



**Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
Human Rights Department**

**“Women’s Rights and Early Warning –
Development of Indicators”**

Consultative Meeting of Practitioners

**Organized by the OSCE/ODIHR
Human Rights Department**

Thursday 8 December, 2005, Vienna

Report of Consultative Meeting

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1. OSCE/ODIHR Consultative Meeting

1.1 Background

As a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, the OSCE is a key instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its region. The OSCE recognizes that equal rights of women and men and the protection of their human rights are essential to peace, sustainable democracy, economic development and therefore to security and stability in the OSCE region. It further recognizes that achievement of gender equality through gender mainstreaming contributes to comprehensive security, which is a goal of all OSCE activities.

The OSCE works to prevent conflicts from arising and to facilitate lasting comprehensive political settlements for existing conflicts. With its institutions and information network, the OSCE closely monitors tensions that could develop into a conflict within the OSCE area and takes "early action" at the earliest possible stage. The OSCE also holds a function to identify potential crisis areas by providing early warning and analysis. The OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2004) states that OSCE structures are to, as appropriate within their mandate, promote the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. That is, with regard to the role of women in, inter alia, the prevention of conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction.

The OSCE/ODIHR has recently decided to increase its attention to women's human rights and security, and is seeking to contribute to an enhanced understanding of the links between violations of women's human rights and security concerns. In accordance with the principle of gender mainstreaming, gender- and women's specific concerns are to also be included in the overall OSCE scope of activities for conflict prevention, as well as in efforts regarding early warning.

The consultative meeting of 8 December 2005 has been formed in line with the OSCE/ODIHR aim of strengthening the understanding of implications of gender and violations of women's rights on security matters in general, and on conflict prevention and early warning in particular. The consultative meeting is the first of its kind in the OSCE and is the first initiative to consolidate practical experiences and knowledge of the links between women's rights and early warning with other relevant actors.

1.2 Framework and Objectives

The OSCE framework regarding conflict prevention, and the importance of gender and women's rights aspects, is set by its overall mandate for support to and active participation in addressing conflict related matters within a politico-military, an economic- and environmental, and a human dimension of security.

With starting point in the overall OSCE mandate, the consultative meeting was to build on a cross dimensional approach, bridging the human dimension with the politico-military. In regard to the internal OSCE context, such an approach indicates both the need for further collaboration between the two dimensions and their inter-dependence when addressing early warning systems and the human rights of women. Furthermost, it pointed to the relevance for interaction between the dimensions for effective and sustainable security promotion.

The overall objective of the meeting was to consolidate relevant practical experiences in the field of gender, women's rights and early warning. Those would form a platform of information on which further development of concrete activities to advance the linkages between women's rights and security concerns could be based.

More specifically, the meeting aimed at providing an opportunity for discussion and exchange of information on practices for development of early warning indicators that have gender and women's rights aspects integrated. Furthermore, it aimed at focusing on how violations of women's human rights relate to development of early warning mechanisms, and on identifying experiences and results of applying and making use of gender sensitive early warning mechanisms.

1.3 Participants and Meeting Format

1.3.1 Profile and Contribution of Participants

Participation in the workshop was through invitation only and focused on actors with practical experiences, knowledge and activities regarding integration of gender and women's rights perspectives in conflict prevention and early warning systems.

With the view of framing the scope of activities and the overall mandate of the OSCE, as regards conflict prevention and early warning, Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Center, Vienna, opened the

meeting and Ms. Monika Wohlfeld, Deputy Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Center, moderated the initial part of it.

1.3.2 Expected Outcomes

The expected concrete outcome of this consultative meeting was a public, summarizing report of discussions held. In substance, the expected outcome was a platform of consolidated information on undertakings and developments in the area of gender, women's rights and early warning, with specific focus on development of early warning indicators. Furthermore, the meeting was to generate possible conclusions on further potential working-level collaboration between the OSCE/ODIHR and other participating actors, for outlining and implementation of relevant concrete activities.

In light of the fact that the consultative meeting is a first initiative in this form taken by the OSCE/ODIHR, the expectations of outcomes primarily related to basic familiarization of the subject through experiences made and activities undertaken by relevant actors.

2. OSCE – Conflict Prevention, Early Warning and Women’s Rights

Since 2004 the OSCE has a revised action plan on gender - OSCE Action Plan for Promotion of Gender Equality. It is a comprehensive document, which is the result of political negotiation. It touches on a number of thematic areas, such as women’s participation in conflict resolution. An OSCE Ministerial Council Decision passed in 2005 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation, highlighted specifically women’s roles. Another Ministerial Council Decision passed was on preventing and combating violence against women. The latter expanded on the commitments from the Action Plan. The decision deals with e.g. access to justice, women’s economic vulnerability and also focuses on post-conflict situations. The decisions represent a consensus of the OSCE participating States and are politically binding. They can therefore be quite useful as advocacy tools.

The OSCE Secretary-General is now required to produce an implementation plan for the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. Relevant OSCE bodies have already produced such plans. During discussions on this subject within the organization, the link between women’s situation, gender inequality and conflict has become increasingly clear.

The OSCE views women’s rights as an element of conflict prevention. The main body within the OSCE to address conflict prevention issues is the Conflict Prevention Center (CPC), which sees the integration of a gender perspective as an integral part of its strategizing for the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality

The CPC closely monitors tensions that could develop into conflicts within the OSCE area and takes action at the earliest possible stage. Its role is to identify potential crisis areas by providing early warning and analysis and also provides direct support to the 18 OSCE field operations in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, helping them to fulfill their tasks in the fields of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. This liaison function between OSCE field missions and the main OSCE negotiating bodies also guarantees the full implementation and execution of the organization's political decisions.

The OSCE monitors tensions in conflicts, with early warning provided through its missions. The Conflict Prevention Center contributes to translate warning signs into political action. It is increasing its attention to women and their role in conflict prevention, taking e.g. the gender imbalances in elections as an indicator, as it closely follows the results of elections in the OSCE mission areas and takes note

of gender imbalances. For example, it was observed with concern that for the first time no women Members of Parliament were elected in the Kyrgyz parliamentary elections in 2005.

Furthermore, in the aftermath of the crisis in Kyrgyzstan, the CPC identified priority activities (“The Workplan for Kyrgyzstan”) to help the government in re-establishing order and the rule of law. One of the priorities identified was the role of women in conflict prevention.

The OSCE/ODIHR has recently increased the focus on the inter-linkage between security related issues and women’s rights by introducing a new program within its human rights work, solely devoted to the subject. Based on the mandate and provisions set in the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, the OSCE/ODIHR is developing its role in regard to implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

3. Security, Early Warning Indicators and Women's Rights

Conflict analyses, post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation processes, as well as early warning and preventive response systems, have traditionally not included a women's rights or a gender perspective. Generally, gender based differences, influencing the situation and experiences of both men and women, are neither considered nor recognized. The integration of a gender perspective in early warning systems improves such systems as it enhances the understanding of factors that bring about instability and violent conflict. In this way, the integration of a gender perspective improves the early analysis and the formulation of response options.

3.1 Conceptualizing Security – Focus on Human Security and Gender Relations

The definition of security itself is central when viewing indicators of conflict, such as the levels of trauma and stress in society. The experiences of the Global Initiative on Psychiatry, Georgia, showed that security can be defined as the ability to create meaningful interaction from an inner feeling of security. This allows individuals to create a positive self-image. Security is not to be perceived as an abstract concept, but something that forms part of every-day life. In a way, everything is about security, from basic human rights to issues regarding the quality of life.

Although stress is an everyday part of life, trauma is different - it overwhelms an individual and disrupts basic functioning and thinking. Many different events can cause trauma and it affect people in many ways. One of the effects is an increased need for attachment to others, but since trauma disrupts cognitive functioning, this attachment becomes dysfunctional. This can result in feelings of alienation and traumatic bonding. In the case of abuse of children they can start to feel an attachment to their abusers, the same can happen with hostages and their hostage takers. This disrupted attachment compromises trust; a group will try to contain the trauma by clinging to each other to feel a sense of security, alienating themselves from the outside world and seeing it as a source of danger and enmity.

Each member of such a group is influenced by the trauma in some way. It can lead some to becoming aggressors themselves and the enemy image becomes generalized. For example, the enemy becomes not only a country, but its predominant religion. This can be a tool to look at early warning signs: the (re)activation of an enemy image becomes dynamic within society when large groups are preparing an attack. There is a process of projection here: in order to

maintain self-image, the person ascribes bad things to the other group. There is a process of dehumanization, recalling 'bad events' linked to the 'other' group. In a mirror effect, the enemy group does the same. Certain traumas are selectively recalled, some of them from as long ago as a thousand years. Anniversaries and ceremonies related to the events may be re-enacted, such as the re-burial of old kings; chosen glories are reactivated. Contemporary folklore and myths are also created, both before and after conflict.

As an example, experiences from Georgia involving family members of missing persons were taken.. There were deeply traumatized torture victims, many from Chechnya. Most of the refugees were women, girls, and elderly persons (mostly female). Until recently trauma was thought to be a universal experience, affecting everyone the same way. It has been discovered that this is not the case; a lot depends on the meaning given to the event(s), whether the individual has a strong upbringing and strong social support in their environment. Persons protected by support mechanisms tend to be less traumatized than those lacking such mechanisms.

In Georgia, an increase in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was noticed many years after the conflict. There are a number of barriers to healing, including a basic feeling of insecurity, which leads to a loss of self-confidence, trust and hope, and destroys a sense of social cohesion and justice. In order to address this, a traumatized group needs secure interpersonal relations to be rehabilitated and healed. Equity and social justice are vital factors in the anticipation of rehabilitation.

It has been shown that following a conflict, women have shown higher levels of disorders like depression and anxiety, psychosomatic disorders, whilst men have fallen into substance abuse, and are more likely to display antisocial personality disorders and aggression. They turn inward and into the micro-social sphere, which results in an increase in interpersonal (family) violence. Typical post-conflict issues relate to women being suspected of having had sexual intercourse with enemy soldiers and women being abused (either psychologically or physically). Both women and girls are restricted in movement because of fears of street- or school-violence. This may lead to more family violence. There are also many cases of self-mutilation and suicides among men.

3.2 Women's Rights – Monitoring and Information Collection for Early Warning

Compiling and analyzing information regarding early warning needs to incorporate a gender- and a women's rights perspective. The choice of priorities

and issues to be addressed need to in turn be based on a notion of women specific needs, gender related differences and gender based power relations in the context at hand.

Information collection on specific indicators constitutes one of the main components of early warning. Other components are analysis of information, formulation of envisioned best and worst case scenarios, identification of response options and channeling the information to relevant actors on decision-making levels. By incorporating gender sensitive indicators in the collection of information, it is possible to capture gender-related changes.

Development of early warning indicators and analysis of root causes to conflict has been undertaken by UNIFEM in several regions, such as the Fergana Valley in Central Asia, Colombia and the Solomon Islands. Pilot projects have been initiated for development of systems for information collection, analysis and dissemination to establish instruments for diplomatic deliberations and peace-building purposes. Lack of information on the position of women regarding a number of issues related to the root causes of conflict has been identified as a concern. Lessons learned will serve the UNIFEM missions in Peru and Haiti.

The pilot projects in Colombia and the Solomon Islands were initiated in July 2005. The latter was set up because of five-years of tensions on the islands, where it was concluded that a number of root causes to the conflict had not been addressed. For further monitoring of the situation, 20 monitors, both women and men, were deployed in a number of different localities. A number of different warning indicators were used, including the frequency of marriage break-ups and the fear of reprisals. Data was collected on different levels, both official and community level.

In Central Asia, UNIFEM has introduced a pilot project in the Fergana Valley with the aim of establishing early warning systems. The Fergana Valley is divided between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and is populated by 10 million people of diverse ethnic background. The valley is a potential source of regional instability and tension. Sources of tension include lack of resources, a high level of labor migration and an overall tense political situation. The area is severely overpopulated and there is a lack of resources such as land and water. The difficult political situation in Fergana Valley makes it a challenging area to work in. There are a number of border disputes, with some territories still being the subject to international disagreement.

The project in the Fergana Valley is set to establish risk factors by using gender sensitive indicators. A network of field monitors gathers gender sensitive information through questionnaires based on a system of indicators. The

monitoring teams consist of 14 women and 15 men spread over Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The monitors are recruited from the region, with attention being paid to ensuring a broad professional and ethnic spectrum, as well as ensuring a gender balance.

The monitors have been trained in using gender-disaggregated indicators when gathering data. Two trainings are provided, one on conflict prevention and gender, and another on the legal framework focusing on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW, and relevant UN resolutions. Experience shows that it can be difficult to recruit women monitors, as well as people from rural areas, underlining the importance of entering rural communities and uphold a dialogue with them.

The questionnaires have been developed in cooperation with the monitors, with the starting point being the background of the situation. The questions relate to e.g issues of education, economy and labor migration. The issue of labor migration from the Fergana Valley to other areas is otherwise an issue which has barely been studied. Research has also been carried out on the level of internet access.

Qualitative analysis is carried out through focused group discussions. The role of the monitors is to observe, not to act themselves. The indicators have been formed by the pilot project in the Solomon Islands, and have been adapted to the context in the Fergana Valley.

The data collected so far will be included in CEDAW reports, as well as in national plans of action on gender equality and poverty reduction. In terms of poverty reduction, the Fergana Valley is seen as a special region with its own trade system. There needs to be more in-depth research to promote sustainability in this regard, and UNIFEM has concluded that there is need for a more sustainable approach to obtaining relevant data.

3.3 Identification of Factors of Destabilization – Recognition of Violations of Women’s Rights in the Private Sphere

Gender analysis may bring forward factors relating to violations of women’s rights, causing conflict as well as its possible effects. In this way, the gender analysis would contribute to a better understanding of unequal gender hierarchies, compromised situation of many women, inequality and oppression, which are all characteristics of societies that may be prone to, or are already involved in, conflict.

Recognizing a relationship between the status of women and the level of risk for conflict and using early warning indicators of violations of women's rights as well as gender analyses is essential for effective early warning systems.

Experiences from Kosovo have shown that during an increase of the conflict there in 1998-99, a majority of women were subjected to violence. The reason for this may be that violence had become a norm to solve conflicts in the society at large, with the effect of domestic violence turning to be a generally accepted form of violence.

3.4 Field and Policy Level Interaction for Effective and Gender Sensitive Early Warning

Violations of the rights of women are generally not recognized as early warning indicators to armed conflict, as violence against women is often regarded as a private rather than a public matter and therefore non-political. The link between women's gender based experiences and the formation of policies is central for effective early warning. At the core of the development of early warning systems lies the principle of anticipating rather than merely predicting crises and violent conflict.

Early warning systems are developed to ensure that political strategies contribute to prevent violent conflict or limit the effects of conflict. Field-based representation is valuable and relevant for ensuring a broad and realistic basis of early warning factors. A systematic integration of a gender perspective in the information collection and analysis ensures the inclusion of information about the situation of both women and men; respect for their basic human rights, access to protection and control over resources.

Experience from UNIFEM's undertakings in Central Asia show that the sustainability of early warning systems is enhanced with NGOs working directly with governments. Such partnerships need to be established at the initial stage of an initiative, so that relevant indicators can be included in national development plans. The link between the local community level and various decision-making levels needs to be developed in order for the early warning system to be functional at different levels. This in turn, ensures a more effective system as a whole. Furthermore, UNIFEM has found it important that the government level incorporates women's rights issues in its national human rights action plans to ensure the collection of information and protection.

Regarding the valuable field-based monitoring, the issue of safety of the monitors is essential. Their safety and their possibility to work freely influences the extent

to which a comprehensive scope of information can be collected. International organizations represented in the field have a responsibility in this regard.

There is still not full recognition of the link between women's concerns and security. Patronizing comments about women related issues 'not being security issues' are still heard as security has been defined in military terms.

The OSCE field missions are themselves monitors of political and general societal changes, essential for the organization's work on conflict prevention. They collect and compile relevant information regarding the situation in the host country, in particular the human rights situation. With this role being central, there is a general awareness of the need to integrate a gender perspective and take into account women's rights. This calls for enhancement of the capacity to analyze women's rights issues and development of guidelines for integration of women's rights in early warning.

3.5 Women's Participation and Integration of Women's Experiences – Central in Early Warning

Through case-studies about how women in civil society contribute to the peace process in El Salvador, and to good governance in Cambodia, the Initiative for Inclusive Security has brought forward women's central role in non-violent transformation and preventing escalation and resurgence of conflicts.

Cases from all over the world have shown that women often lead non-violent movements, using at times creative strategies. In spite of considerable repression, women from different backgrounds meet to pursue peace promotion, often using their traditional roles as mothers to urge combatants to lay down their arms, as recently demonstrated by developments in the Pacific Islands region.

The meeting discussed which indicators relating to women's participation and involvement were seen as most relevant. Examples of mentioned: level of women's employment, level of existence of civil society organizations for women, as well as women's involvement in cross-border trade. Another associated issue brought up was how and what information that should be collected and, especially, how women themselves and civil society could be mobilized to gather such information.

3.6 Security Concerns - Societal Changes, Women's Role and Early Warning

Factors compromising the level of security are more accurately identified if gender analysis is included. This allows for consideration to be paid to women's and men's respective situations, roles and needs. With these identified, gender based destabilizing factors can be detected for use in early warning strategizing.

Consideration needs to be given to the fact that societal changes may bring about changes in women's and men's respective situations and roles and their human rights. UNIFEM's experiences from the Central Asian region regarding movement between countries, with particular reference to the Fergana Valley, show that as trading brings women to cross borders frequently, they often experience violence from border and customs officials.

UNIFEM has concluded that the human rights situation of women in the Fergana Valley, particularly their security, is of high importance given the tradition of banning women from going to court after they are raped. In these cases the victim of sexual abuse is typically blamed for her behavior, constituting a complementary act of violence. Also, women in the region are in general required to stay at home, not attending meetings in their local communities, and therefore in an information vacuum.

A recent Central Asia OSCE Regional Head of Mission Meeting in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, identified a regression of women's role in the region as a general trend and a reason of concern for the OSCE. The OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre developed a project to facilitate the participation of Women NGOs from Central Asia in the annual OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting – as a first practical step to strengthen the role of women in this region.

Experiences of the Global Initiative on Psychiatry, Georgia, show that the role of the mothers is central in the transfer of causes of conflict between generations. They teach their children heroic songs about bloody revenge and maintain the flow of historic traumatic memories. If confronted with this issue, the mothers who teach heroic songs recognize that the songs do not reflect reality. The same is seen with teachers who teach about heroic acts of violence, they too realize the ultimate consequence of their actions. This trans-generational transmission of trauma needs to be recognized and addressed, as needs the gender based role of women and men in regard to the transmission.

With regard to reconciliation and the psychology of history and the need to address myths, the Global Initiative on Psychiatry stresses the importance of early signs, such as adolescent role plays. Adolescents are often the first to

notice that friends and neighbors gradually stop playing with them or going out with them. Other indicators include increased family violence and the breakdown of inter-ethnic marriages. An example of this referred to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where teachers noticed children not playing together, and reemergence of folklore. It was noted by participants that there should be a psychology component to programs encouraging women to engage in peace building.

3.7 Early Warning Indicators as ‘Vindicators’ – Response Based Indicators

Taking a starting point in the fact that violence in society occurs at different levels, International Alert, an NGO which focuses on women’s rights and conflict related issues, has undertaken several consultations in order to link early warning indicators, to micro-, intermediate and macro-level violence. One example are consultations undertaken in Kenya, which suggest that detecting and combating micro-level violence could be used to pre-empt violence on other levels of society. Women can be described as frontline sensors; a source for early warning.

A number of critical issues relating to early warning and women’s rights are seen as essential: How does monitoring link to the actual response? How is information fed back? As regards the response, it is important for “indicators to become vindicators”, i.e. actual triggers for response. To develop strategies or policies for response to conflict is essential if conflict is to be averted.

Experiences have shown that in the development of early warning indicators it is important to focus on gender power relations as root causes as well as taking into account the significant role of development issues. International Alert has published a number of publications dealing with gender and conflict, focusing for instance on Rwanda and the Caucasus. Furthermore, this NGO has developed a toolkit for women peace advocates, providing guidelines in undertaking of initiatives in the area.

Monitoring at local level is an important strategy for detecting early warning indicators, especially since gender is to be incorporated into the early warning mechanisms, based on the principle that the quality of the response is wholly dependent on the quality of the information.

4. Concluding Points and Identified Further Needs

The discussion that followed sharing of experiences regarding early warning and women's rights brought forward a number of aspects in need of further consideration when developing early warning indicators.

A gender perspective needs to be incorporated when compiling information on early warning and analyzing it. Choosing priorities and which issues to include in the information compiled must be based on an awareness of women's specific needs, gender related differences and gender based power relations in each case.

It is important to avoid that gender based indicators end up on a separate 'gender track' Gender based indicators, including those relating specifically to women's rights, must be fully integrated into any early warning work.

Experiences of development of early warning indicators taking women's rights into consideration have usually not included psychological components. Generally, the development of early warning indicators relates to a number of generic areas - political, social economic – but at the same time lack the psychological one. Such indicators would be helpful when detecting early warning signs, such as enemy projection, intolerance towards a particular group, prejudices, chosen traumas and chosen glory; increased cohesion within the group, increased victimization and increased violence.

Development of early warning indicators should include recognition of gender based power relations and the generally compromised/difficult situation of women in relation to those. This includes recognition of destabilizing factors related to the private or domestic sphere with which women are generally defined. In this regard it is important to focus on domestic violence, as it influences the level of acceptance of violence in society, with boys replicating the behavior of their fathers. Other indicators may refer to the level of women's participation in public life, women's access to information and other resources, as well as women's level of freedom of movement.

It was recognized that women's organizations should be consulted on a regular basis in conflict prevention work in general, and in development of early warning indicators ensure that women's experiences and views are incorporated.

In order to ensure appropriate and necessary support to the development of early warning indicators, instruments that outline how women's rights and a gender perspective can be integrated into early warning systems in practice need to be further developed. Furthermore, the benefit of taking women's rights and gender relations into account should be elaborated, with the inclusion of good practices and concrete examples. The instruments need to have a general as well as a context specific focus, while also targeting various levels of relevance in society, especially the field level.

With the view of strengthening the link between women's rights and security issues in early warning, a distinction has been made between two approaches. One is to take a starting point in existing early warning systems and integrate a gender and women's rights perspective. The other approach is to use women specific instruments/processes for monitoring women's situations, such as the CEDAW, and integrate early warning indicators. Both approaches are needed.

**Annex
List of Participants**



**Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
Human Rights Department**

**Consultative Meeting on Women's Rights and Early Warning –
Development of Indicators
Thursday, 8 December, 2005, Vienna**

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