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WOMEN'S WORLD

TRACING 20 YEARS OF FEMINIST PEACE

**WOMEN PEACE BUILDERS REFLECT ON
THE JOURNEY OF ADVANCING THE
WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA
IN BURUNDI, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF
CONGO, NEPAL, SOUTH SUDAN AND
UGANDA**



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Peace Centre**
Amplifying Women's Voice and Power

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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, NEPAL,
SOUTH SUDAN AND UGANDA**



WITH THE SUPPORT OF



LETTER TO OUR READERS



Helen Kezie-Nwoha
Executive Director

As we mark twenty years since the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, a milestone that carried with it great hope for transformative change, I am pleased to introduce you to seven transformative women peace builders.

In this 51st edition of *Women's World*, we take you to Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal, South Sudan and Uganda through the personal stories and reflections of our partners who have taken lead in advancing the women, peace and security agenda in their countries over the past two decades and longer. Through their journeys and deliberations, we look back at 20 years of agitating for women's participation in conflict prevention, resolution and peace building; at our efforts to prevent, end and respond to conflict-related sexual violence; and to ensure gender-response relief and recovery through various means.

We hear from the 7 women peace builders- who are long-term partners of the Peace Centre and alumnae of the Feminist Leadership Institute – on the status of implementation of the UNSCR 1325 through National Action Plans, including challenges and recommendations for the future. While the contexts may seem different, there is a clear thread of common messages across the board.

For instance, the conversations reinforce the need to return to the basics in order for the agenda to be truly transformative. The peace builders stress the need to address women's subordinate social status, to challenge negative norms and prioritise ensuring women's control over their identities, bodies and labour. They highlight women's economic empowerment and education as key prerequisites to enabling women's true agency, challenging negative masculinities and conscientising men to advance the agenda. The need to include, equip and provide space for the youth and to be sensitive to diverse identities and vulnerabilities is also clear. Across countries, the importance of addressing trauma was affirmed as well as the need to re-imagine a peace that is truly holistic. There were also concerns about the agenda not achieving enough and in many ways requiring an overhaul.

In this edition, we continue with our practice of amplifying women's voice and power for peace. I invite you to read from Marie Louise Baricako of Burundi's Inamahoro (formerly Mouvement des Femmes et Filles pour la Paix et la Securite - MFFPS); Jolly Kamuntu, of Karibu Jeunesse Nouvelle (KJN) in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Dr Renu Adhikari, of National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders (NAWHRD) and Rama Dhakal, National Federation of the Disabled Nepal (NFDN) both from Nepal; Mary Apayi Ayiga from Raise Women's Hope and Hannah Lorna from Women Leadership Organisation(WOLO) in South Sudan; and Cecilia Engole Alupo, of Teso Women's Peace Activists (TEWPA) in Uganda.

#FeministPeace



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INTRODUCTION



Juliet Were
Women's International Peace Centre

The year 2020 is a year of multiple milestones and anniversaries. It is a year of reviewing accountability at different fronts in line with the Women Peace and Security Agenda, as well as Gender Equality. These include the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 20th Anniversary of the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the African Union Agenda 2063 commitment on Silencing the Guns by 2020. We are celebrating women's leadership (grassroots and civil society) and activism that pushed and campaigned resulting in language in normative frameworks on WPS.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), the most comprehensive global agenda for women's rights and empowerment, serves as one of the founding documents on the UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 and the supporting resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The critical area of concern on Women and Armed Conflict calls for an increase in the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels, and in the protection of women living in situations of armed conflict, among other objectives. The BPfA also underscores the gendered impact and experiences in humanitarian emergencies, and therefore the need for more holistic support to crisis-affected women, young women, adolescent girls, and gender non-conforming individuals.

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council acknowledged and passed the landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security UNSCR 1325 which is one of the key frameworks that guarantees women's participation in peace processes and decision-making. It is the first resolution adopted by the UN Security Council dealing specifically with gender issues and women's experiences in conflict and post-conflict situations including the central role of women in conflict prevention and peace building.



Participation: calls for increased participation of women at all levels of decision-making; in mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict; in peace negotiations; in peace operations, as soldiers, police, and civilians; and as Special Representatives of the U.N. Secretary-General.



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.



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



Relief and recovery: Calls for advancement of relief and recovery measures to address international crises through a gendered lens, including by respecting the civilian and humanitarian nature of refugee camps, and considering the needs of women and girls in the design of refugee camps and settlements

In 2002, a Security Council Presidential Statement called on UN Member States to develop national level initiatives to help to implement UNSCR 1325. By January 2018, 72 nations had created National Action Plans. Between 1992 and 2019, women constituted, on average, 13 per cent of negotiators, 6 per cent of mediators, and 6 per cent of signatories in major peace processes worldwide. About seven out of every ten peace processes did not include women mediators or women signatories. In addition, the proportion of peace agreements with gender equality provisions increased from 14 to 22 per cent between 1995 and 2019; and between 2015-2019, only 11 per cent of ceasefire agreements included gender provisions, compared to 26 per cent of other peace agreement types.

In order to build capacities of women to engage in mediation and negotiation, the African Union established The Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (Femwise-Africa) in July 2017. The aim was to strengthen the role of women in conflict prevention and mediation as well as peace-making and post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts in the context of the African Peace and Security Architecture. The network has created opportunities to train women in mediation, negotiation and other mediation-related thematic areas, further equipping women with necessary skills.

Additionally, the network provides a platform for mentoring young women to be an integral part of peace mediation, thus building a strong base for current and future generation of women mediators. Other mediation networks have been formed at national and community level including the Association of African Women Mediators (South Africa), Women Network for Peace and Dialogue (Burundi), Women in Peacebuilding Network (Liberia), Mano River Women's Peace Network; South Sudan Women's Peace Network, Sudan and South Sudan Joint Women's Task Force for Peace; Regional Faith Women Peace Mediators Network; Yumbe Peace Mediators Network and Adjumani Peace Mediators Networks (Uganda).

she
builds
peace

Stand with Women Peace Builders



Gender
Sensitive
Leaders

There has also been an increase in women's representation in national parliaments from 13.1 per cent in 2000 to 24.9 per cent in 2020 (UN Women). Most African countries have at least one gender quota in place, including 13 countries that hold specifically reserved seats for women in parliament as opposed to legislated candidate or political party quotas. These reserved seats allowed countries to hold high percentages of women members in parliament, such as Rwanda (61.25%), South Africa (46.35%), Senegal (41.82%), and Ethiopia (38.76%), and include more women and diverse perspectives in legislative decision making¹.

Women in Leadership have formed networks to build their lobby base and support mechanism. The African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) formed in June 2017 is an initiative supported by the African Union Commission and the United Nations, to enhance the leadership of African women in the transformation of the continent in line with Agenda 2063. With continued advocacy by women, there has been an increase in the number of policies and legislation to enhance gender equality. Some of these include the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, adopted in Maputo Mozambique in 2003 (the Maputo Protocol), a legal instrument that provides a set of norms on human rights for African women, supported by national laws. These have been operationalised by the establishment for instance of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Regional Training Facility in 2014 for training and sensitizing judicial officers, police units, social workers, medical officers and other categories of persons who handle cases of sexual violence in the Great Lakes Region

1. Naye Bathily (Feb. 2020. Africa takes historic lead in female parliamentary speakers. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/nasikiliza/africa-takes-historic-lead-female-parliamentary-speakers>

However, as the 2015 Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 emphasized “much of the progress toward the implementation of resolution 1325 continues to be measured in ‘firsts’, rather than as standard practice.” Five years since the Global Study, its recommendations continue to be urgent and relevant. Women’s participation should be upheld in all initiatives driven by the United Nations, African Union Commission, Regional Economic Commissions and Member States to curb militarization, fundamentalism and all incidences disrupting global peace and security. Finally, for the National and Regional Action plans on UNSCR 1325 to be implemented, they should be fully financed as a true representation of the commitment of member states to the women, peace and security agenda.

POSITIONING THE NEXT GENERATION OF WOMEN PEACE BUILDERS IN BURUNDI AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



Marie Louise Baricako
Chairperson of The Mouvement INAMAHORO,
Women and Girls for Peace and Security
Former Chair of The Women and Girls Movement
for Peace and Security in Burundi (MFFPS)



Jolly Kamuntu
Karibu Jeunesse Nouvelle
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Within the Great Lakes region, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi have experienced decades of conflict, turbulent political transitions and massive violations of women's rights. These conflicts have had social, political, and economic impacts, particularly affecting women. While women are seen as both key actors and victims of conflict, their vulnerability in these contexts, particularly to sexual violence was clear to all.

In 2000, the international community, through the United Nations Security Council, took an important step in response to the challenges women were faced with globally in the area of peace and security. On the 31st of October 2000, the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security was adopted.

UNSCR 1325 as a landmark resolution paved the way for subsequent resolutions expressing concern that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and increasingly are targeted by combatants and armed elements. They also reaffirmed the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building, and stressed the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution.

BEFORE AND AFTER UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325

Jolly Kamuntu looks back and reflects on what UNSCR 1325 meant for women peace builders in DRC.

We live in conflict. It is the context in which we have evolved. The peculiarity of Eastern DRC is the battlefield, the rape capital of the world and a cemetery for journalists. Over the years the situation has taken different forms. Sexual violence before occurred during wars and was done by armed groups. Serial rapes were committed, women were buried alive and women were used as weapons of war. In reality, it was a message to the communities that if you do not surrender, if you don't give in, women will be burned and buried alive.

Conflicts have set back the rights of women in DRC by 100 years. Conflicts made it possible for rapists to start trivializing sexual violence as more and more cases were reported and it was normalised. There is also lethargy at the national and international levels allowing leaders to not consider rape as an emergency.

This trivialization has tarnished the dignity of Congolese women. We must not be made to accept this into our culture. That is the fight we are taking on right now. I know there is rape and violence against women in other places, but not at the same rate and magnitude as in our case.

Women in DRC were the main victims of the different conflicts, the resulting insecurity, and the harmful effects of war despite not being consulted in the planning of armed violence. We called for women to enjoy their right to security, especially in times of armed conflict. In such times, the protection of women and children must be given priority.

Before UNSCR 1325 our work as women's rights defenders' was challenged. People thought our demands and our plight were a joke. We had no clout. We did this because we were determined, and we are activists. Even leaders would bring us down whenever we asked for backing. It was as if we were shouting in the desert and people were asking us where we had seen women participating in politics. They would tell us to leave decision-making alone and concentrate on raising children.

However, when the UNSCR 1325 came in to support what we had been stressing, it was more acknowledged that women's rights must be defended and recognised in conflict and post-conflict. Now we see that kind of disparaging language disappearing. When you quote frameworks like the UNSCR 1325, you can feel that they are afraid.

Marie Louise Baricako while reflecting on the case of Burundian women highlights their exclusion or tokenistic inclusion in political and social spheres.

UNSCR 1325 emphasises prevention, protection, participation and reconstruction. Currently, the problem that women face in Burundi is mainly being excluded from all processes. Women are not formally involved in prevention and neither are they systematically involved in protection. In Burundi, we see more women active in civil society and fewer in public institutions.

Violence intimidates women and prevents them from participating. Women are going to tell you that they don't want to take part in politics because politics is dirty, politics is full of lies, corruption and violence. All this discourages women. There is no serene or

safe space for the participation of women, and I believe that this is the main reason as to why they do not participate. Generally speaking, and I say this because I am convinced of it and I would like it to change, you will see that in Burundi there exist symbolic women's appointments: what matters is the number. Whether they participate or not, whether they are capable or not, that's not the problem. It's that kind of thinking - we were asked to get 30% and we are going to get 30%. Even if in parliament they don't discuss issues, either they don't understand, or they're not interested... what matters, we're going to put them there so that no one will accuse us of not involving women.

Burundi and DRC face similar limitations to women's peace building. It was observed that women are not sufficiently aware of their rights and obligations which is a blow to the collective process of highlighting women's demands and calling for implementation of commitments under UNSCR 1325. This problem is also due to the low levels of education of women as there are inequalities in women's access to education. Girls face more burdens that make it easier for them to drop out of school including economic factors (particularly in DRC) and socio-cultural factors that lead to early marriage of young girls, which makes them 'destined for their husbands'. This limits women's participation in decision-making processes due to a lack of sufficient and diversified knowledge. It is also important to note the negative impacts of economic and health precariousness faced by women on their ability to participate. In addition, women are hit harder by the effects of pandemics especially HIV/AIDS (Ondimba, Namegabe and Baseke, 2012; WILPF, 2019).

MAJOR MILESTONES OVER THE PAST TWENTY YEARS

Despite the challenges faced by women, the last twenty years have seen significant positive changes in the status and advancement of women in the two countries. These achievements relate to legislation and effectiveness in implementing the normative frameworks of the women, peace and security agenda.



Jolly Kamuntu highlights the changes seen in DRC

There have been improvements in terms of legislation. Key legal provisions have been put in place, in particular, the law that reprimands rape and sexual violence, the family law and the law on parity or representation of women, which has improved both local governance and decentralisation. This law provides for 30 percent representation of women in government institutions.

In terms of effectiveness, more women are present in public institutions and in the management of public affairs. Definitely, this is not the percentage that we would wish to have, but at least, there is a presence of women. We know that before, it was not possible to find women in government. Prior

to this, it was not possible to have a woman minister or governor but today it is a reality, even though the threshold of the legal basis has not yet been reached. We also see more women working in public spaces today and men are no longer hindering their wives. Some of these men saw women's work as a point of conflict. When the man and the woman quarrelled at home, the man would say to his wife; you will see, you're not going to work anymore. We are open to opportunities. In some positions, female candidates are encouraged to apply because with or without the man's permission, it is possible to work. If we look at some professions like the police, the army, we see that the presence of women is there, it is not enough, but it's there.

In Burundi, a woman minister of indigenous Twa ethnic origin was appointed Minister of National Solidarity, Social Affairs, Human Rights and Gender. At the same time in DRC, a woman with physical disability has also been appointed as State Minister in Charge of People With Disabilities and Other Vulnerable Groups. Even in public institutions that did not include women in the past, such as the police and the army, there is now a Department of Women Affairs. It is worth mentioning, however, that the presence of women is still lower than the vast majority of men in these institutions and they do not yet occupy strategic positions of authority.

In the DRC, women are increasingly becoming aware of and demanding respect of their rights. More women have started to report abuses committed by men. For example, in eastern DRC, after a series of awareness-raising campaigns on rape and sexual violence, many women broke the silence and talked about the challenges they encounter, and they exposed their tormentors without fear of being arrested. As a result, certain practices that discriminate against women are being scaled back. Inheritance or land ownership rights in favour of women are increasingly discussed within families. This was not the case prior to the UNSCR 1325. This change explains to some extent the shift in mind-sets that is gradually permeating behavioural patterns in the Burundian and Congolese societies.

Various campaigns launched in favour of women's education have enabled many girls to attend school in large numbers. In terms of economic empowerment, women are already taking on some responsibilities through local economic structures such as MUSOs (Mutual Solidarity Associations) and AVECs (Village Savings and Credit Associations), which enable women's groups to gain access to financial power through group and rotational loans. These mechanisms have enabled poor women excluded from the conventional banking system to gain economic power and engage in income-generating activities.

In Burundi, progress on the status of women can also be seen in the decline of the negative attitude that society has always had about women. It is mainly the negative stereotypes and prejudices that stigmatise women. However, just like in the DRC, the involvement of women in civil society structures and political parties has had a great impact in changing attitudes and mindsets.

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN PEACE BUILDERS IN DRC AND BURUNDI

The UNSCR 1325 brought forward women not only as beneficiaries of the peace process in terms of improving peace and security but also brought about a paradigm shift by presenting women themselves as agents of peace. Both in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Burundi, over the past 20 years, the feminist peace agenda has focused on the aspects outlined in the personal experiences of Jolly Kamuntu and Marie Louise.

For the Democratic Republic of Congo, Jolly Kamuntu reports

Before the UNSCR 1325, I was working as a journalist, and my job was to allow women to express themselves because what we were going through had never been experienced before. We produced news reports, we made field trips – it wasn't easy. Sometimes we would be chased away, other times we were forced to meet the women in the bush. They themselves told us, a woman can't talk about what she's been through, it would be bad and that's our culture. We are asked to keep quiet and to die in silence. There are villages where we went and the men would tell us that as women we were corrupted and cursed.

It was already a big step forward for women to tell their stories. On the one hand, it was a beginning of healing from the trauma and on the other, it was a way of sharing their experiences with others. After our reports had been broadcast, people spoke both positively and negatively about us. We were cursed and congratulated. It gave people courage to talk about these issues and go on the record about what they had been through.

In addition to journalistic work, we did some advocacy work with other civil society organisations. This advocacy took us even to the International Criminal Court at The Hague. I went with a group of women to call upon the ICC to expedite investigations in DRC. I believe that the bringing of Thomas Lubanga, Matthieu Ngudjolo, and Jean Pierre Bemba to justice was partly because of our work as women. We went to lobby Luis

Moreno because we had had enough, and the authorities were delaying to incorporate women in the laws. Our advocacy also led us to the European Union to ask why the Union continued to fund the Congolese government that was not willing to take responsibility for women's security.

We see that women's movements have carved out a place for themselves. From now on, nothing can be done at the local, provincial, or national level without the involvement of women. Different talks have been held, always with a quota for women. We worked together to send women on different rounds of negotiations in Sun City, Addis Ababa, Tripoli, Gaborone, Arusha.

I continued working in the women's field at the risk of losing my life. I spent six years working in military courts documenting sexual violence crimes and travelled throughout the eastern part of DRC covering women's cases. I have heard things and I have seen things. Sometimes I feel discouraged and traumatised by the testimonies I hear. You wonder how she manages to talk, how she manages to breathe... I went into working with the youth, and I founded a youth centre (Karibu Jeunesse Nouvelle).

I realised that I had been able to get the women to speak up. Now it's high time we start mentoring the younger generation. Since women are already working, they will grow old. I thought it was time to prepare a



new generation, a nursery bed. I have always worked with women but this time around, my concentration is on young girls and boys. We need to nurture a generation of young men who are sensitive to gender and femininity

– people who will grow up to know that you have to support women. The day they come to power, they will already know how to involve women and promote women's rights.

From Burundi, Marie Louise Baricako shares her experiences

Personally, I am not in Burundi but I have seen the change in associative movements even when I was not there. What I learnt in women's movements from the great African seminars, I took it back home. I had to go and see the women; to see how they were organising themselves and I would also share with them new ideas and experiences that I got from other places. Every time there were events or important meetings, I made sure some Burundian women were invited so that we could share our experiences. I saw the way women mobilised themselves during peace talks in Arusha; women stood up and went to see the regional leaders, to the extent of going to South Africa to see Nelson Mandela to tell him that we too, as women, want to participate.

I started in 1996, when I was part of an African women's NGO that was being formed. That's how I joined the African women's movement and got involved at the African Union level. We were in Durban to advocate for the adoption of the principle of parity at the African Union. Within the African Union, we created another women's forum called 'Gender is my Agenda Campaign'. I am also a founding member of the African Women Mediators Network and the African Women Leaders Network, where I contribute as much as I can.

This is why I have always wanted Burundian women to see what is happening elsewhere

and to be able to contribute. I did a lot to encourage and support women, for example when they were involved in conflict resolution in Liberia and Sierra Leone. I was among the group of women who backed them. We also gave a lot of support to Congolese women when they went to South Africa to get involved in conflict resolution peace talks in Sun City. It has always been my passion to see women being involved, bringing in their contributions and showing that they can bring to peace and security.

It was in this spirit that I called upon African women to come with me to support Burundian women when they went to Arusha in Tanzania [for the Inter-Burundi dialogue]. I went on a solidarity mission with 15 African women leaders specifically to facilitate a fortnight of training for women in peaceful conflict resolution, advocacy and breaking barriers. Currently, I am the chairperson of the Women and Girls for Peace and Security in Burundi which does advocacy and community mobilisation on peace and encourages women to get involved and get trained in the public affairs of their country. I normally focus on leadership training not only for women but also for others in civil society. For instance, when the crisis hit Burundi, we submitted a leadership training plan to the government.

Women's peace-seeking efforts have been observed in the various political negotiation processes in both countries. While Burundian women saw their role being limited to observation in the Arusha peace talks in Tanzania, where they used corridor diplomacy to convince political actors, Congolese women took part in all the different rounds of talks between 2001 and 2012. Not only were they delegated by the various political factions, but they also had a full-fledged women's component in civil society with a specific quota for participation in these meetings. As victims of recurring wars

and conflicts, women's participation in the political negotiation process has made it possible to bring to the negotiating table the specific problems faced by women during the conflicts in the DRC.

Women's and women's organisations approaches to recovery have been successful in meeting and refocusing the needs of women and girls leaving armed forces and combatant groups. This is through efforts including psychosocial support and various vocational training courses such as crafts, tailoring and small-scale trade.



CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS WOMEN PEACE BUILDERS FACE DESPITE UNSCR 1325

Despite the progress made in advancing the women peace and security agenda, women still face several challenges in conflict and post-conflict contexts in relation to political will, community will and security.

As jolly kamuntu explains

It seems like the politicians have realised that they should not have granted parity through the various laws, but it's too late. It is regrettable that they look for all means possible to block progress. I rub shoulders with the political world, they feel that 'these women, at the pace they are coming up, if we let them, we will not even get jobs in this country'. So, they put up barriers to stop women. You see, in our political institutions, the positions that women occupy are lower, less important positions such as gender or social affairs officers. They

feel that if we are given a decision-making position, it will be a problem. Community will is also another problem; degrading customs and ideas remain persistent. There are people who are promoting these norms and telling women that there are certain things they should not get themselves involved in. The other challenge is the socio-political context, which is not improving. We need to create a conducive environment for women's personal development which still does not exist.

For Marie Louise Baricako, the persistent problems faced by women in Burundi call for systemic change:

I think that while the UNSCR 1325 is a very powerful, very interesting and very useful instrument, the same States which accepted and adopted it, do not believe in it. The leaders do not believe in it, that's why there are no specific policies on this issue of 1325. So we have the resolution 1325, which is an asset, but we don't use it.

Problems still persist because the system has not changed. Every time we have a system that is not open, that is not transparent, women will not be part of it, at least not voluntarily. The women we would like to see at the forefront are not going to get involved in things that are not clear. Women who dare to speak out that things should change, that we need visionary leadership, good governance and inclusiveness – these women are seen as opponents. Women and the youth do not yet have their own space for intervention.

As I speak, we are in exile not because I am opposed to my country but because I advocate for inclusiveness, good governance and justice for all. As far as peace and security is concerned, there is the new dynamic of rape and violence against women, which is taking on dimensions that we never imagined. In today's crisis, for example, rape and violence against girls and women have truly emerged as a weapon of war. For example, if a father is a political opponent whom they are looking for to kill or imprison and they can't find him, they will pounce on his daughter and rape her. There are many girls who have been raped and impregnated just because their father was in an opposition party or belongs to an ethnic group that is considered to be an enemy. It's horrible. It's total dehumanization that is taking place, so the women are stuck. Some girls cannot go on with their studies because of unwanted pregnancies

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The adoption of Resolution 1325 by the United Nations Security Council has generated a lot of hope for the status and advancement of women affected by conflict and involved in peace building. However, more needs to be done to ensure these hopes are fulfilled.

FOR THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

It is important to prioritise and work towards the qualitative representation of women in the management of public affairs including mobilisation and support for girls and women to participate and contest for senior positions in political structures.

As Jolly Kamuntu explains,

Today, our big target is the representation of women in the management of public affairs. When you remain in civil society organisations, you don't contribute much. Civil society organisations help us to have experience and to analyse the context, but we have to join political structures. Women must be encouraged to run for political offices. It

is not in organisations that we are going to change the policies of the country or adopt policies for the development of the country. Women need to be where the decisions are made. If we have a woman Minister of Internal Affairs, she will know how to ensure security in South Kivu. We must yearn for strategic positions.



To translate the legal and policy frameworks into action, it is important to disseminate information on the instruments used to punish the perpetrators of rape and sexual violence.

There is also a need to strengthen community-based programmes to raise awareness on positive masculinity within society and equip young boys for a future generation that is more devoted to women's rights and gender equality.

To enable women's full and meaningful participation in peace and security, it is important to make young girls aware of the importance of continuing with university studies, and on the other hand, universities should set up programmes focused on the advancement of women and addressing gender inequalities.

Finally, it is important to strengthen women's economic power to reduce their vulnerability and enhance their confidence. This includes extending support to the microeconomic structures where they are present, such as the Village Savings and Credit Associations (AVECs) and the Mutual Solidarity Associations (MUSO).

FOR BURUNDI

It is necessary to strengthen women's political participation by focusing on the presence and quality of engagement of the women in decision-making forums at the local, provincial, and national levels.

Marie Louise Baricako says,

I think we must first open a new chapter in the political dimension. I believe that the participation of women and youth is no longer a matter of negotiation. It has to become a policy and it has to be enforced at all levels.

If women are to participate effectively in all areas of UNSCR 1325, especially in decision-making processes, special emphasis must be

placed on the education of women and girls and vocational training for women. Emphasis must also be put on women's leadership and economic empowerment. In view of all that we are going through today, we will have to put a lot of emphasis on digitalisation. This will require investment, training and encouraging women and girls to take this tool as something that can help them move forward quickly.

For Marie Louise Baricako investing in the gender-responsiveness of the education and economic sectors is key to advancing and sustaining the women, peace and security agenda.

NO PEACE WITHOUT JUSTICE: ENCAPSULATING THE FEMINIST PEACE NARRATIVE FROM NEPAL



Dr Renu Adhikari
National Alliance of Women Human Rights
Defenders (NAWHRD)



Rama Dhakal
National Federation of the Disabled Nepal
(NFDN)

BACKGROUND

The Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda was officially introduced with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000. The UNSCR 1325, along with recognising the need to protect women in conflicts, also called for increased participation of women in conflict-resolution and peace-building efforts.² For policymakers and scholars of the WPS agenda, National Action Plans (NAPs) represent a concrete step by states to fulfil their objectives regarding UNSCR 1325 and the other resolutions that make up the WPS agenda.³

The year 2020 marks the twentieth anniversary of the WPS agenda and in reviewing the significance of the WPS at the grassroots level two women peacebuilders engaged with peace, conflict and the constitutional processes in Nepal shared their perspectives. These women peacebuilders' voices bring forth their engagements with the WPS agenda and its contextual relevance, highlighting not just the significance but also the limitations, gaps and challenges.

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2. Pratt, Nicola and Devroe, Richter-Sophie (2011): 'Critically examining UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 13(4). 489-503
 3. <https://www.wpsnaps.org/report/>

POST-CONFLICT REINTEGRATION AND RECONSTRUCTION IN NEPAL

During ten years of the People's War of 1996-2006, more than 17,000 people lost their lives and over 300,000 people were displaced.⁴ Almost one thousand five hundred people disappeared, 9,000 women were widowed and 5,912 were injured and disabled. While the disaggregated number of women suffering from atrocities of conflict has not been determined, local organisations estimate that 40% to 60% of all conflict victims and affected people were women.⁵ The decade-long armed conflict was a consequence of long historical injustices, pervasive structural inequalities, centralised governance, patronage politics and social exclusion of marginalised and vulnerable groups from resources, power and opportunities.

The conflict ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) by the Maoists and Seven-Party Alliance in 2006. It heralded a new era in Nepali history with the establishment of a Constituent Assembly (CA) to draft a new constitution, ensure equality and end marginalisation.⁶ The CPA included provisions to form a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Commission on Investigation of Disappeared People, which were only formed eight years later in 2015.⁷ The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction (MOPR) was created to manage peace negotiations and agreements, and provided oversight for national commissions and local committees. The Gender Equality Act 2006, 2007 Interim Constitution of Nepal, Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act 2007, Domestic Violence Act 2009 and Caste Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act (2011) were positive developments at the legal front. In 2008, the Government of Nepal and seven donors jointly initiated Nepal Peace Trust Fund to assist the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction to fulfil commitments made in the Comprehensive Peace Accord.⁸

In 2010, the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction established 75 Local Peace Committees with mandatory 33% women members in all the districts, 46 at the municipal level and more than 2,700 at the Village Development Committee level. Thereafter, the Government of Nepal adopted UNSCR 1325 and 1820 and proposed 18-member steering committees for the implementation and adoption of the National Action Plan (2011-2016) in 2011. A national policy for internally displaced peoples (IDP) was established and IDPs, injured conflict victims and conflict-disabled people were provided with relief and compensation, including wheelchairs and artificial limbs. Reparations were given to the family of disappeared persons and martyrs, along with education scholarship to their children.

4. Way Forward: Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, Search for Common Ground and UN Women, 2016

5. Thapa, L & Canyon, D.V. (2017) The Advancement of Women in Post-Conflict Nepal, Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies

6. Peace Audit Nepal, International Alert, 2016

7. *ibid*

8. *ibid*



UNSCR 1325 NATION ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION IN NEPAL

Women played a crucial role in bringing political change through their involvement in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and by being in forefront of activism for peace as members of women's group and civil society members. However, their participation in peace negotiations held in 2005 was negligible. Women combatants were also excluded from the rehabilitation and integration process of combatants.⁹ UNSCR 1325 has played a crucial role in increasing participation of women in peace building processes and recognised their contribution in local and national peace processes. As the first country in South Asia to adopt a National Action Plan in 2011, Nepal was highly acclaimed and praised for its inclusive and comprehensive process 'developed through a highly consultative process with extraordinary levels of collaboration between government, non-governmental bodies and donor community'.¹⁰

The Nepali National Action Plan was developed out of a participatory process with attendance of over 3,000 participants who generated more than 1,500 action points¹¹ which were clustered under five pillars namely: participation, protection and prevention, promotion, relief and recovery, resource management and monitoring and evaluation. The fifth pillar was specifically adopted in Nepal to ensure a timely and proper implementation of all the aspects of the National Action Plan.¹² The Gender Unit of the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction was established to effectively co-ordinate, monitor and evaluate the National Action Plan at the national level. At the district level, the District Coordination Committees were the coordinating body.¹³

The goal of the National Action Plan (2011-2016) was to achieve 'sustainable peace and just society'. Its objective was to 'ensure proportional and meaningful participation of women at all levels of conflict transformation and peace building processes; and protection of women and girls' rights'.¹⁴ It included specific objectives, actions to be taken, expected results, indicators, implementing agencies, and a time frame.¹⁵ The indicators and expected results include women's participation in different government bodies, issues around sexual and gender-based violence, gender and peace education and funding to CSOs and government for peace and security projects.

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9. Across the Lines: The Impact of Nepal's Conflict on Women, Advocacy Forum and International Center for Transitional Justice, December 2010
 10. Yadav, P (2017). 1325 Is that a Taxi number? Implementation of the National Action Plan on 1325 and 1820 in Nepal, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2017/05/03/1325-is-that-a-taxi-number-implementation-of-the-national-action-plan-on-1325-and-1820-in-nepal-punam-yadav-42017/>
 11. Miller, B., M. Pournik, and A. Swaine (2014) 'Women in peace and security through United Nations Security resolution 1325: Literature review, content analysis of National Action Plans, and implementation' PeaceWomen
 12. National Action Plan: On Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 (2011/12-2015/16)" Government of Nepal, Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, Feb 1, 2011.
 13. Nepal National Action Plan 1325 &/ 1820: Needs Assessment, Security in South Asia, Saferworld, March 2012
 14. National Action Plan on Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 & 1820 (2011/12-2015/16), Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, February 1, 2011
 15. Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, 2011



ACHIEVEMENTS AND GAPS

While some momentous achievements need highlighting, such as representation of 33% women in the Constituent Assembly, other positive endeavours have been limited to focus primarily on advocacy and awareness of the National Action Plan itself, rather than implementation of its activities. Despite efforts at implementation, there remains significant gaps in addressing the gendered dimensions of conflict especially on matters of sexual abuse/gender based violence as consequences of conflict.¹⁶ There is an absence of data collection on cases and causes of sexual and gender based violence. There has been no prosecution of perpetrators and Truth and Reconciliation Commission has not been able to deliver justice to conflict victims.

Article 369 of the 2015 Constitution of Nepal made it mandatory for political parties to practice inclusion and have at least 33% of women in the party. The state structuring in 2017 has ensured 40% of women's presence at the local government and 33% at the provincial and federal level. The constitution has granted de jure equality but not de-facto equality. In 2017 general elections, only 2% of the Mayor and Chair positions out of the total 753 went to women, while 91% of the Deputy Mayors were women.¹⁷

16. Desk Review Report of NAP Implementation on UNSCRs 1325 & 1820 related documents, To support the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction in the development of the National Action Plan Phase II on implementation of the UNSCRs 1325 & 1820 and its subsequent resolutions, 1325 Action Group

17. Pawan, Bhola, Data Reveals Local Elections a Disaster for Gender Equality, The Record, <https://www.recordnepal.com/wire/features/data-reveals-local-elections-a-disaster-for-gender-equality/>

While the representation of elected women leaders in the government is encouraging, the behavioural and attitudinal changes in the people within the system needs to be realised to create a favourable environment for these women to work.¹⁸

The National Action Plan was translated into local dialects for dissemination at national, district and local level. There were also capacity building efforts however these had mixed results as officials of District Coordination Committees (DCCs), municipalities and Village Development Committees (VDCs) still have little knowledge on NAP on UNSCR 1325 and 1820. Effective localisation of the National Action Plan and ensuring dividends reach the most needy groups remains the core implementation vacuum. The issue of accountability and transparency is crucial where the line agencies rely on the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction. DCCs and Local Peace Committees therefore do not own or prioritise the activities of the National Action Plan.¹⁹

WOMEN PEACE BUILDERS REFLECT ON THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

Having spoken with two prominent women's rights activists of Nepal, Dr Renu Adhikari and Rama Dhakal we believe that while the Nepali National Action Plan is a significant leap forward and radical in terms of its consultative and inclusive process, much more is yet to be done to challenge the imagination of women as a homogenous category. Women continue to face different forms of marginalisation on the basis of caste, class, gender, religion, ethnicity and other identities.

The Local Level Election Act of 2017 requires that of the five elected members of each ward committee of village assemblies and municipalities across the country, one has to be a woman of any caste or ethnicity, and another has to be a Dalit woman. This has resulted in around 7,000 women and another 7,000 Dalit women holding elected office in Nepal – a situation that was unimaginable just a few years ago.²⁰ Conversely, as observed by one of our women peace builders, there remain structural impediments in the implementation of the National Action Plan at the grassroot level.

Dr. Renu Adhikari, a Women Human Rights Defender and founder of Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) Nepal and National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders (NAWHRD), was among the first group of women engaged with the envisioning of the UNSCR 1325 prior to its introduction in Nepal as an official policy document for peace and security. She states, 'I do not feel satisfied with the UNSCR 1325 and it is only applicable at the international forums.'²¹

18. Basnyat, K. (2020) Women's Rights and Inequalities in Nepal, Voices on South Asia, pp 31-45

19. Desk Review Report of NAP Implementation on UNSCRs 1325 & 1820 related documents, 1325 Action Group

20. Gender and Nepal's transition from war, Conciliation Resources and PSRP, September 2017

21. Interview conducted with Dr. Renu Adhikari, June 29th 2020, via Skype, Location: Nepal

Renu Adhikari's observation is not a complete dismissal of the relevance of the UNSCR as she observed, 'It has been useful in a few places as it provided spaces for Women Human Rights Defenders to open up and voice their

concerns. It has also helped in highlighting the gendered dynamics of conflict, especially at the community level, which saw increased participation of women in the Local Peace Committees voicing out their concerns.'

In the 2017 elections, more than 30 percent of women provincial parliament members in Province No. 5 were Women Human Right Defenders and at the local level, at least 25% of the elected representatives are Women Human Right Defenders and members of NAWHRD. They were able to lobby for at least 33% representation of women in all the government bodies and also were able to extend the legal period for reporting of rape cases from 35 days to six months.

It can be observed that over years of engagement with the Women Peace and Security agenda and changing political dynamics, Dr. Renu Adhikari's emphasis is on addressing the structural impediments to women's access to power and decision-making, as well as on making the National Action Plan a holistic concept. In substantiating her argument, she highlights how the National Action Plan has now become an elite concept, with only a few women having access to the 'knowledge of it'. She highlighted that focusing on representation is not enough and structural transformation is equally necessary. She mentioned the trauma induced by sexual violence and her experience of working with women survivors of sexual violence whose pain and trauma remain invisible due to lack of emphasis on rehabilitation of sexual violence survivors.

The perpetration of sexual violence against women during the conflict by both armed personnel and Maoist insurgents has been well evident. Therefore, involving these same perpetrators of crime for training purposes, rather than enforcing justice for their crimes raises pertinent questions on effective implementation of the Women Peace and Security agenda. How can the idea of peace be envisioned without justice? Can an inclusive, participatory and holistic idea of peace be truly possible if the structures of war responsible for crimes are cemented?²² How does the idea of representation in such structures result in empowering or radically transforming women's lives in the post-conflict spaces?

In contrast to Dr. Renu Adhikari's scepticism and observations, Rama Dhakal,²³ the Vice-President of the National Federation of the Disabled - Nepal, observed that gradual rather than radical changes have come about in the past ten years.' Rama Dhakal herself had to face serious hurdles in her earlier years of activism when she became initially engaged with the Nepal Disability Women's Association (NDWA), having worked in the capacity of president of the organisation.

Working for representation in itself has been a doubly challenging endeavour for women with disability, as disability poses serious challenges to simply having access to these public spaces. Rama Dhakal's emphasis on the double forms of oppression faced by women with disabilities raises a crucial question on participation and representation as she points out that there is no mention in the National Action Plan of women with disability as a highly vulnerable group. She further highlighted the diversity within women's groups, in contrast to questions of intersectionality of identities and vulnerabilities not fully incorporated in the National Action Plan.

22. Pratt, Nicola. (2013). "Reconceptualizing Gender, Re-inscribing Racial-Sexual Boundaries in International Security: The Case study of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security", *International Studies Quarterly*, 57, 772-783.

23. Interview conducted with Ms. Rama Dhakal, June 27th, 2020, via Zoom, Location: Nepal

LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Despite being visionary, Nepal's National Action Plan leaves room for the incorporation of key issues which are yet to find space in its re-drafting. This was scheduled for February 2020 but is yet to materialise, and reflects the lack of political will of the government and their commitment to the same. As emphasised by Dr. Renu Adhikari, the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction now stands dissolved and peacebuilding has become 'project-oriented', rendering the Women Peace and Security agenda weaker than before. She also draws attention to the classist elitist nature of the WPS reflecting upon the composition and barriers to accessibility and participation which has been raised by peace builders, feminists and others from varied contexts.

In devising a conclusive National Action Plan, recognition of these wide ranges of disparities between women's groups is crucial in making it a more holistic and inclusive policy framework. As observed by Rama Dhakal, the emphasis on representation has allowed for an increased participation of women with disabilities in different capacities, although she asserts that provisions for quotas are still an ongoing struggle.

Despite 33% reservation for women as a constitutional provision, separate quotas for women with disability are yet to materialise. The emphasis on representation comes from her experience of working with the community where women face different kinds of stigma – 'often seen as a burden by the family or disabled as a consequence of sin from a past life.' She believes that conscious efforts should be made to recognise different needs and incorporate these in policy frameworks. She observed that in comparison to the drafting of other National Action Plans such as the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the National Action Plan for 1325 saw more representation and inclusion of women with disability, but much more is yet to be done. For instance, while women have emerged as survivors and decision-makers, elected to and represented in different committees, they also form a huge section of population directly affected by conflict, making them potential victims of conflict and therefore increasing their vulnerability during and after conflict.

The difference between the 'naturally disabled' and 'conflict-induced disabled' groups further reflects upon the multifaceted layers of vulnerability, which requires a broader envisioning of the ideas of participation, representation and inclusion. Furthermore, the vulnerabilities of women belonging to marginalised communities with disabilities is another area of concern. It necessitates an urgent re-thinking of the idea of representation, which so far is limited to presenting women as a homogenous group. It is here that simply advocating for representation and 'conflating it with agency'²⁴ limits the materialisation of the Women Peace and Security agenda as a transformative tool for women.

As observed by Renu Adhikari, the UNSCR 1325 is significant and women's rights networks have used it powerfully to advocate for significant issues, but nothing much can be done because of our subordinate status as women in the Nepali society.' Even to realise peace, Nepali women peacebuilders faced injustices in their own personal lives and fought for justice despite threats of death, violence and insecurity. Peacebuilding to them is a thorough process of fighting for justice which won't be able to bring peace if we only look at violent conflict and not address the root causes of it.

24. Shepherd, Laura. (2008). "Power and Authority in the Production of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325", *International Studies Quarterly*, 52(2), (383-404).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The UNSCR 1325 has significantly transformed the lives of women in different contexts of conflicts and also officially introduced a global discourse on Women, Peace and Conflict. In Nepal, spaces have been opened up for women to use these policy frameworks to advocate for specific issues of sexual violence, vulnerabilities, representation and other issues related to women. However, the National Action Plan is simply 'a blueprint that governments, multilateral institutions, and civil society can use to coordinate action and track results'. It can in itself neither be held accountable nor radically transform women's lives. Nonetheless, it cannot be dismissed as being irrelevant, because other countries like India, for instance, are yet to develop a National Action Plan recognising the impact of conflicts on women and other marginalised groups.

The impact of the National Action Plan on 1325 and 1820 can be significantly strengthened by bringing in women's experiences and knowledge in the local contexts working towards;

- Strengthening implementation of National Action Plan 1325 and 1820 through mainstreaming and ownership among government and other stakeholders mainly in the absence of the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction.
- Ensuring relief and reparations to conflict affected women and girls, victims of conflict related sexual violence and former combatants. Strengthen service delivery through Service Providers' Capacity to respond.
- Improving information and evidence through regular data collection on sexual and gender based violence in conflict.
- Enhancing coordination between different line agencies, ministries, CSOs, political parties and donor community in leadership, capacity strengthening and skill-based training to conflict affected women and girls, victims of conflict related sexual violence.
- Mainstreaming the Women Peace and Security Agenda into existing programmes and services within government agencies, conflict affected women and girls platforms and bi/multilateral agencies to develop strong monitoring, transparency and accountability mechanism.
- Approve National Action Plan II draft and address the existing gaps in women, peace and security issues.

For long-term impact, there is a need to work with local women as facilitators, mediators, and agents of peace, with less emphasis on capacity building and more on knowledge sharing. Dr. Renu Adhikari recommends that the biggest agenda of Women Peace and Security needs to be equality to address the subordinated status of women.

In the long term, for structural changes at the community level, we need to first address discrimination.

Dr. Renu shares that as long as women cannot equally establish control over their labour, identity and body, we cannot have peace or security. Sexual violence is only a consequence and outcome. If they do not have any information about sexual rights and sexuality, there is going to be sexual violence – it does not happen only due to impunity. Sexual violence is dependent on the way women's bodies are looked at.

The women peace and security agenda in Nepal needs to be widened to address equality and investigate structural causes of inequalities. As highlighted by the experiences of both Renu Adhikari and Rama Dhakal, the trajectory and growth of the women's movement and their agenda has evolved with time. There are concerns that remain unaddressed by the UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan, and it is imperative that further plans be developed and executed considering local women's experiences and narratives.

TRACING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP TO SECURE AND SUSTAIN PEACE IN SOUTH SUDAN



Mary Apayi Ayiga
Executive Director,
Raise Women's Hope



Hannah Lorna
Founding Member,
Women Leadership Organisation

BACKGROUND

In the year 2000, as the world cheered and peacefully welcomed the new millennium, there was little celebration in what was Southern Sudan. Embroiled in a protracted bloody civil war, there appeared to be no end in sight for Africa's longest civil war, dating as far back as the country's gained 1956 independence.

The year 2000, by marking the passing of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 was significant in shaping processes and the future of the women, peace and security agenda, in South Sudan

Civil war led by the southern separatist Anya Nya movement raged on for a decade until the 1972 peace agreement signed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In 1983, a second civil war broke out this time under the leadership of John Garang's Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). The devastating civil war would go on for over two decades until January 9, 2005 when the north-south Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed, mediated by, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). During the four decades of conflict, women played important roles as combatants, fighting marginalisation and as grassroots peace builders working individually and in informal associations. Yet despite this, there remained a lack of specific recognition of gender and women in conflict.

From the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005, to the Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) of 2015 and the Revitalised Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) of 2018, there has been an incremental advancement of women issues in peace agreements. Women were recognized as stakeholders alongside government (GOSS), SPLM-IO, political parties, SPLM former detainees (SPLM-FD), faith-based groups, civil society, and eminent personalities. Women participated either as representatives of women (as stakeholders) and or as members of delegations (government or conflicting parties). While the critical issue for women was participation and incorporation of their concerns into the agreement women were under represented in the pre-negotiation discussions. This affected the extent to which gender concerns were included in the final peace agreement.

While the R-ARCSS includes several provisions in support of the Women Peace and Security Agenda as articulated by Security Council Resolution 1325, implementation from a gender perspective is faced with challenges. The National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions formulated by the South Sudan Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare however presents an important opportunity to address these challenges, uplifting the status of conflict-affected women and promote their role in building sustainable peace.

South Sudanese women played instrumental roles in resolving past conflicts and had considerable experience to draw from in sustaining peace. Women had supported healing and reconciliation efforts. Women also worked hard to keep families and communities together during conflicts through singing peace songs, persuading their husbands, sons and brothers to stop fighting, risking dangerous peace missions across enemy territories, or marrying across enemy lines to unite or reconcile warring communities. For example, women stood together in solidarity against their husbands' political position following the split in the SPLM/A. Women from both sides of the split continued to visit one another, maintain communication and provide a forum to discuss issues that affected their communities.

THE JOURNEY OF MARY APAYI, FROM COMBATANT TO COMMUNITY PEACE BUILDER

Various women and local women initiatives in South Sudan contributed to the country's peace and security. Mary Apayi Ayiga Wani was one of them. She lived in Yei County, Yei River State. A rebel soldier, Mary Apayi had first-hand experience of the traumatising situation of women in armed conflicts. She recounts, "Children were raped before their parents; parents were raped before their own children. There couldn't be anything more traumatising."

Apayi had her early education in the north before joining and completing secondary school in the south in 1981. In 1988, Apayi joined the University of Juba for a diploma in Education. Her university education was however cut short by the intensity of the war. The paralysis of the war in the south caused the university to be moved to Khartoum, where unlike the south, relative peace prevailed. Apayi did not follow as the rest of the students relocated to the Sudanese capital. She instead joined the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) led rebellion.

While in the rebellion, Apayi was wounded twice. The first time, she and about 20 other soldiers were injured when a landmine hit their car convoy. Many of them did not live to tell the story. The second time, she was shot in crossfire at the battlefield. She and other casualties were evacuated to Kampala, Uganda and later transferred to Nairobi, Kenya where she would spend one and half months fighting, this time on a hospital bed, for her life.

Pain from the bullet wounds did little to dissuade Apayi from continuing with the rebellion. When she recovered, she returned to the fort where she nearly lost her life. She got involved in mobilising women in the communities, convincing them with reasons why the struggle was important and asking them to contribute food “to feed their sons” at the battlefield. “I was motivated to fight for justice, equality and freedom,” she recounts. “I sought to rescue women from marginalisation and discrimination.”

In the 2000s, Mary Apayi was one of the women who participated in peace talks that culminated into the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement incorporated several previous negotiations and agreements signed in Machakos and Naivasha, Kenya: the Machakos Protocol (July 2002), the Naivasha Security Arrangements Agreement (September 2003), the Naivasha Wealth-sharing Agreement (January 2004), the Naivasha Power-sharing Agreement (May 2004), the Naivasha Resolution of the Abyei Conflict Protocol (May 2004), and the Naivasha Resolution of the Conflict in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States Protocol (May 2004).

In 2008, Mary Apayi and other women peace activists formed Raise Women Hope, a grassroots peace organisation which along with others built women’s leadership capacity, knowledge and expertise to advance the women, peace and security agenda, contributing to peace and recovery in South Sudan. Today, Apayi is a trainer focused on gender equality, women’s leadership and economic empowerment – a vocation she is proud of.

HANNAH LONA, THE PEACE BUILDER AND LEGISLATOR

South Sudan woman peace activist Hannah Lona, after the 2005 signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), offered herself to lead in politics. Men were seen as more capable and had dominated politics. However, when, in 2009, she attended a leadership training on peace building organised by then Isis-WICCE, Hannah Lona was inspired to contest for Member of Parliament in Western Equatoria State. Apayi and Lona, as trainees participated in women exchange programmes across the East and Horn of Africa region. During their trips to Uganda and Ethiopia for example, they learnt about different women’s experiences in conflict, peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts which inspired their work.

The CPA and the consequent Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan allocated women at least 25% of seats and positions in each legislative and executive organ of the state as part of Affirmative Action designed to redress historical injustices. These provisions extended to the judiciary, Council of Ministers, Independent Institutions and Commissions. It reinforced the principle that women’s participation in leadership and peace processes was important. This also affirmed that war affects women differently, and as such their needs and priorities, which are different from those of men, ought to be at the decision-making table.

Hannah Lona followed through on her conviction. In 2010, she was on the ballot for the position of Member of Parliament in Western Equatoria State and won.

“Politics is an opportunity to settle political disagreements, but more importantly for me is to be a representative of women at the decision-making table,” says Lona. “A politician is an advocate for her people. Politics is another form of activism. The difference with the usual form of activism is that political activism is done in parliament, and it is important because activism outside parliament sometimes doesn’t reach decision makers, but when you’re in parliament you know your message gets heard.”



Lona rose through the ranks from being a backbencher to Deputy Chairperson of the Gender and Education Committee, and ultimately became Deputy Speaker of the House. She weathered the political storms, especially from men who considered her a political threat despite the fact that she was the only female legislator in the House. After a sustained struggle for women's representation, two more women were appointed to the State Parliament, bringing the total number to three.

Lona and Apayi used their leadership positions to emphasize that women need security and for gender perspectives in state building and reconstruction. They called for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, for better access to justice and improved economic security for women as well as their participation in decision-making processes.

PROGRESS REGISTERED IN IMPLEMENTING UNSCR 1325

South Sudan launched its first five-year National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions in 2015 for a period of five years. The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare led a rigorous participatory process involving broad consultation following which it harmonised views from government institutions, development partners, UN agencies, civil society organisations, women's groups, religious and traditional leaders. A National Steering Committee comprised of government ministries, commissions, UN agencies and civil society organisations was charged with coordinating and monitoring implementation. The overall goal of the National Action Plan was to strengthen the participation of women in peace and security efforts and create an enabling environment for their leadership and political participation in conflict resolution. This would allow for more inclusive, just and sustainable peace, recovery and reconstruction processes, where a gender perspective is integrated into the design and implementation of all policies related to peace and security.

The Government of South Sudan has developed a number of legal and policy instruments at national, state and sector level to provide a framework for implementing elements of the women, peace and security agenda. For instance, the Local Government Act (2009) states that women will be accorded full and equal dignity with men and equal rights to participate in public life. The Prison Act (2011) provides for protection of female prisoners who should be held in separate sections equipped with the necessary requirements for their care and treatment. The Child Act (2008) provides for the protection of the girl-child from sexual abuse and exploitation, including rape, incest, early and child marriage and female genital mutilation. Mary Apayi stressed that government must now enforce these laws.

Progress is also witnessed in women being appointed to influential political positions including in peace negotiations, peacekeeping missions, and ambassadorial roles, among others. Women are also active in contributing to peace building efforts at the grassroots level. However, there is a long way to go in order to have grassroots women at the formal negotiation tables. Hannah Lona attributes this to adhoc engagement of women's leadership in the realm of peace and security, which hinders meaningful participation in peace processes as stipulated by UNSCR 1325. As a result women continue to agitate for increased representation in all government institutions.

Progress in the meaningful implementation of the National Action Plan has also been hindered by inadequate funding and commitment from the government and development partners. A capacity gap has also affected progress and training remains pivotal in acquainting all key actors including women, with knowledge and skills to fill the gaps and participate in decision-making and peace building processes. This would also equip women to influence other important processes such as national budgeting, and other areas where the government is not seen to be delivering sufficiently.

Apayi notes that, a large number of ordinary South Sudanese women do not actually understand what UNSCR 1325 means. She explains,

The resolution ought to be understood by all women, by translating it into local languages. An empowered citizenry will actively participate in demanding accountability for gender responsive peacebuilding processes. Religious leaders may, for example, reach out to their congregations with messages on peace, as well as mediate and promote harmony between conflicting parties. This is important in a community where leaders are custodians of community cultures and tradition.

Both Apayi and Lona agree that to realise sustainable peace, women and girls should engage in dialogue and create relationships, including involving men and boys in working together to advance the women, peace and security agenda. This is especially important given that South Sudan is a patriarchal society that keeps strict gender norms and where gender discrimination, limits women's participation in peace building processes.

Mary Apayi and Hannah Lona live with hope and continue to work towards ensuring that the four main pillars of UNSCR 1325 - Participation, Protection, Prevention and Relief and Recovery will one day be realised for women and girls in South Sudan.



20 YEARS OF UNSCR 1325 IN UGANDA: AS A FEMINIST COMMUNITY PEACE ACTIVIST SEES IT



Cecilia Engole Alupo
Executive Director,
Teso Women Peace Activists

Uganda has, since independence, had a history of conflicts with devastating effects on women and girls. This includes Yoweri Museveni's 1980-85 National Resistance Movement (NRM) Luweero guerrilla war, Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) war in northern and eastern Uganda from late 1980s into 2000s, Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit insurgency in eastern Uganda in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the People's Redemption Army (PRA) insurgency in the Rwenzori region in 1990s and early 2000s, and the Karamojong cattle rustling, among others.

Teso sub region has a history of conflicts, from the Karimojong cattle rustling, the Holy Spirit insurgency and the Force Obote Back rebellion, to the LRA rebellion that caused untold suffering. People died, property and infrastructure was destroyed, forests cut down and schools turned into internally displaced people's (IDP) camps. Teso alone had over 80 IDP camps. Obalanga sub country, in present day Kapelebyong District, and Obuku in Soroti District had some of the biggest IDP camps hosting over 40,000 people each. When the LRA rebels descended on Obalanga in 2003, hundreds of people were killed. There was also a mass grave at Ngariam where the deceased were buried because relatives could not take their bodies due to the insecurity in the area. The most affected areas were present day Katakwi, Amuria, Kaberemaido, Soroti, Kumi, Serere, and Bukedea districts. Today, Teso sub region has relative peace. Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement is long gone, Joseph Kony's LRA rebels was flushed out of the sub region and indeed the country, and the Karamojong disarmament exercise diminished the cattle rushing.

THE EXPERIENCE OF CONFLICTS IN TESO

Women and girls suffered most from armed conflicts in Teso sub region. They were abducted, killed or recruited by rebels into fighting or care work. Women and girls were also forced to walk long distances carrying the loot, gang raped, had sharp objects inserted into their vaginas if they resisted rape, or were killed. Others were taken as sex slaves by the rebels, leaving other women as widows and children as orphans. We know this because we witnessed some of these instances, but also heard accounts of former abductees. For instance, of the over 100 girls abducted by LRA rebels from Lwala Girls Secondary School in Kaberemaido district, some of them escaped and returned home. However, the majority of the abductees are still missing to date. We do not know whether they are still alive.

Some of the returnees contracted HIV and other sexually transmitted infections out of rape or forced marital unions with the rebels. Others returned with children fathered by the rebels. Many of these children and their mothers who returned were rejected by their family members and the community. The community considered them outcasts. For the mothers who had been tormented by the war and unto whom heinous crimes such as rape were committed, being rejected by their family and communities was so traumatic that some committed suicide. Women with disabilities suffered more.

UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 was very relevant for Teso where civilians, particularly women and children, accounted for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict.

WOMEN'S ACTIVISM FOR PEACE IN TESO

UNSCR 1325 brought the awareness of the need for active participation of women in peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts. In the last 20 years, both government and non-government actors have played important roles in peace building in Uganda, and Teso sub region in particular. From 1998 to 2002, I was elected district councillor representing women of Usuk Sub County in Katakwi. It was this role in politics that exposed me to women's rights activism. When Isis-WICCE, (currently Women's International Peace Centre), was identifying women leaders from war affected areas of Kasese, Luwero and Acholi, Lango, Teso and Karamoja sub regions, I was among the first 45 women trained. I got a Certificate in Peacebuilding, Conflict Transformation and Human Rights.

The training inspired me to mobilise four other women: Christine Amaso, the late Rita Etyang, Florence Akelo and Rose Kedi to start the Teso Women Peace Activists (TEWPA). I was motivated by the fact that previous peace initiatives such as those aimed at ending the LRA war never meaningfully involved rural women at the grassroots. This critical aspect of active and meaningful participation of women in peace processes had been overlooked in settling the cattle rustling conflicts. Women had suffered from sexual and gender-based violence and did not know where to seek redress. They had no knowledge of the laws and policies that protect them. The few women who were involved in peace processes were women already found in leadership positions but even then, such women were very few.

TEWPA was born to try to change the status quo. TEWPA then identified 650 women and also trained them in peace building, conflict resolution processes and human rights. We started carrying out activities while meeting under a tree. Then we moved to a store in a neighbour's house before we were given start-up funds of Uganda Shillings 1.5 million by Isis-WICCE to carry out research on the experiences of women and girls during the armed conflicts in Obalanga sub-county. Today, we have 345 women peace committees and over 120 teachers trained in women and children's rights and peace building processes. The teachers manage peace and human rights clubs in over 60 schools in Teso-Karamoja regions. More than 40 active women community based organisations have been formed.

Women in Uganda have a history of trying to foster peace. The late Eireni Emulu of Teso and Betty Bigombe in northern Uganda are classic examples. These women were passionate about peace and security. Betty Bigombe's efforts in June 1993 to initiate contact with Joseph Kony, the leader of the LRA rebels and broker a peaceful resolution of the LRA war, was not only lauded in Uganda but across the globe. She dared for peace when the government considered resolving the conflict only through a military defeat to the rebels.

In July 2006, the government of Uganda started engaging the LRA rebels in peace talks to be held in Juba, South Sudan. The Juba Peace Talks were an opportunity for women who had suffered the brunt of wars to actively participate in the peace building process. In the same year, Isis-WICCE led in organising a peace caravan starting in the Democratic Republic of Congo, going through Uganda and Kenya. The peace caravan aimed at boosting morale for peaceful resolution of the LRA war. In Uganda, the caravan was meant to start in Soroti, and move through Acholi sub region to Juba via Kitgum. However, because of insecurity in South Sudan, the caravan did not reach Juba but stopped at Kitgum.

I was one of the 25 women mobilised in Soroti who carried a peace torch through Acholi to Kitgum. Isis-WICCE also organised peace expositions in Soroti, Kasese, Lira and Kotido involving TEWPA in calling for peace and an end to sexual and gender-based violence.

In December 2011, the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) conference that brought together heads of state and leaders from 12 countries in the Great Lakes region culminated into the 2011 Kampala Declaration. The declaration addressed the deep-rooted problem of sexual and gender-based violence and reaffirmed the regional governments' commitment to ending the violence. I joined Isis-WICCE to participate in these discussions in Kampala, as well as the international conferences on women's rights in Liberia, Mexico and the 52nd Commission on the Status of Women in 2008 in New York, where war survivors gave our testimonies. These experiences and the training I got, helped me to understand the position of women in peace and security processes.

I have utilised several leadership positions to contribute to pushing the women, peace and security agenda. I was elected Katakwi District Chairperson of the National Association of Women Organisations in Uganda, as well as Chairperson of Women Council of Katakwi District. I led programmes for women empowerment in Katakwi and present day Amuria districts. As a district councillor in Katakwi, I influenced the district technical staff under the Department of Production to supply women with improved breeds of goats, bulls, groundnuts and eucalyptus tree seedlings. Women groups were also allocated a plot of land in Katakwi town council for development.

I have presented papers on the role and experiences of rural women in peace building at various forums within and outside Uganda. I have trained and mentored young women in leadership and women's rights. I have designed programs and projects addressing the needs and priorities of grassroots women and girls in addition to advocating and fundraising for women interventions. I have led women coalitions including the Ateker Women Land Rights Partners comprising of 12 organisations.



WOMEN'S NEEDS AND ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES

The experiences I have had in peace activism have been gratifying but also life threatening, sometimes. In 2002, during the Isis-WICCE research on women's experiences during the war in Katakwi, we almost fell into an ambush staged by the cattle rustlers in Ngariam Apeuro-Aodot camp, where 21 innocent people including women were killed. One of our members, Scholastica Akurut, adopted a baby whose parents were killed. In another incident, TEWPA in collaboration with Teso Cultural Union led by His Highness Papa Augustine Osuban sent a delegation to meet LRA rebels in Garamba-Rwischamba in the DRC to plead for the release of women and children in their captivity. The delegates were stripped naked by the rebels and ordered to return home.

Nevertheless, the key milestone for me is the ability to work and collaborate with women, women groups, civil society organisations across the political divide and technical persons in government within the Teso-Karamoja region, for peace. The initiatives I have been part of have contributed to meeting women's strategic needs particularly regarding increasing their effective participation in peace making and conflict prevention. We know that when diverse women participate in peace negotiations, the quality and durability of peace increases.

MAKING PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING UNSCR 1325

The Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development in partnership with women and women organisations, other CSOs and development partners; have taken lead in the advancement of women rights and the role of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. In 2008, Uganda developed a National Action Plan for implementation of Resolutions 1325 and 1820, and the Goma Declaration on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity in the Great Lakes Region. The National Action Plan set out priorities in peace building, conflict resolution and the rights of women and girls to live free from violence. The plan identified four laws addressing gender based violence issues including the International Criminal Court Act (2010), the Domestic Violence Act (2010), Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010) and the Marriage and Divorce Act (2009).

The NAP being implemented has resulted in increased awareness of women's rights. However, more efforts need to be made to address barriers such as negative cultural norms and practices that limit progress for women in post-conflict communities. When the war ended in northern and eastern Uganda, the government of Uganda initiated reconstruction programmes such as the Peace Recovery and Development Programme, Northern Uganda Social Action Fund and Operation Wealth Creation. These programmes were aimed at cementing peace through socio-economic reconstruction of lives devastated by decades of war. These programmes were a timely endeavour by government in revamping the region's economic opportunities.

Without taking a gender transformative approach, however, these programmes have not fully caused the desired positive change. For example, while Operation Wealth Creation focuses on wealth creation through boosting agriculture, but in many parts of eastern and northern Uganda, cultural norms bar women from owning land despite the fact that they contribute majority of the farm labour. Thus, women do not meaningfully benefit from farm produce.

This is also reflected in the fact that despite the government of Uganda developing policy and legal instruments aimed at protecting women and girls, when a crisis like COVID-19 breaks out, with the subsequent lockdown and its impact, violence against women and girls immediately increases. In addition, there remain significant capacity gaps within the judicial sector, which affects progress in curbing or ending sexual and gender-based violence.

There is a need for improved access to health care services and psychosocial support for survivors of violence, along with greater investments in boosting women's leadership and the prevention of gender based violence. Boost women's economic opportunities to reduce male dominance and gender based violence in homes.

The future of implementing UNSCR 1325 should ensure more women in key positions in the army, police and prisons service. Districts should localise costed strategies for implementation of the UNSCR 1325 NAP and popularize at community levels so that local leaders are fully engaged. UNSCR 1325 implementation should include support to transitional justice mechanisms that enable reconciliation and reconstruction of conflict-affected areas with the participation of local women's groups and civil society organisations.





**Women's
International
Peace Centre**
Amplifying Women's Voice and Power

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