



## 10 Recommendations by Religious and Traditional Leaders, Women, and Youth to Strengthen their Role in Building Peace in the Sahel

Since 2012, the Sahel has faced unprecedented levels of violence and socio-economic deterioration. Over the years, there has been a growing recognition amongst the international humanitarian, development, and peace sectors on the critical role of religious and traditional actors in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The critical role that women and youth play in fostering peaceful societies has also been recognized, and a 'whole of society' approach has been prioritised in order to address the region's challenges and support sustainable peace.

The Peacemakers Network, the Finnish Embassy to Senegal, and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland convened religious and traditional leaders, women, and youth from Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger to better understand the current situation in Sahel, the possibilities and challenges that these actors face as well as their support needs in their peace work. The overall objective was to contribute to strengthening the role of religious actors, women, and youth in preventing conflicts and building peace in the Sahel region by providing advocacy and networking opportunity for these leaders. The participants developed the following recommendations for the international community, donors, and other relevant stakeholders to strengthen support mechanisms for peace throughout the region.

### Recommendations by Religious and Traditional Leaders

1. Strengthen existing customary, traditional and religious frameworks at national and regional levels and establish a regional consultation framework in order to develop active and continuous collaboration for effective conflict prevention and management in the Sahel.
2. Create a synergy of action between religious leaders, women and young people for better conflict prevention and management at the national level.
3. Strengthen the capacities of religious, traditional and customary leaders in conflict transformation in order to be able to better disseminate indigenous conflict prevention and management mechanisms among communities.

### Recommendations by Women

1. Strengthen women's capacities on leadership, conflict prevention and management, mediation, prevention of violent extremism, and resolution 1325, to participate in local conflict prevention and management mechanisms and effectively raise awareness at the local level.
2. Support preachers in promoting women's rights at the community and national levels based on religious principles and texts, to facilitate the inclusion and integration of women and young people in decision-making bodies.
3. Finance women-led socio-economic activities to strengthen their empowerment and contribute to combating exclusion, poverty, and vulnerability.
4. Update existing studies on the state of women's participation in peacebuilding in central Sahel in order to identify current gaps, challenges and opportunities to develop relevant programs aimed at strengthening the active participation of women in peacebuilding.

### Recommendations by Youth

1. Increase collaboration between technical and financial partners and youth and youth organizations to implement activities aimed at promoting reconciliation and social reintegration of former members of armed groups in the Sahel.
2. Support youth organizations in implementing integrated socio-economic resilience projects that include religious peace education in order to empower and equip them to resist and deconstruct radical discourses, thereby reducing their enlistment in extremist violence.
3. Develop partnerships with youth structures and support them technically and financially in their commitment to peacebuilding to contribute to significantly increasing the involvement of young people in leading inclusive and effective peace processes in the Sahel.