



PRIO

‘Does Affirmative Action Make a Change?’

Interview with Åshild Falch, Researcher and Associate, NORDEM.

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The PRIO Gender Peace and Security Update is an electronic newsletter launched by PRIO’s Gender Team in response to growing interest among the public for information about women, peace and security issues. The newsletter will keep readers informed of the latest developments both internationally and in Norway in relation to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security and subsequent resolutions.



Åshild Falch, Researcher & Associate, NORDEM.
Photo: PRIO.

For our readership, could you give a brief introduction to your research on women’s political participation in post-conflict countries?

My research looks into the implementation of one particular aspect of UNSCR 1325: the extent to which countries affected by civil war are able to comply with the provision to increase women’s participation in political decision-making. In many conflict-affected countries, women find themselves in a marginalized position – economically, socially and politically. At the same time women are affected parties – victims, survivors and wagers of armed conflict – who have a major stake both in the resolution of conflict and in post-conflict political developments. In the past decade, women in a number of conflict-affected countries have gained increased political representation. My research investigates how these changes have come about in two post-conflict countries, Burundi and Nepal. And by going beyond the merely numerical aspects of women’s political participation, I also address the progress made and the obstacles that remain for women to have a qualitative impact on political decision-making in the crucial post-conflict context.

What motivated you to look at Burundi and Nepal in particular?

Burundi and Nepal have been two focal cases of my research in the past years, and it struck me how they both stand out in their efforts to enhance women’s political participation post-

conflict. In both countries, women have traditionally been marginalized from decision-making, and during the countries’ formal peace negotiations no woman was allowed to participate. However, when the conflict ended and quotas guaranteeing a minimum of women’s political representation were introduced, women obtained a 30 % representation in Burundi’s Parliament and Government, and a 33 % in Nepal’s Constituent Assembly. This puts both Burundi and Nepal ahead of many industrialized countries, and it triggered my curiosity to find out how this dramatic change was effectuated.

In your report you question the effectiveness of ‘affirmative action’ policies. Could you explain what is meant by the term ‘affirmative action’ and why you question it?

Affirmative action is a policy that takes into account ethnicity, religion, sex or origin to guarantee and/or enhance the representation of an underrepresented group, which normally involves mechanisms such as quotas, reserved seats or proportional electoral systems. In recent decades, affirmative action has been a popular tool for enhancing women’s representation in politics, and there has been an increasing trend to adopt ‘women’s quotas’ in conflict-affected countries. In my opinion, affirmative action has been an essential first step to increase women’s political representation in countries like Burundi and Nepal, where the adoption of quotas has remarkably lowered some of the structural barriers that earlier hindered women’s participation in politics. The reason why I question this type of affirmative action, though, is because there is a tendency to look at it as a ceiling rather than a floor for women’s political participation. This is particularly problematic because increased numerical representation of women does not necessarily translate into meaningful participation and enhanced influence for women in politics, and if women are to be able to participate on equal footing with men in politics, the quotas need to be accompanied by broader institutional and attitudinal changes, as well as a qualitative increase in women’s political capabilities.

Resolution 1325
10 years 2000 - 2010

You have highlighted the role of men in consolidating affirmative action. What would be the best way of increasing awareness on the significance of women's participations amongst local men?

Yes, I do believe that men can play an important role in promoting women's participation in political decision-making, and women in both Burundi and Nepal expressed that they often have achieved results by targeting male politicians when trying to get their interests across.

Most male politicians in Burundi and Nepal are well aware that women have a right to participate in decision-making, but ingrained patriarchal stereotypes and male-dominated political hierarchies, as well as worries about their own political careers, constitute psychological barriers for letting women influence key decisions and get access to high positions. I think that gender awareness training targeting both male and female members of political parties, and large-scale public campaigns emphasizing the importance of women's political participation could be effective ways to increase the awareness among men – and women – about why women's participation is essential.

What role can Norway play to strengthen women's active political participation in post-conflict countries?

By supporting institutions and organizations working on the implementation of UNSCR 1325, the Norwegian government is making an important contribution to the work of enhancing women's participation in post-conflict countries. The Norwegian government and other international actors should, however, not rest on their laurels. Within its mandate, the Norwegian government should continue to encourage policies and reviewing existing funding mechanisms to further strengthen women's political participation in conflict-affected countries. It should encourage gender parity in executive positions, and signal to governments that aid is conditional on good-faith efforts to involve women in decision-making. More specifically, it should support long-term programs and activities aimed at increasing women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership, and support training programs on gender-related issues that include both male and female members of political parties.

- Åshild Falch's PRIO Paper titled 'Women's Political Participation and Influence in Post-Conflict Burundi and Nepal' can be accessed online at <http://www.prio.no/Research-and-Publications/Publication/?oid=57892750>

'We have not done enough!'

Summary of meeting with Madeleine Rees, Secretary-General of WILPF



Madeleine Rees, President of WILPF.
Photo: WILPF.

The recently appointed president of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Madeleine Rees visited the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to give a talk on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. A number of civil servants representing a broad range of MFA departments and sections attended the meeting, as well as a handful of civil society representatives.

Rees' point of departure was the upcoming 10th anniversary of Resolution 1325. In her view, how this resolution has evolved is extremely interesting. What was essentially a Security Council Resolution to address women and security in a fairly narrow context has been a huge rallying cry by civil society and is now acknowledged as an important issue area by both the UN and its member states. Still, everybody seems to agree that we have not done enough. In the anniversary year, the number of women in peace processes is lower than before Resolution 1325 was adopted and the number of women being raped as part of warfare seems to be continuously growing.

Rees highlighted the main weaknesses of Resolution 1325, which in her view are the absence of effective implementation tools; how the discourse on women's involvement in peace and security matters primarily has been linked to the perception that the mere

participation of women in governance and peace negotiation will lead to conflict prevention, and it suggests women are victims rather than as active agents for change. The lack of specificity in the language leaves the resolution open to interpretation. According to Rees, Resolution 1325 contains three key elements; prevention, participation and protection. These elements are interlinked and these inter-linkages should be strengthened.

For prevention, in a recent conference organised by WILPF, three members of the Civil Society Advisory Group to the UN on Women, Peace and Security were asked to clarify what the Security Council meant by 'prevention' in the context of Resolution 1325. One of the major outcomes of this was the need to make far greater reference to human rights and to use the human rights mechanisms as part of a prevention strategy. Rees suggested that gender can be a diagnostic tool for predicting conflicts. A worsening situation for women is often an indicator of fragmentation in society. Rees suggested that the already existing mechanisms for human rights monitoring could be more actively used in implementing Resolution 1325. For instance, the reports under the universal periodic review mechanism of the UN Human Rights Council could be used to identify early warning indicators. In terms of participation, Rees expressed her concern that the women's participation in peace processes continue to remain low, less than 3% even after the adoption of Resolution 1325.

To increase participation, Rees suggested integrating women's participation as a conditionality for development aid. Also, it should be an agreed doctrine that peace agreements will not be accepted as genuine unless women from different sectors of society – are represented. Far too often women are those holding it all together during conflict, but are ignored post-conflict. Government structures should ensure that women are participants. Thus, the current approach to Resolution 1325 which isolates the role of women either as victims in need of protection or as the bringers of peace needs to be reconfigured. She took the example of the demobilised female Maoist military personnel in Nepal and how they are left out in the reintegration process. Rees suggested, rather than excluding these women, who yearn to be professional soldiers, from taking part in the national army, they could be recruited as UN Peacekeepers. In this way, she elaborated, these women can make a valuable contribution to the shortage of female peacekeepers, while also satisfying their desire to make a livelihood out of being professional soldiers. It

would also help the Nepalese peace process.

When it comes to protection, Rees emphasised the lack of protection mechanisms for military personnel. She stated that the protection mechanisms set out in Resolution 1325 are only applicable to civilians and largely leave out military personnel despite the fact that military personnel are also subjected to human rights violation. Rees further stated the need to ensure that women dwelling in isolated areas also benefit from protection mechanisms being developed.

Rees also expressed her concern over the lack of attention given to Resolution 1820 in relation to crimes perpetrated by military personnel in times of war. She was particularly concerned with the lack of political will to prosecute military personnel in peace keeping forces who commit crimes and the insufficient accountability. Another concern of Rees' is the lack of gender sensitivity in the normative frameworks of the war crimes tribunals. When dealing with rape in war, the normative frameworks must be different from those developed for national courts dealing with rape in a peace time context. ■



Photo: United Nations.

International News

Former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet was appointed as the Under-Secretary-General for United Nations Women, a newly created entity to coordinate all of the world body's programmes aimed at promoting women's rights and full participation in global affairs, on 14 September 2010. Her press conference on 22 September can be accessed online at <http://goo.gl/JqYi>. Also, her biography can be accessed from UN Women website at <http://goo.gl/LCHe>

The United Nations University Institute for Sustainability and Peace hosted an experts' meeting to assess progress made towards integrating women's voices, perspectives and skills in conflict prevention and peacebuilding on 10 September. More information on the meeting is available online at <http://www.unu.edu/>

The UN Network of Men Leaders, the MenEngage Alliance and the Athena Network have issued a statement calling for action to stop rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo on 13 September. The statement can

be accessed online at <http://goo.gl/KmIZ>

UN INSTRAW has launched an interactive UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 National Action Plan Map. The tool provides information on the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the publically launched National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325. The map can be accessed online at <http://goo.gl/X8G6>

The Global Strategy for Women and Children's Health was launched on 22 September. The strategy sets out a plan to save the lives of millions of women and children as stated in the Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5. The strategy can be accessed online at <http://www.un.org/sg/globalstrategy.shtml>

The UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) published the preliminary results of an investigation into the series of mass rapes and other human rights violations committed by a consortium of armed groups in the Walikale region between 30 July and 2 August. The news coverage (in English) and the report (in French) can be accessed online at <http://goo.gl/Gsen>

The UN Ministerial Meeting on Security Council Resolution 1325: A Call to Action was held at the United Nations Headquarter in New York on 25 September. At the meet-

ing, the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged Member States to show concrete commitments to fully implement Resolution 1325. The transcript of the Secretary-General's Statement at the meeting can be accessed online at <http://goo.gl/caUm>

The webcast of the meeting can be accessed online at <http://goo.gl/fvA8> ■

News from Norway

The Norwegian Church Aid and the Norwegian Women's Public Health Association organized a lecture with Dr. Denis Mukwege, Director of Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, the Democratic Republic of Congo at the National Conference on Rape on 10 September. During his lecture, Dr. Mukwege emphasized that we must do what we can to remedy the injuries women sustain and we must fight for *lasting* peace and fight against the use of rape as a war tactic. More information on the lecture is available at <http://goo.gl/2iQV>

The Norwegian Refugee Council, in collaboration with the Norwegian Red Cross, Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian People's Aid, Caritas, Save the

Children, FOKUS and Care, hosted one-day conference titled 'Gender in Humanitarian Assistance 2010 – Do we pass the quality test?' on 14 September. The purpose of the conference was to discuss how gender has been mainstreamed in field operations, looking particularly into lessons learned from Afghanistan, Chad and Haiti. The outcomes of the conference will be published as a report by the Norwegian Refugee Council later this year.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised a workshop on 22 September to discuss with relevant stakeholders – including a large number of civil society representatives – a draft of a new strategy to improve Norwegian efforts at implementing Resolution 1325. State secretaries of foreign affairs and development cooperation Espen Barth Eide and Ingrid Fiskaa both attended the meeting. The new strategy will be launched 11 November in Oslo.

The Norwegian Red Cross, the Norwegian Ministry of Defence and the Norwegian Military College (Forsvarets Høgskole og Forsvarets Stabsskole) hosted an annual seminar titled 'Protection of Civilians in Current Conflicts: Operational Challenges and Priorities' on 23 September at the Norwegian Red Cross. The seminar first outlined the rules which detail the nature and extent of protection afforded by civilians in situations of armed conflict and review factual challenges that are faced by armed forces. The seminar also studied thematic areas, such as medical missions and civilian protection, and the prevalence of sexualised violence in armed conflicts. ■

News from PRIO

Peter Burgess

gave a lecture on gender theory at the the ANU/Bjørknes/PRIO MA Course on 1 September.

Torunn L. Tryggestad

gave a lecture on gender and peacebuilding/Resolution 1325 at the ANU/Bjørknes/PRIO MA course on Gender and Conflict, 15 September.

Helga Hernes

moderated a panel discussion at a seminar titled 'Women, peace and security: from resolution to action. Ten years of Security Council Resolution 1325' hosted by the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, United Nations Office in Geneva and DCAF in Geneva on 15 September. The seminar programme can be accessed online at <http://goo.gl/UZFa>

Inger Skjelsbæk

gave a lecture titled 'The Political Psychology of Gender and Sexual Violence in War' at the ANU/Bjørknes/PRIO MA Course on Gender and Conflict 22 September. ■

Recent PRIO Publications

Suk Chun & Torunn L. Tryggestad (2010)

Ten Years of Women, Peace and Security: Observing the 10th Anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), *PRIO Policy Brief*, No.6. The Policy Brief can be accessed online at <http://www.prio.no/Research-and-Publications/Publication/?oid=60287090> ■

Other Recent Publications

Human Security Report Project (2010)

Women with a Blue Helmet: The Integration of Women and Gender Issues in UN Peace-

keeping Missions. The report can be accessed at

<http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/showRecord.php?RecordId=33527>

Megan Bastick (2010) Tool 13: Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Resolutions in Gender and Security Sector Reform Tool Kit, DCAF. The document can be accessed online at

<http://www.dcaf.ch/publications/kms/details.cfm?lng=en&id=121108&nav1=5>

Karen Garner (2010) Shaping a Global Women's Agenda. Women's NGOs and Global Governance, 1925-85, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

OECD (2010), Atlas of Gender and Development. How Social Norms Affect Gender Equality in Non-OECD Countries, OECD Development Centre. The report can be accessed at www.oecd.org/publishing

The Institute for Inclusive Security (2010)

Quick Reference Guide to UN Security Council Resolutions. The reference can be accessed at <http://goo.gl/iema>

The Institute for Inclusive Security (2010)

Guide to UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security. The guide can be accessed online at

http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/8497_guide_to_unscrs_on_women_peace_and_security.cfm

The Institute for Inclusive Security (2010)

Guide to UN Security Council Resolution 1889. The guide can be online at <http://goo.gl/SICu> ■



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