



The Women, Peace and Security Agenda – 15 Years On

The Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325

In the context of the UN and global governance, 2015 was truly ‘a year of reviews’. The Global Study on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) was one of three major peace and security reviews completed last year, the other two being the reviews on UN peace operations and UN peacebuilding architecture. This policy brief summarizes some of the main findings and recommendations of the Global Study, and points to some key areas of concern regarding the next phase of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda.

Brief Points

- A comprehensive normative framework on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) has been adopted. Yet, the implementation of UNSCR 1325 is insufficient.
- Civil society actors are disappointed at the international community’s lack of will and ability to take concrete action, particularly in addressing sexual violence in conflict.
- Little progress has been made on increasing women’s participation in formal peace processes.
- The WPS agenda is notoriously underfunded. To remedy the situation a minimum of 15% of all peace and security programming should be earmarked for women and gender equality projects.
- The rise of violent extremism and its threats to women’s lives has emerged as a new component of the WPS agenda.

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The Women, Peace and Security Review Process

In October 2013 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2122, which among other things requested that the UN Secretary-General conduct a review of the implementation of UNSCR 1325, which was adopted in October 2000. The findings of this review were to be presented and discussed at the Security Council Open Debate marking the 15th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 in October 2015. Following this request, an independent global study was commissioned by the Secretary-General. Radhika Coomaraswamy, former Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, was appointed lead author of the Global Study, supported by a High-Level Advisory Group comprised of 17 individuals representing all regions of the world. The mandate of the Global Study was to identify gaps and challenges in the implementation of UNSCR 1325, emerging trends, and, most importantly, to identify priorities for action.

In October 2015, the Global Study *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*¹ was launched at UN Headquarters in New York. The Secretary-General also submitted his own report to the Security Council in September.² The review process culminated on October 13, 2015 with a UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security entitled *High-level Review on Women, Peace and Security: 15*



Members of the UN Security Council adopt a new resolution on Women, Peace and Security, 13 October 2015. Photo: UN Photo

years of Security Council resolution 1325. The outcome of this Open Debate was the adoption of UNSCR 2242, which provides concrete steps for action.³ Much of the text of UNSCR 2242 (2015) refers back to the findings and recommendations of the UN Secretary-General's report and the Global Study.

The Global Study

At 417 pages, the Global Study is comprehensive and ambitious. The study provides analysis and findings backed up by thorough references to the most recent research and updated data from academic institutions, think tanks and civil society organizations. Some of the research was also commissioned by the study secretariat UN Women, for the purpose of this specific review.

Early on it was announced that the study team would go about their work applying an inclusive work method. Consultations were held with various UN entities, member states, regional organizations and civil society organizations. Member states and international and regional organizations sent in over 60 submissions providing analysis and recommendations to the study. Many civil society organizations mobilized: the study secretariat received input from 47 organizations, academics and research institutions. A survey of civil society organizations was also conducted, generating responses from 317 organizations in 71 countries. This inclusive

method may explain the comprehensive end result.

Nevertheless, criticism has been raised, among others from women's organizations in Latin America, that the study was not inclusive enough. Little information was made available about the Latin American consultations, and very few civil society organizations operating at the local level were represented. The inputs from civil society groups were dominated by organizations from the Global North, it has been claimed.⁴

The findings of the Global Study present a generally negative view of insufficient implementation of UNSCR 1325. In particular, there is a strong feeling of disappointment among civil society actors at the international community's lack of will and ability to take concrete action in addressing sexual violence in conflict, despite the fact that a comprehensive normative framework has been adopted. Julienne Lusenge, President of Female Solidarity for Integrated Peace and Development in Eastern DRC, when speaking at the opening of the Security Council review debate, echoed this disappointment when she said: "I thought long and hard before deciding to come back here, and wondered whether or not it was worth the effort."

Members of High-Level Advisory Group

Ms. Madeleine Rees (United Kingdom)
Ms. Elisabeth Rehn (Finland)
Major General Patrick Cammaert (Netherlands)
Ms. Luz Mendez (Guatemala)
Ms. Liliana Andrea Silva Bello (Colombia)
Ms. Sharon Bhagwan Rolls (Fiji)
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Ms. Ruth Ochieng (Uganda)
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Ms. Maha Abu Dayyeh (Palestine/Israel)
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Ms. Igballe Rogova (Kosovo)
Ms. Pramila Patten (Mauritius)
Ms. Bandana Rana (Nepal)



Members of the UN Security Council adopt a new resolution on Women, Peace and Security, 13 October 2015. Photo: UN Photo

Global Study Findings and Recommendations

Key findings from the Global Study include:

- A comprehensive normative framework has been adopted by the international community, especially with regard to sexual violence in armed conflicts. Even so, there are very few cases of prosecution.
- Little progress has been made on women's participation in peace mediation and peace building processes.
- Progress on WPS continues to be measured in 'firsts' rather than as standard practice.
- The WPS agenda suffers from a worrying lack of funding.
- 15 years on from the passing of UNSCR 1325, only 54 UN member states have adopted national action plans for its implementation.
- The rise of violent extremism has led to increased threats to women's lives, and must be treated as a security issue integral to the WPS agenda.

The many recommendations of the Global Study are summarized in an annex of 20 pages.⁵ Some

of the most important general recommendations – or “principles around which the world should unite” – include:

- Greater attention must be paid to the prevention of conflict, including preemptive dialogue efforts at the local, national and international levels.
- A minimum of 15% of all peace and security programming should be earmarked for women and gender equality projects.
- A flexible funding mechanism should be established to rapidly disburse financial support to women's civil society organizations working on peace and security. A reference to such a funding mechanism, 'Global Acceleration Instrument', is included in UNSCR 2242 (2015).
- A Security Council Working Group should be established to ensure that information is available on country-specific gender issues when the Security Council, for example, discusses and adopts mandates for new peace operations. Critics have argued that it will be challenging to have such a group work effectively as long as there is weak or absent analytical capacity in, for example, UN Women field offices.⁶ In addition, the prospects of securing funding to establish such capacities are not promising.

- In order to strengthen the UN gender architecture, an Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Women, Peace and Security should be appointed at UN Women. This recommendation does not seem to have gained support among UN member states.
- A senior gender advisor should be appointed in the office of every Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General.
- The gender divisions within the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations should be strengthened.

The Global Study in Relation to other Peace and Security Reviews

Where does the Global Study stand in relation to the two other major peace and security reviews undertaken in 2015, the Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, HIPPO (Uniting Our Strengths for Peace) and The Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture (The Challenge of Sustaining Peace)? The good news is that the gender-related recommendations of the Peace Operations and Peacebuilding reviews are quite consistent with those of the Global Study. This is good news because the UN has a bad track record in ensuring consistency across related review processes – especially when it comes to the integration of gender concerns. The consistency has been helped by the fact that many of the same UN staff and member states have been consulted by all the review panels and expert groups, contributing to transparency in communication. Furthermore, Radhika Coomaraswamy, the lead author of the Global Study, was also appointed member of the Independent Panel on Peace Operations, feeding findings from the Global Study into the Peace Operations review and vice versa.

Here is what the three parallel reviews share in common in terms of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda:

- They acknowledge the slow progress and urgency of implementation of the WPS agenda.
- They emphasize the importance of strengthening the analytical capacity of the UN on gender issues (both in conflict analysis and in operational planning).

- They point to the lack of adequate funding for the implementation of the WPS agenda, and emphasize the importance of earmarking funds for women and women's organizations – especially in peacebuilding.
- Lastly, all the reviews underline the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict and putting more efforts into conflict prevention. Women's involvement in such processes is acknowledged as crucial.

What's next for the Women, Peace and Security Agenda?

UNSCR 1325 was adopted at a time in history characterized by great upheavals in international politics and global governance. The 1990s brought changes to our conceptualizations of security, moving away from a dominant paradigm of 'state security' to focusing more on 'human security'. Concepts such as Responsibility to Protect (R2P) were introduced, and a number of thematic issues were put on the UN Security Council's agenda. However, 9/11 and the ensuing 'war on terror' slowed down these processes. Contemporary challenges to international peace and security look very different from those faced by the international community at the turn of the millennium. This implies that new issues and dilemmas must also be addressed and integrated into the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Echoing the statement made by the UN Secretary-General at the Security Council Open Debate on October 13, 2015,⁷ the Global Study forms part of an important agenda for change – an agenda that the UN is grappling with as we speak. In the years to come, the Global Study will be an important reference document for WPS advocates, among them UN staff, member states, civil society organizations and researchers. However, regarding what the next 15+ years will bring in terms of WPS challenges and

implementation efforts, some major issues of immediate concern have emerged. These were repeatedly raised at the various side-events organized in New York around the 15th anniversary and review of UNSCR 1325. The first concern, as it was argued, is the emergence of violent extremism and the growing tendency to militarize women's lives. The fear is that arguments for protecting women and women's human rights will be used as an excuse for conducting military operations without properly exploring alternative options first. Some also fear that women will be increasingly identified as key partners on the ground in fighting violent extremists, and will thereby be made even more vulnerable to counter-attacks by those same extremists.

The second, and perhaps more pressing, concern is the continued lack of funding of the WPS agenda. This is a genuine concern that was already felt when the financial crisis hit many UN member states around 2008/2009. Recent developments in Europe, which have led to more and more key donor countries spending larger portions of their funds for development cooperation on addressing the migration crisis in their own countries, have added to the funding concerns felt by both the UN system and the many civil society organizations doing WPS-related work in conflict-affected countries and regions. Among the many donors restructuring their programmes and funding mechanisms for development cooperation, we also find the Nordic countries, known to be the most trusted friends of the WPS agenda both politically and financially. The direct implications for the WPS agenda of their revised strategies, priorities and budget allocations are yet to be seen. ■

Notes

1. UN Women (2015) 'Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace'.
2. UN Security Council (2015) www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/716
3. UN Security Council (2015) S/RES/2242. [www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2242\(2015\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2242(2015))
4. This criticism was put forward amongst others by Anna Milena González, FOKUS, during a 15th Anniversary Event organized by the Norwegian Government in Oslo, 19 November 2015.
5. All 200 recommendations can be found in Annex I of the Global Study.
6. Jenkins, Rob (2015) *The Practical is Political: The UN's Global Study on Women, Peace and Security*. peaceoperationsreview.org/thematic-essays/practical-political-un-global-study-women-peace-security
7. www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.7533 S/PV.7533

Further Reading

- UN (2015) *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace*, Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, HIPPO.
- UN (2015) *The Challenge of Sustaining Peace*, Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture.
- de Coning, Cedric and Eli Stamnes (eds)(2016) *UN Peacebuilding Architecture: The First 10 Years*, Routledge (forthcoming March 2016)
- Gizelis & Olsson (2015) *Gender, Peace and Security: Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 ?*

THE AUTHOR

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THE PROJECT

The PRIO Centre on Gender, Peace and Security is a resource hub at PRIO for gender, peace and security studies. Its activities include research and publishing, teaching, training and policy advice. The centre provides a space for research and policy discussions among networks of national and international scholars, policymakers, NGOs, media and students.

PRIO

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