

Issue Brief No Women, No Peace

The Importance of Women's Participation to Achieve Peace and Security

A paper submitted to the UN High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, upon the invitation of the UN Foundation

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As head of the UN effort in Timor-Leste, I saw the remarkable impact that promoting the participation of women can have in peace-building and development. We will pay increased attention to the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, and particularly to the right of women to participate both in decision-making and in human rights activities. Women are a factor of stability and reconciliation; their contribution can improve the quality of decisions and thus the effectiveness of recovery efforts. Above all, we promote women's participation because women have an equal right to be involved in all decisions and because their input brings value added to all decisions.

—Sergio Vieira de Mello, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Intervention made before the UN Commission on the Status of Women, New York, March 2003

The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security argues that gender inequality is a significant threat to global peace and security. In addressing this and other threats, the Panel must use the framework of the '3 Ps'—conflict prevention, the participation of women in peace and security, and the protection of civilians with consideration to the specific needs of women, men, girls and boys—which recognizes these three principles as fundamentally linked. Using this framework, we urge the Panel to make recommendations for collective action among UN, Member States and civil society that take into account the provisions put forth in UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000), the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979).

Women in Formal Peace-Building: Untapped Potential

Despite the work women do at the grassroots level to organize for peace, the majority of their voices go unheard during formal processes, including: peace negotiations, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), constitution-creation, elections, reconstruction, rehabilitation, truth and reconciliation, and establishing a judicial system.

We organised a silent march to protest the war and the use of rape as a weapon. One thousand women participated—an extraordinary number given Bougainville's small population. We were stopped by the Papua New Guinea Defense Force twice. They wanted to arrest someone and asked, 'Who is your leader.' We said, 'All of us are leaders. We all own this march.' The soldiers couldn't arrest anyone. We walked silently carrying banners we had sewn by hand, with messages of peace... Our sisters in Rabaul were so moved by the story that they organised a boat and sailed through Buka Passage, singing peace songs. There was shooting on both sides of the passage before the women arrived. As they sailed through, the shooting stopped. Their singing stopped the guns. It was the women who risked going out into the jungle to persuade our sons, husbands and brothers to avert war. It was the women who really made peace, not the menfolk. They were busy killing, destroying and raping women.

—Helen Hakena, Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, Bougainville, March 2003

While women are actively engaged in local, national and regional peace-building, they are systematically excluded from formal peace negotiations and agreements. Women community leaders and peace-builders can no longer be excluded from formal peace processes while warlords and leaders of fighting parties, historically all male, have seats at the table. The international community must redefine who are considered legitimate stakeholders in the reconstitution of post-conflict societies, so as to prevent future conflict and to ensure a sustainable peace, founded on human rights and gender equality.

Despite all of their efforts, the women of Somalia were told they could not participate in the final talks, in which a new government would be decided upon, because they didn't constitute one of the traditional bodies for negotiation, called "clans." The Somali...had agreed on the clan-based power sharing system as the modus operandi for the Transitional National Assembly (TNA). While they were not told directly that they were being excluded because of their gender, it was not difficult for the women to recognise that the 5 clans negotiating in Arta were comprised of men only... [T]he women, representing cross-clans, came back to the mediation team and insisted that they be considered an additional clan.

Finding no legal or traditional reason why there shouldn't be an additional clan, it was finally agreed upon that they would be considered the 6th clan and thus be able to participate in the negotiations. The women's agenda for peace and gender inclusion was subsequently incorporated in the final conclusions of the meeting. In addition, the 6th clan succeeded in securing 25 seats for women in the newly formed parliament.

—Femmes Africa Solidarité; (on the Somali peace process May 2000), EGM/PEACE/2003/OP.1, 7
November 2003

Moreover, the international community, regional bodies and local governments—frequently due to their lack of an engendered concept of peace and security—do not provide sufficient resources for women and women's organizations to initiate or sustain their work on peace and security issues.

I have often heard that Afghan women are not political. That peace and security is man's work. I am here to challenge that illusion. For the last 20 years of my life, the leadership of men has only brought war and suffering. I am a woman fighting for education. In Afghanistan and Pakistan that is politics. I run a humanitarian NGO. In Afghanistan and Pakistan that is politics... We still face challenges within our families, particularly when men are unemployed, and from some in our community who oppose an active public role for women. We see larger grants channeled through Afghan men's organizations and wonder why? Women's organizations work in the refugee camps and reach out to the refugee communities in Peshawar, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Quetta, where Afghan refugees do not receive UN assistance. We are the role models for our youth; we are working for security and peace.

—Jamila, intervention made in an Arria Formula, UN Security Council, October 2001

II. The Solution

The following four principles should serve as the framework for the recommendations to the High-Level Panel on their work and that of the UN system and Member States:

- Define security in human terms. A paradigm shift must take place away from weapons-based security towards gender-aware human security. Peace must be redefined as not merely the absence of violent conflict but as the positive and creative process of building sustainable societies. A human-centered approach to security encompasses economic development, social justice, environmental protection, democratization and disarmament—the absence of which causes violent conflict. Redirecting funding from arms to human security and sustainable development will establish new priorities ensuring equal participation of marginalized groups, including women; reduce violence; restrict the use of military force; and move toward collective democratic global security.
- Integrate a '3 Ps' framework into the planning, design and implementation of initiatives carried out by the UN and international community, including conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peace-building.
- Expand and revitalize partnerships with civil society, including the flow of information and systematic consultation at all levels and stages of peace processes. Civil society—in particular women's organizations—are early warning beacons. They are the eyes, ears and hands on the ground, working to prevent conflict and build peace. They are most able to identify situations of pending violence perpetrated by State and non-State actors. Peace is sustainable only if it is locally driven and locally owned. This requires systematic consultation as well as adequate resources.

- Build a culture of peace. A culture of peace, as defined by the UN, must replace the culture of violence. Gender equality is a necessary ingredient. The UN has defined a culture of peace as, "a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations." We can eliminate violence, where women are seen as victims, sexualized objects or as "the other," through the introduction of holistic, participatory peace education. Peace education is achieved in curricula and communities that help people understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts nonviolently, and live by international standards of human rights and equity.

To the High-Level Panel on its work, we recommend:

1. Use a '3Ps' framework—conflict prevention, the participation of women in peace and security, and the protection of civilians with consideration to the specific needs of women, men, girls and boys—when examining global threats and challenges to peace and security in your work and in the final report to the Secretary-General.
2. Ensure that women and women's organizations fully and equally participate, and are resourced to do so, during all of the Panel's regional consultations, in order that women may provide local and regional perspectives on how gender inequality threatens local and regional peace and security.
3. Incorporate into a framework for collective action existing international commitments and laws on women's role in peace and security, including UNSC resolution 1325, the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979).
4. Address how the United Nations, through reform, can better institutionalize the integration of a gender perspective into all of its work on issues of peace and security. While the UN system currently has a mandate to mainstream gender (1997), it frequently only engenders its work on an ad-hoc basis, which depends on individuals.

To the High-Level Panel we recommend that the UN system and Member States:

1. Establish monitoring mechanisms for UNSC resolution 1325 in the Security Council. The Security Council, as suggested by several Member States, must institute a mechanism to monitor, report and ensure the full and systematic implementation of UNSC resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. This could include the appointment of a Council sub-committee or working group to "champion" the principles of UNSC resolution 1325 and ensure their inclusion into every action the Council undertakes.
2. Provide ongoing training to Special Representatives and Envoys of the Secretary-General on UNSC resolution 1325 and related documents, carried out by DPA and DPKO in collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues (OSAGI), Friends of 1325 and civil society organizations.
3. Enforce more aggressively existing UN guidelines and procedures on the protection and participation of women. The General Assembly and ECOSOC must assume more responsibility to ensure that guidelines and procedures such as "codes of conduct" for peacekeeping and humanitarian staff and UNHCR's Five Commitments to Refugee Women and Guidelines on Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence are routinely enforced.
4. Appoint more women to high-level posts. The Secretary-General must be a role model, using his authority and following his own recommendation, to appoint more women Special Representatives, Special Envoys and Under-Secretaries-General.

5. Establish a fund for women's participation in peace processes. The UN system must establish a dedicated fund located in the Secretariat, administered and appropriately staffed (in terms of expertise and numbers) and resourced, to enable women to travel to and participate in formal peace processes.
6. Partner with local civil society groups to form Inter-Agency Taskforces in all countries where the UN works, similar to the Inter-Agency Taskforce on Women, Peace and Security at headquarters and the Gender Taskforce for the UN Iraq Mission.

While each conflict is context-specific... a number of common aspects can nevertheless be identified that represent challenges to the promotion of gender equality and women's participation in peace processes. The prevailing focus on formal peace processes is one such challenge. While women and women's groups undertake many informal peace initiatives and have organized to formulate their priorities for peace, these efforts are not well publicized and are rarely integrated or reflected in formal processes. Although there is increasing understanding of the important contribution of women to peace-building, they continue to be largely absent from formal processes preparatory to, and in, peace negotiations. Support for women's efforts and for capacity-building towards their effective engagement in formal peace processes by donors and the international community is often lacking, provided late or not sustained over a sufficiently long period of time to have an impact.

—Secretary-General's Thematic Report on the CSW theme women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building, E/CN.6/2004/10, Para. 12

You [Security Council] recognized that peace is inextricably linked to equality between women and men. And you declared that maintaining and promoting peace and security requires women's equal participation in decision-making. I...ask you to do everything in your power to translate that statement into action.

—UN Secretary-General, Statement to the Security Council, 24 October 2000

Annex I: Gender Balance and Decision-Making at the UN: Where are the Women?

- Of 27 current peace operations, the Secretary-General has appointed only 1 woman as head of mission or Special Representative (UNOMIG). At the level of Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG), there are 3 women out of 14 positions (UNOMIG, MONUC, MINUGUA).
- Of 15 current peacekeeping missions, only 4 have designated gender units (UNMIK, MONUC, UNMISSET, and UNMIL).
- Women represent only 25% of civilian professional staff, 4% of civilian police and 1.5% of military personnel (source: DPI).
- Of 37 current Under-Secretaries-General (USGs), only 5 are women (source: OSAGI, June 2003).
- Of 40 current Assistant Secretaries-General, only 8 are women (source: OSAGI). In March 2004, 2 more women Assistant Secretaries-General were appointed.
- Of 16 members of the Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, only 4 are women.
- Of 264 country-specific and thematic reports of the Secretary-General from January 2000 to September 2003, 67% made no reference or only 1 reference to women or gender issues (source: OSAGI).
- Of 225 Security Council resolutions from January 2000 to September 2003, only 14.7% included any language on women or gender issues (source: OSAGI).

Annex II: Suggested Reading

- UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, S/RES/1325 (2000), http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf or <http://www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/1325.html>. (Find 36 translations of UNSC Res 1325 at www.peacewomen.org/1325inTranslation/index.html.)
- Secretary-General's Study, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/eWPS.pdf>, and Report on Women, Peace and Security (2002) and Women, Peace and Security: At a Glance, an overview of the Secretary-General's Study on Women, Peace and Security, Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), 2002.
- Secretary-General's thematic report on women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building (2004), [http://ods-dds-ny.un.org](http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/http://www.peacewomen.org)
<http://www.peacewomen.org>
- CSW Agreed Conclusions on women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building (March 2004), <http://www.un.org>
<http://www.peacewomen.org>
- Women War Peace: The Independent Experts. Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and the Women's Role in Peace-building, Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 2002, http://www.unifem.org/index.php?f_page_pid=149
- UNIFEM's Women, War and Peace Web Portal, a web partnership between UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the PeaceWomen Project of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) UN Office: www.womenwarpeace.org and www.peacewomen.org
- Peace agreements as a means for promoting gender equality and ensuring participation of women: A framework of model provisions, Report of the Expert Group Meeting, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Department of Political Affairs, EGM/PEACE/2003/REPORT, <http://www.un.org>
<http://www.peacewomen.org>
- Enhancing Women's Participation in Electoral Processes in Post-conflict Countries, Report of the Expert Group Meeting, Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Department of Political Affairs, EGM/ELEC/2004/ REPORT, <http://www.un.org> <http://www.peacewomen.org>.
- Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming, Department for Disarmament Affairs, 2003, <http://disarmament2.un.org/gender/gmap.pdf>.