

# WOMEN AND PEACE

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## Abstract

Today, many regions in the World are under the threat of wars and terrorist attacks. There are multiple challenges that men and women face in the course of and following armed-conflicts. Unfortunately, women and children become a major part of the victims. Existing research has found a strong and significant link between gender equality and lasting peace, showing that countries where women are experiencing high levels of violence are more likely to engage in conflict and war compared to countries with low levels of violence against women. Countries where women have greater equality and greater political representation are also less likely to become involved in wars.

Although, "Gender Mainstreaming" is a term which first emerged as a concept at the Fourth Women's World Forum held in Beijing in 1995, UN peacekeeping activities were gender-blind till 2000. International recognition and acceptance of women's inclusion in peace-building activities has increased globally, bolstered by the development of a policy framework on women, peace and security that began with the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000, followed by a further six resolutions on women and peace-building.

By this article, the subject has been evaluated from feminist perspective and developed some interventions which have been linked to each of the major roles of women in the pre-conflict, actual conflict and post-conflict phases, through literature review.

### Key words :

human rights, gender equality, gender mainstreaming, peacekeeping, post-conflict reconciliation, participation, human trafficking, sex-disaggregated data.

## WHY WOMEN ARE IMPORTANT FOR PEACE MAKING and PEACE KEEPING?

Gender analysis requires the systematic gathering and examination of gender differences men and women to identify inequities based on gender. By using gender analysis, the gendered aspects of the experiences of men and women and their position within the social structure will become apparent. However, military operations' planning activities should consider the different security concerns of men, women, boys, and girls and how they are differently affected by operations and missions, but also how gender roles can affect operations and missions. Furthermore, they should take into account power relations in the community to ensure men and women have equal access to assistance where the military is engaged in supporting humanitarian aid. Other examples include understanding how customary conflict resolution mechanisms affect women and men differently and how their social status may change as a result of war (Ellerby, 2013).

Existing research has found a strong and significant link between gender equality and lasting peace, showing that countries where women are experiencing high levels of violence are more likely to engage in conflict and war compared to countries with low levels of violence against women. Countries where women have greater equality and greater political representation are also less likely to become involved in wars (Caprioli 2005; Hudson et al. 2012).

Studies have shown a correlation between the organized participation of women's groups in peace talks and in post-conflict recovery and gender-sensitive peace agreements. Although women are still primarily seen as victims of conflict, a group of women met in Hague in order to put an end to the violence during the First World War. The year was 1917 and more than 5,000 soldiers lost their lives every day. There was total resignation and peace seemed a long way off but the women wanted to influence its development. More than 1,000 women from twelve warring and neutral countries organised the first international women's conference. The conference resulted in a programme of action that urged global disarmament and an end to the war. The programme also demanded gender equality and equality between nations and recommended the

creation of an international organisation for conflict resolution between countries (Final Synthesis Report of UN Women, 2013).

102 years had passed but it was clear that further measures are required in order to provide women's participation in peace processes on the same terms as men. Studies have shown us, there are seven major women's roles in internal conflict: a) women as victims of (sexual) abuse b) women as combatants c) women for peace in the non-governmental sector d) women in formal peace politics e) women as coping and surviving actors f) women as household heads and g) women and (in) formal employment opportunities. Women's situations may in practice combine characteristics of these different roles or partially coincide. The following figure has summarised the multifaceted roles of women in pre-conflict, actual conflict and post conflict situations:

|  | Pre-Conflict Situation                 | Actual Conflict   | Post-Conflict  |
|--|--|---|--|
| Women as Victims of (sexual) Violence          |  | Increasing number of civilian casualties<br>Increased exposure to violence<br>Sexual abuse as systematic method of warfare              | Increasing domestic violence<br>Continuing exposure to insecurity  |
| Women as Combatants                            |  | Direct involvement in fighting<br>Indirect support of conflict  | Reintegration of female ex-combatants  |
| Women for Peace in the Non-Governmental Sector | Small and Even non-existing NGO sector | Anti-conflict campaigns<br>Taking over public roles<br>Maintaining the normal situation<br>Providing Relief and Humanitarian Assistance | Active involvement in broad range of topics, ranging from charity work to political activism   |
| Women in 'Formal Peace Politics'               | Limited access to political life       | Increasing access to political positions at various levels of society<br>Limited access to formal peace process                         | Hard to maintain political position<br>Participation in rewriting laws and constitution; post-conflict elections; and rehabilitation efforts |

|                                      |                               |   |   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Women as Coping and Surviving Actors | Minimum Survival mechanisms   | Use of coping mechanisms; adapting existing roles; migration<br><br>Sub-optimal results and forms of distress coping  | Change to more sustainable ways of living   |
| Women as Households Heads            | Traditional division of tasks | Decline in traditional labour relations<br><br>High Number of female-headed households and widows<br><br>Need for new skills<br><br>Lack of access to land other properties | Difficulties maintaining activities outside the home<br><br>Continuing struggle for access to land and property |
| Women and (In) formal Employment     |                               | Increasing informal sector employment<br><br>Limited formal sector employment   | Continuing informal sector employment<br><br>Recurrence of traditional division of labour                       |

(Source: Women's roles in conflict and options for interventions before, during and after conflict Reconstruction: Literature Review and Institutional analysis)

### United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325)

International recognition and acceptance of women's inclusion in peace-building activities has increased globally, bolstered by the development of a policy framework on women, peace and security that began with the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000, followed by a further six resolutions on women and peace-building. While a consensus among international actors has been built around the need to involve women in peace processes more proactively, their experiences in both peace and conflict remain largely unnoticed at national levels.

UNSCR 1325 was adopted due to the hard work of both civil society and the member states of the UN. Prior to its adoption, several major global conferences and policy frameworks were realized that sought to advance the rights of women and girls. Beginning in 1975, the United Nations convened world conferences to elevate gender equality on the global stage. In

1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women yielded the Beijing Declaration and Platform with key objectives that promoted of the role of women in peacemaking.

Despite these important actions, there remains a general lack of recognition of gender in commission reports by the UN, especially regarding peacekeeping. The Coalition on Women and International Peace and Security was formed in response and became the main lobbying force for the creation of UNSCR 1325. In 2000, the Coalition's efforts came to fruition when Namibia held the Security Council Presidency and conducted an open session on Women, Peace, and Security. During this session, the U.N. Security Council acknowledged the changing nature of warfare, in which civilians are increasingly targeted, and women continue to be excluded from participation in peace processes, leading to the passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325.

Resolution 1325 addresses two major points – the disproportional impact of violent conflict and war on women and girls, as well as the crucial role that women should play in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace-making and peace-building. Women's full participation and involvement is critical to achieve sustainable peace and stability within a community. The Resolution urges all actors to increase the participation of women and additionally incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. Parties engaged in conflict must take special measures to protect women and girls from all forms of gender-based violence, especially rape and other forms of sexual violence that are particularly widespread during times of violent conflict. Each of its mandates falls into one UNSCR 1325's four basic pillars: participation, protection, prevention and relief and recovery.

1. Participation: Calls for increased participation of women at all levels of decision-making, including in national, regional, and international institutions; in mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict; in peace negotiations; in peace operations, as soldiers, police, and civilians.

2. Protection: Calls specifically for the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, including in emergency and humanitarian

situations, such as in refugee camps.

3. **Prevention:** Calls for improving intervention strategies in the prevention of violence against women, including by prosecuting international laws; strengthening women's rights under national law; and supporting local women's peace initiatives and conflict resolution processes.

4. **Relief and recovery:** Calls for advancement of relief and recovery measures to address international crises through a gendered lens, including by respecting the civil humanitarian nature of refugee camps and settlements.

UNSCR 1325 is a global commitment in order to ensure that women and girls are more systematically and sustainably integrated into peace and security. But it requires a global effort to implement the Resolution. However, much of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 comes from the UN member states. Since 2005, UN Member States have put the tenets of the resolution into action through the development of government-led National Action Plans (NAP) or other national level strategies. This NAP process assists countries in identifying priorities and resources, determining their responsibilities, and committing the government to action. These Action Plans are an important element to the implementation of the resolution worldwide. As of late January 2018, 72 nations have created National Action Plans.

## **GENDER SENSITIZING POLICIES IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS**

Gender sensitizing policies require a thorough gender analysis that clarifies the interrelationship between gender, the specific conflict situation and the potential different impact of external interventions on women and men. And it demands the promotion of gender equality, because without a clear focus on gender equality, intervening agencies will most likely fail to minimize the negative conditions that women endure in conflict situations. In other words, gender equality is the essence to develop instruments and methodologies that combine gender and conflict analysis.

Intervening agencies should start addressing

women's need and interests in a pre-conflict phase, and not only for a post-conflict phase. Due to the lack of data on a pre-conflict phase, numerous women in conflict situations suffer unnecessarily. More disaggregated gender data on the pre-conflict phase need to be gathered in order to facilitate proactive and preventive interventions in conflict situations, which limit women's exposure to violence and insecurity. For example, in order to understand the gender dimensions of post-conflict economic reconstruction require a clear understanding of the pre-conflict economy and how it changed during the war. Crucial dimensions include the general position of women and men in formal and informal economies, differential vocational skills and educational profiles, access to capital, social attitudes to men and women's work, the distribution of domestic responsibilities and how this affects women's and men's work lives, and different mobility patterns for women and men. Due to these differences and inequalities, men and women are often affected differently by economic reform and international support to rebuild economies. Structural adjustment policies and assistance, may negatively impact on the immediate and long-term economic and social well-being of women and girls. During conflict, women's employment opportunities in the formal sector can increase if institutions employ women and adolescent girls to replace men and adolescent boys who have been lost in the conflict or have entered the fighting forces. In the post-conflict period, maintaining positions or finding work in the formal economy can be difficult for women and girls. In countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mozambique, the combination of these factors resulted in steep reversal of positive employment trends for women in the formal economy in the post-conflict phase. Even when women and adolescent girls are part of the formal economy, there may be marked differences in attitudes towards their employment after conflict. After the formal conclusion of peace accords, women and adolescent girls who worked side by side with men and adolescent boys may be expected to stay at home and fulfil family responsibilities. Advances in employment opportunities for women do not keep pace with the demand for jobs from male ex-combatants. When there are large numbers of unemployed male ex-combatants, women's economic activities may lead to increased tensions between women and men.

Women and adolescent girls, who do not retreat into their homes, participate extensively in informal sector activities, such as petty trading, small-scale food production, and provision of services. These activities do not require large capital investments and the time period between investment and economic gain is relatively short. Many rural people, including women and their families, migrate to urban centres in order to gain greater access to informal markets. In these urban settings women and adolescent girls may not have adequate social networks to draw upon for assistance and may have difficulties in benefiting fully from the new opportunities. During post-conflict periods many women and adolescent girls are in need of skills training for income-generating activities. Special programmes for credit and income-generating skills that target women and adolescent girls have been realized in order to enable them to develop competences which are compatible with market demands and oppose a resistance to men who have prevented their wives or daughters from participating in training courses. In El Salvador and Eritrea, lack of childcare in contexts where women were solely responsible for parenting made it almost impossible for women to participate in training or work outside the home. Existing legal and social barriers for women and adolescent girls to employment and educational opportunities do not vanish with the end of the conflict. Targeted legislation and other interventions are needed to overcome these barriers. Legislation is necessary to enable women and adolescent girls to receive credit, to buy, rent or inherit land and property, and to be legally recognized as heads of households, widows, divorcees and parents or guardians.

Education is a critical resource for stabilizing communities, rebuilding economies and building peace. Women stress that education for themselves and their children is a top priority during reconstruction. Both girls and boys show great desire to return to school. However, adaptation of the system which is used in pre-conflict period, to the post-conflict period, can be useful. But particular areas of concern include education policy/investments curricula, access of both boys and girls to schools, and teacher training. For example, teacher training and education programmes need to take into account the differences in the experiences of women and girls and men and boys during the

conflict. Development of teacher sensitization programmes and appropriate classroom materials that promote understanding of gender equality in the context of community-building can help address some of the inequalities and biases that may have been exacerbated during the conflict. In some cases, girls may be denied their right to education because of social, cultural, religious or political restrictions. In situations of poverty it has proven difficult for families to support the enrolment of girls in schools over sustained periods because of the need for their labour inputs. In the absence of economic growth that increases the proportion of household income provided by all able-bodied adults, families cannot afford to lose the contribution to household food and economic security that girls provide. Lack of money for books, clothes or fees, in addition to the need for the labour of adolescents and younger girls in the household, leads to high drop-out rates in post-conflict situations.

There are many practical possibilities for intervening agencies to address women's needs and interests in conflicts better. Firstly, women often face important obstacles in gaining access to those who provide help. Intervening agencies could attempt to overcome obstacles such as security problems, childcare needs, lack of resources, limited mobility and freedom of movement etc. Secondly, intervening agencies should take into account the specific capacities and vulnerabilities of particular groups of women, such as refugee women, displaced women, female hostages, female ex-combatants, widows and female-headed households. Thirdly, intervening agencies must recognize women as actors and anticipate women's changing roles, positions, identities in conflict situations. For example, during the rehabilitation process in Rwanda, 'women's committees' elected in 'women-only elections', were established at the level of government administration in order to encourage women to express themselves freely. The Government had given these committees the authority to set up communal funds for women to help start economic activities at the community and sector level, thus allowing women at grassroots to participate in funding decisions affecting their lives. These practical efforts will only be successful when intervening agencies not only 'add women to projects and programmes' but truly incorporate women to ensure that their visions, interests and

needs are reflected in the definition of policies and strategies (Bouta, Frerks, Bannon, 2005, 43).

## CONCLUSION

It is the utmost importance that local women's needs and interests at all levels of conflict situations should be considered to develop interventions. The first issue is to prevent women from an exposure to insecurity and violence. Because prevention is always better than cure. It is assumed that with the participation of women, early-warning systems better utilize the untapped potentials of women's networks and organizations. During conflict, it is not always easy to protect women from insecure and violent situations. Employing female security officers in patrolling camps and building sanitary facilities in appropriate locations are important to minimize women's exposure to violence in refugee camps. In post-conflict phases, there is a need of strong sanctioning mechanisms to minimize threats for women in both the public domain and the domestic sphere. Additionally, greater representation of women in police forces and judicial processes, training of security staff and international peacekeepers about women's issues are the good solutions to render the prevailing security actors and systems more gender-sensitive. Secondly, trauma counselling and psycho-social rehabilitation programmes particularly during and after conflict which are designed for women should be realized. Because, several studies have pointed to differences between women and men in the ways in which they deal with trauma (Kumar, Khawar, 1999). Especially in the post-conflict phase, the work of war tribunals and associated legal advisers need to keep gender issues in mind, which are geared to women in order to aid their reporting and the prosecuting of perpetrators of war crimes and human rights abuses against them (Punkhurst, 2003). Thirdly, intervening agencies should encourage female combatants to participate in demobilization and reintegration programmes in the post-conflict phase. Because, ex-combatants often cannot participate in these programmes due to their responsibilities for homes and families. Fourthly, intervening agencies have to support women's organizations to render them sustainable. Because, studies have shown that strong women's civil society organizations have

cultivated skills and broadened opportunities for women to gain entry to the peace process and to occupy various public and political positions (Kumar, Khawar, 1999). Therefore, increasing number of women in decision-making at all levels of society remains a major task. Intervening agencies must ensure that women get involved in conflict prevention and resolution initiatives, peacekeeping programs, peace negotiation processes, post-conflict elections, rewriting laws and the constitution, and the planning and implementation of reconstruction efforts (Council of Europe, CM/Rec(2010)10). The fifth recommendation is to give support to the female-headed households, widows and other women in order to enable them to inherit and own productive assets, especially land. For example in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Centre for Legal Assistance for Women provided legal aid free of charge in the field of property, housing and labour rights to women, mainly refugees and returnees, self-supporting women and women soldiers (Rethink: A Handbook for Sustainable Peace, 2004).

Consequently, intervening agencies, mainly in post-conflict phase, should address women's direct needs for employment and income generation, and their long-term interests in the labour market. They have to work to develop gender-sensitizing labour and other relevant laws, downsize gender-stereotypical labour roles, facilitate women's employment in non-traditional sectors and skills, decrease discrimination and sexual harassment on the work floor, increase opportunities for part-time labour, equal salaries between women and men, ensure childcare facilities as well as support women in maintaining the jobs and income generation.

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