

It Is Time to Walk the Talk and Fulfill the Promise of UNSCR 1325

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For advocates of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, the 10th anniversary of the resolution in October 2010 2011 was no longer an occasion to sing praises to the resolution. We all know that UNSCR 1325 is important. We all know that it is groundbreaking and game-changing. We have heard all of that from the UN, from member states and even from our fellow civil society actors year in and year out in the last 10 years.

What many of us have decided to do was to take stock of where the world is in terms of the actual implementation of the resolution and the push for real commitments and concrete actions — commitments that would not be long on promise but short on implementation. So where are we in terms of actual implementation 10 years on? Members and partners of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) conducted in-country monitoring of UNSCR 1325's implementation in Afghanistan, Burundi, Canada, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Fiji, Nepal, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Uganda, using a set of common indicators they selected and developed. The general findings were as follows:

1. There is in general a limited understanding of the gender dimensions of conflict and of the need for a gender perspective in peace and security processes.
2. Despite impressive progress in some cases, women are still struggling

to participate in conflict prevention, peace-building and governance processes, particularly at formal and official levels.

3. While the development of gender-sensitive policies — especially national action plans (NAPs) on UNSCR 1325 and legislation — constitute a major achievement, their implementation remains a significant challenge.
4. Rates of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are often extremely high both during and after conflict, and impunity remains.
5. Major data gaps on women and peace and security (WPS) issues persist across all areas, especially with regards to SGBV.
6. There is a lack of adequate funding for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 by governments and especially by civil society organizations (CSOs).
7. Women’s civil society organizations play a key role in virtually every aspect of the implementation of UNSCR 1325, often through informal channels.

The civil society in-country monitoring initiative highlights the accountability gap that is manifested in the lack of leadership, lack of systematic approaches to implementation and the absence of concrete and effective monitoring mechanisms to measure progress as the key challenges. It also sends a strong message to governments, the UN and other multilateral institutions: “We will be watching you and we will continue to hold you accountable.” (The full copy of GNWP’s 1325 civil society monitoring report is available at: <http://www.gnwp.org/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/in-country-and-global-monitoring-of-united-nations-security-council-resolution-1325>.)

Another report, “What the Women Say: Participation and UNSCR 1325 by the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) and the MIT Center for International Studies, highlighted some critical points 10 years after the adoption of the resolution:

- * Many governments, UN personnel and CSOs are still unaware of or misunderstand UNSCR 1325.

Beyond the United Nations Development Fund for Women’s (UNIFEM) initial efforts, the adoption of UNSCR 1325 did not prompt a serious public education campaign in any country explaining the origins, rationale and substance of the mandate. The UN leadership did not properly champion the resolution nor support its implementation.

- * Governments and international mediators are not doing their jobs.

Outreach to, consultation with, and inclusion of women’s voices are not part of the standard operating procedures of governments or mediators involved in peace processes.
- * Opposition and non-state actors can provide an important entry point for ensuring attention to gender issues and women’s inclusion.
- * Non-state and opposition movements have been more amenable to addressing issues of gender inequality in peace processes than governments.
- * The UN does many things but it is weak on peace.

“Which UN agency is responsible for peace?” This was a question raised by a Colombian peace activist. For good reason: There are 23 UN agencies active in the country. For NGOs and other organizations working at national or grassroots levels, the multiple points of UN responsibility remain overwhelming and confusing.

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In Colombia, Liberia and Israel, for example, UNSCR 1325 was at the foundation of groundbreaking legislation.

(The details of the findings and full report of the CAN-MIT study are available at: <http://www.icanpeacework.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Whatthewomensay.pdf>.)

The studies from GNWP and ICAN-MIT capture the gains, gaps and glitches in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the last 10 years. They also offer practical recommendations on how governments, civil society, the UN and other stakeholders can work together towards the full and effective implementation. The bottom line is: There are some accomplishments but there is much more to be done on actual implementation.

National Action Plans

There are so far 25 NAPs on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 that have been officially adopted, from the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Chile, Côte d’Ivoire, Denmark, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Liberia, Nepal, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Portugal, Rwanda, Sierra Leone,

Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Uganda, and the United Kingdom. A number of countries, including Australia, Burundi and Indonesia have draft NAPs that are expected to be adopted soon. The United States is currently drafting its NAP.

We applaud the efforts of governments that have adopted NAPs. However, 25 NAPs out of 193 UN member states is not great news. This is a mere 13%. If this is one of the indicators of progress in implementation after 10 years, we have failed miserably.

Having said that, I would like to discuss how some of these NAPs came about. All of the NAPs that were developed in the first six years after the resolution were from European countries. As none of these are conflict-affected countries, their NAPs were developed as part of their foreign policy, development and/or defense agenda rather than as part of a national peace-building and reconstruction agenda. However, the role of such European countries is critical as a number of them support peace processes in developing and the least developed countries either by providing official development assistance to national action planning processes, peace initiatives, actual reconstruction projects and/or by serving as mediators in peace negotiations between governments and rebel groups.

Most of the earlier NAPS did not have dedicated budgets or indicators to track progress in implementation. Nor did they have clear targets and benchmarks. However, some of these concerns have been addressed recently as a number of countries such as Norway, Switzerland and the UK have revised their NAPs.

Cognizant of the weaknesses of earlier NAPs, countries that developed their NAPs later, such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Philippines, Rwanda, Burundi and Nepal have built-in indicators. This consciousness to develop indicators was also a result of the adoption of UNSCR 1889, which called for the development of a set of global indicators to track the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The work of GNWP and other civil society organizations like Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS)-UK on indicators development and monitoring also contributed to the awareness of the need for indicators.

The NAP Process in Nepal

Nepal's national action planning process is a best practice example in policy-making at the national level. It demonstrated a very strong cross-sectoral collaboration and broad-based consultation — the most important components of policy-making that guarantees ownership and participation by the people who will be directly impacted by a specific policy. The Peace

Support Working Group (PSWG) on UNSCR 1325, which is a consortium of foreign embassies, bilateral agencies and UN bodies established in 2007, supported this collaborative and consultative process and served as an advisory and oversight committee. Some members of the PSWG such as the Norwegian Embassy, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNIFEM provided funds for district and regional-level consultations while some others provided in-kind support such as printing and translation. A special Technical Working Group (TWG) consisting of NGOs, national government actors and independent consultants was also formed. The TWG conducted the field and national consultations and drafted the NAP.

The field consultations were conducted in all five development regions and 40 districts of the country (Nepal has 75 districts). The participants in the consultations included members of local peace committees, women’s groups, children from families affected by armed conflicts, local district officials and representatives of national NGOs and UN entities. The consultations generated over 1,500 action points. The action points reflected the broad range of concerns of families and communities in conflict-affected areas. They included requests for livelihood projects, psycho-social and medical services for survivors and the establishment of memorial grounds to remember and honor the victims of the armed conflict, among others. Some of the action points identified by local communities were not even directly related to 1325 — such as the setting up of homes for the elderly and the provision of longer maternity leave. The consultation series enabled local people to pour their hearts out. It empowered them to speak to their



Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan with representatives of women's non-governmental organizations in 2006.

government officials in their own authentic voices. At the consultation in Surkhet, a district in mid-western Nepal heavily affected by armed conflict, one of the participants told the state minister: “We’ve listened to you... now you listen to us.”

Nepal’s national action planning process was also enhanced by global-local and local-global sharing of experiences and strategies among civil society groups. This was made possible through the active links of Nepali NGOs such as Saathi, SAMANATA Institute for Social and Gender Equality, Sancharika Samuha and the Institute of Human Rights Communication Nepal with international networks like GNWP and the Global Action to Prevent War.

Nepal’s political situation remains very volatile despite several peace agreements between the government and the opposing parties. The immense divisions among political parties, compounded by class and caste issues, poverty and easy access to guns, continue to threaten Nepal’s political stability. The fact that the working committee under the High Level Steering Committee with its secretariat at the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, the Peace Support Working Group and women’s groups were able to navigate this difficult situation and generate support for the NAP is very impressive.

Local communities are part of the actual development of policies themselves; they are not just recipients of the policies. National and local government actors bring in the overall policy perspective to ensure that new policies are founded on existing ones and policy and implementation coherence is guaranteed. Civil society organizations bring in the independent voice that is not beholden to partisan politics or self-serving interests of individual politicians. They facilitate dialogues and the critical examination of issues and policies that affect the lives of populations. Multilateral institutions such as the UN play a role in setting the international normative standards for peace and security, human rights and development, as well as in catalyzing policy-making and implementation processes. In Nepal’s planning process, each sector’s roles, functions and mandates were clear and each one respected the boundaries set by those.

These are some of the lessons highlighted in Nepal’s national action planning process on UNSCR 1325 and 1820, which confronts sexual violence in conflict areas. If adopted and applied widely, they could guarantee policy ownership, participation and effective implementation. This interactive, inclusive, consultative and participatory approach to policy-making could potentially change policy culture. This also demonstrates that the process is just as important as the outcome.

Budgets, Costing and Financing

One of the major challenges in implementing UNSCR 1325 has to do with funding — not only the lack of funds per se but also the absence of clear earmarking of financial resources dedicated to implementation, as well as the lack of coordination among government agencies, CSOs and UN agencies working on women and peace and security issues. The lack of transparency in resource generation, usage and management is another issue. These were some of the findings of the study “Costing and Financing 1325: Examining the Resources Needed to Implement Women, Peace and Security Resolutions at the National Level,” jointly commissioned by Cordaid (Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid) and GNWP.

The study also found that almost all of the NAPs from developing and the least developed countries are funded by external donors, many from official development assistance. While it is good to bankroll these processes, it would be much more sustainable if the funding were integrated into the national budget. Furthermore, this would also promote ownership among national government actors. “Making 1325 part of national budget discussions puts it at the heart of the policy agenda. Links become clearer... economic security and empowerment are essential to make women less vulnerable,” notes Maresa Oosterman, first secretary for the Economic and Social Affairs Section of the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands, at the presentation of the costing and financing study during the 10th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 in New York in October 2010.

It is also important to stress that while funding is important for setting the national action planning process in motion, it is much more critical for ensuring resources during implementation. At the same presentation of the costing and financing study, Nana Pratt, representative of the National Organization of Women and the Mano River Women’s Peace Network in Sierra Leone, emphasized that “in situations of post-conflict, there are many competing priorities. Special attention has to be paid not only to financing the development of a national action plan but also to funding for its implementation. ... We need to tap both internal and external sources and look at innovative sources including private enterprises.”

The need to enhance NGO capacity to facilitate and manage funds for the development and implementation of NAPs as well as women and peace and security advocacy and programming also needs to be emphasized. Partnership with the private sector is likewise worth exploring. In this context, a comprehensive corporate social responsibility framework that

integrates a commitment to advance the women and peace and security agenda must be developed. After all, societies where there is sustainable peace and development make for a good business environment.

(Please go to <http://www.gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Costing-and-Financing-1325-study.pdf> to access the costing and financing study. Kindly note, however, that revisions are underway.)

Another Resolution, “Resolution Fatigue”?

On Dec. 16, 2010, the UN Security Council adopted UNSCR 1960, a new resolution on sexual violence in conflict that aims to further strengthen political will and commitment to prevent sexual violence, combat impunity and enforce accountability. It requests the UN secretary-general to establish monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence, including the yearly publication of a list of armed groups that target women for sexual abuse. Moreover, UNSCR 1960 anticipates the appointment of more women protection advisors to peacekeeping missions; as well as the elaboration of scenario-based training materials on combating sexual violence. It also encourages member states to use those as a reference, as part of enhanced peacekeeper training and to deploy more female military and police personnel.

The adoption of UNSCR 1960, was preceded by three supporting resolutions, namely UNSCR 1820 (adopted on June 19, 2008), which responds to the issue of sexual violence in conflict; UNSCR 1888 (adopted on Sept. 30, 2009), which identifies specific actions against sexual violence in conflict — including the appointment of a special representative of the secretary-general to lead efforts to end conflict-related sexual violence; and UNSCR 1889 (adopted on Oct. 5, 2009), which seeks to strengthen the UN’s commitment to engaging women in peace negotiations, in governance and the financing of post-conflict recovery, and in peace-building initiatives and calls for the development of a set of global indicators to track the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

There are now four supporting resolutions that have reinforced the normative standards for the protection of women’s rights during and after conflict and for addressing their specific needs in the recovery and peace-building period. The passing of these resolutions shows the rapid development in international laws that address women, peace and security issues. However, given the glaring reality that UNSCR 1325, the resolution that is the foundation of them all, has not been fully implemented, some women peace activists cannot help but express “resolution fatigue.”

There is also a concern that there has been too much emphasis on sexual

violence prevention and not enough on the prevention of armed conflict itself. Another concern is the lack of emphasis on women's participation in decision-making, despite the fact that sexual violence stems from the lack of women's participation in decision-making, even as it is also one of the key factors that prevent women from fully participating in decision-making. In other words, sexual violence is both the cause and the consequence of women's absence from decision-making, and women's full and equal participation at all levels will reduce their vulnerability to rape and other forms of sexual violence.

It must also be noted that the strong ownership and active participation of civil society that characterized the drafting and adoption of UNSCR 1325 has never been replicated in the subsequent resolutions. It is due to this sense of ownership and active participation that UNSCR 1325 has become an organizing and mobilizing instrument for women's organizations worldwide. I still recall one GNWP member from the conflict-affected Mount Elgon district in Kenya who said to me: "The first time I read Resolution 1325, I held it close to my chest. This is ours; this belongs to us."

We need renewed commitment to fully and effectively implement UNSCR 1325, the foundational document on women and peace and security. We need to look at the issues and the Security Council resolutions that address them as components that constitute a whole. We need these international laws not just to prevent sexual violence in conflict but to prevent conflict itself. We need such policies not just to be able to say that women are represented — but that peace and justice are more sustainable if women who represent women's interests are at the decision-making tables. It is time to walk the talk.

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