“Until Lasting Peace”

Diaspora Women Building Peace Where They Are

Women PeaceMakers Program

University of San Diego | KROC SCHOOL Institute for Peace and Justice

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About

The Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice (Kroc IPJ) launched in 2001 with a vision of active peacebuilding. In 2007, the Kroc IPJ became part of the newly established Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, a global hub for peacebuilding and social innovation.

The core of the Kroc IPJ mission is to co-create learning with peacemakers — learning that is deeply grounded in the lived experience of peacemakers around the world, that is made rigorous by our place within a university ecosystem and that is immediately and practically applied by peacemakers to end cycles of violence. The Kroc IPJ is the bridge between theory and practice at the Kroc School, driving the Kroc School's mission to shape a more peaceful and more just world.

Together with local women peacebuilders and renowned international women, peace and security organizations, the Kroc IPJ identifies the most critical peacebuilding challenges facing women leaders around the world. We then co-develop applied and actionable research to identify evidence-based solutions.

Since 2002, the Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice (Kroc IPJ) at the University of San Diego's Kroc School has hosted the Women PeaceMakers Fellowship program. The Fellowship offers a unique opportunity for peacebuilders who focus on issues of gender, peace and conflict to engage in a cycle of learning, practice, research and participation that strengthens peacebuilding partnerships. The Women PeaceMakers Fellowship facilitates impactful collaborations between peacebuilders from conflict-affected communities and international partner organizations. The Fellows also co-create research intended to shape the peacebuilding field and highlight good practices for peacebuilding design and implementation.

This report was co-created by the three 2024-2025 Women PeaceMaker Fellows — Bochra Laghssais from Morocco and living in the Netherlands, Mariia Levchenko from Ukraine and living in Germany and Temi Mwale from the United Kingdom — and was supported by leaders in the peacebuilding field, who provided their own expertise and perspectives to shape this work. This report is based on the lived realities of women peacebuilders and peacebuilding partners, providing both concrete recommendations for an international audience and in-depth, context-specific analysis through the case studies.

Executive Summary

In an era defined by human mobility and multiple, mutually reinforcing crises, diaspora communities have emerged as vital actors in shaping peace and social cohesion—far beyond the traditional boundaries of conflict zones or homeland politics. Yet, the contributions of women within these transnational networks remain obscured by disciplinary silos and policy frameworks that too often address peacebuilding, migration and gender in isolation. This report begins from the conviction that understanding diaspora women's peace work demands an integrated lens—one that traces the trajectories of diverse migration waves, centers gendered experiences, and bridges the worlds of international law, community activism and feminist care.

At the heart of this inquiry lies the question of how existing international frameworks—embodied, among others, in the Women, Peace and Security agenda, global migration agreements and human rights treaties—create (or fail to create) an enabling environment for diaspora women to be recognized and well supported agents of peace. The report crosses three analytical silos—peacebuilding, diaspora and migration issues, and gender—through a methodology that combines desk review, structured content analysis and comparative synthesis, alongside rich case study fieldwork. This research draws on feminist research principles to foreground lived experience and intersectionality, interrogating how international instruments recognize (or omit) the capacity, participation, leadership, resources and belonging of diaspora women. The three case studies—focused on Black women leaders in the UK, Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women in the Netherlands and Ukrainian women in Germany—span decades and geographies to reveal both enduring patterns and novel dynamics of transnational peace work.

By bringing together insights from generational legacies, long-standing communities and emergent diaspora networks, this report offers a multidimensional analysis that transcends geography and history. This report seeks to chart a path toward policies and practices that not only acknowledge diaspora women's agency but actively support their leadership in forging just and lasting peace across borders.

The analysis here reveals the following key findings:

- Traditional understandings of peacebuilding limit priorities to conflict zones, which may exclude significant portions of peacebuilding work.
- Diaspora peacebuilding is diverse and versatile, reflecting women's varied migration histories, identities and community contexts.
- Peacebuilding priorities are shaped by migration experience and timing, as well as the need to navigate overlapping racial, ethnic, cultural and gender identities and expectations.
- Diaspora women face substantial systemic barriers, including restricted funding, limited recognition and support, and structural inequities that constrain their livelihoods and peacebuilding work.
- Diaspora peacebuilders with compounded or overlapping identities often navigate systemic marginalization and exclusion.
- Women's leadership and emotional labor drive peacebuilding forward, but often at significant personal cost without sufficient institutional or community support.
- Community belonging and robust social infrastructure are central to effective peacebuilding, enabling agency, resilience and sustained civic engagement.
- Representation and cultural affirmation are core to diaspora women's peacebuilding and community-building, encompassing the celebration, honoring and visibilization of cultural identity in countries of residence.
- Women peacebuilders often view their work as community care rooted in necessity—not the language of peacebuilding.

The following recommendations for international organizations and funders, national-level policymakers and funders, and diaspora peace leaders are based on this evidence and analysis:

Recommendations

Recommendations for international Organizations and Funders:

- Promote implementation of existing international agreements related to gender, peacebuilding and migration and foster programming that recognizes the intersections of these frameworks.
- Promote platforms that connect women diaspora leaders across borders and cultures.
- Provide funding opportunities that allow for diaspora women peace leaders to invest in community and self-care, reflection and connection.
- Promote diaspora women's engagement in peace negotiations and other formal peace processes.
- Create monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress in incorporating diaspora women peacebuilders into peace and security processes.

Recommendations for National-Level Policymakers and Funders:

- Incorporate international legal obligations related to migrant rights, women's rights and human rights into national-level policies and frameworks.
- Consult diaspora peacebuilders when designing policy and funding opportunities, including those involved in social change efforts on a voluntary or part-time basis.
- Provide linguistically and culturally appropriate support services for refugees and newly arrived migrants that facilitate connection to existing diaspora communities.
- Consider and include diaspora women in funding opportunities related to peacebuilding or social change within your country.
- Promote programs that support safety in diaspora communities without relying on violent policing, drawing from the needs and strengths of the diaspora community itself.
- Create government offices or institutions focused on engaging with diasporas within your country.

Recommendations for Diaspora Peace Leaders:

- Promote women leaders and other people of marginalized gender identities within your organizations or movements and recognize the work currently being done by women community members.
- Create spaces that promote sharing the emotional and social labor of peace work and where peacebuilders can openly share their challenges and concerns.
- Create programming that explicitly addresses the gendered challenges that diaspora women and people of marginalized gender identities face.

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Case Studies

Introduction

In an era defined by human mobility and multiple, mutually reinforcing crises, diaspora communities have emerged as vital actors in shaping peace and social cohesion—far beyond the traditional boundaries of conflict zones or homeland politics. Yet, the contributions of women within these transnational networks remain obscured by disciplinary silos and policy frameworks that too often address peacebuilding, migration and gender in isolation. This report begins from the conviction that understanding diaspora women's peace work demands an integrated lens—one that traces the trajectories of diverse migration waves, centers gendered experiences, and bridges the worlds of international law, community activism and feminist care.

Like all diasporas, the diaspora communities at the heart of this report are by no means homogeneous. Some communities have been rooted in their host societies for generations—such as Black women in the United Kingdom whose ancestors arrived in the wake of World War II—while others, like Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women, reflect multi-decadal migration patterns beginning in the 1960s and 1970s under guest-worker regimes. Still others, exemplified by the Ukrainian diaspora in Germany, are shaped by the most recent and acute displacements of war, with over a million refugees arriving since 2022. Each "wave" of migration carries its own challenges—linguistic barriers, systemic discrimination, shifting legal statuses—but also unique resources: intergenerational memories of resilience, diasporic networks spanning continents and adaptive strategies honed in response to evolving host-country contexts. By tracing these varied experiences side by side, this report illuminates how time, place and history converge to shape diaspora women's roles as peacebuilders.

At the heart of this inquiry lies the question of how existing international frameworks—embodied in the Women, Peace and Security agenda, global migration agreements and human rights treaties—create (or fail to create) an enabling environment for diaspora women to be recognized and well supported agents of peace. Too often, peacebuilding instruments speak of "local ownership" without clarifying whether that includes citizens living abroad or even potential migrants living in the country; migration policies invoke "diaspora engagement" while treating gender superficially; and gender conventions enshrine women's agency yet sometimes overlook the fallout of transnational displacement. This fragmentation not only deepens policy blind spots but also risks marginalizing the very women whose transnational perspective and community leadership have the power to transform peace processes.

To address these gaps, the report crosses three analytical silos—peacebuilding, diaspora and migration issues, and gender—through a methodology that combines desk review, structured content analysis and comparative synthesis, alongside rich case study fieldwork. This research draws on feminist research principles to foreground lived experience and intersectionality, interrogating how international instruments recognize (or omit) the capacity, participation, leadership, resources and belonging of diaspora women. The three case studies—focused on Black women leaders in the UK, Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women in the Netherlands and Ukrainian women in Germany—span decades and geographies to reveal both enduring patterns and novel dynamics of transnational peace work.

At the heart of this inquiry lies the question of how existing international frameworks create, or fail to create, an enabling environment for diaspora women to be recognized and well supported agents of peace.

It is worth noting that while this report examines diaspora women's peacebuilding more broadly, its empirical focus lies primarily in European contexts. Diasporic experiences, however, are highly diverse: most migrants globally move within the Global South rather than toward Europe or North America, and peacebuilding roles in those regions unfold under very different political, legal and resource conditions.[1] This report does not capture that full range, and its findings should therefore be read as contextually grounded in Europe, while recognizing that a similar inquiry based in the Global South might have generated distinct insights and emphases.

The report's central argument reframes diaspora women not as passive recipients of policy but as co-producers of peace whose activities — whether grassroots care networks, cultural diplomacy or high-impact advocacy — demand a reconceptualization of "the environment for peace." This report argues that meaningful progress requires more than symbolic mentions in resolutions; it demands people-centered approaches that dismantle institutional barriers, resource intersectional leadership and build social infrastructures of belonging. Only by integrating the insights of migration studies, gender justice and peacebuilding can policymakers and practitioners design inclusive, sustainable strategies that honor the creativity and resilience of diaspora women.

By bringing together insights from generational legacies, long-standing communities and emergent refugee networks, this report offers a multidimensional analysis that transcends geography and history. This report seeks to chart a path toward policies and practices that not only acknowledge diaspora women's agency but actively support their leadership in forging just and lasting peace across borders.

Methodology

The methodology for this report was guided by one overarching research question:

- **To what extent have international policy and legal frameworks created an enabling environment for diaspora women's peace work in their countries of residence?**

This question further delineated through four interlocking sub-questions:

- To what extent do international instruments formally recognize the capacity and agency of women in the diaspora?
- How do they facilitate meaningful participation and inclusion of these women in peace and policy processes?
- In what ways do they enable intersectional leadership through material, institutional and epistemic resources?
- How do they foster a sense of belonging and provide social infrastructure that undergirds diasporic peacebuilding in host societies?

In addition, each case study in this report was guided by its own set of tailored research questions, which enabled a detailed exploration of diaspora women's varied experiences across distinct geographic and sociopolitical landscapes.

The research unfolded in three stages. First, the research team conducted an expansive desk review of existing literature to ground our understanding of diasporas, gender, and peacebuilding. This review assessed peer-reviewed journal articles, policy briefs, reports by UN agencies and international organizations and publications from civil society and diaspora-led networks. This study uses the International Organization for Migration (IOM) definition of "diaspora" as "migrants or descendants of migrants, whose identity and sense of belonging have been shaped by their migration experience,"[2] and the literature review focused on feminist and decolonial critiques that emphasize lived experience and intersectional analysis. This stage allowed the research team to map key definitions, theoretical frameworks and existing gaps around diaspora women's agency in peace efforts.

This study uses the International Organization for Migration (IOM) definition of "diaspora" as "migrants or descendants of migrants, whose identity and sense of belonging have been shaped by their migration experience."

Building on this conceptual groundwork, the second stage comprised a systematic document and content analysis of international policy and legal frameworks across three domains: peacebuilding, gender (including the Women, Peace and Security agenda) and migration (including migration compacts and rights of refugees, migrants and stateless persons). We selected high-level instruments expected to influence national and regional practice:

- **Peacebuilding:** key examples included UN Security Council resolutions, the Peacebuilding Commission's founding resolutions and other UN-level peace-related frameworks;
- **Gender:** key examples included UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security and treaties such as CEDAW and its General Recommendations; and
- **Migration:** key examples included the Global Compact for Migration, the Global Compact on Refugees and conventions related to the rights of migrants.

The research team interrogated how the same thematic code manifested differently across frameworks that are usually siloed. The team also examined the depth of intersectional commitments, tracking references to race, legal status, generation and other identities. We identified patterns of convergence (areas where peace, gender and migration texts echoed one another) and divergence (silos where, for instance, migration frameworks treated gender superficially).

Reflecting the feminist ethics of care at the heart of this study, the researchers took special care to ensure that the analysis remained attuned to the intricate interplay of gender, identity and power within diaspora communities.

In parallel, the Women PeaceMaker Fellows carried out targeted fieldwork to collect data for each case study, engaging directly with diaspora women peacebuilders and community leaders in various regions. They relied primarily on interviews and community conversations to capture a rich diversity of viewpoints. Each case study was underpinned by a methodological approach embedded within its particular context, details of which appear in the relevant case studies within the report. Throughout their work, the Fellows adhered to feminist research principles, foregrounding participants' lived realities and their active role in co-creating knowledge.

Throughout this process, the research team remained committed to a pluralistic approach to knowledge production. Reflecting the feminist ethics of care at the heart of this study, the researchers took special care to ensure that the analysis remained attuned to the intricate interplay of gender, identity and power within diaspora communities.

By combining a rigorous desk review with a structured document analysis and a comparative synthesis, and by foregrounding feminist ethics of care and pluralistic knowledge, this methodology offers both breadth and depth. It illuminates not only what multilateral instruments say about diaspora women as rights-holders and actors, but also the practical and normative gaps that must be bridged to translate policy rhetoric into genuine, resourced and intersectional inclusion and recognition in peace processes.

Introduction to Diaspora Peacebuilding

This report seeks to contribute to the literature on diaspora-led peacebuilding in the following ways: expand knowledge about the strategies, achievements and challenges of diaspora women peacebuilders; contribute to analysis of how diaspora women build peace specifically in their countries of residence, not just their countries of origin; and deepen understanding of what type of environment enables diaspora women peacebuilders to build peace effectively. While the existing literature on diasporas at large is expansive, the body of literature focused on women peacebuilders is much smaller, and work focused on diaspora women leading peacebuilding in their countries of residence is even smaller. This report seeks to fill this gap and highlight the work that diaspora women peacebuilders are doing around the world, delineated through three case studies.

Defining Diasporas and Understanding their Work[a]

This report relies on the International Organization for Migration (IOM) definition of diaspora: "migrants or descendants of migrants, whose identity and sense of belonging have been shaped by their migration experience and background,"[3] which includes persons who identify with descriptors like refugee, exile, immigrant, displaced, and/or stateless persons.[4] The categorical differences are essential, as the unique experiences of respective statuses differ substantially, thus impacting peacebuilding strategies and tactics. Refugees, for instance, may focus on adapting to life in their host country, their ability to earn money and join the local labor force, or offering support to other refugees.[5] Additionally, the "when, why and how" of how diaspora communities form — and how members identify with the descriptors above — influences diaspora members' perceived and real political power and the public's reception of peacebuilding efforts. For example, refugees' immediate connection to displacement, conflict and a need for resolution may provide a unique perspective and urgency that can drive political action.[6]

Although broad racial, ethnic and regional diaspora communities are covered in the existing diaspora and peacebuilding literature, a substantial portion of research focuses on migrant groups that have migrated recently, and not much focuses on long-standing, multigenerational diaspora groups. The literature on women-led peacebuilding within the diaspora is also limited; however, available reports highlight a mix of both grassroots efforts and more traditional, formalized work done by nongovernmental and civil society organizations led by diaspora communities, and notably, diaspora women.[7] The literature primarily focuses on this second category of formalized work rather than grassroots efforts or informal, coalition-driven work.

Regardless of the type of diaspora or identification, peacebuilders within respective diasporas focus their work on their country of residence, their country of origin, or both. Overwhelmingly, diaspora community members who focus on peacebuilding work in both locations.[8] However, this report focuses specifically on efforts in peacebuilders' countries of residence, which tend to focus on supporting integration and assimilation or mitigating, if not transforming, the harm of being marginalized or minoritized in societies where they are othered.

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a For a discussion on different definitions of diaspora and the differences within, please see Elena B. Stavrevska, Sveto Muhammad Ishoq, Shadi Rouhshahbaz, Kay Soe, Briana Mawby and Carolyne Komen, *Making Peace from Afar: Women-Led Peacebuilding from the Diaspora*, Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice, 2025, available at https://www.sandiego.edu/peace/institute-for-peace-justice/initiatives/women-peace-security/women-peacemakers/.

Gender and Diaspora Peacebuilding

Diasporas can provide necessary space for women to engage in peacebuilding roles and guide their communities through various peacebuilding and advocacy efforts, ultimately transforming peacebuilding roles within diasporas.[9] However, in hyper-fragmented and patriarchal societies and diasporas, the mere acknowledgement of women's peacebuilding work within the diaspora can be a point of contention. In some diaspora communities, peacebuilding is culturally viewed as a man's role, which hinders community members' ability to acknowledge or agree with women's leadership in peacebuilding, even informally.[10]

This has resulted in a variety of strategies and approaches in response. For instance, in a 2024 study conducted by Carver, Zech and Tohow, women participants in a Somali diaspora community in Melbourne, Australia identified themselves as peacebuilding mentors rather than peacebuilders, which was seen by both men and women within the community as less threatening to patriarchal cultural norms.[11] From a research and policy perspective, cross-cultural and semantic misunderstandings compound these gendered dynamics, exacerbating challenges in documenting women's peacebuilding experiences, as well as formal acknowledgments from their communities and diasporas that this work is taking place.[12] This, however, does not stop the work of women peacebuilders. Instead, some women peacebuilders articulate that this maintenance of traditional power structures further fuels their desires, noting that

> "[w]hen you are outside of the bounds of power, you use extraordinary creativity. That is another aspect of women's peacebuilding that is less understood. We need to survive. We need to get beyond the current unjust structures of power, so we figure out ways to get around and through them."[13]

As reported in existing literature, and in the case studies throughout this report, the versatility and creativity of women peacebuilders, despite or in spite of traditional power and norm structures, forces new or unexpected ways forward.

Challenges and Practices in Diaspora Peacebuilding

Through the literature review, the research team identified common diaspora peacebuilding practices and challenges. This is not an exhaustive list, nor does it aim to discredit the unique experiences of diaspora peacebuilders whose work, expertise and efforts have not been documented. Diaspora communities, due to the diversity of diaspora community makeup and explicit needs — especially when spread across many countries of residence — are adaptive and responsive to evolving societies, challenges and priorities. Peacebuilders overwhelmingly prioritize community and care services to address systemic gaps in their countries of residence, like offering language classes and developing community response mechanisms for challenges that arise within the diaspora community.

Although each diaspora community is vastly different, many share common peacebuilding challenges. Intracultural tensions often arise due to disagreements over peacebuilding tactics, priorities and leaders–especially when evaluating diaspora women's peacebuilding leadership.[14] Personal privilege, and thus, marginalization, also creates friction between peacebuilders and within communities, and discussions of power — who holds it and who wants it — can dominate peacebuilding efforts and potentially hinder progress.[15] Unfortunately, these tensions and friction may create the perception (to those outside of the respective diaspora community) that the diaspora community and thus, its goals, lack cohesion, which may negatively impact public perception, collaboration or perceived legitimacy. Additionally, migration status fundamentally shapes how diaspora members can engage. Citizenship or official residency offer stronger protection than most visa statuses. The opportunity to be safely confrontational could be one of geographic or residential status privilege, as there is a legitimate concern in the US and other diaspora hubs about retaliatory administrative practices, including visa revocation, as "many folks who are [in countries of current residence] on visas and are concerned about increased authoritarian tendencies in both the United States and their home countries."[16]

Diaspora members' engagement in community life in their country of residency can open dialogues and increase cross-cultural understanding, which in turn may reduce inter-community tension and violence. Black's (1999) analysis of the Irish diaspora in the California Bay Area in the US demonstrates the connectivity through sports and the impacts of intercultural relationships and communication. The participants' involvement in recreational team sports, especially for women participants, "reinforced detachment from Irish paternalist and parochial norms" and altered perspectives and opinions about non-Irish people, all due to new exposure and relationships.[17] The idea of this closed, homogenous Irish society was flipped on its head due to the creation of this new multiethnic community. Intercultural engagement may shift perspectives and ultimately reduce discrimination.

Engagement with technology and online communities has transformed diaspora peacebuilding efforts. Technology, even though it has also increased the danger of online violence especially against women peacebuilders, has simplified cross-country collaboration, communication and organizing efforts, substantially impacting diaspora peacebuilding. For instance, Afghan women and diaspora organizations, including the Afghan Women's Network, use hashtags, including #AfghanWomenWillNotGoBack, to encourage messaging uniformity and track engagement, and #MyRedLine as an explicit call to action for Afghan women to share their "red lines," or boundaries they believe should be in place for peace agreements.[18]

Overall, diaspora communities are responding to their unique needs and environments and collaborating with other diaspora communities to share resources and better serve communities. These efforts offer creative examples of collaboration and diverse coalitions working to build safer and more peaceful communities.

Migration status fundamentally shapes how diaspora members can engage in peacebuilding efforts.

Intracommunity Tensions and Fragmentation in Diaspora Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding work is shaped by access to resources and privilege, which often depends on migration status, experience and gendered expectations. These factors breed tensions within diasporas about who has the privilege and power to leave, versus who can — or is forced to — stay in the country of origin. The ability to leave may provide safety and allows diaspora members to play an important role in peacebuilding.[19] As Bermudez (2011) argues, diaspora members may be especially effective because of the "expertise and experience acquired while abroad, and their potential for lobbying the international community and offering support to civil society efforts towards peace at home."[20]

While diaspora members often have the ability — particularly when they live in countries that provide relative safety — to speak loudly on behalf of their communities, there are also concerns that their voices are heard more loudly than those of people living in the country of origin.[21] For example, leaders connected to the Women's League of Burma (WLB) who left Burma/Myanmar, continued their work in the diaspora and ultimately returned to the country of origin, built international networks and experience that "were valued, but became a source of tension when [they] were perceived as more visible than insiders."[22] In some cases, those who leave for countries in the West are perceived by those who stay in countries of origin as "other" or "Western" due to assimilation or evolving ideals. In some contexts, this change can be perceived as "anti-patriotic" or contradictory to cultural or national norms.[23]

In some cases, diaspora members are not able to escape the violence of their country of origin. Surveillance and intimidation from China impact the Uyghur diaspora community regardless of an individual's current location.[24] Surveillance and intelligence collection efforts limit the diaspora's ability to lead peacebuilding initiatives or document their own experiences, especially in countries where China is able to exert political pressure.[25] Baillie and Vandenbrink's (2022) review of documentation lists attempts to "force the return of Uyghurs in the diaspora [which includes instances of] physical and online intimidation and harassment; threatening and/or targeting of family members in XUAR [the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region] including for arbitrary detention; and cybersecurity threats to personal information, communications channels and collected information."[26] As Freedom House notes, these surveillance and harassment mechanisms create a broad framework for extraterritorial control and constrain the "ability to exercise basic rights even when living in a foreign democracy."[27]

Some challenges of peacebuilding work in diasporas are connected to fragmentation along ethnic, religious, political and class/caste lines.[28] Diasporas are not monoliths, and subgroups hold their own perspectives, priorities and goals. These tensions complicate creating unifying or shared goals and may further marginalize minoritized groups in collective efforts. In clan-centric cultures, like the Somali diaspora, "clan affiliation is central to traditional social structuring, and it guides political discussions, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding."[29] These structures provide a foundation for collaboration but may also maintain hierarchies that may restrict individuals' ability to participate in and lead peacebuilding work.[30] Fragmentation may also be affected by the location of the diaspora community. Fauriol and Esnold (2024) argue that the lack of cohesion among the Haitian diaspora in the us limits the diaspora's ability to unite and advocate for specific policies.[31] Specifically, they argue that the "Haitian diaspora is much less organized and lacks a unified voice and strategic focus, impeding its ability to leverage its inherent power."[32] This lack of unity may also be shaped by the us political environment and the systemic challenges Haitians face in the US.

How Diaspora Location Impacts Peacebuilding

Where people are able migrate or receive protected status fundamentally shapes if and how peacebuilding efforts can move forward as well as which issues become areas of focus for diaspora members. Location may determine what diaspora members are able to speak about, their level of safety engaging in peacebuilding work, and their ability to connect with each other. The political system in the host country shapes access to resources and decision-makers, and the political movements or issues of the day also shape diaspora peacebuilders' safety and priorities.

Growing right-wing ideologies and authoritarian regimes globally have led some diaspora communities (temporarily or permanently) to cease peacebuilding around culturally or regionally important issues and focus instead on fighting discrimination and harassment in the current country of residence. As evidenced in Rostami-Povey's (2007) study of the assimilation of Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan in comparison to those in the US and the UK, migrants in the UK and US faced extreme racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia, which meant peacebuilders switched from focusing on typical issues of focus — like gender equality and justice — to dealing with othering and exclusion.[33] Alternatively, migrants in Pakistan and Iran dealt with less overt or extreme materializations of racism and thus were able to prioritize gender equity conversations.[34] However, those locations bring other challenges in terms of collective organizing. Diaspora communities are exceptionally adept at adapting to new conditions, but having to do so may distract from — or completely stop — essential work on other critical needs.

Diaspora communities located in countries that were the colonizer or oppressor of their homeland face a complicated — and perhaps impossible — challenge when working to build peace and center justice. Challenges arise for diaspora communities located in host countries that are responsible for violence and instability in their country of origin, which complicates peacebuilding efforts, tactics and collaboration. For example, as documented by Ahn and Berry, the Korean diaspora within the United States experiences nuanced emotions about building peace and community across cultural bounds.[35] This becomes especially challenging from a coalition-building perspective, as there is a "deeply distressing idea that people should be fortunate enough to live in the United States and be entitled to services and benefits."[36] Often, the violent actions of the colonizer or oppressor country are what caused communities to move to the host country in the first place; this violence created conditions that displaced communities or created harsh enough conditions to compel people to move. Sometimes, migration to the former colonizer is one of few migration routes available to those looking to flee. Diaspora work frequently centers conversations about this violence facilitated vulnerability and thus the need for services for these communities as they migrate. Additionally, the perception from the host community that diaspora members should be "grateful" to live there can cause tension and limit meaningful conversation.[37] As Ahn and Berry argue, the mere presence of "many diasporic communities in the United States exists because of the way that the US military and its imperialist priorities wreak havoc on their home countries."[38]

Diaspora peacebuilders navigating peacebuilding and advocacy work within countries that colonized or oppressed their countries of origin face complex challenges, and the desire for displays of "gratefulness" from migrant and diaspora groups presents challenges for coalition-building, general assimilation and integration within local communities.[39] This means that diaspora peacebuilders can be discouraged both from calling attention to violence in their homeland and advocating for change at the root within their countries of residence. Doing so may increase the chance of experiencing surveillance, repression or the potential for administrative retaliation around visa status.[40]

Challenges arise for diaspora communities located in host countries responsible for violence and instability in their country of origin, which complicates peacebuilding efforts.

Building Cross-Cultural Connections in the Diaspora

Diaspora members may have greater exposure to diverse populations in their country of residence, including diverse population from their own homeland. This varies depending on the countries involved. Some authors argue that in certain contexts, exposure to different types of diversity can lead to cross-cultural collaboration, understanding and personal growth.[41] As Bermudez (2011) notes, Colombians in the UK and Spain are now engaged with a broader range of Colombians, including those outside of their respective class bounds, which likely would not have happened in their homeland of Colombia.[42] Ferrera, et al.'s (2023) study about the Filipino diaspora in the US discusses diaspora communities organizing efforts that resulted in two projects: 1) the community-care focused Healing Justice Dialogue Series within the United States, which brought together diverse coalitions of diaspora communities (including Black, Asian and Latinx students) who faced similar challenges with academia, COVID-19-related exhaustion and racist violence; and 2) a return-to-homeland reconnection experience NEXTGEN Pagbablik, which prioritized personal healing and ancestral connection.[43] These collaborative efforts illustrate the power of shared diaspora identities and experiences even across different nationalities or countries of origin.

These cross-cultural and cross-community integrations and interactions can force a more complete or flexible view of who is truly included in the diaspora community, and, at times, can mitigate differences that have once driven people apart, to now see themselves as one people and fight for change and peace alongside one another. Recurrent themes in the existing literature suggest that without the new proximity the host country or country of residence creates, this evolution of understanding and acceptance would not have taken place.[44] Increased engagement and contact can shift identities and how communities are "othered," ultimately shaping work and collaboration.[45] Even deeper, from a survival and livelihood standpoint, as articulated in Snyder (2020), "most women exiled from Myanmar came to realize and understand the importance of collaboration and trust building among ethnic communities for their future in their host or resettlement countries."[46] Diasporas often have the opportunity to engage with diverse population they would not have met otherwise, which can foster or exacerbate tension but can also encourage collaboration.

This report aims to address gaps in the existing literature on the peacebuilding efforts and practices of women leaders across various diasporas. Additionally, the report seeks to fill research gaps on diaspora peacebuilding within host countries or countries of residence, as the bulk of the existing research is focused on diaspora peacebuilding leadership aimed at creating change in the homeland. In this, the report hopes to illuminate peace work more broadly, while clarifying the modes and methods within peacebuilding work that address diaspora community needs.

The report also attempts to address gaps in diaspora peacebuilding research about longstanding diaspora communities, as a significant portion of existing literature prioritizes more recent diaspora communities and migrants. This research features fundings from diaspora communities with different migration and integration histories with the intention to show commonalities and differences in how this accelerates or hinders movement-building. This report highlights how diaspora women peacebuilders navigate complex environments to address critical needs facing their communities.

Intersecting International Frameworks and Envisioning an Enabling Environment for Diaspora Women Peacebuilders

Diaspora peacebuilders work across cultures, borders and communities to reshape their communities; they welcome new arrivals, provide material, social and emotional support, and push for policy change that will protect and benefit their communities. They lead this challenging work despite obstacles in integration and accessing services, often in a context while experiencing cultural and linguistic barriers, discrimination and violence. This report seeks to understand what type of social, political and legal environment enables diaspora women's peace work so that policymakers and funders can support the political and social changes required to create this enabling environment.

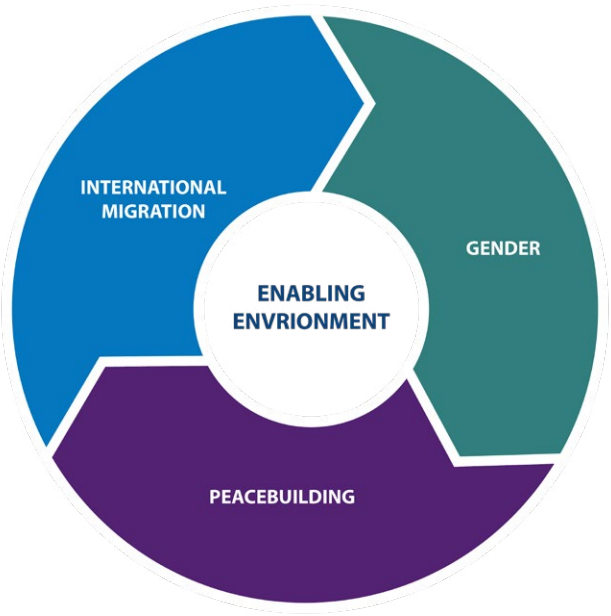
All too often the odds are stacked against creating the long-term societal change many peacebuilders seek. Although peacebuilders often continue their work despite these challenges, certain types of support can facilitate diaspora peacebuilders' access to the services and income they need to support themselves and their families while leading peacebuilding work, ability to build community and coordinate with like-minded changemakers, and rights and freedoms to allow them to move, act and advocate effectively.

There is no one framework that addresses the multilayered experience of building peace as a person in a diaspora community; these leaders experience the challenges of migration and integration (or the unique challenge of being the descendants of those who migrated), obstacles to their efforts to build peace or positive social change, and gendered challenges and conditions that threaten their well-being, all while trying to find gender-responsive and sustainable solutions.

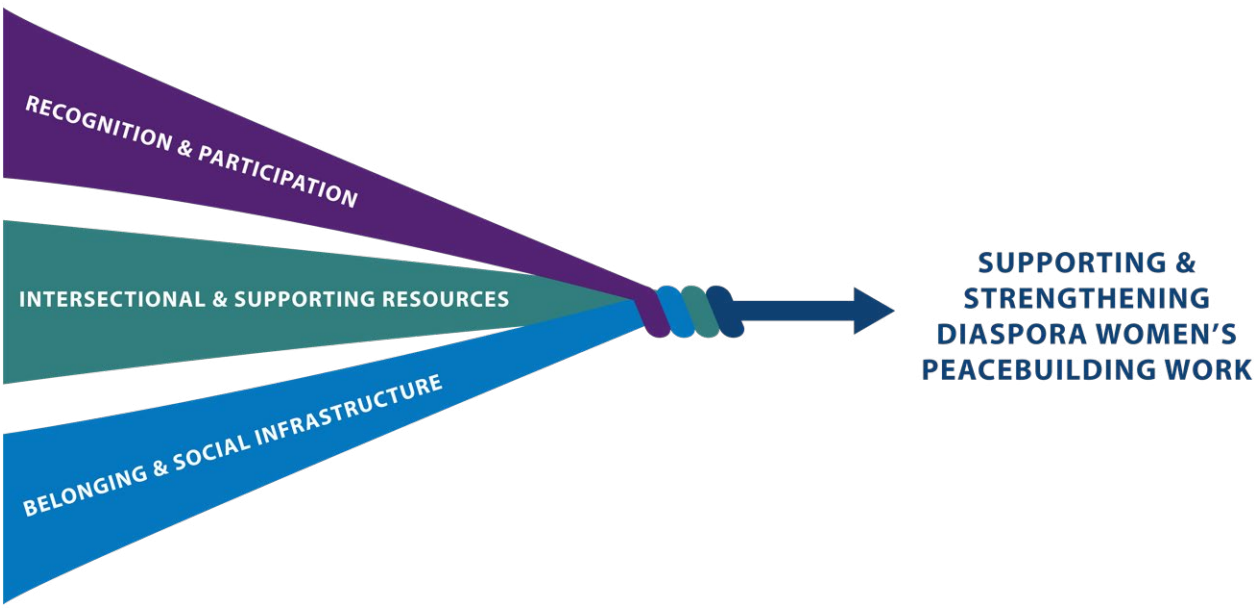
Diaspora peacebuilders lead this challenging work despite obstacles in integration and accessing services, often in a context while experiencing cultural and linguistic barriers, discrimination and violence.

This report proposes a holistic, multisectoral framework for understanding peacebuilding led by diaspora women, spanning existing frameworks that address peacebuilding, gender and migration. This multidimensional approach seeks to make visible the complex experiences, challenges and achievements of diaspora women peacebuilders working in their countries of residence, a group that is often not seen, not funded and not recognized for their impact.

The following chapters each highlight an element of an enabling environment that would support and strengthen the work of diaspora women peacebuilders. This vision brings together analysis of existing **international migration**, **gender** and **peacebuilding** frameworks. Each chapter proposes how these frameworks can be read in combination to understand how to create this enabling environment to promote and foster the work of diaspora women peacebuilders.



The first chapter focuses on the importance of **recognition and participation**, the second on **intersectional and supporting resources**, and the third on strong **belonging and social infrastructure**, all based on the intersection of these three frameworks. These chapters each highlight the findings and analysis of the three 2024-2025 Women PeaceMaker Fellows, which provide analysis drawn from the real and time-tested experiences of diaspora women peacebuilders.



Recognition and Participation Further Enable Diaspora Women's Peacebuilding

This chapter argues that the existing international frameworks, norms and legal instruments have already laid a strong foundation for the recognition of diaspora women's agency and their participation in peace efforts. Namely, women in diaspora communities have long been central actors in sustaining social ties, transmitting remittances and mobilizing for peace, even though policy frameworks only recently began to acknowledge the full scale of their contributions and the need for their inclusion. The World Migration Report 2020 notes that diasporas constitute a form of global social capital whose members act as first movers in crisis response and long-term recovery.[47] Although an unprecedented 108.4 million people were forcibly displaced by the end of 2022,[48] the labor, expertise, and leadership of women within those mobile populations remain chronically under-recognized. A growing body of scholarship documents how diaspora women bridge host- and home-country contexts, facilitate intercultural dialogue, contest patriarchal norms and contribute to peacebuilding efforts despite operating from abroad.[49] That work confirms earlier findings that diasporas are not passive recipients of peace interventions and initiatives, but leaders and co-producers of peace, security and development outcomes.[50]This chapter explores to what extent existing international legal instruments, norms and frameworks create an enabling environment for the work done by women in the diaspora to build peace in their current countries of residence. In doing so, it first examines how international frameworks recognize diaspora women's capacity and agency, before proceeding with an examination of how they enable diaspora women's participation and inclusion in peace processes, and finally demonstrating the main argument of the chapter in the context of the case study of Ukrainian diaspora women in Germany.

Women in diaspora communities have long been central actors in sustaining social ties, transmitting remittances and mobilizing for peace, even though policy frameworks only recently began to acknowledge the full scale of their contributions and the need for their inclusion.

Diaspora Women as Agents of Change

Recognition, in its broadest sense, entails formal acknowledgement of diaspora women's agency, as well as practical validation of the skills and labor they invest in peacebuilding. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) codified this in Objective 19, urging states to enable migrants and diasporas, especially women, to participate in peacebuilding and community dialogue in both origin and destination contexts.[51] Its sister instrument, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), likewise affirms that refugee and diaspora networks are partners in creating conditions for safe return and reconstruction.[52] The International Organization for Migration's Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF) reinforces that recognition by framing migrants as "agents of development" rather than problems to be managed.[53] Taken together, these policy instruments signal a growing appreciation that diaspora women's knowledge, resources and experiences can be a vital asset for peace.

Recognition of diaspora women's capacity is also grounded in international law, in particular human-rights treaties. For example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that all people are born free, equal in dignity and entitled to the same rights—no matter where they come from.[54] This idea underpins the principle that women in a diaspora, like all citizens living abroad, still have full rights. Similarly, in the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), every citizen keeps the right to take part in their country's political life—voting, running for office or speaking out—even if they live overseas.[55] The ICCPR also bans discrimination based on categories like sex or national origin, so diaspora women should not be treated as second-class.[56] The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) goes further by requiring governments to ensure women's equality in public life. Article 8 says that women have the same right as men to represent their country abroad or work with international bodies.[57] That includes women living outside their homeland. Sadly, many countries still fall short — diaspora women are too often left out of official roles. But the Universal Declaration, the ICCPR, and CEDAW together set a clear standard: living abroad does not strip women of their rights or their voice.

Other instruments address specific statuses that many diaspora women hold: the 1951 Refugee Convention (and its 1967 Protocol) affirms the basic rights of refugees, and the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions seek to ensure that even those without nationality have rights and that new cases of statelessness (often affecting women and children in diasporas) are prevented.[58] Taken together, international human rights law recognizes these women as rights-holders and potential actors, not merely as victims or passive people.

The normative apex of recognition for women as peace agents comes from the Women, Peace and Security agenda. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) was a landmark, reframing women — who had been seen mainly as victims of war — as indispensable peacebuilders. Resolution 1325 urges Member States to increase women's representation "at all decision-making levels (…) in the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict." [59] Though the text of 1325 did not explicitly mention "diaspora" or women outside conflict zones, its principles opened the door for all women, wherever they reside, to claim a role in peace processes. Empirical evidence has powerfully vindicated this approach: when women influence peace negotiations, the resulting agreements are more likely to endure. Studies show that women's participation in peace talks is associated with a 35 percent higher chance that a peace agreement will last at least 15 years.[60] This finding has been cited frequently in the push for more inclusive peace processes.

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However, with most WPS resolutions (1325 and its successors) being interpreted as focusing on conflict zones, diaspora women's contributions have remained somewhat out of sight in these documents. Over time, gaps in the WPS agenda's inclusivity began to be addressed by other mechanisms. For instance, the CEDAW Committee — which monitors the women's rights convention — has stepped in with:

- General Recommendation 30 (2013), which urges governments to include all women — displaced, refugee or in the diaspora — in peace talks and rebuilding efforts;[61]
- General Recommendations 32 (2014) and 26 (2008), which make it clear that migrant and asylum-seeking women must have a say in policies on asylum, integration and return;[62]
- General Recommendation 40 (2024), which raises the bar even higher, insisting on true gender parity in every decision-making body. It emphasizes removing every barrier so that all women — of every background — can participate equally.[63] This implicitly includes diaspora women as part of the spectrum of "all women" who must be represented.

In short, the WPS agenda and CEDAW framework together have built a normative foundation that recognizes diaspora women not only as beneficiaries of peace, but as contributors to it.

Recognition also intersects with racial justice. The Human Rights Council's Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent argues that recognition of capacity must precede both justice and development[64] and proposes a draft UN declaration that affirms people of African descent, including those in the diaspora, as agents of change in their own right.[65] These framings help ensure that diaspora women's contributions are neither re-appropriated nor erased.

Beyond treaties and resolutions, the international peacebuilding architecture has slowly begun to note diasporic agency. The creation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in 2005 (through UN Security Council Resolution 1645 and General Assembly Resolution 60/180)[66] established a platform where civil society — including diaspora representatives — could, at least in theory, engage with member states on post-conflict strategies. While in practice the PBC has only occasionally brought in diaspora voices, the door is institutionally open. In 2016, the twin resolutions on Sustaining Peace[67] adopted a "whole-of-society" approach to peacebuilding, stressing that sustaining peace is a task for all segments of society and not only governments. Although they did not name diasporas specifically, this inclusive ethos implies that diaspora communities should be part of the conversation about sustainable and just peace in both their current countries and their societies of origin. Recent Secretary-General's reports on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace have reinforced this by referencing the role of "transnational constituencies" and urging partnerships with diaspora networks to leverage their expertise and resources for peace.[68] Still, one must acknowledge that these acknowledgments remain general; explicit references to women in diaspora are rare in high-level reports.

Often, diaspora women find themselves subsumed under broader categories like "civil society" or "women's groups," which can leave a gap in visibility. Nonetheless, the trend is moving in the right direction: the international community now frequently speaks of diasporas as partners in development and peace, rather than as afterthoughts. Even at the regional or national policy level, there are signs of recognition. For example, the European Union's current development policy explicitly recognizes diasporas as important actors in development and peace, and it highlights the empowerment of women and girls as key to those efforts. National governments with large diaspora communities have also started to incorporate diaspora contributions into their peace and development strategies. All these measures serve to validate diaspora women's capacities: they are no longer seen merely as members of vulnerable groups or senders of remittances, but as agents of change in their own right. This evolving recognition helps ensure that diaspora women's contributions are neither under-recognized nor appropriated by others but celebrated as integral to peace and security endeavors.

Despite these advances on paper, gaps in recognition persist in practice. Diaspora women leaders often report that their cross-cultural expertise and intimate knowledge of conflict and violence dynamics are undervalued by government and donors. Frequently, the peace work they do (organizing dialogues, raising humanitarian funds, counseling trauma survivors across borders) is treated as "community volunteering" rather than professional peacebuilding — which in turn affects their access to funding and seats at policymaking tables. This reveals a continued disconnect: on one hand, global policy now recognizes diaspora women as stakeholders; on the other hand, many diaspora women still struggle for their work to be taken seriously on the ground. Bridging that gap between rhetoric and reality is the next challenge, starting with ensuring that recognition moves beyond symbolism to tangible inclusion.

Diaspora Women's Participation and Inclusion

Recognition alone is not enough if it is not accompanied by genuine participation. Participation here refers not only to presence in a room, but to having influence over decisions and outcomes. International commitments have repeatedly affirmed that women must be included in all stages of peace processes — and by extension, this must include women of the diaspora who have a stake both in their homelands and their current country of residence's future. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, as discussed, was seminal in calling for women's increased representation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It urged Member States and the UN to involve women at "all decision-making levels" in mechanisms for preventing and resolving conflict.[69] In the two and a half decades since 1325, there have been countless initiatives to boost women's participation, from training women mediators to creating rosters of women experts. However, empirical reviews show that diaspora women rarely make it into formal peace negotiations. Peace processes tend to focus on parties to the conflict (e.g., governments and rebel groups), often excluding women and other minoritized genders. Thus, even as women in societies affected by violence fight for a seat at the table, women who are outside the country — no matter how active they have been in advocating peace — are usually left out of the official talks. This remains a blind spot in many peace negotiations: they fail to bring in the valuable perspectives of refugees and exiles who might have ideas for reconciliation and have mobilized significant support abroad.

There are some notable efforts to remedy this exclusion. Transitional justice processes, for instance, have sometimes been more innovative in engaging the diaspora. In Colombia, which underwent a major peace process in 2016, the follow-up Truth Commission recognized the importance of the Colombian diaspora. The Commission created special mechanisms to hear from Colombians abroad, including women. Diaspora women's organizations helped collect over 2,000 testimonies from exiles in 24 different countries to contribute to Colombia's truth-seeking and reconciliation.[70] This ensured that the voices of women who had been displaced — many of whom had unique insights into the conflict and its aftermath — were included in the country's historical record and recommendations for peace. One initiative, the Truth, Memory and Reconciliation Commission of Colombian Women in the Diaspora, explicitly empowered women in exile to become "agents of change" in the peace process.[71] It created a safe space for them to share their stories and put forward recommendations, addressing their exclusion from previous dialogues. Such examples demonstrate that when given the opportunity, diaspora women eagerly step into participatory roles and enrich peace processes with their transnational perspective.

Beyond voluntary initiatives, there are binding obligations on states to include women, including displaced and migrant women, in decision-making. CEDAW General Recommendation 30, mentioned earlier, directs governments to ensure meaningful inclusion of women affected by conflict — wherever they may be. It specifically mentions internally displaced and refugee women, saying that they should be able to participate equally in peace negotiations and recovery efforts.[72] This is a strong statement: it extends the Women, Peace and Security agenda's call for inclusion to women who have been uprooted by war. Similarly, CEDAW General Recommendation 32 on refugee and asylum-seeking women calls for states to respect these women's rights to a voice in asylum procedures and in shaping durable solutions, like return or resettlement.[73] And CEDAW General Recommendation 26 on women migrant workers urges countries to protect migrant women's labor and human rights, which implicitly requires listening to migrant women's experiences in policy-making on migration.[74]

The Global Compact for Migration's Objective 19 goes beyond recognition and into concrete participation: it urges countries to facilitate diaspora women's involvement in public life, including by allowing them to vote from abroad, run for office, or otherwise engage in their origin country's political processes.[75] Some countries have adopted out-of-country voting and even reserved parliamentary seats for their diaspora — measures that benefit women and men in equal measure.[76] The Global Compact for Migration also calls for creating "safe and empowering public spaces" for migrant and diaspora women to participate in community dialogue and peacebuilding in countries of destination.[77] In host countries, this might mean supporting migrant women's organizations and leadership training, so that women in diaspora can influence policies not only "back home" but also in their new communities. The Global Compact on Refugees, while less detailed on this front, encourages involving refugees (and by extension refugee women) in the design of solutions for their situation.[78] When refugees plan returns or integration projects, women's input should be solicited to ensure their needs are met and their talents and knowledge utilized. Additionally, the refugee compact makes a nod to the role of the diaspora by suggesting that diasporas can be part of solidarity efforts for refugees.[79]

The letter of the law to ensure an enabling environment for diaspora women peacemakers is largely in the right place. The challenge now is executing these inclusive ideals on the ground, because a peace that ignores those in the diaspora is incomplete.

Regional and thematic frameworks and initiatives echo these participation demands. For instance, the African Union has declared the diaspora to be Africa's "sixth region" and encourages diaspora engagement in the AU's programs, implicitly including women.[80] The UN Human Rights Council's Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent has stressed that people of African descent (including those in diaspora) should be present in decision-making processes that affect their lives. In its proposals for a draft UN declaration on the rights of African descent communities, the Working Group emphasizes capacity-building and representation of diaspora voices.[81] This is particularly salient for Afro-descendant women in diaspora, who often face both racial and gender marginalization. The International Organization for Migration's MiGOF, as noted, calls for "whole-of-government and whole-of-society" approaches to migration governance.[82] A truly "whole-of-society" approach would, by definition, include migrant and diaspora women's associations in crafting integration or peacebuilding policies.

In practice, however, significant obstacles remain at the operational level. Security vetting procedures, for example, sometimes exclude diaspora individuals from peace talks on the grounds that they are not "on the ground" or that their loyalties are unclear. Visa regimes can make it difficult for women in exile to travel to peace conferences in other countries. And funding streams for peacebuilding may not be accessible to small diaspora-led initiatives, especially if those initiatives are informal groups of refugee women. The UN Secretary-General's peacebuilding reports have repeatedly flagged these gaps — noting that despite rhetorical support for inclusion, women peacebuilders (including those abroad) still receive only a tiny fraction of global peacebuilding funds. This indicates that while frameworks for participation exist, more proactive measures are needed to implement them.

Overall, the international community has laid down extensive obligations and encouragements for including women — diaspora women included — in peace efforts. The letter of the law and policy to ensure an enabling environment is largely in the right place: from UN resolutions to global compacts, there is a common theme that peace processes must be inclusive to be legitimate and effective. The spirit of these mandates is that a peace that ignores those in the diaspora is incomplete. The challenge now is executing these inclusive ideals on the ground, which involves overcoming barriers that diaspora women face, as discussed in the subsequent case studies in this report.

Case Study: Ukrainian Diaspora Women in Germany

The Ukrainian diaspora in Germany, which is in the focus of the case study by Women PeaceMaker Fellow Mariia Levchenko, offers a compelling example of how diasporic women engage in peacebuilding through both formal and informal channels, in ways that reinforce recognition and participation. Following Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Germany became host to the largest Ukrainian refugee population in Europe — now over 1.1 million people — approximately 90 percent of whom are women and children. The influx transformed the Ukrainian diaspora into a women-dominant, civically active community that combines caregiving responsibilities with leadership in humanitarian, advocacy, and peace efforts.

Women-led diaspora initiatives in Germany have created informal care networks that respond rapidly to refugee needs. Examples that Levchenko highlights include grassroots trauma counselling, childcare cooperatives and peer mentoring schemes that facilitate both social integration and emotional healing. Such efforts go beyond relief: they foster resilience, social cohesion and belonging, all of which are core components of peacebuilding. Cultural events have also served as tools for soft diplomacy, preserving Ukrainian identity while building empathy and solidarity within German society. In these efforts, women's leadership and emotional labor have been instrumental, often shaped by caregiving experience and a collective ethos of mutual support.

The diaspora's peacebuilding is equally political. As Levchenko shows, Ukrainian women have led public demonstrations, spoken to media, lobbied German and EU officials and campaigned for justice for conflict-related sexual violence. Their framing of peace is not neutral or pacifist but grounded in justice, accountability and Ukrainian sovereignty. Acts of humanitarian relief, advocacy and truth-telling are viewed by participants as essential to achieving a sustainable and just peace. This aligns with CEDAW's General Recommendations 30 and 40, which underscore women's right to participate in all decision-making processes concerning peace and recovery, including displaced women in the diaspora.

Despite these achievements, diaspora women encounter multiple challenges that echo the disconnects identified in the broader chapter. Participants cited systemic barriers such as bureaucratic hurdles in registering organizations, limited access to funding and exclusion from formal policy dialogues on integration or peace. Gendered burdens were acute: women juggle activism with unpaid care responsibilities, face undervaluation of their work and experience emotional exhaustion from carrying their community's grief and resilience. The peacebuilding they conduct, despite its strategic, professional and transformative value, is often dismissed as "community volunteering."

Internal diaspora dynamics also complicate collective action. Tensions between migration waves, generational divides and differing visions of peace (ranging from negotiation to total victory) can fragment advocacy efforts.

The Ukrainian diaspora's experience reinforces the central argument of this chapter: international frameworks may increasingly recognize the agency of diaspora women, but this recognition must translate into inclusion, support, and resourcing. The case study reveals that diaspora peacebuilding is already happening—through emotional resilience, cultural preservation, and political engagement—but its sustainability depends on dismantling the practical and normative barriers that continue to exclude or marginalize these efforts.

Ultimately, Levchenko's case study illustrates how diaspora women are not merely survivors or aid recipients, but active peacebuilders whose leadership, if fully supported, can bridge policy rhetoric and lived realities. Their work exemplifies the spirit of the environment created through international commitments such as the WPS agenda, the Global Compact for Migration and CEDAW: that women, wherever they are, have the right and capacity to shape peace.

Intersectional Leadership and Supporting Resources Enable and Enhance Diaspora Women's Peacebuilding

This chapter examines how existing international frameworks shape an enabling environment for intersectional leadership and for the resources that sustain the peace work of women in the diaspora. The present analysis interrogates whether and how current global frameworks and norms resource and empower women whose identities cut across gender, race, class, migration status and generation, and who mobilize, often transnationally, to foster peace. The argument proceeds from the premise that diaspora women's leadership is often collective, care-centered and grassroots, yet it requires material, institutional and epistemic support to thrive. The chapter argues that at present, the siloed mandates of the existing international frameworks lead to under-recognition and invisibility of intersectional leadership in diaspora women's peacebuilding efforts. Furthermore, the chapter argues that meaningful recognition demands tailored material, institutional and epistemic support for leaders whose identities span gender, race, class and migration status. In developing this argument, the chapter first examines where international frameworks and mechanisms already recognize intersectional leadership, where they allocate and foresee resources to support it, and where they fall short, before proceeding to provide an example through the case study focused on Black women leaders in the UK.

The notion of intersectional leadership recognizes that power and marginalization are experienced through overlapping axes such as gender, race, ethnicity and legal status. In coining the term intersectionality, Kimberlé Crenshaw's work, looking at the US context, demonstrated that Black women's political claims were routinely erased when law or policy addressed only "women" or only "Black people."[83] Patricia Hill Collins and subsequent Black feminist scholars extended this insight to reveal how Black women carve out spaces of collective leadership by leveraging community knowledge and care practices that mainstream institutions undervalue.[84] In diaspora peacebuilding, such leadership tends to rely on networks that bridge homelands and host countries, and on moral authority rooted in lived experience of violence or displacement.

Resources, in this context, are not limited to funding. They also encompass institutional access (e.g., consultative status, legal personality), epistemic capital (recognition of lived knowledge), linguistic capacity, digital connectivity and trans-national networks. A resource infrastructure therefore comprises the formal rules (laws, treaties, policies), the material mechanisms (trust funds, grants, technical assistance) and the informal norms (legitimacy, media visibility) that enable or hinder diaspora women's peace work.

> Diaspora women's leadership is often collective, care-centered and grassroots — yet it requires material, institutional and epistemic support to thrive.

Intersectional Leadership as Pillar of Diaspora Women's Peacebuilding

The UN's Peacebuilding Commission and its related General Assembly and Security Council resolutions all call for "inclusive national ownership" of peace efforts, but they rarely mention diaspora groups or address gender.[85] One early exception is Security Council Resolution 1645 from 2005, which asks for advice from "regional and local organizations."[86] In a few cases, Peacebuilding Commission country teams have treated diaspora experts as part of that "local" group—but only on an ad hoc basis, and without paying attention to how factors intersect. A more hopeful step came with the General Assembly's Financing for Peacebuilding resolution. It explicitly welcomes voluntary contributions from non-state actors—including diaspora communities—and urges the Peacebuilding Fund to focus on gender equality.[87]

Beyond this, there are also other instruments with a gender lens that matter for leadership and resources. UN Security Council Resolution 2122 (2013), for example, asked the Secretary-General to study the obstacles women face when trying to lead in conflict zones and to set up special funding streams to help them.[88] Earlier, Resolution 1889 (2009) urged donors to tweak their funding rules so that women's groups can more easily access money for rebuilding after war.[89] CEDAW's General Recommendation 30 goes even further: it says governments must talk with a wide range of women — including those living in the diaspora, refugees and internally displaced people — when they plan peace and security policies, acknowledging these women as leaders.[90] Yet the monitoring bodies rarely disaggregate data by diaspora status or intersecting identities, limiting the understanding and the potential for an intersectional impact of these provisions.

The 2018 Global Compact for Migration acknowledges "migrants and diasporas, especially women" as contributors to peace and reconciliation.[91] As noted above, Objective 19 urges States to "create conditions" for such engagement, including safe public spaces and consultative mechanisms. It also encourages the appointment of "dedicated diaspora focal points." However, the Compact's follow-up and review process offers no specific intersectionality indicators, and so far only ten States have reported measures that explicitly target diaspora women's leadership.[92]

CEDAW's General Recommendation 30 says governments must talk with a wide range of women — including those living in the diaspora, refugees and internally displaced people — when they plan peace and security policies, acknowledging these women as leaders.

The Migration Governance Framework, adopted by IOM and endorsing "whole-of-society" approaches, mentions gender mainstreaming, but leadership references remain generic; it recommends that governments "work with diaspora organizations" without guidance on intersectionality and differently positioned communities.[93] By contrast, the Global Compact on Refugees commits States and donors to fund refugee-led organizations and to involve them in decision-making; some States are also beginning to extend this logic to long-settled refugee-diaspora networks.[94]

Finally, the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent has linked systemic racism to exclusion from peacebuilding leadership. Its 2023 report urges governments to co-design anti-racism policies with Afro-descendant diaspora women.[95] Although advisory, these findings constitute a normative push toward intersectional leadership that complements migration and peace instruments.

Access to Critical Resources for Peacebuilding: Funding, Infrastructure and Capacity-Building

In this report's analysis of existing legal and policy frameworks, references to funding appear more frequently in gender and peacebuilding frameworks than in migration ones. UN gender-related resolutions (e.g., UNSCR 2122, 1960) call for earmarked resources, but implementation lags. Data from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that women's rights organizations receive less than one per cent of gender-equality official development assistance, a figure that drops further for diaspora-based groups.[96] The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund illustrates a potential remedy: its 2024–2025 strategy reserves a funding stream for forcibly displaced women, including those leading organizations in the diaspora.[97] Even in those cases, however, the ceiling per grant and the requirement of legal registration in the host country can inadvertently exclude smaller, informal diaspora collectives.

In the peacebuilding field, the UN Peacebuilding Fund's Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI) has become one of the few global windows explicitly designed to expand access for civil society. Competitive calls for proposals are open to civil society organizations alongside UN agencies, funds and programmes, and the mechanism has funded projects in more than 40 eligible countries.[98] However, the model remains resource- and compliance-intensive: until 2021, projects were capped at 18 months and USD 1.5 million, with ceilings only recently raised to 24 months and USD 2 million.[99] Eligibility criteria continue to require proof of prior audited financial statements, evidence of organizational capacity and formal registration in the country of implementation.[100] These thresholds, while ensuring accountability, have the unintended effect of excluding smaller diaspora or women-led initiatives that may be newer, informally structured or not legally registered in multiple jurisdictions.

Beyond funding gaps, access to infrastructure and enabling systems often constrains diaspora women-led peacebuilding. In some settings, damaged or unevenly distributed transport, power and communications infrastructure raises costs and safety risks for outreach, convening and monitoring, while many reconstruction programmes still overlook conflict-sensitivity and gendered impacts—limiting trust and uptake.[101] Donor commitments to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda include a 15 percent target for peacebuilding funds with gender-equality as a principal objective, yet delivery is uneven and overall resources for feminist and women's rights organizations remain persistently under one per cent of official development assistance (ODA) for gender equality.[102] These macro-level gaps translate into very practical shortfalls for diaspora groups: affordable secure venues, reliable connectivity for cross-border convenings, and travel or childcare for women peacebuilders.

Capacity-building and legal/institutional enablers are equally decisive. Many diaspora women's CSOs struggle to meet due-diligence thresholds (audited financials, prior grant history, in-country registration) embedded in competitive windows—even when calls are nominally "open" to civil society. The UN Peacebuilding Fund's GYPI noted above illustrates these constraints, while other mechanisms show partial alternatives. The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), for example, has created tailored channels: its Forced Displacement window reserves resources for initiatives by and with forcibly displaced women, and its Rapid Response Window includes a direct-support stream that does not require proof of legal registration, a critical flexibility for informal or diaspora-based collectives.[103] Yet other WPHF funding streams and many country-level calls still expect formal registration. Overall, restrictive regulations underscore the need for policy reforms that safeguard funding and reduce administrative friction for women-led peacebuilding.

Funding, access, and resource gaps translate into very practical shortfalls for diaspora groups: affordable secure venues, reliable connectivity for cross-border convenings, and travel or childcare for women peacebuilders.

Knowledge, Language and Recognition as Resources for Diaspora Women's Peacebuilding

Knowledge and knowledge production are themselves a resource. However, most frameworks privilege technical or national-security epistemologies over grassroots or experiential knowledge. The Global Compact for Migration, for instance, promotes "evidence-based policy" while omitting the question of whose evidence counts.[104] CEDAW General Recommendation 30 is more explicit, stressing "context-specific knowledge of women affected by conflict," yet reporting templates used by States parties rarely request information about diaspora consultation. Policy recognition matters, too: reports on peacebuilding rarely consider diaspora women's peace work specifically. As a result, diaspora women's innovations—such as using virtual storytelling circles to address post-traumatic stress or organizing remittance-backed women's credit cooperatives—remain largely invisible in policy debates.

Language is another overlooked variable. Frameworks seldom require translation of consultation materials or funding calls. In practice, peacebuilding tenders circulate in English or French, disadvantaging diaspora women who operate in other languages. Some bilateral donors have recently permitted submission in multiple languages, but this remains another important obstacle to obtaining funding specifically.

Recognition intersects with legal status; undocumented or liminal-status women often lead mutual-aid networks yet cannot open bank accounts or sign grant agreements. Although the ICCPR guarantees the right to association irrespective of citizenship, enforcement is weak in many host States.[105] The OECD's 2021 Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society urges donors to fund unregistered groups via intermediaries,[106] a practice already used by the Fund for Global Human Rights and MamaCash; scaling it up could widen resource access for informal and grassroots diaspora organizations.

> When their experiential knowledge goes unrecognized, diaspora women's innovations remain largely invisible in policy debates.

Tensions and Gaps in Existing Frameworks

Across the three areas of frameworks analyzed, the siloed mandates make the issue of intersectional considerations and leadership evident. Namely, gender-focused frameworks speak of women's leadership but rarely address migration status; migration frameworks mention diaspora but treat gender superficially; peacebuilding resolutions invoke local ownership without clarifying diaspora inclusion. The result is intersectional invisibility.

Furthermore, most peace related funds operate on one- to three-year cycles. Diaspora women's initiatives that tackle structural violence—patriarchy, racism, economic inequity—need longer horizons and flexible funding.

Lastly, most of the frameworks tend to prioritize recent refugees or labor migrants. Historical diasporas (e.g., Afro-descendant communities in the Americas, Black communities in the Global North, South Asian diasporas in East Africa, etc.) possess deep reservoirs of leadership, experience and knowledge of different types of violence, but seldom qualify for some of the peace-related funding whereby peace is understood solely in relationship to conflict. Moreover, monitoring and evaluation indicators seldom track intersectionality. The PBC's 2024 review template, for instance, requests sex-disaggregated data but not racial or migration-status disaggregation. Without such metrics, intersectional leadership remains undocumented and under-recognized.

Case Study: Black Women in Britain

The case study by Women PeaceMaker Fellow Temi Mwale brings to life how Black women's grassroots peace work in Britain both exemplifies and tests the above chapter's central argument: that true recognition requires more than generic mandates—it demands tailored material, institutional and epistemic support for leaders whose identities span gender, race, class and migration status.

By weaving together the experiences of Black women peacebuilders in the UK — from community organizers and legal advocates to cultural workers and healers — Mwale's case study highlights how these women and their communities, despite their deep roots and significant contributions to Britain's social fabric, remain mired in systemic racism across housing, education, healthcare and, most acutely, the criminal legal system.

Yet, as the chapter emphasizes, resources extend far beyond funding. This case study shows how epistemic capital, care infrastructures and recognized institutional access are equally vital. Grounded in Black feminist, decolonial and participatory methodologies, Mwale's research was co-created through one-to-one interviews and community conversations with Black women leaders. Storytelling ensured that lived experience—not abstract metrics—anchored the findings. This approach mirrors the call to value grassroots epistemologies and to reform supporting mechanisms, which too often ignore diaspora status and intersecting identities.

The findings starkly reveal the personal and structural toll of this leadership: blurred boundaries between activism and personal life, emotional burdens magnified by childhood neglect, reputational risks within institutions, and an almost complete absence of formal care infrastructures.

Success—another key theme of the case study—shifts from conventional outputs to the relational and transformative. In Mwale's case study, participants cite victories such as helping a traumatized young person find safety, creating spaces where Black women can rest free of surveillance, winning precedent-setting legal challenges, and mobilizing mass protests that reshape public narratives. These outcomes underscore how intersectional leadership is inherently collective and care-centered, even as formal frameworks fail to recognize or resource it adequately.

Drawing directly on these insights, Mwale issues targeted recommendations that bridge the chapter's gap analysis with practice. Funders are urged to move beyond project cycles to long-term, trust-based, unrestricted investments; to create sabbatical-style rest fellowships; and to shift success metrics toward joy, healing and collective wellbeing. Policymakers are called to integrate healing justice into public health and safety strategies, simplify funding systems, and center Black women's expertise in reform processes. Movement ecosystems are encouraged to embed care as core practice — normalizing rest, therapy and peer support — and to build national and transnational networks that honor intergenerational exchange.

This case study powerfully links back to the chapter by demonstrating that without infrastructures of care, recognition and resource, even the most dynamic intersectional leadership remains marginalized. It makes clear that an enabling environment must encompass not only generic inclusion and recognition clauses but also the material, institutional and epistemic scaffolding without which Black women's transformative peacebuilding cannot be sustained.

Social Infrastructure Enables Diaspora Women's Peacebuilding

This chapter argues that while a sense of belonging and robust social infrastructure within host societies are crucial enablers of diaspora engagement in peace and peacebuilding, they are not fully recognized as such in international frameworks. Belonging in the diaspora is a multidimensional construct, incorporating affective bonds to community, recognition of rights and identity, and meaningful participation in civic life. It entails both subjective experiences — feeling welcomed and valued — and objective conditions, such as non-discrimination protections and access to cultural rights. For long-term diasporas, belonging evolves over generations, intersecting with host-state policies and transnational ties to the homeland. Social infrastructure, on the other hand, comprises the tangible and intangible networks and spaces enabling social cohesion and collective agency. Physically, it includes community centers, cultural associations, and safe gathering spaces. Institutionally, it covers legal and policy mechanisms—such as residency schemes, anti-discrimination laws, and participatory fora—that scaffold integration and representation. Materially, it can include the ability to access resources through social services and considerations of the pressures, including the time scarcity, of trying to integrate while undertaking peacebuilding work. Digitally, it extends to online platforms, virtual networks, and diaspora engagement portals. These elements together create environments in which diasporic individuals and groups can access resources, share knowledge and mobilize for peace initiatives.

A strong sense of belonging and supportive social infrastructure empower diaspora communities to contribute to conflict and violence prevention, dialogue and building long-term peace. Recognition of diaspora identities mitigates marginalization, while accessible social spaces facilitate organization and capacity-building. The convergence of belonging and infrastructure thus underpins sustainable peace by reinforcing social cohesion and enabling inclusive participation.

A strong sense of belonging and supportive social infrastructure empower diaspora communities to contribute to conflict and violence prevention, dialogue and building long-term peace.

This chapter examines how key international frameworks in peacebuilding, gender/ WPS, and migration/diaspora policy articulate provisions that foster — or, in some cases, undermine — belonging and social infrastructures for diasporas. The chapter first analyzes how international frameworks consider and enable a sense of belonging for diaspora women, before focusing on the social infrastructures for diaspora women and their peacebuilding work enabled through international frameworks, norms and legal mechanisms, and finally concluding with the case study on Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women in the Netherlands, which shows how social infrastructures and belonging are mutually reinforcing in peacebuilding work.

Belonging as a Foundation for Diaspora Women's Peacebuilding Work

For diaspora women, belonging is not only about formal legal recognition but also about dismantling gendered obstacles to civic participation, cultural expression and personal security. Legal and normative recognition provides the foundation. Although Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights says everyone can vote and run for office,[107] diaspora women still face extra hurdles. They may struggle with language, lack time because of caregiving duties, or simply do not have information on how to register. Similarly, ICCPR Article 27's protection of minority cultural practices[108] can enable diaspora women to maintain traditional crafts, rituals or dress, yet host states frequently fail to accommodate community-led cultural festivals or mother-tongue classes in ways that are accessible for women balancing work and domestic duties. Likewise, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights promises education and cultural participation.[109] In practice, though, programs rarely offer things like flexible class times or childcare, so many women with caring responsibilities cannot join.

The Global Compact for Migration makes strides in recognizing the distinct vulnerabilities of women migrants, calling on states to ensure safe and regular pathways that consider experiences of gender-based discrimination and violence.[110] Its principled emphasis on gender-responsive migration governance acknowledges that legal status alone is insufficient; without complementary measures — such as targeted outreach to women's associations or gender-trained caseworkers — regularization programs may remain effectively inaccessible to many women.

Beyond formal status, language and cultural rights are central to belonging. The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions obliges states to support "conditions for dialogue among cultures."[111] In this direction, initiatives that provide free or low-cost mother-tongue classes at women's centers, or women-led community radio segments, have proven effective in affirming identity and building networks. General Comment No. 23 of the Human Rights Committee highlights language rights under ICCPR Article 27 as integral to minority protection.[112] Nevertheless, implementation routinely overlooks the gendered dimension—namely, that women's unpaid care work constrains their ability to participate in weekday or daytime classes.

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Protection and security measure how safely diaspora women can inhabit public life. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2242 (2015) calls for gender-responsive security sector reforms, including mechanisms to protect migrant and diaspora women from violence.[113] CEDAW General Recommendation 35 on combating hate speech acknowledges that discrimination related to gender and ethnicity intersect to magnify vulnerability, and urges states to enact comprehensive hate-speech laws and victim support services.[114] Yet, here too, enforcement gaps and under-reporting persist, undermining diaspora women's confidence that their safety will be upheld and with that, undermining their feeling of belonging.

Moreover, this sense of belonging directly fuels diaspora women's peace work. Women's grassroots efforts, often born from community centers and cultural associations, serve as sites where diaspora women mediate intercommunal tensions, offer psychosocial support to violence-affected peers and channel remittances into peacebuilding projects. These activities demonstrate that when belonging is affirmed, diaspora women do not only integrate—they become active agents of peace in both host and origin contexts.

Social Infrastructure Supports Diaspora Women-Led Peacebuilding

While belonging secures normative inclusion, social infrastructure gives diaspora women the means to organize collectively, access resources and translate belonging into agency.

Community spaces and networks serve as lifelines. Women's organizations and cultural hubs often operate on precarious, short-term funding that fails to match the sustained needs of diaspora communities. United Nations Women, Peace and Security frameworks (UNSCR 1325 and 2122) mandate "protection and support services" for women in conflict and post-conflict settings,[115] yet these mandates seldom extend to diaspora contexts. Where women's centers do exist, they provide vital language classes, legal clinics and psychosocial support that empower women to navigate host-country systems and to mentor newer arrivals. The Peacebuilding Commission's recognition of diaspora forums as "reconciliation platforms"[116] can be harnessed to advocate for dedicated funding streams that prioritize women-led diaspora associations, ensuring continuity beyond one-off projects,

These community networks also underpin much of the peace work diaspora women undertake. Through regular workshops, dialogue sessions, and transnational sisterhood networks, diaspora women leverage these spaces to train mediators, document violations in their homelands and in the diaspora, and lobby international bodies for ceasefires, humanitarian corridors and better integration support in host countries. Such organized efforts would be impossible without stable social infrastructure in host societies.

Digital and transnational infrastructure further expands women's reach. Online platforms — ranging from diaspora-managed WhatsApp groups to formal e-diaspora registries — facilitate peer support, skills sharing and coordinated advocacy across borders. The Migration Governance Framework and Global Compact for Migration both encourage digital engagement, but they must explicitly address digital gender divides: women's lower digital literacy levels, limited access to devices and disproportionate care burdens reduce time online.[117] During the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN Peacebuilding Fund documented how virtual peace dialogues offered diaspora women experts spaces to contribute to policy discussions[118] — demonstrating that when digital infrastructure is designed with gender in mind, it can surmount geographic and temporal barriers.

Physical infrastructure must likewise reflect women's realities. Community centers offering flexible hours, on-site childcare, and transport stipends enable participation by working mothers and elder caregivers. Such gender-responsive adaptations are rarely mandated in international texts, yet they are essential for translating WPS commitments into lived opportunities for diaspora women's leadership in peacebuilding.

Furthermore, the material aspects of social infrastructure — particularly access to social services, welfare support, and economic resources — shape diaspora women's capacity to balance integration pressures with peacebuilding commitments. Many host-state social protection schemes (such as unemployment benefits, subsidised childcare, and language-learning grants) are technically available to migrants,[119] yet bureaucratic hurdles, eligibility restrictions and limited outreach often prevent women from fully utilizing them. This scarcity of material support exacerbates time poverty when diaspora women have to juggle integration efforts, paid work, domestic responsibilities and community organizing, including peacebuilding work. Some of the economic empowerment programmes under CEDAW and WPS resolutions advocate for vocational training and microfinance access, but without targeted resources and streamlined application processes, diaspora women can struggle to secure the stability needed to invest time in peacebuilding.

Importantly, these physical and digital infrastructures are the very platforms through which diaspora women coordinate peace campaigns—organizing petitions, mobilizing resources for their communities, and collaborating with local NGOs. Without these adaptive infrastructures, the reach and impact of diaspora women's peace activism would be severely curtailed.

Case Study: Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch Women in the Netherlands

Women PeaceMaker Fellow Bochra Laghssais's case study highlights how diasporic Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women in the Netherlands cultivate both affective bonds and tangible networks to sustain peacebuilding from the margins. In the Netherlands' context — where long-established Moroccan communities have negotiated evolving host-state policies and shifting public discourses — Amazigh women forge meaningful participation in civic life through self-organized initiatives, thereby affirming belonging even as structural and cultural obstacles persist. Their experiences underscore that when social infrastructure is responsive to gendered realities, it can transform feelings of exclusion into collective agency.

Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, second- and third-generation Amazigh women recount persistent language deficits in Dutch schools and biased assumptions in healthcare and employment that perpetuate social isolation. Far-right political rhetoric and Islamophobic media narratives further erode their sense of belonging, portraying Moroccan identities as inherently "other" or disloyal. In response, these women employ neighborhood initiatives — Buurtmoeders ("neighborhood mothers") programs such as Stichting Home Empowerment and Stichting Nisa for Nisa—to create safe, culturally attuned spaces where first-generation migrants receive psychosocial support, childcare during classes and informal mediation with external institutions. As Laghssais notes, during the November 2024 unrest at Plein 40-45 in Amsterdam Nieuw-West, these Buurtmoeders donned yellow vests and, leveraging deep relational trust, de-escalated street tensions—demonstrating how localized social infrastructure can stabilize communities in moments of crisis.

Beyond physical gathering spaces, Laghssais' case study shows how Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women harness digital and cultural infrastructure to advance peacebuilding. Online networks bridge generational and geographic divides, while social media channels foster intergenerational dialogue about hybrid identities. Cultural curators animate exhibitions, literary events and henna art workshops to challenge colonial iconography and reframe North African heritage as a site of empowerment.

Laghssais' case study reveals that peacebuilding for these women is not confined to formal conflict contexts but is enacted through everyday acts of care. Yet this grassroots peace work suffers from chronic under-recognition: funders often label it as mere "civic engagement," overlooking the emotional labor, informal mediation and trauma-informed care that underpin lasting community resilience. Consequently, women peacebuilders experience burnout, blurred personal boundaries, and difficulties translating informal outcomes into the "impact language" demanded by institutional donors.

Despite these challenges, Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women persist in weaving social infrastructure that reinforces belonging and collective agency. Their neighborhood NGOs serve as vital reconciliation platforms, while digital spaces extend their reach beyond physical confines. By documenting care-based programs, advocating for formal policy mechanisms and fostering inter-NGO collaboration, these women exemplify how gender-responsive infrastructure and a deep sense of belonging catalyze diasporic peacebuilding.

Laghssais' case study illustrates that belonging and social infrastructure are mutually reinforcing: when Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women find recognition of their identities and access to adaptive community spaces — both physical and digital — they mobilize creatively to prevent violence and cultivate enduring peace. Embedding this narrative in the chapter's broader examination of international frameworks underscores the imperative for host states to enact gender-sensitive residency schemes, fund culturally rooted community centers, and support diaspora-led digital platforms. Only then can the convergence of belonging and infrastructure fully realize the potential of diaspora women as agents of sustainable peace.

Key Findings

This report draws on the experiences and insights of women in diaspora communities who are leading or engaged in peacebuilding efforts in their countries of residence (versus country of origin), focusing on their unique roles, contributions, challenges and successes. The research highlights several key findings that underscore the critical but often overlooked role of these women peacebuilders and the barriers they overcome.

- **Traditional understandings of peacebuilding limit priorities to conflict zones, which may exclude significant portions of peacebuilding work.**

Limiting peacebuilding literature and policy response to conflict zones constricts visions for peace, and ultimately, peacebuilding and response initiatives, which may exclude diaspora communities who focus on dismantling systemic and structural violence or navigate peacebuilding practices in countries without traditional armed conflict.

- **Diaspora peacebuilding is diverse and versatile, reflecting women's varied migration histories, identities and community contexts.**

There is no one way to be a peacebuilder or engage in peacebuilding work. Diaspora women peacebuilders are volunteers and employees, civil society members, grassroots organizers, NGO leaders, politicians and more.

- **Peacebuilding priorities are shaped by migration experience and timing, as well as the need to navigate overlapping racial, ethnic, cultural and gender identities and expectations.**

The needs and priorities of a diaspora community change based on the nature of their migration experience and the length of time since migration. Women in the diaspora engaged in peacebuilding work in their respective countries of residence balance their existing nationality, ethnicity, and culture with that of their new world, which creates a "double consciousness" that can be challenging to navigate. These efforts are often complicated by substantial barriers, like limited linguistic support or systemic exclusion.

- **Diaspora women face substantial systemic barriers, including restricted funding, limited recognition and support, and structural inequities that constrain their livelihoods and peacebuilding work.**

Overwhelmingly, diaspora communities face othering or secondary status, which profoundly impacts their ability to be meaningfully included in or contribute to society as peacebuilders and leaders. These challenges include linguistic barriers, difficulty accessing services, exclusion from decision-making and deep systemic violence.

- **Diaspora peacebuilders with compounded or overlapping identities often navigate systemic marginalization and exclusion.**

Women in the diaspora involved in peacebuilding face systemic barriers that complicate their ability to build peace within their countries of residence. Although frameworks exist to mandate the inclusion of women and prioritize their participation, these same frameworks often limit their meaningful inclusion and participation by overlooking systemic barriers such as language, legal status, race, religion, disability and others.

- **Women's leadership and emotional labor drive peacebuilding forward, but often at significant personal cost without sufficient institutional or community support.**

Overwhelmingly, peacebuilding requires substantial time commitments and on-the-clock responsiveness for crises. This "always on, never off" work culture forces peacebuilders to make difficult decisions about how to split their time between obligations and commitments without reprieve, as diaspora women peacebuilders note that it feels like the work will cease without their engagement or availability. Women peacebuilders often feel alone and isolated in their peacebuilding work, and work overload often has negative health consequences. There are few mechanisms for peacebuilders to delegate, step back or take a break from their important work.

- **Community belonging and robust social infrastructure are central to effective peacebuilding, enabling agency, resilience and sustained civic engagement.**

Social and professional networks within a country of residence provide essential connections and resources for diaspora women engaged in peacebuilding work.

- **Representation and cultural affirmation are core to diaspora women's peacebuilding and community-building, encompassing the celebration, honoring and visibilization of cultural identity in countries of residence.**

Diaspora women peacebuilders spend significant time educating the general public about their culture and identities to combat negative perceptions and stereotypes that can undermine the momentum for or support of the diaspora's goals. Creating opportunities to embrace and share culturally significant traditions provides the necessary and sacred space for diaspora communities to connect and revel in the familiar. These communal acts and spaces build and reinforce community over shared identity while creating powerful opportunities to connect with and educate others.

- **Women peacebuilders often view their work as community care rooted in necessity—not the language of peacebuilding.**

Many women diaspora peace leaders do not see themselves or their work in the language of peacebuilding, often shying away from the term in its entirety. Women peacebuilders viewed their work as community care, a necessary service or a calling. This can create challenges in identifying funding, support or potential collaborators.

Recommendations

Recommendations for international organizations and funders:

- Promote implementation of existing international agreements related to gender, peacebuilding and migration and foster programming that recognizes the intersections of these frameworks.
- Promote platforms that connect women diaspora leaders across borders and cultures.
- Provide funding opportunities that allow for diaspora women peace leaders to invest in community and self-care, reflection and connection.
- Promote diaspora women's engagement in peace negotiations and other formal peace processes.
- Create monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress in incorporating diaspora women peacebuilders into peace and security processes.

Recommendations for national-level policymakers and funders:

- Incorporate international legal obligations related to migrant rights, women's rights and human rights into national-level policies and frameworks.
- Consult diaspora peacebuilders when designing policy and funding opportunities, including those involved in social change efforts on a voluntary or part-time basis.
- Provide linguistically and culturally appropriate support services for refugees and newly arrived migrants that facilitate connection to existing diaspora communities.
- Consider and include diaspora women in funding opportunities related to peacebuilding or social change within your country.
- Promote programs that support safety in diaspora communities without relying on violent policing, drawing from the needs and strengths of the diaspora community itself.
- Create government offices or institutions focused on engaging with diasporas within your country.

Recommendations for diaspora peace leaders:

- Promote women leaders and other people of marginalized gender identities within your organizations or movements and recognize the work currently being done by women community members.
- Create spaces that promote sharing the emotional and social labor of peace work and where peacebuilders can openly share their challenges and concerns.
- Create programming that explicitly addresses the gendered challenges that diaspora women and people of marginalized gender identities face.

Case Study Germany
Empowering the Ukrainian Diaspora in Germany: Building Community Resilience and Exploring Opportunities for Constructive Engagement

CASE STUDY

By Mariia Levchenko

Context[b]

Ukrainian migration to Germany has a long history but remained modest until the political and humanitarian crises of recent decades. After World War II, small Ukrainian communities of displaced persons existed in Germany; however, many later emigrated to North America or South America. In the post-Soviet era, a fourth wave of Ukrainian migrants arrived from the 1990s onward, seeking economic opportunities. This population grew steadily but was still limited in size on the eve of the 2014 Euromaidan, a mass mobilization in Ukraine demanding democratic reforms and closer ties with the European Union (EU).[120] In Germany, new civic groups and associations sprang up during and after Euromaidan, forming what scholars called a "new diasporic community" of civically engaged Ukrainians.[121] This community strongly supported Ukraine's pro-democracy and pro-European aspirations and began coordinating aid and advocacy for their homeland.[122] Their emergence marked a shift; alongside older Ukrainian diaspora organizations — some tracing back to earlier migrant waves — a younger, more activist cohort took on leadership in community mobilization.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered the largest refugee movement in Europe since World War II. As of 2023, Germany hosts approximately 1.1 million Ukrainians under temporary protection — the largest share in Europe — making it a primary destination and significantly expanding the country's Ukrainian diaspora.[123] Importantly, this refugee flow has been highly gendered. Under Ukraine's martial law, most men aged 18–60 are required to stay in-country, so about 90 percent of those fleeing to the EU have been women and children.[124]The result is a Ukrainian diasporic community in Germany that is predominantly female and often organized around family and caregiving networks, even as its members take on public roles.

The Ukrainian diaspora's experience has been shaped by conflict and the pursuit of justice, with key moments of political upheaval triggering waves of civic mobilization. The Euromaidan movement in 2013 and 2014 marked a significant turning point: diaspora communities in Germany organized demonstrations, raised funds for injured protesters and countered disinformation about events in Ukraine. Following the onset of war in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, diaspora actors coordinated humanitarian aid, including medical supplies and protective gear, while advocating for stronger international support. These responses were often underpinned by collective memory of past traumas — such as the Holodomor and Soviet repression, events associated with famine, violence and political persecution — which served as emotional and moral catalysts for diaspora engagement.[125]

b Literature review support from Mia Mac Farland.

This continuity of mobilization deepened further after the full-scale invasion in 2022. Faced with a sudden influx of Ukrainian women and children seeking protection, established diaspora networks — ranging from student groups and churches to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) — responded rapidly, setting up reception points, offering temporary housing and delivering basic assistance, including translation, legal advice and psychosocial support. Volunteers opened their homes, coordinated grassroots donation drives and partnered with local German actors and international organizations. The speed and scale of this response positioned the Ukrainian diaspora as a crucial actor in Europe's humanitarian landscape, reflecting a longstanding commitment to solidarity, mobilization and resilience.

Beyond providing immediate relief, the diaspora community in Germany has become a pillar of resilience for Ukrainians and a vocal advocate for peace. Diaspora groups have taken on roles ranging from humanitarian aid and legal assistance to educational support and social integration for displaced persons. Culturally, they have worked to preserve Ukrainian identity abroad through language classes, cultural events and commemorations of Ukrainian holidays in Germany. Politically, diaspora activists have engaged in public diplomacy — organizing rallies, speaking to media and lobbying German and EU officials.[126] Regular demonstrations in Berlin, Munich and other cities have kept the war in the public eye. Diaspora advocacy groups also combat disinformation by sharing accurate news about the war and countering Russian propaganda narratives. In these ways, the diaspora strives to shape international discourse towards one that supports Ukraine and a just peace.

While states lead formal negotiations, diaspora groups — especially women's organizations — foster resilience, connect civil society with international allies and help create conditions for future peace. Diaspora women's organizations have highlighted the needs of women and children during the conflict, campaigning against gender-based violence and calling for accountability for war crimes. For example, the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations, which has representatives in Germany and elsewhere, has lobbied for Ukraine's accession to the Istanbul Convention on preventing violence against women and pushed international bodies to address Russia's human rights abuses.[127] Such efforts align with broader peacebuilding by ensuring that women's security and justice are part of the post-war agenda.

The 2014 Euromaidan and the ongoing war — intensified by the 2022 invasion — have shaped a Ukrainian diaspora, and now this community plays a vital peacebuilding role by sustaining refugees, preserving social cohesion and keeping international attention on Ukraine. This case study examines how women's diaspora organizations contribute to these efforts, offering insight into their strategies, challenges and growing political relevance in exile.

Methodology

This case study is led by the following research question:

- **To what extent can peacebuilding initiatives empower the Ukrainian diaspora in Germany to strengthen internal community resilience, support social adaptation and address gender-specific challenges and contributions?**

To answer this, the research draws on qualitative, interview-based methods. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews (nine women and one man) with members of the Ukrainian diaspora community in Germany to understand their experiences, perspectives and roles in peacebuilding. A purposive sampling strategy was used to capture a diverse range of participants. Interviewees were selected to represent different demographic and migration backgrounds — including gender, age and migration "wave." In practice, this meant engaging both recent refugees (mostly women who fled after 2022) and longer-term diaspora members (some who migrated in the 1990s–2000s or around the 2014 conflict). By including participants from the post-2014 cohort and the post-2022 cohort, the research could compare insights across different waves of Ukrainian migration to Germany. The sample reflects the overall feminization of the diaspora. Ages of participants ranged roughly from early 20s to late 60s, capturing both youth activists and veteran community leaders engaged in some form of diaspora-led peacebuilding or relief activity.

Interviews were semi-structured in format. An interview guide with open-ended questions was used to ensure key topics were covered, while still allowing participants the freedom to tell their stories. For data analysis, the researcher employed qualitative thematic analysis.

This qualitative approach has certain limitations. The sample size was limited, meaning findings are not statistically generalizable to all Ukrainians in Germany. There may be self-selection bias: those who agreed to be interviewed were often highly engaged in the community, which could skew the findings toward more active diaspora members. Voices of the less involved (the "silent" or less publicly engaged majority of refugees) might be underrepresented. Geographically, participants were primarily concentrated in urban centers (Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, etc.), as these are where diaspora networks and organizations are typically found; the experiences of Ukrainians in more rural parts of Germany may differ. Language posed another constraint — while interviews were done in Ukrainian or a comfortable language for participants, translation of quotes and nuance into English (for reporting) carries a risk of subtle meaning loss. Time was also a constraint: the interviews were conducted at the beginning of 2025, a relatively short time after the major refugee influx of 2022. Thus, the study captures a snapshot while the war is ongoing; longer-term perspectives (e.g., how diaspora engagement might evolve if the war ends) could only be speculative from the participants' viewpoints. Despite these limitations, the methodology provides rich contextual insights. It centers diaspora voices, offering qualitative depth about community resilience and engagement that quantitative data alone could not convey.

Conceptualizing the Diaspora's Role in Peacebuilding

In the interviews, participants shared layered understandings of diaspora peacebuilding amid active conflict, with gender emerging as a central theme. The predominance of women among Ukrainian activists in Germany has significantly shaped the community's peacebuilding approach. Since 2014, and even more visibly after 2022, women have been at the forefront of humanitarian and social efforts, often interpreting their roles through the lens of care work and emotional sustenance. Organizing support groups for refugee mothers, mediating tensions within the community or preserving cultural practices were described as vital contributions to social cohesion and healing. Several interviewees who had not been politically active before 2022 said they stepped into leadership roles out of a felt obligation to "hold our people together."[128] This mobilization of women, particularly in informal and emotionally demanding roles, was framed as a form of peacebuilding rooted in everyday resilience. One interviewee, who organized trauma therapy for refugee families, emphasized that restoring dignity and emotional stability helps prevent future cycles of violence.[129] Across interviews, participants highlighted how emotional labor, often carried by women, is central to both healing and resilience, reinforcing the community's capacity to endure and act.

Participants also reflected on the meanings of "peace" and "diaspora," often linking the two as intertwined responsibilities. The diaspora was seen as an extension of the Ukrainian nation abroad, with a moral duty to advocate for a just and sustainable peace. Peace, in this framing, was not merely the end of violence but a resolution that upholds Ukraine's sovereignty and secures justice for victims. Accordingly, diaspora activities, such as protest mobilization, fundraising and public advocacy, were described as part of a long-term struggle against impunity and misinformation. Acts of humanitarian support — whether providing legal assistance or coordinating psychosocial services — were viewed as equally essential forms of community-level peacebuilding.

On the other hand, diaspora peacebuilding also has an advocacy and international outreach dimension, which often involves more public-facing roles. Participants — both women and men — described efforts to influence public opinion and policy in Germany and beyond. They have organized information campaigns, engaged with German NGOs and charities and met with local officials to voice the Ukrainian perspective. Some interviewees[130] suggested that being women sometimes made German partners more receptive to their message — for instance, a mother speaking about the plight of Ukrainian children might elicit empathy that transcends politics. However, they also encountered the challenge of not being taken seriously at times. Still, the diaspora's conceptualization of its role in building peace includes being "informal ambassadors" for Ukraine, promoting a narrative of resilience and the pursuit of a just peace. This aligns with what researchers observe globally: diasporas often engage in public diplomacy and lobbying in their host countries as part of their political activities.[131]

Diaspora women have increasingly taken on leadership in these advocacy initiatives, partly because they represent the majority and partly because they bring communication and networking skills honed in caregiving roles.[132] Gender dynamics are deeply intertwined with these roles. The feminization of the Ukrainian diaspora means that traditional gender norms both constrain and enable certain kinds of work. Many participants acknowledged that women in the community carried double loads — caring for their own families and volunteering for the community — which sometimes limited their capacity to take on formal leadership roles that require full-time commitment. Paradoxically, it was the very skills from those traditional roles that proved to be invaluable. Organizational talents often honed in managing households or social events were redirected to coordinating volunteer efforts. One male participant, one of the few men active in the refugee aid scene, since most men of military age remain in Ukraine, observed that "it's the women who lead the work here."[133] He noted that women led nearly all the local initiatives, from logistics of collecting donations to running Ukrainian-language weekend schools for kids. This feminized leadership has influenced the style of diaspora peacebuilding, described by respondents as collaborative, grassroots and informal, rather than top-down. Several women leaders eschewed formal titles or hierarchies; instead, they formed committees or chat groups to make collective decisions, reflecting what participants described as more inclusive, "maternal" approach to community peace work.

The concept of peacebuilding itself was sometimes debated among participants. A few grappled with the term "peace" because, as one put it, "there can be no real peace until the aggression stops."[134] These individuals often focused on supporting Ukraine's defensive war effort as their primary mode of engagement, through raising funds to send medical supplies to Ukrainian soldiers or even encouraging able-bodied friends to join Ukraine's armed forces. While, at first glance, activities like supporting soldier recruitment or military defense might seem at odds with peacebuilding, participants reconciled this by emphasizing defensive action and justice. In their eyes, helping Ukraine protect itself and its people is part of achieving a just peace. This underscores a broader point: the Ukrainian diaspora's peacebuilding concept is not neutral or strictly pacifist; it is imbued with the urgency of defending human rights and national survival. Thus, diaspora "peace" initiatives range from humanitarian relief to information warfare (countering propaganda) to supporting Ukraine's institutional resilience.[135] Women interviewees especially highlighted non-military avenues through which they contribute — like petitioning for war crime investigations or helping rebuild schools and homes — viewing those as laying the groundwork for peace.[136]

Lastly, the emotional aspect of diaspora engagement is critical to how they conceptualize their role. Many described the diaspora as an "emotional community" bound by shared grief, hope and determination. This emotional bond is a driving force: interviewees frequently used the language of family — "we are all one family abroad, trying to protect our home."[137] Such language indicates that for them, peacebuilding is as much about maintaining morale and unity as it is about tangible outcomes. In fact, maintaining hope within the diaspora was cited as a deliberate strategy. Community leaders organized cultural events, such as concerts and holiday celebrations, even during dark moments because, as one put it, "celebrating our culture is a form of resistance and peacebuilding — it reminds us what we're fighting for."[138]

During the interviews, participants conceptualized the diaspora's role in peacebuilding in an expansive way. It is highly gendered, with women's leadership and emotional labor at the core. It is also holistic — encompassing relief, advocacy, cultural preservation and justice-seeking. For this community, peacebuilding means sustaining people through crisis, amplifying the truth of Ukraine's cause and working towards a future where peace is secured by freedom and accountability. The Ukrainian diaspora in Germany embodies a form of peace activism that blends traditional care roles with political engagement, demonstrating how diaspora contributions to peace are both intimate and international.

Leaders organized cultural events even during dark moments because "celebrating our culture is a form of resistance and peacebuilding — it reminds us what we're fighting for."

Challenges and Costs in Doing Peacebuilding Work in the Diaspora

Interviewees encountered a range of challenges and costs to their peacebuilding efforts. These difficulties can be grouped into several broad categories: systemic barriers in the host country, internal diaspora frictions, gender-specific burdens, and emotional or personal costs. Each of these intersects with the others, creating a complex landscape of challenges for diaspora peacebuilders in Germany.

Systemic and Institutional Barriers in Germany

Participants consistently highlighted bureaucratic obstacles in the host country. Establishing formal organizations was described as complex and inaccessible, mainly due to unfamiliarity with German legal procedures, tax codes and funding regulations.[139] Many self-organized groups faced delays or failed attempts to register, limiting access to institutional support. Even experienced organizations struggled with high administrative demands, a lack of office space and restrictive rules for fundraising. Funding shortages compounded these issues. Initial emergency support tapered off, leaving smaller diaspora initiatives at a disadvantage compared to larger, well-established NGOs. Limited access to decision-making spaces was another key frustration. Despite their frontline role, diaspora groups were often excluded from official discussions on refugee integration or peacebuilding. Integration bottlenecks — long waits for permits, school access or language classes — further strained diaspora capacity. Volunteers increasingly spent time navigating these systems for newcomers, diverting energy from broader advocacy or peacebuilding efforts.[140]

Despite their frontline role, diaspora groups were often excluded from official discussions on refugee integration or peacebuilding.

Gendered Burdens and Biases

Given the heavily female composition of the active diaspora, challenges often took on a gendered dimension. Women leading diaspora initiatives experience the classic double burden: managing responsibilities for home and family on top of community work. Many of the women interviewees take care of children or elderly relatives in Germany --often without their husbands, who remain in Ukraine or elsewhere. Balancing these duties with volunteer activism led to severe time constraints and stress. There is an undercurrent of the peacebuilding work being seen as "women's work"—compassionate but not substantialwhich can lead to it being undervalued. For example, organizing a memorial vigil for war victims or running a peer-counseling circle might not receive the same recognition or funding as, say, a formal conference on reconciliation led by professional, often male experts. This devaluation can be disheartening.

Moreover, emotional labor falls disproportionately on women, which is a cost often taken for granted. The community relies on women to be the nurturers: comforting children, listening to others' trauma and keeping spirits high. This expectation itself is a burden. As one participant poignantly put it, "[e]veryone turns to us to soothe pain — but we are in pain too."[141] Women reported suppressing their own anguish to stay strong for others, which can lead to mental health issues down the line. Despite these burdens, few had access to respite or professional support, partly because they prioritize the needs of those they care for above their own.

Internal Diaspora Divisions and Engagement Challenges

Some fractures within the Ukrainian community itself limit collective action. Many interviewees candidly discussed a lack of coordination and even competition among diaspora organizations. In Germany, multiple Ukrainian groups exist, ranging from older expatriate associations (some dating back decades) to ad hoc volunteer networks formed after 2022. These groups often struggle to communicate effectively. Surveyed diaspora representatives have noted "lack of cooperation and collaboration (…) most importantly, with each other" as a problem.[142] The research participants confirmed this: some spoke of duplicated efforts, like two groups in the same city collecting similar aid independently rather than pooling resources, and even interpersonal rifts. One young activist from the recent refugee wave felt that some established diaspora leaders were gatekeeping access to German institutions. "The older generation has their circle, and they didn't initially welcome us newcomers. It took time to build trust," she said.[143] Generational and "wave" differences underlie some divisions. Individuals from earlier migration waves (1990s or 2000s) may have different political outlooks or levels of integration compared to those arriving after 2014 or 2022. For instance, a few older diaspora members were Russian-speaking Soviet-era emigrants, whereas the post-2014 youth are often only Ukrainian-speaking and hyper-aware of Russian aggression. While all oppose the invasion, disagreements can arise over approaches — some may prefer quieter charity work, others visible public protest. These diverse political and cultural backgrounds can lead to diaspora polarization, if not managed. One example is how to approach dialogue with Russians in Germany: some diaspora activists absolutely refuse any joint events with Russian diaspora groups, viewing them with suspicion,[144] while a minority thought carefully structured dialogue could be useful.[145] Such fissures can hinder unified diaspora lobbying or messaging. Moreover, the Ukrainian diaspora is not monolithic in its vision of peace. While the vast majority supports Ukraine's defense, there can be differences: some favor exploring negotiations sooner, while others insist on total victory before peace, which can impact how comfortable people feel working together.[146] Such internal tensions, unless carefully navigated, weaken the diaspora's collective influence.

Additionally, community passivity was mentioned as an internal challenge. The burden of activism often falls on a relatively small core of volunteers, while many others remain passive recipients of aid. One interviewee wryly called it the 90/10 problem: "90 percent of people wait for help provided by ten percent who volunteer."[147] This imbalance leads to burnout and resentment. Indeed, multiple diaspora surveys found "passivity within the Ukrainian community" — evidenced by a limited number of people attending demonstrations or volunteering — as a notable challenge.[148]

Emotional and Psychological Costs

Almost every active diaspora member the author spoke with touched on the personal emotional toll of their peacebuilding engagement. Chronic stress and burnout were common refrains. Activists have been operating in "crisis mode" since 2022 (or even 2014 for some), with little opportunity to process their trauma. Many carry the weight of worrying about family back in Ukraine while also dealing with the immediate needs of people in front of them in Germany. One volunteer described her mind as "constantly in two places — I'm sorting donated clothes here but thinking about my husband on the front line every minute."[149] This mental split can be exhausting. Burnout manifests as physical fatigue, irritability or a sense of numbness.

Another emotional cost is vicarious trauma and grief. By helping fellow Ukrainians, diaspora volunteers inevitably absorb many heartbreaking stories about homes lost, relatives killed and atrocities witnessed. Over time, hearing these accounts (and often being a shoulder to cry on) can lead to secondary traumatic stress. Several participants mentioned trouble sleeping, intrusive thoughts or guilt.[150] Survivor's guilt, feeling guilty for being safe in Germany while loved ones suffer or fight in Ukraine, is also prevalent. This guilt drives them to work even harder, creating a vicious cycle of overwork. "I can't relax or enjoy anything knowing what's happening to my people,"[151] one interviewee said, explaining why she has not taken a single day off volunteering in over a year. While dedication is admirable, it comes at the cost of personal well-being. Emotional isolation is also an issue. Ironically, those who spend all day helping others can still feel alone. A participant noted that after she spends her energy supporting others, she has little left to socialize or seek support for herself.[152] Furthermore, not everyone in the host society understands what the diaspora volunteers are going through. Several women mentioned that German colleagues or neighbors might initially express sympathy, but they eventually expect the Ukrainians to "move on" or be less consumed by the war.[153] This lack of understanding can leave activists feeling that only their fellow Ukrainians truly "get it," narrowing their support network.

Finally, uncertainty about the future weighs heavily. Peacebuilding is inherently a long-term, often abstract pursuit. With the war still raging, some diaspora peacebuilders wrestle with emotional fatigue from fighting an uphill battle with no clear end. One person likened it to running a marathon with no finish line in sight. The constant effort to keep the issue visible and aid flowing while combating fatigue and distraction, can lead to cynicism or despair. "Sometimes I wonder, does it make a difference?" a volunteer admitted, reflecting a moment of doubt that many surely feel but seldom voice.[154]Overcoming this emotional low is a challenge in itself — requiring peer support and reminding one another of even small successes. In sum, despite strong commitment, diaspora-led peacebuilding among Ukrainians in Germany is hindered by structural barriers, internal divisions and emotional strain, underscoring the need for lasting support.

With the war still raging, some diaspora peacebuilders wrestle with emotional fatigue from fighting an uphill battle with no clear end.

Successes in Peacebuilding Work

Despite significant challenges, the Ukrainian diaspora in Germany has achieved notable successes in strengthening community resilience and advancing peace-oriented goals. Many of these achievements emerged from informal grassroots efforts driven by solidarity, creativity and the leadership of women.

A key foundation for this success was the pre-existing high level of capacity among Ukrainian women. Many organizers leveraged years of experience as NGO professionals, educators, psychologists and civil society leaders. Rather than needing training, they required structural support to apply their skills in a new context. Participants rejected the notion of "capacity building," instead calling for "capacity unleashing."[155] Their initiatives—from trauma workshops and civic education to diaspora communications—were sustained through autonomy, contextual knowledge and peer-led models. These women built much of the diaspora's grassroots infrastructure, demonstrating how displaced professionals can quickly transition into leadership when empowered.

Grassroots mobilization was another major strength. Responding rapidly to the invasion, diaspora groups created decentralized volunteer networks across German cities, coordinating aid, housing, advocacy and integration support. One frequently cited example was "Vitsche," a women-led platform that combined protest action with community engagement.[156] Their use of social media and open organizing styles attracted a broader base, including second-generation Ukrainians and local German allies. This decentralized, collaborative approach helped foster local ownership and build social capital through cross-community partnerships, though it ultimately emerged in response to, rather than prevention of, the serious burnout many had already experienced. These grassroots structures have become vital pillars of diaspora-led peacebuilding. Importantly, the predominance of women in the diaspora shaped strategies in distinct ways. Women leveraged caregiving networks—such as school and playground groups—as channels for activism and information-sharing. Their emphasis on inclusive, consensus-based decision-making supported cohesion and flexibility, while advocacy efforts often centered issues affecting women and children, including gender-based violence and the needs of single mothers. Diaspora women's organizations have also engaged with international platforms focused on the Women, Peace and Security agenda, ensuring that these concerns remain visible in broader peacebuilding discourse. Below are key areas of success and forward-looking ideas that emerged from the interviews:

Emotional Resilience and Mutual Support

One of the diaspora's greatest successes lies in its ability to foster emotional resilience among its members. In the face of trauma and uncertainty, the community has managed to create spaces of support and hope. For example, Ukrainian women formed informal support circles in several German cities soon after the 2022 refugee arrivals.[157] These were safe spaces — sometimes weekly tea gatherings, sometimes WhatsApp groups — where women could share their feelings, cry, pray and encourage one another. Participants credited these circles with preventing many from falling into isolation or despair. Simply knowing that others had similar fears and hopes provided strength. Over time, what started as small peer groups evolved into more structured initiatives, like "Mama-Schule" meetups for mothers and children, or peer counseling networks.[158] These efforts, often coordinated by volunteers with a background in psychology or social work, helped newcomers process their experiences.

Another critical form of success, especially highlighted by women participants, is the creation of informal care systems that plugged gaps in official services. For instance, when German language courses had waiting lists for refugees, Ukrainian volunteers with teaching experience began offering free, informal language classes in the evenings at community halls.[159] They not only taught German basics but also provided on-site childcare, so mothers could attend — a small innovation that significantly increased women's access to language learning. Likewise, diaspora women organized childcare co-ops, where they would take turns minding each other's children, allowing others to attend job interviews or simply have a respite. The diaspora's informal support networks filled critical gaps left by institutions, easing stress, fostering stability and strengthening community resilience through tailored, responsive care.

Cultural Preservation and Exchange

Another area of success has been cultural programming. Diaspora organizers put significant effort into cultural events that celebrate Ukrainian identity and share it with the host country, and these events have yielded positive outcomes. In 2023, the Ukrainian community in Berlin hosted a large Vyshyvanka Day celebration featuring embroidery exhibits, folk music and a crafts fair. The event boosted morale, fostered pride and connection to home, built empathy with German audiences, and received local media attention that highlighted Ukraine's culture beyond the war. Participants noted that such initiatives often served multiple roles, including fundraising and strengthening community ties.[160] Another success story was a traveling photo exhibition organized by diaspora women that showed scenes of Ukrainian daily life amid war and peace.[161] These cultural diplomacy efforts also illustrate a gendered strategy in which women were often the curators of culture, using soft power to win hearts and minds. This kind of grassroots cultural exchange lays the groundwork for long-term people-to-people peace, strengthening social cohesion and understanding across communities.

Long-Term Visions and Forward Thinking

Many participants, while focused on immediate needs, also look to the future. A common vision is that the diaspora will play a lasting role in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction and peacebuilding.[162] One idea is to establish a permanent Ukrainian cultural and community center in Germany, especially in cities like Berlin or Munich, to serve as a hub for cultural exchange, support services and policy dialogue. [163] Some leaders have already begun informal planning. Others are working to mobilize professional networks, so that Ukrainian engineers, doctors and IT specialists in Germany can contribute to future reconstruction efforts. Diaspora women in particular called for ensuring women's voices are included in peace processes and rebuilding.[164] They envision a shift from informal activism to formal representation, including a transnational Ukrainian women's peace coalition that could engage both German and Ukrainian authorities on survivor support, memorialization and reconciliation. A key strategy for sustaining this momentum has been alliance-building. As one participant said, "We have done so much we never imagined we could. In the future, we see ourselves helping rebuild homes and rebuild lives. We will be there until lasting peace comes — and beyond."[165] This captures the prevailing sentiment that their successes so far are stepping-stones toward an even larger contribution to peace and reconstruction in the long run.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Diaspora-led peacebuilding in Germany has strengthened community resilience, identity and advocacy, with women's leadership at the forefront. Yet structural barriers, limited mental health support, internal divisions and geopolitical tensions continue to constrain its potential, highlighting the need to move from capacity-building to resourcing existing leadership. These recommendations are directed at specific stakeholders — including German policymakers, NGOs, civil society, international partners and the Ukrainian diaspora/community itself.

Invest in Diaspora Platforms and Trauma-Informed Dialogues

- ***Inside Germany (Government, NGOs, Civil Society):*** Fund inclusive digital and physical platforms for storytelling, joint learning, and coalition-building across diaspora communities (Ukrainian, Syrian, Belarusian, Afghan, etc.). Ensure dialogue facilitators are trained in trauma-sensitive practices. Embed women as co-designers and leaders of these regional initiatives.
- ***International Partners and Organizations:*** Support cross-diaspora initiatives at regional and international levels (e.g., EU-funded programs). Fund regional forums specifically geared toward women-led peacebuilding and solidarity through shared trauma.

Support Language Access and Integration

- ***Inside Germany (Government, NGOs, Civil Society):*** Expand multilingual outreach, legal aid services, cultural mediators, and fast-track credential recognition programs. Fund interpreters and community liaisons to reduce administrative burdens on diaspora organizers.
- ***International Partners and Organizations:*** Advocate for integration best practices across EU contexts. Fund multilingual resources for Ukrainian communities beyond Germany. Support mobile integration teams for underserved rural areas.

Leverage Diaspora Expertise

- ***Inside Germany (Government, NGOs, Civil Society):*** Recognize Ukrainian diaspora members as experts in education, health, media, diplomacy, and organizing. Include them as advisors, trainers, and decision-makers in integration, civic dialogue, and policy development.
- ***International Partners and Organizations:*** Fund participatory research, peer training programs, and diaspora fellowships. Support diaspora-led knowledge sharing at international conferences and policy dialogues.

Shift from Capacity-Building to Capacity-Unleashing

- ***Inside Germany (Government, NGOs, Civil Society):*** Shift from generic capacity-building to enabling real autonomy by reforming donor rules that exclude grassroots groups—such as co-financing requirements in Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) grants or the development agency GIZ's complex procurement procedures. Tailor leadership programs for diaspora women and adapt EU schemes like the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV) to include diaspora-led initiatives.
- ***International Partners and Organizations:*** Design flexible funding mechanisms that allow diaspora organizations to set their own priorities. Promote diaspora leadership within international peacebuilding, migration and humanitarian networks.

Prioritize Mental Health and Social Support

- ***Inside Germany (Government, NGOs, Civil Society):*** Allocate funding for culturally and linguistically accessible mental health services (e.g., Ukrainian-speaking counselors). Partner diaspora NGOs with German health services. Support informal care networks such as mother groups and survivor circles as critical resilience infrastructure.
- ***International Partners and Organizations:*** Fund trauma-informed psychosocial programming in cooperation with diaspora networks. Embed mental health support into regional diaspora engagement frameworks.

Plan for the Long Term

- ***Inside Germany (Government, NGOs, Civil Society):*** Invest in mentorship programs and second-generation engagement, such as youth leadership initiatives or cultural education projects to sustain diaspora resilience.
- ***International Partners and Organizations:*** Promote long-term diaspora engagement strategies across international institutions (e.g., UN, EU). Fund research and policy hubs focused on diaspora contributions to reconstruction and peacebuilding.

For the Ukrainian Diaspora Community (Internal Recommendations):

- ***Strengthen internal unity and capacity:*** Create umbrella associations or coordinating committees (e.g., a formal "Alliance of Ukrainian Organizations in Germany") to unify messaging and share resources. Encourage mentorship between established leaders and newer activists to transfer knowledge and avoid duplication. Use tools like newsletters and regular meetings to improve internal coordination.
- ***Promote self-care and sustainability:*** Rotate responsibilities, bring in new volunteers and normalize taking breaks to prevent burnout. Foster a culture where rest is valued as part of long-term contribution. Senior women can model balance by encouraging younger women to step back when needed without guilt.

The Ukrainian diaspora in Germany has demonstrated remarkable grassroots leadership and resilience. To turn this into lasting impact, stakeholders must support community-led peacebuilding by addressing structural barriers—ensuring funding autonomy, recognizing diaspora-led initiatives, investing in gender-sensitive leadership pipelines and creating spaces where diaspora actors shape, not just join, future strategies. When sustained and meaningfully supported, these efforts can strengthen democratic resilience in Germany, support long-term integration and belonging for Ukrainians in exile, and build the civic foundations for a more peaceful and just Ukraine.

Case study Britain

Sustain Black Women, Sustain the Fight: The Impact of Black Women's Leadership in Resisting Racial Injustice and Criminal Legal System Harm in Britain—on Health and Visions for Healing

CASE STUDY

By Temi Mwale

Context[c]

This case study explores the experiences and visions of Black women in Britain[166] leading the fight against racial injustice and criminal legal system harm. It examines how we protect and heal our communities amid systemic violence, racism and state neglect. Our work is emotional, physical, mental and spiritual labor — yet too often we are met with a lack of care. This research offers insight into how our leadership can be recognized, resourced and sustained, affirming that we cannot carry this work without infrastructures that protect our wellbeing. Positioned within global traditions of Black resistance and diasporic solidarity, it honors Black women's everyday peacebuilding. For us, peace is not the absence of conflict, but the presence of justice, safety and collective flourishing. This work is for those who have held too much for too long — for our elders, our youth, the women who came before us and the ones yet to come. Our healing matters: not only so we can keep doing the work, but because we deserve to be well and to be whole.

The Black community in Britain is a diverse diasporic constellation, rooted in centuries of history entangled with the violence of the British empire. We are African, Caribbean and of mixed heritage — spanning generations shaped by migration, survival and resistance. As of 2021, around 3.17 million people in England and Wales — about 5.3 percent of the population — identify as Black or of mixed Black heritage.[167] Against the odds, we have built lives, families, communities and futures. Peacebuilding in Black communities cannot be understood without naming the systemic harms we endure. Racism in Britain is not history; it is embedded in housing, education, healthcare, employment and the criminal legal system.[168] These harms reflect how state power devalues Black life, denying safety, justice and dignity. Nowhere is this more acute than in the criminal legal system,[169] where Black people face disproportionate harm at every stage.[170] Racism also takes a profound toll on Black health[171] — socially, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Chronic exposure to trauma,[172] injustice and systemic neglect contributes to widespread anxiety, depression, PTSD, hypertension and long-term illness.[173] Yet when Black people seek care, we are often pathologized,[174] misdiagnosed or dismissed, and health services fail to meet our cultural and emotional needs.[175] Health inequity is not a byproduct of racism — it is one of its primary mechanisms. In the face of systemic failure, Black communities have always organized to resist harm and build care to meet our own needs.[176] Across the country, Black-led initiatives confront racialized criminalization,[177] demand accountability and build community safety. But this resistance carries a cost: for those of us on the frontlines, the labor of holding our people through state violence and constant grief often leads to burnout and long-term harm.[178]

c Literature review support from Holly Burton.

Black women in Britain live at the intersection of multiple systems of oppression. We experience racism compounded by misogyny, classism, ableism and other forms of marginalization. The compounded stress of navigating these oppressions is rarely recognized in mainstream support systems[179] or mental health frameworks.[180] We face distinct and often overlooked health disparities. Conditions such as fibroids,[181] lupus[182] and certain cancers disproportionately affect us yet remain poorly researched and inadequately treated.[183] Systemic racism in healthcare leads to misdiagnoses, neglect and delayed care — shaped by harmful stereotypes. The "strong Black woman" trope — rooted in childhood as the "strong Black girl"[184] — enables this neglect, forcing us to suppress vulnerability and hindering our ability to seek support[185] or express emotional needs.[186] Black women in Britan experience hypervisibility and invisibility at once.[187] Those at the forefront of community organizing and peacebuilding face significant health impacts with little tailored support. We have been central to resisting criminalization and building community-led responses envisioning care beyond the carceral state,[188] yet this work — often outside formal systems — is rarely recognized or resourced. Activist spaces, too, are not immune to harm: racial and gender discrimination persist within movements.[189] Constant engagement with trauma and the burden of responsibility[190] heighten the risk of secondary trauma[191] and burnout. For decades, Black women have built infrastructures of collective care.[192] Since the 1970s, Black women's organizations have created spaces for healing, education, health advocacy and political mobilization.[193] Yet our contributions to public health[194] and social justice[195] remain under-documented.[196] This erasure is ongoing and deeply political. As Adele Jones and Diana Watt write, "When Black women are rendered invisible in accounts of social life in which they were not only present but made significant contribution, this is the literary equivalent of wielding a slave-master's whip to subjugate and silence."[197] Despite attempts to erase us, we have always documented ourselves.[198] Greater recognition[199] and investment are urgently needed to ensure our work and experiences are centered, not sidelined.

Methodology

This research is grounded in Black feminist, decolonial and participatory methodologies, drawing on abolitionist thought, critical criminology and Black studies — traditions that root theory in lived experience, and frame survival, care, refusal and resistance as political practice.[200] It affirms that knowledge must be created with and for communities, positioning research as a tool for liberation, reflection and repair within a broader lineage of struggle.

The work was guided by three interrelated core questions:

- What unique experiences and challenges do Black women in Britain face while leading peacebuilding work focused on racial injustice in the criminal legal system?
- How does this work impact their health and wellbeing?
- What has sustained them in this work, and, in light of its impacts, what do they need to heal and continue?

I write as both researcher and contributor — a Black woman community organizer from a criminalized community, whose work has been forged through fifteen years of responding to racialized harm and building healing-centered justice. My lived experience is not a limitation to this research but its grounding, depth and integrity. This is not an external study of justice work but a reflection from within it. The women in this project are my sisters and co-organizers, connected through long-standing relationships — spanning three to ten years — with me and with one another, shaped by shared histories of resistance, care and community-building. These relationships are a core strength, grounding the study in trust, accountability, vulnerability and shared purpose. My work and my life are inseparable from the story this research tells.

This research was shaped with twenty Black women in Britain, including myself, who work to address racialized harm in the criminal legal system. Together we engaged through two community conversations, sixteen one-to-one dialogues and a collective validation gathering. We are organizers, healers, community builders, lawyers, educators, campaigners, founders, producers, curators and artists — Black women on the frontlines of transformative change. We confront state and structural violence while building the care, healing and safety infrastructures our communities need to survive and thrive. Our work spans housing estates, schools, protests, galleries, police stations, universities, courtrooms, hospitals, prisons, policy spaces, detention centres and media platforms. Across these spaces, we organize resistance, offer care, shape public narratives and challenge systems from the streets to the state. Ranging in age from our 20s to 60s, with roots across Britain, our leadership is grounded in shared struggle and unwavering commitment. This work is not abstract for us; it is personal, embodied and continuous: the labor of love, grief, resistance and imagination. This research centered Black women as co-researchers, not subjects, affirming that those most impacted by systemic injustice hold essential knowledge for shaping solutions.[201] Storytelling was used as both method and medicine, prioritizing care, trust and collective meaning-making. Contributors shaped the analysis and recommendations to ensure the research remained grounded in lived realities and aligned with our collective priorities.[202] This research had limitations of time and scale. Conducted over a short period, many contributors described the conversations as powerful and therapeutic yet wished for more space to share their stories in depth. The study focused on women who self-identified — or were identified by peers — as engaged in work addressing racialized criminal legal system harm, but it does not capture the full spectrum of Black women whose daily lives resist criminalization in informal or undocumented ways. While the participants reflected diverse experiences across age, profession, spirituality and organizing contexts, the study is not exhaustive. Voices of young Black women under 25, gender-expansive people, incarcerated women, undocumented migrants and more regions across Britain were not represented but would have further enriched the findings. As with all qualitative work, these insights are situated, not generalizable. Yet the themes that emerged reveal enduring patterns in Black women's lives — of harm, resistance, healing, and leadership — and a collective refusal to abandon our communities in the face of systemic violence.

Black British Women Shaping Peace and Justice in the Diaspora

Conceptualizing the Diaspora's Role in Peacebuilding

We, the Black women who shaped this study, reflect the diversity of the Black community in Britain: 30 percent of us are of Caribbean heritage, 25 percent African heritage, 25 percent mixed African and white heritage, 10 percent mixed Caribbean and white heritage, and 10 percent mixed Caribbean and African heritage. Like many Black women in Britain, we navigate an "insider/outsider" relationship to both "here" and "back there" — where "back there" is not always synonymous with home.[203] As Douglas suggests, "diaspora space" is a powerful lens for understanding how we organize to challenge inequities and build collective wellbeing.[204] Though we rarely used the term "diaspora" explicitly in our conversations, our lives and work embody diasporic consciousness: holding layered connections to African and Caribbean heritage, ancestral resistance and global Black struggles for justice. Many of us see ourselves as bridges: between generations, between nations and between visions of survival and transformation. Whilst some of us name our work as peacebuilding, others may not use those terms but are deeply engaged in practices that challenge state violence and sustain our communities. For many of us who define our work as justice work, the movement phrase "no justice, no peace" deeply resonated. One contributor named it perfectly:

> ***"The work that we do, we automatically always call it racial justice work, although it's way more than that, it's way more intersectional than that, right? But actually, peace is inserted right before it in a silent way, you know, like you've got the letter K in front of knowledge... I feel peace is like that letter K, you know?... absolutely you can't remove it. It is silent, but it's essential."***[205]

Our work is building peace — not the "peace" of state-sanctioned order, but a daily practice of refusing violence and creating the conditions for Black communities to live, heal, thrive and be free. We confront criminal legal system harm at every point of its violence, while simultaneously constructing infrastructures of care that the state refuses to build. Across communal, legal, political, cultural, educational and spiritual terrains, we organize and build community-led systems of safety and wellbeing. What follows offers only a glimpse of this work — a testament to the breadth, brilliance and necessity of Black women's leadership in redefining peace and justice on our terms. Documenting this legacy remains an ongoing, vital task.

Resisting State Violence and Building Community Justice

To address the immediate harms of institutionally racist policing,[206] we have built crisis support services that hold young people, families and communities through police contact, offering emotional care, legal advice and sustained advocacy. We have empowered those whose rights were violated to pursue complaints and legal action, while driving public accountability by challenging the disproportionate stop and search,[207] launching campaigns against degrading strip searches — where Black children[208] are over six times more likely to be targeted[209] — and resisting the criminalization of education[210] by opposing school exclusions and police presence in schools.[211] We have challenged racialized "gang" policing[212] through legal action that exposed the human rights violations of gang databases and the devastating consequences of gang labelling on housing, education, and social life.[213] This collective work ultimately led to the abolition of the Metropolitan Police's Gangs Violence Matrix.[214] In courtrooms, we have provided emotional support to families, acted as character witnesses, and challenged harmful narratives that dehumanize defendants. We have contributed to fairer outcomes by foregrounding racial trauma in defense strategies and exposing the criminalization of Black vernacular within language justice campaigns. Our work has highlighted how racism shapes prosecution and sentencing, including the racist origins of majority verdicts.[215] We have relentlessly challenged joint enterprise and conspiracy laws that criminalize Black youth through association,[216] using direct family support, research and campaigns to expose the injustices of collective punishment and advocate for care over incarceration.

In prisons — where Black children[217] and adults[218] are disproportionately incarcerated — we have offered emotional, legal and spiritual care, exposing degrading conditions and advocating for recognition of the profound impact of parental imprisonment on children. Our support extends beyond the prison walls: we accompany people returning home, offering emotional and financial assistance and developing tailored programmes for Black men on probation to resist the neglect that defines post-custodial supervision. We have directly supported individuals facing deportation, challenged immigration policies that criminalize migration and campaigned to stop families being torn apart. We have sustained family justice campaigns after fatal state violence that disproportionately impacts Black people,[219] accompanying bereaved relatives through inquests, civil proceedings and public inquiries. These campaigns demand accountability for institutional killings and create spaces for grief, remembrance and collective care. We have also challenged the criminalization of mental illness,[220] campaigning against the use of policing to respond to mental health crises, given the fatal consequences this continues to have for our communities.[221]

Where the state has failed to provide care, we have built it ourselves. We established the UK's first Community Justice Centre,[222] a holistic space supporting young people to navigate violence, criminalization and systemic neglect. Across our communities, we have created infrastructures of healing, advocacy and collective safety. Education remains central to this work: we teach legal rights, campaign strategy and leadership to those most impacted, while forming coalitions that coordinate resistance across the full spectrum of criminal legal system harm. We have documented our histories through exhibitions, books and public events to ensure our narratives remain visible and protected. Projects such as War in a Babylon[223] have archived the long history of racial injustice and curated spaces for intergenerational dialogue, connecting young people with elders to trace continuities of resistance from past to present. Our work extends into schools, prisons and universities through research, curricula and cultural production that embed community-led perspectives on justice and healing. We have raised millions to fund resistance and build lasting community infrastructure. Our advocacy has brought local issues to national and international recognition, shifting public narratives and shaping political debate. Through sustained organizing, we have engaged policymakers from local councils to Parliament, influencing legislation and reform. We have led mass protests and intimate memorials alike, mobilizing thousands in defense of life and dignity while holding sacred space for grief and remembrance.

The role of Black women in Britain's diaspora is not only to resist but to reimagine: to hold space for grief, dreaming, recovery and justice.

For the Black women who shaped this study, this work extends beyond confronting racialized criminal legal system harm — it is about sustaining Black life, culture and legacy through art, education, community-building and the creation of spaces where our people can breathe, heal and thrive. For us, peacebuilding is expansive, radical and spiritual. It means building infrastructure, healing from trauma, redistributing resources, resisting state violence and practicing joy, creativity and care. As one contributor said, "[p]articularly Black women, because of our ancestors, we can't insult them by doing nothing when we are free."[224] What unites this work is not a single tactic or title but a shared refusal to accept the violence of the current system — and a commitment to building new structures of safety, care and justice beyond it. The role of Black women in Britain's diaspora is not only to resist but to reimagine: to hold space for grief, for dreaming, for recovery and for justice, often all at once. We understand peace as both daily struggle and ancestral inheritance, passed down from the freedom fighters who came before us.

Origins of the Work: Care as Longing and Legacy

For Black women leading justice work, activism is rarely a choice — it is a calling.[225] Our paths are rooted in personal loss, systemic violence and a deep responsibility to our communities — a compulsion to serve[226] that many described as spiritual: "[m]any are called, but few are chosen. So we're all chosen. That's why we're here."[227] Some of us were "thrust into activism"[228] after the police killed our own family members;[229] others became politically engaged as children, by the police killings of Mark Duggan, Rashan Charles and Edson da Costa.[230] Grief was a catalyst: the murder of friends,[231] the incarceration of loved ones[232] and the cumulative losses within our communities. Many traced the origins of our work to the racism we witnessed in families,[233] schools[234] and public institutions: the stark difference in how Black and white parents were treated,[235] the relentless targeting of our own family members by police. [236] For some, activism was shaped by a sense of duty instilled from childhood, raised in homes where care for one another was a given.[237] Others were inspired by family members who were community organizers[238] or began as teenagers, responding not to career paths but to injustice unfolding before our eyes. These stories show that our activism is not separate from our lives; it is born from our survival, emerging from the conditions that shaped us.

Another shared theme is the absence of care in our own lives, particularly during Black girlhood.[239] The pain of being unsupported, unseen or unsafe becomes a catalyst. Activism becomes both a response to external harm and a personal attempt to build what we did not have: safety, protection and care. Yet, in striving to meet our communities' needs, we often neglect our own. The same systems that failed us in childhood[240] echo through our organising spaces — overwork, invisibility, guilt and doubt about our worthiness of rest or love. This cycle is not merely burnout; it is the re-enactment of the very harms we seek to dismantle. Recognizing these emotional origins is essential. When we name and heal them, we create movements rooted not only in survival but in reciprocity, care and wholeness.

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The Impact of Leading for Black Women

This research reveals the profound toll of Black women's peacebuilding and justice work. The women in this study described how leading this work has transformed them, offering deep emotional and spiritual growth, but the personal costs are unquantifiable. This section shares key findings on the emotional, physical, material, spiritual and structural tolls Black women face in resisting racial injustice and criminal legal system harm. These are not individual struggles or personal shortcomings, but systemic patterns of extraction, rooted in the absence of care infrastructures across movements, workplaces and society.

The Toll on Our Whole Selves: Health, Wealth, Spirit and Time

For Black women, the toll of this work is carried in our whole selves: our mental, physical and spiritual health; our relationships; our finances; and our sense of time. Many described chronic exhaustion and severe mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression and, at times, suicidal ideation. The "relentless"[241] exposure to harm and repeated trauma leaves deep scars. As one contributor shared:

> ***"The reason why I keep doing this [is] because the deaths keep happening, as my sister just said, they're continuous. So you're continuously bereaved, over and over and over again and re-traumatized. It's not post-traumatic stress, it's continuous traumatic stress disorder."***[242]

Another described experiencing "survivor's guilt."[243] For many, neurodivergence compounded these challenges, intensifying barriers to wellbeing. The strain also manifests physically: contributors linked their advocacy to serious diagnoses, including cancer, fibroids and autoimmune conditions. Some described feeling unable to take time off when sick, because of the responsibilities they were carrying.[244] Many expressed fear — describing it as "scary"[245] and "frightening"[246] — that this work is shortening their lives. As one said, "[It's] affecting our long-term health…I think if I stopped [this work] today and did nothing else… I feel my life has already been shortened."[247]

Our personal relationships also bear the weight of this work. Time with children, partners, family and friends is often eroded, leading to disconnection and guilt. Many of us shared how loved ones struggle to grasp the depth of our commitment or the emotional toll of this work, resulting in feelings of neglect, alienation, loneliness and longing for intimacy, to be truly seen and held. Financial precarity is another persistent strain.[248] For some, activism is part of paid employment, yet boundaries blur, and compensation rarely reflects the depth of labor. For others, whose organizing lies outside formal work, insecurity is constant. Some limited their formal work hours or left paid roles to meet the demands of justice work; others were excluded from opportunities because of their activism. Many fear the future — lacking financial safety or retirement security — especially given the health vulnerabilities already described. There is also the toll on time and being: the loss of rest, joy, creativity and the ability to simply be. One contributor said, "my time was no longer my time;"[249] another shared, "I feel like this work is part of who I am, but it also sacrifices part of me somehow."[250] Many mourn their "younger selves,"[251] forced to grow up too quickly under the weight of responsibility and resistance as teenagers, sharing "too much"[252] of themselves. The resulting burnout is the cumulative toll of carrying state harms: a systemic extraction of our health, time, peace and being.

Blurred Boundaries Between Work and Life

One of the most pervasive challenges in this work is the absence of boundaries between activism and daily life. As one contributor shared, "It just seeped into my personal life. And then it became my personal life."[253] For many of us, peacebuilding is not a role we step into; it is inseparable from our identity, making it difficult to say no or step back. Homes and relationships become sites of advocacy, as we are constantly called to navigate harmful systems — schools, social services, healthcare and the criminal legal system — on behalf of loved ones and communities. The proximity to state violence means the work is never truly "off-duty" and attempts to rest often bring "guilt" or "stress" rather than relief.[254] This blurring of lines is not a personal failure, but a structural reality born of systemic neglect and institutional abandonment.

The Weight of Disproportionate Responsibility

Across our conversations, a shared theme emerged around the immense emotional labour carried by Black women in justice work and the feeling of responsibility for outcomes far beyond our control. When change does not come, failure is often internalized — not as structural resistance, but as personal inadequacy. As one contributor shared, "I kind of feel a personal duty. And if there's a failure, it kind of feels very personalized."[255] Many traced this pattern to childhood, where early caregiving — often without being cared for — instilled over-responsibility. In justice work, this becomes amplified: the scale of harm is vast, and the demand to "hold it all" and be able to "handle it"[256] feels unrelenting. This is not a personal flaw but a systemic dynamic. Institutions rely on Black women to carry the grief, rage and labor of justice work while denying the care structures needed to sustain us. The result is a continuous cycle of responsibility without support, forced to bear harms we did not create and blamed for change we are prevented from achieving.

Threats to Safety and the Cost of Visibility

For Black women leading peace and justice work, the threat of violence is not theoretical; it is constant. Misogynoir, the convergence of anti-Black racism and misogyny,[257] makes our leadership a target. In legal spaces, Black women who challenge injustice are often policed by the very systems they seek to transform. For those working as lawyers, advocates or campaigners, the surveillance we resist in our communities is mirrored inside courtrooms and institutions. Our refusal to conform — to dilute our message or align with institutional expectations — invites scrutiny. We are penalized by systems and society alike for doing things differently, for embodying a radical imagination that refuses to "get in line."

This surveillance is not abstract. It appears as racist complaints to regulators, targeted judicial scrutiny and reputational policing designed to silence and control. Visibility becomes dangerous, not because of what we do, but because of how society and the state respond to us doing it. Across this research, contributors described the constant fear of being surveilled, harassed, attacked or vilified. Many, including myself, have been followed, doxxed, and directly threatened, including receiving death threats. These are not isolated incidents but reflections of a structural dynamic that punishes Black women's leadership with heightened risk. The psychological toll of hypervigilance is immense; it shapes where we go, how we show up and whether we feel safe enough to lead. Most efforts to protect ourselves are managed in isolation, with support often coming only from other Black women. This is not an acceptable "cost" of the work. It is structural violence, sustained by institutional neglect and societal complicity, demanding not rhetoric but real protection and accountability.

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Structural Absence of Care Infrastructure

A core finding of this research is the absence of formal infrastructure to support the wellbeing of Black women peacebuilders. Though we serve as the emotional and spiritual anchors of movements for racial justice, there are no reciprocal systems to hold us. Many spoke of feeling neglected and unseen. As one contributor shared, "Another cost is carrying the disappointment of wanting to be supported and wanting to be cared for, and there's just an abyss, even when you reach out… it's not for lack of asking for help."[258] This absence of dedicated spaces, resources and care structures is not an oversight — it is a structural failure that sustains cycles of harm and burnout.

Sustainability Strategies

Despite the toll of justice work, Black women continue to lead, love and imagine. This research revealed everyday practices — rooted in care, connection and collective wisdom — that sustain us. Many of us are anchored by spirituality: God, the universe, faith and our ancestors offer grounding in grief and clarity in doubt. A sense of calling, of being part of something greater than ourselves, guides and replenishes us. As contributors shared, "God, first and foremost. My ancestors, family, culture, community… that sustains me"[259] and "[h]ope that tomorrow will be different… that belief and that longing for that difference sustains me."[260] Relationships are at the heart of our survival. While movement spaces can offer solidarity and sisterhood, many also draw strength from family, partners, close friends, mentors and leaders walking parallel paths. Being deeply loved — romantically or platonically — was described as vital. Feeling safe, affirmed and supported beyond our public roles reminds us that we are more than what we do. Sisterhood with Black women in particular was described as sacred, a space of restoration. "Belly laughter," "leaving a space uplifted," and "feeling joy in the company of people who truly see me" were named as healing acts. Joy is not separate from resistance; as one contributor said, "joy is a human right… there has to be joy."[261] Cooking together, dancing, talking into the night and holding space for one another's vulnerability were described not as luxuries, but as necessities. Creativity, culture and intergenerational connection also sustain us. Poetry, art, storytelling and music — reggae, gospel, RnB — connect us to memory and possibility, helping us metabolize grief and imagine freedom. The younger generation — our children, nieces, nephews and students — offer hope and accountability. As one woman reflected, "The babies and the children who are growing up in this world. And I think about my younger self and my inner child, who wished that there were more adults holding me doing this work, showing me how to do this work. And that's definitely what keeps me in it."[262] Nature, movement and rest were consistently named as non-negotiable. Time in the sun, walks, plants, exercise, yoga and retreats help us return to our bodies. Rest was not seen as a reward, but a radical practice of refusal in a world that expects our endless labour. We are not sustained by institutions, but by each other — by love, faith, culture and the spaces we carve to breathe, heal and be well.

To be witnessed, remembered and valued not just for what we produce, but for who we are and how we hold and love our people. These visions are not abstract. They already exist — in memory, practice and possibility. What we need now is to be resourced to live them fully, with dignity, care and trust.

Visions for Healing and Sustainability

At the heart of this work is the belief that Black women's rest, dreaming, creativity and healing must be possible — and that our communities must be shaped to hold that possibility. Our visions for Black women's freedom and our visions for community care are one and the same: communities rooted in justice, protection and deep value for Black life. These visions already live in the spaces we create, the healing we nurture and the joy we insist on. This is not only labor — it is legacy.

Across this research, a shared vision emerged for what it means not just to survive the work, but to feel held within it. We need rest — not as a reward, but as an essential practice. We dream of stepping away without guilt or collapse, trusting we are held in our absence. We need financial resources that trust us to know what we need — therapy, rent, retreat or joy. We do not seek project-based funding, but investment in our full, complex selves, allowing us to live and lead without extraction or pure sacrifice.

We need space together as Black women — to connect in ways that are light, joyful and grounding, to laugh, eat, dance and simply be. We need intergenerational bonds that root and stretch us: spaces to learn from elders, pour into youth and be witnessed as whole people. We need these spaces not only as leaders or activists, but as women with stories, softness and needs. Many of us are driven by what we lacked, yet our work often replicates that same absence. We need time and space to heal — from what brought us here and from what we continue to carry. We need deep care, genuine support and recognition — not tokenistic praise, but grounded acknowledgment of our labor and leadership. To be witnessed, remembered and valued not just for what we produce, but for who we are and how we hold and love our people. These visions are not abstract. They already exist — in memory, practice and possibility. What we need now is to be resourced to live them fully, with dignity, care and trust.

Recommendations

These recommendations focus on resourcing what is already alive — what Black women have long been nurturing, defending and reimagining. They honor the brilliance and resilience embedded in existing community work while calling for bold, intentional infrastructure to sustain Black women's leadership, labor and lives. This is not only about ensuring the continuity of justice work, but about anchoring it in systems of care that match the depth of our commitment. To support Black women is to secure the future of collective liberation. The following recommendations, grounded in this research, outline practical steps to sustain the peacebuilding work of Black women in Britain's diaspora.

For Funders and Philanthropic Institutions:

- ***Fund Black women holistically:*** Provide unrestricted funding that honors the full humanity of Black women leaders. Resource rest, therapy, housing, spiritual healing, and creative exploration — without conditions.
- ***Invest in long-term security:*** Support financial security beyond active organizing. Fund pensions, healthcare and savings for Black women who have carried frontline work for decades, often without safety nets. No one should age into precarity after a lifetime of service.
- ***Prioritize the care and development of Black girls:*** Fund initiatives that provide tailored, culturally grounded care and long-term support for Black girls. Invest in programmes that nurture their leadership, wellbeing, creativity and safety and that are rooted in joy, healing and community.
- ***Commit to trust-based, long-term investment:*** Move beyond short-term, project-based funding. Provide eight-to-ten-year unrestricted grants to Black-led initiatives rooted in healing, justice and community power.
- ***Resource community-led healing infrastructure:*** Fund the creation and sustainability of healing infrastructure envisioned by Black women, including physical spaces, networks and systems that support organizing, care, creativity and leadership. Resource what already exists and what is still being dreamed into being.
- ***Resource intergenerational and cultural legacy work:*** Fund programmes that preserve ancestral wisdom and pass on intergenerational knowledge. Resource storytelling, archiving and cultural work as essential strategies of resistance, repair and remembrance.
- ***Redefine impact to include care, joy and restoration:*** Transform funding models to recognise emotional wellbeing, collective joy, relational trust and restored dignity as core outcomes, not just deliverables. Fund what sustains life, not just what produces outputs.

For Government and Policy Institutions:

- ***Acknowledge harm and tackle systemic racism:*** Formally recognize the racial injustice, violence and trauma inflicted by the criminal legal system — as well as the compounding impact of misogynoir across healthcare, education, housing and mental health. Commit to meaningful justice and repair through legislative reform, cross-sector accountability measures and sustained investment in solutions designed and led by Black women.
- ***Make healing justice a public priority:*** Recognize healing as critical to collective wellbeing. Fund and embed Black women-led healing work — including mental health, spiritual care and community repair — across public health, safety and justice strategies.
- ***Center Black women in policy and power:*** Black women must shape the policies that impact our lives. Move beyond tokenism. Ensure Black women are meaningfully represented in decision-making, policymaking and governance, from funding panels and public boards to local councils and Parliament. Resource our leadership, expertise and lived experience as vital to social transformation.
- ***Protect, teach and resource Black women's legacy:*** Preserve the cultural and political legacy of Black women through public investment in archives, oral histories, mentorship and cultural work. Embed our contributions to justice, health, education and liberation in national curricula and public institutions, ensuring our leadership is remembered, celebrated and passed on.

For Activist and Movement Ecosystems:

- ***Center care as strategy:*** Make care, rest, boundaries and joy foundational to organizing, not afterthoughts. Embed healing, therapy and spiritual practice into the fabric of movement work to resist urgency, extraction and burnout.
- ***Share leadership and sustain each other:*** Create collective structures where responsibility is shared, and people can step back and return without fear. Build rest cycles, timeshare models, peer support and care agreements that hold us through the work.
- ***Confront harm within:*** Ensure Black women are safe in our movements. Actively address misogynoir, anti-Blackness, colorism, texturism, ableism and queerphobia. Establish accountability rooted in care and justice.
- ***Honor invisible and intergenerational labor:*** Recognize the emotional, relational, cultural and spiritual labor that sustains movements. Create space for storytelling and cross-generational learning, ensuring that both elder wisdom and youth vision are honored.
- ***Uplift without extraction:*** Build platforms that affirm and elevate Black women's leadership without commodifying our pain or exploiting our stories. Celebrate us as full people, not only as producers of labor.
- ***Build transnational networks for collective power:*** Create and sustain alliances across borders, generations and contexts: spaces where Black women can heal, learn, strategize and organize together.

These recommendations are grounded in lived reality — not aspirational, but actionable. Black women are already leading, healing, building and holding. What is needed now is meaningful infrastructure, affirmation and investment that reflects the magnitude of our work. Without this, the toll of peacebuilding will continue to fall on those already stretched thin. But with sustained support, we lay the foundation for liberation that is not just imagined, but made real: collective, rooted and enduring.

Conclusion

This case study is not simply an account of Black women's peacebuilding; it is a tribute to our endurance, brilliance and unwavering commitment to justice. Our visions are not only about supporting Black communities; they are guides for how society itself can be restructured to benefit everyone. The recommendations that emerge here offer lessons far beyond our experiences, providing guidance for sustaining leaders and movements everywhere. This is an offering of recognition in a world that so often refuses to see us whole. What has surfaced through this research is not only evidence of harm, but a living archive of love, grief, power and possibility. We, Black women, are not peripheral to movements for change — we are the pulse. We carry ancestral knowledge and everyday wisdom. We build without blueprints, hold our communities through crisis and continue creating even when the cost is high. What we need is meaningful support: resourcing without conditions, rest without guilt and recognition that honours the fullness of our contributions. Listen to Black women not as case studies, but as strategists and leaders. The call is not only to witness, but to act — to repair, resource and reimagine. When Black women are supported to live, heal and lead fully, the whole world moves closer to freedom.

Case study
The Netherlands
Leading Change: Peacebuilding Initiatives of Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch Women in the Netherlands

CASE STUDY

By Bochra Laghssais

Context[d]

The Amazigh people are the Indigenous people of North Africa, who have been colonized by various civilizations from the Arab Muslim conquests in the 7th century to the French and Spanish states in the 19th and 20th centuries. Today, these communities reject the stigmatizing, pejorative term Berbers, preferring to call themselves Amazigh, which in the Tamazight language means "free noble people."[263]

This case study explores how Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women in the diaspora navigate questions of identity and culture while integrating into European society and naturalizing in the Netherlands. It focuses particularly on their self-organized peacebuilding efforts within their local communities.

Following World War II, the Dutch economy recovered faster than expected, creating a shortage of low-skilled labor. While the Netherlands initially recruited workers from Southern Europe (Italy, Spain and Greece), in 1969, the Netherlands and Morocco signed a bilateral recruitment agreement that formalized the hiring of Moroccan guest laborers (gastarbeiders).[264] This agreement accounted for only about 4,000 workers.[265] The majority of Moroccan workers had already arrived outside formal channels through spontaneous migration before 1969 or continued to migrate independently afterward.[266]

Komittee van Marokkaanse Arbeiders in Nederland (KMAN) — Committee of Moroccan Workers in the Netherlands was established in 1975 to protect and advocate for Moroccan worker rights in the Netherlands.[267] Once it became clear that most of these guest workers would stay in the Netherlands permanently, the workers' wives and children followed them in the second wave of migration.[268] The Minorities Act of 1983 was introduced as part of a broader policy shift that formally recognized several immigrant groups (including Moroccans) as ethnic minorities, entitled to targeted policies for integration, equal opportunities and participation.[269]

d Literature review support from Sara Kuhn

In the 1980s, the economic landscape in the Netherlands changed dramatically, with a significant decline in manual labor opportunities. Unemployment among Moroccan men rose sharply, particularly in labor-intensive sectors. In response, many Moroccan women entered the labor force for the first time, often becoming the primary breadwinners. This shift in economic roles gave women more decision-making power within the household and enhanced their autonomy in managing transnational relationships with family in Morocco.[270] Having their own income enabled women to make independent choices about remittances, travel and financial obligations, helping to reshape gender dynamics within the diaspora.[271] Gender also shaped the nature of transnational engagement. While some men, facing status loss due to unemployment, maintained stronger ties with Morocco to regain a sense of respect, many women, empowered by work and education, became more locally oriented and less focused on return migration.[272]

It was within this period that the Marokkaanse Vrouwen Vereniging Nederland (MVVN)- Moroccan Women's Association Netherlands was founded in 1982 as one of the most influential organizations focused on the empowerment of Moroccan women in the Netherlands.[273] Over time, it evolved into a strong advocacy platform addressing domestic violence, women's rights and independent residency rights for migrant women. It also played a significant role in transnational activism, campaigning for reforms to Morocco's family law (Moudawana).[274]

Despite over sixty years of Moroccan presence in the Netherlands, discussions around integration still persist today. According to historian Nadia Bouras, a key reason lies in the Dutch government's early approach to labor migration.[275] Moroccan guest workers were seen as temporary laborers who would eventually return to Morocco. As a result, policies in the 1960s and 1970s encouraged strong ties with the country of origin. One example of this approach was Onderwijs in Eigen Taal en Cultuur (OETC)- Education in Own Language and Culture, which offered Arabic classes to prepare children for eventual return.[276] While these policies initially supported cultural retention, they laid a fragmented foundation that would later complicate integration efforts.[277]

By the 1990s, Dutch integration policy and political discourse shifted in response to concerns about integration outcomes. This shift was not limited to rhetorical framing but reflected concrete policy changes and public narratives promoted by key actors. Political leaders, such as Minister Eberhard van der Laan, voiced concerns about migrants maintaining strong ties to Morocco, portraying such attachments as signs of divided loyalty and barriers to integration.[278] Parliamentary debates and integration policy documents increasingly echoed the idea that successful integration required diminishing transnational ties. The state moved from supporting transnational cultural ties to actively discouraging them. Connections to Morocco came to be viewed not as bridges but as barriers to national cohesion.[279] This marked what Bouras describes as the "problematization of transnationalism."[280] Politically, dual citizenship raised questions about migrant loyalty. Economically, investments in Morocco were portrayed as harmful to the Dutch economy because remittances and investments abroad were believed to divert resources that could otherwise strengthen the Netherlands.[281] Culturally, continued attachment to Morocco was seen as the root of failed integration.[282] As a result, responsibility for integration failures was increasingly placed on the behaviors and cultural practices of migrants themselves rather than on structural or policy shortcomings.[283] This ideological shift from enabling return to penalizing connection redefined how the state viewed migrant communities and reshaped both policy and public discourse.[284]

The Amazigh Moroccan community in the Netherlands is diverse,[285] with the majority originating from the Rif region,[286] which has a distinct identity rooted in its unique history, including the Rif Republic (1921–1926) and recent movements like Hirak El-Rif (2016). This regional identity shaped migration patterns and influences how diasporic identities have evolved.

Throughout this case study, the terms first, second and third generation are used. Formally they are defined as:

- ***First generation:*** people born in Morocco who have migrated to the Netherlands
- ***Second generation:*** people born in the Netherlands with migrant parents
- ***Third generation:*** children of the second generation; they and their parents were born in the Netherlands

This case study focuses on two distinct aspects of peacebuilding. On the one hand it looks at different types of violences as a continuum,[287] how they are interconnected and how to address these directly. This perspective aligns with the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, particularly its focus on the need to address violence in both conflict and peacetime contexts.[288] Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women in the Netherlands have traditionally suffered structural violence manifested through discrimination in housing, employment and healthcare; symbolic and cultural violence such as negative media representation and denial of language and identity; and gendered social control within their communities, including stigmatization, early marriage and the under-recognition of their peacebuilding and caregiving work. On the other hand, the case study looks at peace beyond the absence of violence and tries to highlight activities of Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women to actively build peace as an alternative and preventative measure to violence. It focuses on Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women's self-organized peacebuilding through neighborhood initiatives, community projects, informal mediation of conflict, cultural event curation and digital peacebuilding efforts. In doing so, this research challenges one-dimensional portrayals and instead centers the strength, resistance and leadership of Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women in the face of enduring adversity.

Methodology

This case study explores the challenges and adversity faced by Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women and sheds light on their peacebuilding effort in the Netherlands. Specifically, the case study answers the research question:

- How do diaspora Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women in the Netherlands build peace and empower each other through grassroots initiatives within their local communities?

This case study draws on primary data collected through semi-structured interviews, as well as secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, national statistics from the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in the Netherlands and reports by public institutions.

This case study used qualitative research methods with data collected via semi-structured in-depth interviews with ten Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women in the Netherlands from both the second generation and third generations of Moroccans in the country. In addition, an interview was conducted with Esther Aminata Kamara, an expert on Neighborhood Associations. The interviews were conducted both in person and virtually, using a mixture of English, Dutch, Darija and Tamazight. The researcher translated and transcribed the interviews verbatim into English when needed.

The sample of diasporic participants is comprised of Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women in the Netherlands who identify as Amazigh or Moroccan or Dutch with Moroccan backgrounds and are active in society. They are involved with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or work as entrepreneurs or content creators promoting Amazigh Moroccan culture digitally.

During the initial phase, the researcher encountered challenges in identifying participants who matched the research sample criteria. At first, the search was conducted in English, but most of the information found on Moroccan-led initiatives was focused on philanthropic efforts in Morocco, often carried out by the Moroccan-Dutch diaspora to support their ancestral homeland. English was primarily used to promote these transnational activities. In contrast, the researcher switched to searching in Dutch, which made it more effective to identify peacebuilding initiatives led by Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women at the micro or neighborhood level in the Netherlands, often described using broader terms such as "Dutch women with a migration background." This terminology made it more difficult to locate and engage relevant participants, as their work was less visible and did not appear under conventional search terms. In response, the researcher adjusted the terminology used in the call for participants to ensure that women could recognize themselves in the language and feel a sense of belonging in the invitation.

Mapping the Landscape: Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch Women and Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding activism and advocacy within the Moroccan community in the Netherlands have traditionally been politically-oriented and male-led, shaped by the initial waves of migration in which men arrived as guest workers. With MVVN's establishment in 1982 as the first formal NGO to support women's empowerment and subsequent efforts in this direction, Moroccan women in the Netherlands became increasingly engaged in society, taking active roles in politics, community building and grassroots leadership. However, they are still expected to fulfill traditional domestic roles as mothers and wives. This creates an intersectional constraint as they navigate the challenge of balancing public responsibilities with private expectations.

Given the migration history of the Moroccan community, interviews with second- and third-generation participants reveal that "diaspora" identity is often associated with a sense of longing. These individuals navigate a fluid identity: born in the Netherlands yet not seen as fully Dutch by broader society. In response, they engage in self-organization to collectively address the challenges of existing as an in-between community.

Still, across both generations, there is a shared sense of pride in their Amazigh Moroccan identity, and it is seen as enrichment. Participants expressed appreciation for the sacrifices made by their parents and grandparents, acknowledging that diaspora identity includes both gratitude and a sense of responsibility to carry their heritage forward. Many of them engage in community projects, artistic expression or cultural initiatives as a way of reconnecting with their roots and honoring their heritage.

When asked about the meaning of diaspora, participants, particularly from the second generation,[289] spoke about growing up in homes where Tamazight, Tarifit or Darija were spoken, in addition to taking Arabic classes. These language skills and home environments reinforced a deep connection to their parents' homeland, even as they navigated life in Dutch society. For the third generation, who are born to parents already born and raised in the Netherlands, this connection often looks different. Their primary language is Dutch, and their cultural ties to Morocco may be more symbolic. However, for some interviewees,[290] "diaspora" means maintaining strong links to the country of origin or their parents' homeland. This sense of connectedness often manifests itself as a feeling of responsibility or commitment to giving back. Many Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women are involved in NGOs and community foundations that collect resources and mobilize aid for Morocco in times of need. One interviewee, Yasmine Bellachi,[291] shared that her NGO right2care organized earthquake relief efforts in 2023 following the earthquake that struck the Marrakech region in Morocco. This highlights how diasporic identity can include transnational solidarity and rapid mobilization during moments of crisis and beyond.

The concept of peace, as understood by the women interviewed in this research, differs from the traditional notion of peace in relation to war and conflict, and is instead focused on ending structural violence. Since the Netherlands is not a conflict zone, peacebuilding for these women is connected to community well-being, solidarity and cultural survival within the Amazigh Moroccan diaspora.

Participants described peacebuilding as a response to the structural challenges of immigration, discrimination and cultural disconnection that span multiple generations. As a result, Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women began organizing among themselves at the community level, developing local neighborhood NGOs that support women's development, foster inclusion and offer culturally safe spaces. Their initiatives include mentorship programs, mediation and dialogue sessions and age-specific activities that address the needs of both youth and elders. In this way, peace is enacted as everyday community care and empowerment.

Since the Netherlands is not a conflict zone, peacebuilding is connected to community well-being, solidarity and cultural survival.

Manifestations of Challenges and Adversity Among Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch Women in the Diaspora

Challenges vary according to each generation, although they still have points of intersection. These challenges shape the societal isolation felt by Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women, how they interact with public services, relationships within their local micro-Moroccan communities in the Netherlands, and how they carry out peacebuilding work.

Longing for Belonging

The in-between community

A common pattern that is reiterated through all interviews is the lack of a sense of belonging to either Morocco or the Netherlands. This pattern is common among the second and third generations. They are the generation in-between: despite being born in the Netherlands and speaking Dutch, they are not seen as Dutch by many of their native peers. When they go to Morocco on vacation, many Moroccans do not view them as Moroccan but see them as Europeans or Dutch. This leaves them alienated in an in-between space. This sense of a lack of belonging led some interviewees to feel frustrated and lost or isolated. Some reported trying to more fully assimilate with their Dutch peers by partaking in various activities that increased their exposure to local Dutch culture, which was not always in line with the cultural preferences of their parents. Some examples given were going to Dutch parties, coloring their hair blonde or wearing blue contact lenses. Other examples counter this completely by embracing their Moroccan identity and rejecting aspects of the Dutch culture that do not resonate with that identity. Some young women alternate between these two options, searching for ways to navigate the in-between.

Given the migration history of the Moroccan community, interviews with second- and third-generation participants reveal that "diaspora" identity is often associated with a sense of longing. These individuals navigate a fluid identity: born in the Netherlands yet not seen as fully Dutch by broader society. In response, they engage in self-organization to collectively address the challenges of existing as an in-between community. This sense of connectedness often manifests itself as a feeling of responsibility or commitment to giving back.

Societal Challenges

Structural challenges

Although article 1 of the Dutch Constitution states that "[a]ll persons in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in equal circumstances. Discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, political opinion, race or sex or on any other grounds whatsoever shall not be permitted,"[292] interviewees expressed facing structural violence and systemic racism growing up and living in the Netherlands. This was particularly evident in daily integration into society. Interviewees reiterated that many have not been selected for a job or housing opportunities because of their Moroccan names and backgrounds. In the words of Nisrine Mbarki: "I was just brought up by Dutch people and considered myself Dutch, but of course, we never got the same opportunity as Dutch people."[293]

Navigating the health system for first-generation women comes with its own set of challenges. Many of these women did not receive formal education, resulting in limited knowledge about reproductive health, nutrition and preventive care. Illiteracy and linguistic exclusion also mean they struggle to read medical texts or understand prescriptions, often leading to untreated or mismanaged conditions.

Interviewees[294] from the second and third generations shared instances where they faced biased assumptions when dealing with health and care systems. One example[295] given was of a participant's child who had a neurological sleep disorder and before being diagnosed was repeatedly told that he was lazy; a comment, according to the interviewee, less likely given to a person belonging to a higher social class.

Psychological stress caused by migration, social isolation and gendered expectations often manifest physically. This can be understood through the lens of Ulysses Syndrome,[296] a condition describing the chronic and multiple stress symptoms migrants experience due to extreme levels of stress during migration and adaptation.[297] This is reflected in research showing that "relatively more Moroccan women compared to Dutch women in the Netherlands suffer from gynecological complaints (33 percent versus 15 percent); digestive and respiratory problems; and physical problems in general."[298] Cultural taboos around menstruation, fertility and sexual health often prevent women from seeking timely medical care. Language barriers, distrust or fear of the Dutch medical system and shame, particularly regarding gynecological issues, further compound the delay in accessing appropriate healthcare.

Education and language challenges emerged as a recurring pattern across the interviews. Many participants highlighted the challenges faced by children of the second and third generations who grow up speaking Darija or Tamazight at home. When they enter the Dutch school system, they often experience a Dutch language deficiency (taalachterstand) compared to their peers. This in turn creates an early barrier to educational achievement and can shape how children perceive themselves and how they are treated by teachers and institutions. Data from the Central Statistics Bureau (CBS)[299] confirms that students with a migration background, especially those of Moroccan or Turkish descent, are more likely to receive lower school advice than their native Dutch peers.[300]Therefore, it often takes four or five more years of study to reach higher education because they are often placed at the lowest level and must work their way up.

Political turmoil and the Moroccan-Muslim experience

Another recurring concern expressed in the interviews was the growing sense of fear and uncertainty surrounding the rise of far-right politics in the Netherlands, particularly in relation to anti-Moroccan and anti-Muslim rhetoric. The normalization of xenophobic and Islamophobic discourses, especially through political figures like Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders, has had a direct psychological impact on Moroccan communities.[301] Participants shared deep anxiety about raising children in a society where their identity is regularly politicized and targeted.[302] Interviewees' reflections capture a broader intergenerational fear about worsening conditions and a further diminished sense of belonging for future generations of Moroccan-Dutch youth.

Representation of Moroccans in the Dutch media

All interviewees expressed that Moroccans are portrayed negatively in the Dutch media on a regular basis. Participants emphasized that media narratives often reinforce harmful stereotypes, particularly portraying Moroccan men as criminals or troublemakers[303] and reducing Moroccan women to one-dimensional stereotypical figures as jobless, illiterate women who care for lots of children and live on social benefits. This provides a very narrow and incomplete perspective on the complex identities, backgrounds and variety amongst these women.

One interviewee expressed more nuanced views, acknowledging both the structural conditions and the media's role in exaggeration.[304] She explained that poverty, lack of opportunity and systemic marginalization are the root causes behind the overrepresentation of Moroccan youth in criminal statistics.[305] However, she stressed that the media sensationalizes this reality. Her reflections underline the danger of media generalizations, which amplify fear and reinforce stigma while ignoring structural causes such as class, exclusion and inequality.

In the context of misrepresentation of Moroccans and their identities in the media, interviewees[306] expressed that their fluid identity as Moroccan, Amazigh, Arab, Dutch, Muslim, North African and female is rarely acknowledged, or, worse, stigmatized. They raised the sentiment that the media focuses on talking about them rather than speaking with them. These harmful portrayals reflect a form of symbolic and cultural violence, reinforcing structures of exclusion and otherness that contribute to the broader continuum of violence experienced by Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch communities.

Challenges within the Local Micro-Moroccan Communities

Pursuit of peace and freedom: Women's experiences in the community

Many interviewees expressed difficulty in attaining the rights and freedoms ingrained in the Dutch constitution or the basic personal freedoms available to Dutch women in the broader society around them. When asked about hope, many participants expressed a desire for peace and freedom, particularly as they reflected on the stark differences between the Moroccan community in the Netherlands and the one in Morocco. Several described the Moroccan community in the Netherlands as old-fashioned or extremely conservative. This was often explained through the context of migration history. Coming from conservative and economically marginalized backgrounds, many settled in tight-knit enclaves that acted as cultural time capsules, where norms from their rural hometowns were preserved and passed down to their children. Often, families lived close together, in neighborhoods where everybody knew everybody.

While this strong sense of community can offer care, respect and support, it is conditional on one's conformity to unspoken rules of honor, shame and social expectations. Interviewees from the second generation mentioned that in 1980s, it was controversial for women even to light a cigarette, and the community was heavily involved in enforcing this norm. If seen in public, then the parents would be involved. For girls and women, this created a climate of surveillance in which they felt suffocated. One interviewee recalled how her Riffian friends would travel to different cities just to go on a date in secret, fearing gossip or backlash within their own neighborhoods.[307] Early and arranged marriages were common practice.[308] The interviewee recalled three examples of femicide within the community in which women were victimized because of their desire to live lives that did not strictly adhere to the community's expectations and were more in line with lifestyles common to the Dutch society around them.[309] This clash between traditional expectations of virginity and honor and the more liberal norms of Dutch society created intense internal conflict, particularly for young women.

Although the Netherlands is widely regarded as progressive when it comes to women's rights, several interviewees emphasized that legal freedom does not always translate into lived freedom within their communities. Therefore, Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women still face strong expectations around virginity before marriage, motherhood and career choices. Although they are able to attain financial independence as a result of living within a capitalistic system, this does not guarantee real autonomy within their community for many women.

Challenges Carrying out Peacebuilding Work

Challenges of peacebuilders in doing peacebuilding work in the diaspora

According to the interviewees, challenges around Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women's peacebuilding work is often not recognized, which makes receiving funding difficult. Some stakeholders and institutions that provide funding for this work frame the peacebuilders' contributions as civic engagement rather than peacebuilding, which affects which types of funding are available. This is particularly challenging for work focused on care, emotional support or informal mediation, which is often not counted as peacebuilding in institutional or policy frameworks. However, women leading this work carry a heavy weight; several participants described the relentless demands of community peace work, often characterized by long hours, emotional intensity and a constant state of reactivity. This kind of nonstop caregiving and problem-solving leaves little space for rest, reflection or long-term strategy, which leads to emotional exhaustion, blurred personal boundaries and burnout.

While many Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women's NGOs operate on an open-door approach, which is intentionally inclusive and trauma-informed, it often limits organizations' ability to document, evaluate or advocate for the value of their work.[310] They foster an environment of mutual trust for their participants by creating an environment that offers anonymity and safety.[311] This trusted environment is created through the social proximity of the peacebuilders to the participants of the programs, but this also exacerbates complexities around documentation and advocacy regarding their efforts. Women's peacebuilding leadership within these programs stems from a sense of caring, kindness, empathy, trust, relational depth and family-centered service of their communities. A lot of work done by these women is not recognized as work but as raising the children and keeping the neighborhood clean.[312] Women's soft power is undervalued, untracked and underfunded because of this. A lot of activities within these programs lean on the women's soft power and the impact their "mothering" nature can have on its participants. Activities include breakfast gatherings, informal conversations, cooking classes, Dutch language lessons, sewing workshops, Pilates sessions and mother-daughter events. Some activities, such as "informal conversations" are intentionally vague, as it allows for the peacebuilders to interact with participants on a deeper personal level.

As a result, women leading these efforts are often overlooked for funding, recognition or collaboration in funding opportunities driven by local municipalities and various private funds. This challenge reflects a broader disconnect between how peacebuilding is defined and how it is actually practiced in migrant communities.

Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women peacebuilders in the Netherlands navigate an intersectional set of challenges based in structural bias towards "otherness", gendered expectations and cultural in-betweenness. Their peacebuilding efforts are often hindered by exclusion from public services, national and social media, and challenges present for women within their own communities. These difficulties are not only deeply gendered but also intergenerational, emotional and political. Despite these barriers, many continue to resist, adapt and advocate — often at great personal cost — to try and provide a better future for those within their own local communities.

Women's soft power is undervalued and untracked. As a result, women leading these efforts are often overlooked for funding, recognition or collaboration.

Building Peace from the Margins: Initiatives and Successes of Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch Women

Although they face challenges, Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women lead a range of peacebuilding and community building initiatives. Initiatives investigated through this research generally fall within the themes of grassroots local neighborhood initiatives, cultural curation as peacebuilding and the digital space as a form of peacebuilding.

Buurtmoeders Initiatives (Neighborhood Mothers Initiatives)

Grassroots local neighborhood NGOs such as Stichting Home Empowerment, Stichting Nisa for Nisa, Stichting Buurtmoeders Krachtmoeders, Stichting Dappere Dames and Stichting Prachtvrouw play a vital role in supporting Dutch women with a migration background, particularly those from Amazigh Moroccan communities. These organizations focus on the development and emancipation of women by providing safe, trusted and culturally sensitive environments.

Activities include breakfast gatherings, informal conversations, cooking classes, Dutch language lessons, sewing workshops, Pilates sessions and mother-daughter events. These types of activities are mainly targeted at first-generation diaspora women who feel alienated and depressed, often linked to factors like poverty, unemployment, and linguistic and external cultural stigma. These conditions often lead to a lack of self-esteem and difficulties interacting with society around them.

An interview participant emphasized the importance of creating safe spaces for teenage girls, especially regarding issues of online safety and sexual exploitation.[313] One interviewee expressed that "one of the big problems facing this community is online safety. Girls are lured into sending nude pictures and then get exposed. Sometimes even normal pictures are altered with AI or Photoshop and shared in Telegram groups. These organizations help girls understand these risks and protect themselves."[314]

Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women's local NGOs often act as informal mediators between residents and external institutions, helping to bridge a gap marked by mutual distrust and prejudice, especially in areas like Amsterdam Nieuw-West.[315] Communities may view some official institutions with suspicion, while these institutions often see such neighborhoods as "vulnerable" or "problematic." NGOs counter this by creating trusted spaces for dialogue, where community-led gatherings invite institutions to engage in ways that prioritize local needs.[316] This grassroots mediation enables social services to operate more effectively by fostering trust, care and mutual understanding.

Interviewees shared that another key method through which women contribute to peacebuilding in their communities is by participating in Prevention Rounds focused on de-escalating street violence and offering care-based engagement. These women, often referred to as neighborhood mothers, walk through their local streets to offer presence, support and informal guidance, especially to young people. They describe their role as not to police, but to act as visible and trusted figures, often regarded as "aunties" in the community who create a sense of safety through familiarity, relational trust and care.[317] Their presence became especially visible during an incident in November 2024, when unrest broke out at Plein 40-45 in Amsterdam Nieuw West following a Maccabi Tel Aviv vs Ajax soccer match, during which a tram was set on fire.[318] The neighborhood mothers, wearing their yellow vests, stepped in and helped calm tensions and de-escalate the situation through their trusted relationships with local youth.

Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women's local NGOs often act as informal mediators between residents and external institutions, helping to bridge a gap marked by mutual distrust and prejudice.

Cultural Curation as Peacebuilding: Reclaiming the Narrative

A growing number of Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women are reclaiming cultural spaces as sites of peacebuilding by using art, storytelling and heritage work to promote dialogue, visibility and community healing. While their mediums vary, what unites them is their commitment to challenging dominant narratives, preserving cultural identity and fostering intercultural connection.

Together, Myriam Sahraoui,[319] Nisrine Mbarki[320] and Warda El-Kaddouri[321] contribute to peacebuilding through curating cultural production spaces that promote dialogue, visibility and recognition for marginalized voices, particularly Amazigh and Moroccan women. Their work demonstrates that peacebuilding is not limited to conflict mediation or grassroots social work, but can also take place in theatres, museums, books, exhibitions, literary festivals and other creative gatherings.

Fatima Oulad Thami — Hand of Fatima is a henna artist who engages in peacebuilding through what she calls the intentional reclamation of cultural heritage.[322] She hosts gatherings, workshops and conversations centered around sisterhood, decolonial storytelling and cultural empowerment. Her work includes the Restore the Narrative project, in which she overlays colonial-era postcards with henna patterns to reclaim representation and rewrite visual histories. Fatima said, "[i]t was never about us; now it's time that we tell our own stories."[323]

Through these events the artists create spaces for alternative narratives and intercultural dialogue and connect people beyond politics and conflict. During these events, visitors from all kinds of backgrounds can learn about multi-layered North African cultural identity and connect with each other on these topics to break down stereotypes and promote cultural understanding and peaceful coexistence.

The Digital Space as a form of Peacebuilding

Digital platforms are increasingly becoming vital peacebuilding spaces for third-generation Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women, who use social media visibility and storytelling to challenge dominant narratives and foster connection, pride and representation.

Through curating content that combines everyday culture, critical reflection and public discourse, online spaces become tools of decolonial knowledge-sharing and grassroots peacebuilding, reaching young audiences often excluded from traditional activism.

These initiatives attempt to transform the perspectives of the general population's often polarized and complete view of the Moroccan-Dutch community to a more holistic and complete perspective that fosters respect, understanding and appreciation for their fluid identities.

For example, Yasmine Bellachi's online Instagram channel provides a new space for intergenerational dialogue.[324] She coins this the middle ground or "gray space" that reflects experiences of the hybrid identities of Moroccan diaspora in the Netherlands; before she created this space, women were generally categorized as one of two opposites: either as conservative women, who were illiterate and unintegrated, or as women who were fully assimilated. There was no space in between for people to navigate and foster understanding of the full spectrum of identity that lies between these opposites.

In an interview conducted for this research, Warda El-Kaddouri[325] spoke about an initiative called Grote Spelers, a community academy for youth aged 16 to 35. The academy supports young students and professionals from marginalized areas by helping them build networks, confidence and practical skills. "They don't have the tools or network to get the jobs they're qualified for, so this program teaches them how to connect, how to build a CV and how to access their own potential," Warda explained.[326] Strengthening the ability of these young people to better tap into their own potential reduces the chances of them engaging in unlawful activities.

Grote Spelers also hosts a digital podcast, which serves as a powerful platform for representation and hope. The podcast features guests who grew up in Amsterdam Nieuw-West and went on to build successful careers, offering listeners real-life examples of achievement rooted in shared experience. By showcasing these stories, the podcast aims to inspire youth from the area and challenge the dominant narrative that associates Amsterdam Nieuw-West with failure or marginalization. It flips the script, highlighting pride, resilience and possibility.

Due to the predominantly self-organizing nature of the peacebuilding efforts analyzed in this study and the close social proximity of the peacebuilders to the participants in their programs, these grassroots efforts can operate effectively and achieve truly life-changing successes for the participants. The deep level of trust between the peacebuilders and participants is a valuable asset in the fieldwork of peacebuilding that instigates high-impact and meaningful change within their local communities. Due to the nature of these deep interpersonal relationships, full transparency on all activities and their results is not always feasible, causing challenges in showcasing the the nature and impact of their work to stakeholders like funders. These challenges aside, the newer generations of Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women peacebuilders within these communities leverage digital spaces to reach a wider and often younger audience to educate and foster better understanding of Moroccans and their culturally diverse backgrounds within the Netherlands.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The challenges faced by Amazigh Moroccan women in the Netherlands are amplified by structural inequalities, cultural exclusion and the invisibility of their contributions to peace and community resilience. Addressing these challenges requires recognition of their lived realities and the value of their grassroots, cultural and digital peacebuilding work.

By fostering intersectional inclusion, rethinking dominant narratives and creating space for these women's voices, institutions and society can begin to support safer and more equitable communities. The women at the center of this research demonstrate remarkable strength, creativity and leadership. Their everyday efforts, acts of care, mediation and cultural preservation represent the invisible part of the iceberg in peacebuilding: essential, enduring, yet too often overlooked. Recognizing this labor is not only a matter of justice but a step toward a more peaceful, just and inclusive Dutch society.

The following recommendations are grounded in the findings of this case study and seek to enhance peacebuilding efforts within diaspora context in the Netherlands.

Recommendations for Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch Women's NGOs

- Translate informal outcomes into recognizable impact language to improve visibility and funding opportunities for grassroots initiatives by:
  - » framing community activities as tools for wellbeing and empowerment, emphasizing their impact on social isolation, mental health and community resilience among migrant women.
  - » establishing partnerships with universities to support communications, evaluation and digital outreach through student internship programs.
  - » documenting and communicating the value of care-based, trauma-informed and culturally rooted programs as core components of peacebuilding.
- Advocate for the recognition of informal mediation, emotional support and neighborhood care work as legitimate forms of community peacebuilding.
- Foster strategic collaborations among NGOs supporting Amazigh Moroccan-Dutch women to amplify challenges, highlight grassroots successes and reduce fragmentation through joint campaigns, co-hosted events, partnerships or cross-referrals.

Recommendations for Local Governments, Policy Institutions, and Funders

- Recognize neighborhood mothers as strategic actors in youth and safety policy by creating formal mechanisms for their participation in policy consultations.
- Fund and sustain accessible community spaces that serve youth from marginalized areas and promote inclusion, mentorship and belonging.
- Support grassroots women-led organizations with long-term, flexible funding structures that reflect the holistic nature of their work.
- Support intergenerational initiatives that create safe spaces for girls and women to address online safety, gender-based risks and empowerment through mentorship.
- Provide funding for grassroots initiatives that address youth vulnerability, especially those that operate in stigmatized neighborhoods like Amsterdam Nieuw-West.

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