

Who Cares in Peacebuilding?

Building Sustainable Peace and Advancing Gender Equality through Support for Peacebuilders with Caring Responsibilities

Concept Note

There are many barriers to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of peacebuilding* practitioners with caring responsibilities. Initial research (Box 1) suggests that most people in the sector believe their caring responsibilities** impacts their work, hinders career progression, or forces them to leave or change their career. This is not just due to personal choice, but to a wide range of organisational, normative, work culture, and practical challenges – many of which could be addressed.

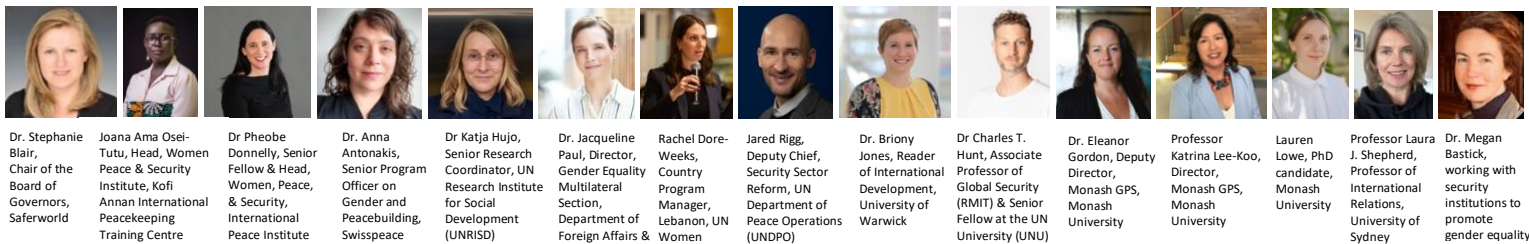
These challenges impact all staff, including those with caring responsibilities. It also impacts peacebuilding practices, priorities, and outcomes, because it:

- **Limits organisational diversity, inclusion, and resilience**, which can compromise programmatic responsiveness and organisational effectiveness
- **Hinders the representation of women**, given the gendered nature of care work
- **Harms the wellbeing of all staff** - men, women, and people of diverse gender identities - who may be torn between their caring and paid work responsibilities (for example, choosing not to have a family or being separated from their family for extended periods of time)
- **Sustains harmful workplace cultures**, which can lead to stress, burnout, and safeguarding concerns that may be linked to undervaluing care and disconnection from caring relationships
- **Communicates lack of commitment to care**, including self-care and care for others
- Consequently, and critically, **undermines the effectiveness of peacebuilding**

'I was not given a space to pump breastmilk, maternity leave was short (3 months) there was no support - financial or otherwise to travel to a safer location to give birth. I push myself to show the organisation that I am willing to travel even though I'd prefer not to/others travel less than me because I'm scared of being stigmatised as a mother.' Research participant (Gordon 2022: 421)

'... this Rambo or martyr mentality where we should sacrifice everything... is just not possible or fair with children' – or, it could be said, anyone. Research participant (Gordon & Jones 2021: 10)

We*** have jointly developed this Concept Note to generate discussion around the issue of peacebuilding and care work, and raise awareness of the harms that can arise when peacebuilding* practitioners with caring responsibilities are not adequately supported.



We invite you to share your views, experiences, and recommendations on this issue. We encourage people of all genders, with and without caring responsibilities, to complete this short survey**** on the impact of having caring responsibilities in the peacebuilding sector, and the subsequent impact on peacebuilding practices, priorities and outcomes. [Please click here to access the survey.](#)

Survey results will inform a report aimed at raising awareness, provoking further discussion, and effecting change in the sector. Your responses will be treated confidentially and all data will be de-identified (no individual or organisation names or other identifying information will be included in the report nor shared with anyone other than the Monash University research team).

Box 1: A 2020 survey (Gordon & Jones 2021) conducted among practitioners in peacebuilding and the broader international development sector indicates the extent of this problem:

- 92% said that their caring responsibilities had impacted their work in the sector
- 80% said their caring responsibilities hindered career progression & curtailed promotion opportunities
- 3% said that they did not have to leave or change their career as a result of their caring responsibilities
- 1% said that it is not difficult for people with caring responsibilities to work in the sector

***Peacebuilding** incorporates a complexity of efforts engaging multiple actors and activities across multiple sectors, including political, security, justice, human rights, economic, and development sectors. Efforts to build and sustain peace occur in conflict-vulnerable and conflict-affected environments, including conflict zones. While much of the focus of this Concept Note is on formal peacebuilding in respect of the barriers to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of employees in peacebuilding organisations, it is recognised that informal peacebuilding is critical to success and is also impacted by relationships and practices of care.

****Caring Responsibilities** refers to the essential (usually unpaid) activities that carers undertake for others, and for themselves, in response to a specific need. Caring responsibilities include but are not limited to caring for children and other family members. It may entail practical tasks such as cooking or housework, or providing physical and personal care for someone, such as helping someone out of bed or get dressed. While recognising the gendered nature of care work – with women more likely to be sole and primary carers – it is acknowledged that men, women, and people of diverse gender identities have caring responsibilities, and are impacted when their caring responsibilities and care needs are overlooked by the organisations they work within.

*** **Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this Concept Note do not necessarily reflect the views of the organisations mentioned
**** L'enquête est également disponible en français / La encuesta también está disponible en español / Survei ini juga tersedia dalam bahasa Indonesia / الاستبيان متاح أيضًا باللغة العربية
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Gordon, E. (2022) 'Careless Talk Costs Lives: The Causes and Effects of Marginalising Peacebuilding Practitioners with Caring Responsibilities', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 16(4): 413-433. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17502977.2022.2065161>
Gordon, E. & Jones, B. (2021) *Building Success in Development and Peacebuilding by Caring for the Carers: A Guide to Research, Policy and Practice to Ensure Effective, Inclusive and Responsive Interventions*, Warwick Interdisciplinary Research Centre for International Development (WICID) Methods Lab Toolkit, University of Warwick. <https://publishing.warwick.ac.uk/index.php/uwp/catalog/book/10>