

Security Council resolution 1325: National Implementation of Women, Peace and Security – Ways Forward

*Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Coordinator,
femLINKpacific
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Introduction:

History has shown, every time a conflict breaks out, women, in their communities, mobilize for peace. Women and women's groups have played key roles as activists and peace makers in each conflict situation whilst at the same time holding together their families and communities.

Whether it takes the form of silent protest, prayer and peace vigils, protest marches and public actions, the feminization of conflict and peace can no longer be disregarded in decision making forums.

In our own Pacific Island region, the imagery of idyllic tropical paradise has been shattered many times over - whether it is the Bougainville war or the internal political conflicts of Fiji and the Solomon Islands – and in each conflict, women, have played a poignant and pivotal role in mobilizing for peace ...

I believe 1325 **has the potential** to change the paradigm for women that peace and security issues are the sole domain of male leaders and defense and security professionals also.

In the Pacific region, women have been greatly marginalized from formal decision making structures as a result of the predominantly patriarchal governance structures from the time of colonial administrations and continuing after independence. Yet, despite such obstacles, in Bougainville and the Solomon Islands, as well as Fiji, women were instrumental in brokering peace during the height of crises and continue to play a vital role in building and sustaining peace in their communities.

But, while women have demonstrated the ability to effectively work together at the local level, there is a need to strengthen women's and peace networks engagement and ability to influence security policies - as well as all levels and aspects of conflict prevention, resolution and management programmes - at national and regional levels.

Resolution 1325 is unprecedented, and is an enabling framework which requires governments and regional organisations and multilateral bodies to ensure the participation of traditional non states actors, especially women in such processes. This requires investment in capacity building and institutional strengthening, as well as more inclusive consultative processes by Governments, regional organisations and multilateral bodies.

Resolution 1325 is also a firm endorsement of the need to increase the numbers of women in decision making positions relating to peace and security issues. It provides new opportunities for senior and qualified women to enter into positions quite often dominated by men. The Resolution recognizes that men and women bring different perspectives to peace negotiations, because of the unique experiences that have shaped them and influenced their priorities.

Women also bring a wealth of practical knowledge to the peace table because of their understanding of the challenges faced by civilian populations and the most effective ways to address them. Women can improve the prospects for sustainable peace.

INCORPORATING UNSCR 1325 INTO EXISTING TO GENDERED FRAMEWORKS

While Fiji does not have a national action plan on UNSCR 1325, the provisions of the resolution were incorporated into the national context in two ways in:

- 1) Linked with the National Women's Action Plan¹ making the linkage with the government's policy commitment of ensuring Gender Equality in Decision Making
- 2) Through the establishment of the Women, Peace and Security Coordinating Committee (WPS Fiji CC) comprised of government and NGO participants to implement the objectives of the WPS Fiji Project

In 2003, the Women, Peace and Security Fiji Coordinating Committee on 1325 (WPS Fiji CC)² was established, through UNIFEM Pacific's Women, Peace and Security Project for Melanesia³.

Fiji's Ministry of Women initially chaired the committee⁴ that aimed to accelerate the implementation of SCR 1325 by forging a working partnership between the national machinery for women and women's peace-centered NGOs. For practical policy implementation purposes it was agreed that the WPS Fiji project would be implemented within the existing Shared Decision Making Task Force of the National Women's Plan of Action, in order to forge and maintain multi-sectoral partnerships to achieve the overall goals of the project:

- 1) Improvement of the availability of data and analysis on the root causes of conflicts, the impact of conflict on women and their role in conflict prevention, and resolution and post-conflict peace-building;
- 2) Strengthening the capacity of women and women's groups to play a role in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict peace-building at the national and regional level;
- 3) Promoting a gender perspective in conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives of governments, regional organizations and mainstream agencies; *and*
- 4) Promoting peace, tolerance and reconciliation, linked to economic security, through advocacy in the community and with the general public

The WPS Fiji CC worked to promote and enhance the recognition and contribution of women to detect early conflict warning via intervention, resolution strategies and post conflict progress. The committee recognised that peace needs to be long lasting. That sustainable development and peace building must encompass the rights of men and women and boys and girls and that there needs to be equal distribution of development benefits.

¹ Fiji Government's national policy on gender equality – incorporating the Beijing Platform for Action

² Core Members included femLINKPACIFIC:Media Initiatives for Women, the Peace programme of the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECREA), affiliates of the National Council of Women Fiji, and the national network for indigenous women - the Soqosoqo Vakamarama I Taukei,. The committee also had limited participation by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement as well as the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre

³ Fiji Islands, Bougainville/Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu

⁴ It should be noted that pending the midterm review of the Ministry of Women all Women's Plan of Action Task Forces were disbanded in 2004/5; The implementation of UNSCR1325 in Fiji subsequently has been through efforts of NGOs such as femLINKpacific to work with national and regional government counterparts

The Fiji committee also realized that in order to really make a difference we had to listen to and learn from each to overcome the ethnic and communal barriers perpetuated by our conflicts; take into account the range of experiences through research and analysis; and to create community centered programmes that will help build and maintain a culture of peace in Fiji - especially one where women are key decision makers as well.

The WPS Fiji committee was also mindful that we could not just focus on creating activities. We needed to learn more in order to strengthen our lobby with the policy makers. After all women's peace and security issues were entering a new domain.

THE FIJI EXPERIENCE: A WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY COORDINATING COMMITTEE (WPS Fiji CC)

Achievements:

Building on women and peace initiatives during the May 2000 hostage crisis⁵ in Fiji, including a dialogue between leaders of the National Council of Women and the Military Council, an important outcome of this initial partnership in Fiji were the submissions in December 2003 by the Fiji Women, Peace and Security Coordinating Committee and the National Council of Women Fiji to the National Security and Defense Review which reiterated the valuable contribution our women's networks from the village and community clubs to the national level can contribute, to early warning interventions, while identifying key entry points for women at local and national decision making levels

The submission included:

- *The Minister for Women be included as a member of the National Security Council*
- *The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Women is a permanent member of a/the National Security Advisory Committee*
- *That there is effective and equitable representation of the diversities of women of Fiji on Provincial/Divisional, District/Local level Security Committees; The selection of such representation be made in consultation with the Fiji Women, Peace and Security Coordinating Committee, which is inclusive of Government and women's NGOs, including the National Council of Women Fiji and the Soqosoqo Vakamarama I Taukei*
- *That women are represented in the Analyst Section of the Police Special Branch and National Security Assessment Unit; women NGOs are also considered as advisers to such units; The selection of such representation be made in consultation with the Fiji Women, Peace and Security Coordinating Committee, which is inclusive of Government and women's NGOs, including the National Council of Women Fiji and the Soqosoqo Vakamarama I Taukei*

⁵ Because of the role of the military in both conflicts, and its recurring role in addressing instability in Fiji, women learned to negotiate and communicate with the security forces. In 2000, as a result of discussions at the Peace Vigil, the National Council of Women Fiji made contact with the military, and as a result, the Commander of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces, Ratu Voreqe Bainimarama, brought together the members of the military council and other senior officers to meet with the representatives of the Peace Vigil. The delegation presented what has become known as "The Women's Letter." It outlined various suggestions, particularly the need for Fiji to return to parliamentary democracy, and for the military to uphold the 1997 Constitution as the supreme law of the country. The women also requested that the military respect human rights.⁵ From this initial meeting, women learned the importance of using the language of the military/security sector for future dialogue and peace initiatives. The letter was received respectfully and favourably, and a critical lesson learnt from this process was to ensure that future communication was more in line with the style of communication that the army was familiar with

- *To ensure there is a gender balance in the decision making levels of the Security Forces, all efforts are made towards 'affirmative action' in the recruitment of women to the Fiji Police Force as well as the Republic of Fiji Military Forces*

Challenges:

While national action plans can enable a workable partnership at the national level, in preparation for such partnership, there needs to be greater appreciation and understanding and therefore appropriate technical support to account for the impact of a conflict on the existing women's movement.

Such programmes need to be included as part of the formal post conflict reconstruction phase with adequate and relevant institutional support to deal with issues relating to: constitutional amendments, law reform, as well as the social, economic and cultural impact of the events.

Furthermore, just because there has been an election, does not mean that the elected government supports the women's human rights agenda – so quite often women peace networks are actually having to challenge the political status quo; Resources for supporting the implementation of 1325 can also be used against the very letter for which 1325 stands for – so consider how especially in the post conflict transformation stage, women are being supported to uphold universal principles of human rights.

While the WPS Fiji project enabled the Ministry of Women and women's NGOs to collaborate on the initial implementation of the project objectives, it was recognised that there was a need to engage with the Ministries of Home Affairs (responsible for the security sector), as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to strategically incorporate 1325 and gender equality into the national development priorities for peace and security, as well as reconciliation programmes, especially to address the need to overcome the perpetuation of the "victim" mentality or regarding women as subjects of only "social welfare" and micro-enterprise programmes.

This is not only an experience in the Fiji Islands.

Recent reviews of regional and national women's plans of action have highlighted that Pacific Governments must be assisted to elevate women from the micro-level development level to the macro level ...**we must be invested in through equitable and gender-inclusive national budgets and more effective institutionalization of gender mainstreaming.**

So while the establishment of the Fiji WPS project highlighted potential of working in partnership with the Ministry of Women, as a way to influence policy for women through our peacebuilding efforts, we were challenged to continue the work of the WPS Fiji CC when the Ministry of Women's internal changes resulted in the termination of the task forces of the National Women's Plan of Action, including the WPS CC.

This clearly highlights one of the limitations of government and NGO collaborations, especially as the Department of Women remains **HIGHLY UNDER-RESOURCED** – which is very typical of many national women's machineries in most Pacific governments.

The lack of available resources for NGO efforts remains an challenge, as many governments and even UN agencies in our region have been slow in incorporating SCR1325 into their own policy frameworks and therefore in recognising the opportunity to support women and peace initiatives – from conflict prevention to post conflict reconstruction/transformation, including reconciliation initiatives.

Furthermore, despite the availability of information and data through the project, the challenge of changing the patriarchal paradigm of the peace and security sector within our government frameworks, is an ongoing challenge.

This was evident in the Solomon Islands during the 2006 Post Elections riots in the capital city in April 2006, when despite the availability of a set of gender inclusive early warning indicators through the UNIFEM Gendered Early Warning Indicators reports for the Solomon Islands, there was no evident use of such vital information – drawn from the communities themselves. Was it a case of being treated as only a “women’s report”?

So despite the advancements of global women’s equality agenda – including the unanimous adoption of SCR 1325, at national level, in practice, women remain sidelined from the decision making processes especially from our own national development frameworks as well as at local or community level.

Much of this marginalization is exacerbated by the patriarchy of “traditional” decision making structures – and the resurgence of a social and political conservatism in post conflict environment – as well as the challenges of addressing the resurgence of conflict or violence.

However, there is hope.

The 2006 Gender, Conflict Peace and Security Regional Workshop⁶ immediately preceding the annual Pacific Islands Forum Regional Security Committee meeting (FSRC) organized by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat⁷ in collaboration with AusAID, UNDP Pacific Sub-Regional Centre, (PSRC), UNIFEM Pacific, the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA), and femLINKPACIFIC, provided an important opportunity to finally place UNSCR1325 onto the inter-government regional security agenda.

The workshop culminated with high-level endorsement by participants from all 16 Pacific Island Forum Countries⁸, including Australia and New Zealand, in recognition of the responsibility of Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) member governments, regional organisations and multilateral bodies to uphold women’s rights and support their participation in all aspects of conflict prevention, peace negotiations, and post conflict reconstruction.⁹

⁶ Nadi, Fiji from 15-17 June 2006

⁷ The Pacific Islands Forum is mandated to respond to issues of security at regional level. In 2000, Forum Leaders endorsed the Biketawa Declaration, recognised the need in time of crisis or in response to members’ request for assistance, for action to be taken on the basis of all members of the Forum being part of the Pacific Islands extended family. The Declaration highlights that the Forum must constructively address difficult and sensitive issues including underlying causes of tensions and conflict (ethnicity, socio-economic disparities, and lack of good governance, land disputes and erosion of cultural values), while also reiterating the belief in the liberty of the individual under the law, in equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender, race, colour, creed or political belief and in the individual’s inalienable right to participate by means of free and democratic political process in framing the society in which he or she lives.

⁸ Participants also included representatives from military and law enforcement agencies, and women’s NGOs actively involved in the peace and security sector

⁹ To date, 11 Forum Island Countries (FICs) (being UN member states) are party to the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Solomon Islands is the only FIC that has ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW⁹. All Pacific Island Forum members have endorsed the Millennium Development Goals which includes MDG 3 on Gender Equality and the empowerment of women. All FICs committed to the 1994 Pacific Platforms for Action for the Advancement for Women⁹, and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, agreed to at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women. In addition, 11 FICs are members of the Commonwealth and have committed to the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality

The regional outcome statement and recommendations emphasized the need to strengthen partnerships between National Women's Machineries, government portfolios which deal with issues of security (e.g Foreign Affairs, Law Enforcement, Military) women's peace activists, the broader civil society, regional and international organisations and the donor community, to build political will through the development of national action plans to accelerate full implementation of Resolution 1325 and concretize all relevant gender equality and human rights commitments for sustainable peace and security in the region through the development of practical and time bound action plans to assist all stakeholders contribute to the implementation of Resolution 1325.

In addition, regional consensus was reached on the following national actions:

- i) Develop and collect gender specific data and early warning indicators, to ensure effective conflict prevention
- ii) Collect data and integrate a gender perspective into all situation and conflict analyses and subsequent programming;
- iii) Ministries of Foreign Affairs take an active role in the progress and implementation of 1325 at UN level, with specific attention to the appointment of Pacific women to senior postings.
- iv) Improve the recruitment, training and appointment process of women within the foreign and security sector (Foreign Affairs, Law Enforcement and Military), to increase gender balance in decision making
- v) Reconvene and strengthen national and regional government/NGO Women, Peace and Security Committees to develop national action plans for the implementation of 1325 including:
 - a. Developing training workshops, awareness raising toolkits and guidelines to support 1325 implementation.
 - b. Translating 1325 into local languages.
 - c. Documenting and sharing relevant experiences, information and strategies
- vi) Enable women's civil society input into all aspects of conflict prevention, management, formal negotiations and resolution, including all reconstruction efforts, through improved consultative processes and capacity building, and ensuring sustained interaction and solidarity

Strengthening National Action Plans key for 1325 Implementation: A Fiji Proposal

This regional workshop also provided an important platform for the reformulation of a UNSCR 1325 action plan for Fiji by key national stakeholders at the workshop - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Women, femLINKPACIFIC, Soqosoqo Vakamarama I Taukei, Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECREA), Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, the Republic of Fiji Military Forces and Fiji Police Force.

All stakeholders agreed that there was an important need for the MOFA to assist in further advancing the implementation to date, of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Fiji, which primarily has been through women's NGO initiatives, as it is the key government agency responsible for ensuring compliance of UN Security Council Resolutions.

Subsequently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has been requested to assist in the reconvening, review and strengthening of the Fiji Women, Peace and Security Coordinating Committee (Fiji WPS CC) including relocating the WPS Fiji CC to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Rationale:

The WPS Fiji CC is a clear and important link to assist Fiji as the only Pacific Island Country represented as a member of the Peacebuilding Commission: The Fiji Government, therefore, is strategically placed to reaffirm the commitments to women and girls, such as overcoming violence against women, increasing girls' access to primary education, ensuring women's equal participation in decision-making and ensuring access to reproductive rights and services, with time-bound targets and benchmarks for action.

Gender equality must be a key guiding principle for the UN Peacebuilding Commission as articulated in the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and SC Resolution 1325. Development, equality and peace cannot be achieved without the equal participation of women and full integration of gender perspectives, not only in peacekeeping operations, but also in the design and implementation of effective strategies for conflict prevention, as well as post-conflict reconstruction/transformation and peace-building.

The WPS Fiji CC is an important avenue to assist Fiji implement the provisions of the Pacific Plan: Endorsed by Forum Leaders in 2005, the Pacific Plan¹⁰ incorporates a broad definition of security to include human security as one of four priority goals for the region, and included a crosscutting strategic objective to improve gender equality. The Fiji Government is well placed to ensure the incorporation of SC Resolution 1325 into all areas of human security, including trade, the environment, as well as the health sector and notwithstanding the Digital Strategy which recognizes the role of information and communication systems in empowering Pacific communities.

The WPS Fiji CC can be an avenue to enhance Fiji's role to date as a Troop Contributing Country: While Fiji has been an important Troop Contributing Country for more than 25 years, we are yet to develop and implement a national policy on peacekeeping operations which would not only ensure minimum standards are adhered to in accordance with the various UN Security Council Resolutions and other international law / obligations, including Resolution 1325 and CEDAW, but also provide an opportunity for the Fiji Government to lead by example.

Such a policy would also ensure that deployment and management of peacekeepers and security personnel, as well as civilians involved in peace-support operations including the delivery of humanitarian services (as well as disaster relief).

While there are efforts to implement SC Resolution 1308 (HIV/AIDS), it is also critical to develop and implement a gender policy for the military and law enforcement sector to assist in the recruitment and appointment of women in these sectors, as well as ensuring a sexual harassment policy.

The national policy would also consider and act on the links between political instability, violence towards women and children and the role of peacekeepers/security personnel and would assist in

¹⁰ In October 2005 Pacific Heads of State endorsed the Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration of which security is one the four key components. The Plan defines security as "stable and safe social (human) and political conditions necessary for, and reflective of, Good Governance and Sustainable Development for the achievement of Economic Growth."

addressing the impact of unrecognized and untreated trauma and deployment/post deployment issues that impact on returning peacekeepers/security personnel.

The WPS Fiji CC has a critical role to play also in advancing the much needed legislation for the regulation of security firms: This would enhance the Fiji Government's work to date towards the implementation of such legislation. Working in consultation with key civil society groups, including peace-based NGOs will also ensure a holistic approach to all aspects of security services including incorporating a gender perspective while also ensuring fair and honest contracts are negotiated for men and women employed by private security firms

The priority action of a reformed WPS Fiji CC would be to develop National Action Plan to also coordinate a major information and awareness raising programmes of 1325 for all stakeholders including parliamentarians, including translations as well as engage with young men and young women in the development and implementation of conflict prevention programmes

It should also be noted that since the formulation of this draft national action plan, the Fiji Government has announced its intention to bid for a place in the Security Council in 2011. I believe this is a further opportunity to increase the Pacific region's visibility in crucial UN foras – as well as an opportunity to monitor, from a Pacific perspective, the implementation of SCR 1325, as well contribute to the debates in the lead up to the adoption of SC resolutions. Should our government be successful in its bid, this will be a remarkable milestone for our country, and will be a valuable opportunity for us – through the reformed WPS CC Fiji to further advance UNSCR 1325.

Conclusion

Every year from the global to national level, women are remembered for their invaluable contribution to peace and security.

I hope that the 6th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 will go beyond the political rhetoric about our traditional roles as peacebuilders.

I hope that this anniversary, member states will step up to the challenge of advancing national implementation consistent with their commitments through the ratification of CEDAW, through the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as countless other global, regional and national commitments to gender equality.

Because this is what is needed - So that women ARE appointed to positions alongside male counterparts on Security Committees; In decision making or advisory positions to the Disciplined Forces and serving on other Government bodies where Security, Peace and Conflict issues are regularly discussed and reviewed. Only then can we say that women are active decision makers – in the home, community, country, and the world.