



Clockwise from left: teaching women literacy and political rights in Yemen; a policewoman in Afghanistan; a villager addressing an Oxfam public health meeting in South Sudan; a Syrian refugee in Lebanon; discussing local peace issues in South Sudan. Credits on back page.

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: KEEPING THE PROMISE

How to revitalize the agenda 15 years after UNSCR 1325

In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 to uphold women's rights in conflict and their roles in peace and security. Despite signs of progress, the impact on women's lives and roles worldwide has been sporadic. Fifteen years on, the UN and Member States should use a formal review of the Women, Peace and Security agenda as a crucial opportunity to address key gaps. New commitments should focus on women's participation, preventing conflict and gender-based violence, monitoring and implementation, and financing.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conflicts threaten devastating consequences for everyone – but women and girls face particular impacts. In general, women and girls have access to fewer resources to protect and sustain themselves, are more often the deliberate target of gender-based violence and are more often excluded from political processes essential for peace and security.

The number of conflicts – especially intra-state conflicts – has recently been on the rise worldwide (although still below the peak that occurred in the mid-1990s) contributing to record numbers of forcibly displaced people in 2014.¹ Many of these conflicts are marked by violent extremism and acts of gender-based violence and abuse. This poses huge challenges both for communities and governments directly affected and for world leaders charged with maintaining international peace and security. The need for inclusive peace and recovery processes backed by popular support has never been greater. Yet, although women have led and supported peace and recovery efforts in communities across the world, they remain largely excluded from negotiations and decision making.

Recognizing these challenges, the international community has taken some important steps. In 2000, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. UNSCR 1325 called for women to participate in peace efforts, greater protection from violations of their human rights, improved access to justice, and measures to address discrimination.

Since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, there have been many new commitments, growing policy recognition and increasing political rhetoric in relation to the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Six additional UN Security Council resolutions have helped develop the policy framework and promote positive norms. Denmark became the first country to develop its National Action Plan (NAP) to implement UNSCR 1325 in 2005, while Côte d'Ivoire led the way in sub-Saharan Africa in 2007. The African Union Commission launched its five-year Gender, Peace and Security Programme in June 2014 to promote women's participation and protection across the continent. By July 2015, 49 states² had published one or more NAPs.

There have been some visible achievements in countries recovering from conflict. Twenty years after the 1994 genocide, Rwanda has the highest ratio of female parliamentarians in the world: 64 percent.³ In 2006, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected Liberia's first female president in the wake of that country's civil war. In Afghanistan's 2014 presidential and provincial elections, a record 300 women stood as candidates for provincial councils. There are 69 female MPs in Afghanistan (27.7 percent of a total of 249) compared with none in 2001.

However, the impact on women's lives and their formal role in peace and security worldwide has been sporadic. Globally, the political will required to enable women's meaningful participation in peace processes and security institutions, to holistically address the underlying causes of conflict, violence

'Resolution 1325 holds a promise to women across the globe that their rights will be protected and that barriers to their equal participation and full involvement in the maintenance and promotion of sustainable peace will be removed. We must uphold this promise.'

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, October 2004

and gender inequality, to promote implementation through transparent reporting and civil society engagement, and to mobilize necessary financial resources, is frequently absent.

High Level Review – addressing the obstacles

As the world prepares to mark the 15th anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in October 2015, the Security Council is conducting a High Level Review. This welcome review aims to assess progress at the global, regional and national levels in implementing UNSCR 1325, renew key commitments, and address obstacles that have been identified. To prepare for this, the Secretary-General commissioned a Global Study to identify good practice, gaps and challenges, and priorities for action.

The effort that Spain, which holds the presidency of the UN Security Council in October, has been putting into its preparations for the High Level Review is welcome, as is its aspiration that any new UN Security Council resolution be genuinely measurable. Spain has also been playing a positive role by promoting the integration of the Women, Peace and Security agenda into various UN Security Council activities.

Actions by Spain and the UK (which leads on the Women, Peace and Security agenda at the UN Security Council) to mobilize wider political support for necessary new commitments are also welcome and should be complemented by engaging civil society and women's rights organizations to inform discussions and preparations for the High Level Review.

It is essential that all UN Member States and agencies use the High Level Review, the findings of the Global Study and recommendations by relevant civil society organizations (especially women's rights groups) not only to recommit to the principles and ambition of the Women, Peace and Security agenda – they should also adopt new specific measures to address the gaps and challenges identified, set new targets and translate useful policy and political recognition into more effective practice.

For example, women's meaningful participation in peace talks supported by the international community remains a rarity. An Oxfam study of 23 known Afghanistan peace talks between 2005 and 2014, for example, found that during negotiations between the international community and the Taliban, not a single Afghan woman had been involved.⁴ Such cases send a terrible message to all other actors that women do not matter, reinforcing gender inequality and the marginalization of women. At local levels, women's participation in peace building and conflict prevention activities as well as the monitoring of peace accords is often hindered by physical risks and limited access to basic services and livelihoods.

The UN and some Member States have made progress in supporting women's roles and integrating gender expertise and analysis – but more needs to be done. The UN itself should build on existing targets for women's leadership and ensure that, by 2020, 40 percent of senior roles across its peace, security and development institutions, including envoys and heads of agencies, are held by women.⁵

Important steps have been taken to reduce the impacts of conflict. These include the landmark Arms Trade Treaty, which obliges state parties to consider the risks to women and girls arising from arms transfers. But the prevention of conflict itself – including by tackling the complex root causes of conflict such as structural social and economic inequalities – has not received adequate attention. A holistic approach informed by a comprehensive gender analysis is needed that, for example, enables women to engage in local peacebuilding efforts by addressing not just their technical capacity and advocacy skills but also their basic needs.

Turning rhetoric into reality

There have been significant efforts to raise awareness and mobilize efforts in relation to gender-based violence in conflict. Serious obstacles remain, however, including the lack of female personnel in the security sector and the frequent failure to hold perpetrators of gender-based violence accountable. More robust action is needed to ensure that the positive rhetoric around efforts to tackle gender-based violence is matched by reality.

Challenges and gaps on the issue of reporting and implementation remain. At the UN Security Council, systematic mechanisms to promote effective analysis, monitoring and implementation in relation to Women, Peace and Security were absent at the outset. This may account for the inconsistent integration of UNSCR 1325 commitments in Security Council discussions, documents and decisions over the years. For example, not one of the 11 Security Council resolutions on Israel–Palestine since 2000 has mentioned gender or UNSCR 1325 commitments.

Such gaps not only maintain the exclusion of women from peace talks but miss opportunities to revive peace processes on conflicts that have defied all attempts to resolve them. Recent efforts to address such issues at the UN Security Council are welcome. But setting up a dedicated working group – comprising experts from Member States, UN agencies, and civil society – to review and inform UN Security Council plans, actions and resourcing, would improve consistency and accelerate progress. The 2015 Peace Building Architecture Review and the High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations also provide opportunities to promote gender equality across all peace and security activities in mutually reinforcing ways.

Across the world, Member States can enhance implementation by ensuring their action plans are supported by formal processes to engage women's rights groups and civil society experts, as well as through regular public reporting of progress and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation. States looking for a model of civil society engagement should consider the Netherlands NAP, whose production involved a wide range of actors including research institutes, international NGOs, women's peace movements and diaspora groups.⁶

Another crucial weakness in the Women, Peace and Security agenda has been the lack of funding to implement it. Without an adequate, dedicated budget, a national or regional action plan (RAP) resembles a car without fuel: it may be well designed, but it remains incapable of moving forward. A few countries, such as Spain, started well but then cut their NAP funding to inadequate levels.

Missing from the table

From 1992 to 2011, less than 4% of signatories to peace agreements and less than 10% of negotiators at peace talks were women.

UN Women Sourcebook on Women, Peace and Security, 2012

Overseas aid to support gender equality in fragile states has been rising – but only six percent of such assistance targets gender equality as a principal aim. In the peace and security sector, the proportion of aid focused on gender equality is even less – two percent.⁷ This is well below the amount needed to fulfil Women, Peace and Security commitments. Donors should increase aid furthering gender equality in fragile states based on recommendations in the Global Study, and in their peace and security spending match existing UN targets for peacebuilding expenditure devoted to gender equality.⁸

Such support should include reliable core funding and accessible, sizeable grants to women’s rights organizations, which conduct crucial work but often struggle for resources.⁹ In fragile states, organizations and institutions working on women’s rights and empowerment receive just one percent of all aid targeting gender equality. Mechanisms designed to deliver accessible funding to such organizations, such as the Global Acceleration Instrument on Women, Peace and Security as well as numerous independent Women’s Funds, provide opportunities for this.

This paper outlines Oxfam’s analysis of the main gaps and challenges in the Women, Peace and Security agenda and recommendations for increasing its impact. Section One focuses on women’s participation in peace processes and security institutions. Section Two, outlines gaps and solutions in relation to conflict prevention and gender-based violence. Section Three addresses the theme of reporting, monitoring and implementation, highlighting the role of civil society organizations. Section Four examines the question of financial resources.

This document draws on consultations with other organizations and experts in the field as well as on Oxfam’s experience as a humanitarian and development organization working in more than 90 countries with a substantial track record of programmes supporting women’s rights and empowerment. The paper makes particular use of evidence and analysis from programmes in Afghanistan, Iraq, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The UN and Member States should implement the following in accordance with their roles and responsibilities.

Participation

1. **Ensure women’s roles and demands are effectively integrated into all international, regional and national peace and security processes and institutions.** Governments mediating or supporting peace, security and development discussions, including ‘Friends’ groups, should insist on the meaningful participation of women as a condition of their involvement. Women representing communities should be enabled to participate meaningfully at all levels through advocacy training, adequate technical and financial support, and well-resourced UN gender and women’s rights expertise.

2. **Strengthen UN female participation and leadership** by ensuring women achieve a minimum 40 percent share of senior positions across the UN's peace, security and development architecture by 2020, including special representatives, envoys and heads of agencies, as well as senior roles in conflict and post-conflict-related missions as per existing UN targets on women in senior positions.

Conflict prevention and gender-based violence

3. **Increase comprehensive efforts to prevent conflict**, supported by systematic gender analysis and the promotion of gender equality, that place a greater focus on root causes of conflict such as social and economic inequalities, inequitable access to basic services and resources, climate change impacts, poor governance and accountability, and militarism. There should also be more holistic support for women's roles and participation in efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and tackle political extremism.
4. **Pursue greater, more holistic efforts to prevent gender-based violence** with more attention and resources to address underlying causes of gender-based violence and gender inequality, more effective implementation of article 7(4) of the Arms Trade Treaty on risks to women, increased support for the recruitment, retention and capacity of women in security services, and tackling impunity by consistently and visibly holding all perpetrators of gender-based violence – including UN and other international security personnel – to account.

Monitoring and implementation

5. **Improve reporting, monitoring and implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda at the UN Security Council** by establishing a dedicated expert working group drawn from Member States, UN agencies and civil society to review and inform Security Council plans, actions and resourcing; institutionalizing civil society briefings as per UNSCR 2122 during open debates and formal meetings; supporting Member States to establish formal consultative mechanisms with civil society (including women's rights organizations) to assist the context analysis for, and the design, monitoring and evaluation of, national plans and actions. Additionally, consistently integrate Women, Peace and Security commitments in all UN Security Council activities.
6. **Improve reporting, monitoring and implementation in Member States** by ensuring NAPs and regional action plans are supported by establishing formal mechanisms to engage women's rights groups and civil society experts in relevant planning and review processes. There should be regular, transparent reporting of progress through parliamentary statements, public briefings and publications, as well as mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of results with clear indicators and timeframes.

Financing

7. **Ensure all Member States commit to developing adequately resourced NAPs** with dedicated resources and budgets, as recommended by UNSCR 2122, by the end of 2016.
8. **Substantially increase donor funding in support of Women, Peace and Security and related gender equality aims**, based on the Global

Study recommendation that 15 percent of aid to crisis contexts is allocated to address women's needs and gender equality, and ensuring that by 2020 at least 15 percent of peace and security spending principally targets gender equality (in line with UN peacebuilding targets). As part of this, donors should commit to multi-year, core funding and sizeable grants for women's organizations. This should include funds channelled via the Global Acceleration Instrument on Women, Peace and Security as well as Women's Funds.

NOTES

- 1 The number of armed conflicts, especially intra-state conflicts, has increased in the current decade compared with the preceding two decades: Global Conflict Report, Center for Systemic Peace, 2014. The number of conflicts and conflicts deaths remains lower than the post-Second World War peak witnessed in the mid-1990s, after which the number of conflicts declined till the mid-2000s. Global Conflict Trends, Center for Systemic Peace, 2014 (see <http://www.systemicpeace.org/conflictrends.html>) The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported 60 million forcibly displaced people in 2014: the highest number it has ever recorded.
- 2 This includes the State of Palestine, whose UNSCR 1325 NAP was approved by cabinet ministers in May 2015. Development of the UNSCR 1325 NAP was assisted by a coalition of local civil society organizations supported by Oxfam.
- 3 In 1994, approximately one-fifth of Rwanda's MPs were women.
- 4 See Oxfam report 'Behind Closed Doors', November 2014, <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/behind-closed-doors-the-risk-of-denying-women-a-voice-in-determining-afghanista-335875>.
- 5 The targets for women in senior positions were first set in the Report of the Secretary-General on Women and Peace and Security in September 2011. This called for women to comprise at least 30 percent of senior positions (grade P-5 and above) in UN entities operating in conflict and post-conflict situations by 2014, and 40 percent by 2020.
- 6 The current Dutch NAP (2012–15) has been signed by three Dutch government ministries, four research institutions and over 30 civil society organisations, including Oxfam's Dutch affiliate, Oxfam Novib.
- 7 Briefing by OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (Gendernet), March 2015: Financing UN Security Council Resolution 1325.
- 8 The Global Study finalized in July 2015 recommends that 15 percent of overseas development assistance (ODA) is earmarked to furthering gender equality in crisis and conflict contexts. Additionally, the UN has a minimum target of 15 percent of UN-managed peacebuilding spending for addressing women's needs and gender equality, as recommended in the seven-point action plan in the Report of the Secretary-General on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding, 2010.
- 9 See A. Arutyunova and C. Clark (2013) 'Watering the leaves, starving the roots: The Status of Financing for Women's Rights Organizing and Gender Equality'. AWID, available at: <http://www.awid.org/publications/watering-leaves-starving-roots#sthash.XEYRBKIZ.dpuf>

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This paper was written by Shaheen Chughtai. Oxfam acknowledges the assistance of Colm Byrne, Sally Chin, Julie Diallo, Tess Dico-Young, Edla Muga, Paula San Pedro, Poe Ei Phyu, Jessica Skinner, and Serge Veldhuizen in its production.

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The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International under ISBN 978-1-78077-928-7 in September 2015.

Oxfam GB, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, UK.

Photo credits front page, clockwise from top left: Hani Mohammad/Oxfam; Ellie Kealey/Oxfam; Crispin Hughes; Joelle Bassoul/Oxfam; Mackenzie Knowles.

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