

## *1325 And Beyond – Essay Contest*

### SECOND PRIZE

## *Enhancing WPS in the 2020s: Lessons Learned and Strategies for Transformative Change*

**Agathe Christien**

In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted the landmark Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) to increase women's participation in the prevention and resolution of conflict, protect women and girls from gender-based and sexual violence, and provide humanitarian relief and recovery through a gendered lens. At the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, progress has however been slow and uneven across the globe.<sup>1</sup> The challenge of the decade ahead is to push for transformative change.

Major existing and emerging issues such as climate change, global health crises and violent extremism will threaten international security in the 2020s and require gender-inclusive responses. These major issues are an opportunity for the United Nations, governments, and civil society to advance the WPS agenda and adapt it to the needs of today and tomorrow by reflecting on lessons learned and proposing effective strategies and actions for gender mainstreaming.

### *Advancing the WPS Agenda*

The past two decades have seen incremental progress of UNSCR 1325's objectives. In the new decade, we must advance the current WPS agenda by learning from the mixed successes of women's participation in peace processes and proposing recommendations for the UN and member states to effectively mainstream gender in UN peacekeeping and efforts to counter violent extremism.

### *Learning from the mixed success of women's participation in peace processes*

Women remain excluded from formal peace negotiations. Data from the 2010s show that men represented 97.5 percent of chief mediators and 91 percent of mediators in formal peace processes.<sup>2</sup> The very few women who access the formal peace table face major challenges, including tokenism and limited roles to influence negotiations.

Adverse trends can be observed in gender provisions in recent peace agreements. While there was a major increase in gender provisions in peace agreements after the passage of UNSCR 1325—from below 10 percent in the 1990s to 45 percent in 2013—the number of references to women and girls decreased to 11 percent in 2018.<sup>3</sup> This decrease can partly be explained by the decline in the number of women listed as parties or third parties to the agreements in recent years.<sup>4</sup> Vigilance will be required to respond to this backslide.

Even where peace accords are gender sensitive, as was the 2016 Colombia Peace Accord, gender provisions often fail to be implemented. As of 2018, about half of the 130 gender-related commitments of the Colombia agreement had not been initiated and only 4 percent fully implemented.<sup>5</sup>

The UN and other international actors must advocate for women's effective inclusion at all stages—from early dialogues to agreement implementation—among parties and third-

party delegations. Pressing for inclusion is particularly critical in Yemen, Syria and Libya, where the risk of women's exclusion is high.

While women are typically excluded from formal peace processes, they have played major roles in informal peace processes. Dayal and Christien found that 60 percent of 1989–2017 peace processes had identifiable informal peace processes, of which 71 percent had clear evidence of women's groups' involvement.<sup>6</sup> Women's groups have successfully organized for peace and legitimated formal peace processes. They have also provided critical expertise and information to formal negotiators and broader constituencies. For example, the Women's Coalition in South Sudan was established to strengthen women's participation in the peace process. The Coalition provided technical support for women participants in the formal peace talks. This support helped women negotiate a 35 percent quota for women's share of places in executive bodies and two additional seats for women in the institutions for the implementation of the agreement.<sup>7</sup>

Moving forward, it will be important to capitalize on the successes of women's grassroots organizations and better connect the various diplomatic tracks to channel grassroots voices. Informal processes can give women a space to network, build legitimacy and gain skills.<sup>8</sup> Funders and organizers should provide resources for women to participate in those informal peace processes by covering costs of travel and transportation and providing child care and security. Such support can encourage women from various backgrounds to participate and help diversify peace processes.

Women have political agency and do not speak with one voice, especially in protracted violent conflicts, where polarization is high. In the 2020s, the challenge will be to meaningfully engage young women in peacebuilding activities and adopt an integrated approach with the Youth, Peace and Security agenda. Concrete actions include the creation of grassroots-led regional networks of young women peacebuilders, in partnership with UN Women, for peer learning, coordination, and channeling recommendations to the formal peace table.

### *Adopting a Gender Equality and Human Security Approach in UN Peacekeeping*

One of the major goals of UN Peacekeeping is to increase the participation of women in police, military and civilian contingents of UN peacekeeping missions. While women's representation constituted 1 percent of deployed uniform personnel in 1993, they represented 4.4 percent of military personnel and 11.1 percent of police personnel in 2019.<sup>9</sup> Progress in this sector has also been incremental and lacks transformative power.

Research has documented that women peacekeepers can make a difference. For example, an all-female police unit in Liberia used less force than other units and at the same time improved locals' trust in peacekeeping.<sup>10</sup> The establishment of this all-women unit was also associated with a major decline in reported cases of sexual abuse by peacekeepers, from 47 in 2005 to 18 in 2009.<sup>11</sup> Research in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone also demonstrated that female victims of sexual violence were more likely to report such abuse to a female officer than a male officer.<sup>12</sup> While such research helps to make the case for greater participation of women in peacekeeping and the security sector, it also risks perpetuating essentialist views of women's roles rather than a gender equality perspective.

The challenge for UN Peacekeeping in this decade will be to comprehensively mainstream gender in evaluating peacekeeping effectiveness beyond indicators such as female peacekeepers' share in total units and the reduction of sexual abuse and exploitation perpetrated by rebel groups, government forces, and peacekeepers themselves. Mainstreaming gender in UN peacekeeping includes collecting sex-disaggregated data in all peacekeeping activities and adopting a human security approach to peacekeeping that responds to the peace and security needs of local men and women. Regular needs assessments, consultations and engagement can help accomplish this mainstreaming.

### *Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE): Strategies for long-term gender-responsive policies and programming*

In efforts to integrate the WPS and P/CVE agenda, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2242 in 2015 to increase women's participation and mainstream gender in P/CVE and counterterrorism. Since then, the UN and others have taken gender perspectives into consideration, and there has been discussion of the roles women may play in countering and fueling violent extremism. The challenge is to move P/CVE theory into concrete practice and policy at the state level.

States like the United States still tend to charge fewer women than men with terrorism.<sup>13</sup> Women are less likely to be arrested and convicted and receive more lenient sentences than men.<sup>14</sup> Yet female foreign fighters in camps like al-Hol in Syria are spreading ISIS ideology to their children and other women.<sup>15</sup> States should address these ticking time bombs by adopting long-term gender-responsive policies for repatriation, prosecution, and rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation and reintegration programs across the globe overall fail to mainstream gender and address women's needs. Effective strategies can include credible ways out of violent groups by engaging local female religious leaders, providing

child care during rehabilitation and reintegration programs, and offering vocational training and education opportunities of interest.<sup>16</sup>

While UNSCR 1325 and subsequent Security Council resolutions have provided an important framework to increase women's participation in all aspects of peace and security, sustained efforts are required to effectively implement it. In the new decade, we must both advance the current framework and adapt it to address emerging peace and security challenges.

### ***Adapting the WPS Agenda to the Critical Issues of Tomorrow***

The 2020s offer an opportunity to adapt the current agenda to issues that were neglected when UNSCR 1325 was adopted 20 years ago. These include addressing the impacts of climate change and health crises on women and girls, especially in conflict contexts, and transitioning to a more comprehensive understanding of gender in a Gender, Peace and Security framework.

#### *Integrating Climate Change into the WPS Agenda*

From degradation to conflict-related pollution, the environment is one of the “silent victims of war.”<sup>17</sup> Conflict and climate change exacerbate underlying inequalities and disproportionately affect women and girls. The impacts of climate change and environmental vulnerability on women and girls, especially in conflict contexts, and gender-responsive climate adaptation should be integrated into the WPS agenda and become a priority.

Forward-looking approaches include gender-responsive and climate-resilient post-conflict reconstruction. For example, in post-conflict Sierra Leone, Freetown mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyer has led the three-year city plan “Transform Freetown,” which addresses informal sanitation and flood mitigation, especially for women in informal settlements.<sup>18</sup>

Burundi faced major deforestation due to conflict and illegal exploitation of the forest's resources. In the post-conflict period, grassroots women from the Association Femmes et Environment au Burundi (AFEB) led the replanting of 400,000 native and eucalyptus trees in the Kabira forest. Once harvested, 70 percent of the income generated by the eucalyptus trees returned to the women's group.<sup>19</sup> Such sustainable management of natural resources can contribute to women's livelihoods and address environmental vulnerability.

### ***Mainstreaming Gender into Responses to Pandemics and Health Crises***

Public health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic have become a major threat to international security and have major impacts on women, as they care for out-of-school children and experience greater domestic-partner violence.<sup>20</sup> Such health crises are particularly harmful in humanitarian emergencies and conflict-affected areas due to poor health systems and dire economic situations.

In the early 2020s, states must deal with short- to long-term effects of COVID-19. Women's effective participation and equal representation in health response planning, decision-making and implementation will be particularly critical to ensure that states adopt recovery measures targeted at women.

#### *Moving from Women, Peace and Security to Gender, Peace and Security*

The WPS agenda focuses too narrowly on women—sometimes as a homogenous entity—and does not sufficiently take into account the diversity of women and gender roles. Moreover, men are also affected by gender-based violence and rape in violent conflict. A revised agenda should address how conflict affects men and women.

Toxic masculinity can play a major role in explaining sexual violence perpetrated by UN peacekeepers and in fueling violent extremism from far-right movements to jihadist groups.<sup>21</sup> For example, this violence particularly hurts LGBTQ communities, which have been targets of terrorist attacks such as the 2016 nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida.<sup>22</sup>

In such a context, moving from the Women, Peace and Security agenda to a Gender, Peace and Security framework in the 2020s will better address the gender impacts of conflict on men and women from all backgrounds.

To conclude, we can draw on lessons learned from the past 20 years of advocacy for the WPS agenda to bring about transformative conflict management in the new decade. The security threat landscape is evolving, and states must adapt the WPS agenda to existing and emerging needs by pushing for gender-responsive and human security approaches. Backlash against women's effective participation will likely be an issue in various sectors. Effective strategies for states, civil society, and the UN can mitigate the backlash against gender equality and help overcome barriers that hinder women's effective participation in peace and security.

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## 1325AndBeyond – Essay Contest

In the run up to the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325 (2000)) Women In International Security (WIIS) and the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Washington, DC launched an international essay competition *1325AndBeyond*.

WIIS and the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Washington, DC are proud to announce and publish the winning essays. The essays highlight innovative and imaginative ideas and strategies to achieve the objectives of UNSCR 1325 in the 2020s.

### FIRST PRIZE

ANA LAURA VELASCO UGALDE (MEXICO)

*UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda: A Feminist Response to Authoritarianism*

### SECOND PRIZE

AGATHE CHRISTIEN (FRANCE)

*Enhancing WPS in the 2020s: Lessons Learned and Strategies for Transformative Change*

ANNINA CLAESSION (SWEDEN)

*Mobilizing a Forgotten Sector: A Case for a New Media Code of Ethics on Gender and Conflict*

### THIRD PRIZE

PAULA DRUMMOND & TAMYA REBELO (BRAZIL)

*1325 and Beyond: Moving Forward the WPS Agenda in Latin America*

MUHAMMAD AMMAR HIDAYAHTULLOH (INDONESIA)

*WPS in Asean: Progress, Gaps and Way Forward*

### FOURTH PRIZE

ESTHER LUIGI (FRANCE)

*1325 and Beyond*

### HONORABLE MENTIONS

CHELSEA COHEN (ZIMBABWE)

*The Third Awakening: The Decade of SHE Politics*

KARLA DRPIĆ (CROATIA)

*How the Private Sector Can Advance UNSCR 1325 in the 2020s*

TABITHA MWANGI (KENYA)

*UNSCR1325 and Beyond: Engagement of Women in Dialogue with Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups*

GUDLAUG OLAFSDOTTIR (SWEDEN)

*Promoting Women's Rights: Creating Conditions for Post-Conflict Peace*

ANTHONY ITODO SAMUEL (NIGERIA)

*Dismantling the Structural Prejudices that Promote Gender Inequality*

ANDREA TUEMLER (UNITED STATES)

*Escaping the Closet: Women, Peace and Security was Already Queer*

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1325 AND BEYOND  
An International Essay Competition

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## RECENT WIIS PUBLICATIONS

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