

In Pursuit of Peace and Security: How Gender Makes a Difference

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REPORT

Even though Women, Peace and Security emerged on the global agenda fifteen years ago, women remain under-represented in crisis prevention, conflict management and formal peace negotiations, peace-building efforts, arms control and disarmament, along with other areas related to peace and security.

This year's fifteenth anniversary of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security provided a valuable opportunity for the OSCE to review its efforts to integrate a gender perspective into relevant activities, policies and projects and to reflect on how the Women, Peace and Security agenda contributes to the Organization's ability to prevent and respond to conflicts as well as to its efforts in post-conflict rehabilitation. Acknowledging the different ways in which conflict affects women and men is a first essential step to sensitizing policy makers and practitioners to the need for differentiated policy responses in crisis prevention and conflict management.

The OSCE Security Days event **“In Pursuit of Peace and Security: How Gender Makes a Difference”** provided a forum for exploring opportunities on how to apply a gender perspective to crisis prevention, conflict management and post-conflict rehabilitation. Finnish Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Lenita Toivakka delivered the keynote speech and discussions focused on the challenges of implementing UNSCR 1325 and the tools and strategies that can be employed to improve its effective application. The conference gathered senior executives from national governments, parliamentarians, civil society leaders, prominent women's advocates and grassroots activists, representatives of international and regional organizations, academics and leading journalists from OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation.

More specifically, the event looked into ways to integrate a gender perspective in conflict analysis, conflict resolution, reconciliation and mediation and explore the prerequisites for successful gender mainstreaming of security sector institutions. In response to new trends in the Women, Peace and Security agenda, gender-responsive strategies to counter violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism were addressed. The event also served as a forum for sharing successful initiatives and projects at the international, regional, national and local levels.

The conference brought together over 250 participants from across the OSCE region who participated in a lively debate about women's roles in conflict prevention, mediation and sustainable development. And the role that OSCE has in ensuring that gender equality aspects are an integral part of its comprehensive security concept.

Gratitude is extended to Finland, Liechtenstein, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States for their generous financial support for this Security Days event.

Setting the scene – Gender and Conflict

*United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security has established standards and expanded our understanding that conflict affects women and men in different ways. Therefore, effective crisis response needs to be sensitive to the diversity of communities and to power relations between women and men in societies. **This session looked at methodologies to implement UNSCR 1325.***

Over the past fifteen years, UNSCR 1325 has shaped activities connected to conflict prevention and resolution. However, national security institutions, as well as in international and regional bodies, have not yet fully internalized the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

The current structures to prevent conflict are not working well. According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, around one-third of all countries that signed peace agreements between 1990 and 2012 returned to violence within five years. This is not a convincing track record for conflict prevention and conventional peacekeeping. Meanwhile, the one resource that has a proven positive impact on sustainable peace, women, are mostly excluded. A study by UN Women of 31 peace processes between 1992 and 2011 found that 2% of mediators and 9% of negotiators in official peace talks worldwide were women.

Engaging women goes beyond the issue of inclusion and women exercising their human rights; there is sufficient scientific evidence as well as experience proving that including women and civil society in matters of peace and security dramatically increases the chances for peace. There is now enough data to make substantiated arguments for women's inclusion in security issues. Researchers Mary Caprioli and Mark Boyer convincingly argued that with only a 5% increase in women's representation in parliament, a country becomes five times less likely to use violence when faced with an international crisis. Additionally, a study of 58 conflict-affected states between 1980 and 2003 found the risk of relapse into war was near zero when at least 35% of the post-conflict legislature was female.

Effective crisis response needs to be sensitive to the diversity of communities and to power relations between women and men in society. This is important both for a better understanding of the conflict setting and for activating women as potential pillars for peace. The OECD Development Assistance Committee Network on Gender Equality found that only 2% of global funding dedicated to peace and security goes to supporting gender equality or women's empowerment.

While international and regional organizations, as well as national governments, are discussing whether to include women in security issues, extremist organizations are already including them as active fighters, spies, recruiters, or fundraisers.

Women can play an important role in de-radicalization as was shown by the Pakistani organization *Paiman* where women have worked with over 655 mothers to de-radicalize 1,024 young men and boys, rehabilitating them and reintegrating them into society. The UN has recognized this in Sustainable Development Goal number five which focuses on gender equality and empowering women and girls in order to achieve peaceful, prosperous and sustainable peace.

The UN has passed an additional UN Council resolution in 2015 to expand the Women, Peace and Security agenda, UNSCR 2242, which explores women's role in preventing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as well as combatting violent extremism that leads to terrorism. Even though there are several resolutions and regional decisions on including women throughout the conflict cycle, more needs to be done to enhance practical implementation.

Recommendations:

- Use the empirical evidence on women's involvement in conflict prevention and resolution to support the argument for women's inclusion.
- National governments, as well as international and regional organizations, need to enhance their efforts to include women in peace-building and invest more in building their capacities as mediators.

Integrating a gender perspective in mediation and reconciliation

Inclusion of a gender perspective in mediation and conflict resolution can greatly improve the sustainability of peace processes. This session discussed the main obstacles to women's inclusion and explored options to encourage their full-scale participation.

Stronger female leadership and participation in public and political life is conducive to maintaining prosperous and peaceful societies. Efforts to support their inclusion in all decision-making mechanisms in society need to be strengthened as is conflict analysis with a gender perspective.

Women often need continuous support even when they are included in peace processes as they often struggle to get their opinions heard due to widespread and persistent gender stereotypes.

Inclusion and gender analysis can contribute to a deeper contextual understanding of the conflict. If the process is managed properly it can also lead to broader support for a peace agreement and thus a greater chance of durable success. International and regional

organizations have the leverage to provide for women's meaningful participation, but they need to lead by example by including women in their own decisions-making structures.

However, there is a limit to how much of a role international and regional organizations can play in peace processes. In the end, the process must be owned domestically. This is for instance true for Syria where there is a strong women's movement fighting to be included in the peace process. They need the support of the international community in order to gain entrance to the peace process and, later, to have a say in future reconstruction efforts.

In the Ukrainian context, women have been the most active in calling for peace and modernization of societal structures. Thus Ukrainian women should be recognized as the actors of change that they are and should be integrated in the formal peace processes in Ukraine. In the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine there has been a conscious effort to include women at all levels but more female nominations to international professional positions are needed.

Recommendations:

- Mediators and peace-builders need to be creative in how to include women in the peace process and not give up at signs of resistance. The methodology needs to be adapted to the context.
- Women need continuous support throughout peace processes that goes beyond getting them to participate. Gender stereotypes can play against their meaningful inclusion in peace negotiations and reconstruction efforts.
- International and regional organizations need to lead by example and include women in their decision-making structures.

New Trends in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Countering radicalization and violent extremism leading to terrorism

Radicalization and violent extremism pose a multi-faceted challenge that requires multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional responses in which women can play a crucial role. As women often play a central role as caregivers they are well placed to counter violent extremism and radicalization. This session explored how both governmental and civil society actors can promote gender-sensitive strategies, policies, and measures to counter radicalization and violent extremism and identify good practices.

There is a misconception that violent extremism and terrorism only concerns men. Women are mainly viewed as victims, ignoring the fact that women also engage in violent extremism in different roles, ranging from support activities to active terrorism. Similarly, there is great resistance to talking about women as foreign fighters and thus there is very little analysis as to why women chose to join terrorist movements. We seem to be stuck in gender stereotypes and therefore incapable to accept that women break these molds. Data collected in Germany shows that 20% of all people that leave to join terrorist organizations are women.

In order to develop a proper policy response, we need to understand what gender means in the context of a terrorist movement. What does it mean to be a man or a woman in the movement? Through the gender lens we can gain better understanding of the kind of society they envision and their aspirations on how to organize the family, communities and society.

More research is needed to understand the barriers that prevent women from engaging in CVE activities. Do they stem from legal obstacles, operational concerns, security threats or the threat of backlash from violent extremists? In many cases, characterizing their activities as CVE creates a dangerous situation for activist women in terms of threats toward female activists by extremists, but also in relation to unreformed security services that do not understand women's role in CVE and consequently might not be protective of their rights. Women end up squeezed between terror and counter-terror responses.

In this context, it is essential to see how financial support is branded and distributed. Women's organizations need support, but there needs to be an understanding that the support has to be sensitive to their surroundings and at times should not be branded as CVE in order to protect the women. Furthermore, many smaller civil society organizations that implement grassroots projects cannot be part of large funding schemes therefore there must be space for smaller grants for women's movements.

CVE thus needs a multi-layered cross-dimensional policy response that should include gender analysis, which until recently, has been almost completely lacking. Over the last couple of years, however, there have been some positive developments. The OSCE Transnational Threats Department has identified best practices in including women in counter-terrorism activities which in turn were adopted by the Global Counterterrorism Forum as guidelines on how to operationalize women's engagement in CVE.

Recommendations:

- Conduct more comprehensive studies of why men and women join terrorist movements and what their roles are in these movements.
- Diversify support and make the grants accessible to women's NGOs by creating smaller grants.
- Diversify classification of support since labeling it as CVE activities might endanger women's NGOs.

A call to action – Enhancing gender mainstreaming in security sector institutions

*Gender mainstreaming, which requires an analysis of the impact on gender roles and relations in communities of all policy decisions and actions taken by the state and other actors, is recognized as an effective strategy to achieve gender equality. **This session aimed***

to explore lessons learned and good practices for successful gender mainstreaming in security sector reform.

UNSCR 1325 calls for a systemic change in how we view security. In particular, when working with the military, including a gender perspective in a very masculine environment can be a great challenge. Although the internal structural change needed can be lobbied by outsiders, it ultimately has to be led from within the security organization itself by persons who understand the doctrines and policies of the institution. The Swedish army is implementing a program where gender advisers are coaching admirals on how to apply a gender perspective in practice. Signing up the leadership to the cause helps to get the buy-in by lower-ranking staff.

Should we focus on women or gender issues when reforming a security institution? There is no clear answer as there are examples of institutions that have been great in taking up women into their ranks but still fail to understand the core of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Then again, there are security forces that incorporate gender issues in their policies but are hopeless at recruiting women. Both aspects need to be considered.

Gender mainstreaming in the Irish Army was given as a positive example. The national strategy provided a framework which involved training at every level, the insertion of gender criteria into the doctrine and a strong political commitment to the overall process. It also led to innovative recruitment policies and gender sensitive data collection in peace missions where Ireland was involved. Furthermore, it has been a catalyst for including a gender approach in Irish aid programs.

Should we focus on gender mainstreaming or specific gender functions? Sometimes there is reluctance to have a gender adviser as it focuses all institutional reform efforts on one person or a particular unit but this approach helps create coherent gender mainstreaming efforts across all departments. It is often indispensable to have an agent for change that energizes and explains the rationale for the efforts undertaken.

In order to secure long-term integration of a gender perspective in security institutions, gender equality considerations need to become part of the everyday process, a part of the everyday reality of an average police officer, soldier, prosecutor or judge. In other words, gender equality needs to become a part of the DNA of the institution.

Political commitment and buy-in from the leadership is paramount. A good example of how political leadership matters, is the effort by former UK First Secretary of State, William Hague, who pushed for the development of policies on conflict related sexual violence. Sweden's current feminist foreign policy may yet find followers elsewhere.

Governments and civil society need to reach out to female migrants in order to understand their experiences and better assist them. Aspects of multiple and intersecting discrimination add another layer to the analysis of minority issues and security.

Recommendations:

- Internal structures need to drive the change required to fully implement UNSCR 1325 in security sector institutions. Emphasis can be put on gender mainstreaming and/or including gender advisers in the organigram.
- Leadership and political commitment are paramount.
- It was recommended that the OSCE develops its own action plan to integrate the Women, Peace and Security agenda more efficiently into the OSCE policies.
