



For women's rights, peace and security



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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CEO • LETTER

STANDING FOR PEACE IN A WAR-RIVEN WORLD

ICAN's 2025 Annual Report goes to print under the heavy clouds of another illegal war being waged in the Middle East. From Iran to Gaza and Lebanon, and amid continuing wars in Sudan and Ukraine, we watch as civilian deaths rise daily and the decimation of the fundamental infrastructure of life—water desalination and electricity plants, homes, businesses, and cultural sites.

At a moment when global cooperation is most needed, international human rights, humanitarian norms, and multilateralism are eroding. At the same time, a deadly arms race is accelerating while investments in peace, environmental protection, human rights, and social cohesion continue to decline. These failures do not stop at borders: they undermine the safety, rights, and futures of people everywhere.

2025 also marked the 25th anniversary of the UN Security Council's watershed resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). Yet at the start of this year, the WPS agenda itself was under threat, overshadowed by geopolitical tensions and targeted by political backlash.

At ICAN, we have not let fear or pessimism overwhelm us. Amid the tumult, we remember the extraordinary challenges we have all endured, and the remarkable resilience, courage, and hope that guide our work.

- Through determined mobilization and strategic advocacy, ICAN, our partners in the Women's Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL) network, and our global community of practice have succeeded in ensuring that WPS remains a priority for governments across Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
- We strengthened and sustained frontline peacebuilding across more than 40 conflict-affected contexts through targeted strategic support to WASL.
- While global funding for peace collapsed and institutions pivoted toward securitized responses, ICAN's Innovative Peace Fund (IPF) disbursed \$2,257,448 USD to women peacebuilders delivering prevention, mediation, and civilian protection in real time.
- We challenged the normalization of violence, the false inevitability of militarized solutions, and the narrowing of political imagination that so often accompanies crises, instead centering a humanized view of security in our advocacy, reports, and support to women peacebuilders.



“Without protection and with scant resources, we continue to work to bring peace. We can go places, say things, engage, and build trust in ways that are not possible for other actors.”

– ICAN Open Statement Marking 25 Years of the WPS Agenda

- In an era of institutional silence, we spoke truth to power on the international stage—challenging double standards in international law and the exclusion of women from peace diplomacy.
- We expanded the conversation, reaching beyond policy elites and engaging the public. Our ecosystem of allies across sectors now includes coalitions with the arts, security actors, and religious leaders.
- We redefined whose expertise counts in global security, and decolonized peace knowledge, by leading an initiative to develop an edited volume of peace strategy authored by women peacebuilders.

2025 was a year of reflection and reassertion, of standing for peace in a war-riven world.

To our partners, allies, and supporters: thank you for standing with us, for believing in this mission, and for holding fast to the truth that peace is not only possible, but essential.

Together, we kept peace alive as a practice, not just a principle.



Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE
Founder and CEO

France Bognon, Esq.
Co-CEO, Managing Director



OUR • MISSION

ICAN promotes inclusive and sustainable peace globally.

Recognizing the gendered impact of conflict and the critical role of women peacebuilders, we:



Shape and guide peace and security policies through thought leadership, strategic advice, and gender-responsive analysis;



Foster a global movement of locally rooted women peacebuilders to have voice and influence in matters of peace, conflict, rights, and human security;



Bring the word and spirit of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda to life.

GUIDING • PRINCIPLES

To foster positive, peaceful, socio-political change, our guiding principles at ICAN are as follows:



WHAT • WE • DO

Inclusive and Gender Responsive Peacemaking

ICAN offers strategic advice, accompaniment, and practical guidance on how to ensure inclusive and gender responsive peace processes.

Protection of Peacebuilders

ICAN supports our partners to address and mitigate threats and risks through provision of comprehensive protection guidance, digital security assessments, mental health and psychosocial support, and in-country grantmaking.

The Triple Nexus of Peace, Humanitarian, and Development Work

Recognizing that the drivers of conflict and crisis are deeply interconnected, ICAN supports women peacebuilders to respond holistically to the evolving needs of their communities. We also advocate for international policies and funding models that reflect this reality and enable flexible, integrated, and locally led approaches across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

Gender and Extremisms

ICAN seeks to transform the policy and practice of Preventing/Countering Violent Extremisms (P/CVE) and addressing extremism by promoting peace, resilience, equality, and pluralism, tailored to, and rooted in, local contexts.



ICAN CEO and Founder Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE speaks at Her Power at UNGA 80: "Women in Conflict Zones: From Marginalization to Mobilization"



WASL Peer-to-Peer Discussion on National Dialogues, Nairobi

HOW • WE • WORK



Network and Movement Building

ICAN puts network and movement building at the heart of our work, spearheading the **Women's Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL)** and the **She Builds Peace (SBP)** campaign.



Grantmaking

Developed in 2015, ICAN's **Innovative Peace Fund (IPF)** is the first and only independent, multi-donor, global grantmaking mechanism wholly dedicated to providing financial support and technical assistance to women-led peacebuilding organizations in countries affected by violent conflict, extremism, and militarism.



Advocacy

ICAN aims to define, broaden, and improve policy discourse and the practice of peacebuilding, the resolution of wars, and the prevention of violent extremism.



Research & Publications

ICAN conducts cutting-edge research, evidence mapping, and analysis of inclusive peacemaking, gender and extremisms, protection of peacebuilders, and other interrelated subjects.



Building Skills & Expertise

ICAN supports our partners' sustainability and capacity by providing them with mentoring, ongoing technical and strategic guidance, accompaniment (advisory support), trainings, and peer-to-peer learning tailored to their distinct needs.

25 YEARS • OF • WOMEN PEACE • AND • SECURITY



“In a world rushing to rearm and militarize, the Women, Peace, and Security agenda is the only global peace and security strategy that is preventive, people-centered and sustainable.”

– Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE, Founder and CEO, ICAN

2025 marked the 25th anniversary of the UN Security Council’s (UNSC) watershed resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). The adoption of this resolution, championed by grassroots women peacebuilders and civil society activists, was the first time in history that women’s roles as peacemakers and mediators were recognized and codified. The resolution mandated that governments and the UN system ensure women’s participation in peace processes and support women’s peacebuilding initiatives.

At the start of the year, the WPS agenda was under threat, despite overwhelming evidence that women’s participation is essential to sustaining peace. Political support for the agenda waned, with global backlash against women’s rights and increasing militarization and violence.

To prevent the erasure of the WPS agenda from the global arena, ICAN, our WASL partners, and our community of practice mobilized around the 25th anniversary to hold key public events with governments across Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Our advocacy successfully reclaimed the agenda, positioning it as a central doctrine for peace and security.

Instead of issuing a new statement, we combined excerpts from 25 years of women peacebuilders speaking to the UN Security Council. It was published in seven language and read and disseminated in 13 countries.

UPHOLDING • AN • AGENDA UNDER • ATTACK



For women's rights, peace and security



**"But unmet commitments
are just words. What are you
waiting for?"**

– ICAN Open Statement Marking 25 Years
of the WPS Agenda

Key Achievements:

- Austria and Portugal, both elected to non-permanent seats at the UNSC in 2027, committed to upholding WPS as a priority.
- The ICAN team shared actionable recommendations in over 30 policy discussions around the world.
- WASL members secured key commitments from local, regional, and national-level governments through the SBP campaign.

Why this matters: ICAN mobilized to prevent a 25-year global norm from collapsing.

Open Statement to the United Nations Security Council on Behalf

Over 25 years, we shared our realities. We said:

In the absence of government, we are at the forefront of providing aid and services in places unreachable by international organizations.

In areas hardest hit by violent extremism, where no one would dare stand up to the Taliban, out of necessity, I had a dialogue with their leaders.

Without protection and with scant resources, we continue to work to bring peace. We sensitize young people to dissociate themselves from the armed groups.

We speak for unarmed civilians, bring tolerance, forgiveness, and practical solutions that are the basic tenets of reconciliation.

We can go places, say things, engage and build trust in ways that are not possible for other actors.

We are not essentializing women.

But speaking about the women, who have the vision, courage and skill to engage in such deeply dangerous work.

Those who, out of the horrific ordeals we have suffered and witnessed, have transformed into peacebuilders.

Yet, we remain vastly underrepresented in efforts to prevent conflict and violent extremism.

Unmet commitments are just words.

What are you waiting for?

We warned you:

Lasting peace can be achieved only when women sit at the negotiation table together with men.

The Taliban view women who speak out, as the enemy, because they expose the depth and breadth of the Taliban's abuse of the Afghan people.

If we leave it only to men, we get Israeli generals and Palestinians who will not be defeated, there is no room to negotiate.

Our demands for inclusion are pragmatic.

Why should wielding weapons and



Of Women Peacebuilders Marking 25 Years of the WPS Agenda

threatening violence be the only ticket to peace talks?

If you are serious about achieving peace, then as governments and the UN, respect and draw on peace actors.

We do not live in the realm of fantasy. Our wars are complex and multifaceted. Our peace processes must be rooted in that reality.

But unmet commitments are just words.

What are you waiting for?

We explained to you:

Women's exclusion is not about culture; it is about power.

All issues are women's issues.

Peace is not simply ending war, but addressing collectively the root causes of conflict and demilitarizing our societies.

When we speak of peace in everyday life, for women and men, it means accepting differences, being treated well by the police, employment, health, women walking alone free from danger of being raped, participating in the country's decision-making without feeling threatened, children playing and studying without fear of being recruited, without fear of losing a loved one.

But unmet commitments are just words.

What are you waiting for?

We tell you again:

You need us because, even when we are women whose very existence contradicts each other, we will talk—we will not shoot.

We are willing to sit together on the same side of the table and look at our complex history, not getting up until—in respect and reciprocity—we get up together and fulfill our joint destiny.

Are you willing to work with us?

Unmet commitments are just words.

What are you waiting for? What are you waiting for?

The text was collated from speeches from the following women: Maha Abu-Dayeh Shammās, Grace Akallo, Hamsatu Allamin, Visaka Dharmadasa, Bineta Diop, Wazhma Frogh, Terry Greenblatt, Abir Haj Ibrahim, Rita Lopidia, Julianne Lusenge, Amina Megheirbi, Charo Mina-Rojas, Yanar Mohammed, Zahra Nader, Eugenia Piza-Lopez, Mossarat Qadeem, and Rosa Emilia Salamanca.



"GHOSTS OF 1325: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE"

During WPS week in October at the UN in New York, ICAN partnered with the International Peace Institute (IPI) to host an event blending history, activism, and art, asking: What have we done with the promise of 1325, and what future are we building now?

Referencing Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, the audience was visited by ghosts from the history of the WPS agenda. In acting out their roles, the speakers brought us from the civil society origins of the WPS agenda, into the harsh realities facing women peacebuilders in present day, and then into the future. For each time period, one ghost acted as a cynical skeptic who argued the inadequacies of the agenda and another ghost rebuked these concerns by showing the agenda's potential if fully realized.

The creative "Ghosts of 1325" framing cut through old rhetoric, generating new energy and inspiration.



Helena Grönberg, Program Director, ICAN
Photos: International Peace Institute

Key recommendations from the event:

- **Humanize security rather than securitize humanity** – Place human wellbeing at the center of global security policy.
- **Re-imagine diplomacy** – Foster new possibilities rather than repeating old patterns.
- **Support a trauma-informed, uninational, people-owned peace plan for Israel and Palestine.**
 - Ensure civil society—including doctors, teachers, journalists, and women peacebuilders—sit as equals with political and military leadership to determine the future of their respective countries.
 - Create a gender-inclusive peace board.
 - Deploy an international peacekeeping force.
 - Ensure gender-responsive humanitarian assistance.

25 YEARS OF WPS AT THE UN



“Armed actors aren’t going to let women peace actors sit at the same table regardless of what a resolution says or what words are on a piece of paper. I anticipate that in the next 25 years there will still be peace negotiations that don’t include a woman.”

– France Bognon, Co-CEO and Managing Director, ICAN, portraying a Cynical Ghost of the Past



France Bognon, Co-CEO and Managing Director, ICAN, and Mossarat Qadeem, Co-Founder, PAIMAN Alumni Trust



“We the women have been doing this historically—mediating, resolving conflicts, building trust in our communities. We are not the creation of foreign agendas. We are the agenda.”

– Mossarat Qadeem, Co-Founder, PAIMAN Alumni Trust, portraying an Optimistic Ghost of the Past



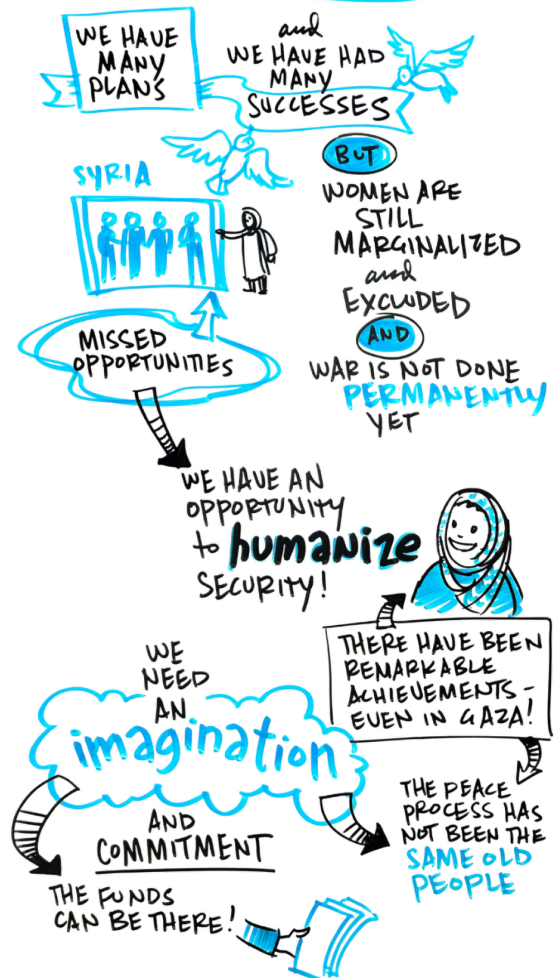
the GHOSTS

the PAST

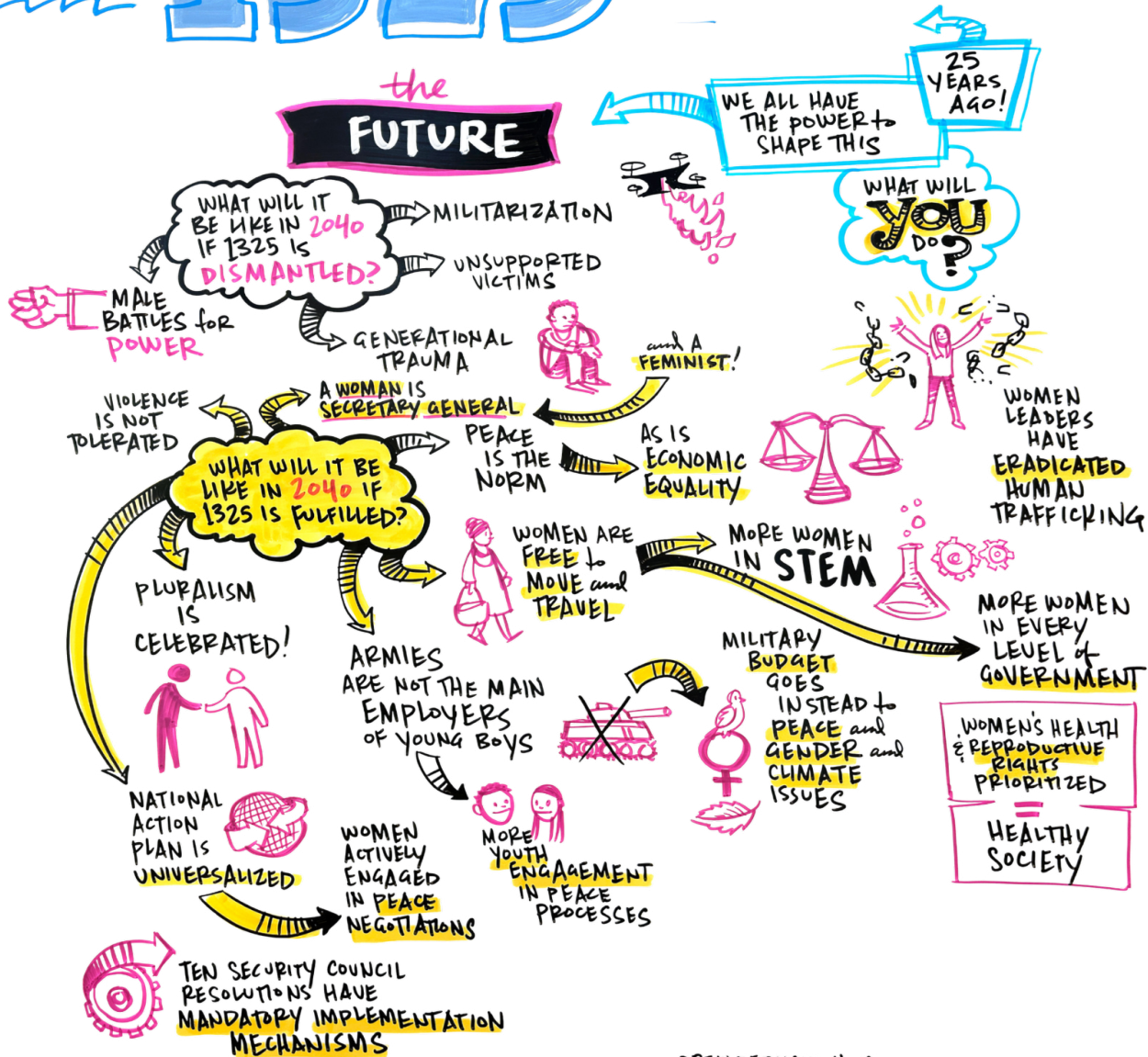


ICAN International Civil Society Action Network
For women's rights, peace and security

the PRESENT



of 1325



DREW DERNAUGH for CROWLEY & CO.



“I imagine a world where women move freely, where girls and boys learn in safety. I’m 61, and I’ve never known that kind of peace—but it’s possible.”

– Cerue Konah Garlo, Liberian Feminist and Peace Activist, portraying an Optimistic Ghost of the Future



Cerue Konah Garlo

1325@25

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Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE



“If we diverted even 1% of global military spending—about \$25 billion—we could change the world.”

– Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE,
Founder and CEO, ICAN



“The war came to my doorstep, the day my son was missing in action from the battlefield. I contacted other women, as mothers, who wanted to stop the war. With the women across the divide, we were able to build much-needed trust. But the official process that started—based on our work—excluded us.”

– Visaka Dharmadasa, as quoted in the ICAN Open Statement Marking 25 Years of the WPS Agenda



Visaka Dharmadasa



Rajaa Altalli

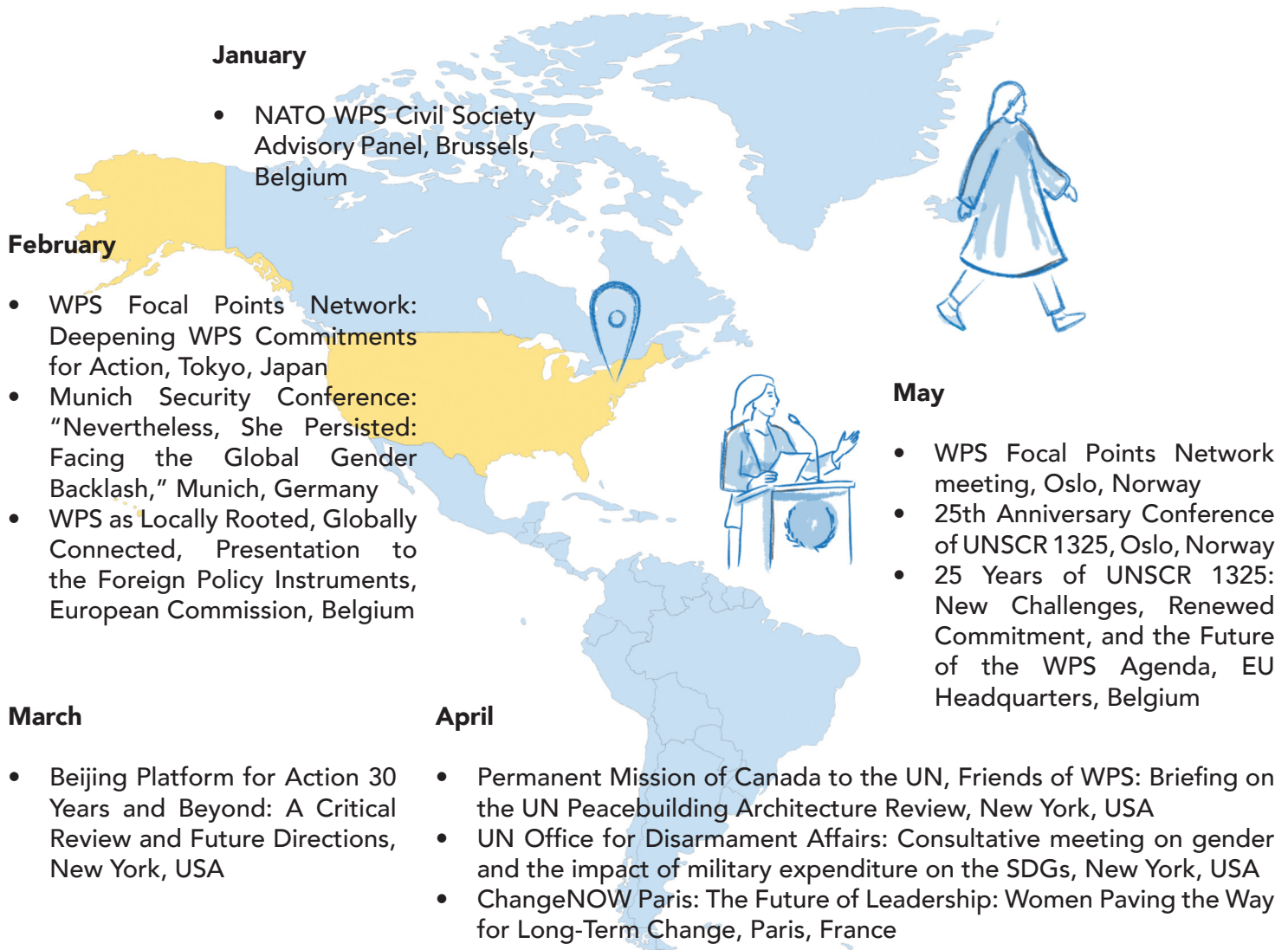


“Women are being killed every day in Syria. Even though we have led demonstrations and called for peace, we are still marginalized in negotiations and decision-making.”

– Rajaa Altalli, Co-Founder, CCSD, portraying a Ghost of the Present

ICAN'S GLOBAL TOUR DE FORCE FOR UNSCR 1325 AT 25

Our CEOs and directors were invited to keynote numerous conferences and contribute to policy discussions, from NATO and the EU to Kenya and South Korea.



June

- The International WPS Forum 2025, Pristina, Kosovo
- The New Peace Agenda, Our Commitment to the World, Madrid, Spain
- Disarm to live: a bet on the future, Barcelona, Spain
- From Gender Justice to Sustainable Peace: A 25-Year Vision, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Hague Humanity Hub: Investing in Peace – Why It Matters and What It Takes, The Hague, The Netherlands

October

- Peace Connect: Defining the Future of the WPS Agenda, Nairobi, Kenya
- The Ghosts of 1325: Past, Present, Future, New York, USA

November

- Ernest Lluch Foundation: How to build a culture of peace, Barcelona, Spain
- Unsilence Forum, Barcelona, Spain
- APPG-WPS & APPG-Conflict Prevention: Marking 25 years of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, London, UK
- International Conference on Action with Women & Peace, Seoul, South Korea
- FCDO: From Commitment to Action: 25 Years of WPS, London, UK

December

- Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue: 25 Years of WPS: Reflecting on Achievements, Responding to Increased Challenges, Imagining Future Objectives, Vienna, Austria
- Alliance Française de la Haye: Women & Peace Conference, The Hague, The Netherlands
- UN80 Civil Society Townhall

SHE BUILDS PEACE

ICAN supported **15** WASL members in **14** countries to organize events as part of the She Builds Peace campaign to commemorate the 25th anniversary of WPS—spanning training sessions, public convenings, radio talk shows, and community barazas. WASL members claimed recognition and ownership of the agenda, asserted why their work matters, and called for concrete commitments.

Through these efforts, our partners secured the following commitments from governments and community leaders:

- **The Nigerian Military:** adopting more gender responsive security operations and community engagement; improving collaboration with WASL member the Allamin Foundation and other women mediators and peace platforms; and strengthening civilian protection mechanisms during theater operations.
- **The Kenyan Women Police Association:** raising awareness on women's rights and responsibilities; increasing funds for a peacebuilding program; and collaborating with WASL member Advocacy for Women in Peace and Security Africa (AWAPSA) to develop guidelines and curriculums for Police Cafés to improve relationships between communities and the police.
- **The Liberian Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection:** developing a roadmap to increase women's representation in security leadership; establishing predictable financing for women-led peacebuilding, and institutionalizing women peacebuilders as equal partners in negotiation, reform, and accountability processes.
- **Uganda People's Defence Force, Police, and Prisons:** strengthening gender-responsive policies within the security sector; supporting recruitment, retention, and career advancement of women within the security sector; and ensuring strong collaboration between women-led civil society organizations and security agencies.



PAIMAN Alumni Trust marks 25 years of WPS

- **Egyptian officials:** inviting women peacebuilders to provide recommendations to the WPS National Action Plan on topics of social cohesion, community safety, and implementation.

- **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly:** developing an action plan on WPS, in consultation with WASL member PAIMAN Alumni Trust.

WPS AT 25 AROUND THE WORLD



Women Education and Development Organization Liberia (WEDOL) marks 25 years of WPS

“Ultimately, ICAN’s contribution lay in helping PAIMAN shape the anniversary not as a symbolic commemoration, but as a moment of awakening—a reminder that women are not participants in peace—they are the pulse that keeps it alive.”

– PAIMAN Alumni Trust, Pakistan



Allamin Foundation marks 25 years of WPS

STRENGTHENING THE • MOVEMENT



“

“By connecting organizations across contexts, WASL enables the development of shared narratives, mutual support, and collective strategies. ICAN’s added value lies in creating and sustaining this network, providing both structure and opportunities for engagement.”

– Independent evaluation, 2026

In 2025, ICAN marked the 10th anniversary of the WASL network. This global alliance now comprises 82 locally rooted, women-led peacebuilding organizations in 41 countries. Many are national networks with reach and access from the corridors of power to the most remote villages in their country.

Over the years, our partners have prevented terror attacks, negotiated humanitarian access, deradicalized women and men from violent extremism, supported displaced communities, and led reconciliation and reintegration efforts. They are the first responders and essential workers, shouldering the responsibility to protect when the powerful wage wars and fuel violence.

ICAN’s support to WASL members ranges from individual solidarity to collective convenings that enable information and lessons sharing. We provide financial and technical assistance to strengthen member organizations, and strategic guidance, skills building and mentoring as WASL members navigate peace processes.

Our support has catalyzed national networks and enabled individual members to influence security sector reform, national policies, and community security, among other peace and security related policy and practice. Part of that work involves creating participatory governance and structure for peer collaboration to foster solidarity, learning, and ownership.

THE • GLOBAL • ECOSYSTEM OF • WOMEN'S • PEACE LEADERSHIP



Key Achievements:

- WASL formed its first Steering Committee—a critical milestone in the Alliance’s evolution. The committee adopted a governance charter, a WASL conflict transformation policy, and WASL membership and expansion criteria - setting the direction for the alliance’s future.
- A survey of the value and contributions of the alliance to WASL members found that WASL membership expands the reach and impact of their work, builds partnerships among civil society movements and generates new ideas and strategies for gender-responsive peacebuilding.

Why this matters: Strengthening the global movement supports not only individual WASL members, but the collective capacity of women peacebuilders globally, and enhances their ability to influence policy and practice.

WASL'S INAUGURAL STEERING COMMITTEE



Abir Haj Ibrahim – Syrian peacebuilder. Co-founder of the Mobaderoon Peacebuilding Network.



Ahlem Nasraoui – Tunisian advocate for inclusion, diversity, and economic empowerment. Founder of Young Leaders Entrepreneurs (YLE) and the “She Can” conference.



Ruby Kholifah – Indonesian peace advocate. Director of Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) Indonesia.



Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE – Iranian-British peace strategist. Founder and Co-CEO of ICAN.



Robinah Rubimbwa – Ugandan educator, feminist, and peace practitioner. Founder of the Coalition for Action on 1325 (COACT).



Rosa Emilia Salamanca – Colombian peace activist. Director of Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Económica (CIASE).



Visaka Dharmadasa – Sri Lankan peace advocate. Founder of the Association of War Affected Women (AWAW).



Wazhma Frogh – Afghan peace practitioner. Founder of Wellness, Prosperity & Socio-Empowerment Organization (WPSO).

TARGETED STRATEGIC SUPPORT

Syria

Syria's political transition following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024 demanded an inclusive and democratic process, informed by the experiences of those most affected. Despite the vital role women played in sustaining communities and building peace during the 14 years of the Syrian civil war, their voices and perspectives continued to be marginalized in the transition.



"Syria stands at a fragile and pivotal crossroads which holds profound significance for the country and region. We have seen this new leadership emerging and shaping the foundations of what lies ahead for the country, but we know it's essential to center the voices of Syrians, both within the country and the diaspora."

– Helena Grönberg, Program Director, ICAN

ICAN supported Syrian partners through organizing donor briefings, identifying advocacy and engagement priorities, and coordinating efforts with local and international, governmental and non-governmental actors.

Voices for Change: Syrian Perspectives for an Inclusive Transition Towards Democracy

ICAN joined WASL member Center for Civil Society and Democracy (CCSD), Mediators Beyond Borders, Vitol Foundation, Rotary E-Club for World Peace, WO=MEN, and Alliance for Peacebuilding for the series "Voices for Change: Syrian Perspective for an Inclusive Transition Towards Democracy".



"We need each other to build the future, but for that we need to have a shared vision, even if there are differences—peace and democracy needs us. You need both people inside and outside the country working together."

– Rajaa Altalli, Co-Founder, CCSD

To create spaces for dialogue, the group hosted nine online discussions with women and youth leaders to explore issues ranging from resilience, civic engagement, and the rule of law to challenges of ensuring women’s inclusion in decision-making, negotiating ceasefires, and shaping political structures. Women peacebuilders from Afghanistan, Colombia, and Sri Lanka contributed lessons, strategies, and best practices from their own experiences navigating political transition. ICAN’s Program Director Helena Grönberg regularly co-moderated the exchanges.

Voices for Change Impact:

- Each discussion drew more than 100 participants, reaching 2,315 registrants total.
- The event series fostered new partnerships and collaborations, both local and global.

Voices for Change:
Syrian Youth Perspectives on Peace and Democracy



Yara Ferhat Haj Ersan
Youth Activist



Jawaher Yassin
Youth Activist

Wednesday April 23rd 2025
5-6:30 PM Syria / 4-5:30 PM CET / 10-11:30 PM EST
[Register Here for this Virtual Event](#)
Translation is available in English and Arabic



Rajaa Altalli
CCSD

Facilitated by



Helena Grönberg
ICAN



Government Briefings

ICAN convened a briefing for the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the FCDO Syria Office with Syrian WASL members to discuss trends, priorities, and needs related to transitional justice, national dialogue, and protection of women in government, social, and civic spaces. Syrian WASL members separately briefed the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) on immediate needs and priorities.

Impact:

- These briefings deepened bilateral relationships between our partners and key policymakers, leading to increased funding and visibility of their work.

Peer Exchange: Learning from Colombia and Sri Lanka

ICAN facilitated a peer exchange between WASL member Mobaderoon Network in Syria and WASL members Rosa Emilia Salamanca (CIASE, Colombia) and Visaka Dharmadasa (AWAW, Sri Lanka). The exchange drew practical lessons from Colombia and Sri Lanka, where WASL members have worked toward social reconciliation with and without a formal peace agreement in place, concluding that trust is fragile, and reconciliation is most effectively built through dialogue.

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Kenya

In Kenya's Kilifi and Kwale counties, marginalization, land injustices, and socio-economic exclusion create pathways to radicalization and recruitment. Women and girls are disproportionately targeted by violence and are overlooked actors in prevention and resilience-building. At a county level, responses to violent extremism have been fragmented, positioned as isolated security or gender issues.

In 2025, ICAN visited WASL member Coast Education Centre (COEC), led by Halima Mohammed, in Mombasa. ICAN's presence enabled the COEC team to connect with county-level government actors.

“Strategic accompaniment is a key mechanism linking grassroots action to influence. By strengthening partners' visibility, legitimacy, and access to policy spaces, ICAN enables women peacebuilders to engage in processes that would otherwise remain inaccessible.”

– Independent evaluation, 2026



ICAN's France Bognon and Kendahl Tyburski with the Kilifi County Minister of Gender

Kenya Strategic Accompaniment Impact:

- ICAN's strategic accompaniment to COEC enabled them to shift county stakeholders' understanding, leading these to recognize that preventing violent extremism must be integrated across sectors (including policing, education, commerce, and youth engagement) because it affects the entire community.
- With ICAN's technical support, Mohammed sustained and strengthened a strategic relationship with the Governor of Kilifi County. This contributed to more coordinated county-level responses to violent extremism and stronger community resilience.
- Women and girls now receive targeted support, not only as beneficiaries, but as key actors in prevention efforts. ICAN's strategic accompaniment ensured that these gains were locally owned, sustainable, and embedded within government systems rather than remaining stand-alone interventions.



ICAN's France Bognon and Kendahl Tyburski, and Halima Mohamed (COEC) and team, with the Kilifi County Minister of Gender

Ukraine

In December, ICAN Co-CEO and Managing Director France Bognon facilitated a full-day workshop between Russian and Ukrainian women who convened for the first time as part of the Women Building Bridges Initiative. The initiative aims to foster dialogue and humanitarian cooperation and build new forms of solidarity and people-centered security. Bognon led a coaching workshop on the WPS agenda's potential to advance peace in Ukraine and helped the two groups develop common talking points that fed into their joint declaration on family separation and forced displacement.

Afghanistan Case Study: The War Against Ourselves

The Taliban control of Afghanistan has caused an unprecedented mental health crisis, affecting 70% of the population, with differential impact on Afghan women and men. Afghan women and girls represent 75% of the suicide deaths as well as the affected survivors. Women-led peacebuilding organizations are stepping in to provide mental health and psychosocial support services, creating innovative programs that are saving lives.

ICAN authored a case study, “The War Against Ourselves,” to call attention to this dire crisis and bring recognition to how Afghan women peacebuilders integrate mental health and psychosocial approaches in their work.



Women work in small groups during a psychosocial support session organized by ICAN partner Wellness, Prosperity, and Socio-Empowerment Organization (WPSO)

International
Civil Society
Network

For women's rights, peace and security

CASE STUDY

THE WAR AGAINST
OURSELVES: AFGHAN WOMEN
PEACEBUILDERS' RESPONSE TO
THE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN
AFGHANISTAN

COUNTRY: Afghanistan

AUTHOR: Stacey Schamber,
UCSW

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:
ICAN gratefully acknowledges
our partner organizations—
Afghanistan Capacity
Development and Educational
Organization (ACDEO), Afghans
for Progressive Thinking (APT),
Wellness, Prosperity, Socio-
Empowerment Organization
(WPSO), and Women for Peace
and Participation (WPPA)—for
sharing their important work and
collaborating to develop this case
study.
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do not necessarily reflect the UK
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www.icanetwork.org

SUMMARY

Afghanistan is facing a complex mental health crisis inextricably linked with and compounding the dire state of physical, political, and economic insecurity in the country. Afghan women-led peacebuilding organizations are uniquely positioned to address community members' health and wellness in gender-responsive, culturally-sensitive, and trauma-informed ways. These organizations provide basic services, build skills, and shape cultural and gender norms.

This case study describes the drivers of the mental health crisis in Afghanistan, its gendered and cultural dimensions, and the strategies used by Afghan women-led peacebuilding organizations to provide solutions. The authors conducted interviews with representatives of Afghan women-led peacebuilding organizations and thematic experts, which were complemented by a desk review of project documentation and reports.¹

This case study is part of a series documenting the work of women peacebuilders in Afghanistan to ensure their creativity, tenacity, and impact are not lost to history, and inform present practice.

Impact:

- ICAN elevated the strategies of Afghan women-led peacebuilding organizations who have combatted isolation, dissolved stigma, helped overcome barriers to accessing mental healthcare, promoted self-reliance, and challenged cultural and gendered norms.

“

“I always thought there was a straight correlation between talk therapy, understanding each other, and not picking up a gun.”

– Wida Yalaqi, Founder and Director, Afghanistan Capacity Development and Educational Organization (ACDEO)

FUNDING • LOCALLY • WHEN OTHERS • WITHDREW



In 2025, we celebrated 10 years of ICAN's Innovative Peace Fund (IPF)—the first and only independent multi-donor fund dedicated to women-led peacebuilding organizations.

2025 witnessed an unprecedented reduction in funding for the international development and peace sector. With the demise of USAID, and governments across the globe shifting funds to defense budgets, local peacebuilding organizations were among the first to face existential threats.

Funders around the world are retracting their support at a time when peacebuilders are needed the most. At ICAN we enabled our partners to survive the moment, and continue their vital work in their communities, such as fostering social cohesion in Syria and providing rehabilitation support to youth returnees in Nigeria.

We raised and disbursed **\$2,257,448 USD**, supporting **38** WASL partners in **18** countries. In addition, we funded **27** partners to continue their She Builds Peace campaigns.

Through the IPF, we provide rapid, flexible funding to women peacebuilders who have the trust of their communities and authorities, access to the most vulnerable, and deep local knowledge. They are uniquely positioned to respond effectively to emerging crises while advancing more effective, inclusive, and sustainable peace and security processes.

Instead of focusing on our appetite for risk, ICAN asks, "What is our appetite for trust?". The IPF invests in that trust. Our agile, locally-led approach means that peacebuilders can use funds effectively to prevent violence in real time and reach millions of people.

Why this matters: As global crises deepen and resources diminish, the IPF's decade-long model continues to innovate to support women peacebuilders responding to emerging threats and opportunities.

THE • INNOVATIVE • PEACE FUND • (IPF)



"We trust our partners to determine the most effective interventions and responses for their communities."

– France Bognon, Co-CEO and Managing Director, ICAN

10 YEARS OF THE INNOVATIVE PEACE FUND

**Total contracted:
\$2,257,448**

**Average
grant
size:
\$56,436**

**40
grants**

**IN
2025**

**18
countries**

**In 2025, the IPF has disbursed
\$2,257,448 across 40 grants in
18 countries.**

**Total contracted:
\$13,431,706**

**Average
grant
size:
\$49,381**

**272
grants**

**SINCE
2015**

**27
countries**

**Since 2015, the IPF has
disbursed \$13,431,706 across
272 grants in 27 countries.**



SPOTLIGHTING 2025 IPF PARTNERS

Wi'am - The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center Building Peace Within: \$115,000 USD

The genocide in Gaza and the continued assault on Palestinian communities in the West Bank have led to large spikes in gender-based violence (GBV) within Palestinian society.

As a result of the ongoing conflict, survivors are isolated from support and resources, unable to access medical treatment or psychosocial support, and excluded from decision-making roles shaping their communities.

With funding from the IPF, Wi'am provided women survivors with access to holistic treatment services to support their full journey from isolated GBV survivors to community changemakers. Wi'am strengthened its peacebuilders leaders network to advocate for the needs of GBV survivors and provided immediate legal and medical crisis support.

Wi'am plans to build on this work by working with survivors to advocate for gender-sensitive legal reforms around the Family Protection Bill and UNSCR 1325, enabling institutional change in Palestine.

Wi'am's support included:

- Training 20 women in Wi'am's network to serve as mentors and advocate for the needs of GBV survivors.
- Providing 80 GBV survivors with psychosocial support and legal guidance through Wi'am's Women Counseling Unit.
- Expanding Wi'am's capacity to respond to medical and legal crisis situations through its hotline for those in immediate need.
- Supporting 20 survivors with psychosocial and mental health services through individual and collective sessions.
- Connecting 20 GBV survivors with mentors from Wi'am's peacebuilding network who foster confidence and help the survivors imagine themselves in leadership spaces. Through these relationships, survivors will gain the skills to find jobs or start their own businesses, leave their abusers, and have the tools to support themselves.



"Unlike rigid funding models, ICAN enables partners to adjust activities without losing alignment with broader objectives. This is particularly critical in fragile contexts, where needs are dynamic and often unpredictable."

– Independent evaluation, 2026

Afghan Women Skills Development Center (AWSDC) Strengthening Community Resilience & Reducing Disaster Risk \$75,000 USD

In Afghanistan, communities are surviving multi-layered crises: deepening poverty, displacement, climate-related disasters, shrinking access to basic services, and Taliban restrictions that have pushed women and girls out of public life. In Faryab Province, where floods, drought, returnee pressures, and competition over scarce resources are intensifying community-level tensions, families are often forced to make impossible choices between food, safety, and stability with limited support.

AWSDC enabled women and girls to become leaders in emergency preparation, despite severe constraints on their rights to expression, movement, and education within Afghanistan.

When the Kunar earthquake struck in August, ICAN's rapid response support enabled AWSDC to move quickly and provide emergency food assistance to 200 affected households. This flexibility mattered because in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, delays can leave vulnerable families without food, deepen displacement pressures, and heighten risks for women and children already living with limited protection and mobility.

ICAN's support in 2025 ensured AWSDC could keep community-based peacebuilding structures active in Faryab, while also meeting urgent survival needs, all amid displacement, climate shocks, poverty, and Taliban restrictions on women's public life.

- 
- In the winter, AWSDC distributed food packages to 370 vulnerable households and provided multipurpose cash assistance to 71 households, helping families meet urgent needs.
 - AWSDC strengthened existing peacebuilding structures—Shuras—by providing refresher training to 100 members on conflict analysis, mediation, negotiation, inclusive engagement, social cohesion, and conflict resolution. Shura members exchanged learning, documented emerging conflict trends, and coordinated responses to community disputes, including those linked to climate stress, displacement, returnee pressures, and resource scarcity.
 - AWSDC's disaster risk reduction (DRR) work gave communities tools to prepare for recurring floods, droughts, and other emergencies that often deepen poverty and fuel local disputes. In Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committees, 20 trained members supported local DRR plans and hazard mapping, which enabled communities to better anticipate and respond to risks such as floods and droughts and plan collective responses.

Sri Lanka: Association of War Affected Women (AWAW) Creating Corridors of Peace through Heritage Sites \$61,000 USD

Sri Lanka continues to struggle with ethnic and religious tensions more than a decade after its civil war. Archaeological sites in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province are among the key sites of tension and politicization. Competing nationalist and faith narratives, particularly around Sinhala Buddhist heritage, have deepened divisions and fueled conflict.

AWAW initiated culture- and faith-based mediation and reconciliation work in 2022 with ICAN's IPF support. Its research found that many sites reflect a shared Tamil and Sinhala Buddhist heritage, challenging dominant mono-ethnic narratives about these sites. As divisions deepened between communities, ICAN's funding enabled AWAW to partner with archaeologists to produce credible historical evidence about the shared heritage of archaeological sites—countering divisive narratives, reducing tensions, and supporting reconciliation.



Visaka Dharmadasa (AWAW) meets with the Venerable Galgamuwe Shantha Bodhi Thero at the Sapumalgaskada Temple



AWAW team conducts field research

The work integrated trust-building and collaboration across religious groups, local communities, and diaspora actors. In addition to co-designing research tools, groups were brought together to discuss how to prevent religious conflict and find ways to build mutual understanding and cooperation. The mutual care and interest in the archeological sites has proven critical to the shared vision of peace and pluralism, and socio-economic benefits for local communities.

AWAW is transforming Sri Lankan archaeological and heritage sites from potential flashpoints into corridors of peace, contributing to long-term social cohesion and harmony.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY-LED RESPONSE (SCLR) AND THE TRIPLE NEXUS



“People are looking for salaries, stability, food, water, protection. No one said peace agreements. They don’t care who’s going to govern them right now, as long as these services get to them, that they feel protected, that they are safe, and their children are safe. This doesn’t mean undermining the work of the UN, or the peace agreements. But the old school way of bringing peace isn’t bring peace to my country.”

– Muna Luqman, Founder and Chairperson, Food4Humanity, Yemen



ICAN's France Bognon, Rawan Kahwaji, and Mandi Soliman, with WASL partners Madaniya (Sudan) and Food4Humanity (Yemen) at an sclr Co-Design Workshop in Amman, Jordan

In every war zone, local communities, especially women peacebuilders, say the same thing: negotiations when people are hungry, displaced, or traumatized do not result in sustainable peace. True peace includes restoring daily life, education, and mental health support. Yet, international actors typically separate peacebuilding from development and humanitarian funding. This creates challenges for peacebuilders to respond holistically.

To help bridge this gap, ICAN has long advocated for flexible funding and locally-led initiatives.

We strive to ensure that our partners have the financial and technical resources and support to combine humanitarian aid, peacebuilding, and development (the Triple Nexus), as they see fit.

In 2025, in partnership with the Vitol Foundation, we built six partners’ capacities to implement the Strengthening Community-led Responses (sclr) methodology, which harnesses local capacities and resources for crisis response.

Additionally, we worked to elevate our partners’ community-led peacebuilding work, peace and gender sensitivity approaches, and awareness of women’s leadership in the global sclr Community of Practice.

Through our sclr and Triple Nexus work, ICAN continues to build evidence around the efficacy and necessity of locally-led and globally connected approaches. We advocate shifting away from siloed donor and policy frameworks toward more responsive, flexible, and impactful models of support.

Syria: Mobaderoon

Rebuilding Trust through Local Peace Committees

\$100,000 USD

Following the fall of the Assad regime, communal tensions and dire socio-economic pressures endure across Syria. In response, Mobaderoon operationalized the sclr approach and established 11 Local Peace Committees in the most conflict-prone areas. Mobaderoon equipped 22 community members as “peace architects,” providing technical tools for context analysis, conflict mapping, and community facilitation, then stepped back to let communities lead.

- In Homs, community members held neighborhood dialogue sessions, distilling key issues into policy recommendations for the mayor and local authorities. Responding to their recommendations, the city council and peace committee now have regular meetings, police are more visible in the streets, and the community now has direct methods to contact the police.
- Hama’s peace committee created safe spaces for 150 participants to share their experiences of violence and oppression during the Assad regime and the war. These narratives had been suppressed for over 40 years, and by creating safe spaces for these exchanges, Mobaderoon broke cycles of silence and mitigated sectarian tensions.
- In Latakia, 70 people from across sectarian divides used food as a tool for dialogue where direct conversation had been previously impossible. After sharing traditional dishes from conflict-affected regions at the event, conversations continued, promoting understanding between communities that had previously been in conflict.
- Members of Qatana’s peace committee, frustrated by the lack of women representatives on the local city council, formed a parallel Women’s Council to engage on issues of reconstruction and city administration.

With ICAN’s flexible funding, peace committees were able to adapt continuously to shifting security conditions—revising plans, relocating sessions, and redirecting resources toward emerging needs such as psychosocial support for newly displaced families.

Today, multiple peace committees continue meeting in Syria, planning, and implementing initiatives independently. Their work continues not because of ongoing project-style funding but because communities recognize the process as their own. Local ownership and flexibility are not trade-offs; rather, they are mutually reinforcing foundations of effective and sustainable response.

HUMANIZING • SECURITY



In 2025, the global military budget rose to \$9.5 trillion USD, while the cost of violence reached a staggering \$21.8 trillion USD (Global Peace Index, 2026). Humanity is becoming securitized in unimaginable ways. Our public lives and civic space are increasingly subject to oversight from police to intelligence and military services. Geopolitical conflicts are rising, and societal fragmentation is becoming normalized. But the threats we face are not just military in nature. Climate change, social polarization, terrorism, and white supremacy are all real, yet we are told these do not matter, only weapons.

Though military budgets are ballooning, security actors are unable to effectively tackle the growing complexity of threats facing communities, in part, due to a narrow framing of state-based security. Securitization itself can also fuel greater mistrust and insecurity, destroying the social cohesion needed for democratic and pluralistic societies to function.

In the absence of political will, ICAN and WASL members tackled these trends at the policy and community levels in 2025. Rather than securitize humanity, we are reframing security to put humanity at the center: protecting individual wellbeing, health, and human rights. From Africa to the Middle East, Asia and South America, ICAN supports our WASL partners to draw on indigenous culture, tradition, faith, and kinship structures, not weapons, to confront the root causes of violence and address community needs.

With funding support from ICAN, our partners are drawing on the WPS agenda to engage their national police and militaries, to build space for dialogue and trust building with affected communities. These efforts—often invisible—are contributing to reductions in violence, greater community engagement, and reforms within the sector from the ground up.

ICAN is also using the WPS agenda as an entry point to engage the policy arena and security sector institutions. In 2025, ICAN prioritized our interventions on reframing security, challenging the inevitability of militarization in key public events at the EU and across Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Why this matters: As the world turns towards securitization of humanity and the planet, ICAN and our partners continue to prove that humanizing security is a powerful alternative.

REFORMING • SECURITY FROM • THE • INSIDE • OUT



“£60 billion or €800 billion poured into the weapons industry comes at the expense of climate action, social welfare, housing, education, and international development. We are being pitted against each other, left to fight over crumbs. The militarization we’re seeing is effectively subsidizing the private sector. They are buying influence while we have no real say.”

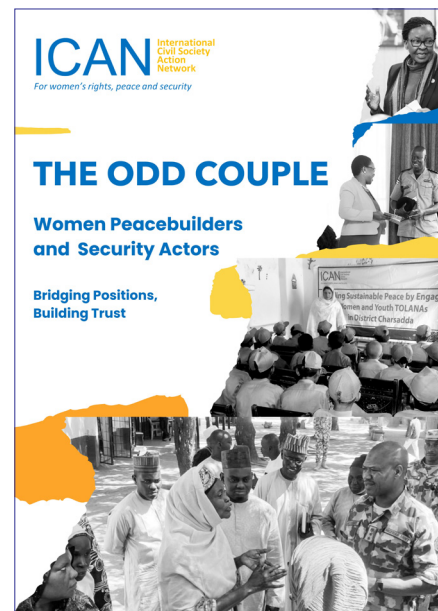
– Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE, Founder and CEO, ICAN

The Odd Couple

In May 2025, ICAN published *The Odd Couple: Women Peacebuilders and Security Actors Bridging Positions, Building Trust*.

This seminal report reflected the findings from the first ever international dialogue held between women peacebuilders, military advisers and UN security personnel held in New York in 2024. The report also highlights innovative programs that WASL partners have developed in their home countries, often with ICAN IPF funding, to engage security actors related to:

- Addressing the threat of violent extremism
- Reframing and reforming the security sector; and
- Confronting election-related violence.





The Odd Couple's Key Recommendations:

- Reframe and consider national security to include human and community centric approaches, instead of limiting the focus to militarization.
- Recognize civil society as allies, not adversaries, in addressing community security, tackling polarization, and fostering social cohesion.
- Convene exchanges and opportunities for dialogue between women peacebuilders and the security sector at national and international levels.
- Bridge legal and accountability gaps by reforming laws and fostering justice.



“We were looked at with distrust when we spoke with the security sector and tried to work in discussion about security—now this shift in thinking is crucial.”

– Rosa Emilia Salamanca, Executive Director, CIASE, Colombia

25 Years of UNSCR 1325: EU Headquarters, Belgium



“Imagine if just 1% or even 0.1% of the €800 billion the EU wants to spend on military rearmament, was dedicated to peacebuilding? How transformative that would be. Frankly, if €799 billion is not sufficient for a military strategy, then, we are in precarious times and better go back to the drawing board. Now imagine that 1 billion or 2.5 billion—marking 25 years of the WPS agenda—being dedicated to peacebuilding and humanizing security with women peacebuilders at the center, what a different world we’d see.”

– Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE, Founder and CEO, ICAN

International Women, Peace, and Security Forum 2025: Pristina, Kosovo

ICAN Founder and CEO Sanam Naraghi Anderlini shared key recommendations and insights from *The Odd Couple* during “The Peacebuilding Partnership: Women and the Security Sector”.



“

The partnership between the civil society and military and police is essential because we see more and more how politicians instrumentalize the military, and it is the military who is paying the cost for these political decisions.”

– Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE,
Founder and CEO, ICAN



Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue 25 Years of Women, Peace, and Security: Vienna, Austria

Naraghi Anderlini reminded participants that the WPS agenda was never only about “protecting women”—it was a transformative vision for human security, peace, and accountability. She warned that growing militarization is turning the UN Security Council into an “insecurity council,” and that real global threats—climate, pandemics, polarization—cannot be solved with arms races.

GRANTMAKING SPOTLIGHT

Iraq: Al-Firdaws Society: From Distrust to Collaboration **\$60,000 USD**

The Iraqi city of Basra has faced increasing threats posed by hate speech, radicalization, and fraying trust between citizens and security institutions. With funding from ICAN's Innovative Peace Fund, Al-Firdaws developed the capacity of local security actors to address the threats of violent extremism and online violence, foster effective communication with the community, and promote mutual understanding.

Crucially, the project shifted perceptions of the police. Officers who once operated in isolation now collaborate openly with youth and educators. Families who feared security forces now see them as allies in protecting their children. Police-to-police learning normalized new approaches and fostered genuine partnerships with civil society partners.



A police training session facilitated by Al-Firdaws

The year-long initiative was a comprehensive program:

- Al-Firdaws trained 20 officers from the community police, family protection units, and women's affairs departments on Iraq's national counter-extremism strategies, the UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan, and on use of its Combating Hate Speech Guide, developed with support from ICAN.
- The officers worked with Al-Firdaws to adapt the materials to their context, co-developing Basra's first Local Action Plan to counter hate speech and violent extremism. Endorsed by the municipality, this plan marked a rare achievement: a grassroots strategy institutionalized through formal local government approval.
- Al-Firdaws also directly engaged Basra's youth, identifying and training 25 young people in the causes and impact of extremism, nonviolent communication, community safety, and conflict resolution. Together with this cohort, members of local communities, and the police force, they established three local committees, reaching over 300 individuals responsible for combating violent extremism in their communities.
- The committees opened spaces for dialogue between community groups, building social cohesion through community events, and raising awareness of hate speech and violent extremism. Each of these initiatives was locally tailored and participatory—designed and led by youth, supported by trained security officers, and grounded in community partnerships.

“

“We were able to break the barrier of fear among people and build bridges of trust between communities that had been isolated.”

– Fatima Al-Bahadly, Founder, Al-Firdaws Society



Building bridges between the Basra community and security actors

HOLISTIC SECURITY MENU



“We are contributing to the reimagining of security from a feminist perspective that puts care at the center for more effective prevention of violence and protection of peacebuilders.”

– Melinda Holmes, Program Director, ICAN



Melinda Holmes

Following the Taliban takeover in 2021, many Afghans struggle with loss of independence, social isolation, loneliness, stress, job insecurity, and fear. ICAN’s Afghan partners have been threatened online and in-person for their continued peacebuilding work, and their families have been targeted.

Women peacebuilders often operate in some of the world’s most dangerous contexts—yet the security support available to them is fragmented, and short-term. To address this gap, ICAN launched the Holistic Security Menu: a co-designed, partner-driven model that provides practical and sustainable security support—on women peacebuilders’ own terms. Protecting them enables them to protect others.

Rather than one-off trainings or generic toolkits, the Holistic Security Menu offers a coordinated suite of services that address security as an interconnected system: physical, digital, psychosocial, and organizational.

ICAN’s partners choose what they need, when they need it, and how deeply they engage. ICAN covers the costs and coordinates the entire process, allowing peacebuilders to focus on their work, not logistics. The Holistic Security Menu draws directly on the expertise of the WASL network itself, mobilizing gendered, context-specific knowledge from across regions. ICAN aims to expand the model across the entire WASL network.

A NEW WAY TO SUPPORT WOMEN PEACEBUILDERS



ICAN's Holistic Security Menu includes:

- **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS):** WASL members Zarrina Alimshoeva, Nancy Yammout, and Maya Yammout offered over 70 individual and 13 group sessions in either Farsi or English during the Menu's pilot. WASL partner the Neem Foundation led training workshops.
- **Digital Security:** In-depth organizational assessments by WASL partner Digital Shelter, followed by an eight-week training course, Training of Trainers, and ongoing office hours for additional support.
- **Security Policy and Practice:** Practical workshops on physical and digital security delivered by women-led teams from Afghan Witness, with resources available for continued use.
- **Security Mini-Grants:** Flexible stipends allowing partners to implement immediate security improvements—from VPNs to security cameras—based on their own priorities.



“About 60% of those participating in individual and group sessions spoke about the clear benefits that this help brought them: they became more self-confident, learned to listen to others and themselves, and for many it was a good experience of communicating with a psychologist.”

– Zarrina Alimshoeva, Social Work Expert and WASL Member, Tajikistan

SPEAKING • TRUTH TO • POWER



As civic space shrinks and civil society organizations come under threat, speaking truth to power is exponentially riskier. Yet, it is precisely in these times that our democratic right to freedom of expression becomes a responsibility.

In 2025, some UN member states perpetuated war crimes, illegal occupations, and genocide, and others abrogated their responsibility to hold allies and adversaries as equals under international laws.

ICAN chose to speak truth to power.

While many organizations stepped back from policy spaces amid growing political risks and funding constraints, ICAN stepped forward—using international forums and policy conferences to speak out against genocide, war crimes, and the double standards undermining international law. We also highlighted the gaps between policymakers’ rhetoric of support for women’s participation in peace processes, and the reality of their continued exclusion in contexts such as Syria, Ukraine, and Cameroon.

We also stepped into new spaces for ICAN, joining grassroots anti-war movements in Europe and bringing the voices of women peacebuilders and their solutions into more visible, public-facing activism.

Across our advocacy, ICAN shared concrete recommendations on creating more inclusive processes for the humanitarian aid, reconstruction, and a future peace for Palestine (see page 48).

Why this matters: ICAN stood out in the broader international community because we retained moral authority while offering strategic and practical solutions for sustainable and just peace.

EXPANDING COALITIONS: THE UNSILENCE FORUM

In November 2025, ICAN joined the international organizing committee of the Unsilence Forum in Barcelona. Over three days, activists, journalists, and organizations from more than 20 countries gathered to discuss peace, human rights, and democracy in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The forum combined political dialogue, artistic creation, and collective reflection, while centering feminist, ecological, and decolonial perspectives as alternatives to militarism.

ICAN, in collaboration with Dones x Dones, Un Ponte Per, Ca La Dona, and WILPF, shared analysis and recommendations around the theme of “What the Women Say: The Past, Present and Future of Resolution 1325 in Peace, Security, and Justice for Palestine and Beyond”.

Reflecting on the evolution of WPS in their contexts and globally, speakers charted pathways toward more inclusive and accountable peacebuilding. In additional panels, ICAN Founder and CEO Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE debated rearmament, militarism, and the plural meanings of peace, and ICAN Program Officer Rawan Kahwaji shared her ideas on expanding civic space and civil rights in Iraq and Syria.

As part of the international coordinating committee, ICAN and Palestinian WASL member Lucy Talgieh also met with the Minister of Culture of Spain.



“The UN Charter begins with ‘We the people’—not ‘we the member states.’ Civil society actors—those preventing conflict and delivering humanitarian aid—must be central at negotiation tables, not sidelined.”

– Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE, CEO and Founder, ICAN



ICAN CEO and Founder Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE; ICAN Program Director Helena Grönberg, WASL partner Lucy Talgieh, and the Spanish Minister of Culture; ICAN Program Officer Rawan Kahwaji

Peace for Palestine: Policy Recommendations & Ideas for the Future

ICAN worked with WASL partner Lucy Talgieh, Deputy Mayor of Bethlehem and Head of the Women's Department of Wi'am: The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center, to hone policy recommendations for key international audiences.

Throughout 2025, ICAN created opportunities for Talgieh to meet and deliver these recommendations directly to Portuguese and Spanish Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO), and the European Union's External Action Service.



WASL Partner Lucy Talgieh addresses the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs



"There will be no peace without addressing root causes: military occupation, the blockade, displacement, and withholding of Palestinian Authority tax revenues. Without justice, the WPS agenda risks becoming rhetoric instead of reality."

– Lucy Talgieh, Head of Women's Department, Wi'am, and Deputy Mayor, Bethlehem



"A distinct characteristic of women-led or feminist processes is the ability to focus the vision toward the future—the uncharted, unwritten, world to come. It is not a denial of the past or the traumas, but it is looking to a future in which the past can be memorialized with the intention of preventing the experience of violence being felt by future generations."

– From ICAN's 20-Point Framework for Inclusive Peace and Security between Palestine and Israel and Recovery in Gaza and the West Bank



Five Critical Recommendations on Gaza and Palestinian Statehood

1. Ensure an immediate, permanent ceasefire and unrestricted humanitarian access to Gaza.
2. Place Palestinian women at the heart of reconstruction, governance, and peace negotiations that the international community is supporting, recognizing them not simply as beneficiaries, but as decision-makers, shaping priorities for their communities.
3. Match political and rhetorical support for Palestinian statehood with key actions notably calling on Israel to:
 - a. Remove all internal checkpoints in the occupied Palestinian territories to enable freedom of movement;
 - b. Return Palestinian tax funds collected in the occupied Palestinian territories to the Palestinian civil administration, enabling to pay for the salaries of teachers, medics, hygiene and other civil servants, and to provide services;
 - c. Ensure that Palestinian authorities have control of their borders to allow for the passage of people, goods and services.
4. Support the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) with regard to their rulings pertaining war crimes and genocide.



“We need two parallel national dialogues where Palestinian journalists, doctors, mothers, and young people, all the people that have suffered from this violence, sit with the political and military forces, hold them accountable, and determine what they want going forward. Similarly, in Israel, let civil society and the families of the hostages sit on equal footing with their politicians to decide what they want for the future.”

– Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE, Founder and CEO, ICAN

EXPANDING THE • CONVERSATION



With militarism rising in 2025, the experiences of people most affected by violence, the solutions they bring, and the resilience and optimism they carry, were often invisible in public discourse.

In 2025, in an effort to elevate the human dimensions of war and the agency and solutions of women to inform policy, media narratives, and public understanding, we expanded our outreach beyond traditional diplomatic and donor audiences. We reached youth, diaspora communities, faith leaders, security professionals, and the wider public with narratives of peace, pluralism, and human security. We integrated art and culture into our work, demonstrating that peacebuilding is fundamental to every aspect of a healthy society.

Why this matters: Imagination, dialogue, and looking beyond traditional allies builds global support for peace.



Watan e Ma event pictures

REACHING • BEYOND POLICY • ELITES

ENGAGING THE ARTS

Showcasing Afghan Women's Creative Resistance Through Art, Culture, and Heritage

In March 2025, during the UN Commission on the Status of Women, ICAN—together with our Afghan partners—hosted the “Watan e Ma – وطن ما – Our Homeland” event and exhibit.

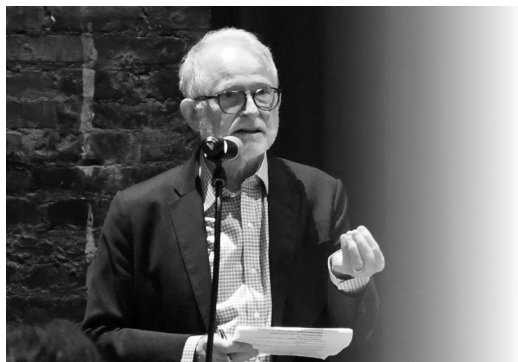
We convened activists, artists, musicians, and peacebuilders, together with our traditional policy allies, for public dialogues to showcase the fullness of Afghan women's lives and their strategies for resistance against the Taliban.

The event was juxtaposed against dramatically shifting geopolitical dynamics and further entrenchment of the Taliban regime's gender apartheid.



Watan e Ma event pictures

At a time when the Taliban is systematically erasing women, art, and culture from public life in Afghanistan, Watan e Ma affirmed the opposite: that Afghan women continue to document, preserve, and defend their lives, identities, and histories. Their work is an act of courage and resistance - a testament to their unwavering commitment to dignity, justice, and fundamental rights. They will not allow their experiences nor their demands for freedom to be forgotten by the international community.



Richard Bennett



"It's important to remember that civic space is also made up of poets, artists, musicians, actors, academics, philosophers, and everything that makes up the fabric of any society, including Afghan society. And the Taliban are attempting to wipe that out, but, as we see here today, it is impossible to do that."

– Richard Bennett, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan



"I had the deep honor of performing the Afghan national anthem in a classical rendition—a moment of profound emotion and remembrance for all the women who lost their voices, their freedom, and their dreams. Art is not just expression—it is resistance, a bridge to understanding and force for change."

– Nina Yaqob, Award-winning Afghan-German opera singer

Resilience, Resistance, and Solidarity: Voices of Myanmar's Women and Minorities

In October, during the annual UN WPS Week in New York, ICAN cohosted an interactive event with WASL's Myanmar members Gender Equality Network (GEN) and the Women's Peace Network, spotlighting the ongoing crisis in their country and the leadership of women peacebuilders.

Through moving storytelling, film, poetry, and art installations, the event showcased how creative expression has become a form of resistance—preserving culture, documenting truth, and fostering solidarity amid ongoing military violence.

The event featured remarks from ICAN's Helena Grönberg, UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar Tom Andrews, Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the UN Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, and Head of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, Tonni Brodber.



“The crisis in Myanmar is not only about politics or power. It is about people—women, men, children, and entire communities who are enduring daily violence and loss yet continue to resist with courage and dignity.”

– Helena Grönberg, Program Director, ICAN



“The event invited guests to write their messages of solidarity, encouragement, and support on a plain white fabric, dedicated to the people of Myanmar/Burma who continue to endure violence, yet refuse to surrender to the control of the military junta. Despite deep gendered insecurities, women are courageously leading their own journeys with resilience and determination.

Each word inked on the cloth became a symbol of collective hope and transnational people-to-people connection. The solidarity cloth has been hand-carried back to Thailand and will one day be brought to the communities of the organizers, a symbolic reminder that they are seen, supported, and never alone in their struggle.”

– WASL Partner May Sabe Phyu, Gender Equality Network



May Sabe Phyu

ENGAGING RELIGIOUS LEADERS: ICAN'S PARTNERSHIP WITH KAICIID

Religious leaders, like women peacebuilders, invest in their communities, exercise significant influence, and have trusted access to and knowledge about their communities. They can be powerful peacebuilders—when they use their influence to unite rather than divide.

However, opportunities for meaningful dialogue and joint initiatives between these two groups remain limited. At a time of increasing polarization within communities and across societies, cross-sectoral movement building is a vital strategy for civil society to foster mutual support and positive social transformation.

In 2025, ICAN embarked on a strategic collaboration with the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), an organization that connects local religious leaders active in peacebuilding. Together, we aim to create opportunities for women peacebuilders and religious leaders to build trust and mutual understanding and pursue joint initiatives. With this partnership, ICAN hopes to amplify the gender inclusive perspectives and work of women peacebuilders in religious spaces and mediation processes.

To achieve this, ICAN and KAICIID held an Arab-Asia exchange and interreligious dialogue in Amman, Jordan on gendered approaches in religious peacebuilding. The partnership also enhanced women peacebuilders' participation in high-level advocacy spaces, including with the government of Portugal and in Rome.



ICAN and KAICIID's Arab-Asia exchange and interreligious dialogue in Amman



WASL partners Wazhma Frogh, Nina Potarska, and Lucy Talgieh at the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs



"Women peacebuilders and religious leaders are both trying to answer an impossible question: how to respond to the profound injustices we're witnessing around the world. That shared motivation is what brings us together."

— Melinda Holmes, Program Director, ICAN

IF YOU WERE IN CHARGE: A PODCAST PEOPLE, POWER, AND POSSIBILITIES

In 2024, ICAN launched *If You Were in Charge*, a podcast hosted by Founder and CEO Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE, that reframes global challenges through the lens of global solutions by featuring pioneering activists and frontline peacebuilders.

If You Were in Charge expands the conversation beyond traditional peacebuilding and policy circles, strengthening the visibility and credibility of ICAN's work and that of women peacebuilders, while fostering hope and a vision for a more equitable, resilient, and peaceful world. Since the podcast's launch in 2024, it has hosted 29 guests and has been downloaded 21,718 times.

From climate change to police violence, wealth inequality, and feminism, listeners hear about the journey of activists, their impactful work, and how they would exercise financial and political power if they were in charge. Guests have included: Abigail Disney, Stephen Walt, Yasmin Radjy, Wazhma Frogh, Richard Gowan, Maria Fernanda Espinosa, Marwa Hamad, Yael Braudo-Bahat, Abir Haj Ibrahim, Sir Richard Dalton, and more.



“We know that it’s not easy to sit with Israelis...But if not today, we need to share a vision together. Because, as a mother, I care about my children. I don’t want them to be martyred or to be in prison or to be injured. And I believe that each mother wants that. We care about our new generation and we want them to live in dignity, safety. And this is the solution—it’s to find dialogue.”

– Marwa Hammad, Women of the Sun, Palestine, on Season 2, Episode 5



“I particularly enjoyed the two podcasts featuring the rabbi from Israel and the Palestinian peace activist. It gave me so much joy to hear such active and unexpected voices on a story so often covered from the extremes.”

– *If You Were in Charge* listener

NOMINATION OF FRANCESCA ALBANESE FOR THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

ICAN and WASL nominated Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, for the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize.

To build public support for the nomination, ICAN and WASL launched a global sign-on campaign that garnered 1,353 signatories from 99 countries.

Albanese embodies the spirit of the WPS agenda, demonstrating unwavering courage and clarity in defending human rights, upholding international law, and speaking truth to power—even under immense personal and political pressure. Through her work, she has steadfastly advanced the principles of international law and nonviolent accountability while amplifying the voices and rights of those most impacted by war, genocide, and injustice.

Our nomination recognized Albanese's extraordinary leadership while serving as a public call to defend the values she embodies: justice, accountability, human dignity, and the rule of international law. Through our public campaign, we affirmed those who courageously uphold international law and human rights—even in the face of intimidation and retaliation—deserve the world's highest recognition.



Francesca Albanese



“Francesca Albanese stands alongside generations of women who have acted when others have turned away, chosen to speak truth to power, use words not violence, and held fast to the basic human right to life and peace in the face of militarism and oppression.”

– Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE, Founder and CEO, ICAN

ENGAGING INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

ICAN CEO and Founder Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE engaged widely across international traditional and nontraditional media in 2025. Appearing in newspapers, podcasts, evening news broadcasts, digital news sites, and radio, Naraghi Anderlini challenged the efficacy of rising militarism as the path to security and amplified the work of women peacebuilders. In a time of polarization, she offers a vision of peace and pluralism to counter rising divisions.



“Are we willing to recognize that in the theater of conflict, there are peace actors—not just armed actors? Are we, as an international community, willing to stand by our commitments to human rights and support the peace actors, not just the war-makers?”

– Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE, Founder and CEO, ICAN, in Al Jazeera, June 2025



DECOLONIZING PEACE • KNOWLEDGE



Since the advent of the WPS agenda at the UN Security Council in 2000, scholars have published a growing body of qualitative and quantitative research that demonstrates women's contributions to peace.

But women peacebuilders are rarely the authors of their own work. Their innovative strategies are often co-opted, extracted, anonymized, or interpreted by others, reinforcing hierarchies of knowledge that privilege external "experts" over lived expertise.

To address this systemic exclusion, ICAN launched a multi-year project to develop an edited volume authored by WASL members, which will challenge entrenched hierarchies of expertise that have long privileged external interpretation over locally grounded peace praxis. The book will center women peacebuilders as creators of knowledge and practice, whose theories, strategies, and tactics constitute a vital, yet underrepresented, body of peace and security practice.

Each chapter will stand as an act of intellectual and moral courage, as the authors explore their personal journey into peacebuilding while navigating violence, contesting unequal power structures, and overcoming challenges to their legitimacy, authority, and leadership within their cultural, political, and social contexts. Contributors document their strategies, sources of legitimacy and inspiration, and theories of change. Chapters feature the distinct ways women peacebuilders meld law, culture, religion, indigenous practice, feminism, psychosocial care, education, and movement-building to achieve their goals.



Why this matters: ICAN is redefining whose knowledge counts in global security policy and practice.

WOMEN • PEACEBUILDERS IN • THEIR • OWN • WORDS

A PRACTITIONER-AUTHORED CANON



“Through sharing this journey of ours, we are not only reclaiming our authority in history, but trying to inspire the future generation that peace is possible. It is possible when the women are there.”

– Mossarat Qadeem, Co-Founder, PAIMAN Alumni Trust



Mossarat Qadeem

Innovative Autoethnography Methodology

Based on established selection criteria, ICAN identified 23 WASL partners to contribute to the volume. Recognizing the demands on women peacebuilders' time and the barriers to authorship, ICAN provided tailored support throughout the process, including one-on-one brainstorming, outlining, writing, and editing guidance. In close collaboration with the authors and a seven-member Editorial Advisory Group, ICAN co-designed the interview methodology, chapter framework, and drafting process to ensure the book reflected the experiences, voices, and priorities of its contributors.

Writers' Workshop

In September 2025, as part of the autoethnography drafting process ICAN convened the “Our Strategies, Our Peace” Writers’ Workshop in Lisbon, Portugal. For three days, 20 WASL members came together in a secure and creative space for reflection, peer exchange, and chapter development. Through six “strategy-telling” sessions, participants explore how their backgrounds, family, and kinship, faith and spirituality, culture, gender, sex, and identity, law and policy, and movement-building and leadership have shaped their approach to peacebuilding. These discussions helped participants deepen their analysis, articulate their lived experiences, and strengthen the development of their autoethnographies.



“I want to pass my story on to the next generation so that other people can pick it up from where I’ve left off”

– Clotilda Andienza Waah, Founder and CEO, Center for Advocacy in Gender Equality and Action for Development (CAGEAD)



“Our Strategies, Our Peace” Writers’ Workshop



"We want the world to see that the way we shape policies, the way we think about the world, and the tools we use are different and must be taken into account."

– Rosa Emilia Salamanca, Executive Director,
Corporación de Investigación y Acción
Social y Económica (CIASE)



Rosa Emilia Salamanca



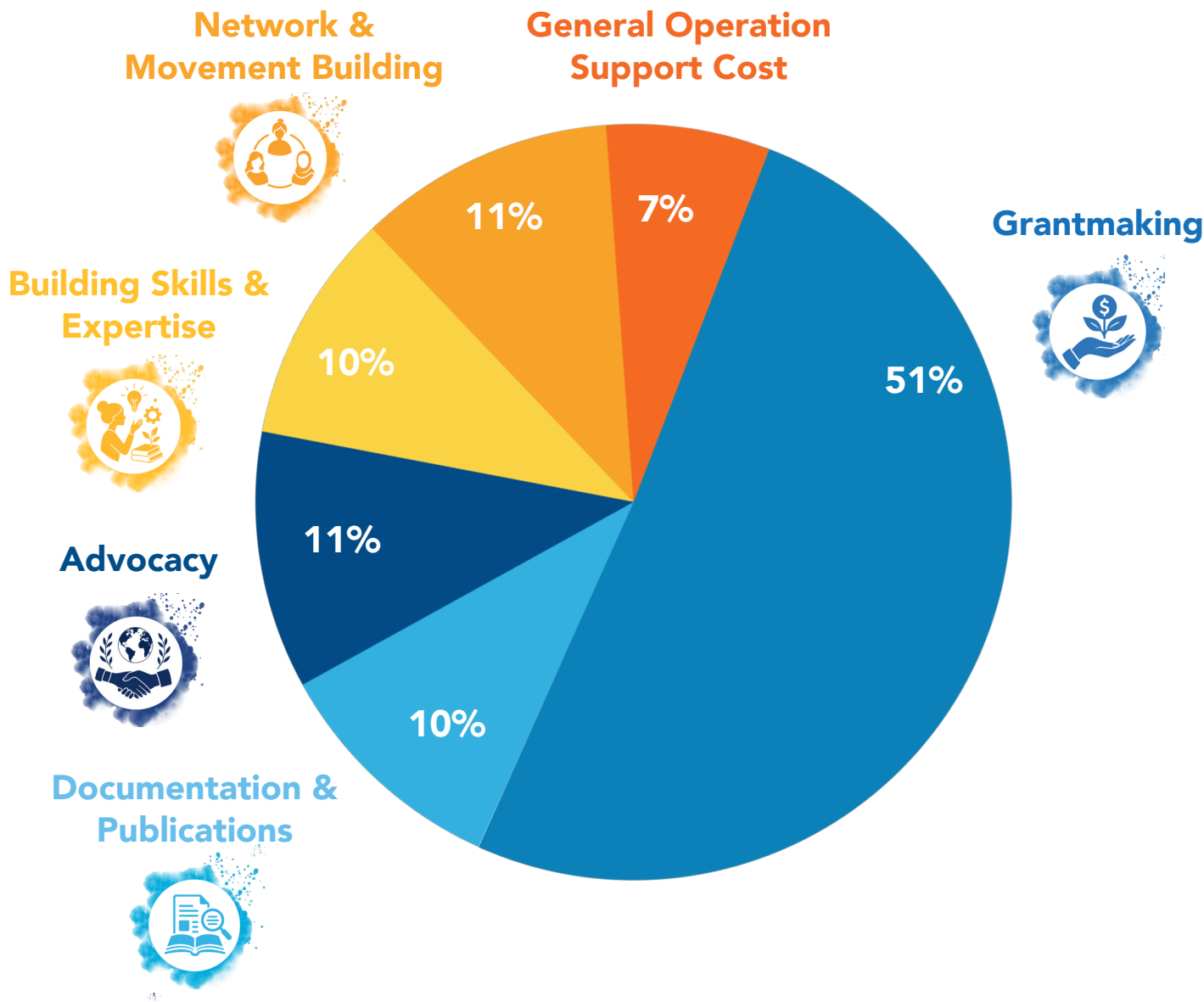
Abir Haj Ibrahim, Co-founder, Mobaderoon Peacebuilding Network, Syria; Mira Kusumarini, Founder and Director, Empatiku Foundation, Indonesia

FINANCIALS

Consolidated Statement in Numbers				
	2025	2024	2023	2022
Income				
Government/ NGO Grants	3,447,427	4,515,480	2,557,380	2,690,790
Foundations and Corporate Grants	1,576,434	1,244,930	581,302	664,452
Individual Contributions	17,646	17,489	121,946	46,188
Fees for Service				47,166
Other (Miscellaneous) Revenue	47,840	33,762	32,142	10,947
Total Income	5,089,346	5,791,692	3,292,628	3,458,932
Expenses				
Program Services	4,374,335	4,908,045	2,757,641	3,581,594
Management and General Operational	215,376	371,525	328,798	352,770
Fundraising	25,000	32,965	52,274	79,331
Total Expenses	4,614,711	5,312,535	3,138,713	4,013,695
Change in Net Assets	474,636	479,157	153,915	(554,763)

Statement of Financial Position				
	2025	2024	2023	2022
Assets				
Cash, Investments, and Equivalents	1,848,431.63	2,426,488	1,390,601	1,302,257
Grants and Other Receivable	864,756.54	301,726	223,409	173,993
Prepaid Expenses	2,081			13,600
Deposits	4,221.06		3,332	3,332
Total Assets	2,719,490.23	2,728,214	1,617,342	1,493,182
Liabilities and Net Assets				
Liabilities				
Accounts Payable	228,117.52	120,095	89,509	225,743
Deferred Revenue/ Accrued Expenses	665,946.15	955,603	656,200	549,721
Total Liabilities	894,063.67	1,075,698	745,709	775,464
Net Assets				
Unrestricted Net Assets	474,756.01	506,876	363,754	313,757
Restricted Net Assets	1,350,670.55	843,914	507,879	403,961
Total Net Assets	1,825,426.56	1,350,790	871,633	717,718
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	2,719,490.23	2,426,488	1,617,342	1,493,182

EXPENDITURE BY ACTIVITY, 2025



ICAN • 2025

We extend our heartfelt thanks to institutional and individual donations and for all in-kind contributions.



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Members of the 2025 team at ICAN's strategic planning retreat

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Rescue Me

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“ICAN’s integrated model, combining flexible grantmaking, strategic accompaniment, and network facilitation, is highly suited to the needs and operating realities of women peacebuilders across diverse contexts. Its effectiveness lies not in any single component, but in the way these elements interact to address the financial, operational, and relational constraints faced by partners.”

– Independent Evaluation, 2026



For women's rights, peace and security

”

How tragic that those of us advocating for peace and justice are outside of the halls of power, while those waging wars, enabling genocide, and trampling international laws are inside.

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, MBE
Founder and CEO, ICAN