV". (The World Bank in DRC, Overview, World Bank).

The first Women Peace and Security National Action Plan (NAP) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was launched the first time in 2010, but it did not have an implementation period, and its outcome was a "low awareness in the general public, poor uptake of NAP by the government; weak support from partners in the implementation of the NAP; and non-inclusion and lack of integration of young women and women living with disability [sic] in the implementation" (DRC NAP, WILPF). In 2018, a second NAP was adopted (2019-2022), and it provided an evaluation of the implementation of the first one, as well as a list of 11 objectives that had to be implemented until 2022 (ibid.). Beside the adoption of the 1325 resolution, it is still highlighted by grassroot organizations, that the implementation of the 1325 resolution is still limited and, women face structural barriers in accessing peacebuilding processes (Africa Renewal, 2018).

Given the high instability of the country, the effort that grassroot organizations make in promoting women's role in peacebuilding and the high intervention of the international community in the country, the purpose of the research is to explore the potential limitations of the National Action Plan and the perception of this instrument from women's organizations that promote women's participation in peacebuilding and how grassroot level organization respond to mitigate the limitation. To do so, a "politics of scale" theoretical approach will be used to understand and highlight to what extent the WPS-National Action Plan is able to respond to the need of including women in peacebuilding, and how women organizations respond to this instrument and promote their role in peacebuilding.

1.2 Research problem and aim

In DRC, a (post-) conflict laden country, two generations of National Action Plans to promote the WPS agenda have been implemented so far, aiming to improve women's protection and role in decision-making processes in the country. However, the condition of women still emerges as

penalized, due to the high instability present in the country. By looking at the DRC-NAP, this research wants to understand the limitations of the NAP in promoting women's role in peacebuilding and how local women organizations on the one hand promote the resolution and on the other try to overcome its limitations to promote women in peacebuilding.

More precisely the study is guided by the following research aims:

1. To understand how "the problem" of including women in peacebuilding approaches is represented in the DRC National Action Plan to implement the Women Peace Security agenda and the limitations that the NAP can carry.

2. To understand how grassroot women organizations promote the role of women's participation in peacebuilding and how they emphasize the narratives with regards to the DRC-NAP and, at the same time overcome the limitations of this tool.

This is done by integrating the theoretical framework of Politics of Scale with the methodology of "What is the problem represented to be?", so that it is possible to understand the power dynamics the scale influence and the interpretation of the policy issues.

This research aims to investigate women in peacebuilding and the role of the 1325 Resolution in promoting their agency, by analyzing the National Action Plans launched by the government, the answers to an open-ended questionnaire provided by two grassroot organizations, the first organization opted for anonymity so it will be referred as "Organization 1" and Non-Governmental Organization - Femme Main dans la Main pour le Développement Intégral- (FMMDI), that promote actions within the framework of the 1325 resolution in promoting women in peacebuilding and the discourse from a Congolese women's movement, Rien Sans les Femmes (RSLF).

1.3   Research question

The research question is:

To what extent the UNSCR 1325 Resolution National Action Plan in DRC supports women's organizations to foster the participation of women in peacebuilding?

1.3.1 Working questions

1. How do women's organizations perceive the UN 1325 Resolution and the NAP?

2. Which are the limitations of the DRC NAP when promoting women in peacebuilding?

3. How do they overcome the limitations of NAP when promoting women's participation in peacebuilding?

1.4 Social and ethical considerations

Ethical issues will be raised throughout the research. Though women may be mentioned as vulnerable groups or victims in this project, it is important to stress that this does not imply they are weak individuals or more fragile just because of their gender/biological sex.

Moreover, due to my position as a Global North researcher doing research in the Global South, some "global north assumptions" may be reproduced. Further analysis of my positionality will be mentioned in the sub-chapter "Self-problematization" and positioning", in the "Methodology" chapter.

1.5 Motivation and research interest

Due to my previous internship in the Sector Network for International Cooperation in Conflict and Disaster (GIZ) and my pre-covid civil service experience in Gisenyi, Ruanda, on the border with DRC, I developed a strong interest in the promotion of women's agency and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Especially, I gained a specific interest in gender and inequalities. The peculiar situation of the country, that theoretically is in a post-conflict situation since 2003, but still has high instability areas, as well as strong intervention of the international community, are two of the main reasons why I was interested in focusing on the country; aware of the limitations that accompany this decision. Thus, analyzing the promotion of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the country represent an interesting outlook to understand women positionality in DRC to me.

1.6   Outline of chapters

The thesis will be divided into chapters. The introduction aims to shortly introduce the topic and present the research objectives and present the research question, followed by the social and ethical consideration and the reason and motivation that made me choose this topic.

The second chapter is a literature review that aims to analyze the previous research on the topic of women's inclusion in peacebuilding in the context of the Women Peace and Security agenda, followed by the chapter on the theoretical framework used in the research, that will help the reader understand the lens used throughout the analysis. Within the theoretical framework the main concept and theory used throughout the analysis will be presented, followed by a chapter on the provision of the context and the background information on the chosen topic and the presentation of the case study and the different data used for the analysis. In the following chapter, the methodology and methods used to develop the thesis will be delineated, furthermore the self-positionality of the author to the research is included in the chapter.

The analysis will be divided into two: firstly, an analysis of the two generations of DRC NAP will be done to understand how it was developed and what were the effects and limitations of their implementation. The second part looks at the discourse of two women's organizations, shedding light on how the DRC NAP is perceived by local organizations, the limitations of it when including women in peacebuilding processes and how women's organizations try to overcome these limitations.
Lastly, there will be a discussion of the main findings and conclusion that answers the research question and tries to tackle the research problem.

2   Literature Review

The following section will provide a brief review on the published literature that relates to the topic of analysis.

The WPS debate tends to be polarized (Hudson, 2017, p.3). On the one hand, there are scholars that consider the significant major shift in the UN approach to security (Hudson 2009, Tyggestad 2009 in Prügl). On the other hand, a critical feminist positions argue that gendered power relations were left unchallenged (Binder, Lukas and Schweiger 2008, Cohn 2009, Pratt and Richter-Devroe 2011, Shepherd 2008, 2011). The main criticism was related to the fact that, beside a growing WPS agenda, there was "an implementation gap" that left women in conflict in a marginal condition, particularly in formal peace talks (Hudson, 2017, p. 4).

2.1   Women in the WPS agenda

A major critique of the WPS agenda is that women participation in formal peace processes is symbolic, made possible by the assumption that women's issues and concerns directly become part of the political agenda once women participation increases (Scanlon et al. 2020, p. 7). De Almagro in her article "*Producing Participants: Gender, Race, Class, and Women, Peace and Security*" (2018) moves a strong criticism against the WPS agenda and the NAPs. In particular, she shows how WPS focus on the management of already existing situations, without working and focusing on the prevention and how full categories are left out, reproducing more "traditional" forms of hierarchy. Using "poststructuralist and postcolonial feminist literature the role of discourse in the production of subject positions and policy practices" (p. 397), the author concludes that although WPS has a strategic function, it must be modified to prevent the representation of hierarchical structures. Focusing on an intersectional perspective, Smith and Stavrevska suggest that by including the latter into WPS and NAPs can result in easier access for women in. Björkdahl and Selimovic (2015) promote the concept of "critical agency" in the WPS NAPs to avoid the situation where women are considered "perpetual victims". From their perspective, critical agencies can challenge power relations and reposition the women in the discourse. Also, Drumond and Rebelo (2020) advocate for an extension of the WPS to increase its inclusivity and avoid that NAPs end up being tools used by Global-North-Countries in their foreign policy (p. 478).

2.2   Women in the Global South

Barrow (2016) looks at how Northern European Countries affected the development of NAPs in the Global South. Conversely, Basu (2016) article emphasizes that although UNSCR 1325 and its related resolutions are formally centered around the Security Council and receive significant support from donors in the Global North, their conceptual foundations have a wider scope. Governments in the Global South have also been active at the Security Council, in adopting National Action Plans (NAPs), and in participating in UN peacekeeping. Consequently, the Global South has influenced the development of UNSCR 1325, thus it can also claim ownership of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) resolutions. The author suggests also to focus not only on the results, but also on the non-results can contribute to get a bigger picture of the outcomes.

When it comes to promotion of the WPS agenda in the African continent, Haastrup (2018) explores how the African Union and its members interpret the norms around the concept of gender and security in the WPS agenda, highlighting how by using regional instruments and creating "community of practice", the continent plays a central role in the promotion of the WPS agenda. However, Ekiyor and Wanyeki denounce how Africa is lacking when reporting the progress, implementing consequently measures that can result inaccurate. The African Union in 2016 tried to solve this issue by reviewing on the implementation of the WPS Agenda in the continent which showed how DRC, among others, still had very low women's participation and representation in peace processes (Scanlon et al. 2020, p. 6).

The article "*Women, Peace and Security across scales: exclusions and opportunities in Iraq's WPS engagements*" looks at how space plays a central role in the implementation of the WPS agenda to show the ability of women to work "within and across scales", but also how there is a constant recreation of hierarchies. Similarly to Chilmeran, George (2020) in her article "Conflict transition, emplaced identity and the gendered politics of scale in Solomon Islands" uses this case study to highlight the role of women and their narratives when articulating their identity in post-conflict environments. By looking at the "local" positionality as a source of power, the author can rescale politics and reclaim political power, with potential progress "upwards and outwards" (p. 590).

2.3   Women and Peacebuilding in DRC

Whitman (2007) focusing on the Inter-Congolese Dialogue[1] tries to discuss the essential role of the women in the effort of reaching a peace agreement in the country, also considering the impact of the

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[1] the 3-year-long negotiations that resulted into the Sun City Agreement (see table I)

conflict on women and that, although women could be seen as victims, they were able to show self-empowerment. According to the author, the efforts to promote themselves and find mechanism towards peace have not been highlighted or analyzed: women encountered issues with respect to their inclusion in peace process. Therefore, the author looks at how this exclusion might have impacted the outcome of a continuing instability. Arousi (2017) in her article "*Women, Peace, and Security and the DRC: Time to Rethink Wartime Sexual Violence as Gender-Based Violence*?" show how the civil society's organization in DRC are protesting against the international community as they focus only on the victimization of women, ignoring the "gender empowerment and women's leadership", resulting in responding to the needs of the victims, and not to empowering women by promoting their crucial role on different levels. Davis (2017) focuses on the opportunities and constraints created by the launch of the first National Action Plan (NAP) on women and girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Specifically, she noticed a decrease in participation of women in peacebuilding processes, compared to 2006, and, most importantly, after the adoption of the 2010 NAP, and showing how they have been limited in discussing "women issues" and that the consultation of women's associations has been superficial. Davis (2019) in the article "*Women Peace and Security: Adrift in Policy and Practice*" continues to consider the challenges of the Democratic Republic of Congo's NAP (and the one of the European Union). By doing so she demonstrated how little impact the WPS agenda had at a governmental level, and how the agenda promoted a heteronormativity, patriarchal understanding of "gender".

3 Theories and theoretical framework

The following theory chapter outlines the theoretical framework that will be employed in the analysis to answer the research questions previously introduced. In the first place it will be explained how the WPS agenda and peacebuilding are understood and in particular need to take space to make peacebuilding effective, followed by the theoretical lens: the "politics of scale" to conclude with a section that shows how the politics of scale could be used to analyze peacebuilding and the application of the WPS agenda.

3.1 The WPS and Peacebuilding

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) presented 12 "areas of concern" that prevent women to advance. Porter asserts how the exclusion of women in armed conflict and decision making, obstacles women's advancement in peacebuilding (Porter, 2007, p. 2). The 1325 Resolution aims to a fair representation of women in decision-making to "prevent, manage and resolve conflict" (ibid.), as the under-representation of women creates inequality in peace processes, and consequently on the effectiveness of the process. Therefore, beside its limitations, its efficacy as a global advocacy tool results critical and fundamental (p. 3).

Boutros Boutros-Ghali differentiated the UN's understanding of peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding, specifying that the latter refers to "post-conflict peacebuilding", emphasizing the "prevention of the recurrence of conflict" and referring to a structural peacebuilding in post-conflict societies ((ibid., p.22) and limiting the peacebuilding tools in the "post-conflict reconstruction stage". However, Porter notes how "peace is an ongoing task.. […] peacebuilding involves all processes that build positive relationships, heal wounds, reconcile antagonistic differences, restore esteem, respect rights, meet basic needs, enhance equality, instill feelings of security, empower moral agency and are democratic, inclusive and just (p. 191). Noma et al. (2012), building on Porter (2007), asserts that is only by making women participate as peacebuilders can improve the understanding of the opportunities and limitation in the peacebuilding process and these processes do not occur after the ending of the conflict, but they are present in all phases of the peace process, formally and/or informally (p. 7). Giles and Hyndman write "As groups struggle to shape the meanings of spaces and create places, they reconstitute and transform social relations. Conflicts are maintained at multiple spatial scales – local, national, and international; to acknowledge 'place' is to enable women and men to move past their experiences of conflict and transform these places (2004: 6–7, in Noma et al., p.16)".

3.2 Politics of scale

To develop my thesis, I will apply the "politics of scale" lens. The concept of scale is frequently used in human geography and differently than the scale used on a map, it results to be less straightforward. In human geography it is understood as a "form of hierarchy" that interconnects different "scales". Flint (Introduction to Geopolitics, 2016), for instance, looks at a bottom-up scale: how an individual scale, like a protest, can be motivated by a national campaign, and consequently could affect and influence a national legislative process, a national scale. In human geography, therefore, scales are intended as something fluid, that do not have to follow a specific order, and "jumping of scales", for instance going from the local to the global, without considering the national, can occur. Flint also suggests that the idea of a "clear and distinct hierarchy of scales" is misleading because every scale is interconnected with multiple other scales. This shows how geographic scales, like places, are "socially constructed or made by human activity: social movements are formed and maintained by both individual activities, such as the leaders of the movements and at the same time the more "hidden" activities promoted by the members of the movements. Also participating in elections and choosing -or not- to vote, the individual choice has some impact on a different, "higher" scale, which is the political system - and its validation or not (ibid., p. 12). Therefore, the scale has a fundamental importance in the political discourse as it helps to create a clear division of the subject of analysis in terms of special qualifiers - local, regional, national etc.- and to understand how they are interconnected (Cox, 2017, p. 1). Cox, in his article, makes a distinction between the spaces of dependence, defined by those social relationships which depend on the realization of the essential interests and where it is not possible to find any substitutes. These spaces define the conditions of the sense of significance and are "inserted in sets of broader relationships of a more global character". In general, people, state agencies, etc., organize to protect the conditions that safeguard their space of dependence by engaging with other "centers of local power". By doing so they create a *space of engagement:* the space in which the "politics of securing a space of dependence unfolds" (p. 2). Cox also points out in the discussion on the *politics of scale,* the scale form is intended in "areal terms" and, to understand the spatiality of scale, he suggests taking into consideration the concept of network. The concept of the construction of networks of association, particularly, will be used in this case as the means through which to realize interests. Networks have a different penetration of areal forms, and their boundary results are porous (ibid, p. 3). While the reach of state agencies, intended as *formal power*, from a territorial perspective results imperfect, even in totalitarian spaces, there are always spaces of resistance (p. 3), agents as associations and movements result to be less limited by particular enclosures.

3.3   Politics of scale and peacebuilding

Hameiri and Jones (2017), to overcome the concept of hybridity – "the mixing of international/liberal and local/non-liberal agendas, ideas, institutions and authority structures"- helps scholars to explain the emergence of hybridized political orders through conflictual encounters between international interveners and local population (p. 55), by using the politics of scale (p. 60): they argue that the politics of scale can help to understand and explain the institutional outcomes of peacebuilding and the struggle "to define the authority and resources distributed across the scale". Using this perspective can help not only to reflect entrenched traditional values that are in a conflictual position with liberal-international ones, but also to "express the mobilization of ideological discourses related to "local and traditional" in order to promote scalar arrangement that can favor specific parts of society (p. 60). The starting point is that peacebuilding (and state building) usually comprehends socio-political contestation, with the aim to re-allocate power, resources and reorganize the political structure. Consequently, "social forces" aim to influence these processes for their own advantages and objectives (ibid.). This "contestation" typically involves a strong scalar dimension, that supports the analysis in understanding the implication of the arrangements for actors' power and resources: "where a given scale mode of governance favors a particular group, we would expect it to support the intervention or seek to adapt it for their purposes" and vice versa (p. 62). In the article "Women Peace and Security across scales: exclusion and opportunities in Iraq's WPS engagement", Chilmeran (2022) applies the politics of scale approach to the WPS agenda to analyze the implementation of the WPS agenda in Iraq. The author uses "location and space" to figure the re-production of "opportunities, boundaries and hierarchies" and to unveil the "exclusion and opportunities" (p. 748).

The politics of scale approach will help me to delineate the connections and interrelation between the different political-spatial contexts in the DRC, the local, the national and the global, from a vertical dimension of the "scale" (Amin, 2002; Brenner, 1998; Leitner, 2004; Taylor, 2004 in Blakey (2021)). By integrating the theoretical framework of Politics of Scale with the methodology of "What is the problem represented to be?" it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the power dynamics that emerge and the scale that influence the interpretation and the implementation of the policy. Thus, this integrated approach allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the problem: a limited implementation of the National Action Plan in the peacebuilding context and its political implication and the role of women organizations that "play" in different scales to increase their level of influence.

4   Context

In the next chapter, a brief contextual background will be provided.

4.1   History of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The current conflict in DRC finds its roots in colonialism. The independent State of Congo was characterized by the Leopoldian period which subjected the Congolese area to high exploitation that resulted in disastrous outcomes (Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, Security Council Resolution, 1325: Civil Society Monitoring Report, Democratic Republic of Congo). Over the decades of colonial rule, the country was reorganized several times to respond to a "highly centralized, unitary and symmetric Napoleonic logic of administration" (Thill & Cimanuka, 2019, p. 11). Locally, the system relied on a structure of indirect control where chiefs and local leaders were in charge to control the population (ibid.). Despite the colonial attempt to penetrate in the country, due to the vast size of the area, its control and government resulted to be inefficient. After the independence of the Congo, there has been a time of political fragmentation, with a decentralization of power to a provincial level. With a *coup d'etat*, Mobuto Sese Seko became president of the country in 1965. Zaire (during his presidency, he changed the name which remained the same until 1997) restarted using the structure of the colonial state, characterized by corruption and an inefficient system. Mobutu's plan to centralize the country failed due to a combination of lack of state capacity and the resistance of the people in charge of managing the local. Many used this "nationalization process" to profit from it by selling the land that they were managing to the Congolese elites, creating an increase of competition over resources and the base to instability in the following years (ibid. p.14). The beginning of the Congo wars (1996-2003) and the fall of the Mobuto Presidency led to growing insecurity, especially in the regions of eastern DRC. With the Sun City Agreement, it was signed the "formal" ending of the conflict and during the transition to peace (2003-2006), several processes and reforms were launched (ibid., p. 15).

Stages of the Peace Process in DRC:

1999	Lusaka Agreements	The Lusaka Agreement between the countries of Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Namibia, Uganda, Rwanda and Zimbabwe, aims to end the conflict in DRC. Among other objectives, it wants to facilitate an all-inclusive inter-Congolese dialogue. The agreement also calls for the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force.

2001	Declaration of Fundamental Principles of the Inter-Congolese Political Negotiations	Establishes the principles and issues to be addressed by the Inter-Congolese Dialogue.
2002	Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Pretoria Agreement)	This agreement the arrangements of a transitional period of 24 months during which state institutions are to be established.
2003	Sun City Agreement	This comprehensive agreement is the culmination of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue that sets the process for the transformation of the political climate within the DRC. - a commission for the protection of women and children was created to investigate of the different form of GBV against women, children, elder people, and people with disabilities
2006	Constitution & first democratic elections Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region	Pact on security, stability, and development in the Great Lakes Region. It aims at preventing and resolving internal and inter-states armed conflicts within and between member states and resolving any kind of disputes by peaceful means.
2007	Nairobi Peace Agreement	The parties to the agreement decided to have a common approach to deal with the Ex-Far/Interahamwe. DRC planned to disarm the Ex-Far/Interahamwe and Rwanda agreed to take measures to secure its boundaries.
2008	Goma Peace Agreement	
2013	Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region	In the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the signatories state their concern regarding the persistent violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and discuss the options for addressing the root causes of the conflict. The document outlines principles of engagement on the national, regional, and international level. The signatories also request

		national and regional oversight mechanisms reviewing progress in the implementation of the above-mentioned commitments.

Table I - Table realized using the Peace Agreements Database Search, UN Peacemakers

4.2 Gender Policy Framework in DRC

The articles 5, 14 and 15 of the DRC Constitution aim to guarantee gender equality. However, the gap in the country persists to be high. While the Article 5 states that the suffrage is universal and that all Congolese, female or male[2], above 18 years old have civil and political rights and can elect or be elected, article 14 focuses on the need to remove any kind of discrimination concerning women and the assurance to protect and promote their rights, to achieve a man-woman parity. Finally, article 15 focuses on the elimination of sexual violence (The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2005).

DRC has adopted different regional, sub-regional, and international legal frameworks concerning gender and human rights. These include:

- the SADC Memorandum of Understanding on Gender and Development,
- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women,
- the Maputo Protocol (also known as The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa),
- the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,
- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- the UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR1325).

Implementation of policies remains a challenge due to difficulty in awareness raising as a result of the size of the country, insufficient budget allocation by government, limited capacity of public implementation agencies, and continuing conflicts in certain areas (Gender Assesment and Action

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[2] Without prejudice to the provisions of Articles 72, 102 and 106 of this Constitution, all Congolese of both sexes who are over the age of eighteen and enjoy their civil and political rights are entitled, under the conditions prescribed by law, to vote and to stand at elections" – Art. 5 – Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This research will focus on women and not on more inclusive understanding of gender. As reported by Amera International, homosexuality, although not explicitly illegal, is considered a taboo and LGBTIQ+ persons are generally not open about their sexual orientation to avoid the denial by society (https://amerainternational.org/democratic-republic-congo-lgbti-resources/).

Plan, Green Climate Fund, 2019). The "Ministère du Genre, Famille et Enfant" [Ministry of Gender, Family, and Children] is responsible for promoting gender mainstreaming. Although a gender mainstreaming mechanism has been established, progress has been slow. At the provincial level, each government has a minister in charge of gender, and a Gender Division is established within their administration. However, the coordination of the Thematic Group on Gender at the national level is poorly managed (ibid).

4.3   Women's inclusion in Peacebuilding

Cynthia Enloe (1990) asked "where are the women?" to highlight the invisibility of women as subjects of study in international relations (Ellerby, 2013: p. 437). Most of the 20th century, women, and gender instead of being mainstreamed were marginalized. Efforts to mainstream gender ensures that need of both men and women are taken into account in peacebuilding, however, these processes have frequently been inefficient (Thornton and Whitman, 2018, 103). Ellerby (2013) stresses that there are two key reasons why it is necessary to focus on women in peace agreements: firstly, peace agreements represent a "road map" for peacebuilding efforts. In other words, it represents the framework of objectives that are set to produce a more stable future and the actors that will have an active position in it (p. 439). Moreover, as peace agreements were used as the main tool to end conflicts after 1989 (ibid.), the necessity to improve the effectiveness of them became central. Ban Ki-Moon in 2009 asserted that "Bringing women to the peace table improves the quality of agreements reached, and increases the chances of successful implementation (ibid., p. 455). Peacebuilding initiatives can change power dynamics if attention to gender is taken into consideration (Tickner, 1992 in Thornton and Whitman, 2018, p. 104). Since negotiations potentially are the first point at which women promote the new agenda for their futures, it is relevant to understand in the first place, what gets included and secondly, how women get included. However, women remain a minority in formal peace efforts (Thornton and Whitman, 2018, P.103). Conversely, women are often at the "forefront of local peacebuilding initiatives", where their leadership role results more visible, typically in "informal, unofficial capacity" (de la Rey & McKay, 2006 in Thornton and Whitman, 2018, P.103). Richmond indicates feminist concepts – such as the "everyday" and "empathy" – help post-liberal peacebuilding to challenge power structure and emphasize local engagement (Richmond 2009 in Van Houten (2020), p. 240-241). Ehrenreich (1999), Fukuyama (1998) and Jaquette (1999) argue either that women have qualities - either biological or socially constructed- that provide them with the ability to address conflict, or that women are more "peaceful" than men due the hierarchical power relations that exclude women from power (ibid., 104). Qualitative evidence shows how women

can shape both the substance and the process of reducing and transforming conflicts, by addressing the set of issues more broadly (O'Neill and Vary, 2011, in Thornton and Whitman, 2018, p. 104), thus increasing the sustainability of peace initiatives.

4.4 Women and Peacebuilding in the African context

"African women have always played active roles in mediating and negotiating peace, and many historians have documented women's importance in resolving conflict in pre-colonial African societies" (Scanlon, Makan-Lakha & Hamilton, 2020, p. 2). The scholar Amadiume in her studies has shown how the patriarchal interpretation of Africa's history hides the women's leadership in pre-colonial societies. The colonial period, indeed, changed gendered systems of power and deepened patriarchal domination, with women being reduces as "bounded to the man" subjects: wives, widows, mothers of daughters. Women remained marginalized as "history was a powerful instrument for the maintenance of inequality" (Bradford, 1996, 368) and became "part of the politics of the gender system" (Bradford in Scanlon, Makan-Lakha & Hamilton, 2020, p. 2). The increased activism from women around the topic of peace and security coincided with the acknowledgments that women and men are affected differently from conflicts, in the '90s: as a result, women's mobilization across sub-Saharan Africa extended beyond the local, to engage with continental and international spheres (ibid., p. 3). With the adoption of the UN's Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, that states "'while entire communities suffer consequences of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society and their sex", it is highlighted the need to include women in peace processes – allowing them to enter the public sphere and participate in local activism to mediate peace (ibid.).

4.5 Grassroot organizations taken into analysis

Organization 1: located in North Kivu, the organization taken into account operates in different fields in the context of development, justice and peace. Regarding the promotion of the WPS agenda, the organization works in partnership with other 10 partner organizations in a consortium to promote a program in the Women, Peace and Security field, with the aim to tackle all the pillars of the WPS agenda on the local level.

Femmes Main dans la Main pour le Développement Intégral (FMMDI): is a women-led non-governmental organization, created in 2012, situated in the region of Kasaï Central. In 2021, from being an organization focusing on the region of Kasai, it enlarged its intervention becoming a humanitarian structure on a national level. Among others, one of the main objectives of the

organization is to promote participation in decision-making instances. In particular, they promoted the "Projet de Consolidation de la Paix" and « Renforcer le leadership des femmes et des filles dans l'action de consolidation de la paix au Kasaï Centra" in which two "Incubateur de paix" were created. The NGO collaborates with different NGOs networks and platforms relevant to this research, it is part of the "Mouvement Rien Sans Les Femmes" (RSLF). In 2022, the NGO won the "UNHCR NGO Innovation Award 2022) because of their action during and after the conflict in Kasai. "FMMDI aimed at establishing a peer support platform for resource mobilization, advocacy, and the creation of a critical mass of support for prevention and access to GBV services (UNHCR NGO Innovation Award 2022, Strengthening Local Responses led by Women-Led Organizations (WLOs), UNHCR). The MONUSCO, in 2021, withdrew from the Kasaïs regions (UN, Peacebuilding, DRC).

Mouvement Rien Sans les Femmes (RSLF):
Rien Sans les Femmes is a civil society movement that includes different Congolese activists that aim to defend women rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The movement was born in 2015 and its objective is to promote an egalitarian representation of men-women on every level of decision-making processes in the country, as it recognizes that there is a long way before women are represented at the same level as men in the decision-making processes [encore un chemin important à parcourir pour que les femmes soient présentes au même niveau que les hommes dans les instances décisionnelles]. The movement promotes the idea that there is no peace and sustainable development without the inclusion of women in all the levels: local, national, and international et consequently make effective the measures that the government has adopted regarding equality. Starting with 15 organizations of the civil society, the movement today counts more than 160 local organizations and the support of international organizations. The main message of the organization is to promote equality on the effective participation of women in the electoral processes and in the peace processes in the country (Brochure, Rien Sans Les Femmes).

5   Methodology

In the following chapter the methodological considerations and approaches chosen as the guiding principles for the analysis of the above-introduced research questions are outlined. Moreover, the research design and data used for analysis are described and the research consideration are explained. This will set the methodological framework of the thesis.

The research will be theory-driven qualitatively oriented research and will be online-desk research based on the triangulation of different data: secondary data provided by reports of organizations that work on the field, interviews present on official media and literature review and primary data provided by two organizations working to implement women's peacebuilding actions, Organization 1 and the Non-Governmental Organization Femmes Main dans la Main pour le Dévéloppement Intégral, (NGO FMMDI), that supported the research by answering a questionnaire (Annex I).

In the subsequent section, the research design will be outlined, explaining the methods selected for the analysis. This chapter includes the policy analysis approach used throughout the thesis as well as an overview of the empirical data to be used, including two open-ended questionnaires from two organizations working in DRC in the context of promotion of the 1325 resolutions, as well as the methods employed to gather and analyze the data.

5.1   "What's the Problem Represented to be?" (WPR)

The specific method of policy analysis that will be used for the analysis used for this thesis will be "What's the Problem Represented to be?" (WPR) approach presented by Bacchi (2012), as it intends to support the researcher to make a critical interrogation of public policies. This approach challenges the "problem-solving" attitude that, according to Bacchi, dominates western policy research and proposes a "problem-questioning" paradigm (Tawell & McCluskey, 2021, p. 137). Public policies often also bring "implicit problem representation" that can derive from the "deep conceptual premises" on which the policies are built on (ibid.). In other words, Bacchi wants to point out that there is the presumption to have a constant (western) "problem- solving" approach that settles on the fact that policies and legislation, more in general, create only solutions. The WPR approach facilitates to individuate the problem and then scrutinize it critically (ibid., p.21), by answering six question[3]

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[3] However, in this research only 4 questioned will be addressed.

that help the analysis in recognizing the potential silences and "hidden effects" that this representation of the problem has.

Bacchi also highlights the importance of including the researcher into the "data " used to make the analysis, as our subjectivity is part of the problem itself. Following this reasoning it is necessary to make an analysis of the positionality of the researcher, and to include this point into the analysis of the problem. Bacchi calls it "self-problematization ('reflexivity')". The WPR approach will support the "problem"-questioning to induce the research (ibid., p. 22) to develop a critical point of view. This methodology allows for individuating the inequalities and/or opportunities hidden when promoting women's participation through the WPS agenda. This methodology will be used to delineate the "implicit problem representation", related to representation and promotion of women in the implementation of the WPS agenda in DRC.

5.2   Why WPR?

This approach provides a structure, a script, and a system for coding in analysis which affords a clear examination between the discourse and other social elements, such as ideologies, social identities, etc. (Tawell & McCluskey, 2022, p. 138). Moreover, this approach suggests that issues could be thought about in ways that can challenge problem representations that can have deleterious effects.

In terms of effects, Bacchi and Eveline (2010) explain that the WPR approach draws attention to three implications that overlap as way to assess the pros or the cons of a policy:

- *Discursive effects* – what can be said.
- *Subjectification effects* – political subjects produced in and through discourse.
- *Lived effects* – the objective impact that the policy has on people's lives (p. 115)

Bacchi asserts that *discursive* effects set boundaries around what can be considered relevant. *Subjectification* is the position of the subject that is represented in the discourses. And finally, "lived effects capture the material impact of problem representations on people's embodied existence" (Bacchi 2009, in Tawell & McCluskey, 2022).

Considering the aim of the research

1. To understand how "the problem" of including women in peacebuilding approaches is represented in the DRC National Action Plan to implement the Women Peace Security agenda and the limitations that the NAP can carry - *discursive effects and subjectification effects;*

2. To understand how grassroot women organizations promote the role of women's participation in peacebuilding and how they emphasize the narratives with regards to the DRC-NAP and, at the same time overcome the limitations of this tool - *lived effects and discursive effects.*

As the research question aims to understand mainly the effects of the National Action Plan when promoting women's role in peacebuilding and how women's organizations have been working in the context of the 1325 resolution, it has been decided to select and carry out 4 out of the 6 questions illustrated by Bacchi.

WPR Q1: what's the problem represented to be in implementing the WPS agenda in DRC?
This question aims to uncover the main implicit issue that a policy tries to address. Bacchi (2009) suggests how by looking at the policy intervention, it will help the analysis to understand what the objectives are of the policy, but also what "hidden" problem representations that are to be uncovered.

WPR Q4: What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently? This question is concerned with the limitations and gaps that the policy might present. The researcher must individuate potential gaps or re-presentation of inequalities (Bacchi, 2009).

WPR Q5: What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
The aim of this question is to take into consideration the political implication of how particular problems are represented.

WPR Q6: How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted and replaced?
The goal of this question is to "develop a sharpened awareness of the forms of power involved in the shaping of problem representation" (Bacchi, 2012, p. 23). It helps understand how the policy is disseminated and how the people that are targeted by the policy react to it.

5.3   Methods of analysis

To examine the research question presented in the introduction chapter of this thesis, a selection of methods has been employed. The scope and nature of the study as well as the choice of paradigm examined determine what methods will be useful for the analysis (Ackerly & True 2013)

Firstly, a policy analysis will help analyze the WPS NAP in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this thesis project, WPR approach was chosen as a method of analysis due to the researcher's interest in understanding the problems that arise when implementing the Women Peace and Security agenda in DRC regarding the involvement women in peacebuilding. As limitations in women's participation in peacebuilding is observed, it is of interest what role the WPS, and, more specifically, the National Action Plan has in facilitating the inclusion process. The WPR approach allows for looking at the framework created by the government through the launch of the National Action Plan to shape women's inclusion in peacebuilding, but also focuses on the "*effects*" of this framework and how the "problem" has been "*questioned, disrupted and replaced*" (Bacchi, 2012).

Also, a thematic analysis method (TA) will be taken into consideration to integrate the collected primary data with the "problem represented to be". Thematic Analysis (TA) for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into, patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset. By examining different meaning across a dataset, this approach facilitates researchers to recognize and comprehend collective or shared meanings and experiences. It serves as a mean of identifying what appears common and making sense of it. A wide range of patterns can be observed in datasets, and the objective of the analysis is to find the patterns that result relevant to answer a research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 2).

The matter of analysis in this research project is the DRC National Action Plan policy to increase women's participation in peacebuilding and how women's organizations respond to it. There are two generations of Action Plans, launched in 2010 and 2019. Since the second NAP builds on the first one, both documents will be taken into analysis. In addition, reports, article, published interviews and two questionnaires will be taken into considerations to be able to answer more carefully to the research question. The DRC National Action Plans are available online.

5.3.1   Qualitative data

The primary source of data for analysis will be qualitative and includes written reports and monitoring systems. Qualitative data is useful in social and political science research as it provides an opportunity for researchers to interpret the data by applying specific theories to it, in this specific case, the politics of scale. Qualitative studies often use an analytic framework –a network of linked concepts- that help

the researcher to understand and underlying process; that is a sequence of events or constructs and how they relate (Collins & Stockton, 2018). In this thesis, both secondary and primary data will be used, to answer the research question.

5.3.2   Gathering of empirical data

Most of the data is collected from official documents and reports and evaluation of the implementation by the government, UN agencies or (international) NGOs. Also, material such as articles or published interviews were used in the analysis, however they were carefully chosen as "internationally recognized", such as Radio Okapi, the radio promoted by the MONUSCO. Moreover, the research is supported with primary data provided by two organizations that supported the research by answering an open-ended questionnaire (ANNEX I). To facilitate the communication, the questionnaires were submitted in French.

5.3.3   Justification of the choice of the organizations taken into analysis

As stated in the upcoming section on "Limitations" (5.7), the data collection process encountered various challenges. In conducting my research, I made efforts to reach out to numerous local organizations engaged in promoting the WPS NAP, particularly in relation to women's involvement in peacebuilding. Using my network in Rwanda, built from previous work experiences, and utilizing purposive sampling techniques, I focused on finding (women's) organizations promoting the participation of women in peacebuilding.

The main mean of communication was WhatsApp. Once I received their confirmation on the availability in answer my questions, it was advised from both organizations to proceed with an open-ended questionnaire due to time constraint. Following the recommendation of Hopkins (2008, p. 40), I sent a form to the participants who responded, providing them with a concise research description and including the ethics consent form: one of the organizations gave permission to include names, whereas the other one, in a second moment, changed idea and opted to be anonymous.

5.3.4   Criteria for selection of participants

In the first place, I conducted a background search on organization working in the field of Women, Peace and Security. I checked their profile online, social media and videos published by the organizations. Using this information, I was able to identify 8 organizations that fitted the research and had updated website pages and active social network pages. Among the 8 organizations, two answered and were available to participate and collaborate to the research.

The first organization, which opted in a second moment to stay anonymous, is active in the promotion and implementation of programs that deal with women's inclusion in peacebuilding in the context of the 1325 resolution. The relevance of the organization derives in the first place from the program that they are implementing on the field, the themes that the "Gender office" uses to promote the 1325 resolution and the context where it is active (eastern part of the country), which is still highly conflictual.

The second organization selected in the research, the Non-Governmental Organization Femmes Main Dans les Main pour le Dévéloppement Integral (FMMDI), is located in Kasaï (although the action is national), which is considered as a "post-conflictual" area of the DRC (MONUSCO, UN, 2020). The organization results relevant for this research in the first place, for the programs that it promotes, namely "Incubateur de Paix" among others, for being a member of the women's movement "Rien Sans les Femmes" and for the international partner (UNWOMEN) with which it collaborates in the context of the 1325 Resolution.

5.4 Data analysis

In this case, the WPR (What's the Problem Represented to be) approach developed by Bacchi was selected as the approach for policy analysis, supported with the thematic analysis method (TA) proposed by Braun and Clarke (2012). I followed the recommended stages in conducting this analysis. Firstly, I familiarized myself with the data. Secondly, I generated codes based on my research questions. Thirdly, I identified and examined themes, reviewed them, and proceeded to define and label the themes. Lastly, I conducted this analysis by utilizing a deductive approach to thematic analysis. The following themes emerged:

1. The symbolic value of the National Action Plan but the limited implementation of it;
2. The necessity to overcome the socio-cultural burden;
3. The concept of resistance.

5.5 Limitations

This thesis is limited in relation to several aspects. Firstly, the time constraint of the thesis and the geographical location of the researcher based in Denmark, have made it difficult to collect an extensive data set on the matter.

Secondly, the availability and accessibility of certain information might be limited or not completely reliable, due to limited accessibility of online data.

Thirdly, one of the organizations decided to change their contribution to anonymous few days before the deadline, which reduced the amount of data that I could use in my analysis: this had a big impact on the results of the analysis, as it significantly reduced the amount of empirical information I could rely on and affecting consequently the level of depth of analysis.

5.6   Delimitations

In this project some delimitations were made to limit the research.

In the first place, it was decided to limit the use of the concept of "victim" in the analysis. Following Pamela Scully (2010) reasoning which shows how the focus on women as victims penalizes women in the peacebuilding - because the vulnerability makes for them difficult to participate and engage into the life as citizens and as political subjects. The author suggests a need to increase the participation and decrease the focus on women only as victims (of sexual violence) (p.22). Since, in both questionnaires taken into analysis, the concept of "victim" did not appear, it has been decided to exclude it in the analysis, although it is strongly present in other data taken into analysis and it's a discourse that emerges when DRC is taken into analysis due to its high level of Gender Based Violence (GBV) (Bihamba, 2017). The research did not have enough data to be able to analyze this concept from an objective and complete perspective risking to re-present women as victims and reproducing some implicit power structures. Therefore, the concept will be highlighted when mentioned in the NAP, but it was chosen not to take it into analysis.

Secondly, a geographical delimitation was adopted: it was decided to take into consideration only one country, namely the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), to be able to have a better and deeper understanding of the implementation of the WPS agenda. Focusing solely on a single case, can risk not "seeing the bigger picture". On the other hand, it provides a thorough analysis. Considering the difficult geopolitical situation of DRC, being able to focus on the country will allow the research to have a deeper understanding.

Moreover, although the WPS agenda and the NAP cover a wide range of topics in the involvement and empowerment of women, this research will investigate only the involvement of women in peacebuilding.

Finally, it was decided to set a limit to the time frame of the research: from 2010, year of the first National Action Plan launch, to 2022.

5.7 "Self-problematization" and positioning

An important consideration throughout the study was the impact of the author's own positionality on the analysis and the problem representations it was identified (Bacchi, 2012). In particular, as Bacchi depicts, this approach does not aim to find solutions but to develop a "problem - questioning" approach to have a critical perspective on the policy, without having the "western eagerness" to "solve the problem" (ibid., p. 23).

Hellsten (2013) in her article "The idea of gender justice and the UNSCR 1325, Two case studies: Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo" draws on the fact that Global South feminists often point out how Global North feminists "make it as their mission to empower women" by "set them free" from all their community links, traditions. However, the author notices how it is not necessary that women in the Global South feel the need to completely "break themselves free" from the traditional social constructions, but the main need is to gain power and rights and recognition within those settings, recognizing the rationality and reasonability of their decision-making processes[4] (p. 1-2). Moreover, this "mission" risks in reproducing some "Global North – Global South" unilateral discourse.

As a Global North white researcher (she/her), the choice to investigate the Global South case study can be perceived as controversial, since the risk is that the outcome would be to try "to solve *their problems*". However, by adopting the WPR methodology, the goal of the research is to uncover the potential hidden "problems", without providing a solution to it. On the one hand, I am aware that my analysis could reproduce some "North-South" assumptions: thanks to the collaboration with two local organizations, I will be able to collect an internal perspective, that can help me have a deeper understanding of the discourse related to the 1325 in DRC. On the other, being external to the case-study can help the researcher develop different perspectives.

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[4] The "contrarian ideal" - The ideal of autonomous and fully rational decision makers who from equal basis choose the principles of justice under which they can organize their society and its governance structure (Hellster, 2013, p.2)

6 Analysis

6.1 Setting the scene: understanding the WPS agenda

The UNSCR 1325 is recognized to be the foundation of gender-sensitive formulation in the sphere of peace and security and a "landmark resolution" (Otto, 2015, p. 4). Overall, the WPS agenda is composed of 10 resolutions divided into two groups: the first group, initiated by 1325 and followed by SCR 1889 (2009), SCR 2122 (2013), SCR 2242 (2015) and SCR 2493 (2019), focuses on the promotion of women's agency in peacemaking and peacebuilding and their fundamental role in decision-making processes (Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Women Peace, and Security). The second group focuses on preventing and addressing the "conflict-related sexual violence" (CRSV), women (and children)'s protection. The first resolution on the sexual violence was SCR 1820, adopted in 2008. It recognizes how sexual violence can be used as a war weapon and therefore can result as a threat to international peace and security. After 2008, four additional resolutions on CRSV were adopted: SCR 1888 (2009), SCR 1960 (2010), SCR 2106 (2013), and SCR 2467 (2019). Overall, all the resolutions can actually be read as "protective" more than "empowering" (Otto, 2015, p. 4). Although the WPS agenda results to be a fundamental tool, it is noticed how disconnected the agenda with the gender mainstreaming in peace building is in UN institutions and the governance of peace-building-related activities (Shepherd, 2016). Otto (2015) highlights the importance to investigate these "opportunities for women's voices to be heard" (p.7) to understand to what extent the participation of women is limited to provide "feminized contributions", for instance, assuming a pacifying role or highlighting the vulnerability of women by promoting the "protecting and saving" discourse (p. 7). This creates a burden for women's participation to make the difference (p.8), in other words, from the role that the Security Council delineates it emerges the implicit idea that women are predisposed to make peace. The UNSCR 1325 is at the core of policy debates related to women and peacebuilding on how to ensure gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding. It is often noticed how often NAPs, although promising, remain "words on paper", without any concrete change (De Amalgro, 2018, p. 398).

6.2 What is the Problem Represented to Be?

When looking at the National Action Plan, the most immediate problem that the policy seems to tackle is the lack of an environment that guarantees a fair inclusion of women, men and young people when consolidating peace in the DRC by addressing four axes: Participation, Protection, Prevention, Relief and Recovery. These axes represent the issues to be tackled in order to overcome the limited inclusion of women in peace and security issues. The Bacchi's questions selected guide the analysis,

to uncover the "hidden" problem representation, the potential gaps left by the policy, the effects produced by the representation of the "problem" and how women's organizations questioned and "overcame" the limitations. The theoretical framework supports the analysis by gaining a deeper understanding of the power dynamics that emerge and the scale that women use to influence the policy and overcome the limitations.

In the next section, the two National Action Plans that have been implemented in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to put into practice the WPS agenda will be analyzed, however more focus will be given to the second one – 2019-2022- due to a more exhaustive and detailed National Action Plan. Both the NAPs were developed and launched by the Ministère du Genre, Famille et Enfant, in collaboration with different international actors (Resolution 1325, Ministère du Genre, Famille et Enfants).

6.2.1 I Generation NAP in DRC

Local activism to enhance women's participation in conflict resolution started before the launch of the SCR 1325 in DRC, due to the instability of the country and the precarious situation of women (Hellsten, 2013, p. 10). Prior to the launch of DRC NAP of 2010, women movement were, in fact, relying on international commitments which were endorsed by the Congolese government, such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action, governmental actors, such as Canada and Switzerland, and in collaboration with regional women's right organization (Hellsten, p.10). Women organizations networked and advocated to implement the National Action Plan to increase the degree of participation in peace processes and once it was launched in 2010, local women's NGOs collaborated with the Office of Gender Affairs of the MONUC[5] to translate the SCR 1325 into the country's official national languages and to raise public awareness (ibid.). However, what it has emerged has been the emphasis on women as being "sexualized victims of regional conflict", changing the direction towards the unstable area of the country, the eastern one (Davis, 2019, p. 101). Hellsten (2013) highlights the

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[5] United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) initially to plan for the observation of the ceasefire and disengagement of forces and maintain liaison with all parties to the Ceasefire Agreement. Later in a series of resolutions, the Council expanded the mandate of MONUC to the supervision of the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement and assigned multiple related additional tasks (Helping bring peace and stability in the DRC, MONUC).

positive aspects of the launch of the NAP, among others, it was underlined that "the process had a genuine ownership since its beginning" and that the DRC initiative had repercussions on the regional one, as the conflict involves multiple actors in the region, showing the key position of the country. Nevertheless, the author observes how the overall impact of the resolution was weak and the political will to implement it was vague, to the extent that women remained in marginal positions in all the decision-making processes and, more generally, in political life (p. 11). Moreover, it is mentioned at page 5 of the NAP how the "*plan is not a final document, it will include changes and additions necessary during application*" (DRC-NAP, 2010, p. 5)*,* showing that the main effort of the document was to create "a base", from which to develop a stronger Action Plan. In other words, although the first National Action Plan was able to make Congolese women activism more "visible" and to show to the international community the will to include the WPS agenda in the country, the objectives and consequently the results remained vague and superficial (Davis, 2018, p. 103). The effects of the launch of the first NAP were that official decision-making positions covered by women were few or were put into a strategic position with the sole scope to improve the international community's perception of the country, without making gender justice a priority (Hellsten, 2013, p. 11). Moreover, the external support was provided with the aim to launch the NAP, but not to support its implementation that, throretically, was supposed to come from the government. Hellsten (2013) notes how the "peace negotiations were not about ending the structural injustices, [but] about access to power and resources by existing elites, [where] gender justice does not feature as a high priority" (ibid., p. 12). As it emerges in table 1 (see below), published in 2015, in the *Balance Sheet Report* developed by the Ministry of Gender, Family and Children, there has not been any specific change in women participation in peace negotiation after the implementation of the NAP. Conversely, when it was signed the "Accord Cadre pour la Paix, la Sécurité et la Coopération pour la RDC et la Région" [the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region,], on February the 24th, 2013 in Addis Abeba, only one woman took part in the negotiations. Also, the content of the agreement mentions sexual violence, but it makes no refence to women's "other needs" or measures that aim to involve or promote women's participation when implementing the agreement (Davis, 2018, p. 103). Women's organizations note how consultations with mediators result shallow, predetermined by the "women's issues", without considering the topic in depth (ibid.). For instance, CAFCO, in 2013 denounced that the national monitoring mechanism to implement the Addis Ababa agreement did not include any women and that beside few "awareness-raising sessions", no other initiatives were promoted to address women needs or involve them in the peace process (Genre et Accord Cadre d'Addis-Abeba, CAFCO, 2013). Even though the Congolese women have carried out a number of pleas and legal reforms that resulted in the – already mentioned-

inclusion of "Gender Parity", the law on the implementation of women's rights and parity, the revision of the Family Code to remove the legal restriction that made the "wife" as a property of the "husband" (World Bank Blogs, 2022), etc. Thus, CAFCO denounced that if the Framework Agreement was taken as the Agreement *par excellence* for peace and stability in the DRC and the Region, the main stakeholders were supposed to broaden and deepen the concept of gender in peacebuilding. To do so they should have recognized that men and women as equal social actors must play multiple and different roles, implying that women and men have different experiences of conflict and peace with different access to resources (including power and decision-making); and having different practical needs and strategic interests related to gender power relations (Genre et Accord Cadre d'Addis-Abeba, CAFCO, 2013).

In conclusion, the first generation of the NAP resulted to be weak, also considering the absence of funds from the government and/or external actors (see sub-chapter 5.5.). In Chapter II of the second-generation NAP, where it is reported the effectiveness of the first NAP, it is mentioned that the inclusion remains low in peacebuilding dialogues, citing the Addis Ababa Agreement of 2013 (6.2%), the People's Palace National Discussions of 2013 (12.4%), the African Union's Negotiations on the City of 2016 (18%), St Sylvester Accord of 2016 (9.4%) (DRC NAP, 2018).

Tableau N°1. Nombre et pourcentage des femmes aux négociations de 1999 à 2015

N°	Année	ACTIVITÉS	Nbre de Femmes	Nbre d'Hommes	%
01	1999	Accord de cessez-le-feu de Lusaka ,10 juillet 1999	45	300	13,04
02	2002	Accord global et inclusif sur la transition en RDC, 17 décembre 2002, Sun City, en Afrique du Sud	47	298	13,6
03	2006	Pacte sur la sécurité, la stabilité et le développement dans le Région des Grands Lacs, 15 décembre 2006, Nairobi, Kenya	0	11	0
04	2008	Acte d'engagement à Goma, janvier 2008	1	88	1,1
05	2009	Accord de paix entre le Gouvernement et le Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP), signé le 23 mars 2009, Goma	0	4	0
06	2013	Accord-cadre sur la paix, la sécurité et la coopération en RDC et dans la Région des grands lacs, 24 Février 2013, Addis-Abeba(Éthiopie)	1	15	6,2
07		Mécanisme de Suivi de l'Accord Cadre d'Addis-Abeba	1	3	25
08		Concertations nationales du Palais du Peuple	95	668	12,4
09		Groupe de Contact pour la préparation des Concertations Nationales	5	42	11,9
10		Comité de suivi des Concertations nationales	1	11	8,3

Figure 2, Rapport Bilan 1325, 2015, p. 9

6.2.2   II Generation NAP in DRC

The DRC's second NAP 1325 was launched in 2018 for the period 2019-2022, with the idea to conform and integrate the new "challenges and concerns", such as the Sustainable Development Objectives (SDO) and the AU Agenda 63[6]. In general, this instrument results to be more detailed and structured than the previous NAP (DRC-NAP, WILPF). In the first place, it is mentioned that the general objective of the second-generation NAP is to "promote a secure environment that guarantees the fair inclusion of women, men and young people in consolidating peace in the DRC" (DRC NAP, 2018, p. 10), highlighting the need to improve the inclusivity in peacebuilding processes but also the central role that peace has in the country considering "the post-conflict state for nearly ten years but is still dealing with a resurgence of armed groups, notably in the eastern part of the country*"* (DRC-NAP, 2018, p. 7*)*. The main objective shows the affirmation that by including women in the peacebuilding process of the country a more "consolidated peace" will be the effect of it. In 2009, the former UN Secretary General, in a statement regarding the UNSCR 1325 affirmed that including women in peacebuilding processes improved the quality of the agreements and consequently a positive implementation of them (Ellerby, 2013, p. 136). This discourse is strongly promoted by the international organization that supported the development of this NAP, namely UNWOMEN, WILPF and TROCAIRE, by helping the government in the creation of a "roadmap" and organizing two workshops to develop the NAP (DRC-NAP, 2018, p. 10). Moreover, UN WOMEN plays a relevant role in the NAP, due to its position as First Vice-Chair in the National Steering Committee.

The first chapter serves as a status report to show the findings on how the implementation of the first NAP worked. It highlighted the "low awareness" of this document among the population, the scarce activity from the government in promoting it and the lack of support from the partners in the implementation of the NAP (DRC, WILPF). In particular, in the context of peace, it is recognized how women's participation and inclusion resulted always low (DRC NAP, 2018, p.15). Moreover, in section "Lessons learned" (ibid., p. 17), the "poor results participation and inclusion of women at the negotiation tables and in decision-making bodies" was caused by "cultural inertia", however, when it came to the data gathered in 21 of the 26th provinces in DRC, 49% of the actors which were

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[6] In both documents the main objective regarding gender equality is to achieve it in all spheres of life and empower all women and girls. For more information see "Linking Agenda 2063 and the SDGs" - https://au.int/agenda2063/sdgs

interviewed gave priority to the topic of peace (p. 17-18). By cultural inertia it is intended "the desire to avoid cultural change, or a change in trajectories, or conversely, desire cultural change once movement or change is already occurring. Cultural inertia suggests that groups resist change due to perceived pressure from outside forces" (Zárate, M. A. et al., 2012, p. 635). However, according to the statement made in the "lesson learned" concept, almost half the actors that provided data, implicitly declares that their priority "pillar" in the Women Peace and Security area is related to peace, making the topic the most relevant and "urgent".

In the section - II.5 Best Practice – (DRC NAP, 2018, p. 18) point "iv" and "v" highlight that a positive contribution was provided by creating peace committees in provinces affected by armed conflict and on a regional level – the creation of synergy for peace.

In the section "Challenges to overcome", 3 out of the 4 points are focused on women as vulnerable subjects and victims of acts of violence. In particular, the first points states that it is necessary to overcome the challenge to make sure to promote "the fair inclusion of women, with consideration of vulnerable women, young women and girls in decision-making bodies and mechanisms for the prevention and peaceful settlement of conflict". What emerges here, as already stated, is the idea that women are within the "victim frame", which has been often criticized by scholars when looking at the WPS agenda and the way it addressed the role of women in peacebuilding (Krystalli, 2020). De Almagro (2017) in her article "Producing Participants: Gender, Race, Class, and Women, Peace and Security" she notices that although women are considered "also" agents of change, by "reinforcing racial, sexual and gendered discourse" (p. 399), in other words, the focus of the NAP in protecting women does ignore the work on avoiding violence and war (ibid). To paraphrase De Almagro's point, it seems that women gain relevance once they are "victimized", ignoring their overall role in society, and putting "gender subjectification" as the main recognition for involving women in peacebuilding-related activities.

6.2.3   The objectives that aim to involve women's participation in peacebuilding

The National Action Plan presents 11 objectives that need to be fulfilled and strategies to measure change are included in the plan. The objectives that aim to include women in peacebuilding are spread throughout three out of the four axis that resume the four pillars of the WPS Agenda: Participation, Protection, Prevention, Relief and Recovery (The Four Pillars of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, UN).

6.2.3.1   Objective 1

The first objective in inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes in the second-generation NAP is intended to help increase the number of women and AYW (adolescents and young women) to participation in decision-making processes by raising the "inclusion rate to 20% within local, provincial, national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for preventing, managing and resolving conflict and in the security services" (DRC-NAP, 2019, p.19). According to the NAP, this can happen by "obtaining commitments from officials to align women in various peace negotiations" (p. 19). This sentence implicitly recognizes that the consolidation of peace is still a man's prerogative, and it is by "obtaining the commitment from officials" that potentially women can end up being included in these processes.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE AXIS	ANTICIPATED RESULTS	INDICATORS	ACTIVITIES	ACTORS
AXIS 1. INCLUSION				
1. Helping to raise to 20% the inclusion rate of women and young women in national, regional and international mechanisms for the prevention and management of conflict	Women and AYW are represented at a level of 20% in national, regional and international mechanisms for the prevention and management of conflict	**Indic:** percentage of women and young women within institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and management of conflict	Advocacy for meaningful representation of women at negotiation tables, within institutions and in national, regional and international mechanisms to prevent, manage and settle disputes;	Ministries of Gender, the Interior, Foreign Affairs; political parties, Parliament CSOs, technical and financial partners,

Figure 3: DRC NAP, 2018, p. 28

6.2.3.2   Objective 4

In the "Prevention" Axis, objective 4, recognizes that armed conflict should be prevented to avoid women and AYW to "fall victim", therefore as "concrete actions" to prevent this situation, the inclusion of women in taken into consideration, such as training women in the mediation and peaceful resolution of conflict, instituting committees of peace mediators in every province, and aligning women and AYW in all "missions for negotiation", mediation and peaceful resolution of conflict. (DRC NAP, 2018, p.20-21). This axis aims to "prevent conflict" by making peacebuilding actions more inclusive, following the emerging consensus that women's participation in peace initiatives affects the durability of the peace (Krause, Krause & Bränfors, 2018, p, 985). However, the training and inclusion of women in peacebuilding is paired up with the aim to prevent women to become victims. Paraphrasing Hudson (2017), the Plan reflects two types of discourse in prevention. In the first place is that prevention is associated with participation, calling for women's inclusion in conflict prevention. The overcome is that "their agency will necessarily be exercised in productive and socially transformative ways" (Shepherd, 2017, in Krause et al, 2018, p. 19), becoming responsible

to prevent the violence. The second discourse is the one that connects prevention and protection (ibid. p. 20): although the axis aim to prevent potential situation of violence against women, it seems that "prevention" is framed to be linked to "protection", indeed subpoints (ii), (v) encourage trainings not only to prevent, but also to participate in the negotiation, mediation and resolution of the conflict, shifting the overall meaning to act after the conflict, as consequence, instead of before, limiting therefore the action of women in preventing conflict. In the latest report "Rapport Pays de la Mise en Œuvre du Plan d'Action National de IIème generation de l'Agenda Femmes, Paix et Securité du Conseil de Securite des Nations Unies" (2022), when commenting the 4th objective, it is reported that there are more that 369 mechanisms and peace initiatives in the country with 31% of women are able to take part in the decision-making processes in these mechanisms (p.8), showing a positive trend in including women in peace-related decisions.

AXIS 2. PREVENTION

4. Setting up community-based early warning mechanisms and mechanisms for peaceful resolution of conflict, training women and AYW in techniques for early warning and peaceful resolution of conflict, on the New Deal and in fragility analysis; conducting studies on	− community-based mechanisms for early warning and peaceful resolution of conflict have been set up; − Women and AYW are trained in techniques for early warning and peaceful resolution of	**Indic:** Number of community-based early-warning mechanisms et of peaceful resolution existent; **Indic:** Percentage of women and AYW trained in techniques for early warning and peaceful resolution of conflict, on the New Deal, and in fragility analysis.	− Organization of initiatives to set up early-warning mechanisms; − Organization of training sessions in the 26 provinces.	Ministry of Gender, CSOs TFP Ministry of Gender, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Defence, Disarmament and Veterans, CSOs, TFPs.
the impact of armed conflict on women and girls have been made.	conflict and in fragility analysis			
	Studies on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls have been made	Indic: Number of studies conducted	Completion of field studies in conflict zones	Min GEFA, CSOs, Ministry of the Plan, TFPs

Figure 4: DRC NAP 2018, p. 30-31

6.2.3.3 Objective 10

The 10th objective from the NAP, located in the "Recovery" Axis, aims to integrate a gender dimension in conflict resolutions. In particular, it is pointed out how "women and AYF are the main victims of conflict, [but] their specific needs are not considered" (p. 23), and therefore by integrating the gender dimension, it is possible to "accommodate the specific needs of women […] to increase their empowerment or to progress the equality of sexes" (ibid.), this can be achieved through the integration of a gender-perspective in different actions and programs. The Security Council urges its member states "to ensure gender mainstreaming to ensure that women's empowerment is taken into account during post- conflict needs assessments and planning." This objective implies that women's needs should be taken into consideration as they are one of the social categories most impacted by conflicts, revealing that women are considered in the process because of their "victim position".

Shepherd (2016, p. 123) affirms that by representing women as "victims of violence" limit their agency and consequently the effectiveness of peacebuilding-related activities that can address a full spectrum of the different experience that women can encounter throughout a (post-) conflict environment. As it emerges in the 10th objective, women, thanks to their position as "victims of violence", they are also considered "agents of change" (ibid).

AXIS 4. RECOVERY				
10. Integrating gender into the management and peaceful resolution of conflict.	Recovery projects and programmes are sensitive to gender	Indic: Number of projects and programmes integrating gender	Integration of gender into recovery projects and programmes	Ministry of Gender, of Defence, Disarmament and Veterans, of the Interior, CSOs
	Community-based actors in recovery projects widen their skillsets in relation to the impact of gender	Indic: Number of community-based actors in recovery projects trained	Widening the skillsets of community-based actors relating to consideration of gender in recovery projects	Ministries of Gender, Defence, Disarmament and Veterans, the Interior, CSOs

Figure 5: DRC NAP, 2018, p. 34-35

6.2.4   Budget allocation – Financing of the NAP

To understand the (potential) development of the promotion of the WPS agenda through the National Action Plans it is relevant to examine the financial commitments, made by the Member State (Scanlon, Makan-Lakha & Hamilton, p. 10). The first NAP (2010) does not mention or allocate any NAP, beside the promise from the government to support its implementation via the state budget (Hellsten, 2013, p. 11) and that did not result in any actual budget plan. Also, the II generation NAP does not contain an "allocated budget". However, it is mentioned the set up of a Trust Fund to obtain and manage financial support (WILPF). In the 2022 Report it is mentioned how the national budget has not been defined yet (p. 4) and that the government is determined to provide a budget to the plan. In the meantime, UN Women and other partners, such as embassies, supported the NAP by promoting projects. Indeed, both the organizations taken into analysis are financed by international organization, such as UN Women. To conclude, CSO are active in the promotion of the NAP (Rapport Pays 2022, p. 4). Indeed, Annie Matundu Mbambi, a representative of the Civil Society, during a round table on the occasion of the 21st anniversary of the 1325 resolution focused on the problematic of aligning the NAP with the state budget. The civil society called for a sum of $ 23.520.260 for the full period of implementation of the NAP (2019-2022) (Lokale, 2021, Actualité.dc). The outcome is that the weak mobilization of funds in support of the 1325 resolution and the NAP, result in a limited efficiency of the tool. Scanlon, Makan-Lakha & Hamilton notice how many governments rely on weak structures for the implementation of the agenda, and that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, potentially budgetary cuts in gender-related programs might have occurred (p. 10).

6.2.5   Decentralizing the implementation of the NAP

The inclusion of different actors in the promotion of the NAP results relevant since the first launch of the first NAP. Particularly, the involvement of both state and non-state actors is considered essential for the effective implementation of the NAP (DRC-NAP, 2019). Moreover, both Plans aim to implement actions on a multilevel scale: the first NAP aimed to have three "steering committees" [Comité de pilotages], on a national, provincial, and local level. Moreover, in the "Best Practices" individuated by the II DRC-NAP, collaborating with other actors of the Great Lakes sub-region by exchanging notes and experiences resulted in a positive approach[7]. The second NAP added the National, Provincial and Local Secretariat, with a more "day-to-day" management of implementation of the NAP 1325 (p. 25-26). The emphasis of including the different scales and different actors is highlighted not only by the NAPs, but also by the discourse promoted by the government, indeed the government often calls for the action of every actor engaged on the research of peace and security both on a local and a global scale (Lokale, 2021, Actualité.dc). Moreover, the National Secretary of the 1325 Resolution in DRC (A propos du Secrétariat National, Minister du Genre, Famille et Enfant), has promoted the creation of Provincial Action Plans. However, both organizations that answered the questionnaire, find a gap between its implementation on a national level, where they argue that the implementation results stronger compared to the local level (Questionnaire Organization 1 and NGO FMMDI, 2023).

6.3   Women Organizations, Peacebuilding and 1325 Resolution – DRC NAP

6.3.1   The perception of the NAP in promoting women in peacebuilding from civil society organizations perspective

In the interview from Radio Okapi, "Rôle de la femme dans les initiatives de paix" [The role of the woman in peace initiatives], Annie Bambe, President of the Forum for Women's and Girl's rights and Advocacy Officer for the movement "Rien Sans les Femmes" makes an analysis of the women's condition and role in peacebuilding (2022, Radio Okapi). The interviewee explains that the adoption of the 1325 resolution presents some "faiblesses" [weaknesses] that stops the Resolution to be effective and consequently women still are not active and in the condition of covering leadership position in peacebuilding initiatives. In particular, she mentions that due to the "pesanteurs

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[7] In 2018, a Regional Action Plan for the Great Lakes Region was launched by 10 countries to increase the cooperation to promote the WPS agenda in the area. http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/RAP-2018-2023-IGGLR.pdf

socioculturelles" [socio-cultural burdens][8] and the fact that instruments and juridical tools are there, but the means to implement them are limited. The fact that women in Congo have not experienced actual change despite the existence of laws and policies designed to address their situation, raises doubts about the effectiveness of these metrics promoting women's active roles in peacebuilding (Yaliwe & Selebogo, 2020, p. 15143). The gender and protection officer of Organization 1 has noticed how the implementation of the resolution 1325 through the National Action Plan is a process, and at the moment the NAP results more as "a guidance and verification document" [document d'orientation et de certification], that is limited, however, on the implementation level since there are not rigorous measures (Questionnaire Organization 1, 2023). Also, the NGO FMMDI recognizes the weak level of implementation of the Resolution. However, the value of the resolution is "capital" as it recognizes the impact that conflict has on (young) women, to the extent that the organization is inspired by the vision of the NAP. Moreover, thanks to this tool, the organization has been able to promote initiatives to support women's leadership in peacebuilding (Questionnaire FMMDI, 2023).

What emerges from the organization working locally to promote the WPS agenda is that the NAP is perceived more as a "strategic symbolic tool", a cornerstone to recall the importance and the symbolism that it brings. Nevertheless, due to the limitation that the document brings with itself, it does not go beyond its symbolic value. In other words, it results still relevant and fundamental for the grassroot organizations, as they can rely on it when promoting women's role in peacebuilding. (Questionnaire Organization 1 and FMMDI). Therefore, albeit the limitations, the NAP emerges as a strategic tool to improve on different levels: on an international level the perception of the country in the field of women's positioning in peacebuilding, and internally, to make women activism visible. Harvey (1985) noticed how "those who built a sense of community across space found themselves with a distinct advantage over those who mobilized the principle of community in place" (Harvey in Cox, 1998, p. 2). The symbolic value that the NAP represents, facilitated the possibility of a creation of a space where it is possible develop spaces for women to assert their needs and promote activities to facilitate their requests, proving to the latter the advantage of having created "a community" based on the principle introduced by the NAP. Locally and nationally (and regionally), women's civil

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[8] Burdens are like "a force of inertia, a resistance to change... administrative burdens, sociological burdens"[une force d'inertie, une résistance au changement… les pesanteurs administratives, les pesanteurs sociologiques]. In other words, socio-cultural burdens can be defined as forces of inertia, attitudes of resistance specific to a given group, which is conservative and very attached to cultural traditions, and which do not always militate in favour of useful or unhelpful social change in the face of the current evolution of societies. (https://www.labrys.net.br/labrys12/livre/elisabeth.htm)

society organizations (CSOs) are key spaces from women's social and political engagement. Neera Chandhoke conceptualizes civil society as a "space where ordinary men and women through the practices of their life acquire political agency and selfhood" (Chandhoke in Björkdahl & Selimovic, 2018, p. 424). Put differently, is that by recalling the highly symbolic value of the NAP, it was possible for organizations and movements to create or improve spaces to favor women's inclusion in peacebuilding. As mentioned above, both organizations taken into analysis, recognizes that on a national level, the impact of the NAP has stronger results than in the local setting: in particular, NGO FMMDI recognizes that the government of Sama Lokonde has made progress in the field of implementing the 1325 resolution. Indeed, the prime minister has declared that the implementation of the 1325 resolution and what it concerns women's role, also in the peace consolidation, is a priority of its politics (Primature Cabinet du Premier Ministre de la République Démocratique du Congo, Actualités, 2021). Whereas, according to local organizations, women start to participate at decision-making instances, but "it's a process. There is more to do" [c'est un processus. Il y a encore à faire] (Questionnaire Organization 1, 2023). On the other hand, they both see the limits that the National Action Plan has on the grassroot level where a low percentage of representation of women in decision-making is noticed (ibid).

6.3.2   Resistance across scales – "La lutte continue"

What in the NAP 2019, is mentioned as "cultural inertia" (DRC NAP, 2019, p. 17) and referred to as one of the causes of scarce participation of women at the negotiation tables, local organizations and movements call it "sociocultural burdens". The perspective here arises as opposites: as specified in the first part of the analysis, inertia stays for the "lack of activity or interest, or unwillingness to make an effort to do anything" (inertia, Cambridge Dictionary), highlighting the passivity and the "unwillingness to change", whereas the grassroot organizations talk about a social burden, looking at the obstacle that their activity to promote women's inclusion in peacebuilding encounters. According to Chilmeran (2022), women or organizations, by participating in the promotion of women in peacebuilding in the context of the 1325 Resolution, must be considered political actors that are "automatically" embedded in political scales according to where they are attempting to change settings. What, the NAP implemented by the government, is perceived as "unwillingness" to change, grassroot organizations, active in trying to change the setting", feel "oppressed" by these burdens and need to overcome them. David Harvey to offer an understanding of the politics of space, highlights

the contradiction of mobility and immobility[9] (Harvey in Cox 1998, p.5), paraphrasing the author, we could understand the National Action Plan as the immobile tool, that it is there to support (symbolically) the mobile action promoted by grassroot organizations intended as political actors.

Resistance in peacebuilding helps to mitigate and deny domination that can come from the international imposition of specific policies but primarily from the reproduction of coercive practices embedded in state-making (De Heredia, 2017, p. 179). Peacebuilding has demonstrated that the reconstitution of political authority after conflict results improvised and contradictory. By implementing an "everyday form of resistance", it is possible to provide insights into the everyday practices of institutions, norms and processes that operate transversally in a multilevel society (local, national, international) (ibid.). Xavier Guillaume states that the combination of resistance, every day and the international does not fit into the idealized image of the international, where "exceptional events" conducted by states and/or state-men mark the rhythm of time (Guillaume in De Heredia, p. 180). The author asserts that the agency of resistance is related to the creation of an alternative agenda that helps the actors to be motivated in undertaking resistance acts. This resistance does not have to deal with "grand ideologies", but with the "improved conditions of living, social justice, political and economic participatory democracy and access to land." (p. 182). For instance, in the DRC, the ideal of "should be", which means using an ideal picture of reality, of "how things should actually be", has a double effect: it represents a claim for international actors and government authorities and at the same time a form of resistance (ibid.). This "should be"-approach describes a potential reality that allows *resisters* to point out what is not working in the "everyday life", making the objective of resistance visible in discursive form: motivation, therefore, becomes a moral justification for disobedience (ibid.) For instance, it was understood that implementing the resolution should have resulted in the prevention of conflicts, which is not the current case in DRC (Questionnaire Organization 1, DRC). The use of terms such as "lutte"[fight] and "processus"[process] in the promotion of women in peacebuilding implemented by the Gender Office of the organization, highlights the resisting and determined attitude of the organization towards the topic of empowering women. On the other hand, the project "Renforcer le leadership des femmes et des filles dans l'action de consolidation de la paix au Kasaï Central" [Reinforce women and AYW in the action of promoting peace in the Kasaï Central], in which the "Incubateur de paix" [peace incubator] is promoted by the

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[9] In his examples, he makes a distinction between capital as the mobile features and factories, worker skills and infrastructures as the immobile ones. Where value must continue to flow through capital in its fixed forms (Harvey in Cox. 1998, p. 4).

NGO FMMDI, which creates a framework for learning about the various documents relating to the consolidation of peace, the Internet, for active participation in the various peace mechanisms [la mise en place de l'incubateur de paix qui est un cadre approprié d'apprentissage des femmes et filles à travers les différents documents qui ont trait à la consolidation de la paix, l'internet, ceci pour une participation active aux différents mécanismes de paix] (Questionnaire FMMDI, 2023). In other words, the project aims to educate women how peace should be consolidated and how participation of women should be increased in all peace mechanisms.

Women that promote inclusion in decision-making process in the DRC have to "resist" in different ways and deal with different "how things are" on different levels, figuring out how to resist and claim for each situation. The interview "Rôle de la femme dans les initiatives de paix" [the role of women in peace initiatives] (Radio Okapi, June 2022) on the Radio of the MONUSCO, "Informations pour la Paix et le développement de la RDC [Information for Peace and Development for DRC]", helps to understand how the women's movement "Rien sans les Femmes" needs to promote a specific "resistance-discourse" to transcend the "socio-cultural burdensome"[pesanteur socio-culturelles] when it comes to women's inclusion in peacebuilding initiatives, where it is not accepted that women sit where men sit (14:38), as the role of the women is to stay "dans la cuisine" (14:49). The counterpart, reproducing the generic cultural assumption, asks whether it is possible that it is women's fault that their participation in peacebuilding is not effective, and afterwards she asks whether pregnancy can also be considered a "natural obstacle" [obstacle naturelle]. The response from Annie Bambe, representing the movement Rien Sans les Femmes, was that being pregnant or being a mother is not an illness [maladie] (07:54) – illness-, so it should not be used as a "pretext" to avoid or exclude women in peacebuilding initiatives. This dialogue reflects two discourses: on the one hand, the interviewer reports the traditional patriarchal social construction where women are in the "shadow", managing the family and the house and offering advice to men, the "voix" [voice], who take the decisions and are positioned in the front line[10]. Bambe answers by assessing that this is a construction made to avoid the participation of women in peacebuilding processes and to answer the interviewer she asks rhetorically "qui a établi la liste?" [who has established the list?][11]. Lastly, she added that in the traditional culture of the past it might have worked to have the women "in the shadow". However, by having these new juridical tools, benefiting women, things have to change. Throughout the whole interview, it is relevant the clash of mindset between the traditional values, that still perceive the

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[10] Relevant that it is an interview by Radio Okapi, the Radio promoted by the MONUSCO.

[11] Referring to the Nairobi peace initiatives where no women were included (Radio Okapi, 2022).

women to be in a subordinate position, and the need to resist and change these socio-traditional rules, in particular by referring at the fundamental "tools" provided by the government, such as the adoption of the 1325 resolution and the launch of a National Action Plan. This interaction shows that by promoting the relevance of the fundamental tools that DRC has adopted throughout the years to strengthen women's position, they are able to "fight and resist" the cultural burden that puts women in a "lower level" compared to men due to its biological condition of potentially being a mother, or the socio-cultural condition of being "in the shadow". However, at the same time it is recognized the fragility of these tools as incapable to overcome the social boundaries that it encountered, showing the mismatch between the existing laws and policies and an actual change for women in the peacebuilding setting (Yaliwe & Selebogo, 2020, p. 15143). The organization FMMDI, by implementing the project "Renforcer le leadership des femmes et des filles dans l'action de consolidation de la paix au Kasaï Central", on the other hand, promotes a different approach that does not aim to completely change the settings, but by "identifying existing institutional and traditional peace mechanisms" [identification des mécanismes de paix institutionnels et traditionnels existants], it promotes the creation of favorable conditions to support and increase the participation of women (FMMDI, 2022). In the following chapter, we will deepen analysis on the creation of spaces in the context of the 1325 resolution that are able to challenge the cultural burdens, using Cox's concept of "space of dependence".

6.3.3   Producing spaces of dependence

Following Cox (1998) reasoning regarding the content and for in the politics of space, a crucial distinction has been made among spaces of dependence and spaces of engagement (See sub-chapter 6.3.5). By spaces of dependence, it is understood to be those "localized social relations upon which we depend for the realization of essential interests and for which there are no substitutes elsewhere; they define place-specific conditions for our material well-being and our sense of significance" (Cox, 1998, p. 2). The spaces of dependence exist within a larger, more global set of relationships and are constantly at risk of being weakened or dissolved by different factors. The NGO FMMDI, and even more the Organization 1 (considering that it did not start out as an organization promoting specifically women's right, so it had to define its own space in an already settled context), created and defined their own spaces of dependence in the areas where they are active, in order to secure the conditions for the continued existence of the space that facilitate women's inclusion in peacebuilding, namely the "Incubateur de paix" in the context of the project "Renforcer le leadership des femmes et des filles dans l'action de consolidation de la paix au Kasaï Central for FMMDI and the promotion by the Organization 1 of activities within the program where are involved to promote the Women Peace and

Security Agenda. Both projects have promoted the education of women in becoming leaders by accompanying them in the process of acknowledgement of their rights, FMMDI in the first place identified the traditional peace mechanisms and the peace mediators that were involved after the conflict *Kamuina Nsapu* (2016-2018) and involved the community to identify the needs of women that emerged during and after the conflict, highlighting the necessity to actively include them in the search of a lasting peace (FMMDI, 2022). In the meantime, two "Incubateur de Paix" were installed to create a physical space, with digital tools that could be used with the purpose to help take more ownership of the gender issues, and consequently, consolidate the role that women and girls have or should have in peacebuilding (Questionnaire FMMDI, 2023). Indeed, creating physical spaces helps the organization affirm their presence and recognition in the territory, becoming consequently an actor and a point of refence, and sending the message that through the implementation of the project the objective is to reinforce women and AYW to participate "massivement" [massively] to peace mechanisms (FMMDI, 2022). Organization 1 promoted workshops that aimed to involve three "groups" of actors that can favor the inclusion of women in peacebuilding (Questionnaire Organization 1, 2023). In the first place, it is relevant to notice how both projects aim to empower women through education: indeed, in both NAPs (2010, 2018) and in the Country Report of 2022, it is essential to "vulgariser" [popularize] and consequently increase the awareness of the National Action Plan. Moreover, one of the "best practices" individuated has been the "formation of peace committees in provinces affected by armed conflict" (DRC NAP, 2018, p. 18). Also, the spokesperson for the gender office of Organization 1, talking about her personal experience mentioned that she used to think that peacebuilding was "a male issue" [je croyais que la question de la consolidation de la paix ne revenait qu'aux hommes] (Questionnaire Organization 1, 2023). Despite feeling "incapable" at the beginning, the community recognized her potential to address and resolve problems. As she increased her knowledge and gained experience by exercising her role, she grew more confident in her ability to tackle community issues. This resulted in her active participation in advocacy efforts at both national and international levels during the conflict between RCD (Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie), CNDP (Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple), and the M23 movement (Questionnaire Organization 1, 2023). The creation of spaces that promote women in peacebuilding coincides with the creation of a spaces of dependence: women in this space can find social relations that can facilitate the realization of their own interest, that, due to socio-cultural burdens and lack of "reputation", it is difficult to find elsewhere, since these spaces are still embedded in the area where they are active "as their knowledge and reputation are not portable elsewhere" (Cox, 1998, p. 5). Indeed, if the personal experience of the spokesperson of Organization 1 is taken into consideration, she could be recognized as a "peace facilitator" due to the spatial relations she covered in the place

where she was active as a teacher. To clarify, the creation of "spaces" that facilitated the education and inclusion of women in peacebuilding creates simultaneously a space of "dependence" with the area where these - spaces of dependence- are created due to the knowledge that people living these locations have.

In the next section, it will be considered how women's organization in order to overcome the problem of lack of funds, "jump scales" to access international funds provided by international organizations.

6.3.4 Jumping scales, overcoming budget limitations

As mentioned in the sub-chapter "6.2.4 Budget allocation – Financing of the NAP", although with the NAP a Trust Fund was created to manage the finances directed to implement the NAP, the national budget was never defined. Meanwhile, international actors and partners support the implementation of projects in the context of the 1325 resolution and the NAP.

Lebel, Garden and Imamura (2005), in their article "The Politics of Scale, Position, and Place in the Governance of Water Resources in the Mekong Region", affirm that actors can modify power dynamics by engaging at various spatial levels. This engagement allows them to influence resource access and decision-making processes related to those resources (p. 2), and to shift across levels and scales. To access resources that are not budgeted by the government, organization access funds foreseen to implement the 1325 resolutions. The NGO FMMDI, works with funding partners such as UN Women to strengthen the leadership of women and girls for the consolidation of peace in Kasai and Central Kasai, through the establishment of the peace incubator, as framework for learning about the various documents relating to the consolidation of peace, for active participation in the various peace mechanisms and the Canadian Local Initiative Fund that promotes the increase of the participation of women and youth in the political life of the province of Central Kasai in the DRC through capacity building, organizational strengthening of women's structures and awareness raising of the population (Questionnaire FMMDI, 2023). Organization 1 works in partnership with a international organization that aims to increase gender equality in local communities (Questionnaire 1, 2023) in order to promote in partnership with other local organizations in DRC a program that promotes the Women Peace and Security Agenda. Moreover, the program beside being active in the local level to promote women and girls' meaningful participation in peace processes, advocates both on local, provincial, national and regional level to advance of the DRC NAP (Questionnaire Organization 1, 2023), showing how by working in touch with international "external" organizations the organization is not only able to overcome the budget limitation that prevent the NAP to be incisive when promoting women in peacebuilding, but to actually lobby for the advance of the NAP on a

national level: not only this results in a "jumping scale" strategy to overcome the limitations on the national level, but it shows how the organizations are able to advocate "back" on the national level, "changing" the power structures. Williams (1999, in Lebel, Garden & Imamura,2005) notices how acquiring the ability to operate at various levels may be essential for empowerment. It is common for significant environmental and social injustices to occur in small geographic areas, while the political mechanisms to address them exist at larger administrative or jurisdictional levels, resulting in a significant gap (Williams, 1999): indeed, it is noticed the gap between the implementation of the NAP on a national level and the ineffectiveness of it on the local (Questionnaire Organization 1, 2023). By working with international partner organizations, local organizations firstly, on the one hand, overcome the budget limitations of the NAP, and on the other, acquire the knowledge to have to behave strategically to take advantage of alternative scales of regulation and dependencies (Cox 1998).

Cox (1998) continues by showing how the ability to realize their objectives is influenced by the ability to "exercise territorial power" (p. 7). Cox (1998) continues that the goal is to exercise authority on the actions and interactions "within and between spaces of dependence" (p. 7).), that coincides with the control of a (broader) geographic area. The state's agencies are the most obvious candidate to be able to exercise control of these areas (ibid.). Thus, the issue shifts to exercise influence on agencies that own geographical control. Cox suggests that this is possible due to the creation of a network of associations that either involve those agencies or individuals capable of influencing these actors on the specific issue, which the author calls "space of engagement" (ibid.), that will be analyzed in the next section.

6.3.5 Constructing spaces of engagement

Agents usually participate in a broader range of exchange relations that goes beyond the bounds of a specific location. In addition, these global spheres of influence and forces are constantly changing. As a result, realizing local interests turns out to be inextricable to the evolving geography of different levels (Cox, 1998, p. 4). To be able to influence state agencies, Cox recognizes how "network of association" can create "spaces of engagement". In some instances, it is possible to individuate processes of "jumping scales", that can be able to construct much more extended networks of association, hence space of engagement, to accomplish their objectives. In the following part it will be taken into consideration how the two organizations examined create networks that results into spaces of engagement and afterwards look at a "bigger picture" of how Congolese women

associations, by engaging on an international scale are able to advocate and request DRC government to enhance its focus in the promotion of women in peacebuilding through the NAP.

To achieve their objectives and influence bigger scales, it appears necessary to construct a network of links with other centers of social power (Cox, 1998, p. 15). Organizations to realize the interest of women in the field of participation can try to enter in coalition with other organizations elsewhere, given that they share same or similar interests (ibid., p. 17). For instance, the movement Rien Sans les Femmes (within also FMMDI is actively involved), founded in 2015, promotes the equal representation of women and men in decision making bodies in the DRC at all levels. The formation of these networks can enhance the potential to influence decision-making processes. (ibid. 15), and regardless of the "type" of network of associations, the primary target for achieving their objective would be the central government (ibid.). The movement indeed, that in 2015 counted 15 organizations, quickly grew larger, representing not only a social promotion movement for women's rights, but also an interlocutor for the government when discussing the promotion of NAP, as the government uses RSLF's reports on women inclusion in peacebuilding initiatives (Rapport pays de la mise en œuvre du Plan d'Action National de IIème génération de l'Agenda Femmes, Paix et Sécurité du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies, 2022, p. 3) However, Cox asserts that it is fundamental not over-estimate the position of the state, as its decision-making capabilities makes it an "attractive partner" (p. 16), but not only state agencies possess power and responsibilities. It is observable how movements that aim to promote women's participation "jump the scale" to exhort governments to act in a specific direction and promote their position and aims. Rien Sans Les Femmes, building on its influential position, plays on different scales to promote women's right (and duty) to be part of peace initiatives. For instance, considering the Memorandum that movement addressed to the CIRGL, recommending as the first point to guarantee "gender mainstreaming, taking into account diversity [...] dealing with issues of peace, security and investment between countries" [la réprésentation égalitaire homme-femme en tentant compte de la diversité […] qui traite de question de paix, de la sécurité et investissements entre pays] (Mémorandum auprès de la CIRGL, 2022, RSLF), but at the same time becoming a political actor that asserts "The DR Congo is and will remain indivisible" [La RD Congo est et restera indivisible] (ibid), showing that not only is promoting women's rights, but by doing so it's promoting DRC political interests. This becomes evident as "the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation", partner of RSLF reported that during the peace negotiation held in Nairobi on the security situation in Eastern DRC, despite RSLF women were not invited, they mobilized independently and they "managed to get accredited and are now actively participating in the negotiations to make women's voices heard at the conference" (Facebook, The Kvinna Till

Kvinna Foundation, 2022). This action shows the importance of establishing networks and creating spaces of engagement on a more "global scale" to overcome limitations (such as financial) and to surpass the immediate interests of the individuals involved. As a result, organizations were able to establish favorable circumstances to advance their (local) interests and identities. In this particular scenario, the result ended up being promoting the Congolese identity and interests as a collective entity, by including women in the (international) peace process. To achieve these conditions, organizations need to establish networks with influential entities that extend beyond their immediate sphere of dependence (Cox, 1998, p. 18). In other words, the movement that was born in Bukavu, in the east of the country, shows that it is necessary to expand nationally and internationally in order to promote their specific local interests, going beyond the space of dependence of the movement itself and consequently, making local politics appear as "metropolitan, regional, national or even international as different organizations try to secure those networks of associations through which respective projects can be realized" (ibid., p. 19), and therefore shifting the discourse on different scales and not relating it to the National Action Plan, that would result limiting, but more generally the CIRGL Regional Action Plan or the 1325 Resolution. Cox, indeed, points out that it may occur that localness of the interests and identities driving the politics forward can potentially be obscured (ibid.) and that "jumping scales" is not a "movement from one discrete arena to another": Rien Sans les Femmes, despite not being invited and despite the "financial constraints" managed to access an international scale to impose their "quantitative and qualitative participation in all the ongoing processes" (The Kvinna Till Kvinna Foundation, 2022). This highlights the meaning of local interests and the interconnected spaces of reliance as fundamental prerequisites for local politics, as demonstrated by implementing the DRC National Action Plan. However, it is essential to recognize that the "space of engagement" for this local politics is entirely contingent, as mentioned by Cox (1998, p. 20). By transcending the framework and boundaries set by the NAP, local spaces of dependence were able to assert their own agency and exhibit resistance also on an international and regional scale.

7   Discussion

Throughout the analysis, I tried to understand the role that the National Action Plan has in promoting women's participation in peacebuilding. This process was supported by looking at the perception of it, its limitations and how women's organizations try to overcome the limitations that NAP produces (WPR Q1). By making a triangulation of the data, primary and secondary, the main limitations that emerged were the socio-cultural burden and the lack of fundings that made the implementation of the 1325 NAP difficult and with a lot of weaknesses [faiblesses], especially on the local level (WPR Q4). Consequently, the effects of these limitations result in the research of alternative ways by local organizations to overcome this limitation (WPR Q5). By being active on different scales and therefore changing power structures, they reach their goals which are aligned with the NAP (WPR Q6).

While the effect of the first generation Action Plan of 2010 resulted into making women more visible and to show to the international community the will to include the WPS agenda in the country, the second generation clearly stated that aim was to "promote a secure environment" by guaranteeing a fair inclusion "women, men and young people in consolidating peace in the DRC", aligning with the international emerging consensus that the more inclusive the peacebuilding process is, the more efficient it results (Krause, Krause, Bränfors, 2018). However, due to the absence of funds supporting the implementation of the NAP, the socio-cultural burdens, and the difficulties in being effective at the local level, the NAP gained more a symbolic value for women working to promote women's role in peacebuilding than being concretely implemented. What it emerged however from the two questionnaires and the interviews and reports analyzed is that the NAP has a crucial importance for women's claim of their active role in society, and more specifically, in participating in peacebuilding initiative, to *resister* the socio-cultural burden that sees the woman as incapable to attend peace processes due to "natural obstacles". Women's organizations and movements rely on the NAP to depict how things "should be" and consequently they resist the "pressure" of seeing them as passive agents. Women's organization, by actively promoting the role of women, create spaces of dependence where they can facilitate the promotion and education of women in the context of peacebuilding and work on the overcome of social burdens that block women in being at the frontline in these processes: this resulted into the creation of specific workshops and activities (Organization 1) to empower women and the creation of spaces -the Incubateur de paix- that creates a framework for women to learn about peacebuilding and the their role in it (FMMDI). Moreover, the organizations to be able to overcome the budget limitations and the ineffectiveness of the NAP on the local level, start collaborating with external international actors, that results into "jumping the national scale".

Nevertheless, to be able to expand their action to become more influential on different levels and to reach their (local) objectives, local women organizations get together creating networks of associations, such as the movement Rien Sans les Femmes, in which there is also FMMDI, that form spaces of engagements. The creation of this network results in becoming strong interlocutors with the government, strengthening their political presence in the country as civil society. Moreover, by gaining political recognition and strength, such as Rien Sans les Femmes being able to access peace negotiation held in Nairobi on the security situation in Eastern DRC and advocating the CIRGL to not only make sure to take into account women inclusion and diversity, but more importantly to promote the DRC as "indivisible", showing how by implementing and promoting their "local" interests, they are actually promoting the Congolese interests.

To sum up, the analysis suggests is that "thanks to" the limitations that the NAP presents and the "should be" discourse that is used to discuss the implementation of the WPS agenda, local organizations not only form networks of associations to increase their influential power in the country, but also start creating different hierarchical scales and by "jumping" the national level, on the one hand they collaborate with international organizations to finance their activities, reaching the primary objective of overcoming the financial burden. Further, on the other hand, they are able to reach out to international organizations, such as the Regional CIRGL, to advocate for women inclusion in the peacebuilding processes with the aim to represent the Congolese population as a whole, becoming a fundamental political actor in the promotion of Congolese interests also externally the national borders. At the same time, gaining recognition externally puts them in the position where they can "advocate" and "lobby" for an advance of the National Action Plan to overcome its limitations. What emerges, therefore, is that the NAP is a fundamental tool for women's organizations to support their activism and, at the same time, its weaknesses can support these organizations in promoting their position and campaign to increase women in peacebuilding processes on different levels and covering different roles.

These findings align with Hameri and Jones (2017) observations regarding social forces promoting contestation to be able to obtain a re-allocation of power and resources to reach their own objectives. Correspondingly, thanks to the contestation moved to the NAP, local organizations utilize a scalar dimension to change the political structures and the way resources are obtained, by jumping scales. Similarly to Chilmeran (2022), it resulted that the launch of the NAP and the adoption of the 1325 resolution created "sites of political activities and contestation" (p. 763), that define identities of women's promoting peacebuilding and their involvement in these processes as political subjects.

This thesis could be considered only the starting point for wider research on the implementation of the 1325 National Action Plan in the DRC and the consequences. As already mentioned, some key consideration must be done, as this thesis is not able to fully answer the research question. In the first place, it does not aim to provide a "solution", but to provide a deeper understanding of the effects of the National Action Plan has on organizations promoting women in peacebuilding. However, it does not have the objective to provide a full overview and further research must be done, as it represents only the starting point for potential future further analysis. Many other perspectives and angles could and/or should be taken into considerations: there is opportunity to apply an intersectional approach within the analysis to understand the different intersections that are included and excluded in the National Action Plan and how this affects the outcome when promoting women in peacebuilding. Furthermore, there is room to focus on the role of the NAP with regards to the government and how it uses the same/different scales. Alternatively, we could have focus on the exclusion; what this thesis highlighted was that taking advantage of the limitation of the NAP, women's organization managed to play on different scales, however, building on Chilmeran (2022), it could be interpreted from an "exclusion" lens, looking at how the NAP excludes subjects due to its limitations.

8   Conclusion

The research question is as follows:

To what extent the UNSCR 1325 Resolution National Action Plan in DRC supports women's organizations to foster the participation of women in peacebuilding?

What it emerges is that the NAP has a crucial importance for women's participation in peacebuilding, not in its implementation, since the budget limitation, the socio-cultural burdens, and the difficulties in being implemented on the local level make this tool limited. Instead, due to the symbolic value it carries, it results extremely useful for women to actively advocate and promote projects aligned with the aim of the NAP.

This research aimed to contribute to the field of Women Peace and Security and the implementation of the National Action Plan, by consistently looking at the policy through the "What the problem is represented to be?" to unveil the effects of the DRC's NAP in the effort to promote women's participation in peacebuilding. By using the lens of the politics of scale, in particular considering Cox' explanation of the theory and the use of his concepts "space of dependence" and "space of engagement", it emerged how by exploiting the NAP's limitations and incapability to it respond to the main socio-cultural burdens, women's organizations promote themselves by creating their own spaces, on a local level, and networks of associations to become more influential as political actors and play their narrative of "how things should be" on different scales, not only overcoming the limitations, but also being able to access peacebuilding processes on a regional level, rendering them representatives of the interest of the country as a whole.

To conclude, even if the state of this research could be considered still quite "at the beginning", and further investigation has to be done to consolidate the outcomes, it managed to demonstrate how the NAP, regardless of its limitations, is a fundamental tool for women's organizations promoting women's participation in peacebuilding.

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10   ANNEX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE POUR LES ORGANISATIONS QUI TRAVAILLENT À PROMOUVOIR LA PARTICIPATION DES FEMMES À LA CONSTRUCTION DE LA PAIX EN RDC DANS LE CONTEXTE DE LA RÉSOLUTION 1325

Je m'appelle Chiara Pipinato et je suis étudiante en relations internationales. Je rédige actuellement mon projet de thèse de maîtrise dans le domaine de la Paix et de la Sécurité des Femmes (Résolution 1325 du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies) et j'utilise la République Démocratique du Congo (RDC) comme étude de cas.

Ma recherche vise à comprendre les effets de la mise en œuvre du Plan d'Action National sur la promotion du rôle des femmes dans la construction de la paix. Pour cette raison, je suis en train de collecter du matériel à analyser.

Vous trouverez ci-dessous deux annexes :

1.   Annexe 1 : Formulaire de consentement éclairé - Déclaration de consentement à la participation à la recherche

2.   Annexe 2 : Questionnaire

Je reste à votre disposition pour toute clarification.

Annexe 1 : Formulaire de consentement éclairé - Déclaration de consentement à la participation à une recherche

J'accepte par la présente de participer à un projet de recherche en répondant aux questions posées. Le questionnaire sera administré par Chiara Pipinato, de l'Université d'Aalborg (AUA) de Copenhague, au Danemark. Le projet est supervisé par le professeur associé Dr. Tamirace Fakhoury de la même université. Je comprends que le projet est conçu pour recueillir des informations sur la résolution 1325 du Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies et le plan d'action national de la RDC et qu'il fait partie du diplôme universitaire.

1.   Ma participation au projet implique de répondre à des questions.

2.   Ma participation à ce projet est volontaire. Je comprends que je ne serai pas payé ou rémunéré de quelque manière que ce soit pour ma participation.

3.   Je peux me retirer et interrompre ma participation à tout moment sans pénalité. Si je refuse de participer dès le début ou si je me retire pendant l'entretien, le chercheur ne partagera avec personne les informations que j'ai fournies jusqu'à ce moment-là.

4.   Je comprends que si les questions me mettent mal à l'aise, j'ai le droit de refuser de répondre à une question ou de me retirer.

5.   Confidentialité.

A.   Je comprends que le chercheur me demandera mon accord pour être identifié(e) par mon nom dans cette recherche et dans les travaux écrits qui en résulteront, y compris les publications éventuelles.

B.   Si je refuse de donner mon consentement, ma confidentialité sera respectée. Cela implique que les utilisations ultérieures des données protégeront mon anonymat en tant qu'individu et celui des institutions auxquelles je suis associé(e). Je comprends toutefois que le superviseur de l'étudiant peut avoir accès aux notes ou aux questionnaires afin d'aider l'étudiant dans l'analyse. En dehors de cela, aucune autre personne n'aura accès au matériel.

Confidentialité. Le participant est prié de cocher l'une des cases suivantes :

☐J'accepte d'être identifié nominativement dans les résultats de cette recherche.

☐J'accepte d'être interviewé(e) à condition de ne pas être identifié(e) par mon nom dans les résultats de cette recherche.

6.   Je comprends que si, après l'entretien, j'ai des questions concernant la recherche ou l'utilisation qui sera faite de mes déclarations, je peux contacter l'étudiant et/ou le superviseur. Leurs coordonnées figurent au bas de ce formulaire.

1. J'ai lu et compris les explications qui m'ont été fournies. J'ai obtenu des réponses satisfaisantes à toutes mes questions et j'accepte volontairement de participer à cette étude.

_____   _____

Signature du participant   Date

_____   _____

Nom du participant   Signature de l'étudiant

Pour de plus amples informations après sa participation, le participant peut contacter l'étudiant et/ou son superviseur. Leurs coordonnées sont indiquées ci-dessous.

Étudiante: Superviseur :

Chiara Pipinato   Dr. Tamirace Fakhoury

e-mail : cpipin21@student.aau.dk   talfa@dps.aau.dk

Annexe 2 : Questionnaire

- Pouvez-vous nous parler brièvement de votre organisation et de votre rôle au sein de celle-ci?
- Depuis combien de temps travaillez-vous dans ce domaine?
- Pourquoi avez-vous choisi de travailler dans ce domaine?

Thème 1 - RCSNU 1325 et PAN-RDC

- De quelle manière avez-vous travaillé avec la résolution 1325 et la consolidation de la paix?
- Dans l'ensemble, comment percevez-vous la mise en œuvre de la Résolution 1325 dans le pays?
- Quels sont les principaux programmes que vous avez promus en relation avec la résolution 1325, les femmes, la paix et la sécurité, et l'implication des femmes dans la consolidation de la paix (le cas échéant, veuillez joindre la documentation, si vous plait)?
- Quel rôle joue la résolution dans vos projets?
- Comment le PAN a-t-il été mis en œuvre sur le terrain?
- Avez-vous constaté un changement au sein de votre organisation lorsque la résolution a été adoptée pour la première fois en 2010? Veuillez décrire ce changement.
- Avez-vous constaté un changement lors de l'adoption du deuxième plan d'action national en 2019? Veuillez les décrire.
- Comment percevez-vous le processus d'adaptation de votre travail à la résolution?
- Comment percevez-vous le niveau d'applicabilité de la résolution à votre travail?
- Comment percevez-vous les réponses de la résolution aux différents niveaux (international, national, local, etc.) et comment ces niveaux interagissent-ils?
- Quels sont les principaux partenaires (nationaux et internationaux) avec lesquels vous travaillez pour mettre en œuvre la résolution 1325?
    - Comment travaillez-vous avec vos partenaires?
    - Quelles sont les principales limites et forces de la résolution dans la construction de la paix et l'inclusion des femmes dans les processus de construction de la paix?

Thème 2 - Les femmes dans la construction de la paix

- Quels effets le lancement du PAN de la RDC a-t-il eu sur la construction de la paix?
- Quels sont les projets de l'organisation qui visent à promouvoir l'inclusion des femmes dans la construction de la paix?
- Quelle est votre expérience générale en matière de promotion des femmes dans la construction de la paix? De quelle manière l'organisation a-t-elle travaillé pour soutenir leur implication?
- Quels ont été les principaux défis à relever pour promouvoir l'intégration des femmes dans la consolidation de la paix?
- Avez-vous remarqué un changement dans les initiatives de consolidation de la paix depuis l'adoption de la résolution 1325?
- Comment évaluez-vous l'efficacité de la résolution 1325 dans la promotion du rôle des femmes dans les contextes de consolidation de la paix?
- Dans quelle mesure la résolution et sa mise en œuvre par le biais du PAN sont-elles liées à vos luttes et projets locaux?

- Pensez-vous que la résolution a des effets différents lorsqu'elle est mise en œuvre à un niveau différent (international, national, local)?

- Quels sont les principaux thèmes abordés par vos organisations lorsqu'elles discutent des "femmes et de la construction de la paix"?

- Collaborez-vous avec d'autres acteurs de la construction de la paix ?

- Si oui, avec qui?

- Comment vous coordonnez-vous?

- Pouvez-vous, s'il vous plaît, décrire les principaux défis à surmonter lorsque vous travaillez avec d'autres acteurs?

Souhaitez-vous ajouter quelque chose?

Merci beaucoup d'avoir répondu à ces questions et pour votre soutien.