

MARCH 2018

WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

REPORT



This event is part of our Development Policy Forum (DPF), which brings together a number of important development actors, including the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the United Nations and the World Bank. Reflecting the growing role of the private sector in development, the DPF has now welcomed Coca-Cola to the forum. The DPF contributes to the global and European conversation on inclusive development. Through its activities and publications, the DPF reflects the rapidly-changing global debate on growth and development and seeks to encourage a multi-stakeholdered, fresh, up-to-date thinking on the multiple challenges facing the development community.

INTRODUCTION

Almost twenty years after the adoption of the United Nations Security Council resolution SCR1325 on ‘Women, Peace, and Security’ that encoded women’s roles in peace and security and despite growing evidence that including women in peace-making processes in conflict areas enhances peace and stability, women still struggle to get a place at the negotiating table.

“There is a huge gap between what the UN resolutions and international commitments outline and what is put into place by governments throughout the world,” noted moderator [Shada Islam](#), Director of Europe & Geopolitics at Friends of Europe at the debate entitled ‘Women, Peace and Security’ on 7 March. “It is really a sad story to tell.”

In order to address this disconnect, governments and organisations on all levels need to consider initiatives to empower women in the political, social and economic sectors. Women are more often than not seen as victims in conflict and this perception devalues their contributions to community mediation, economic growth, security sector reform, and in many other areas.

Unlocking women’s potential in peace and security means concentrating on their roles in local communities and empowering them economically as well as politically. Many initiatives and programmes stress capacity-building for women in areas of technical expertise but overlook ways that women are disadvantaged when navigating the overwhelmingly male environments of security and peacebuilding and making their voices heard.

It behoves policymakers and leaders in the fields of security and development to remain focused on the issues of gender-based violence and gender inequality through policy and funding aimed at shifting the perception and place of women in societies and conflict areas throughout the world.

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European Parliament Vice-Chair
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INCLUDING WOMEN IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

According to a [Friends of Europe's publication](#) on the subject, in global peace processes between 1992 and 2011, women made up only 2% of chief mediators, 4% of witnesses and signatories, and 9% of negotiators. In addition, from 2008 to 2012, women were signatories to only two out of 61 peace agreements.

Though the international community has declared otherwise, the reality is that the vast majority of peace agreements over the past thirty years fail to include women in the peace process or even address them and their concerns, including gender-based violence.

The outcomes of women, frequently in the first line of impact when it comes to conflict, mean that they must have a voice in standing up for the specific issues affecting them. Without their voices, these issues are ignored and peace-building efforts continue to focus more on the conflicts themselves than their resolutions.

“There is not enough research in this area but where there is, there is a proven difference as a result of involving women in peace negotiations,” stressed [Clare Moody](#), European Parliament Vice-Chair of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence.

“When women are actively involved in the peace-making process, there is a 20% increase in peace lasting two years and a 35% increase over five years,” she said.

“Women bring other skills to the negotiating table,” noted [Sandra Oelke](#), Advisor on Security, Peace and Disaster Risk Management at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). “They strive less for power or recognition and are calmer in some situations than their male counterparts, bringing new ideas and dynamics to the whole process.”

As it stands, there are not enough women being actively involved outside of a few isolated examples such as in Columbia or Northern Ireland during their respective peace processes, Moody said.

One of the primary reasons for this is the general lack of women in official positions to begin with, particularly in defence ministries and the defence sector overall.

The gender profile of defence ministers, as well as heads of state and government, parliamentarians, and other decision-makers, is overwhelmingly male throughout the world. Though nearly two decades have passed since the adoption of SCR1325, there has been little change, and there are still not enough women's voices involved in decision-making processes and their outputs.

“It appears that simply increasing the number of female participants and women in leadership positions is an adequate response,” noted [Makiko Kubota](#), Senior Advisor on Gender and Development at JICA Tokyo.

“However, this does not automatically bring about the desired changes in peace and development outcomes, including protecting women’s rights. We need to go beyond number and focus on the content and quality of women’s participation and leadership,” she said. “In doing so, our challenge is to work more with women’s organisations on the grassroots level.”

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EMPOWERING WOMEN AS PEACEMAKERS IN LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES

“Women do indeed have a role in peace-building, whether they like it or not,” noted [Bruno Nazim Baroni](#), Head of Monitoring and Evaluation at the AVSI Foundation, South Sudan. “This is evident before, during, and after conflicts at the local level.”

Whether minimising the possibility of conflict, disrupting an ongoing conflict, or recovering their lives and those of their families and communities post-conflict, women find themselves sometimes unwilling participants on the front lines of peace efforts.

For example, he noted that women in South Sudan tend to have relationships through marriage across communities that are often in conflict with one another. More than the men in these communities, women are better placed to have different perspectives and the ability to speak for several communities at the same time.

“These women peacemakers are there on the ground in conflict areas,” he stressed, “it is just a matter of going there, noticing their roles, and then giving them the power to effect change on the national level.”

How, then, can these women be empowered to effect the needed changes? What is needed is an incremental, bottom-up approach beginning with the inclusion of women in other domains and sectors – economic, political, civil society, and so on. Without this inclusion, it is difficult to imagine women having a more important role in peace negotiations.

“We need to learn from the experiences of women on the ground and then be conscious of these experiences when putting the international framework in place to facilitate women’s roles and voices,” Moody said.

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Increasing the participation of women in such processes requires concerted efforts to empower them but this alone is not sufficient, noted Oelke. “We need to empower women but also to raise awareness among men and the male-dominated organisational culture in peace and security,” she said. “Without respect and acceptance on their side, women are simply unable to get into the field.”

CAPACITY-BUILDING BEYOND TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

In projects on the local level, both GIZ and the AVSI Foundation have been working with women to build capacities for mediation, conflict resolution and technical expertise. While this sort of capacity-building is essential, getting women into higher positions is a challenge.

“Empowering women is very difficult,” Oelke said. “Just being in the room does not make a woman an expert on gender politics and negotiation. Our work is not only about teaching technical skills but also the skills necessary to navigate and be heard in a male-dominated environment.”

Imparting these skills can take various forms, noted Kubota, whose work with capacity-building with female police officers in Afghanistan includes actions to address the trauma and psychological vulnerability experienced by many women in conflict areas.

“Empowering women in the security sector and in conflict can be an important driving force to create a society where women are not silenced, can raise their voices, and participate directly,” she said.

Moving beyond conflicts, it is important to adopt a holistic approach to addressing and improving the political power of women and the economic power that underpins this political power, Baroni stressed.

To this end, the AVSI Foundation has implemented an agriculture project in South Sudan encouraging women to become pig farmers in order to break down the traditional roles of men as herders and women as farmers and move towards greater gender equality and respect for women in local communities.

PEACEBUILDING THROUGH GENDER-SENSITIVE SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

It is generally accepted that gender-based discrimination and violence hinder the establishment of peace and human security. On the other hand, Oelke noted, it is less accepted that including women in peace processes and in the security sector can contribute to diminishing this discrimination and violence.

“Women are often seen as victims in the peacekeeping arena, not as active players,” she said. “We must seek to include more women in the field of security sector reform, which remains overwhelmingly male in contrast with the field of development cooperation.”

The participation of women in security sector reform is important to create more diverse security services by opening up the sector to people with different backgrounds and experiences. In Afghanistan, for example, where gender separation is entrenched in the society, efforts are underway to reform police services to be more gender-sensitive, Kubota stressed.

High levels of violence against women, including domestic violence, child marriages, sexual assault and honour killings mean that significant challenges remain to ensuring the rights and safety of women and girls.

Despite some progress, there are only 3014 women police officers in Afghanistan’s national police force, representing a mere 4% of the whole. “Women face significant obstacles to joining the police force and serving effectively,” Kubota said. “They face opposition from their communities and families because it is perceived to be culturally inappropriate to work alongside men.”

In addition, discrimination, sexual harassment and targeted violence from male colleagues and from their own communities decrease the effectiveness of women police officers in the country.

Nonetheless, she concluded, “women who join the police force are active change agents for peace and development. With a strong desire to contribute to enhanced security, they recognise that community mediation, education, and protection are key components of their role. Supporting these women will create a more equal and cohesive society where both sexes can live peacefully without discrimination and violence.”

Increasing cohesion between development and defence actors is crucial to gender-sensitive security sector reform. Beyond Afghanistan, women are underrepresented in peacekeeping operations and as security actors in conflict areas throughout the world.

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Advisor on Security, Peace and Disaster Risk Management at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

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In order to address this, Oelke noted that member states involved in peacekeeping must diversify the pool from which they select peacekeepers and move away from the dominance of male-oriented defence ministries in this regard. Gender-sensitive security reform must begin with raising awareness on how to build this capacity in the institutions that are in charge

Drawing on her experience working with the Eastern African Standby Force, she said that “defence ministries do not know who to send into conflict zones. When we asked members for female civilian peacekeepers, they sent us cleaning ladies and storekeepers. This is a sad reality.”

ADDRESSING THE POLICY AND FINANCING CONTEXT

While JICA has been promoting gender-responsive programmes and women’s economic empowerment, as well as supporting local initiatives that provide protection and prevention services for the victims of trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence, such interventions comprise only 6% of the agency’s peacebuilding operations, Kubota noted.

“To be honest,” she said, “we have not been very successful in including women in peace and security. Much of our support has been directed towards men as the primary beneficiaries.”

Changing local and global perspectives towards more gender-sensitive societies is a major part of the response to the issues but there is also a greater need for policymakers and financing organisations to step up and consider approaches to support the inclusion of women in peace and security, for example more funding for research on the role of women’s organisations, Baroni stressed.

One specific area lacking in a balanced gender perspective is migration, noted participant Irune Aguirrezabal, Head of the Policy and Programme Support Division at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Regional Office for the EEA, EU, and NATO.

Migration data and policy need to be disaggregated by age and sex to reflect the fact that 48% of migrants to Europe are women, she said. Women migrants are at greater risk of exploitation and abuse than their male counterparts. For this and other reasons, policymakers should strive for greater understanding of gender interaction in migration and provide adequate responses through non-discriminatory legislation and services.

“In relation to women in migration, there are immediate actions that must be taken to address migration flares and the refugee crisis,” Moody stressed, “but these are just band aids that we can use to cover the war wounds we are dealing with at the moment.”

In the longer term, European and international policymakers need to be investing in economic empowerment for women. “We need to recognise the difference we can make by not just supporting women’s agency in peace-making situations but by supporting women’s economic agency in general,” she added. “This is the beginning of changing the place and view of women in society.”

Finally, Moody noted that, in preparation for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the EU and its institutions need to carefully consider the effects of budget support and funding mechanisms for initiatives aimed at improving the lot of women in peace and security.

“Looking at the budget proposals for the next MFF, there is tension between proposed reductions and support for rights, equality, and citizenship,” she concluded. “We need to scrutinise these proposals and ensure that there is gender sensitivity and targeting in all budget streams.”

CONCLUSION

Over the past few decades, the role and prominence of women in peace and security has evolved, though much remains to be done to improve gender equality, justice, and sensitivity in peacebuilding.

“It is essential that we continue to raise the issues of women’s rights and gender-based violence,” concluded Baroni. “We must be relentless. As long as these issues are being discussed there is hope for real change.”

More efforts are required, particularly to remedy the lack of detailed research into the lives and affairs of women in conflict zones and in peace negotiations. Discussion is necessary to keep public focus on the issues but more action is needed and better outcomes must be delivered, Moody said.

“The scale of effort that is required is great,” Shada Islam concluded, “the state of women in peace and security is appalling and unacceptable. The moment we think that things are going well and reduce our efforts, there is a pushback. We must use the momentum we have now to press ahead with fundamental changes in the way we deal with women in peace and security.”

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Tel: +32 2 893 98 23

Fax: +32 2 893 98 28

Email: info@friendsofeurope.org

friendsofeurope.org

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