

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Literature Repository on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security"

**WOMEN ORGANISING FOR AN AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON
SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325**

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Civil Society Activities and Women Organising for Peace



Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to reflect upon the Australian experience of seeking a National Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325. This article will both reflect past advocacy on this issue, outline key legal frameworks and use the Australian national consultations on the Beijing Platform for Action 15 year review as a recent case study to reflect current opinion on contemporary issues of women and armed conflict as it pertains to the Australian context.

This article will endeavor to establish a context of UN SCR 1325 in Australia, followed by an evaluation of the discussions held with Australian women across the country. The examination of the workshops and the concerns of women revealed throughout the workshops will serve as examples of lessons learned for civil society and women organising for peace. While based upon the Beijing Declaration, the indivisible link between equality, development and peace made at the 1995 Beijing Conference, strongly resonates and continues to inform the analysis of women, peace and security enshrined in UN SCR 1325. Therefore, this article seeks to present a way forward for civil society and women alike to continue advocating for an Australia National Action Plan on UN SCR 1325.

Introduction & Regional Context

Australia is geographically positioned in the Asia Pacific Region, it is one of the largest regions in the world and stretches from the Pacific to the Middle East. It is a region that is home to more than 60 percent of the world's recorded population and includes three of the world's most populous countries. The Asia Pacific region is one of the most diverse in terms of culture, language, religion and ethnicity. A region of colonizers and countries who remain colonized, a mix of affluent and not so affluent countries, countries in transition fragile states, countries in conflict, conflict affected and post conflict countries.

The Asia Pacific region is also the world's fastest growing economic region¹. While Asia and the Pacific can take pride in the region's vibrant economic transformation in recent decades, this has not translated into progress on gender equality. Discrimination and neglect are threatening women's very survival in the Asia-Pacific

¹ Asia Pacific Forum (2010) <http://www.asiapacificforum.net/about/the-region>.

region, where women suffer from some of the world's lowest rates of political representation, employment and property ownership. Their lack of participation is also depressing economic growth.² Sub-regional disparities are remarkable. The Asia Pacific as a whole, especially South Asia, ranks near the worst in the world on gender indicators of gender equality such as nutrition, health and education often close to or worse than sub-Saharan Africa. Gender issues in the East Asia and Pacific Region are multi-faceted and progress varies widely depending on context. Progress in the region, or lack thereof, will therefore have a profound impact on global performance in all areas of development, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and sustainable peace and security. All countries in the Asia-Pacific region, except four, have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Fifteen of these ratifications happened in the last 15 years.

Despite this richness and diversity, the Asia Pacific Region is a conflict-prone area and armed conflict constitutes a serious issue for a large number of people in the region.³ Some countries find themselves in protracted conflict situations with resolutions seeming out of reach. The world, as a whole, has seen an increase in armed conflict and a change in the nature of armed conflict since the creation of the United Nations in 1945. A shift from international cross-border conflicts to mainly internal armed conflicts has brought the battlefield into homes and communities. Today's conflict zones encompass homes, places of worship, schools and hospitals and almost nowhere is safe. Civilians, not soldiers, constitute the majority of casualties in conflict, and the major proportions of these are women and children⁴. Not all casualties are directly related to the fighting, "The biggest death tolls do not come from the actual fighting, however, but from war-exacerbated disease and malnutrition. These 'indirect' deaths can account for as much as 90% of the total war-related death toll."⁵

² Asia Pacific Human Development Report, (2010) Power, Voices and Rights: A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific. UNDP, Macmillan Publishers, ISBN: 978-92-1-126286-5 p vii.

³ ESCAP (2010) Information Materials: Women and Armed Conflict: A Regional Analysis on Asia and the Pacific
http://www.unescap.org/ESID/GAD/Publication/Information_Materials/Women_and_Armed_Conflict_final.pdf downloaded 18/8/2010.

⁴ FaHCSIA (2004) Background Paper: 'Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building', downloaded 18/8/2010
http://www.facsia.gov.au/sa/women/progserv/intengage/un/Pages/dp_48thsession_womens.aspx

⁵ Human Security Center, "Press Release" (2005), <http://www.hsrgroup.org/press-room/latest-news/latest-news-view/05-10->

Women and men experience conflict differently and in the rebuilding and reconstruction of the country following conflict, women are often not considered or present. The conflict related consequences of instability and conflict for women and girls includes high levels of gender based violence, including systemic rape, trafficking, sexual slavery, abuse, abduction, forced pregnancy, forced abortions and acts of sexual violence affects the lives of women prior to, during and for a long time after conflict. The scarcity of resources (land, food, water and energy), destruction of infrastructural systems and limited access to clean services such as sanitation, disproportionately affects women's and girls' health, education, economic empowerment and participation in decision-making, especially when men are absent. Cross border or internal displacement where women and their children are forced to flee conflict results in constant fear, anxiety and stress. Strength, courage and resourcefulness come to the fore in many women seeking to provide for their families in such situations.

Australian Context

Australia has made significant progress towards including gender equality within legislation, policies and programmes.

Nationally, CEDAW was ratified by Australia in 1983, and in 1984 the Sex Discrimination Act was introduced to give domestic effect to certain provisions of CEDAW. In 2008 Australia acceded to the Optional Protocol and this entered into force in 2009. National legislative amendments and action plans have included *The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act, 1999*, the recent release of a government sponsored *National Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children* (2010).

As a signatory to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol, Australia has an obligation to protect refugees who have sought asylum. Through the Woman at Risk visa category for refugee women and girls, vulnerable women and children such as female headed households, single mothers, women in situations of extreme violence and sexual abuse, abandoned or single women are referred by UNHCR for

17/Study_Shows_Major_Declines_in_Armed_Conflicts_Genocides_Human_Rights_Abuse_Military_Coups_and_International_Crises.aspx accessed 17/8/2010.

immediate resettlement in Australia. In conflict affected regions, Australian non-government agencies, often with the Australian Overseas Aid programme (AusAID) support, are active in many facets of community development and human rights institution building in many countries in an effort to avert population displacement.⁶

Internationally, Australia operates in many different contexts covering fragile, conflict, conflict affected and post conflict areas, both within the Asia Pacific region and in other parts of the world. Australia provides troops, police and civil expertise to UN peacekeeping initiatives such as East Timor, Rwanda, Somalia, Angola and Cambodia and advisers (e.g. on mine clearance) to other areas. Australian personnel also continues to operate as part of regional coordinated responses and has ongoing commitments to building peace in Bougainville, East Timor and through the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). Gender and cultural training is provided to mission staff. Australia is working regionally to build the capacity of police forces and is working to help increase the number of policewomen on these forces.

Australia ratified the Geneva Conventions (1949) and the two Additional Protocols of 1977. To implement the Geneva Conventions, Australia created the Geneva Conventions Act 1957 and amended this piece of legislation in 1991 after the ratification of the two Protocols. Australia has supported full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UN SCR 1325) on Women Peace and Security since its adoption in 2000, and had supported its intentions since well before then.

In recognition of the high levels of sexual and gender based violence committed towards women and girls, Australia co-sponsored UN SCR 1820 in June, 2008, and its follow on UN SCR 1888 in September, 2009. These Resolutions acknowledge sexual violence as a tactic of war, call for an end to impunity for those who perpetrate such crimes and importantly recognize that it is a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security. UN SCR 1888 also called for the appointment of a new Special Representative of the Secretary General on ending Sexual violence in conflict, which Australia has welcomed.

The nexus of gender, security and development is crucial for the advancement of peace and security in the Asia Pacific Region. This is recognized under Strategic

⁶ Refugee Council of Australia <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/arp/facts-01.html> downloaded 18/8/2010.

Objective E: Women and Armed Conflict in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). Women and girls in conflict and post-conflict were recognized as one of the three subpopulations for which support is critical in realizing the Millennium Development Goal #3 (MDGs). Women have a key role in the prevention of armed conflicts and have the potential to be key leaders of positive change in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. However, International experience shows that unless we take explicit steps to involve women in conflict prevention, peace building and longer term development planning, exclusion from these critical processes can often occur. Bringing women into formal peace processes is key to involve women in political decision making and working towards gender equality and sustainable peace in new and developing country structures and frameworks. AusAID has developed and implemented gender guidelines for its work in both development and peace building programmes whereby the importance of UN SCR 1325 is highlighted⁷. AusAID supports a number of NGOs promoting UN SCR 1325 in the Asia Pacific region and funds a number of projects and programmes in fragile, conflict-affected and post conflict countries to support women to participate in prevention of armed conflict and formal peace processes at many levels. Australia has also supported women's increased participation in a number of recent elections through provision of gender and elections training in such countries as Afghanistan and East Timor.

Australian Women Organising for an Australian National Action Plan on UN SCR 1325

Australian Non-Government Organisations (NGO's) have long been at the forefront of working with, and supporting positive change for, women in fragile, conflict, conflict affected and post conflict situations. High-level advocacy through supporting of UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security has brought many Australian women's NGO's to the United Nations in New York and Geneva to lobby and network to gain momentum for positive change. It was long before the UN SCR 1325 was established in 2000 that Australian women were working to build peace and security for all women.

⁷ AusAID (2007), 'Gender Equality in Australia's aid program – why and how: summary March 2007', Canberra. Available online: http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/gender_summary.pdf.

Long before the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, Australian NGO's were working nationally, regionally and internationally to network, discuss, analyse and develop strategies and actions to be included in the outcomes document of this conference that would address the issues and concerns of women and girls in armed conflict. The outcomes document from the fourth world conference on Women, which was held in Hairou, near Beijing China, was called the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action⁸. A groundbreaking document that acts as a blueprint towards the equality of women and realization of human rights for all. Chapter IV-E of the Platform for Action explicitly addresses women and armed conflict, outlining strategic objectives to increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation and to promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace. In the Beijing +5 review in 2000, the Political Declaration and Outcome Document from this meeting reiterated the commitments regarding women's participation in conflict prevention and peace building. The Beijing + 10 year review in 2005 noted that while some progress has been made in this area, 'new and consistent approaches are needed to increase women's full and effective participation in all aspects of peace processes.'⁹

Women in Australia have long been part of a broader dialogue on advancing women, peace and security through the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) held each year in New York. At the 2004 meeting of CSW 48th session one of the thematic issues focused specifically on women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management, and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building. Civil society groups, including those from Australia, worked to bring together existing language from the UN, governments and civil society in a language compendium.¹⁰ This compendium provides a common language for advocacy and assists in strengthening global networks of communication for working on women, peace and security.

⁸ United Nations (2001) Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with the Beijing+5 Political Declaration and Outcome Document, Strategic Objective E, New York.

⁹ United Nations (2005), Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome Documents of the Special Session of the General Assembly entitles "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century – Report of the Secretary General (E/CN.6/2005/2) New York, United Nations, 2004.

¹⁰ Conaway, CP & Sen, A (2005); Beyond Conflict Prevention : How Women Prevent Violence and Build Sustainable Peace; Global Action to Prevent War, WILPF, October, 2005.

Since the ratification of Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 and more explicitly since the 10 year review of the Beijing Platform for Action (2005), there has been a concerted effort within Australian NGO's to push for a National Action Plan on UN SCR 1325.

This was not new advocacy, more a renewed vigor, to support and advocate for women in armed conflict, conflict-related situations refugee women and women and girls in post-conflict development. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) has been at the forefront of such advocacy since 1915. It is interesting to note that at the same time as WILPF in Europe was being formed; Australian women's peace groups were actively and successfully campaigning against compulsory overseas military conscription in two referendums. They aligned with the aims of the International Congress of Women, which later became the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.¹¹

In 2004, WILPF (Australian Section) received funding from the Australian Government to develop an Australian website promoting UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (www.1325australia.org.au) in preparation for the CSW 48th Session (2004). It was therefore, no surprise when in 2008 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was successful in gaining support from the Australian Government to undertake a national consultation on community views for developing an Australian National Action Plan on UN SCR 1325. The consultation processes which worked collaboratively with many women's NGO's and the Australian national women's alliances, developed a comprehensive Discussion paper on Developing a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 which was handed to the Australian Government for review early in 2009.

The outcome from this broad and interactive community review outlined stated "the focus of UN SCR 1325 is on the stages of conflict, most of the National Action Plan's seek to embed the plan within broader principles of human rights and development" (p. 22)¹². Given Australia's prominent role on both fronts of UN peacekeeping and development, the government is well positioned to develop a National Action Plan

¹¹ WILPF (2009) National Human Rights Consultation Submission
<http://www.humanrightsact.com.au/2008/wp-content/uploads/2008/05/wilpf-submission-to-national-human-rights-consultation.pdf> downloaded 18/8/2010.

¹² Zetlin, D. (2009) 'Discussion Paper: Developing a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325', Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Australian Section), Available online: <http://www.1325australia.org.au/html/nuresources.html>.

but to also potentially partner with Pacific neighbours in assisting with the effective implementation of National Action Plan's on 1325 on a regional basis. Thus, a National Action Plan would encompass prevention of armed conflict, participation of women across all phases of the conflict and reconstruction, protection of women and girls from sexual and gender based violence and processes to address impunity of perpetrators of violence. In 2008, WILPF (Australian Section) in partnership with UNIFEM (Australian National Committee) which had earlier in the year run *Inform Sessions* promoting UN SCR 1325 in several of Australia's state and territory capitals, and with support of the WomenSpeak Secretariat (a national network of women's organizations and NGO's) put forward a proposal to the Minister for Women that a National Action Plan on UN SCR 1325 be considered in the top ten priorities for Australian women. This proposal was later accepted by the other three secretariats for inclusion in the top ten women's priorities for action.

In 2009, Justice, Equality, Rights and Access (JERA) International, were supported to undertake a broad and interactive review of the actions, gaps and challenges for women as relevant to the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), Beijing + 5 and Beijing + 10 documents to feed into the 15 year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 54th Session held in New York in 2010. JERA International worked collaboratively with other women's NGO's across the 12 critical areas of the BPFA and national NGO's with specific expertise worked on key sections of the BPFA. Four key methods were used for data collection; (1) caravans which are groups of people meeting to discuss in a semi-structured way the key issues and recommendations on particular critical areas; (2) Semi-structured workshops with small group discussions; (3) an on-line forum to enable those not able to attend meetings or workshops to input on line; and (4) an on-line forum for men. In addition, a background paper on working with men and boys was developed in coordination with Dr Michael Flood, Wollongong University on the men's barriers to supporting and advancing gender equality. An intersectional analysis was undertaken on the data collected from 3,487 women and girls and 148 men. This form of analysis acknowledges that inequality exists within society, and examines the way in which different oppressions weave together and compound the effects of each other. Analysis of the data was presented as overarching concerns, gains, gaps and challenges for women in Australia in 2009-2010.

Case Study: 2009 Beijing +15 Australian National Review

Background

The Fourth World Conference on Women convened by the United Nations in 1995 in Beijing sought to assess progress made since the Nairobi World Conference on Women (1985) and to adopt a platform for action, concentrating on key issues identified as obstacles to the advancement of women in the world.

The Fourth World Conference focused on 12 areas of concern and adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA for short) in order to address these concerns. One of the critical areas identified was Women and Armed Conflict. The BPFA identified six (6) strategic objectives to focus the work on this critical area:

- Strategic objective E.1. Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation.
- Strategic objective E.2. Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments.
- Strategic objective E.3. Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations.
- Strategic objective E.4. Promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace.
- Strategic objective E.5. Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women.
- Strategic objective E.6. Provide assistance to the women of the colonies and non-self-governing territories.

Reviewing the progress made 5 years later, in 2000, the Australian government reported on the work done by Australia in assisting to develop the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 1998; successfully advocating for the inclusion of female jurists on the ICC; and the inclusion of sexual violence in armed conflict as war crime. The report also focused on the work done by Australia as a member of the OECD Development Assistance Committee Taskforce on Conflict peace and Development Cooperation; its support for the Neutral Peace Monitoring Group on Bougainville; assistance provided to refugee women in Australia (Community Refugee Resettlement Scheme and the On-Arrival Accommodation Programme); and Australia's overseas aid programme which included a category for women (Women at Risk Programme). In addition the report also discussed efforts to

enhance the role of women in the Australian defense force, training of defence personnel on equity and diversity among others.¹³

In response to a request from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for feedback from Governments in the region in preparation for the 15th anniversary of the adoption of BPFA in 2010, the Australian government reported that it supports the implementation of the SCR1325 and is “committed to appropriate representation of women in the Australian Defence Force” (p. 10). Working to realize that commitment, the report outlined the establishment of an external women’s reference group by the Chief of the Defence Force “to present alternative and innovative strategies and options to break down current barriers to women joining and continuing to serve in the Australian Defence Force” (p.10). Finally, the report reiterated Australia’s commitment to increasing the representation of women in peacekeeping operations, noting that nearly 20 per cent of Australian police personnel involved in peacekeeping missions are women and many hold senior roles within these missions.¹⁴

In order to supplement the government’s 15 year review of BPFA, JERA International (JERA), was successful in securing funding for the ‘Working Together for Equality: A review of the Beijing Platform for Action 15 years on’ project from the Australian Government through the Gender Equality for Women Program. This enabled JERA to organise community consultations with women to discuss and debate the issues raised in the Beijing Platform for Action and to gain a measure of the reality of women’s human rights in Australia.

What did women in Australia have to say about ‘Women and armed conflict’?

The issues raised covered within the consultations include a wide range of critical areas including the impact of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and its role in supporting the equal participation of women and equal opportunities for women

¹³ The report by the Australian Government was provided to the Division for the Advancement of Women in response to the Secretary-General's Questionnaire on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Available online:
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/responses/Australia.htm#E>.

¹⁴ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP) (2000) ‘UNESCAP Questionnaire on the implementation of the outcome of the Four World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995)’, Available online:
http://www.unescap.org/ESID/GAD/Issues/Beijing+15/Responds_to_Questionnaire/Australia.pdf.

to participate in all forums and peace activities at all levels, particularly at the decision-making level; the promotion of women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace and protection and support of refugee women and girls who have resettled in Australia.

The particular issues of concern that arose include:

- Internationally, there is not enough emphasis on the protection of women and children, in particular vulnerable groups such as women and children with disability, young girls and older women. Women with disabilities are doubly disadvantaged as there are few countries that resettle people with disability.
- While acknowledging the work being done in Australia to provide services for refugees, many women felt that there appeared to be a lack of coordinated approaches to providing services across the sectors and a lack of training of mainstream providers in the particular issues and needs of refugee women and girls. Refugee women reflected feeling they receive conflicting messages from support services and their sponsors regarding what is available and support services vary across state and urban, rural and regional settings. Lack of translators in this situation is a major barrier for refugee women and girls who reported feeling isolated in their homes. For refugees arriving by sea, unduly long visa processing times in off-shore detention camps causes further psychological stress, especially for women and girls. Refugee women face multiple barriers in resettlement. Refugee flight and many years in refugee camps has caused families to stick together, in resettlement, with challenges to housing, work and settling into a new culture with new laws and norms, some family units break down. 'Social and cultural fabric is in turmoil' and a number of refugee women move away from their spouses and divorce. Stress from resettlement and trauma of the refugee journey remain and outside of urban centres, there is little trauma support and counseling for women, and none for girls and children. Harassment by refugee men to undermine women's role in the family and community is commonplace and domestic violence can occur.
- Significant concern was raised about private defense contractors working in conflict areas and post-conflict areas who are not obliged to adhere to the Security Council Resolutions on Women Peace and Security.
- Finally, women felt that there is currently no strong voice for gender issues to be represented at the high level in neither government, nor a strong ministerial position for input into UN Security Council on women peace and security issues.

Celebrating Australia's achievements:

There was a strong recognition that Australian ODA plays a huge role in the region for the support and inclusion of women in forums of peace activities - AusAID funds directly or indirectly many women's projects in the Asia Pacific region that assisted many other women to have a voice in the peace processes of their country. As a regional player in partnership with NZAid, UNIFEM (Pacific) and UNDP, Australia has been supporting Pacific Island women to attend the Commission on the Status of Women sessions. Many women noted that the development of the AusAID Gender Policy was a step in the right direction and would go some way in bringing a gender lens to international aid, an industry dominated by male leaders and large organisations.

Women at the consultations appreciated the role played by Australia as one of 16 countries that participate in the UNHCR Women at Risk programme. Research over the last 5 years has supported changes in this programme to allow more women and families to enter Australia (previously men were coming in under this programme). In addition, there was a clear acknowledgement that the current government is actively reviewing its policy on detention centres, and the "Pacific Solution".¹⁵ NGOs in Australia therefore have a 'watching brief' on this situation.

Finally, women recognised that there are some excellent models of leadership, representation and social inclusion for refugee women in Australia. One such programme is the African Women of Australia – a peak body based in NSW. This group encourages linkages and collaboration with refugee and migrant women across all ethnic groups and creates links and opportunities for African refugee women to come together with women from all areas of society to address common issues, share knowledge, gain skills and to build networks.

Other significant achievements include:

- Australian Overseas Development Assistance contribution to the improvement of women and children in areas of armed conflict in the Asia, Pacific and African regions.
- Australian government support for community consultations on the options for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women Peace and Security) (2000) National Action Plan.

¹⁵ The Pacific Solution was the name given to the Australian government's policy (2001 -2007) of transporting asylum seekers and refugees to detention centres in the surrounding islands of the Pacific region as oppose to allowing them to reach the Australian mainland.

- Australia co-sponsoring the UN Security Council Resolution 1820 (Sexual Violence as a Tactic of War)
- Australia co-sponsoring the UN Security Council Resolution 1888 (Mandating peacekeeping missions to protect women and girls from sexual violence in armed conflict) (2009), which builds on Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008).
- Australia supporting the efforts of UN Action on its 'Inventory of Responses by Peacekeeping Personnel to War-Related Violence against Women' (2009).
- Australia's contribution to ensure the renewal of the mandate for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict during the 63rd session of the General Assembly (2009).
- Australia endorsement of the Paris Principles (September 2008) on children associated with armed forces or armed groups and committed funding to UNICEF for its work on child soldiers, particularly in Sri Lanka.
- Australia support for the full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1612 (Children and Armed Conflict) and began operationalising Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (2009).
- Australia official recognition of International Day of Peace.
- The establishment of UN Peace awards.
- Reflections on Hiroshima Day.
- Abolishment of Temporary Protection Visas for Refugees.

Gaps that need to be addressed:

While achievements should be celebrated, women at the consultations identified some gaps that needed to be addressed.

- Refugee women appear to fall into the gap especially with housing. This group lacks specific support strategies for resettlement. Family repatriation issues and barriers for women who left families in refugee camps continue to impact on successful resettlement in Australia and on the health of refugee women especially. Long internments in detention centres (both onshore and off shore) and long visa processing times for those seeking asylum, especially women and children, remains a key challenge and severely impacts on the health and wellbeing of those in detention.
- Many women pointed out that at that time only 16 countries have developed National Action Plan's to implement the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and Australia is not one of them. The lack of national strategy to further develop and implement Security Council Resolution 1325 National

Action Plan many felt would significantly impact Australia's ability to meet the strategic objectives listed in BPFA's 'Women and armed conflict.'

In addition not enough progress has been made to:

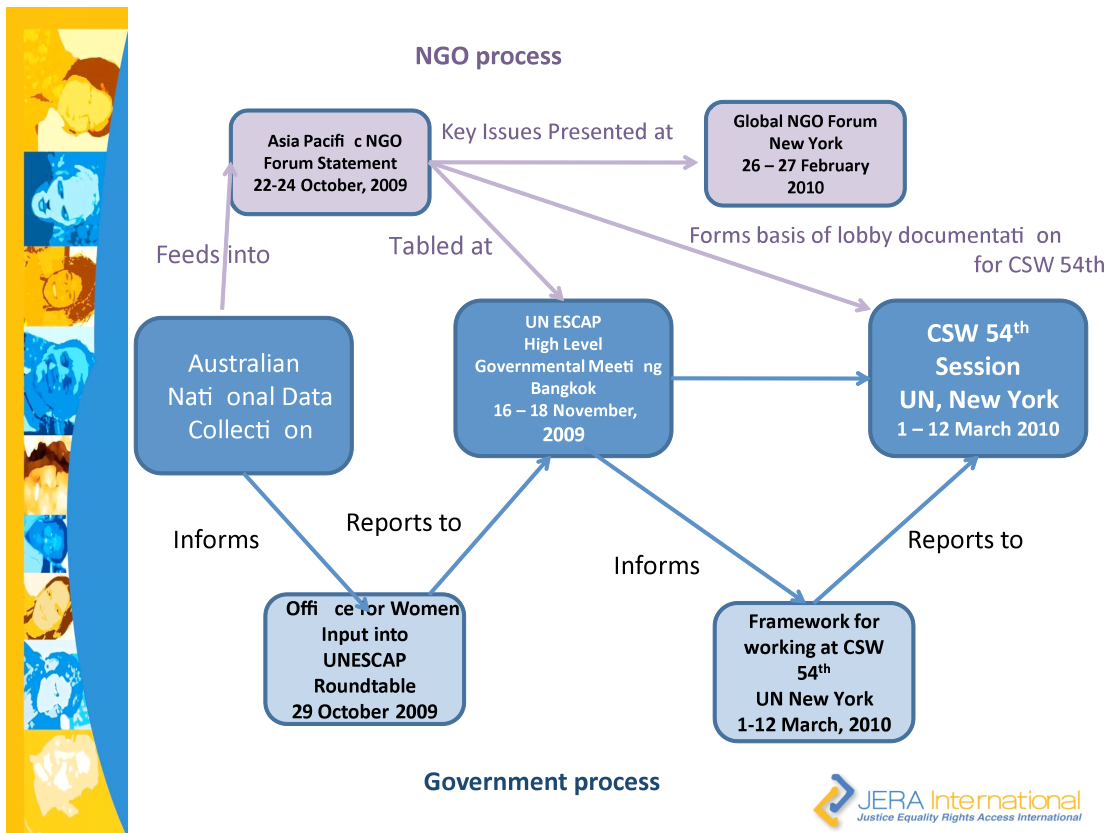
- Develop gender-sensitive indicators of process and outcomes to measure the performance of protecting women and children.
- Reduce the notable escalation in defense funding and military expenditure.
- Deal with the impunity of private Defense contractors in conflict areas.

Suggested reforms were presented to the Australian government as part of the final report including a strong call for a National Action Plan on UN SCR 1325.

Advocacy leading up to the BPFA 15 year review process.

JERA International works closely with Asia Pacific Women Watch (APWW); a regional network of women's groups which monitors and collaborates with the United Nations, national governments and non-government organizations (NGOs) in empowering women and advancing their human rights. APWW is represented by five (5) sub-regions – Central Asia, East Asia, the Pacific, South Asia and South East Asia and is also joined by representatives of each of the three major international women's networks: APWLD (Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development), Isis International and ARROW (Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Center for Women). APWW coordinates the Asia Pacific Caucus Meetings at CSW in New York each year. In 2009, APWW also hosted the Asia Pacific NGO Forum on the 15-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action held in the Philippines. Information from the Australian national review on the BPFA 15 year review was presented at this forum.

As noted in the chart below, the information from the national review was used to inform both government and NGO processes at all stages of the review. From the national, to the regional meeting at UN ESCAP and on to CSW. The Beijing + 15 review process was used to inform a continuing dialogue on women's rights between Australian women's NGO's and the Australian government.



In conclusion

In the year of the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UN SCR 1325), it is timely to reflect the progress Australian civil society has made in pursuit of Women Peace and Security issues and a National Action Plan on UN SCR 1325. While Australia does not yet have a National Action Plan, many steps have been taken in recent years by government and civil society alike to ensure that a plan will be formed in Australia's near future. The principles of UN SCR 1325 are informed by key ongoing gender advocacy such as the Beijing Platform for Action 10 and 15 year reviews.

Through strategic advocacy and working together with the government departments, the ground work is in place for an Australian National Action Plan on UN SCR 1325. NGO's have continued to keep the issues of Women Peace and

Security in the forefront of the government's priorities. The Australian government has worked hard over the last 4 years to strengthen its commitment to the UN women peace and security agenda. As this article is being written, Australia is poised to vote for a new Prime Minister. Until the new government is decided, all plans and ongoing work on a National Action Plan on UN SCR 1325 are on hold. One thing is certain, once the new government is decided; Australian NGO's will once again bring pressure on the government to continue to strengthen its work on women peace and security and to develop an Australian National Action Plan on UN SCR 1325.