

# Peacebuilders' Reflections on Gender, Peace and Security

## Conciliation Resources, International Alert and Saferworld

*Joint Submission to the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security*

The past twenty years have seen some remarkable successes in the advancement of gender equality and the gender-sensitization of peacebuilding across the world. Our recent work has been focused on furthering the understanding of the links between gender, violence and peace in order to create gender-sensitive peace and security responses.

This year, several key milestones are being marked: fifteen years since the passage of UNSCR 1325, 20 years since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, a review of the Peacekeeping Operations and a ten-year review of the Peacebuilding architecture will be undergone this year.

As organisations dedicated to building peace, **Conciliation Resources**, **International Alert** and **Saferworld** have prepared a joint submission to the Global Study on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda to reflect on progress, assess priorities, and recommend effective ways to realise peacebuilding and gender equality goals.

### Challenges of the past twenty years

While the frameworks above have led to marked improvements in gender-sensitive policy and programming in the field of peace and security, several significant challenges have been encountered:

- **Gender has too often been merely viewed as a 'tick box' exercise.** This has meant that emphasis has been placed on quantitative aspects such as the number of women involved in certain sectors, processes or events without ensuring the impact or meaningfulness of this involvement. Originally intended as a lens for analysing and transforming unequal power relations, gender has more commonly been treated as merely a technical add-on to peace and security initiatives without fundamentally influencing their design. This has de-politicised approaches to inclusion and change. Gender is ultimately about power dynamics, identities, possibilities and vulnerabilities across societies. All of these have an immense bearing both on violent conflict and peacebuilding, and only a comprehensive, nuanced gender analysis can help us better understand them.
- **Current approaches often ignore the variations and hierarchies within and across women and men, as well as those who do not subscribe to these binary identities.** These hierarchies are produced by the interaction of gender with other identity factors such as age, social class, geographical location, sexuality or marital status. The wife of a rural leader may have more access to resources and justice than an urban young male motorbike taxi driver. Narrow approaches to women as a homogenous group, often portrayed as powerless victims, fail to address the complexities of roles played by, the varying needs and above all the agency of different women both in conflict and in peacebuilding. The variety of men's roles and needs are treated as default and not analysed from a gender perspective, whereas their gendered vulnerabilities are often ignored or side-lined. When men are brought into the picture, this tends to be mainly as perpetrators of violence against, or wielders of patriarchal power over women. Consequently, many international development and peacebuilding actors base their engagement on a simplistic understanding of gender dynamics, resulting in an approach that

does little more than to ‘add women and stir’. This can lead to a backlash if underlying gender relations are not taken into account. For example, the targeting of economic and livelihood support to displaced women has often been followed by an increase in domestic violence against them, as men seek to reassert their authority. Furthermore, the particular needs, vulnerabilities and agencies of sexual and gender minorities in peacebuilding processes are rarely taken into account. Moreover, it is important to raise the questions of masculinities and femininities in other fields, not least in the peace and security sector itself. A reflective look on militarised masculinities and femininities among peacekeeping forces, gendered power dynamics among civilian personnel including INGOs, as well as broader entrenched gender norms in the sector needs to be taken.

- ***Donor funding and policy attention on women, peace and security (WPS) has been increasingly narrowing to a focus on addressing Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in conflict.*** While this has brought much needed attention to a previously ignored issue, and made sexual violence in conflict a matter of international peace and security, the overwhelmingly technical approaches to ‘ending sexual violence in conflict’ with little if any attention for the links between violence and gender more generally have coincided with a side-lining of the more challenging topic of increasing political participation and economic empowerment of women and addressing structural gender inequalities. They may also lead to other forms of violence and militarisation being tacitly disregarded.

***UNSCR 1325 and Gender, Peace and Security (GPS)***

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and the broader women, peace and security (WPS) framework has been incredibly important in bringing gender onto the peace and security agenda. It has secured greater attention for women’s participation in peace and security efforts and raised attention to women’s specific needs in conflict-affected countries. It has not, however, resulted in the integration of a gender perspective in peace and security efforts – despite explicit calls for this in UNSCR 1325. The term ‘gender’ is used interchangeably with ‘women’. The WPS framework has also not led to a more substantial shift in how the international community approaches peace and security more broadly. This has undermined the transformative potential of the WPS agenda, namely to change the way we approach peace and security to be more inclusive.

## Recommendations for the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security

We recommend that the study should consider and integrate the following priorities for donors, agencies, NGOs and policymakers:

- ***Conduct analysis that explores how gender (and other) power hierarchies are (re)produced in specific contexts:*** In order to comprehensively understand conflict, and design effective peace and security responses, one needs to study gender dynamics within a given context. By studying how gender is produced through interaction with other variables such as social class, urban-rural dynamics and age, a more informed analysis can lead to more targeted and effective peace and security programming. Understanding the intersections of gender and power dynamics is relevant in fragile and conflict-affected low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) but also in high-income countries (HICs).
- ***Integrate a broader gender approach into peace & security efforts and institutions.*** While we argue that the promotion of gender perspectives includes but also goes beyond

consideration of women, it is also vital that these approaches are not seen as mutually exclusive. Integrating gender comprehensively into work on peace and security will lead to more inclusive programming with greater impact to help build less violent societies. While furthering the building of more peaceful societies, broader gender approaches should always be designed to also advance women's empowerment and gender equality more effectively.

- ***Develop participatory and evidence-based advocacy*** – In order to help further understand why it is important to support context-sensitive work, it is essential to connect advocacy work with available research on the links between gender, peace and security. Lobbying international institutions, local and donor governments, civil society, media as well as other relevant actors, needs to be done based on a grounded understanding of issues and relevant findings and in close collaboration with local partners.
- ***Acknowledge and investigate how gender and conflict interact***. While political statements about the importance of gender equality for peace and security have become commonplace (which in itself is positive), rarely are clear explanations offered as to why they are linked. The evidence of a strong correlation between gender equality and levels of peacefulness highlights the importance of understanding how particular constructions of masculinities and femininities, which are used to justify and reinforce inequalities, might also contribute to militarisation and conflict, and vice versa.
- ***Promote gender-sensitive conflict analysis*** – Gender-sensitive conflict analysis, which sheds light on the particular power dynamics of a society and is particularly attentive to excluded issues and groups, is an effective way of developing more effective peace and security responses. It is not enough to just request such analysis of others; guidance and trainings should be provided.
- ***Focus on prevention of violent conflict*** – The 'prevention' pillar of the WPS agenda is often interpreted in practice as referring to the prevention of SGBV in conflict rather than the prevention of conflict itself. The international community should make clear that this pillar also refers to the prevention of conflict, and revive this aspect of the agenda.
- ***Provide dedicated funds for GPS agenda*** – Providing funds that are accessible to civil society including women's rights organisations is crucial. Moreover, smaller local CSOs working on peacebuilding and gender equality which often do not have the capacity to access many of the funding opportunities available which are increasingly designed for large INGOs with high levels of management capacity, are often forgotten players in the peacebuilding sector and dedicating funds for them is crucial.
- ***Ensure that GPS is considered in the reviews of the UN peacebuilding architecture and the High Level Panel on Peace Operations*** – While focusing on designing and implementing external peace and security efforts, a critical and reflective look inside the peacebuilding sector is necessary. Tackling issues of SGBV and more deeply entrenched gender norms among UN-mandated peacekeeping forces and troop- and police contributing countries as well as civilian staff and contractors, examining the impacts of gendered institutional cultures of peacebuilding actors, moving beyond simply talking about making peace processes more inclusive and involving women's participation in them, to insisting on it among donors as well as working towards gender equality within mostly 'Western'-based peacebuilding organisations and agencies are necessary.

- **Support inclusive peace processes and promote women's participation** – women play crucial roles to find inclusive and consensus-based solutions to conflict. Yet they face major challenges to engage in formal peace processes, where exclusion is often the norm. Moreover, informal efforts to influence the formal peace process and build local-level peace are not sufficiently harnessed or recognised. Greater resources, both financial and political, should be earmarked to support the participation of women as key actors in peacebuilding efforts at all levels.

### Related resources:

#### Conciliation Resources:

Conciliation Resources, "Women's participation and inclusive peace processes: lessons from Mindanao and beyond", April 2015, available at: <http://www.c-r.org/resources/submission-global-study-women-peace-and-security>

Conciliation Resources "Gender in Peacebuilding", June 2014, available at: <http://www.c-r.org/resources/gender-and-peacebuilding>

Conciliation Resources "Accord Insight: Women building peace", 2013, available at: <http://www.c-r.org/accord-project/women-and-peacebuilding-insight>

#### International Alert:

Henri Myrntinen, Jana Naujoks and Judy El-Bushra, "Re-thinking gender in Peacebuilding", International Alert, March 2014, available at: <http://www.international-alert.org/resources/publications/rethinking-gender-peacebuilding>

Lana Khattab, "Why 2015 is critical for gender in peacebuilding", March 2015, available at: <http://www.international-alert.org/blog/why-2015-is-critical-to-gender-and-peacebuilding>

#### Saferworld:

Hannah Wright, "Masculinities, conflict and peacebuilding: perspectives on men through a gender lens", *Saferworld*, November 2014, available at: <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/862-masculinities-conflict-and-peacebuilding-perspectives-on-men-through-a-gender-lens>

Saferworld, "Reviving conflict prevention in 1325: Submission to the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security", March 2015, available at <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/890-reviving-conflict-prevention-in-1325>