



wia

2012 Women in Action

Women in Peace Building



The Isis International Activist School

for Feminist Development Communications aims to strengthen social movements and advocacies through the strategic use of media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to further enhance women's skills and knowledge in communication technologies. It particularly focuses on developing and sharpening skills in community radio, journalism and publication, film, video, theater, and convergent media technology for networking.

Conducting in-house and on-site training seminars globally specially in the Asia region, the Activist School brings together women activists and development practitioners to share and learn from each other on the theory and practice of development communications to strengthen cause-oriented advocacies on various issues, such as peace building, migration, disaster mitigation and climate justice, LBT (lesbian, bisexual, transgender), and human rights, among many others.

Background

Since its creation 36 years ago, Isis International has been committed to achieving Southern women's human rights by increasing their participation and access to media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) as well as facilitating networking and information sharing of women's movements in the Global South.

The development of new media and information and communication technologies has drastically changed social mobilisation and organising, as well as movement building and advocacy. In 2008, Isis concluded a three-year five-country research project called "People's Communications for Development" (PC4D) in the Asia-Pacific region of India, Thailand, Philippines, Fiji and Papua New Guinea. The purpose of the research project was to uncover how intermediary groups used new ICTs and traditional communication tools in interacting with grassroots women and to determine the most effective communication tools for grassroots women's empowerment. Results from PC4D show that the most effective communication tools to reach grassroots women are radio, followed by theater, film and face-to-face communication. The research also brought to light demands from women's The Isis International Activist School (IIAS) for Feminist Development Communications aims to strengthen social movements and advocacies through the strategic use of media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to further enhance women's skills and knowledge in communication technologies. It particularly focuses on developing and sharpening skills in community radio, journalism and publication, film, video, theater, and convergent media technology for networking groups on the convergence of traditional and new media and communications technologies.

Seeing the need for capacity building in gender, media and communications Isis created the Isis International Activist School to systematise and institutionalise feminist development communications launched in April 2010, Isis has since conducted four successful Activist Schools focusing on various themes including migrant rights, women and peacebuilding, and gender and climate justice. It has also recently concluded a three-week School on gender based violence, which provided participants with theoretical grounding on new perspectives and frameworks as well as exercises on organisational development strategies towards strengthening institutional responses to gender based violence.



Announcements and calls for application for each Isis International Activist School will be available on the Isis International and the Isis International website (www.isiswomen.org) Organisations interested in requesting a training for their organisation are urged to contact Lalen de Vela, Governance, Activist School Coordinator, at lalen@isiswomen.org.

This Women in Action (WiA) issue is dedicated to making women's voices heard in peace and development processes. The articles featured here provide accounts of the appalling situation of women in conflict- situations and their pursuit of a peaceful resolution of current conflict in different countries and localities. While the authors share with our readers a collection of women's personal stories and adolescents' stories, the essays also focus on the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, the first international legislation ever passed to address the impact of armed conflict on women and give importance to their role in the prevention and resolution of conflict.

This WiA takes a critical and insightful perspective on current peace and development processes with a gendered lens. The articles include Jenny Becker's call to involve young women in consultations and decision-making in various peace efforts; Vesna Jaric's depiction of Serbian women's participation in advancing peace initiatives; Marie-Anne Zammit's account on the challenges of war displaced African women; stories about collective popular action among individual organisations in Uganda for social change through the telling of Isis WICCE's experience of mobilising women from Luweero to Juba; and it shares Isis International's two-country (Philippines and Indonesia) research on sustainable and lasting peace. This issue also includes talking point articles such as Dr. Gal Harmat's analysis of unequal gender relations in dialogue encounters; and Cynthia Cockburn's contentions on the contradictions brought about by the implementation of Resolution 1325. Stories and experiences on women and peace building highlighting the use of media are Isis International's experience in the use of feminist development communication as a strategy and capacity building effort to strengthen women's participation in peace building by Marilee Karl; also by Marilee Karl, women's stories of the impact on exposing the specific issue of gender based violence on the peace building agenda; Sharon Bhagwan Rolls' presentation at the UNCSW 56 in New York on the impact of conflict on the issue of food sovereignty for rural women in the Pacific; and a review of engendered peace journalism by Cai Yiping. Finally, this WiA issue also includes Eva Sajoo's review of the book, *Land of the Unconquerable: The Lives of Contemporary Afghan Women*.

This WiA helps uncover the often hidden situations and images of women and children caught in war zones and conflict situations, and provides a critical analysis of current peace and development efforts.

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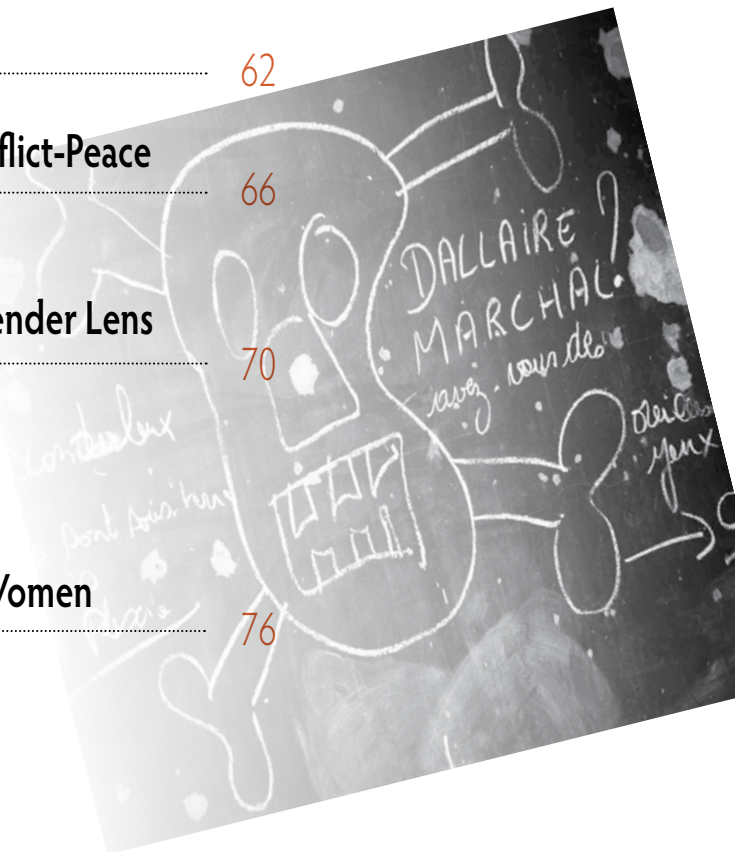
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BOOK REVIEW

**Land of the Unconquerable:
The Lives of Contemporary Afghan Women**

Eva Sajoo

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The United Nations' Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) is a ground-breaking legal document that require nations to pay particular attention to the abilities, needs and agency of women in times of conflict and peace. This paper outlines the issues and programmes that apply a more nuanced understanding of UNSCR 1325 in programmes involving young women and girls.

UNSCR 1325 which was adopted in 2000, urged governments, international bodies and other relevant stakeholders to take specific action to facilitate women's involvement in peace processes and the rebuilding of government structures. The resolution also urged these bodies to actively work to prevent exploitation as well as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and to provide adequate security and justice for survivors of armed conflict. More than a decade later, only limited progress has been made. Along with an increase in the number of women's peace coalitions, a greater awareness and understanding of how conflict is experienced by each gender is gaining more attention. One area of concern is to determine how women and men are affected by conflict differently, and how they can contribute to its peaceful resolution. A number of new policy directives, toolkits, guide documents, technical experts and training resources now exist to help integrate a gender perspective into the work in this area as well as the appointment of women into key decision making roles.¹

Despite these examples, progress is difficult to quantify.² A major pitfall of the document is that it addresses women and girls as a homogeneous group. Girls, adolescent women, middle-aged women and elderly women may share similar discrimination as females, but have different needs and abilities based on their life stages and their socio-economic class. A group that is frequently overlooked is adolescent women (teenagers).

Girls in Fragile Context Join Peace Dialogue

by Jenny Becker

The Women's Commission notes that because adolescence is not a period experienced by most young women they are often an overlooked population.³ Because of this, there is not enough effort to include them into the fold of the peace building process or in decision making roles.

Youth in general are often overlooked as decision makers and active participants in society. This is slowly changing. The global Year of Youth was concluded in August 2011. This initiative shows that multinational institutions such as the United Nations recognise the valuable perspectives and experiences that the youth can contribute to the growth and development of a country. This participation has to be meaningful.⁴ The Year of Youth even involves a multilateral taskforce on adolescent girls,⁵ yet the focus remains on boys because young men are seen as a potentially destabilising element, particularly when young people make up the majority of the population and men have particularly low levels of educational attainment. This discounts, firstly, the agency youth have in creating change in their society, and secondly, the power young women have to participate in that change.⁶ Many projects targeted towards young people are still conceptualised with males in mind, and not particularly women or peace. The international women's fund Mama Cash conducted a study on European funders and found that overall, only 11 percent supported peace initiatives. There is less than 10 percent supporting activities and programs for women and girls, of which an average of 5.8 percent grant support to organisations supporting initiatives for women and girls. Most foundations that have a focus on women and girls place priorities on SGBV, initiatives for women in poverty and access to education.⁷ Of the projects and programmes that are funded, there is a question on targeting and retention. Organisations are unsure of good practices to keep young girls involved or to ensure the inclusion of members of the most vulnerable groups. The Population Council found that overall, organisations were not reaching their target populations in youth programmes.⁸

UNSCR 1325 seeks to increase women's participation in all levels of decision making: active prevention of conflict, recognition of the

important peace building work women do and protection from sexual violence and exploitation. All of these three elements are interconnected and rely on balanced implementation to achieve the goals of UNSCR 1325. Yet, there is an overemphasis on programmes addressing sexual violence and exploitation. Young women have specific needs exacerbated by conflict such as early marriage, forced impregnation, abduction and lack of education, among others.⁹ The strong focus on sexual and gender based violence and exploitation programming for young girls may have come from the reality that young women do not have control over their own bodies. Adolescent girls and young women lose their opportunity to grow as young adults and are often thrust into marriage and motherhood at a young age without gaining the decision making power of elders in their community.¹⁰ The organisation Kvinna Till Kvinna (2007) argues that until young women have control over their bodies they will not have control over decision making. Therefore, all programmes must focus on giving girls a real agency, not just participation but real power. Projects designed in the spirit of UNSCR 1325 focus on the protection of young women based on the limited control they have over their bodies rather than addressing the core of the problem head on. It is important to recognise these threats, to recognise that young women have agency and understanding of their context, that they can play a role in shaping the provision of their security, and possibly, a unique

A group that is frequently overlooked is adolescent women (teenagers). The Women's Commission notes that because adolescence is not a period experienced by most young women they are often an overlooked population.³ Because of this, there is not enough effort to include them into the fold of the peace building process or in decision making roles.

perspective on how to reach other young people in peace building efforts.¹¹

This focus is now being extended to other crucial concerns. Initiatives such as Plan International's "Because I Am A Girl" have highlighted not only the needs of girls and young women, but also their experience and their abilities to impart change. In 2008, the project specifically looked into the experience of girls in conflict affected contexts. Media awareness can change the way young people perceive gender roles but also change the community as a whole. Radio programmes, cartoons, comics, and TV shows contribute to popularise the profile of young people as agents for change and peace builders. Some even support young women as peacemakers. Search For Common Ground runs a radio programme in Rwanda that is produced, designed and implemented by young women.¹² Projects such as these see young women as project creators and implementers. These projects do not only increase their public profile but also equip them with life skills. Search for Common Ground also recognises the role that champions and mentors take in bringing and retaining young women in the programmes. A project called Big Sisters connected girls to adolescent role models in post-conflict Angola. It supports both groups in making community decisions and taking leadership roles. The programme also brings girls together to discuss gender issues and promote peaceful conflict resolution.¹³ Groups that physically bring girls together provide the venue for rights education, and encourage girls to play active roles in their communities. Recognising that adolescent girls may also be young mothers means allowing for a child friendly programme settings and ensuring exclusive for female participation. Concerns about the mixing of gender and the cultural constructs that gender empowerment and equality is considered a purely "western" ideal.¹⁴ While gender segregated activities is a good way to get more girls to participate, something must be done to change the perception that gender mingling is negative. Greater understanding and respect can only be built if women and men, including boys and girls, are regarded as equals and responsible for their own actions. In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, UNICEF brought 1,500

youth together, half of them are girls. Sixty schools participated and the age range was 18 to 23. Girls were given leadership roles and many commented that it was the first time that someone had entrusted them with an important task. They have been empowered and want to continue working with their peers.¹⁵ Bringing youth together, so that boys and girls interact with each other from a young age is important to combat gender stereotypes.

Access to technology plays a key role in empowering women. The cellphone in particular, is an important tool to connect girls together. It can provide services such as banking and financial aid, serve as information channel for things of interest to young women, and may be used as an early warning device or notification systems in precarious situations. Systems like Hollaback and Harrasmap provide these services, even publicly putting to shame individuals who sexually harass or assault women. These tools are effective methods of empowering young women to actively stand-up against sexual violence in their communities.¹⁶ Greater access to computers using websites such as the Si Jeunesse Savait project in the DRC and Take Back the Tech, along with more mainstream social media such as Facebook and Twitter provide wider venue



It has shown that women with greater knowledge of their reproductive health, sex education and rights, are more likely to have handy information that could thwart unwanted sexual advances. They are also more predisposed to practice safe sexual choices and report sexual and gender based violence.

for young women to act and connect with other young people in their own countries as well as globally.¹⁷ Still, the internet café can be a very male dominated location where young women are not always permitted to go. These places may also be discomforting for women.¹⁸ Creating women's sections in cafés, women only cafés or setting-up of women centres and child friendly online spaces can help increase internet use among women.

Young women still face a number of barriers in their integration to the public sphere, including low levels of education and lack of opportunities for employment. A UNAIDS study this year reported that forty percent of the unemployed are youth and young women from developing areas

who have harder time finding employment than young men. Correspondingly, a pitfall of UNSCR 1325 is that it does not recognise the economic barriers that women face, and how these can impede their civic engagement and involvement in peacemaking. Girls face even greater barriers with less prospects and support in finding formal employment, as well as limited decision making power because families worry about the security and marriageability of their daughters if they work outside the home. Kishori Abhijan, a livelihood programme for adolescent girls run by BRAC in Bangladesh rely on programme employees to encourage fathers' to let their daughters attend training programmes. Yet when parents see that their daughters can travel without any problems, they are more likely to allow them to continue to attend the programme's activities.¹⁹ Some industries only have a brief window of opportunity for recruitment such as the security sector which recruits youth in their late teens and early twenties. These are prime childbearing years where young women may not be able to separate from their family or delay marriage or childbirth in order to enter police service or other security institutions.²⁰ This has a direct bearing on the aim of UNSCR1325 to include more women in the security sector. Governments need to address these barriers but women must bring such concerns to their attention. Empowerment through associations that motivate young women to have a voice makes women's participation in the security sector possible.

The inclusion of adolescent girls in decision and peacemaking could have an overall positive effect on their society. Barakat and Urdal (2009) state that studies on educational attainment, high youth population and conflict, has focused solely on men. However one will likely find a greater causal link between the educational attainment of both men and women and the reduction of violent conflict. Greater empowerment of young women generates a spiralling effect that improves a number of different social systems in addition to peace and security. HIV/AIDS is one area in particular where the empowerment and confidence building of young women address issues like early marriage, forced sexual encounters, use of sexual protection methods and the confidence to demand

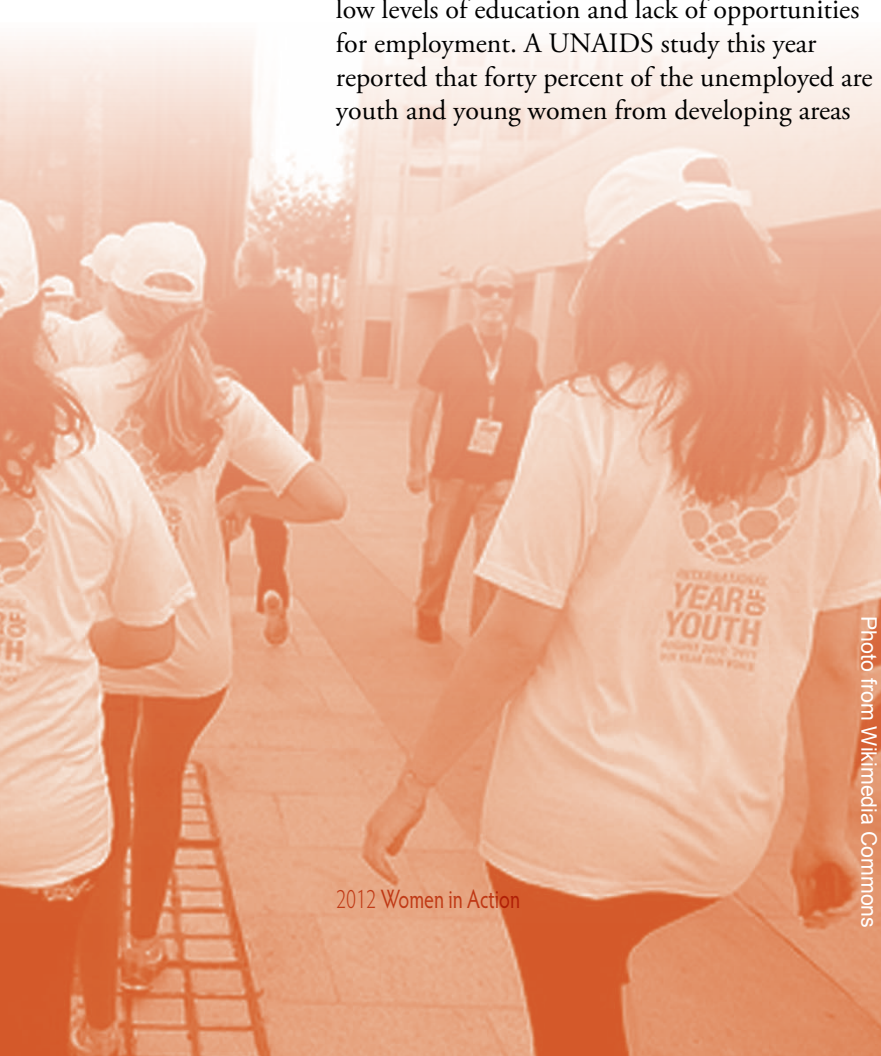


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Yet, mixed gender dialogues and programmes should also be created to break gender stereotypes and build tolerance and equality. It is important to actively engage the community as a whole through meetings with parents, public awareness and education in order to breakdown community barriers in engaging active participation of young girls.

these. Globally, women account for 60 percent of all HIV/AIDS cases, 72 percent of which are in sub-Saharan Africa. Greater independence and confidence of women could reduce the number of people infected and living with HIV/AIDS.²¹ Moreover, including adolescent girls in the design and tapping them as programme implementers could increase the number of girls reached.²² UN estimates that on the average, 16 million adolescent women give birth each year.²³ It has been shown that women with greater knowledge of their reproductive health, sex education and rights, are more likely to have handy information that could thwart unwanted sexual advances. They are also more predisposed to practice safe sexual choices and report sexual and gender based violence.²⁴ An emphasis of programmes on sex and reproductive health education and awareness of rights could prevent the incidence of sexually transmitted illnesses. It also provides knowledge and information on how young women can take back control of their bodies.²⁵ Finally, it is estimated by the UN that an average of 16 million girls give birth each year.²⁶ Young women who have been empowered as peace and decision makers in their communities have gained the confidence to demand more for their children, to equip future generations with the same confidence, and to engage in peaceful mechanisms in resolving conflict instead of resorting to violence.

What can be deduced from all this information and how can it impact on future policies and programmes created to further the goals of

UNSCR 1325? We can take a positive view of the fact that there is a growing recognition that adolescent girls and young women are left out of programming globally, and are affected by conflict differently than others. Another recognition is that they have valuable contribution to the peace building and state building process. This means, allowing them meaningful participation and empowering them in the process of community peace building and development, can lead to a number of positive effects on the health, education and status of women in particular. However, there is a lot more that needs to be done. Adolescent women need to be viewed by policymakers not just as victims in need of protection, but as important decision makers who can participate in community decision making and peace building. Projects and programmes should be participatory in nature so that young women can have a free hand in realising initiatives and gaining leadership and other life skills. Women only spaces, as well as adolescent women only spaces must be created so that young women can safely congregate, learn, advocate and grow as a critical mass.

Yet, mixed gender dialogues and programmes should also be created to break gender stereotypes and build tolerance and equality. It is important to actively engage the community as a whole through meetings with parents, public awareness and education in order to breakdown community barriers in engaging active participation of young girls. Governments and organisations that implement projects for the youth should assess who are actually taking part in programmes and ensure that projects reach its target groups, including the most vulnerable.²⁷ Finally, governments at all levels and international institutions need to provide more support for programmes and projects that focus and actively involve young women in decision making and peace building. Starting young and maintaining the involvement of young women through their adolescence is important. Retaining them in projects and programmes needs to be further explored. How can women be expected to believe in themselves and take on challenges within their communities if they are not socialised from a young age into believing that they have the right to choose their own path and take leadership positions. ■

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Serbian Women Take Steps to Advance Peace Initiatives

by Vesna Jaric



This article offers an introduction and overview of the process of institutionalisation of gender equality in Serbia. It highlights the application of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and thus, examines the process of the formulation of the National Action Plan (NAP) 1325 and the manner of which the content of UNSCR 1325 has been adapted to the specific national context.

Given the crucial role that women NGOs had exercised in peace building during the war years in the Balkans during the nineties, this article looks into the process of how NGOs were included in the drafting process of the NAP 1325. The final part of this article provides an assessment of the extent to which NAP 1325 has been coordinated with other existing institutional mechanisms and their activities in the field of gender equality in the country, as well as an assessment of the possible impact it might have on the position of women in Serbia.



Art by Honoré Daumier "Mother" from Wikimedia Commons

The process of the implementation of the Action Plan for the National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality is the main focus of the discussion in this paper.

Institutionalising Gender

The Republic of Serbia has undergone profound national changes since the overthrow of Milosevic's regime in October 2000 and its "21st century velvet revolution." These historical points marked the beginning of Serbia's transition to democracy. The process implied significant institutional reforms in all sectors. The most reluctant to change has been the security sector, even though some important steps may be observed there as well. A good example of it is the formulation of the NAP for the implementation of UNSCR in the Republic of Serbia.

Ever since crucial political changes in the country occurred in the year 2000, and the State has started the transition to democratic order, an integral part of democratisation and internal reforms has been the integration of the gender-equality component in the state system. The first step towards the institutionalisation of gender equality was to establish the gender equality institutional mechanisms. The establishment of institutions did not follow a predefined order. It was driven by the presence of strong advocates of women's human rights in different branches of power. The first mechanism for gender equality to be established in Serbia was the Gender Equality Committee of the Parliament in 2002. The women MPs (Members of Parliament) strongly advocated for the institutionalisation of this mechanism and other significant legislative changes such as the recognition of domestic violence in the Family Law¹ and in the Penal Law². The women MPs acted in close cooperation with women's NGOs. That same year, the Council for gender equality was established as an advisory body of the Government but it wasn't constituted until 2004 when the state officials were nominated as representatives to the Council by the line ministries.

The executive power mechanism was established only in mid 2007 as the Sector for Gender

Equality within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, and became a Directorate within the same ministry the following year. The first independent control mechanism for gender equality was established within the Ombudsman office in 2008 and in the same year, one of the five Ombudsman deputies elected by the Parliament was in charge of the gender equality component. The last central level power mechanism was established in 2010 through the Commissioner for Equality which was elected by the Parliament. That institution has the mandate to act upon the umbrella law against discrimination³ on all grounds including grounds on sex and gender. The Commissioner was elected in the year 2010 with an election amid a huge debate in the NGO sector. One part of the civil sector that was active in the field of human rights, threw their support to the Coalition Against Discrimination which supported a male candidate in the person of a long term male activist and human rights defender. On the other hand, the majority of women's NGOs strongly supported a female candidate in the person of the Dean of Law Faculty at the University of Nis in Serbia who is also a women's human rights defender. She was eventually elected.

The debate in the civil sector demonstrated the presence of strong interest groups and publicly revealed that the Serbian women's movement is not immune to divisions within different political interests. However, the institutional debate was not as much interested in the choice of the candidate as it is interested in the "unclear" division of mandates between the Ombudsman and the Commissioner. There was a lingering question on the necessity of a new mechanism even though the European Union's (EU) directives⁴ are clear on this regard.

As far as the legislative and policy framework is concerned, I will mention significant achievements in gender-specific legislation and policies. Within a set of anti-discrimination laws in late 2009, the Parliament adopted the Gender Equality Law⁵ after eight years of various attempts to push it through. Strong dedication of the Serbian Government to the EU accession process played a significant role. The Gender Equality Law is one of the international obligations and conditions

set by the EU in the accession process. This law is fully compliant with the EU directives regulating equal opportunities for women and men. The EU conditionality policy, together with strong grassroots NGO sector in Serbia, exercised a strong “sandwich” pressure which resulted to the adoption of the first gender-specific legislation. The year 2009 was crucial for the institutionalisation of gender equality measures given the fact that at the beginning of the same year, the National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality was adopted⁶ on February 13th 2009. The Action Plan⁷ for its implementation was adopted the following year. Towards the end of 2010, gender equality concepts were instigated in the security sector, traditionally the most reluctant sector to change, with the adoption of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the Republic of Serbia⁸ on December 26th 2010. The positive trend in the formulation of gender-specific policies spilled-over in the year 2011 with the adoption of the National Strategy for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women in Family and Intimate Partner Relationships on April 1st 2011.

Overview of UNSCR 1325

The UNSCR 1325 adopted on October 31st 2000 is a direct outcome of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. It is of crucial significance to women living in the territories of armed conflict. The UN Security Council has expressed concern that “civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons. They are also increasingly targeted by combatants and armed elements.”⁹ For these reasons, the

UN member states, through this resolution, are invited to work on increasing the number of women at all levels of decision-making in conflict resolution and peace building processes. The Resolution urges the UN Secretary-General to expand the role and boost

the contribution of women in field operations headed by UN, especially among the military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel.

The UN has taken on the role of providing member states with the guidelines and training materials about protection, rights and the particular needs of women. The Resolution invites the member states to adopt the gender perspective in peace negotiations and agreements which takes consideration of the following: “(a) the situation of girls during repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction; (b) measures that support local women’s peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, (c) measures that involve women in all the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements and (d) measures that ensure the protection and respect for the human rights of women and girls, particularly as these relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary.” The Resolution emphasises the need to exclude sexual and other violence against women crimes from crimes that are eligible for amnesty provisions.

A short overview of the UNSCR 1325 provides the context upon which we can measure the faithfulness of local efforts to the Resolution.

Role of the Women’s Movement in Serbia

In its twenty centuries of history, Serbia has seen the rise and fall of its women’s movement several times. The beginning of the last wave of women’s movement in Serbia that continues to this day may be identified in the conference “Drug-ca. Women’s issue, new approaches?”¹⁰ which was held in Belgrade in 1978. It gathered feminists from all over ex-Yugoslavia and other areas where they were active. Since that time, the women’s movement in Serbia has been gaining strength. It reached the peak of activism in the nineties¹¹ during wartime in the Balkans. It was the women’s movement in the nineties that actually spawned the peace movement in the country. This was the time when the first among women’s NGOs acquired its shape and structures. Women in Black was among the first women’s NGOs at the time. It was strongly





Women in Black
The nights grow
longer. The war
drags on. The
Women in Black
stand in silent vigil
on the Arcata Plaza,
California.

against all forms of war, mass rape as a war strategy and aggression in armed conflict that were taking place in the Balkans at the time. After the adoption of UNSCR 1325, Women in Black was the first to embrace the Resolution as an advocacy tool. In the beginning, their activism was directed to pressure the Parliament to adopt the UNSCR 1325, then later on, it was for the adoption of the National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Every year on October 31st, Women in Black would persistently organise public events to remind the state of its responsibility to formulate and adopt provisions for the contextualisation and implementation of UNSCR 1325.¹² The first draft of the national resolution entitled “Women, Peace, Security”¹³ was submitted to the Parliament by the civil society sector with the Women in Black in the forefront of the action. For a long time, the draft was practically ignored at the Parliament. Several years later, with the vigorous activism of Women in Black, the draft was finally taken up for discussion at the Parliament and became an issue for public debate.

From Activism to Cooperation

In 2009, the NGO Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence (BFPE)¹⁴ initiated the project “Strengthening the Role of Women in Building the New Security Paradigm in Serbia”, as a component of the 2007 Programme targeted to build the capacities of women leaders in local political life.¹⁵ The project was made possible with the support of the Canadian Fund. The BFPE established a close cooperation with the Ministry

of Defence and started the participatory process of drafting the guidelines for the National Action Plan that would pursue the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Forty one persons were consulted through this project and four thematic working groups were constituted. These are, the (1) Role of women in decision making processes, (2) Women’s participation in conflict resolution, in post-conflict situations and in operations related to peace building, (3) Legal instruments for the protection of women and (4) Sensitisation to gender issues of women and men working in the security sector. The groups were composed of representatives from state institutions, academic community, civil society organisations and media. The results of the work of the four thematic working groups were presented in the form of guidelines.¹⁶ These guidelines served as the basis for the next step which was, the drafting of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in the Republic of Serbia referred to as NAP 1325.

The actual drafting process of NAP 1325 started in June 2010 when the formal working group of the Government of the Republic of Serbia was incorporated in the proposal of the Ministry of Defence, the ministry in charge for coordinating the drafting and submission of the draft to the Government. This step marked the official recognition of the work initiated by the civil society sector. The working group delivered the Draft with parallel recommendations by October of the same year. The conference organised a celebration of the 10 years adoption of UNSCR 1325 which was marked with the opening of a wide public consultation process. The document was opened for comments until November 16th 2010. After that date, the Ministry of Defence took into consideration the gathered comments, integrated existing texts and submitted the final draft version for Government procedure. The process of legally adopting NAP 1325 by the Government came to a productive conclusion on December 30th 2010. This story chronicles an extraordinary feat in the adoption of a policy document, which to a large extent was also made possible by a wide consensus of support it received during the drafting process.

The Essence of NAP 1325

The creation of NAP 1325 is another milestone for change in the lives of Serbian women. The main priorities of NAP 1325 are:

- Establishing institutional mechanisms for the implementation of NAP 1325;
- Creating conditions for the effective application of gender equality policy in the security sector. This entails increasing the participation of women and their influence in areas relevant to women such as in peace building, defence and security sector activities;
- Ensuring gender-equal representations in conflict resolution missions, in post-conflict efforts and in multinational operations;
- Provide adequate and efficient protection mechanisms for women and girls, from all forms of discrimination and gender-based violence;
- Provide training and education to women and men working in the security sector including their families, on the importance of women's involvement and participation in solving peace-related and security issues and
- Ensure media coverage and support in the realisation of goals and activities defined in NAP 1325.

The goals of the NAP 1325 are in line with the UNSCR 1325's recommendations to member states. Nevertheless, as recommended by the UNSCR 1325, there are no provisions for repatriation and resettlement during the post-conflict period. Such omission may be interpreted as the State's political statement that Serbia has already concluded the period of post-conflict reconstruction, which is a debatable position. The implementation period for NAP 1325 is 2010-2015.

The line ministries responsible for the implementation of NAP 1325 are:

- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry for Human and Minority Rights
- Gender Equality Directorate within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

NAP 1325 also planned to establish new mechanisms for its implementation. Institutions tapped to participate include: The Political Council (political body at the level of State secretaries, presidents of Parliamentary Committees and representatives of gender institutions); Intersector coordination body (representatives of ministries, administration level); Monitoring body (legislative power); Analytical groups (research teams in state administration) and Gender Advisors and Trust Persons.

Particularly interesting is the context-specific inclusion of Gender Advisors for the ministers and directors of relevant state institutions, with the specific task of mainstreaming gender perspectives in state policies and programmes. Complementary "trust persons" are to be appointed among employees in the organisational units of more than 60 employees. They should offer support to female and male colleagues in stressful situations. They are to cooperate closely with the gender advisors in solving issues of interest for gender equality in the security sector.

Opportunities and Challenges

The activism of women's groups/NGOs was crucial in raising the issue and bringing the topic to the level of a national political agenda. Still, these efforts were not sufficient to the institutionalisation of UNSCR 1325. As far as the State is concerned, the general shift in state politics and reform in the security sector, secured the basis for opening the institutional dialogue on UNSCR 1325 as an integral part of women's human rights. But the state lacked the expertise to deal with the issue adequately. International organisations understood both political and technical goals involved.

The EU integration and accession process has been declared as one of three State priorities by the last two Governments. On the other hand, technical expert support units like DCAF¹⁷ and UNDP took the role of providing input and supporting the dialogue between state and non-state actors on the issue. Three parties are in rough lines namely, the civil sector, the state actors and the international organisations, where each of these may be seen as heterogenic actor.

In the civil society sector, two types of NGOs can be distinguished. There are those advocating for women's human rights and gender equality, and those who are advocating human rights in general with no specific gender agenda on hand. In the state sector, the involved parties are from the security sector, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interiors in particular. The gender institutional mechanisms are implemented through the Gender Equality Directorate, Council for Gender Equality and the Committee for Gender Equality in the Parliament. Other line ministries such as the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy have different perspectives on the approaches to the issue while international organisations have different agenda and cannot be regarded as a homogeneous group.

It may be said that in the Serbian context, the institutionalisation of UNSCR 1325 implies the cooperation of different actors in order to balance-out responses to different interest groups. Such approach requires an investment on a wide-scale participation, but it also provides strong ownership which contributed to the fast adoption of the document. It also sets a sound basis for implementation, although this involves the challenge to ensure efficient coordination systems among the different stakeholders. Both coordination and synergy between the civic society and state sector also means a change in structures. In more specific context, these changes are guided, even though not explicitly stated, by putting to practice and institutionalising feminist concepts and principles. The question inevitably posed within the process of institutionalising feminism in the peace process is, 'What is there to lose and what is there to gain?'

It is indisputable that institutionalising feminism is opening spaces previously precluded from women, for example, more spaces for women professional soldiers¹⁸ and women in decision making positions, among others. Feminist concepts are being integrated in new security theories such as human security, and feminist ideas being contributed in the development and deeper understanding of gender-equity and equality. The thought that feminism is not separated from

the civic society movement opens the door to wider and stronger cooperation among women NGOs. In this way, we are able to direct the flow of change from the grassroots level, implementing institutions and the State to the bigger mainstream consciousness.

Participation in this process of change implies mediation. On the interaction between the state and civil sector, one of the major debates remains on the level of independence of the civil society, as well as the potential risks involved in excessive compromising with established systems. Reversely, staying out of the dialogue with the institutions brings in the risk of marginalisation and reduces the power of lobbying. Institutionalisation also means alignment with certain standards. Many women NGOs are too small and lack funds to have the capacity to follow certain standards. Furthermore, many activists are not necessarily recognised professionals in their field of profession, which is one of the requirements of concerned institutions in peace and development.

Another aspect that is often neglected is the way legal and political environment conjures the obligations of states on women's rights. The political pressure to comply with these internationally recognised standards are regionally more evident now in the context of the supranational characteristics of the European Union. The conditionality policy¹⁹ implies compliance with the norms and standards on equal opportunities for women and men in the accession process. This conditionality contributes significantly to changes in various national structures like legislation, procedures, policies, among others. Opportunities offered in institutionalising feminist consciousness in peace issues are numerous. Yet, there are certain challenges that shouldn't be neglected. When it comes to international pressure, there is a standing risk of incorporating standards and recommendations from "above" without clear understanding of the concepts involved and without contextualised planning and consultation at the national and local levels. This could result to ineffective or weakened institutions and mechanisms with lack of coordination systems and no gender-effective implementable plans.

Photo by Tom Stoddart from Wikimedia Commons

NAP 1325 is an example of a wide-scale involvement of interested parties in its entire phase of drafting, combining expertise of state, civil sector and accumulated support of the international organisations. Still, the Women in Black, one of the pioneer NGOs to raise the issue of women, peace and security, was not consulted during the process though it remains in line with UNSCR 1325 in the local context. As a policy document, UNSCR 1325 expresses certain political stands, some of these have highlighted and strengthened the position of women in the

security sector. But the sole increase in the number of women personnel in the security sector is not sufficient to effect the change we are hoping for. Institutional action must be implemented in combination with structural change from all spheres, and with a wide range of civic action.

Feminisation of institutions through NAP 1325 has good potentials, but whether it will keep up with the challenge to change the quality of women's lives for the better, remains a thought-provoking question without available concrete answers. ■

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The article is about displaced women, particularly African women who are still facing situations of armed conflict and subjected to sexual violence. Those who have attempted to escape mostly end up being displaced. This puts them in a more vulnerable spot and subjected to more violence during the flight out of the country where the women are attacked by smugglers and are trafficked. Displaced women are excluded from mainstream society without access to basic services and excluded from the Justice System.

United Nations Resolution 1325, a major policy milestone in the lives of women in conflict situation, urges women to participate in peace negotiations. This was followed by resolution 1820 in 2009 which has contributed to the incorporation of women s' rights and eliminating gender-based violence against women and girls during and after armed conflict. Women, particularly displaced women need to be engaged in decision making and be provided with social support, training and empowerment support and access to legal systems.

Meeting the Challenges of Displaced African Women

by Marie Anne Zammit



Amina's Plight and Displacement

On her beautiful face, one can hardly read any expression, as if she is making sure that no emotion is betrayed. Her eyes are held downcast, hiding her pain and an attempt to bury all her experiences. The comfortable room at the second floor of the Refugee Commission seems quite safe. Amina (a fictitious name), a young woman from Somalia takes note of this as she answers questions regarding her application for a refugee status. Suddenly, Amina's face turns ghastly pale and tears surface from the edge of her eyes. Amina is asked to describe what she had to go through before finding herself in Malta. Long silence dominates the room as Amina recalls the war, the stray bullets' bomb shells landing on her house. But worse was her experience of rape by men, losing all her family members and having to flee from her own country searching for a new life.

Like many other women from Africa, Amina had to flee from her country in order to escape the violence and the harsh brutalities caused by war. All these women hope for a better life devoid of war and conflict. This is the harsh reality experienced by African women immigrants who risk their lives while crossing the Mediterranean region illegally. With some luck, they might manage to reach one or two Mediterranean shores for refuge.

The African continent is considered to be a continent affected by many disasters. Some are natural like drought and dryness, and others are caused by humans such as war and conflict. Women in these regions are responsible for 70 percent of agricultural work, and all the cooking and domestic responsibilities. Women are excluded from mainstream society and gender equality is almost non-existent. The effects of climate change are a direct menace to these women but the worst threat that women face is the exposure to sexual and other forms of violence during armed conflicts. Conflicts in most African regions have escalated and the negative impact of these wars has resulted to the abuse of women and children.

Violence against women comes in many forms - physical abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence, genital mutilation and other forms. In conflict zones, the violence directed towards women is even

more profound, creating adverse impact with short and long term consequences.

As an aftermath of war, resorting to violence in armed conflicts is still a common reality and is often used as a weapon of war against the opponent. Women in armed conflicts are often subjected to rape and sexual abuse, forced pregnancies, slavery, forced marriages and many forms of torture and mutilation. These include being burned alive, shot and subjected to other brutal attacks with the aim of humiliating the women. To add to the pain and suffering, these harsh atrocities are performed in the presence of their children and family members. These circumstances are enough to get the women imbalanced. In situations of conflicts in Rwanda, Sudan and Sierra Leone, acts of sexual violence were committed to destroy women's lives, and thus, the opponent.

A report undertaken by the UN Special Rapporteur in 1996 found that acts of rape were quite prevalent during the Genocide in Rwanda in 1994. It led to the rape of 500,000 women and girls.


For women who survive, going through the experience of abuse and violence leaves a lingering effect on them, whether it is psychological, social and physical. Victims suffer from stress, anxiety, depression, panic attacks and may lose general interest in life. Moreover, many of them suffer from medical complications such as traumatic fistula which is described as tissue tears in the vagina, bladder and rectum. There is also the medical condition referred to as uterine prolapse which is the case of the uterus descending into the vagina. Other medical and physical conditions include miscarriage and long term complications such as infertility. There is also the high risk of contracting STDs and HIV/AIDS by women who have been raped.

Even if women are the victims and have been forced into the situation of sexual violence, women who have been raped, sexually violated, humiliated, persecuted and isolated by their own



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communities. Some are rejected by their families and even abandoned by their husbands because they are regarded as dishonour to the family and community, and out of fear of contracting STDs and HIV/AIDS. These harsh conditions put women in even more vulnerable and helpless situations where many are forced to engage in sex trade and be prostituted.

In times of war, women who are married lose their husbands and end up as widows with increased responsibilities. Most African women work in the agriculture sector. In times of war, there is a bigger chance that they could lose their land and properties.

Illegal grabbing of land and property owned by the women results in diminished food and crops which are necessary for family and community survival. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) estimated that in 2004, the number of people displaced by armed conflict was about 34 million. Of these people, 9.3 million became refugees in neighbouring states while another 25 million were internally displaced. Women who end up displaced are forced to leave their homes and countries to seek protection elsewhere. Because of this, they are further exposed to risks of sexual violence. The incidence of violence and abuse could be repeated over and over again while the women are temporarily living in halfway camps provided. After losing their land, properties and belongings, not even the halfway camps can provide some sense of guaranteed protection and security. While staying in camps, women have to collect firewood in order to cook for their families and in so doing, they also expose themselves to risks of assault, rape, theft and even murder.

Crossing Deserts, Tales of Sexual Slavery

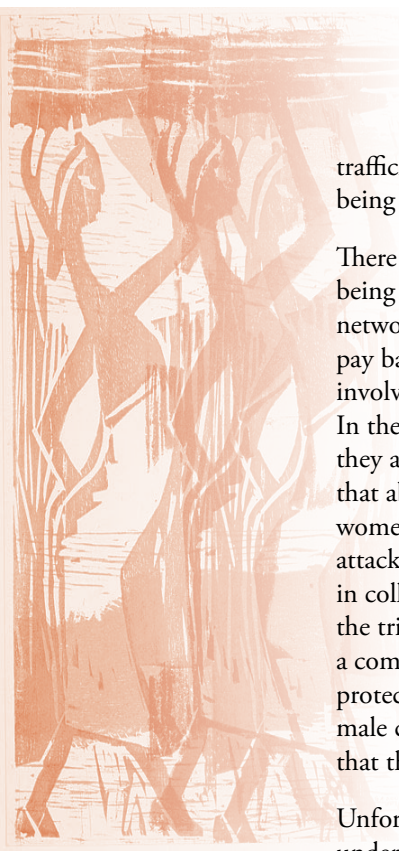
In 2006, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women identified a group of women who are of particular concern. These are displaced girls, older women and physically-disabled women and girls

who lack the capacity to resist physical or sexual violence. According to the UNCHR, there are many factors which make women vulnerable to sexual violence. These are: the collapse of family support, lack of available food, fuel which forces women to seek outside of their locality, lack of police or security protection and hostility coming from their own community.

After spending some long periods inside the camps, women may decide to move away. Most of the time, women move away from these camps only to enter a more difficult situation. More often, they end up being transported illegally out of Africa. Taking this journey is without doubt more perilous for women who have to cross through deserts for long days till they reach the ports of Libya.

During their flight, women are again put at risk of being sexually abused, this time by bandits, military men and border guards. Those who manage to get through like Amina, may end up in Southern European countries like Malta, Sicily and Southern Italy where States are obliged by the European Union to assist refugees and provide them necessary documentation. In other circumstances, women crossing over Libya may end up in the Gulf region where they work as domestic workers with no work contracts, working as slaves and even subjected to abuse.

One could say that the toughest part of the journey is the immigrant's stop in countries of transit in the Maghreb area. These countries are Morocco and Egypt, geographical locations considered attractive for migrant flow passing through the Maghreb on their way to Europe. The widespread incidence of violence inflicted on immigrant women is often not recorded, but the Medicins Sans Frontieres has issued reports of violence against undocumented sub Saharan migrants in Morocco. These reports were compiled with detailed information on the effects of violence on women's health and at the same time, highlights the failure of the Moroccan, Spanish and European Authorities to meet their obligations in protecting migrants from all forms of violence. Morocco has become a transit destination for trafficked women coming from the sub Saharan region, from North Africa and even Asia. So many



trafficked women brought to Morocco end up being sexually exploited.

There is a high incidence of migrating women being forced into prostitution by these trafficking networks. During flight, women are expected to pay back with sexual favors, in return to the efforts involved in smuggling them out of their countries. In the case of single women, the risks are higher as they are most vulnerable to sexual abuse. It seems that abusers more often prey on single or widowed women, as do organised gangs who choose to attack them. These attacks may even be organised in collaboration with the smugglers organising the trip. So if they could, single women choose a companion to travel with them in order to be protected from this violence although women with male companions can never be completely assured that they will not be targeted.

Unfortunately, this violence during flight remains under reported because women who endured violence are mainly afraid to report the incidence of what they have gone through and even if they do, they get little or no help.

Egypt is another country of transit and destination for migrant workers and refugees. Most of the refugee populations are from Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea. To address the deplorable condition of women during times of conflict, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1325 in 2000 to provide the key framework for the implementation of a gender perspective. The resolution on Women, Peace and Security assessed the impact of war on women and enhanced women's contribution to conflict resolution and peace building.

This was followed by the UN Security Council Resolution 1820 in 2009 calling for a coordinated response to the crime of sexual violence in conflicts. Without doubt, this is an important landmark but still, women continue to be sexually violated in war torn areas, lose their status and exposed to higher risks. The situation is even worse in the case of displaced women who are rarely included in governmental structures. Displaced women have no access to schools, to health services and to legal participation in the labour market.

Need for Gender-Responsive Approach

The problem of displaced women may be addressed by reinforcing the implementation of community-based programmes that offer multi-sectoral support services. These services would include reproductive and health services, medical, psychological, legal and economic programmes with the provision of immediate help to reintegrate them back within the fold of community. The health sector will assess the needs of women and girls who have been exposed to violence while other sectors shall see to it that women get free psychological services and free or low cost legal counselling, representation and other legal support.

Significantly, women are encouraged to participate in community-based activities and institutions despite facing numerous obstacles devastating their lives. In countries where gender equality is unheard of, it is fairly common that women are left out of the peace building processes and excluded in decision making aspects in their communities as the committees and councils are male-dominated. Women are excluded from the public sphere and may not be informed about their rights, or they may be unwilling to report to the police due to lack of information sources and lack of access to support services. Women are unaware of their human rights and the support services available to them.

Introducing more community-based initiatives and applying gender-equal systems would help alleviate the enormous problems that displaced women encounter on a daily basis. On top of that, more measures should incorporate the adoption of a binding code of conduct regulating the behaviour of soldiers. Law enforcement strategies must be geared towards punishing those who engage in smuggling and trafficking of women and children.

The physical environment where women live is another important concern. Most of the time, this generates serious problems for women who have to go out of the house to use toilets or latrines, even after dark. Such a situation can be life-threatening, endangers women's lives and heightens the risk of sexual violence. These communities need to be made safer and should be constructed with

the utmost consideration to protect women from sexual violence and reduce opportunities for perpetrators to attack.

Putting into practice more gender sensitive approach in assessing conflict situations can contribute to the prevention of women's violence. Empowering women is the key to easing up their woes. Their participation and inclusion in all decision making processes are crucial. The more women meet and discuss issues together, the more they will be encouraged to build networks and coalitions between them.

The key components in the prevention of violence against women and curb displacement of women involve: the delivery of educational services and

information, providing adequate social services and encouraging participation in the labour market. For the UN Resolution to work and be considered an effective instrument for peace, it is vital that women and men take part in the whole process of peace building and ensuring security in the community. Emancipating women means supporting them in their struggles and putting a stop to more sexual violence from happening. The more women participate in community decision making, the more they will be able to stand up for their rights, prevail over victimisation and take the lead. The possibility of this happening is not an impossible dream. Hopefully, international initiatives remain committed to the pursuit of its peace building goals and do so effectively and with strong conviction. ■

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Women Building Peace in Africa

by Isis Wicce

Isis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE) is a global, action oriented women's organisation, whose mission is to promote women's human rights through the cross-cultural exchange of skills, information exchange and knowledge sharing to contribute empowerment towards women's. Isis-WICCE works in conflict and post conflict countries.



In the midst of the swirl of intense armed conflict in some parts of Uganda, Isis-WICCE poured her energy and passion into peace building and reconstruction. The story shared in these pages is part of the experience of Isis-WICCE, the organisation that mobilised women from Luweero to Juba. It is a story of how an individual organisation in a small developing country called Uganda catalysed for collective popular action aimed at social change within an environment of disempowerment.

We summarise the efforts of Isis-WICCE in reaching out to women and creating the space for their own empowerment. It is important to point out that Isis-WICCE did not empower women; empowerment cannot be given to anyone. Isis-WICCE only facilitated the space and expertise for them to engage in the process of education and acceptance that there is something to be achieved and somewhere to be reached.

Isis-WICCE started documenting the impact of war on women in Luweero, Uganda in 1997. The major issues identified during the research were systematic rape of women during the war; lack of access to appropriate and important information by the women; inability to acknowledge and give resettlement packages to women who participated in the 'liberation' war. The documentation went beyond conventional images of women as victims of war to documenting the many different ways in which women contributed to rebuilding their communities as they emerged from armed conflict.

Since 1997, Isis-WICCE has carried out in-depth studies on women's experiences in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict in Central, Southwest, North and North Eastern Uganda. The findings reveal high levels of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) against women, trauma, apathy and poverty amongst women war survivors.

Having realised that there were many women needing medical attention, Isis-WICCE's action and feminist research approach necessitated the organisation to mobilise resources and medical experts to carry out emergency medical interventions in sexual and reproductive health and trauma management (Luweero, 1999; Gulu, 2001; Teso, 2002; and, Kitgum, 2005), thus

linking research with activism. The comprehensive reports have given Isis-WICCE empirical data to use as evidence to prove that wars are fought on the bodies of women.

Isis-WICCE's work catalysed the Ministry of Health in Uganda to prioritise mental health in its 5-year strategic plan. Through the collaboration with medical professionals, it has been possible for Isis-WICCE to utilise the documented data to develop and produce the first ever-comprehensive "Training manual for health workers in the management of medical and psychological effects of war trauma" (2006), which was adopted by the Uganda Ministry of Health – Mental Health section as its standard training manual.

As a follow up of its action oriented research, Isis-WICCE initiated a 5-year (1999-2003) leadership-training programme for women leaders from various war-ravaged communities in Uganda, on the theme "Women Building Peace from Grassroots to Parliament", to become change agents through mobilisation of communities for peace building. Isis-WICCE used the training to transform women's wartime experiences into positive contributions to society. Exchange visits within and out of Uganda were organised. These exchange visits promoted women's solidarity across ethnic and religious lines.

The trained women have subsequently replicated the skills in their communities. They have played a significant role in building a new culture of peace at the local level by organising peace education and community-based reconciliation and social reconstruction activities. Some formed community-based organisations, and these have been instrumental in addressing human rights and the human security of survivors of conflict. This has changed the image of women as vulnerable victims to that of women as a highly differentiated group of social actors, who possess valuable resources and capacities and who have their own agendas.

Following the peace negotiations in 2006 between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to end the 21-year civil war, Isis-WICCE was part of the core group of the Uganda Women Peace Coalition

(UWPC) who lobbied for the needs, concerns and priorities of women to be integrated into the Juba Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which was to be signed. Isis-WICCE played a key role in mobilising grassroots women's groups to participate in the consultative processes, as well as documenting the process.

After the collapse of the Juba Peace talks, Isis-WICCE continued supporting and engaging the women's movement in peace building and post-conflict recovery processes. It mobilised resources to review the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) framework from a gender and women's rights perspective, which revealed the PRDP's weakness in terms of gender equality and women's rights sensitivity and responsiveness. Isis-WICCE was then mandated by the UWPC to spearhead a collective effort to ensure that women's needs, interests and rights are prioritised and gender equality becomes a reality in North and North Eastern Uganda. This led to the formation of the Women's Task Force for a Gender Responsive PRDP (WTF), coordinated by Isis-WICCE. The WTF consists of 21 vibrant and diverse women's organisations from North and North Eastern Uganda (West Nile, Acholi, Lango, Teso and Karamoja sub-regions) and national women's organisations with interventions in the Greater Northern region.

The main objective of the WTF is to ensure that women's needs, interests and gender equality issues become a priority in the PRDP framework and its implementation. It was within this context that the WTF commissioned a participatory women's needs assessment in the North and North Eastern Uganda sub-regions of Acholi, Lango, Teso, Karamoja and West Nile. The needs assessment was coordinated by Isis-WICCE on behalf of the WTF from February to October 2009. Its main objective was to identify the main gender equality issues and women's needs in the region in order to map out strategies and appropriate interventions to address them and to involve women meaningfully in the PRDP implementation.

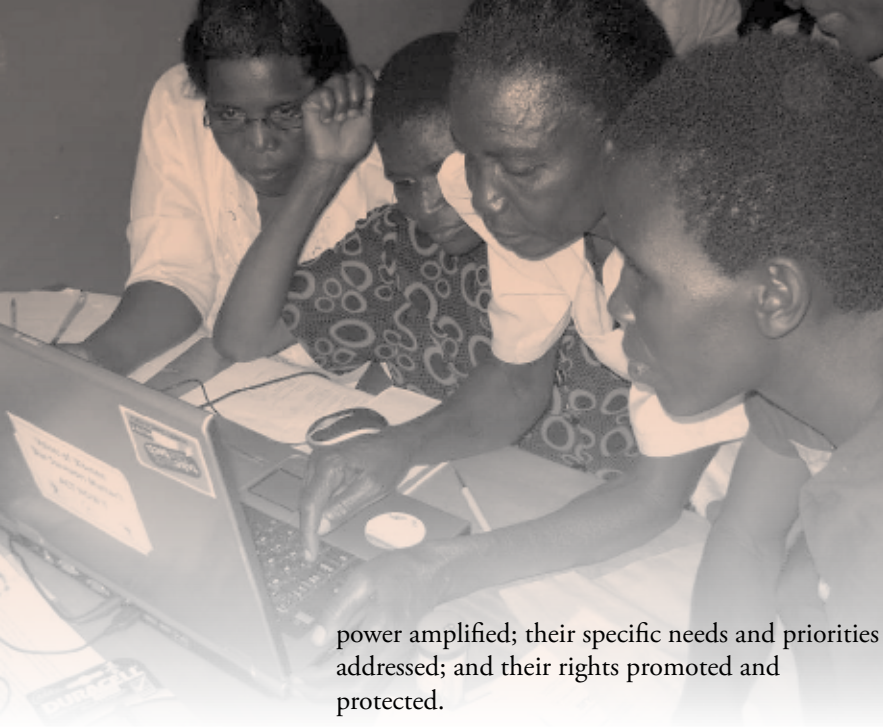
The needs assessment, which was validated in the Greater Northern region and in Kampala with the women respondents and various stakeholders, generated short, medium and long-term recommendations. In an effort to come up with smart, strategic, realistic and implementable recommendations, the WTF collectively prioritised the recommendations. The prioritisation was based on, not only, a rigorous analysis of the current practical and strategic needs of the women in the region but also on the PRDP planned programmes and interventions.

The recommendations and suggested strategies for each PRDP programme are meant to guide policy makers and practitioners during the implementation of the PRDP. Beyond these specific recommendations, the major recommendations for a successful PRDP with tangible results on the ground are:

- Decision-making, planning, resource allocation and implementation must be grounded in women's realities.
- Women and women's organisations must play an active role in the PRDP implementation, monitoring and evaluation as contributors of ideas and as beneficiaries.
- The capacity of PRDP implementers for gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment must be strengthened.
- Specific and sufficient human and financial resources have to be committed to address women's needs and gender equality issues.

Those involved in the implementation of the PRDP will need gender and community based monitoring indicators to track the desirable shifts from a gender equality and women's rights perspective. In this regard, it is expected that during the course of the PRDP there will be shifts at four broad levels, namely behaviour, engagement, definition and policy levels.

The success of the PRDP will be judged by the extent to which women's voices and visibility will be strengthened; their collective organising



power amplified; their specific needs and priorities addressed; and their rights promoted and protected.

Development work has been active for the past five or six decades. Experience and common sense tell us that if we -as individuals, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations, donors and government machineries- continue working in the same mould of the last six decades, the transformation we want to generate will permanently elude us. Largely focusing on law reform and gender sensitisation will change a few things but can never bring about the positive transformative change that we seek in the struggle to acquire gender equality

The Women's Task Force for a Gender Responsive PRDP started by engaging with the PRDP, understanding it, identifying gaps and developing a plan of action to fill the gaps. Now that most of the preliminary work is over, the next phase will concentrate on implementation and monitoring.

During this phase, the WTF and equity. If we are to realise true transformative change in North and North Eastern Uganda -one that dismantles patriarchy (the supremacy of men and subordination of women) and its related practices- the starting point is for us to learn to unlearn and to re-learn. The old political and ideological paths that we have trodden thus far are beaten and well worn, and yet we have hardly created change in women's lives. It is time for us to return to the drawing boards, look hard at the ideologies that inform our development work and to re-strategise

for real transformation in the Greater Northern region of Uganda.

Unlearning means breaking free of deeply entrenched conventional beliefs and value systems and questioning of unjust systems. Re-learning means acquiring new lenses through which to view ourselves, women, men and the world. These change processes are difficult ones, and can even be traumatic. They are guaranteed to cause a serious backlash from all traditional power bases. But if the PRDP is to make a difference in women's lives, unlearning and re-learning are necessary.

The Women's Task Force for a Gender Responsive PRDP started by engaging with the PRDP, understanding it, identifying gaps and developing a plan of action to fill the gaps. Now that most of the preliminary work is over, the next phase will concentrate on implementation and monitoring.

During this phase, the WTF will use the knowledge already generated to provide technical and practical assistance on the ground. The WTF will assess progress and any challenges in the delivery of service and point them out in an effort to expand and deepen the work of implementing a gender sensitive PRDP. The WTF will measure the success of the PRDP by the commitment it generates towards women's needs and priorities of both resources and political will, from government institutions, development agencies and CSOs.

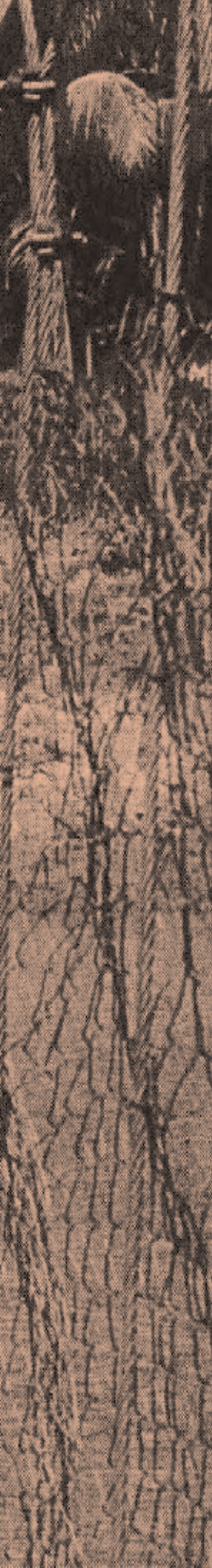
Isis-WICCE has replicated these best practices in other war-ravaged countries such as Liberia and Southern Sudan.

Excerpted from: Isis Wicce, Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) Final Report.

A woman in a dark coat is walking away from the camera on a narrow suspension bridge. Her arms are raised in a gesture of triumph or peace. The bridge is made of wooden planks and ropes, and the background is a dense forest of tall, thin trees. The overall tone is warm and hopeful.

Recognising Women's Participation in Sustainable and Lasting Peace

Isis International recently concluded a two-year two-country project entitled "Cultural Politics of Peace and Conflict: strategising and capacity building for the Philippines and Indonesia". The project aimed to help create an enabling environment where women can actively participate in and significantly contribute to peace and conflict resolution processes; and to build the capacities of women in peace building processes.



In the Philippines, Isis International worked with the grassroots organisation, Balay Rehabilitation Center and its communities in Pikit, Cotobato. Overall results in the Philippine study reflected that gender was not an issue that was taken into consideration in the peace work, whether it is being done by the local government or by civil society groups. At the same time, media and communication work has not been maximised to mainstream gender in peace building, nor has media reflected women's participation in peace building, but rather only as victims of conflict.

For instance, day-care teachers shared creativity in teaching the value and understanding of living in a tri-people (Christians, Muslims and Lumads, or indigenous peoples) community that calls for acceptance despite differences. The indigenous farmers also spoke of “Damayan” (helping each other) not only as a farming system but also a way of community life that exists during times of peace and conflict. Yet, none of this is projected in media nor is it known by local government or civil society groups working in the area of peace building. At the same time, neglecting participation of women, including conducting any consultation with them in peace building, results in a lack of or insufficient programmes and activities addressing women's issues and concerns during times of war and conflict.

On the other hand, women successfully expressed their experiences and concerns using the media and communication skills they have learned in the capacity building seminar conducted by the project in a multi-stakeholders dialogue. This dialogue included government, civil society and media representatives, who heard and understood these women and their issues for the first time. Civil society groups acknowledged that they had lacked the gender perspective in their work and local government acknowledged the value of including women representatives in the peace negotiation panels.

But peace and conflict issues in the Philippines are not confined to Mindanao alone. In Luzon and in the Visayas, women suffer the consequences brought about by armed encounters between the military/police and the New People's Army

in a war that has, like the conflict in Mindanao, stretched on for decades. Women likewise become victims of clashes between various armed groups and private armies.

In these contexts, civil society groups and local governments recognise the lack of gender perspectives in various peace building efforts. Women's issues are rarely prioritised in peace work and women are seldom allowed to participate in decision-making processes.

Isis International thus realised that with so much peace work being done by groups both among civil society and government, its value lies in bringing in the gender aspect of peace work and emphasising its value by looking at and working on peace building holistically. And to do this, Isis International realised it is essential to initially find out to what extent (or if any at all) do peace advocates include or consider women and gender in their peace work. Then, to expand its capacity building work among the grassroots women to empower them by equipping them with the tools so that they may voice their experiences and issues and ways they can contribute to both civil society, local government and media. Lastly, to promote the UNSCR 1325 as a valuable tool in ensuring women's participation in peace building as well as the protection of women and children in times of conflict and reconstruction.

Gender, Conflict and Peace Situation in the Philippines

Armed Conflict in the Philippines has been ongoing for several decades now. The Communist Party of the Philippines – National People's Army (CPP-NPA) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front – Bangsamoro Islamic Auxiliary Force (MILF-BIAF) are the two major groups that are at war with the State for a number of reasons: some fight for their rights to ancestral domain, clamour for access to basic rights and services, and the experience of poverty and marginalisation. In the different regions of the country—Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao—different groups figure into the war with the Philippine Government. The radical change for which they aim has been espoused through a long history of armed struggle

against century's old problems of colonisation, poverty, inequality and marginalisation that to date is felt by marginalised sectors of society: peasants, workers, Moros, and indigenous people in different regions of the Philippines. (Teodoro, 2007)

Gender and Armed Conflict

In 2007 UNICEF and Ibon Foundation did extensive research that looked into the situation of women and children who continue to be affected by war and conflict. Aside from being able to look into the situation at the grassroots level, it was also able to provide a summary of the roots of war by looking into the history and the stand of the armed groups that figure into this war.

While various groups recognise long-standing issues of conflict and war in the Philippines, it is also important to note the gendered impact of war on women and children. Margallo in her 2005 report summarised the status of addressing gender issues in Conflict Situations in the Philippines. She notes how gender responsiveness continues to be a difficulty encountered by peace and development actors at the national and community levels despite achievements towards gender responsiveness. One of the problems she noted was that women are still not able to participate in decision making processes in the home, communities and formal governance. When women are able to occupy leadership positions, it is largely due to the fact that they come from political families and dynasties. Evidence of this is the experience of the Philippines in having two women presidents: Cojuangco-Aquino and Macapagal-Arroyo. Leadership is still not seen as a role women should be playing because of traditional notions of femininity that is interwoven with cultural and religious beliefs that may vary by region.

The last two decades saw marked efforts at trying to address women's strengthened participation in leadership and governance. At the international level this is evidenced by the adoption of two key international conventions and resolutions such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women as (CEDAW, 1981) and the UN Security Council Resolution

1325 (UNSCR 1325, October 2000). These two resolutions aim to define the experience of discrimination in various contexts while being mindful of the crucial role women play in leadership. In the Philippines efforts to match international policy development for women's participation is evidenced by the adoption of the Women in Nation Building Act (RA 7192, 1992), Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710, 2009) and the Philippine National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (supported by EO 865, 2010).

However despite the existence of both international and national policies that seek to address women's strengthened participation (a mandate for 30% representation of women at different levels of governance), women continue to see low levels of representation in political leadership and governance. This situation was further affirmed by the experience shared by the women of Pikit, North Cotabato, southern-most regions in the country where they continue to face traditional notions of gender that question women's participation in higher levels of governance. Women's capacity and strength in leading amidst a conflict situation is continuously questioned because of traditional notions of gender that see them as weak and unable to protect themselves.

Health Impacts on Women

During conflict situations and as communities move out of their homes and into the evacuation centres, access to basic services such as maternal health care is still much of a challenge. The key informant interviewees shared stories of difficulties in childbirth and nursing their newborn in the evacuation centres as one of the most difficult experiences they encounter during conflict. These services have not improved despite the fact that this conflict situation has been going on for decades.

Gender based violence or violence against women continues to be an experience that is shared in whispers and kept a secret by women. In the informal discussions they can be a bit candid about the difficulties and intimate violence they encounter with their husbands. The inability to talk about the violence they experience or



observe from others may be drowned by the larger experience of conflict and war. The women welcome the discussions on violence against women, existing policies to address this, or even be able to acknowledge the experiences in a “safe space”. There is a holistic viewing of violence and conflict that is external as well as in the home.

Isis Contribution to Gender and Peace-building Work

Interwoven in the gender and conflict situation of the Philippines is Isis International’s commitment and contribution to looking into the achievement and challenges of inclusion of women in the peace process and development work. In the past four years, Isis International has worked steadily on women’s participation in peace building, making sure that women are included in a process that looks at holistic approaches towards peace and development work, and that peace and development efforts are mindful of women’s voice and contribution in various processes at the formal and informal level. Isis International launched its Activist School in 2009 to provide skills building capacity to women on the use of community media technology and ICT to advance their advocacies and to strengthen their capacity to articulate their own issues through their own perspectives and experiences.

The year 2000 was significant for policy advocates on Gender, Peace and Development because it was in October 2000 that the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was passed and approved for implementation. The UNSCR 1325 is grounded on the framework of Women, Peace and Security that appreciates the particularity of women’s experiences within conflict situations. It is aware of the fact of long standing issues of gender that contribute to the gendered impact of war and conflict on women and this is manifested in the way they experience sexual violence during these times, and many of their issues are not given attention because of a lack of appreciation of gender as well as the urgency of war. Policy advocates however cannot deny the contribution of women in trying to rebuild peace—whether in small or in big ways. Given this appreciation of women’s experience of conflict and their roles and participation in peace building the UNSCR 1325 focuses on five thematic areas of work, and these are: prevention, participation, protection, relief and recovery, and the normative. Prevention entails that a gender perspective be included in all aspects of conflict prevention strategies and activities; women’s participation seeks to look into promoting and supporting women’s full and meaningful participation in the different aspects of peace-building work; protection looks into ways to secure the over-all well-being and security of women and girls such as physical, mental, psychological and economic; and, finally, women’s equal access to relief and recovery programmes and services.

Ten years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325, the implementation of Security Council resolutions has been weak due to a lack of political will and monitoring bodies. The challenge is to continue to contribute to the realisation of the said resolution and put this in full implementation as a way to uphold human rights. Other resolutions to augment and help strengthen 1325 are UNSCR 1820, which aims to address sexual violence in conflict and UNSCR 1888, adopted to reinforce the protection and prevention of sexual violence by assigning leaders and calling for coordination among stakeholders.



A decade after the approval of UNSCR 1325 the Philippines launched the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in November 2010, that was the first launch in Asia and 17th in the world. The basic components of the Philippine NAP cover an implementation plan for UNSCRs 1325 (women's participation in peace building) and 1820 (addressing sexual violence as a weapon of war).

Media Accounts of Gender Issues within Conflict Situations

In 2006, during the beginnings of projects to strengthen gender analysis in conflict and use of community for peace building, Isis International shared its experience in capacity building through an article for the WiA (2006). "Women Journalists Train for Peacebuilding". This article looks into the current situation of community radio specifically in a war-conflict area, Mindanao. It shares what the capacity building project would like to look into: 1) Evolve the reportage of peace efforts as news-worthy and promote responsible journalism that gives equal "billing" and attention to women; 2) Through skills training and the promotion of responsible journalism amongst community women media practitioners, usher in a situation where women's participation in peace processes and civil society is empowered; 3) Train community-based journalists in adequate skills on radio production that will facilitate the development of radio clips in the promotion of cultural diversity and a culture of peace; 4) Introduce community radio as a medium with great potential in support of women's empowerment especially in areas of conflict; and 5) Explore women's active participation and maximised utilisation of existing community radio stations and/ or the creation of new women community radio stations as cooperative enterprises." (Women in Action, 2006)

Isis International through this one-year project urges for community radio to be popularised as a way to bring women's voices together towards peace-building and to exchange information promoting inter-cultural understanding. It is also to develop skills of women in producing articles

equipped with a "right" way to approach the conflict situations. (Women in Action, 2006)

Research into current practices for gender inclusion by peace and development organisations

Isis International conducted research into current practices for gender inclusion by peace and development organisations working in conflict areas in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao in order to assess the current capabilities and surface gaps in how peace and development stakeholders are able to contribute to an environment conducive for the effective implementation of the UNSCRs 1325 and the Philippine National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. This was done through the conduct of focused group discussions (Regional Cheekah Sessions) among peace advocates in specified areas in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, representing various civil society organisations, local government units (and agencies), and community-based women's organisations. This survey collected the cases of good practice in implementing UNSCR1325 as well as identified the gaps.

The research aimed to respond to the questions: How can various peace and development stakeholders effectively contribute to strengthening women's participation in peace and development work? What support is needed for civil society organisations to effectively contribute to the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 through the Philippine National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security?

The Cheekah Session was designed as several small group discussions that encourage informal flowing conversations with use of creative activities like clay-play and collage making among the research partners to surface their thoughts on women's participation, experiences of conflict, violence and peace. The Cheekah allowed women to speak freely about their thoughts, feelings and insights on their various roles in everyday community and peace building. They referred to these sessions as an "emotional band-aid" that provides them the space to acknowledge their hurts and experience healing and affirmation within a safe space. The Cheekah Session also provided discussion spaces for women

and peace stakeholders representing: women community leaders, local government leaders, government representatives, NGO representatives and media practitioners.

Summary of Findings

Experience of Violence across Regions

Kalinga in Luzon is still affected by the armed conflict between the government and the Communist party of the Philippines. However, the experience of violence is stronger when tribal and sub-tribal wars erupt. Tribal and sub-tribal wars occur when another party feels aggrieved, most of the time because of disputes over resources such as land or boundary; other times because of the desire to maintain a family or tribe's honour or reputation. These kinds of conflict are aggravated by the proliferation and widespread availability of firearms. Clan conflicts divide families and communities, disrupt livelihood, and affect food production pushing communities further into poverty. They indicate inclination of people to guard personal interests over the interests of the larger community. Conflict has also been named as one of the main push in the experience of migration as a way of seeking more stable economic opportunities.

Samar in Visayas experiences political, economic, cultural and psychological forms of violence. The province continues to be affected by the armed conflict between the government and the Communist Party of the Philippines. However, another political form of violence, stemming from political rivalries, confronts people of the province as well. Structural violence is also experienced through poverty and the lack of basic social services. They also noted cultural forms of violence such as the experience of marginalisation because of class and gender as well as forms of gender based violence with women experiencing domestic and sexual violence. They see the roots of this violence in ideological differences, the experience of poverty and various forms of social injustice (including gender). They also named poor governance as contributory to worsening the experience of conflict. The armed conflict in Samar has caused displacement, worsening poverty because of the

disruption of economic activities, and destruction of lives and property. The Samarens also noted feelings of insecurity among media personnel because of political labels given to them by either party to the armed conflict.

For Maguindanao in Mindanao, the women from Maguindanao named two major forms of violence in their province: political and economic. Political forms of violence were named as rooted in political rivalries and armed conflict between government and the MILF. They also noted the experience of indigenous communities of development aggression (i.e., development via extraction industries) resulting in environmental degradation and destruction of their ancestral lands. They attribute conflict and violence particularly to the fight for ancestral domain; to historical injustice and a lack of recognition of cultural identity expressed via the struggle for self-determination, as well as to differences in political agenda and increased militarisation that contributes to fear and security among civilians. The armed conflict has limited their access to basic social services and has caused massive displacement, trauma, and disruption of social activities such as schooling, disruption of economic activities such as farming and death and destruction.

Gendered Impact of War/Violence on Women

The gendered impact of war and violence on women has been articulated in various aspects of political, economic / environmental degradation, socio-cultural roots and impact of gender, physical, and psychological and gender / sexual based experience of violence.

Political Subordination. The experiences shared by the participants from Kalinga, Samar and Maguindanao spoke of political marginalisation in terms of women's leadership and a lack of access to basic rights and protection. They observed that women occupied very little space in leadership and were rarely appointed in high level positions. They see that as being rooted to the perception that women have no right to become leaders and as a manifestation of gender inequality. Another manifestation of political subordination is the poor

implementation of laws that should be ensuring women's participation. They experience a lack of government protection because laws that exist are not properly implemented and are not efficiently monitored. These conditions make it more difficult for women victims of violence to access existing mechanisms for redress making it more difficult to seek justice.

Economic Marginalisation and Environmental Degradation.

Women experience economic marginalisation manifested in the lack of economic opportunities and access to basic services. Women in Kalinga and Samar noted how conflict disrupts economic activities such as managing small cooperatives. Women in Samar noted how it was difficult to recover and find jobs because of double standards in hiring. Women in Maguindanao shared difficulties in accessing basic health services before and during conflict. Before conflict they already experience not having access to facilities that can treat illnesses of women and their children. They also shared how the difficulty of access is further exacerbated by conflict when evacuation centres lack basic facilities as decent and secure toilets or the lack of birthing rooms.

Socio-cultural Roots and Impact of Gender.

Even in times of conflict and war women continue to experience internalised and social marginalisation. Women have internalised their role of being the nurturer of their family. The Kalingan women spoke of this internalised marginalisation as constantly sacrificing their needs to provide for the needs of the family. Social marginalisation, not being seen as capable of holding leadership positions in the community, was a consistent experience of women in Kalinga, Samar and Maguindanao. Samarenan women described being marginalised even in access to information. The experience of marginalisation because of traditional gender roles and constant experience of conflict has impacted planning their future, continuing school, holding a job and making a home.

Physical and Psychological Insecurity. The women also talked about the physical and psychological impact of violence and conflict on women. They spoke of physical insecurity

because of the constant experience of conflict and needing to evacuate from their homes, and having to contend with very inhumane conditions in the evacuation centre. This impacts the women psychologically results in the feeling of helplessness, passivity and acceptance of their fate; with some becoming unproductive at work. A few reported losing family members but do not have the space to acknowledge the loss and grieve properly. Women in media, particularly those from Samar, also expressed concern about their safety. Political labelling by either party to armed conflict has elicited tremendous fear and insecurity.

Gender Based Violence. Various forms of gender based violence were a shared experience of women in the different regions; these were sexual abuse, rape and domestic violence. All these were noted to exist prior to conflict but exacerbated by the experience of conflict. Women who try to participate in areas of community work often experience domestic violence as partners demand that they play their traditional roles at home. Domestic violence is used as a way of keeping the women in their place. Women in Maguindanao expressed concern over growing sexual abuse as a consequence of conflict. Rape and incest were also noted to be growing concerns in the community as women noted greater access to pornographic material.

Women's Rights Violations

The gendered experience of conflict is manifested in the violation of women's political rights to equal opportunities and freedom of choice. Women lack the awareness of basic laws that are supposed to be protecting their rights. Women also need access to economic opportunities to help them recover from the experience of conflict and yet they have difficulty in accessing employment, economic resources such as land and property. These impact their right to achieve financial independence from families, spouses and partners. Even as women speak of the experience of resilience and being able to bounce back from difficulties and challenges, practice of individual agency is still challenged. Even if women try to fulfil all of the roles expected of them, people around them are not always mindful in recognising these. Women are

deprived as well of basic opportunities for growth and improvement such as education sessions or capacity building activities.

Women also experience a great sense of insecurity not just when they experience conflict but also in providing for the daily needs of their family. This experience challenges how they seek growth, peace and development for themselves as they contribute to the building of peace and development in their own communities. Women are very hopeful of a culture supportive of women's growth but what they encounter is the opposite. They live within a culture that supports traditional notions of gender that is far from supportive of women's personal development. The various cultures that women come from are sadly supportive of double standards that continue to challenge women's access to the basics as well as their personal development. It also sadly condones other practices of abuse by the family, co-workers and even the community.

Women Responding to Gender Issues: Mechanisms Available and Challenges Encountered

Despite the challenges they encounter women continue to respond to the gender issues that they have identified even with the lack of formal training in gender as applied to peace and development issues. The spaces that have been available to women are their participation in local governance, government service, and development work and community leadership.

- **Women in Local Governance.** Women in the different regional cheekah sessions shared how they, as incumbent public officials in the local community council, municipal and city leadership, monitor various abuses against women, oversee community projects and assess how these should benefit women. They also take the opportunity to promote national laws and local ordinances for women. But even as they try their best to respond to women's needs in times of conflict their credibility to do so is often questioned not because of their capacity but because they are women. They also face

challenges in raising awareness on the existence of various forms of abuse against women. They encounter the resistance of the community who would rather not speak of these experiences and continue to be silent about it.

- **Women in Government Service.** Different government agencies were represented by women in the regional cheekah sessions; these were the Philippine National Police (PNP), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Commission on Human Rights (CHR), Department of Education, and the National Commission for Indigenous People's Rights (NCIP). These agencies are involved in direct service provision to women in terms of protection of their rights, relief assistance during times of evacuation, livelihood programme provision and looking after the special concerns of marginalised sectors like indigenous people. They try to continue to be responsive to the needs of civilians particularly women. They also face the difficulty of being ill equipped in terms of capacities and material resources. The different government agencies have varying capacities in understanding gender issues within conflict and peace situations. Some agencies such as the Philippine National Police had the benefit of gender sensitivity trainings. Other agencies that are saddled with various concerns face the challenges of being ill-equipped in addressing the women's issues amidst this conflict.
- **Women in Civil Society Organisations.** Also responding to the urgent situation of women within armed conflict is the steadfast support and partnership coming from civil society organisations. Non-government organisations are committed to development work within the context of conflict and peace. They take part in advocacy and awareness work on women's rights. Their advocacy range from awareness raising on gender issues, awareness of laws and policies for women's protection to enjoining communities in protest and mass action to end abuse against women. Other organisations also share their services and partner in delivering basic social and economic services and organise livelihood opportunities. But they also face

challenges in continuing to provide these. Not all have the benefit of strengthened capacities prior to diving into service provision. They also face the challenge of financial limitations that threaten their capacity to continue on with their work.

- **Women in Community Leadership.** Local community leaders have found it helpful to partner with CSOs in giving assistance within communities. They also found an effective space as mediators of conflict within their respective communities. In doing this they found themselves drawing on indigenous forms of conflict resolution that have been tested as they mediate on resource based conflicts within the community. A challenge they face however is trying to use these mechanisms to address gender issues as well. This is where they are faced with cultural conservatism and blindness to gender issues. To effectively push for these concerns, they have expressed the need to be more exposed to gender trainings that are culturally sensitive or mindful in addressing cultural challenges in gender.
- **Women in Media.** Women media representatives who attended the regional cheekah sessions are mostly involved in radio and community media. They shared how they have maximised their radio programmes and community media in drawing attention and visibility to gender issues. Their programmes talk about various forms of abuses against women, especially gender based violence. They have also maximised the platform to share current services and programmes for women. The challenge they experience however is the lack of capacity building activities on gender and media work especially in the context of peace. They also see collaboration and partnership to be a challenge as they are not always seen as partners in development work. They also face threats to their own security as visible spokespersons of these sensitive gender and conflict issues.

Implications on Policies, Programme and Practice for Gender Inclusion in Peacebuilding

The Women, Peace and Security framework that was used to craft the UNSCR 1325 and

adopted in the Philippines through the National Action Plan offers a comprehensive frame of understanding for gender issues vis-à-vis urgent issues of conflict and violence. It has stressed the sensitivity needed to address the gendered impact of conflict and violence as well as gender based violence as a weapon of conflict. These policies also appreciate the possible contribution of women through greater participation in formal leadership as key to continuous mindfulness in addressing the particular needs of women given the situation as well as shaping holistic and sustainable peace.

Effective implementation of policies must be grounded in current needs of ordinary people in the immediate as well as the long term. The concerns raised by the participants in the cheekah sessions were in the foreground of crafting recommendations for strengthened practice, effective programme and policy implementation at the local level. These three aspects were seen to be part of effective mechanisms for Women, Peace and Security at the regional and local levels.

Strengthened Practice towards Women, Peace and Security

- **Pursue peace negotiations that are inclusive of gender concerns.** Women participants appreciate current practices in pursuing peace. True and lasting peace was part of the conditions for which women feel secure in various aspects of their lives. However these processes need to be mindful of traditional notions of gender that challenge women in various aspects of their lives.
- **Early warning and reporting systems.** Instituting early warning and reporting systems will help ordinary people be informed of when conflict escalates and ensues. It helps when civilians are also part of this mechanism of reporting similar to the Bantay Ceasefire as they are informed of when to leave and return to their homes.
- **Engendering Peace Journalism.** Engendering peace journalism recognises the role of media practitioners as partners in peacebuilding. It also offers a sound frame for media practice that is responsible, accounts for the needs and concerns of the people and the role media

plays in shaping perceptions of men and women. Practicing principles of engendering peace journalism is thus a substantial and essential part of media responsibility and public vigilance.

- **Multi-sectoral Dialogues.** The practice of dialogues as a way of problem analysis and crafting solutions is good practice. However for it to be representative of the needs of all it needs to have all groups represented so that all concerns are raised, heard and considered. In the case of the Philippines, this may comprise of government, security sector, armed groups and civilians composed of Christians, Muslims and Indigenous People.
- **Achieving Gender Equality as a Goal of Good Governance.** Ensuring good governance as a practice was seen to be contributory to crafting and implementing policies, programmes and services. The usage and maximisations of the Gender and Development (GAD) budget was often cited as a way to make available financial resources to address gender concerns. However its implementation and usage also lies in appreciating the need to look in gender issues as peace and development concerns and be mindful of the use of existing resources to achieve these.
- **Grounding in People's Needs and Concerns.** There is a need to constantly look into current conditions before guidelines and recommendations are enforced specially in designing and implementing government services. It is important to be aware of current challenges that may affect proper implementation, or specific challenges of marginalised groups in availing of these.
- **Strengthened Partnerships for Gender, Peace and Development.** Women, Peace and Security will not be achieved by one sector alone. Thus, effective collaboration between various stakeholders in gender, peace and development in government including local government and local government agencies, civil society, communities and media should be forged and strengthened.

- **Recognition of various forms of support and partnership.** Civil Society Organisations have been doing peace and development work on the ground for a very long time and they should be recognised and supported as legitimate stakeholders in peace and development work. CSOs have also been working with the international community on support for peacebuilding work on the ground so as they deepen this involvement through gender inclusion they should be allowed to sit/ be heard in committees and other mechanisms related to women, peace and development.
- **Participation in Special Local Peace Bodies.** Women in government, CSOs and community all do their share in peace work. Much of this work is centred on welfare. Women can and should do more than giving training on livelihood or health but participate, as well in local bodies and mechanisms that promote peace such as the Barangay Human Rights Action Centre and the Lupong Tagapamayapa (Mediating Peace Group). The experience of women in mediating conflicts in the family and community should be brought to formal conflict resolution spaces such as these.

Effective Programmes Grounded in People's Needs


- **Substantial Budget for Social Services.** In all of the regional cheekah sessions participants were consistent in saying that access to basic social services such as basic health, reproductive and maternal health education and employment are challenged before, during and after conflict. Ensuring that sizeable budget is allocated to cover these basic social services and that allocations are spent for the intended purpose will allow people to recover from the devastation of conflict and violence.
- **Knowledge of International Standards for Gender Equality and, Human Rights Law.** All stakeholders were seen to benefit from raising their capacities on international human rights laws- Training on these should also be complemented with knowledge on their implementation at the national and local level by means of policy development at the national level.

- **Capacity Building on Crisis Intervention for Gender Based Violence.** With increased incidents of gender based violence at home and in communities, training should be given to CSOs on initial crisis intervention to respond to gender based violence. A network of support services to address gender based violence would help make available services like basic counselling, crisis intervention and shelters for survivors of GBV. This makes for a genuine support system for awareness on women, peace and security at various sites of their lives.
- **Women, Peace and Security at the International, National and Local Level.** The development of a localised action plan on women, peace and security was also highly recommended if the NAP is to be grounded on people's needs. For a local policy intervention to be effective it needs to have an appreciation on international standards of women's rights as well as grounding to women's needs and concerns related to their sense of peace and security at the personal, home and community level.
- **Strengthened GAD Fund Implementation.** The GAD fund has been a mechanism for making resources available for gender and development work in communities, departments and localities, existing for over ten years but it has been without systematic and progressive implementation. It is a strong recommendation from this research that its usage and implementation be reviewed and monitored in relation to its use in women, peace and development work. All stakeholders in gender, peace and development need to raise their understanding of state obligations on achieving substantive gender equality; framework on women, peace and security; and available mechanisms for achieving this.
- **Media Practitioners as Effective Stakeholders in Women, Peace and Security.** Given the current threats to media practitioners who are targeted for their advocacies and practice, attention should be given to their security concerns. They can continue to be effective stakeholders in raising the public's awareness on women, peace and security issues if they

too have the grounding to understand these through consistent capability training on areas of concern such as holistic peacebuilding, engendering peace journalism, and human rights and Policy Development for Women (Philippines). These capacities can also be maximised through collaborative engagement with CSOs and government.

Policy Development for Women, Peace and Security

- **Institutionalise Monitoring Mechanisms for Women's Participation.** In support of the laws that were passed and implemented, monitoring mechanisms should be crafted to ensure inclusion/participation of women. Its indicators should be able to measure women's participation not only in numbers and percentages but for the quality of how they are able to participate.
- **Monitoring mechanisms to implement laws.** Studies and research should also be encouraged to look into the effectiveness of the laws that have been crafted. This would inform policy makers to look into conditions that hinder and facilitate the effectiveness of the laws.
- **Engender Local Systems for Conflict Resolution.** Local and indigenous systems for conflict resolution have long been recognised to effectively contribute in resolving conflict and building peace within communities. Council leaders should also be enjoined as partners in achieving substantive gender equality so that existing local systems can also effectively address discrimination and marginalisation of women as they strengthen their understanding of cultural roots of gender inequality.
- **Institutionalise Monitoring Mechanisms for the Inclusion / Protection of Women.** In support of the laws that were passed and implemented, monitoring mechanisms should likewise be crafted to ensure inclusion/ protection of women. Its indicators should be able to measure the women's participation and protection not only in numbers and percentages but for the quality of how they are able to participate. It should also look into the hindering and facilitating factors that



push women and their families to put forward complaints that pertain to sexual violence of women.

- **Monitoring Women's Participation in Formal Leadership.** Affirmative action in favour of women is a good strategy to ensure the participation of women in the workplace and in leadership. However it needs to set up gender quota of 30% or more in observance of international standards of measures of women's leadership. These standards need to trickle down into the local government, community systems of governance, indigenous councils and even CSOs. Assessments of the quality of participation of women should also be a part of effective monitoring to ensure that achievements and constraints to women's participation are surfaced and responded to.

- **Stringent Gun Control Programmes and Gender Based Violence.** Conditions that encourage and condone gender based violence should immediately be addressed. Gun proliferation has been named by the participants of the regional cheekah session as one of the factors that exacerbate gender based violence because guns are available and are used to threaten women. Although there are programmes that monitor gun ownership and control, more stringent monitoring and implementation should be institutionalised to make this effective. The protection of women from gun violence and their participation in controlling gun proliferation should also be underscored in programmes and policies that will be adopted. ■

Language and Voice in Dialogue Encounters

by Dr. Gal Harmat, Ph.D

This article reflects on the findings of a research that demonstrates and analyses the unequal gender relations between men and women in dialogue encounters between the Palestinians and the Jewish Israelis. It maps out gender inequality in peace dialogue encounters focusing on the issue of language, as a symbol of national discourse vs. gender discourse. This article resorts to gender analysis in order to examine the experiences of Palestinian and Jewish men and women, group facilitators and participants in dialogue encounters which have taken place during the last 10 years. The qualitative research featured in this article addresses two main themes that were raised by the 22 facilitators and the 12 participants interviewed for the research.



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Voices in Dialogue Encounters

The female participants in the dialogue encounter do not have feminine terminologies or even the “legitimacy” to use the female form of verbs and adjectives in Hebrew and Arabic. However, they do find ways to project a strong and clear voice in the encounter group. This paper shall examine this voice as a sub-chapter and look into its origins and more specifically, its meanings and effects on these sub-groups.

Palestinian female participants are often very vocal while the Palestinian males oftentimes do not express their true opinion in order to be liked by the Jewish participants, mainly the female ones. The Jewish voice is hardly described, but is perceived as the hegemonic voice – it is obvious that it is being heard and used.¹ Noam, a 27-years-old female Jewish participant echoes these observations regarding language and voice:

Girls were generally more hesitant to speak English, because they were ashamed of making mistakes (I think) – especially Arab girls. Males usually talked more than females, but the thing I remember most is that there were many interruptions during group conversation, and it was much more acceptable for a male to interrupt the other. A girl who interrupted was seen as pushy and “dominant” in a negative way. Boys usually spoke louder and longer than girls. I also think girls tended to revert to their native language (Hebrew or Arabic) more often than boys when they were missing a word in English.²

Michael Zak’s chapter on gender and nationality in dialogue encounters in her book, *When the Present are Absent*, is a detailed research into the dynamics of dialogue encounters between Jews and Palestinians. It described how the Palestinian female participants and the Jewish female participants took much more responsibility in the group in voicing their needs and opinions. They took strong leadership positions, which did not reflect their realities in the Palestinian nor in Jewish societies.³

Zak highlighted the fact that the majority of the participants in the encounters were females and that they cooperated quite actively with the group facilitators and the research team. They shared

their views with the group during the interviews with them, before and after the encounter. Zak attributed this phenomenon to the female participants’ higher dialogue ability, in addition to the interest that the male Palestinian participants manifested in the Jewish female participants instead of in the dialogue itself.

This chapter in Zak’s book dedicated to gender is extremely short, about one and a half (1.5) page out of 86 pages dealing with issues of transparency in encounters. However short, it is almost the only account of a gender analysis of dialogue encounters between Jews and Palestinians in Israel.

Zak is one of the leading researchers on dialogue encounters in Israel. The observations that a small part of the book is dedicated to gender, that most of the participants were females and most of the group work in the dialogue was done by the female participants lead to an important conclusion. This is an indication that gender analysis in general, and gender discourse on language in particular, do not occupy a major space within the dialogue encounter’s academic research sphere as much as within the encounters themselves. It echoes and highlights the invisibility of the gender aspect of the conflict on all levels - language, voice and identity.

This state of affairs leaves women with 2 extreme options to express their voices. They may adopt the masculine form of language, culture and identity by resorting to loudness and extreme firmness in adopting the national voice rather than use their personal voice, or, they are pushed into the extreme passive silence which is negatively associated to women as falling into the stereotyped quiet and silent Palestinian women.⁴ Both options are perceived negatively by the other sub-groups and facilitators. The question is, why do they resort to these expressions of voice?

In Zak’s interviews, the female Palestinian participants expressed the feeling that the Palestinian male participants “sold” the Palestinian struggle over the Jewish female participants as they left the question on the Palestinian cause hanging.⁵ Isra, a 21-year-old female Palestinian former participant and now a facilitator comments:

We were the only ones from the Palestinian group who talked about us girls. It was hard but we did it very well, we showed them (Israeli Jews). We voiced the Palestinian voice and pain - put it to their faces, I felt and thought they needed to hear that so they will not be able to say 'I didn't know'!⁶

The strong clear voice that represents the Palestinian struggle is carried by the female Palestinian participants to the extreme. They feel that they need to shout their opinion. They are speaking of a long time, although some of them never talked with Israeli Jews before, and they feel that everything needs to be said at the encounter. Tarik, a male Palestinian facilitator observes:

*The Palestinian women are the representatives of the militant radical even violent Palestinian position of what should be the Palestinian struggle. They are silencing the Palestinian male participants to win their place and position in the group in forceful ways.*⁷

In the dialogue encounter jargon, the terms used in the above quote - 'forceful ways' and 'silencing' – carry the negative meaning of undermining the 'other', taking more space in the group, and using more of the group's resources such as time, energy, and space. However, this is not the case when checked against the actual representation of the subgroup of Palestinian female participants. Amir, a 19-year-old male Palestinian participant observes:

*I was there, and the girls, our girls, were yelling and misbehaving and not respecting the group. They were right but each of us were there for different reasons. The Jews came to get to know us and to become friends. They were nice. We could just play and have fun with them. The Palestinian girls were making it hard for us to become friends with them.*⁸

Why the Shouting?

Conflict situations often cause women to be ignored, and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict is no exception. Women in Palestine who support the struggle can cheer and support male heroism in a militant manner. However in most cases, they can do more and much more is open to them.

Cynthia Cockburn noted that the masculine side of war is usually the only one presented in the press, mass media and textbooks while the role and place of women in armed conflict has not been studied enough.⁹ Women do not have a voice so their language, history and narratives are not told in the media nor in most academic researches in Israel, Palestine and worldwide. Recent feminist researches have shown that women support men in warfare. They play complementary roles to the warriors, and they often stumble into this role without a choice.¹⁰ Simona Sharoni, a leading expert on gender and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict writes:

*Women play specific roles in maintaining militarism. Women are praised when they follow the dichotomised social roles and accept their tasks as reproducers and caretakers.*¹¹

Awatef, a 22-year-old female participant echoes Sharoni's claim:

*I felt that I need to fight them and to show them who we are (i.e. the Palestinian people). I represented an even more radical opinion than that which I hold myself. I wanted them to know that I am a fighter, that we are fighters, that our men, the Palestinian men – who currently don't talk - will fight for Palestine.*¹²

Tarik reports on what happens when women try to shift from the militaristic male-dominated discourse:

The feminine voice is lacking in our work. We are not paying attention to it. We are mirroring analytical moral statements and not emotional nostalgic ones. I feel that we discourage feminine statements, solutions, narratives and of course language.

He goes on to give a hint for the reason of such act of ignoring:

One Jewish female participant wanted to talk in the female form. The group thought it is childish and not relevant, and in the end of the process she felt that too. She was convinced that the gender language is not relevant nor important in the encounter. The female participants are starting with feminine language and statements, talking

*about fathers, brothers, friends who were killed. The male participant do not or can't hear it so they deconstruct, analyze and pressure women to say that the men and women who were killed were heroes who died for 'us' - whatever the national group is.*¹³

Ira Shor and Paulo Friere argue that observing power structures, symbols and mechanisms can give us an insight on who control society, who is dominating whom and why they hold the power do so. What do they gain from their control of power over others?¹⁴ In addition, this observation of the dominant group can teach us the ways to operate and maintain power over other subgroups. Shor and Freire further argue that uncovering the transparency of this group is the first step to changing the power structures, suggesting that by uncovering them, we are able to understand the mechanisms behind them.¹⁵

The fact that a certain group cannot use their language in the dialogue encounter carries with it a meaning. Much like in the case of a national language which is a leading trace in uncovering the control and dominance of one subgroup over another through the use of language.

Male Culture and Militarism

The accepted legitimate discourse in the Israel-Palestine conflict is a militarist one. Spencer defines militarism as the spirit and traditions of military life.¹⁶ Gor Ziv defines militarism as "same powers, maneuvers and discourse extending from the military to civilian life and education system."¹⁷ A militarist discourse encourages the heroism of dying, and rejects the notion of positive peace in its broadest sense.¹⁸ In a militaristic culture, one of the main gender roles expected from women is to be in their bodies, mind and behavior – the representation of the national pride so perceived across enemy lines to the extent that hurting the enemy's women is parallel to inflicting harm to the enemy's national pride and honor.¹⁹

In this conflict situation, women are assigned the role of the ones protected by men, the role of having to need protection and thus help in boosting their protector's manliness. Men, on their end, learn that by protecting their personal

and national women (their sisters, mothers, wives, daughters, and any woman of the nation), they protect the national pride and honor as well as fulfill their role as 'men'.²⁰

In a positive peace discourse, people's full potential and needs are fulfilled.²¹ In the case of dialogue encounters, it would mean that a participant can raise an issue and talk about it with the rest of the group in a respectful way that values opinion. It further means that she will be able to express herself fully in her language, in her voice, in her own way without having to withdraw to the dominant language and take her place in the protected-protector divide in order to be heard.

A militaristic discourse sanctions those who choose this path, reducing their thoughts, ideas and feelings into negative categories like 'women talk' or 'emotional mish-mash,' perceived as non-political and non-relevant. In extreme violent context, the use of a feminine language to communicate across national lines is considered as a betrayal, and in a way, it means not allowing men to take the role of the protectors defending the nation's pride.²²

Not only male participants see this as a betrayal. The Palestinian male facilitators themselves conceive of the gender discourse as harming and betraying the Palestinian national cause. Yotam, a 38 year-old male Jewish facilitator comments:

We were in a weekend of facilitators' training for a bi-national organisation. When it came to discussing gender it was pretty frustrating for me. The Palestinian males felt intimidated. When we talked about the connection between militarism and sexism. They said things like 'I am for gender equality, but I don't see its relevance to this dialogue'.

One of the Palestinian women shared with us that she's deconstructing the gender identity in her group. She thought she should do the same with national identity, to see that it is not becoming an oppressing identity against women. The Palestinian men fiercely attacked her and accused her of hurting the cause. For the Palestinian case, this is national empowerment and building up of identity, rather than deconstruction. She was then

attacked by other Palestinian women, while we (male Jews) just said nothing. Finally, since the only person to back her up was a Jewish woman, she retreated, practically apologized, and said she understood that she had hurt the cause.²³

In terms of militarism and positive peace, it seems that when it comes to letting out the national voice and taking the place of their silent male peers, the female Palestinian participants take the only path open to them. They are taking responsibility over the representation of the male oriented national discourse which represents their nation's pride and honor, neglecting their own personal voice. But it seems they lose either way as they are accused of irrelevance, aggressiveness or betrayal.

Deafening Silence

They do not speak. They don't say a word but they sit closely together, half a circle of them Palestinian female participants, like a frontier. Their silence is very loud in the group. (Pnina, 35-years-old female Jewish facilitator)²⁴

When they do not take a very masculine, strong, militant voice, the female Palestinian participants are left with only one choice, the dichotomised option which means giving up their voice, remaining completely silent, and acting out their opinion and positions in this kind of behavior.

These two dichotomous behaviours reflect the two classic options that women have had historically. One option is to conform with the masculine discourse, assume a male-like behaviour and way of talking, and be rewarded with one's inclusion in a the male-dominated society, but is still perceived negatively as 'behaving like a man'. The other option is to remain silent, not voicing-out their opinions, not communicating their needs, ideas and emotions, resorting to non-verbal communication, but are generally perceived negatively as manipulative and weak, 'like women'.²⁵

Going back to the concept of radical translation,²⁶ both behaviours can be explained by the disappointment of not succeeding in the translation of their concept map.

A group silence can give feminine power to the female Palestinian participant group. It is like a

civil disobedience act or an act of demonstration which can have a solidifying effect for their sub-group, even though the rest of the group sees them as using a non- legitimate method of communication. Dina, a 19-years-old female Palestinian participant explains:

I didn't have any voice in this group. It did not matter to anyone that I didn't say anything, I was ignored. Even when the Jewish group asked the Palestinian female participants, why don't we talk about it? I didn't react. I felt it is useless. They didn't understand me on so many level... but I felt strong at not saying anything. Even when we were asked for our opinion, we didn't react. I felt that no one is listening to me anyway.²⁷

In another venue of her interview she shares:

I listen and listen but no one hears me. I was listening but couldn't say what I want. I wasn't sure what I want. I felt that even when I am talking, the group was not listening to me.²⁸

The expectations and interests of the dialogue encounter are fundamentally different among the different gender groups and national groups. Their intended silence is an act of demonstration against their Palestinian peers, as much as against the Jewish sub-group. Palestinian males in this case are very much in line with the hegemonic Jewish interests and expectations of getting to know each other and making new friends. They are in conflict of interests with the female Palestinian participants who have a need to represent their Palestinian voice. Amir a 20-years-old male Palestinian participant echoes these expectations:

It was quiet, annoying. I wasn't allowed to go out, smoke, talk and get to know the girls. No one said anything. I faded out. I thought of other things and wasn't there in my mind. I just waited for the session to end. I know the Palestinian girls will say what needs to be said in the end. I just wanted to make friends there.²⁹

On one hand, Amir agrees politically with the Palestinian female participants. He trusts them to 'do the job' they came to do, as Palestinians. On the other hand, he is affected by the strong expectations and interest of the Jewish group to have fun and to choose the dominant group over



Photo from Wikimedia Commons

his national group. Galia, a 38-years-old female Jewish facilitator, goes even further in interpreting the act of silence as an act of rebellion:

The whole group is waiting for someone from the subgroup to represent and they acted as if they were not there. It attracted a lot of attention and was regarded as a mini rebel move on their part.³⁰

The facilitators are often trying to encourage the subgroup of the Palestinian female participants to talk and express themselves, a method which generates even more attention to the fact that they do not say anything. This strategy brings to surface some very hard feelings. Few of the Jewish participants who were interviewed and actually lived the experience said that the silence is painful and humiliating. For example:

We wanted to hear what they had to say but they kept quiet. It was very difficult. I felt this pain in my stomach like I did something wrong and I felt that I am angry at them for making me feel that way. I started to ignore them and talked only with the Palestinian boys who were really nice to me.³¹

The female Palestinian participants' silence creates more complexity in the group as the Jewish female participants feel that they are forced to talk only with the male Palestinian participants because of this overpowering silence. However, the female Palestinians assert that this happens because of the Palestinian male participants' interest in the Jewish women. This was a convenient excuse to continue being deafeningly silent.

Thus, silence, much like silencing, creates a circle which reinforces a deeper, fuller silence and exclusion. The opportunity for a gender-based solidarity to create space for the gender language is missed. This is the power of silence in the purview of hegemony. It is used all the more to silence the dominated groups, preventing them to see the possibility of solidarity, and further reinforcing these power relations and structures.³²

The aforementioned misunderstanding can be interpreted as a problem of radical cultural translation. We can also learn from the observation of Dina, a 19-year-old female Palestinian participant:

I was very angry with the Jewish girls who came with exposed tops and got all the boys' attentions. I was extremely upset with the Palestinian boys who were only interested in the girls and did not voice the Palestinian ideas.³³

In de Saussure's terms, the signifier is the top. The metaphorically signified meaning is freedom, liberalism and also, bodily temptation. The Jewish female participants are using it, at least in the eyes of the Palestinian female participants, in order to divert the Palestinian males' attention and divert their political will to represent the Palestinian views and causes in the dialogue. Since the feminine language is silenced, and with it, the possibility of a cross-national gender dialogue, the female Palestinian participants have only the Palestinian males' behavior to base their assumptions on, as implied in Tarik's observation:

Both the Jewish and the Palestinian female participants are using the militarist voice in the group. They are talking like representatives of the masculine voice that is at that time busy looking at the Jewish girls.³⁴

His observation is affirmed by Johina, a 37 year-old female Palestinian facilitator:

The silence of the female Palestinian participants is present in the dialogue group and also in the unilateral sessions. However, the silence at the bi-national sessions is felt much stronger as they just sit there, upset, almost exploding and observing their national male participants peers - their oppressors, who are like saying, I am sorry but little puppies are sitting in the group.³⁵

Thus, the voice of the female Palestinian subgroup is heard beneath their silence. They are talking without really talking, explaining with their silence what they would like to bring to the group such as, "you Jews and Palestinian males are ignoring us, so we will ignore you back and would not collaborate in this process of learning together." Thus, they are stating very clearly that they are here but will not take active part and will only sit there without saying a word. According to Lakoff, this gesture can be read as a women's language.³⁶

Furthermore, the rude term Johina used in her interview is something she has heard in her group

but felt that she has to apologise for using it. Ira Shore and Paulo Freire would call this gesture as internalisation of oppression and would talk about the political power in a word such as those uttered to the Palestinian female sub group.³⁷ Lakoff, on the other hand, would argue that politeness and being very polite is a classical form of women language.³⁸ In other words, Shore and Freire's insistence on talking about everything might function as just another mechanism to silence women's voices.

Silenced by Deconstruction, Different Backgrounds

Derrida argues that the act of deconstruction is a liberating act.³⁹ It goes to show that when it comes to the juxtaposition of gender and nationality, deconstruction might function as a silencing rather than a liberating act. It can be argued that this is the case with the female Jewish participants as illustrated by Bar, a 26 year-old female Jewish participant who says:

*I listened all day and heard everything there is to hear from the Palestinian participants. I heard that my country is horrible, that we are all horrible occupiers and that my country is doing terrible things to their people. Now what? What can I do about that?*⁴⁰

Liat, a 30 year-old female Jewish facilitator adds:

*It was only in the end that they started to talk (the Jewish female participants). When we started to share our experiences and think of a model Palestinian-Jewish friendship, they really started to communicate.*⁴¹

Another aspect of the female Jewish participants' silence relates to issues of race, age and socio-economic backgrounds.⁴² The female Palestinian participants are often coming from a lower social-economic bracket as reflected in their schooling background and their language ability. This is even more enhanced when they are pushed to using Hebrew in the masculine form, which is their 4th language, or worse, English, which is their 5th language.

Jean Anyon who did a research on five elementary schools over the course of a full school year

concluded that fifth graders of different economic backgrounds are already being prepared to occupy certain ranks on the social ladder. Already in fifth grade, they use the language of the lowest economic class that they learned in school and as a result, it is quite difficult for them to express themselves fully.⁴³

In her book *Between Voice and Silence: Women and Girls, Race and Relationships*, Carol Gilligan writes about a group of young women from different ethnic backgrounds who need to find their own voice in order to communicate among themselves. They did not have a language of their own as they were using the dominant hegemonic language of the majority while they were an oppressed minority on every level, mainly poor and from different schooling background.⁴⁴

Gilligan argued that as women of color in a white hegemonic society, their ability to express their feelings in their own words has been long gone. She wrote about the bravery of these young women and about the process of finding their voices. She found that for them, it is easier to break the silence as female adolescents, and to talk and share, when they were interacting with older women who could express themselves fully and share their experiences openly with them.⁴⁵

Liat's next statement is a vivid example of Gilligan's theory about breaking the silence. She describes hers and her Palestinian co-facilitator's act of modeling as they opened the conversation to sharing painful experiences of the violent Palestinian-Israeli conflict. She says:

*We were sharing, talking about ourselves, our own narratives and experiences in life. Then they start to share as well. Women talking, sharing their painful stories about life, men and war. The fact that we could talk and be friends shows a Palestinian –Jewish strong, loving friendship that could help deal with the pain.*⁴⁶

Finding their mutual voice and a mutually-gendered language requires a certain trust-building process. The mistrust may be connected to the distorted perception of having different backgrounds, for example, in the clothes that the

Jewish female participants wear. Natalia, a 38 year-old female Jewish facilitator comments:

This is a classic phenomenon when you face women's groups. You would expect that you'll find a gender discourse there because it's possible. But the discourse is often about nationality. The nationality debate occupies most of the group's time. It feels as if when women meet, they come to talk about Jews and Palestinians, about nationality and not about gender.

I think that when we are dealing with a progressive group of women, it's possible to open-up on other things, to shift the discourse to topics other than nationality. There is an option and the openness to discuss other issues. But this is only possible in groups that trust each other and have worked together for years. Otherwise, from what I remember, there is no chance.⁴⁷

Only a deep trust allows the female participants to bridge their national, cultural, racial and socio-economic gaps.

Conclusion

The female participants' ability to express themselves in a calm and reasonable way is challenged due to the following reasons:

Their feminine way of speaking and use of language is not palpable for most of the dialogue encounter groups. The feminine language - spoken and metaphorical, is perceived as emotional, nostalgic, complaining or whining while the hegemonic masculine analytical national language is conceived as strong, powerful and more appropriate, whether used by a male or a female.

Reference to the dichotomous, militaristic and conflict-prone masculine language and discourse

prevents the female participants from thinking together of a more holistic and creative solution. They are stacked in the gender divide between the protector and the protected. This divide pushes them to be the presenters of either the heroic masculine voice or of extreme silence. This leaves them no space or time to communicate their personal female narratives.

The militaristic discourse and vocabulary are bound on using a high tone of voice, which is perceived negatively as signifying to the group that they are giving up on the attempt to communicate their subgroup's needs and views.

The lack of a language that would allow them to bridge the national, cultural and social divide, creates and deepens the mistrust which already exists on a national level.

The silence of the Palestinian female participants is a sign of mistrust, a way to send a strong and clear message to the subgroup of male Palestinian participants and also to the Jewish group as a whole. Although perceived negatively, this is their way, almost their only way, to speak and express their needs and ideals.

The female Jewish participants are silenced by the Palestinian narratives but may react to their Palestinian peers' messages, whether spoken or communicated through silence. This boxes them in the militaristic, hegemonic discourse.

In long-term groups and in successful dialogue encounter processes, the facilitators are able to assist in the creation of a model for experience-sharing, and help form a fluid and meaningful space for the female participants to express their thoughts and converse among themselves. ■



Snagged on the Contradiction: NATO, Resolution 1325, and Feminist Responses

by Cynthia Cockburn

This article points to the contradiction inherent to the connection made to the Security Council Resolution 1325 by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, a military alliance. It was written to prompt a discussion among women of the 'Women against NATO' e-group list, a network of women in NATO member-states contributing to the No-to-NATO movement. The author suggests that the framing of 1325, especially matters it failed to include, left the Resolution hostage to co-optation by militarist states and military institutions for military purposes. This article explores four major contradictions in Resolution 1325, in antimilitarist feminist activism, and suggests some questions we might now want to ask ourselves in our efforts to transcend them.



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Feminist antimilitarists in a host of countries and contexts are struggling with the contradictions inherent in UNSCR 1325 of 31 October 2000 on Women, Peace and Security. It was ‘our’ achievement. It was ‘our’ project and ‘our’ success. Yet the more energetically we push for its implementation, the more we see its limitations. Worse, we realise how it can be used for ends quite contrary to those we intended. In this respect, NATO is a thought-provoking case. More than that, it’s an enraging example of how a good feminist work can be manipulated by a patriarchal and militarist institution.

UNSCR 1325 is a Feminist Achievement

When I say Resolution 1325 was ‘our’ achievement, it may well be the only Security Council resolution for which the groundwork, the diplomacy and lobbying, the drafting and redrafting, was almost entirely the work of civil society and non-governmental organisations. Certainly, it was the first resolution in which the actors were almost all women. I have written about this elsewhere.¹

Passing the Resolution involved the Security Council in a two-day debate. It was the first time since the foundation of the UN that this August body, the pinnacle of the UN structure, had devoted an entire session to debating women’s issues.² That this happened was due to the brave and persistent efforts of women from many countries. The Resolution was achieved by a wide, unnamed, ad hoc transnational network of women in local and international NGOs. They were joined by women from member state governments, several UN departments and agencies and academic feminists from universities. It entailed co-operation between women very differently positioned in relation to structures of power, and differently located in relation to wars. It was an informal, unnamed but a highly productive alliance that came together for this specific project. It involved the skilled handling of complicated mechanisms of power at the UN, in which they encountered resistance from many sources, including reluctant

individuals and governments, and the inertia of institutional processes.

Among the international NGOs involved were Amnesty International, International Alert, the Hague Appeal for Peace, the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, the International Peace Research Association, the Women’s Caucus for Gender Justice and most importantly, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). Not all of these organisations, nor their key women activists, would call themselves feminist although many would call them such. But the work they did in conceiving, drafting and chasing this Resolution through the UN system was certainly a feminist work. It was, ostensibly, feminist Felicity Hill at WILPF’s New York office who did a great deal of the leg work. She and WILPF were at the heart of this transnational advocacy network, and it is significant that today, she is deeply distressed and angered by what Resolution 1325 has become in practice.³

The Resolution’s content is brief and its intention is easily grasped.⁴ The preamble acknowledges both the specific effect of armed conflict on women and women’s role in preventing and resolving conflict. It is set in the context of the Security Council’s responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has eighteen brief points covering three main themes. One is protection, including the recognition of women’s rights, a clearer understanding of gender-specific needs in times of war, the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and an end to impunity in these crimes. A second theme is participation. Women’s work for peace must be recognised, they must be included in decision making at all levels in national and regional institutions, including significant posts in the UN itself, in mechanisms for the prevention and management of conflict, and in negotiations for peace. A third theme is the insertion of a gender perspective in UN peace keeping operations (PKOs), and in measures of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration after war (DDR).

NATO and The Woman Question

The big challenge lies in getting the new instrument implemented, getting governments to commit to it and translating it into action for peace making initiatives and peace-keeping operations. That task has engaged many women and women's organisations in a great deal of sustained efforts from that day to this.⁵ They had to 'get their hands dirty', negotiating not only with member governments but also with state militaries, for they are the ones who 'man' the aforesaid 'peace keeping operations'. Who else but they, can ensure that women's concerns are addressed by the UN 'blue beret' units who work among the distressed populations in conflict and post-conflict situations?

Up to a point, implementing Resolution 1325 could mean relatively unproblematic and even creative encounters with the 'civil-military' functionaries of relatively benign state armies like those of the Netherlands, a country which sees its army more as a peace keeping force rather than a war-fighting army.⁶ However, many of the armies of Western Europe (and increasingly of Eastern Europe and even further afield) are marshalled within, and often commanded by the structures of the North Atlantic Alliance, by NATO. In our No-to-NATO movement we have developed a strong, sustained and carefully argued critique of the Alliance. It may speak the dainty language of 'security', but its actions show that it is an ambitious, expansionist and belligerent war-machine, primarily serving the economic and strategic interests of the more powerful among its member states.⁷

NATO has adopted Resolution 1325 with an energy that could easily pass for enthusiasm. A glance at its website will show 47 documents relating to the topic.⁸ A multi-media exhibition has been mounted about NATO's contributions to the implementation of the Resolution (September 2010). There are pleasing photos of young women in army fatigues carrying babies, waving to children. NATO even celebrates International Women's Day. Apparently standing shoulder to shoulder with the women's movement, Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen asked, on 8 March 2010, "Would a world in which women

enjoyed rights equal to those of men be safer and more stable? It is difficult to say, but ultimately a lasting peace in many of the world's most troubled areas may depend upon the answer."⁹

The Alliance was, it is true, rather slow off the mark at first in grasping the merits of Resolution 1325. They made their first move in 2007, seven years after it came into effect, and in doing so, they addressed action on 'women, peace and security (WPS)' from the start, as a joint policy initiative between NATO and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. In other words the 28 NATO member states didn't put a go on it alone. They decided, on their own reasons, to include the 22 'Partnership for Peace' states. Otherwise, this would not be, they said, "a true partnership policy on an issue of global interest."¹⁰ They set up an informal 'ad hoc group' to make progress on the matter. It was the following summer, 2008, that the North Atlantic Council 'tasked' the NATO Strategic Command to provide guidance on implementing Resolution 1325. In other words, this was the point when the big political boys asked the big military boys to put their minds on women. The result was a Bi-Strategic Command guidelines to be 'taken forward' by the NATO civil and military authorities. All these member and 'partner' nations were urged to adopt National Action Plans on the Resolution. The Alliance envisioned Resolution 1325 policy on WPS as 'an integral part of NATO's corporate identity, in the way it plans and conducts its everyday business, and the way it organises its civilian and military structures'. It should also be fully integrated into 'all aspects of NATO-led operations' (my emphasis).¹¹

However, even now, things have not moved fast enough. In early 2009 when the 60th NATO Summit meeting took place in Strasbourg-Kehl, all they could say was that NATO was 'actively engaged with its partners in supporting' the implementation of Resolution 1325, and they hoped to have a comprehensive set of measures in eighteen months' time, specifically in 2010. Some nations prompted action, and two reports were written.¹² In June 2010, the Defence Ministers of all the nations contributing to ISAF in Afghanistan and KFOR in Kosovo endorsed action on Resolution 1325 in time for the Lisbon Summit

on November 19-21, 2010. Simultaneously, the Resolution 1325 policy was extended even beyond the Partnership for Peace (PfP) Program of NATO, to the additional states known as ‘Contact Countries’ and those countries participating in the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.¹³

By now, a number of the NATO Committees had the implementation of Resolution 1325 as part of their program agenda. The lead committee on this gender business is the important Political and Partnerships Committee. Significantly, the Operations Policy Committee is also involved, integrating WPS into the context of NATO missions and operations. On the soldiering side, NATO’s Committee on Women in the Armed Forces was converted in the summer of 2009 into a Committee on Gender Perspectives, and an Office on Gender Perspectives was established in the International Military Staff. Clearly, NATO was being thorough. It was making a serious effort to ‘mainstream’ gender, or more precisely WPS awareness, throughout its structures and

activities. And indeed, it described mainstreaming as the first of the five strategies comprising its ‘pragmatic approach’ to implementation. The other four were co-operation with international organisations;¹⁴ operations (most importantly Afghanistan); education and training; and public diplomacy, mobilizing the media to tell the world how much NATO is doing on WPS.

So how were they actually conceptualising the NATO contribution to UNSCR 1325? In January 2010, NATO joined in the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the passing of the Resolution. To mark the occasion, Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen gave a speech at the European Commission on ‘Empowering Women in Peace and Security’.¹⁵ He spoke of “the ongoing victimisation of women in conflict situations and the marginalisation of women in matters of peace building” as having a profound impact on global security, and being one of ‘the key security issues of our time’. By now NATO was well up to speed, and he was therefore able to say that “NATO has heard this call and that our military



authorities have developed guidelines for the integration of gender issues in all NATO planning and operations.” He mentioned a strict ‘Code of Behaviour’ for all NATO military personnel, a significantly increased proportion of women on NATO’s political staff, and he added, “we have studied carefully the significance of gender issues to the success of our operation in Afghanistan.”¹⁶

There are two areas of NATO activity in which response to Resolution 1325 should be examined more closely. Both were mentioned by the Secretary General in his 10th anniversary speech. One is about women soldiers, and the other is in operations. Women in the military forces of nation states come under NATO command. NATO’s stated aim is to increase the proportion of women in the military. The Secretary General noted that the percentage of women in the armed forces of member states ranges widely from as low as three percent in some states to as many as 18 percent in others. On accounting for the shortfall of armed service women in some countries, he tactfully mentioned the member countries’ military traditions. The recruitment of more women had to be ‘gradual’ he acknowledged, but needs to be consciously tackled.

In respect to operations, Afghanistan is particularly interesting. The Secretary General mentioned today’s presence of high-level gender advisers in International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Headquarters in Kabul, and gender experts employed in Provincial Reconstruction Teams. He noted that the US Marine Corps had begun fielding all-women military units in the most troubled provinces, with ‘highly positive results’. ISAF was having difficulty recruiting all the gender specialists, female interpreters and women soldiers they believe they need. But according to him, the WPS policy in place had already “allowed us to improve our mission effectiveness, our protection of the civilian population, and the protection of our own forces. It has also allowed us to reach out more effectively to the entire Afghan population.”

Dr. Stefanie Babst, acting NATO Assistant Secretary is the ‘chief’ senior woman for NATO. A week or so before the Lisbon Summit in November 2010, she addressed a NATO



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conference held in Tallinn, Estonia, on Women, Peace and Security: the Afghan View. She stated that “as a result of our engagement in Afghanistan, we have moved from an organisation talking about how to deliver Resolution 1325, to one that is actually implementing it” (her emphasis).¹⁷

So what kind of things does ISAF do on WPS in Afghanistan? They provide gender awareness training to the civilian and military teams before these are deployed on operations. They teach soldiers gender-sensitivity and why it matters to take a different approach when searching an Afghan woman or man, or why male ISAF personnel should avoid looking at an Afghan woman in the face. The gender experts in the field advise commanders on the needs of women local communities when it comes to providing access to aid and services. Some NATO nations deploy Female Engagement Teams (FETs) in southern Afghanistan who are trained to enable dialogue with local women. They have female soldiers who can conduct searches on Afghan women at checkpoints ‘without causing offence,’ and female military doctors and nurses to run clinics for women. ISAF helps train women police, security and even army personnel, some of whom have become instructors in turn. They trained Khatool Mohammadzai, the country’s ‘first ever’ female paratrooper. Babst wrote of this achievement, “Anyone who knows anything about Afghanistan realises what a historic step that is. It is a real indication of the change for the better that we are seeing in Afghanistan.” If more girls are going to school, more women are setting up businesses, more are getting the health care they need and more getting elected to Parliament, this is (she implied) thanks to the NATO operation. Babst



concluded that UNSCR 1325 in action is where it really matters most'.¹⁸

Contradictions in Resolution 1325

As feminist antimilitarists, as women of the No-to-NATO movement, how should we respond to the integration by NATO of Resolution 1325? After all, the instrument was universally welcomed by women. Its objectives were irrefutably sound which is, to draw attention to the impact of armed conflict specifically its impact on women. Such anticipated impact is for women to be recognised not as mere victims but as actors, capable of contributing to the ending of war and to achieving peace and redefining security. One can imagine that the United Nations Security Council might see NATO as an exemplary institution, implementing the resolution in pretty much the manner desired - and desired not only by the UN (we suppose), but by the women who drafted the Resolution and pressed the Security Council to pass it. Many of the measures NATO are introducing in Afghanistan, as described above, are in the circumstances, desirable. Given that ISAF is present in Afghanistan, we can only be glad if NATO personnel, prompted by Resolution 1325, behave respectfully towards women and try not to make their lives any worse than its current state. If Afghan women are to be searched at checkpoints, it is certainly more desirable that they should be handled by women than men. Yet, how can we who oppose NATO, who deplore its very existence and its war in Afghanistan – welcome its espousal of 'our' Resolution 1325? Especially when that war was legitimated by those who launched it, in part, by its potential for liberating women from fundamentalist oppression.

I would suggest that there are at least four elements in the contradiction that is now anguishing many feminist antimilitarists, not the least, ourselves in the No-to-NATO movement.

The most obvious and fundamental is the perennial 'equality' dilemma in feminism. At many moments in the history of the women's movement, a divergence has surfaced between women who call for 'equality' and those who assert 'difference'. Those who stress 'equality' believe that equal treatment of women is simple justice. Those

who stress 'difference' believe equality is too easily interpreted as 'equality' with men in a men's world. They call for a transformative change in gender power relations and a valorisation of women and the feminine. Yet in turn (and herein lies the contradiction), the positive assertion of difference can become an undesirable entrenchment of complementation in gender relations, trapping us in the gender dichotomy. The divergence between 'equality' and 'difference' strategies becomes seriously divisive when the equality demanded by women concerns access to roles that self-evidently enhance patriarchal, capitalist, nationalist or militarist power. Serving in the armed forces is an acutely troubling case in point.

It should be noted that Resolution 1325 does not in fact call for more women in armies. It urges, in rather careful terms, an expansion of "the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel." In promoting a higher proportion of women in militaries, NATO is not actually 'implementing 1325'. The feminisation of soldiering (at least in my interpretation), is part of NATO's thrust to modernise and professionalise contributing national armies. It has picked up the ball of gender equality thrown into play by feminists and is running with it for its own objectives. What can we do as feminists in such a situation? We have surely to emphasise that equality is a matter of justice, and in a just and inclusive society, women should not be debarred on account of their gender from doing anything they want to do. Just as ethnic minorities should not be debarred from police force for instance. But we must simultaneously critique and seek to dismantle all the power relations that deform and subvert not only justice in employment, but also the quality of human life and relationships – including those of militarism. It's unimaginable that the struggle for equality can be pursued, anywhere or ever, except hand in hand with an unrelenting struggle for transformative change in gender and other power relations.

The second contradiction I believe goes like this: NATO is a militarist organisation but the intention of Resolution 1325 is anti-militarist.

Yet its wording and provisions leave it co-optable by militarism. In fact, back in 2000 in New York, the ink was scarcely dry on the document before quite a lot of the feminist women involved were voicing self-criticism about their failure to frame the 1325 measures with a strong statement about ending militarism, militarisation and war itself. They were advised by those close to the UN system, and indeed informed by common sense, that the Security Council would not accept any insistence from the women on the resolution - a sharp critique of militarism, militarisation and the pursuit of war policies by member states. That is indeed why the women originators of the Resolution censored themselves. All the same, the UN was created to put an end to war. The Security Council's primary responsibility, under the Charter is the maintenance of international peace and security.¹⁹ Some of the women now wondered, "should we not have called the Security Council's bluff?"²⁰ Four years later, Carol Cohn neatly summarised the effect of their failure to engage in struggle with the Security Council on this issue. She wrote, Protecting women in war, and insisting that they have an equal right to participate in the processes and negotiations that end particular

wars, both leave war itself in place... [1325 is not] an intervention that tries either to prevent war, or to contest the legitimacy of the systems that produce war - that is, 'to put an end to war'. In this sense, it fits comfortably into the already extant concepts and discursive practices of the Security Council, where the dominant paradigm holds a world made up of states that 'defend' state security through military means... Letting (some) women into decision-making positions seems a small price to pay for leaving the war system essentially undisturbed.²¹

The third contradiction is inherent in the several interpretations to which the word 'security' lends itself. Women have been at pains for a decade or more now to redefine 'security'.²² We readily adopted the critique of military conceptions of security by those who began to speak and write of 'human security'.²³ Then, in the concept of 'women's security,' we gave 'human security' gender specificity.²⁴ This was, for feminists, the meaning of the word in the title of the Resolution: Women, Peace and Security. The ideal of 'security' can however too readily be manipulated by an organisation such as NATO, that however it



describes security in words, manifests it in action as meaning the militarisation of society and a readiness to fight wars.

Fourth, and finally, some of the women who were involved in the movement to achieve Resolution 1325 were self-critical afterwards on the grounds that they had failed at any point to express an explicit critique of men, masculinity and patriarchy in relation to militarism, militarisation and war. The Resolution said nothing about the male-dominant gender order in which we all live, the supremacy of men in political and military systems, the affinity of military values with hegemonic masculine values, and the overwhelming statistical preponderance of men in actual acts of violence against both men and women, whether in peace or war. As Carol Cohn puts it, to have the effect we desire as feminists, the women transnational activists in this story would have to address “the pernicious, pervasive complexities of the gender regimes that undergird not only individual wars but the entire war system.”²⁵ (I argue that we should go further and recognise gender power relations as a predisposing, and thus causal, factor in militarisation and war.²⁶) The fact is that, just as the UN cannot criticise the USA, capitalism and militarisation, so it is quite unable to make any critique of masculinity. Sandra Whitworth would later write in her post-1325 study of UN peace keeping, “There is...no discussion within UN documents of militarism or militarised masculinities or, for that matter, of masculinities more generally” (Whitworth 2004:137). It may be beyond the bounds of reason to imagine the Security Council taking the step (albeit logical) from deploring the rape of women in war to pointing the finger at men’s perennial propensity for violence and specifically for sexual violence against women. Yet, this silence on men, masculinity and the male-dominant gender order has vitiated Resolution 1325. In the absence of a strong statement against the ‘co-production’ of hegemonic masculinity and militarism, it becomes little more than an aspiration on the one hand, to make war a bit safer for women, on the other, to alert the powers-that-be to the resource women can be in helping them do their job. The Resolution is left hostage to co-optation

by militarist states and military institutions for military purposes.

Questions to Ask Ourselves

Some things we might usefully discuss in the context of No-to-NATO and the Women-against-NATO network now could be:²⁷

Has the Resolution become ‘reified’, even ‘deified’? It is as if nothing had been said before about women, peace and security. The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom have been arguing this case since 1915 and feminist antimilitarism, as an analysis, had already far outstripped this formulation of women’s (and men’s) relationship to war by the early 1980s.²⁸

- How much of the Resolution is actually intended to create political space for women to express opinions and take assertive action on every war/security issue in every country, at every moment, including military expenditures (which have been relentlessly growing since 2000) and ‘international’ military missions which continue today as the ‘no-fly-zone’ operation unloads Tomahawk missiles on Libya? It has rarely been used as such a lever. Instead the 1325 agenda has shrunk into protecting women war victims and obligingly remembering to use the resource women represent for peace.
- Should we be more pro-active in contesting the way the feminist agenda has been recuperated by armies justifying the recruitment of more women to the military in reference to Resolution 1325?
- Should we be pressing harder for something Resolution 1325 didn’t mention, ensuring that post-war moments bring the redistribution of power and resources in several dimensions – wealth, land ownership, economic opportunity, minority rights etc. (all of which of course affect women) and the dismantling of male supremacy, decommissioning masculinity while disarming combatants?
- Should we be concerned about the way ‘doing gender’ (mainstreaming) in the implementation of Resolution 1325 has become a ‘soft’, ill-defined and easy-option activity in the institutions, to



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which very often unskilled, unknowledgeable (in more crucial aspects) women and men, often interns, or people who already have other more pressing tasks, are appointed as practitioners, consultants or advisers? This not only makes 'doing gender' non-feminist and therefore, non-transformational. It leaves it even technically deficient.

- Were we wrong from the start to place so much reliance on the United Nations, and in particular on the (almost universally) male Security Council? Every time we rousingly cite Resolution 1325 we are acting as cheer leaders for a body that doesn't deserve it. Its increasing closeness to NATO is surely evidence that the UN is not a mechanism for peace and security as women (and other antimilitarist activists such as No-to-NATO) define those things. Is it a waste of time to put our energies into the UN? On the other hand, can we afford to neglect doing so?

- As feminist antimilitarist women, do we need to step up more boldly and make ourselves heard raising tough questions about the part played by gender power relations in militarism, militarisation, foreign and military policy and war fighting, including the way an institution like NATO functions? Should we grasp the political responsibilities that come with 'participation' in 'women, peace and security'? If so, how and where? ■

About the Author

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Endnotes:

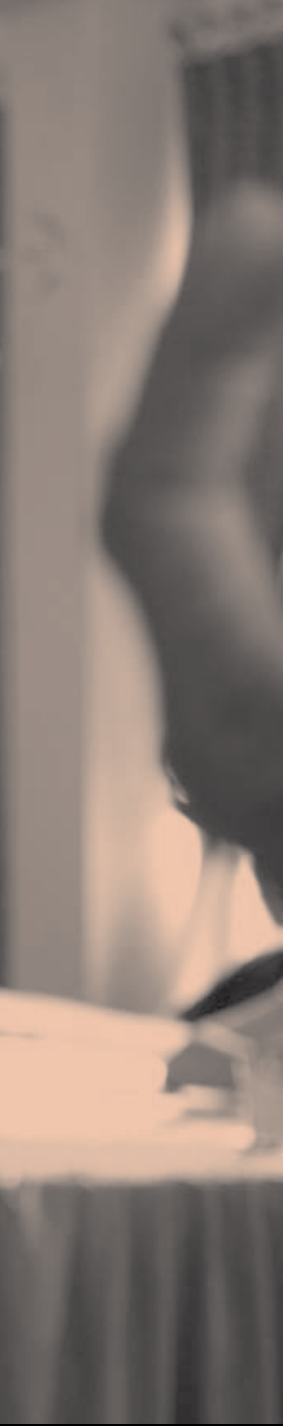
1. Chapter 5 of my book *From Where We Stand: War, Women's Activism and Feminist Analysis*. Zed Books, 2007.
2. Cohn, Carol et al, 'Women, peace and security', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol.6 (1). 2004.
3. Personal communication.
4. The text of UNSC Resolution 1325 can be seen at <<http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/2000/sc2000.htm>>. A useful point-by-point annotation has been produced by the United Nations Development Fund for Women, see 'Security Council Resolution 1325 Annotated and Explained' at <www.womenwarpeace.org/toolbox/annot1325.htm>, accessed 23 January 2006.
5. See the website <www.peacewomen.org>.
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10. 'Comprehensive report on the NATO/EAPC policy on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security and related resolutions'. 20 November 2010. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68578.htm?selectedLocale=en> 7.4.11
11. See <<http://www.no-to-nato.org>>, site in process of development.
12. See <<http://www.no-to-nato.org>>, site in process of development. They were (1) a comprehensive report with recommendations on mainstreaming UNSCR 1325 in NATO-led operations and missions; and (2) a comprehensive report with recommendations on the NATO/EAPC policy on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related Resolutions.
13. By now, besides, NATO and other governmental and international institutions were obliged to take account of subsequent UNSC Resolutions on 'Women, peace and security': 1820 of June 2008, 1888 and 1889 of October 2009, and 1960 of December 2010.
14. Naming specifically the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Committee of the Red Cross.
15. 27 January 2010. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_61040.htm> accessed 7.4.11.

16. See <<http://www.no-to-nato.org>>, site in process of development. They were (1) a comprehensive report with recommendations on mainstreaming UNSCR 1325 in NATO-led operations and missions; and (2) a comprehensive report with recommendations on the NATO/EAPC policy on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related Resolutions.
17. 'Role and experience of international organisations in implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Afghanistan', remarks by Dr. Stefanie Babst, Acting NATO Assistant Secretary at the Conference on Women, Peace and Security – the Afghan View. Tallinn, Estonia, 11 November 2010. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_68078.htm?selectedLocale=en> accessed 7.4.11
18. Naming specifically the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Committee of the Red Cross.
19. See <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_background.html> accessed 7.4.11.
20. Felicity Hill, personal communication.
21. Cohn, Carol (2008) 'Mainstreaming Gender in UN Security Policy: A Path to Political Transformation' in Rai, Shirin M. and Georgina Waylen (eds) *Analysing and Transforming Global Governance: Feminist Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
22. My research on movements to end war suggests that a particular contribution by women is, noting the continuation of violence against women into 'peacetime', to redefine what peace means. See Cockburn, Cynthia (forthcoming) *Antimilitarism: Political and Gender Dynamics of Peace Movements*, Palgrave Macmillan (forthcoming 2012).
23. Human Security Centre. 'What is Human Security.' <<http://www.humansecurityreport.info/index.php>>
24. See for instance Hamber, B. et al 'Discourses in transition: re-imagining women's security', *International Relations*, Vol.20 (4) 2006. Pp.487-502.
25. Naming specifically the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Committee of the Red Cross.
26. Cockburn, C., 'Gender as causal in militarization and war: a feminist standpoint', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol.12, No.2. May 2010. Pp.139-157.
27. These questions are derived from a recent exchange of e-mails with Felicity Hill – to whom I am indebted for a much more informed and 'close in' view of the trajectory of Resolution 1325 than my own experience affords. However, the way they are formulated here is my own 'take' on the subject, and Felicity should not be held accountable for any errors.
28. See *Feminism and Nonviolence Study Group (1983) Piecing It Together: Feminism and Nonviolence*. Published by the group in co-operation with War Resisters' International, London.

Strengthening Women's Participation in Peace Building

through feminist action
research, skills and
capacity building and multi
stakeholder dialogue

by Marilee Karl



Isis International launched its initiative to strengthen Women's Participation in Peace Building in 2009. Called "The Cultural Politics of Conflict, Peace and the UNSCR 1325: Strategising and Capacity Building", this initiative continues Isis International's commitment to strengthen women's participation in peace building through: feminist action research, skills and capacity building and multi stakeholder dialogue. It uses creative methodologies such as story telling and informal dialogues that allow women to surface their experiences in their homes and communities as they strive for a peaceful and sustainable life. To begin with, Isis International launched the initiative in Indonesia and the Philippines. Its partner organisations in these countries are: Centre Studies of Indonesia Eastern Region, Indonesia and BALAI Rehabilitation Centre Inc., Philippines.

In the Philippines, the use of storytelling as a methodology for gathering data has proven to be an important mode of exchange of information and support for women. Through their stories women have been able to share how they find peace in their everyday lives through the creative ways they negotiate for their participation and bridge understanding, despite cultural and religious diversity within and outside of their homes.

In Indonesia, women's stories reflected their participation in community and public life after the experience of conflict. Women's efforts of becoming peace agents began as early as 1997 where their homes and the market place served as a venue to share informally their values of peace building.

Creatively crafting messages for peace building
Capacity building in both countries, in the form of development communication arts, strengthened women's confidence and communication skills, enhancing their capacities as leaders and peace agents in their respective communities.

In the Philippines, a five-day session on Women Crafting Messages for Peace Building facilitated women's creativity in telling their stories of strengths and challenges in peace building work. The use of theatre and visual arts and community radio allowed them to share their stories of peaceful negotiation and conflict handling, acceptance of diversity and calls for the

strengthening of women's participation in peace and development work in the community.

In Indonesia, different media, such as local dance, radio drama and songs, shared women's stories of maximising the market place and their homes as sites for peace. These media allowed women to exhibit their creativity in arts and in daily life as they turned the loss of their loved ones to strength to stand for the rest of their families, and continue to find spaces in their communities to share peace.



Dialogue

The dialogues with peace advocates in both countries strengthened women's participation in peace building, making this a shared agenda for stakeholders.

In the Philippines, the dialogues were held with local government units on ways towards making gender responsiveness part of good governance and government services. This also encouraged local government officials to ensure two seats for women on the village council.

In Indonesia, community leaders had the opportunity to speak with media practitioners and local government. Using this opportunity, women were able to talk about their everyday participation, and correct misconceptions that women are merely victims in these situations. This provided the holistic viewing of women, recognising their everyday contribution and, at the same time, calling attention to their immediate needs of livelihood.

Feminist action research

The feminist action research took careful note of the use of creative methodologies to surface women's stories and shared the results of the research with the women so that they could discuss this and use this themselves

In the Philippines, the storytelling in groups and the deeper conversations with the women provided the space for them to discuss the most intimate parts of their lives, their dreams for their families, struggles with partners, and the simple ways they are present for their friends and neighbours that form part of the way they live a peaceful life. These spaces were much appreciated by women as these were novel to them even if they were used to sharing within capacity building spaces and psychosocial intervention. The women described the focus group discussions as "emotional band-aid" because of the relief they felt in being able to share and hear about each other's joys and pains, while acknowledging the learning they gain from each other.

In Indonesia, women acknowledged how the conflict affected their lives in many ways. They



shared the pain and grief they felt as they lost their loved ones to the conflict, and shared the struggles they went through in picking up their lives. They acknowledged how the conflict has allowed them to participate in community and public life, a new way to contribute that they have come to value. The conflict also allowed the women the space to move out of their otherwise constricted gender roles.

Creative capacity building

Capacity building sessions integrated theatre arts to strengthen women's leadership skills in communications, articulation of their visions for participation and equality, as well as practical knowledge of international policies and frameworks that acknowledge women's role in various aspects of their lives.

In the Philippines, the workshop on Women Crafting Messages for Peace Building, not only

enhanced the women's creative expression but in many ways also released tension. As the women went through creative exercises in theatre and in poetry they recalled times of conflict and fleeing their homes. They were able to touch base with feelings of fear for their lives, but took comfort in being able to acknowledge the reality of their situation and appreciate where they are now. The theatre pieces, posters and radio spots they produced allowed them to communicate the value of women's everyday participation in peace building to other peace and development stakeholders in a non-threatening way. Thus, the call to gender responsiveness was not seen as a threat but rather a shared agenda by all.



In Indonesia, the capacity building space was a first for the women in a number of ways. It was a first for them to engage with other peace and development stakeholders and be acknowledged as part of this circle. It was also the first formal capacity building space for the women where: 1) the results of the research were shared, 2) they were able to participate in discussions on international policies supportive of women's rights and participation, 3) alternative frames such as Engendered Peace Journalism were shared with them and with media practitioners as an important part of peace and development work; and 4) skills were shared with them on the use of radio to produce short spots, and talk shows to discuss women's issues in peace building.

Learning about the Landmark United Nations Resolution on Women, Peace and Security

The United Nations Security Council adopted resolution (S/RES/1325) on women and peace and security on 31 October 2000. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls

on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The resolution provides a number of important operational mandates, with implications for Member States and the entities of the United Nations system. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

The Isis International initiative also aims to strengthen women's use of the UNSCR 1325. This was the first time the women had learned about it, including women community leaders involved in peace building work, despite the 10 years since its approval by member states. The session on understanding UNSCR 1325, falls under the principle of feminist knowledge sharing to which both country teams are committed.

In the Philippines, even before the women knew about the resolution, they had already taken part in many efforts to restore life and peace in their communities. Still the women affirmed the need to know about such resolutions, since they continue to hold strong hopes for policies that support women's rights and participation, provided the women know it and are able to access it. They noted local policies like the Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act that were effective in preventing domestic violence in the community because information was shared. Most of them noted that, if the same effort in information dissemination on the UNSCR 1325 were taken seriously, the policy would take its effect for women's rights.

The same was also noted in Indonesia when the women heard about UNSCR 1325 for the first time. Women took a certain pride in the informal ways they have contributed to peace building within their families and daily work. The Indonesia team took pains in developing sessions that made women more aware of the international policies that could also be taken up at a local level.

Sensitising media and the community

An important aspect of the initiative was to sensitise the media on women's role in conflict resolution and peace building, particularly in

Gender Based Violence on the Peace Building Agenda

In its work of strengthening women's participation in peace building, Isis International found resistance to women's participation and to putting the issue of gender-based violence on the peace building agenda.

Male leaders questioned the need for women's participation in governance even when the ratio of representation stands 1/10.

Male leaders questioned women's capacity in leading within conflict.

Women peace advocates questioned whether violence against women should be addressed at this time; they feel this is still an experience of the minority and expressed fears that to take the issue of violence at this time may be divisive.

Faced with this resistance to gender, Isis International felt it necessary to continue acknowledging women's experiences and facilitate a way in which the women could communicate their experiences. This led to the Cheekah Sessions.

Cheekah Sessions as Safe Space

Cheeka is a colloquial term for idle talk or gossip, and the Cheekah sessions became a safe space for women to share and acknowledge their experience. Women appreciated the space to discuss their concerns and they called these sessions "emotional band-aid sessions" as they shared very intimate details and events. These sessions provided the women the space to freely talk about their lives, challenges and strengths. These sessions provided them the space to acknowledge their hurts and experience healing and affirmation within a safe space.

The sessions were designed creatively as flowing conversations within small groups of women in Pikit, North Cotabato, Philippines as well as with some community and civil society representatives

Different faces of violence

Jenalyn was one of the few women who took part in village council meetings. Trying to maintain her assertive attitude and always allowing herself to speak her mind, she would find herself at odds with their male leader who did not appreciate this attitude from her. In a heated discussion they had over how to plan for and budget for a women's activity, one of the village officials became very angry at her and threatened to pull out his gun, while reminding her not to be too smug, as her life was only worth about a few pesos.

how women are portrayed. In the Philippines, community systems like the family, organisations, friends and linkages with local government and non-governmental organisations were the women's major sources of information and value sharing. The dialogues held in the Philippines expanded beyond a dialogue with media to include local peace and development stakeholders that could also respond to strengthening and supporting women's participation. At the multi-stakeholder dialogues women creatively communicated their needs in the everyday commitment to peace building, while local governments and nongovernmental organisations exchanged ways to approach gender, peace and development work.

Ultimately concrete commitments to ensure women's participation in local governance, and more gender responsive programmes that address women's immediate needs in conflict situations were developed. Women's participation in the development communications workshop and dialogue allowed the women to reflect on the need for community media that could take up awareness raising on the importance of women's participation and their unique contribution in peace building.

In Indonesia, women community leaders held a dialogue with other stakeholders. The dialogues were attended by media practitioners, and the women took the opportunity to engage with them for the first time. In an effort to balance women's portrayal in media, the women community leaders shared the challenges they faced in the situation as well as their contributions. The women's sharing called attention to the urgency of media attention on women in situations of armed conflict together with other pressing issues such as displacement brought about by floods.

The narratives of women that came out of the research in the Philippines and Indonesia speak of women's strength and resilience and picking up their lives after conflict - everyday strengths that in most times goes unrecognised. Bringing this into the public space as an area of dialogue among stakeholders is also very timely as the provisions of the UNSCR 1325 of participation, representation and protection of women's rights are not only to be viewed as problems by women or the states but



rather an agenda of which stakeholders in peace and development need to be very mindful.

The project teams have become more mindful of how states take up the implementation of the UNSCR 1325, as well as how local stakeholders can be more committed to its successful implementation, as in the Philippines, where the UNSCR 1325 Implementation Plan has recently been developed.

In the experience of the Philippines, where women have contributed to a strong local peace movement that has committed to many efforts in building cultures of peace and strengthened community life, the UNSCR 1325 Implementation Plan needs to take on a stronger gender perspective to be conscious of women's inclusion and participation in various spaces for peace building.

In Indonesia, the project teams noted that it will take a longer time for their state to act on the development and implementation of a national action plan for the UNSCR 1325, but women have taken this initial opportunity to speak of their need for programme and policy support for women's participation.

Producing our own media - Claiming our space

Given the commitment of all partner organisations for media and information work as part of attaining holistic and sustainable peace, the women became more aware of



Jenelyn's difficulties are not only with so called male leaders but with men in the community. Known to be approachable, women often come to her about their domestic troubles. In playing a role as an advocate against gender violence, she has experienced threats when she tried to stand up for a neighbour who was being beaten up by her husband. On one occasion while attempting to secure this neighbour, she faced the angry husband in her home. The husband pointed a gun at her threatening to shoot if she did not stop meddling in their affairs. Together with some members of the community she was able to mediate with the husband.

Violence in the Home

Nena is a 40 year-old Maguindanaoan married to a Christian and was working as a farmer. In the Cheekah session, she shared the challenges of supporting her family almost by herself as her husband was a drunkard and would engage only in odd jobs. It was this challenge that would drive her to tears as she told stories of how her husband, when he was drunk would yell at her and the children and even threaten to hit them. But it was her experience of local community leadership that enhanced her skills in conflict management even within her home. She observed how family and community disputes were settled in the barangay (village) through dialogue and agreements. This exposure gifted her with the experience of how she could resolve this conflict in her own home through a written agreement. She came up with what others coined as "Nena's declaration of peace within her home". This agreement stipulated that her husband should conduct himself calmly even when he was drunk; he was not allowed to hurt or harm her or the children, and if he did she would make sure the barangay would intervene and take him away. Nena had this agreement signed by her husband and witnessed by her husband's brother and another community leader.

Sexual Violence and Shame in the Community

In an attempt to also understand the context of the women leaders in Pikit, the Isis International team also interviewed representatives from government, church and peace organisations in Pikit. They were able to share the achievements and challenges faced in peace building efforts. Vic-vic, one of the interviewees, was part of a peace and development organisation that operated in a city near Pikit. She shared that she had been asked to talk to survivors of sexual violence, and a particular story she shared was of a young woman who was raped by a military man. As she was asked to provide initial intervention, she was able to talk to the survivor and her family. They told her that they did not wish to file a case, as making the rape public would put the family and the clan in shame. Vic-vic also shared with us that this is not a one-off case of sexual violence that she encountered. There were a few others who also refused to file cases using mechanisms that are currently available. A common story to all of these women is that

their families could not stand being dragged into shame because of this, and as much as they were thankful for Vic-vic's intervention they could not push it further as they tried to preserve the dignity of their family.

Space, confidence and skills to participate in dialogue

Isis has found that stakeholders from government, civil society, communities and the media can continue to make efforts to contribute to an environment that supports and strengthens women. However, while the National Action Plan advocates "Cultures of Peace" and provided women with the spaces to reflect on concepts of diversity as part of a "tri-people" community of Muslims, Lumads and Christians, these sessions are not able to take up issues of gender and gender based violence, as these are not integrated in the components of the peace training sessions. It is also very difficult to raise issues of gender and gender-based-violence even among peace advocates as some of them felt that these issues would be divisive.

While peace training sessions allow women in the community to question "negative" notions of each other and provides them with the opportunity to celebrate each other's traditions, these sessions are not able to accommodate gender sensitivity sessions, or how violence against women is also an issue of peace and an experience of violence.

Isis International found that women are more than capable and willing to share their thoughts on what happens in the community. The knowledge and what they can talk about ranges from challenges faced in the home, disrupted lives because of war, and ways to manage the evacuation centre. Yet the space to talk is not always readily granted and at times even contested.

The male leaders and representatives in Pikit who had expressed discomfort in talking about women's participation and gender, were given the opportunity to interact with other Gender and Development Practitioners in Davao. They heard about the experiences of men and women representing several agencies in Davao and how they included gender as part of responsible and accountable governance. This kind of dialogue exposed the men to different kinds of thinking and challenged their misgivings as to why women should be allowed to participate in peace-building.

Women need to continue to be able to address and share their experiences of violence in the community, the home and in conflict areas. Isis International, together with the women community leaders and communication practitioners, was able to create non-threatening spaces for women to express themselves through the use of multi-media that included; poetry, visuals and street-theatre where they staged a short play at the end of the dialogue. By using multi-media forms, Isis was able to develop capacity and a space that served as a safe space for emotional and physical release as well as allowing the women to take part in multi-stakeholder dialogues with confidence, and to take centre stage to talk and creatively share their messages through vignettes, monologues and dance. ■

message development and maintaining relations with media. In the Philippines, the exposure to development communications has opened up their dreams for community media that would help sustain their peace and development work and they have gained confidence in producing media forms that speak of their needs and situation. In Indonesia, it has inspired women to think of their own stories as newsworthy and be willing to share these with various media. It has also inspired some of them to produce women and peace building themes in various radio formats.

For the women, the confidence they gained in their everyday contributions has inspired them to speak about these and encourage other women and men to take part in peace and community building. They have affirmed the value of organising that provides immediate assistance in times of need as well as awareness in communicating effectively in numbers.

Despite encountering male dominance in leadership in local and community organisations, women have and will continue claiming spaces in the G7 Farmers organisation in Pikit, Philippines or taking advantage of the marketplace in Sulawesi, Indonesia, as spaces to share values for peace. The capacities in communication that they gained have also inspired them to develop and disseminate their peace messages in various forms. Women of Pikit appreciated the use of theatre and radio and now seek the development of community media in their place. Women leaders of the Sulawesi Islands gained the confidence to speak with stakeholders like themselves and were inspired to produce various radio materials.

Calling for commitments

Peace and development stakeholders in the Sulawesi Islands in Indonesia and Pikit North Cotabato in the Philippines were called to be more responsive to the needs of women in these contexts. The women leaders in Sulawesi Islands called for women's basic needs for education as part of acknowledging their basic rights and commitments to strengthening their capacities.

Other commitment areas were to look into strengthening women's participation in local and

national government; and the role media can play in disseminating the peace messages that women produce. In Indonesia, these are initial commitments that may lead to strengthened partnerships in favour of women.

In the Philippines, concrete commitments towards strengthened participation of women in local governance were achieved despite very evident male dominance in leadership in various organisations in Pikit, achieved through creative and nonviolent communication. The local leadership in Pikit acknowledged that the local council could benefit from having two women representatives in the local council. Another commitment area was for inter-government support on gender responsiveness as part of good governance (even in conflict situations) that involves network building for local governments in Pikit, North Cotabato and Davao. This commitment is directly in support of the Pikit municipal council's commitment to gender and good governance in their programmes and policies that is meant to benefit women in Pikit.

Lessons learned

In Indonesia and the Philippines this initiative affirmed the need to continue to work with national and local government and media as strategic partners in strengthening women's participation and in achieving holistic, sustainable and lasting peace.

Given Isis International's existing programmes such as the Isis International Activist School, the organisation continues capacity building support for the women leaders in both countries in the use of various development communications tools to sustain women as leaders and their efforts in peace and development work.

The initiative has also shed light on continued work needed with different types of media: mainstream, alternative and community media in terms of strengthening skills and commitment of strategic stakeholders in peace and development work. The frames of engendered peace journalism can continue to form part of theoretical and practical ways media can contribute to a true portrayal of women's situation in conflict.

It can also play a crucial role in disseminating information on the UNSCR 1325 so that greater awareness on the policy can be shared in various countries. Mainstream, alternative and community media can all play a role in monitoring the implementation of this resolution, be it in the form of monitoring of women's portrayal in the media, or on how states have taken its commitment to implementing the resolution.

The results of this initiative have been utilised in the other peace initiatives in which Isis International has been involved, including the "Women Making Airwaves for Peace" community radio training workshop for women in Southeast Asia and the Pacific and in community radio training in South and Central Asia. The results of this initiative also stirred the interest of government agencies in the Philippines, including the National Committee on Women and Office of Presidential Advisor on Peace Processes, as well as civil society organisations on further collaboration in implementing and monitoring the national action plan on UNSCR 1325, which was launched in April 2010.

While Isis International joins women and peace advocates all over the world in acknowledging milestones in women, peace and development work, such as the approval of the UNSCR 1325; and as countries commit and draft their National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security, we also continue to be mindful about its full and effective implementation. As we reflect on the experiences of women and peace advocates amidst an environment that continues to question women's needs and participation, we find that efforts in policy development need to be accompanied by, as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) says, ways to "modify social and cultural patterns" based on gender discrimination or stereotypes. ■

About the Author

Marilee Karl co-founded Isis International in 1974, and served as its coordinator for its first 20 years. She is currently Honorary Chairperson of Isis International and continues her activism in the international women's movement and other social justice movements.

Rural Women

- Food Sovereignty
- Conflict
- Peace



by Sharon Bhagwan Rolls

This paper was presented during the UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN 56, HIGH LEVEL PANEL on March 1, 2012

"I cannot feed my family with mats" a rural woman leader told me as we discussed the connection between rural women's economic and food security. She attends our monthly 1325 network meetings and represents women from her village close to 100 km from the main town centre. She like many other women craves for financial security – savings accounts more than just micro credit. Rural young women have shared how they have travelled to and from school on an empty stomach. Market vendors regularly share the cost of food production and food sales as they strive to earn cash for their families.

"Freedom from want and freedom from fear" is central to women's peace and human security and integral to ensuring holistic responses to the CSW theme.

In addition the multiple realities of rural women in Pacific need to be addressed within a human rights framework which are central to human security. Conflicts have not only caused economic upheaval and hardship they have also been created by them. Natural resource exploitation has created economies of war in which those involved in waging it use conflict to gain control of land, forests and other resources to exploit for profit.

During peace negotiations when allocation and use of natural resources are discussed, women and their concerns are often excluded.

How are they able to define their food security?
Including in the context of natural disasters?

How can they ensure that the environmental impact of conflict is incorporated into post conflict

reconstruction, including addressing the unexploded remnants of war, toxic pollutants and lead contamination if they are not at the Peace Table?

Additionally unabated human security risks in the Pacific including climate change risks are not only inextricably linked to food security but also are linked to increase violent conflict which requires greater efforts by the UN and international community to respond more effectively.

In defining peace and security it is critical that we redefine and transform patriarchal structures of decision-making.

Women in the Pacific have continued to remind government that bombs, guns and landmines will not remove the threat of natural disasters: tsunamis, hurricane, flood, drought, or epidemic that are the real security threats of our time along with environmental degradation and finite resource exploitation.

We are also contributing to the development of a Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security to use 1325 as a transformation tool, to transform notions of peace and security and institutions and ensuring prevention and protection, as well as women's participation at the Peace Table where women make a difference for the whole of society.

To ensure that we build back better

When women are empowered to participate in society they are more likely to live lives free from violence, so it is crucial they be actively included in decisions around security needs.

It is time that member states integrate women's human rights commitments and peace into development agendas because a development agenda which invests in women is enabling them to participate in decision making particularly to address new and emerging threats to Peace in the Pacific including climate change, tensions over access to water, land and other diminishing resources, with implications for food security.

The human security of rural women is too often undermined by sexual violence, limited access

to land, no freedom of movement and forced displacement.

Enabling the potential of rural women to improve their human security through active involvement within policy processes and political decision-making is a precondition for achieving lasting peace and security

Gender-sensitive security measures improve societal participation and economic empowerment of rural women, including in agriculture and food production.

Rural women as active agents in security decision-making processes ultimately contribute to the general prevention of conflict and peace building.

This presentation is based on FemLINKPACIFIC's work through our rural and regional women's media and policy network (Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Bougainville – Papua New Guinea) which strives to support the collective call to empower women and communities so that they can share in decision-making for equality, appropriate development, security and peace.

Common experiences and visions are drawn from rural centres in Fiji, the outer islands and provinces in the Solomon Islands, remote communities still rebuilding their lives following the war in Bougainville and village communities in Tonga share a common thread - we have all experienced some form of violence, conflict or instability.

They have come from their market stalls. They have come from their homes and community clubs to talk about infrastructure problems including poor drainage and sanitation, limited access to clean water, bad roads and poor transportation and long distance to access health services. Community issues include the high number of school dropouts and youth unemployment, often linked to the inability of families to meet education expenses including tertiary education, as well as rising food prices.

These stories and voices are the basis of reality on which the network builds its advocacy and currently informing the development of a Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

The anecdotal evidence presented is based on interviews and consultations with women aged between 20 and 70 years from 34 rural communities in Fiji between November 2011 and January 2012. Sixty-two (62) women attended monthly consultations during this period, 139 radio programmes were produced with women who attending the 16 Days community radio campaign and an additional 30 women contributed to consultations and broadcasts on the 2012 CSW theme. Women have spoken from an individual perspective, from the experiences of their extended families and the local clubs and women's groups they lead or attend.

Additionally 114 women were respondents in FemLINKPACIFIC's Household Expenditure and Income Survey (HIES) during this period from 4 rural centres and 1 urban centre.

Most of the women identify their husbands or fathers as the main income providers of the family, but many of the women are working in the informal sector to supplement their family income.

Most have no access to land

Individual household earnings varied from as low as FJD10 a week to a maximum of FJD500 a week with an average count of FJD170 a week.

Ninety-four percent (94%) identified radio as their key source of news and information with listening patterns during the early hours of the morning or in the afternoon.

Less than 25% have access to the daily newspapers and those who do prefer the local news.

Seventy-four percent (74%) have access to the Internet and those who do use it to access general information, for study or to contact family and friends.

Eighty-three percent (83%) own a pre pay mobile phone with an average of less than FJD20 allocated for recharge credit.

Linkages with UNSCR1325

These rural women are local members of the Regional Women's Media and Policy Network on UNSCR1325, which FemLINKPACIFIC has

coordinated since 2007 with partner organisations in Solomon Islands, Bougainville and Tonga. Since 2009 we have integrated the 1325 network into the GPPAC Pacific Regional Steering Group.

In the Pacific region there continues to be high levels of domestic and sexual violence against women, which escalates during conflict as general violence increases. Militarisation and the presence of weapons legitimise new levels of brutality and greater levels of impunity, so that violence becomes a new normality and becomes entrenched in post-conflict landscapes.

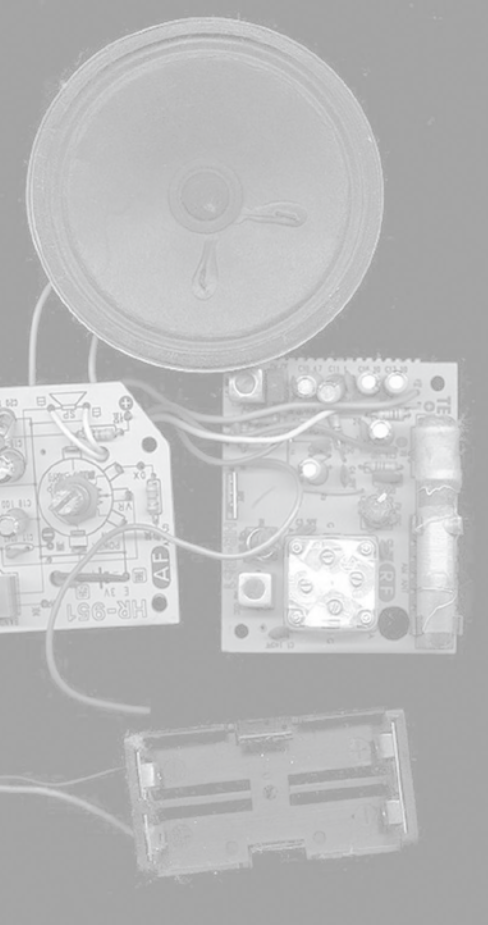
As the Pacific develops a Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security this has been an important platform to reiterate the importance of conflict prevention as an essential element of resolution 1325.

UNSCR 1325 is about people's security, it is a way to redefine and transform security and understand the impact of war and conflict on men and women, and recognise and enhance the role of women as agents of change while also enhancing protection and the prevention of sexual gender based violence.

The role of Community Media and Community Radio

It is not enough to merely talk about the rights, peace and security of rural women, but we also need to ensure that rural women, in all her diversities are provided with their own media and communication platform. For FemLINKPACIFIC it is Community Radio. As women mobilise together around rural consultations to discuss their Peace and Human Security priorities, radio programmes and broadcasts enable them to be heard by local and national decision makers, and regional partners. The broadcasts are also featuring programmes from the young women producers who belong to Generation Next providing insights into the reality of young women.

During 2011 16-days campaign, FemLINKPACIFIC localised the theme connecting it to the monthly "1325" network discussions on Women, Peace and Human Security using a UN Security Resolution 1325



lens. UNSCR1325 reaffirms that women are crucial partners in shoring up the three pillars of lasting peace: economic recovery, social cohesion and political system. This also linked rural women to the 2011 UN Security Council Open Debate on UNSCR 1325 which reiterates that a legitimate and durable post-conflict political system must include full and equal participation of women in decision making.

Women have spoken of their life and human security issues. They have linked together across the airwaves because the barriers for their empowerment and development are the same. In one voice, they have called for action,

through services and programmes which will address the physical, emotional and institutional violence they experience in their daily lives, so that people can be informed, empowered to be involved in advocating for a safe and peaceful environment to live in without fear.

Interesting that these are the priorities raised at a time we learnt from a 2012 Budget Brief that Fiji's military budget has increased by \$5.2 million "due to the additional 42 troops for the Iraq Mission" with an additional \$550,000 allocated for military infrastructure upgrade. This is the same amount allocated to the Women's Plan of Action which is focused on "(providing) training to women in the rural and urban areas and in the process assist in the implementing of their projects that promotes the social and empowerment of women" while an additional \$300K is provided for repairs and maintenance of health facilities, including Health Centres and 103 Nursing Stations in the 4 divisions.

How do government programmes connect to women's human security? This is more than about going shopping. As women in other rural communities have highlighted, poor roads make it harder for women to access health services and

children to travel safely to and from school. With poor water and electricity supply, the burden of daily work remains an ongoing barrier to accessing opportunities for education, employment and decision-making especially when due to patriarchal decision-making structures, women just often don't get a chance to be part of the solutions, especially when it comes to violence.

Conclusion

On the occasion of the 56th session of Commission on the Status of Women, we call for the full participation of rural women in all decision-making processes on peace and security, from local communities to global policy processes. Enhancing decision-making on peace and security with their perspectives means enhancing Human Security For All.

Within these broad areas of human security are the critical issues being experienced in different ways and grappled with by Pacific women, who are working to place their recommendations for change on to the various state and regional agendas.

When women feel secure, peace is possible. When women feel secure enough to resist war and organise for peace, expressed through theatre, public demonstrations and civil disobedience, peace is on its way.

Women's civil society representatives have to be involved in helping redefine and ensure implementation of the new human security agenda, including representation on local and national councils and committees addressing the broad range of security issues including food security. ■

About the Author

Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls is the founder and executive director of FemLINKPACIFIC, a regional women's community media NGO, based in Fiji, and vice-president of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) Pacific sub-region. Sharon is also part of the Isis International general membership governing body; and is a member of the Global Civil Society Advisory Group of UN Women.

Revisiting Peace Journalism With a Gender Lens

by Cai Yiping

Peace Journalism (also called conflict solution journalism, conflict sensitive journalism) has been developed from research that indicates that all too often news about conflict has a value bias toward violence. Peace journalism also includes a practical methodology for correcting this bias by producing journalism in both the mainstream and alternative media; and working with journalists and other media professionals, audiences and organisations in conflict.¹

As defined by Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch, peace journalism takes place whenever—editors and reporters make choices—about what stories to report, and how to report them— which create opportunities for society at large to consider and to value nonviolent responses to conflict— (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005). Peace journalism is a broader, fairer and more accurate way of framing stories, drawing on the insights of conflict analysis and transformation. The basic question a peace journalist would ask before crafting any story would be, “what can I do with my intervention to enhance the prospects for peace?”

The peace journalism approach provides a new road map for tracing the connections between journalists, their sources, the stories they cover and the consequences of their reporting— the ethics of journalistic intervention.²An explicit aim of peace journalism is to promote peace initiatives



from whatever quarter, and to allow the reader to distinguish between stated positions and real goals.

Professor Johan Galtung, eminent Peace Studies professor and director of the TRANSCEND network, started using the term, “Peace Journalism” in the 1970s. The peace journalism model was further developed by Conflict and Peace Forums, a think-tank based in UK in a series of international conferences and publications in the late 1990s, e.g. *The Peace Journalism Option* (1998); *What Are Journalists For?* (1999); and *Using Conflict Analysis in Reporting* (2000). In their book “Peace Journalism” (2005)³ Lynch and McGoldrick summarised and elaborated the basic tenets of Galtung’s approach as well as highlighting the misunderstandings and scepticism levelled at peace journalism by discussing dominant misconceptions and emphasising the ways in which it is regarded as unprofessional, biased or partisan.

In 2010, Jake Lynch and Johan Galtung launched their new book, *Reporting Conflict: New Directions in Peace Journalism*.⁴ In it, the two leading authors in this rapidly growing field of research, practice, teaching and training, continue to challenge reporters to tell the real story of conflicts around the world.

Debates and criticisms around peace journalism

Peace journalism has run into a number of debates and criticisms from some scholars and journalists.

“Activist news”/peace advocacy lacking “objectivity”

Some opponents characterise peace journalism as “activist” new writing and peace journalist as peace advocate. It is criticised as either “too critical” or “not critical enough”. This raises the important question of how objective and impartial is peace journalism. From a peace journalism perspective, it is not peace advocacy and it is generally more “objective” than war journalism, with its inclusion of implications for international law, positive developments in both elite peacemaking and capacity building, and non-elite perspectives and peace-building initiatives.

Contextualising/explaining violence equals justifying it

This criticism can be represented by neo-conservative proponent Richard Perle, that one must “decontextualise terror...any attempt to discuss the roots of terrorism is an attempt to justify it. It simply needs to be fought and destroyed.” And this may be a common response to journalism advocating context. Conflict Analysis and Peace Research has shown why an explanation of violence is not the same thing as a justification for it.

By focusing on root causes of conflict such as poverty or prior abuse, and not merely focusing on events associated with violent political encounters, peace journalism could act to “un-embed” seemingly immutable official positions from the greater context of a conflict by exploring the background to a conflict, challenging propaganda, and making visible official and local initiatives for peaceful conflict resolutions.

Journalistic agency versus media structure

Lynch argues that most journalistic work is “governed”, not “determined” by convention and structural factors arising from the economic and political interests of the news industry. Thus, journalists’ own self-awareness and efforts at reform can combine with mobilisations in civil society to challenge and supplement conventions.⁵

Despite misunderstandings and scepticism, the peace journalism model has become a source of practical options for journalists; a lead in to media monitoring for peace activists and offers a firm basis for drawing distinctions in content analysis by academic researchers.

Peace journalism with a gender lens

The Global Media Monitoring Project 2010 report shows that only 24% of the people heard or read about in print, radio and television news are female. In contrast, 76% – more than 3 out of 4 – of the people in the news are male. And news continues to portray a world in which men outnumber women in almost all occupational

categories, the highest disparity being in the professions. Meanwhile, high proportions of stories on peace (64%), development (59%) war (56%), and gender-based violence (56%) reinforce gender stereotypes.⁶ These findings confirm the imperative need to include women and integrate gender perspectives in the news media and journalistic profession, including peace journalism.

The genuine peace journalism model, of course, has an inherent gender perspective, which understands how gender relations play out. It is, therefore, better equipped to uncover the underlying roots of armed conflict and helps find solutions for lasting and sustainable peace from the locality and creativity, whether it be

at the grassroots, mid level or upper level or a combination.

Based on collaboration on the project “Women Making Airwaves for Peace” in 2007, two Philippine based women organisations – Isis International and Mindanao Women Writers, Inc. (Min-WoW) – developed “Engendered Peace Journalism: Keeping Community Whole – A Guide on Gender-Sensitive Peace and Conflict Reportage”.⁷ The following matrix is excerpted from this guide. The matrix is adapted from Professor Johan Galtung’s model, which re-frames Peace Journalism from widely practiced War/Violence Journalism in the 20th and 21st centuries.

War/Violence Journalism	Engendered Peace/Conflict Journalism
I. War/Violence-Orientated	I. Peace/Conflict Orientated
Focuses on conflict arena: 2 parties, 1 goal (win), war, general zero-sum orientation	Explores conflict formation x parties, y goals, z issues, general win-win orientation
Focuses on mostly male resource persons – military, head of state, governments, police as source of information	Explores how women and men of all parties are affected and included in win-win orientation
Closed space, closed time, causes and exits in arena, who threw the first stone	Open space, open time, causes and outcomes anywhere, also in history and culture
Making wars opaque/secret	Making conflicts transparent
“Us-them” journalism, propaganda, voice for “us”	Giving voice to all parties, empathy, understanding
Sees “them” as the problem, focuses on who prevails in war	Sees conflict/war as problem, focuses on creativity
Reactive: waiting for violence	Pro-active: before any violence occurs, focuses on initiatives including those coming from the women
Focuses only on the visible effect of violence (killed, wounded and material damage)	Focuses on invisible effects of violence (trauma and glory, damage to structure/culture, marginalization of women and children)
Portrays women and children as helpless victims (see what “they” did to “our” women and children)	Portrays women as active contributors in conflict transformation and peace building
Dehumanizes “them”	Humanizes all side

War/Violence Journalism	Engendered Peace/Conflict Journalism
II. Propaganda-Orientated	II. Truth-Orientated
Exposes "their" untruths	Exposes untruths on all sides
Helps "our" cover-ups/lies	Uncovers all cover-ups
III. Elite-Orientated	III. People-Orientated
Focuses on "our" suffering; on able-bodied elite males being their mouthpiece	Focuses on suffering all over— on women, aged and children; giving voice to the voiceless
Gives name of their evil-doers	Gives names to all evildoers
Focuses on elite peacemakers, mostly men	Focuses on people peacemakers, heroes of nonviolence, including women
IV. Victory-Orientated	IV. Solution-Orientated
Peace = victory + ceasefire	Peace = non-violence + creativity
Conceals peace initiatives, before victory is on hand	Highlights peace initiatives, also to prevent more war
Focuses on treaty, institution, the controlled society	Focuses on structure, culture, the peaceful society
Aftermath: leaving for another war, return if the old flares up again	Aftermath: resolution, reconstruction, reconciliation (includes women's needs and participation), peacebuilding

Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick had outlined 17 tips for a peace journalist on what to do.⁸ In order to (re)frame stories with a gender lens, a journalist may consider the following questions when writing a story:

- Where are the women/girls in the story?
- How can gender information strengthen the story?
- What are the roles of the male and female subjects and how do these factors inform the issues and story?
- What are the power relationships between men and women, in the leadership of the conflict parties, in the negotiation panels, community structures, family structures?
- How do these roles and power relations further explain the issue?

- How are the impacts of events and processes written about in a specific story, different for women and for men?
- Where are the points of collaboration between genders? What are the common grounds and shared interests and needs?

Another useful tool to engender peace journalism is United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 unanimously adopted on October 31 2000, which marks the first time the Security Council addressed the impact of armed conflict on women, recognised the under-valued and under-utilised contributions of women to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building, and stressed the importance of their equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security. UNSCR1820 passed in June 2008, establishes a strong link between sexual violence and sustainable peace

and security. UNSCR1888 (30 September 2009) provides concrete building blocks to advance its implementation.

UNSCR1889 (5 October 2009) builds on the historic UNSCR 1325. It pays particular attention to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the immediate post-conflict peace-building period. These UN resolutions are binding on all UN member states. The media can play a role in monitoring the implementation of these resolutions as well as broaden and deepen the reportage:

- Ask for interviews with all parties to the conflict on the implementation of UNSCR1325 and other resolutions.
- Consult local women's organisations about their UNSCR 1325 monitoring processes and related demands.
- In peace or ceasefire negotiations, ask for the women's representation on negotiation panels. In case no women are represented on the negotiation panels of the different parties, ask what they intend to do about this.
- If national or international armed forces and/or peacekeeping forces are being deployed to a conflict area, ask them if they received any gender training on women's rights and UNSCRs.
- Ask the authorities of refugee camps and relocation sites how they address women's needs and rights as guaranteed by UNSCRs.
- If a peace agreement has been reached, ask how UNSCR 1325 is reflected in the agreement and how much money is allotted to its implementation.
- In post-conflict reconstruction, ask local government, peacekeeping forces and national and international relief organisations, if they trained their personnel in respect to women's rights and UNSCRs. And how they will meet women's needs and guarantee their full participation in post-conflict reconstruction as called by UNSCR 1325 and 1889.

Special attention must also be paid to the safety of journalists covering conflict situations, both

women and men, who are facing a real danger of physical injury and emotional stress.

Conclusion: peace journalism in new era

Media activism is activism that uses media and communication technologies to strengthen a social movement, and/or tries to change policies and practices relating to media and communication. As Lynch pointed out, "It means that peace journalism is possible, and realistic, here and now, for professional journalists, and it can become the focus of media activism."⁹

This is even more promising with the booming wave of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) and rapid growth of community and independent media and civil journalism, which bring the voices and initiatives that are not being reported by mainstream or corporate media in the past. As recent revolutionary movements in Egypt and other Arab countries have so powerfully demonstrated, digital and social media have enabled essential information – via mobile phones, blogs, online social networks, satellite TV, wikis, and user-generated news, photos and videos – to reach people who otherwise would have been disenfranchised.

Meanwhile, collaboration between media and peace advocates, civil society organisations has been recognised as one of the effective strategies and introduced in many training modules on conflict prevention and peace-building, as well as being practiced by media organisations and civil society organisations.

Isis International, a feminist development communication organisation based in the Philippines, has conducted a series of workshops in the Asia-Pacific region for women community radio broadcasters, women community leaders, media professionals, peace advocates, women's human rights advocates and development workers on how to use various media and communication tools, including traditional media like community radio, popular theatre, film and new ICTs such as mobile phones and online social networking, to advocate for lasting peace and climate justice and the elimination of gender-based violence.¹⁰

The community radio station, Radio Purbanchal, in Nepal visited women victims of war and conflict. The visit was coupled with open discussions about the issues facing these women victims and how their rights can be ensured. The discussions initiated by Radio Purbanchal resulted in specific policy recommendations to

the State, including the provision of better and qualitative education to women victims, proper health care and employment opportunities, training and capacity building programmes. Through the initiative of Radio Purbanchal, women also organised to advocate for their rights and welfare.¹¹ ■

Endnotes

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About the Author

Cai Yiping served as the Director of Isis International, from November 2008 to April 2011. Isis International is a non-governmental organization based in Philippines working through media and information and communications technologies (ICTs) towards achieving women's human rights and facilitating networking and information sharing of women's movements in the global South. Prior to joining Isis, Cai was Associate Professor at the Women's Studies Institute of China, and served as the Deputy Director of International News Department, China Women's News, Beijing. She writes extensively on the issue of women's human rights and actively involves in the media advocacy for women's rights in China and internationally. She was the national coordinator for China for WACC's Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) in 2000 and 2005 and regional coordinator for Southeast and East Asia for the "Global Report on the Status Women in the News Media", research conducted by International Women Media Foundation (IWMF) in 2009-10.

Land of the Unconquerable: The Lives of Contemporary Afghan Women

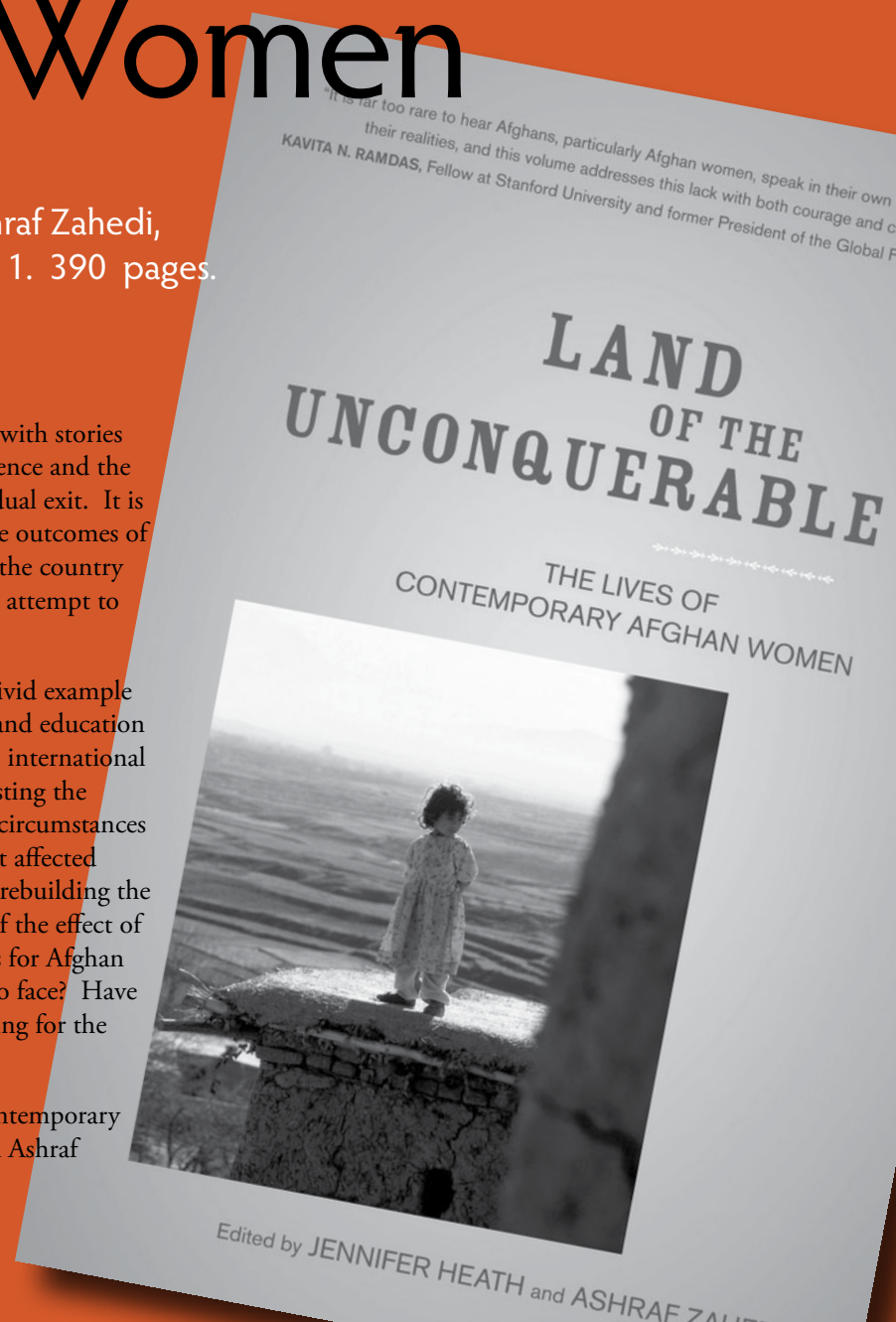
Edited by Jennifer Heath and Ashraf Zahedi,
University of California Press, 2011. 390 pages.

a book review by Eva Sajoo

Afghanistan once again hogs the headlines with stories divided between the ongoing episodes of violence and the preparations of international troops for a gradual exit. It is definitely an appropriate time to reflect on the outcomes of international involvements in Afghanistan as the country is one of the most prominent examples of the attempt to apply UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Afghanistan came to represent an especially vivid example of female exclusion when the empowerment and education of Afghan women became a major concern as international forces entered the country in 2001. After ousting the Taliban, policies designed to address the dire circumstances of illiteracy, poverty, seclusion and silence that affected Afghan women were proclaimed priorities in rebuilding the country. Now a decade later, an assessment of the effect of those policies is due. Has there been progress for Afghan women? What challenges do they continue to face? Have they been included in peace talks or in planning for the reconstruction of their country?

Land of the Unconquerable: The Lives of Contemporary Afghan Women edited by Jennifer Heath and Ashraf



Zahedi provides a cogent and compelling response to these questions. This book is focused on the lives of Afghan women today. Despite the growing list of titles which promise to illuminate this subject, a few can be credited on bringing such a thorough and wide-ranging approach to the task.

Afghan women have long been symbols of competing ideologies, their challenges sensationalised, and their context ignored. This book provides a welcome corrective in dealing with the multi-dimensional aspects of their lived experiences. It has anecdotal chapters which humanise the problems that are so often reported as statistics and help the reader understand how people find themselves in such dire circumstances, instead of focusing on their victimhood. It is also rich with analytical detail and case studies. What makes this book affective is that it captures the voices of Afghan women themselves, and depict the many ways of which they navigate the complex challenges they face to improve their lives.

The book is divided into five parts. Part 1: Perceptions and Realities which deal with the ways the Afghan women are represented. Shireen Burki's chapter, "The Politics of Zan" provides an excellent overview of the history of national reforms for women's rights. Previous governments in Afghanistan have seen women as symbols of modernisation, and sought to implement rapid, often coercive change. Such policies invariably provoked resistance, particularly because the authority and control of a central government in Afghanistan has always been tenuous. For western governments and NGOs too, Afghan women have been symbolic, though the focus has often been on measures of liberty and progress that are often devised without consulting the women themselves. The book challenges western perceptions that liberation can be measured by the number of women wearing burqas, or that the women "below" them are helpless victims. Anne Brodsky's chapter, "Centuries of Threat, Centuries of Resistance" reveals a lengthy but less known history of the many ways in which Afghan women have worked against injustice in their society.

Part 2: A Woman's Place, deals directly with policies designed to fulfill UN Resolution 1325 by giving women a voice in Parliament and politics. In "Women's Political Presence: A Path to Promoting Gender Interests?" Anna Larson challenges the logic of the quota system, which currently requires that twenty eight percent of the seats in Parliament be reserved for women. Among the unintended results of this

rule is the fact that male members of Parliament (MP) now regard this number as a limit, the rest of the seats are reserved for men. The quota also undermines the legitimacy of female candidates, critically seen as token appointees, even if they have received enough votes to be elected on their own right.

The other assumption of the quota system is that women will be united by shared interests, and therefore constitute a voice for women's rights in general. Larson shows that more often, they are influenced by other considerations, including regional, ethnic, and personal divisions, forcing a reconsideration of the effectiveness of this strategy. This part of the book also features interviews with Massouda Jalal, Malalai Joya, Fawzia Koofi and Azita Rafat, all members of Parliament who further illuminate the struggles women face in politics. The other chapters deal with issues affecting the majority of women, such as how to deal with a justice system and a society that continue to operate more in accordance with customs rather than the law.

There are many excellent case studies in this book for development workers and academics alike. In addition to providing detailed examples of projects that have succeeded and policies that have failed in Afghanistan, there were reflections and discussions involving the international development community. Analysis of the rhetorics and policies of aid organisations in Afghanistan are found in Chapter 18. The key approaches in development such as Women In Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) which were discussed in Chapter 19 of the book, puts Afghanistan in a larger context. Too often, in ignoring the priorities of Afghan women themselves, and the cultural sensitivities of the society in which they live, development initiatives in Afghanistan seem to be a mere application of the latest global apparatus. It is an apparatus that seems to keep making the same mistakes, or is inevitably driven by its own logic and packaged technical solutions, disregarding the particular context in which they are being applied.

One of the major points that many authors bring to light is the failure to engage with Afghan men, or the tendency to see them only as oppressors or obstacles to be circumvented, rather than as potential partners for change. As presidential

candidate Massouda Jalal noted in Chapter 7, the fate of Afghanistan is like a bird with two wings, one male and one female. It will not fly unless they work together. There are positive examples of development projects for women's advancement that have worked for Afghan men with much success. Rachel Lehr's account of the creation of Rubia, an NGO she founded to create employment for Afghan women, shows that this can be done. She makes a case that without including men, progress is shaky at best.

The other significant theme that has emerged in many of the chapters is the failure to make use of another indigenous resource for women's empowerment: Islam. This may come as a surprise to some in the activist community who are accustomed to seeing religion in general, and Islam in particular, as an implacable obstacle to women's rights. Sakena Yacoobi, founder of the Afghanistan Institute for Learning (AIL) established in a refugee camp in Peshawar in 1995, has been providing education to women in communities throughout Afghanistan since its formation. She attributes the success of her organisation largely to its sensitivity to local values. This includes having her staff model recognise cultural virtues while locating human rights awareness training within the framework of Islam.

This framework gives great legitimacy to women's aspirations, and disarms reactionaries who have often claimed that human rights and women empowerment are "western" concepts that go against local religion and culture. Several other contributors assert that educational campaigns that articulate women's rights in Islamic terms have great potentials in altering the widespread abuse of religion which justify the patriarchal status quo. While religion is often excluded from development projects and frameworks for women's rights, Afghan women do not see being Muslim and seeking equality as mutually exclusive. They fit within a larger global reality, of women working with and through their cultural and religious resources to bring about change.

Part 5 with its focus on art and culture, provides a rare glimpse of the Afghanistan that rarely gets reported in western media. Aunohita Mojumdar analyses the role of Afghan media, especially the radio, in building new avenues of communication and virtual interaction that can overcome geographical distance and ethno-cultural barriers. Women are especially affected, as radio provides information to remote communities with low literacy levels, as well as an avenue for self expression

through call-in programmes. Such precious opportunities are also supplied by the nascent contemporary art movement which Lauryn Oates records. While some might see art as a trivial pursuit in a country still ravaged by conflict, Oates contends that "the right to make and access art is fundamentally linked to cultural renaissance and national identity, unity, and stability - women's participation in arts and culture can ultimately dismantle some of the structures that facilitated Afghanistan's descent into chaos." Other chapters of the book include the works of contemporary female poets presenting beautifully translated poetry. These accounts reveal other ways in which Afghan women are reclaiming their traditions and challenging many areas of the world they live in.

In assessing the last decade of international involvement in Afghanistan, it is clear that some progress has been made. Yet many opportunities have been missed. Despite initial claims that assisting Afghan women was a primary goal of the international community, there has been more lip service than actual delivery. There is fewer mention of women now as attention has shifted to expedient strategies in exiting the country, even if it means empowering the very parties that excluded women in the first place.

Land of the Unconquerable is unique in the range of perspectives and fields that it brings together. From politics and education to economics and art, this book gives justice to the incredibly varied experiences of Afghan women. A rich mixture of interviews, narratives, case studies, and analysis, it will appeal to academics, activists and most about anyone interested in the unconquerable lives of Afghan women. In presenting the views coming from Afghans themselves, it often challenges assumptions that we have been accustomed to making about Afghan women, and the ideas and policies that have defined our perceptions of them and interactions with them. ■

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Eva Sajoo is a Research Associate with the Centre for the Comparative Study of Muslim Societies and Cultures at Simon Fraser University. Her work focuses on the rights of women in transitional societies, and she has a special interest in Afghanistan. She is a member of Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WA) and resides in Vancouver, Canada.

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