

No Women, No Peace:

The Importance of Women's Participation in Peace and Development

From the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security¹ for the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, March 2004.

I. THE PROBLEM

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

II. THE SOLUTION: Redefine security and systematically listen to and engage women at all stages of conflict prevention and peace-building

This paper presents two sets of recommendations, one to the High-Level Panel and a second to the international community and UN system.

To the High-Level Panel, we recommend:

- 1. Use a '3Ps' framework**— conflict **prevention**, the **participation** of women in peace and security, and the **protection** of civilians with consideration to the specific needs of women, men, girls and boys—when examining global threats and challenges to peace and security in your work and in the final report to the Secretary-General.
- 2. Ensure that women and women's organizations fully and equally participate**, and are resourced to do so, during all of the Panel's regional consultations on threats and challenges to peace and security.
- 3. Incorporate into a framework for collective action international commitments and laws** that exist on women's role in peace and security, including UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000), the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination

¹ The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security was formed in May 2000 to call for a Security Council resolution on women, peace and security. Following the unanimous adoption of resolution 1325 in October 2000, the group now focuses on working towards its full implementation. The working group currently consists of the Hague Appeal for Peace, International Alert, International Women's Tribune Centre, Women's Action for New Directions, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. For more information, see www.peacewomen.org/un/ngo/wg.html.

Against Women (1979).

4. Address how the United Nations, through reform, can better institutionalize and systematize the integration of a gender perspective into all of its work on issues of peace and security. While the UN system currently has a mandate to mainstream gender (1997), it frequently only engenders its work on an ad-hoc basis, which depends on individuals.

To the international community and UN system, we broadly recommend:

The following shifts in thinking are fundamental prerequisites to further change.

- **Define security in human terms.** A paradigm shift must take place away from weapons-based security towards gender-aware human security. Peace must be redefined as not merely the absence of violent conflict but as the positive and creative process of building sustainable societies. A human-centered approach to security encompasses economic development, social justice, environmental protection, democratization and disarmament—the absence of which causes violent conflict. Redirecting funding from arms to human security and sustainable development will establish new priorities ensuring equal participation of marginalized groups, including women; reduce violence; restrict the use of military force; and move toward collective democratic global security.
- **Integrate a ‘3 Ps’ framework** into the planning, design and implementation of initiatives carried out by the UN and international community, including conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peace-building.
- **Expand and revitalize partnerships with civil society**, including the flow of information and systematic consultation at all levels and stages of peace processes. Civil society, in particular women’s organizations, are early warning beacons. They are the eyes, ears and hands on the ground, working to prevent conflict and build peace. They are most able to identify situations of pending violence perpetrated by State and non-State actors. Peace is sustainable only if it is locally driven and locally owned. This requires systematic consultation as well as adequate resources.
- **Build a culture of peace.** A culture of peace, as defined by the UN, must replace the culture of violence. Gender equality is a necessary ingredient. The UN has defined a culture of peace as, “a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations.” We can eliminate violence, where women are seen as victims, sexualized objects or as ‘the other,’ through the introduction of holistic, participatory peace education. Peace education is achieved in curricula and community that help people understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts non-violently, and live by international standards of human rights and equity.

Within the UN system, we recommend:

- 1. Implement monitoring mechanism for 1325.** The Security Council, as suggested by several Member States, must institute a mechanism to monitor, report and ensure the full and systematic implementation of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. This could include the appointment of a Council sub-committee or working group to “champion” the principles of resolution 1325 and ensure their inclusion into every action the Council undertakes.
- 2. Provide ongoing training to Special Representatives and Envoys of the Secretary-General** on UNSC resolution 1325 and related documents, carried out by DPA and DPKO in collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues (OSAGI), Friends of 1325 and civil society organizations.
- 3. Enforce more aggressively existing UN guidelines and procedures** on the protection and participation of women. The General Assembly and ECOSOC must assume more responsibility to ensure that guidelines and procedures such as “codes of conduct” for peacekeeping and humanitarian staff and UNHCR’s Five Commitments to Refugee Women and Guidelines on Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence are routinely enforced.
- 4. Appoint more women to high-level posts.** The Secretary-General must be a role model, using his authority and following his own recommendation, to appoint more women Special Representatives, Special Envoys and Under-Secretaries-General.
- 5. Establish a special fund for women’s participation in peace processes.** The UN system must establish a fund located in the Secretariat, administered and appropriately staffed (in terms of expertise and numbers) and resourced, to enable women to travel to and participate in formal peace processes.
- 6. Partner with local civil society groups to form Inter-Agency Taskforces** similar to the Inter-Agency Taskforce on Women, Peace and Security and the Gender Taskforce for the UN Iraq Mission.

III. THE CONTEXT

A. At the UN: Where are the Women?

- Of 27 current peace operations, the Secretary-General has appointed only 1 woman as head of mission or Special Representative (UNOMIG). At the level of Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG), there are 3 women out of 14 positions (UNOMIG, MONUC, MINUGUA).
- Of 15 current peacekeeping missions, only 4 have designated gender units (UNMIK, MONUC, UNMISSET, and UNMIL).
- Women represent only 25% of civilian professional staff, 4% of civilian police and 1.5% of military personnel working on peacekeeping operations (from DPI).

- Of 37 current Under-Secretaries-General, only 5 are women (from OSAGI, June 2003).
- Of 43 current Assistant Secretaries-General, only 8 are women (from OSAGI June 2003). In March, 2 more women Assistant Secretaries-General were appointed.
- Of 16 members of the Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, only 3 are women.
- Of 264 country-specific and thematic reports of the Secretary-General from January 2000 to September 2003, 67% made no reference or only 1 reference to women or gender issues (from OSAGI).
- Of 225 Security Council resolutions from January 2000 to September 2003, only 14.7% included any language on women or gender issues (from OSAGI).

B. Measures taken by the UN and International Community

The UN and the international community have taken some positive measures to include and acknowledge the contributions of women in building peace and security. These include:

- Unanimous adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000);
- Inclusion of sexual and gender violence as war crimes and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court and International Criminal Tribunals;
- Establishment of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues (OSAGI) in the UN;
- Appointment of Gender Adviser Units in five UN peacekeeping operations;
- Development of "codes of conduct" for peacekeeping and humanitarian staff;
- Gender-awareness training developed by DPKO and provided for some country's civilian and military forces prior to selected Missions;
- Establishment of the post of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (1994); and
- Adoption of the ECOSOC Resolution on Gender Mainstreaming (2001).

While welcome, these measures are inadequate and their implementation has been ad-hoc.

UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000) is a watershed political framework that makes women—and a gender perspective—central to negotiating peace agreements, planning refugee camps and peacekeeping operations, and reconstructing war-torn societies. It also makes the pursuit of gender equality central to every single action the Council and the entire UN undertake. Yet more than 3 years after its unanimous adoption, glaring gaps in its implementation persist.

Furthermore, some of the most egregious violations of women in conflict situations—in Colombia, Sudan and Northern Uganda among others—remain inadequately addressed

by the UN. Many conflicts are not on the agenda of the UN Security Council. Current levels of UN and international engagement, including situations affecting long-term refugees, are insufficient.

C. Women in Formal Peace Processes: A Vast Potential Untapped

Despite the work women do at the grassroots level to organize for peace, their voices go unheard during formal peace negotiations. Male leaders of the fighting parties normally negotiate an end to war. Women, who have usually not taken up arms, and have held communities together, are told they have no business at the table.

Formal peace negotiations mean more than an end to fighting. They can include power-sharing agreements; economic reconstruction; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of soldiers; legislation on human rights; access to land, education and health; the status of displaced people; and the empowerment of civil society. For these reasons, peace agreements provide a unique opportunity to create and transform institutions and relationships within society—including issues related to gender equality and the position and rights of women.

When half the population is excluded from negotiations, the democratic legitimacy and sustainability of those negotiations are seriously called into question.

Where women have been at the peace table, their presence has made a substantive difference. In the Northern Ireland peace talks, in South Africa and in Guatemala, women's participation has focused attention on human rights and institutions to build peace. Women bring innovative approaches to the peacemaking process. Their concerns emerge from their own experiences and connections with their communities. Women tend to advocate for healing and prevention of further violence, calling for the institutionalization of peace education in post-conflict societies and ensuring the presence of women in parliaments, all of which help sustain the social gains made from their inclusion in peace processes.

The following documents, available at <http://www.peacewomen.org>, are recommended for further reading:

- ❖ UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, S/RES/1325 (2000), http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf.
- ❖ *Women, Peace and Security: At a Glance*, an overview of the Secretary-General's Study on Women, Peace and Security, Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), 2002.
- ❖ *Women War Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and the Women's Role in Peace-building*, by Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 2002.
- ❖ *Peace agreements as a means for promoting gender equality and ensuring participation of women: A framework of model provisions*, Report of the Expert Group Meeting, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Department of Political Affairs, EGM/PEACE/2003/ REPORT.
- ❖ *Enhancing Women's Participation in Electoral Processes in Post-conflict Countries*, Report of the Expert Group Meeting, Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Department of Political Affairs, EGM/ELEC/2004/ REPORT.
- ❖ UN Commission on the Status of Women's Agreed Conclusions on women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building, March 2004.
- ❖ *Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming*, Department for Disarmament Affairs, 2003, <http://disarmament2.un.org/gender/gmap.pdf>.