

Bringing Gender Dimensions Back from Obscurity

Governance, Peace and Security in Africa



AWDF Policy Working Paper



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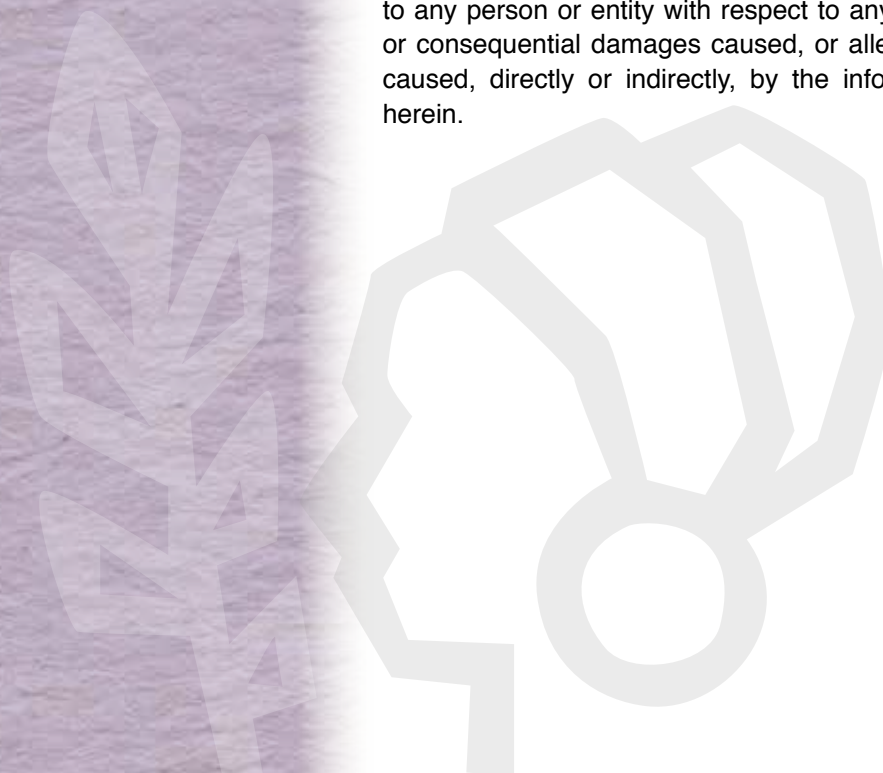
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Acronyms

APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AWDF	African Women's Development Fund
CSW	Committee on the Status of Women
DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
NAPs	National Action Plans
NGO	nongovernmental organisation
OSAGI	Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues
PDS	Peace and Security Department (of the Commission of the African Union)
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGEA	Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme

Summary



Efforts to address the gender dimensions of governance, peace and security in Africa have registered some success. At the same time, fundamental challenges remain. These challenges continue to relegate gender issues to the periphery of peace and security. Among other things; this policy paper discusses the disconnect between policy, scholarship and activism; and the reality on the ground. It argues, among other things, that there is not yet a narrative that moves Africa towards transformation in gender relations in peace and security processes in Africa. The paper makes a set of observations which, in part, explain the absence of a qualitative shift toward gender equality in these fields. It offers some proposals for relocating gender considerations in mainstream governance, peace and security discourse and practice.

Key observations

When weighed against expressed goals, at least in declarations and policies relating to gender peace and security, there are noticeable gaps and challenges. These have been consistent in the last two decades. They include, for example, analysis, policy and practice of gender peace and security which keep gender issues isolated from the field of security. Some of these include:

- Gender inequality in mainstream peace and security processes in Africa is treated as a side issue, or linked to peace and security only tangentially and in segments.
- Those leading or facilitating peace processes and missions lack conviction about the need to transform gender relations in their areas of operation. They see related policies as separate from mainstream security policy.
- Peace missions' staff and staff of peace and security institutions' continue to resist the notion of gender equality (this is related to the above point). Their attitudes arguably derive from the norms, values and culture that have shaped their own understanding of gender issues. Training programmes have not managed to effectively respond to this challenge.
- The relative ease with which those managing peace processes and peace missions retreat to the provision of technical solutions. There is no real interest in a deep examination of gender issues except as a technical problem requiring a technical approach and solution. It is therefore unlikely that real change can occur without a corresponding commitment that goes beyond ticking checklists aimed at meeting institutional reporting directives or donor reporting requirements.
- Women leaders and activists have, even if inadvertently, reinforced the status quo. This is not least due to a lack of capacity. In an overwhelming number of cases women activists, in their narratives and practice, are unable to take a strategic approach that would enable them to engage in holistic thinking about peace and security. Understandably, they restrict themselves to their vantage points, which can be narrow and invariably relegate them to the periphery of strategic conversations. Excluding them from mainstream peace and security processes then becomes relatively easy – either by mainstream policy actors' design or omission.

Key recommendations

These recommendations attempt to deal with the gaps and challenges outlined in this paper.

To academic and policy analysts

Analysts should endeavour to take a more comprehensive approach when analysing gender in peace and security processes. They should make more organic linkages between gender and mainstream security.

To African regional organisations and policy communities

African organisations should more consciously institutionalise the principles of Resolution 1325 into their methods of work, practice and daily life. They need to move beyond the technical checklists entrenched by their claims of gender mainstreaming.

Policy-making institutions and agencies should take a more holistic approach to the development and application of policy frameworks. For example, greater consultation with people working in the communities.

To African women's organisations and activists

Women's groups and organisations seeking to place – and keep – issues of women's equality at the core of the security policy agenda should become more grounded in mainstream peace and security processes and dialogues. For example, we need to analyse where we are located at this point in peace and security. Should we be doing greater analysis of the military and security industries? Including examining military expenditure against the national budget?

Introduction

Attempts to address the gender dimensions of governance, peace and security in Africa are often plagued by several undermining tendencies. One tendency is that gender and, derived from this, women's concerns are presented as a standalone issue by an active women's movement. This is done without thorough engagement with the entire peace, security and governance environment. Mainstream peace and security processes generally deal with gender and the women's agenda as a peripheral issue. They relegate it to the shadows of the governance and security debate. Policy interventions aimed at achieving gender related transformation in peace and security have not delivered meaningful change on the ground.

This policy paper discusses this disconnect between policy, scholarship and activism and the reality on the ground; and its underlying causes. It makes proposals for relocating gender considerations in mainstream governance, peace and security discourse and practice. Ultimately, the hope is that this might begin to bring a systematic shift in the way all parties address gender issues. As such, this paper brings several interrelated issues into focus:

- The relationship between governance, peace and security.
- The value of examining processes through which state and society forge a common understanding around the protection of their citizens – and the place of gender in this. A key question is: why does gender inequality remain relegated to the background while other issues occupy the foreground of national conversation?
- The opportunities peace and security processes provide for reform of security governance in favour of excluded citizens, particularly women, who are often at the receiving end of gender inequality. The paper highlights the role of policy frameworks such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325.
- The constituency of actors who can help elevate the gender equality agenda as articulated in Resolution 1325 in the policy and decision making arena.
- Despite efforts, the failure to achieve transformation in society and change for women toward gender equality.

The summary section of this paper above includes three sets of recommendations for analysts, policy practitioners and women's organisations and activists.¹

The relationship between governance, peace and security

The intersections of governance with peace and security in particular contexts often reveal the degree to which citizens, in their diversity, can fulfil their aspirations and realise their full potential. Governance is central to conversations about the maintenance or failure of peace as well as the experiences of (in) security by individuals, groups and states. A clear indication of the quality of governance – manifested as progress or deficit – is often reflected in the extent to which populations feel safe and (in)secure; or to which they feel a sense of (in)justice.

Much has been written in academic and policy arenas about human development and the role of governance² in delivering peace, security and justice to citizens (Boutros-Ghali 1995). Debates about what ought to take priority continue (Sen 1998). But there is no confusion or contradiction about the outcomes desired by hundreds of millions of ordinary people: people aspire to live well, live long and

1 This paper benefits in large part from a range of field visits the author conducted in the last decade to conflict affected environments in Africa. This includes observation of the work of regional security institutions and related peace and security processes.

It also draws in part on the analysis contained in Hendricks, C and Olonisakin, F (2013). 'Engaging (In)security as an Entry Point for Seeking Redress in Gender Inequality in Africa' in the *Special Issue of African Peace and Conflict Journal Vol. 6 No. 1 on Gender and Security in Africa*

2 The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) offers an explanation of the relationship between governance and human development in *Governance for Sustainable Human Development: A UNDP Policy Document*. Available: <http://www.pogar.org/publications/other/undp/governance/undppolicydoc97-e.pdf> [Accessed 01 April 2013]

attain their fullest potential in society; they crave conditions that will ensure the realisation of their aspirations.

For much of the period since African countries became independent, African peoples have had to contend with governance conditions and environments that limit the realisation of these aspirations. Conditions nonetheless vary across countries and across regions. In the same vein, citizens within the same country and region may not experience (in)security and (in)justice in the same way, even under similar governance conditions. Every society is invariably a reflection of how its citizens live. In reality, whether governance institutions are formal or informal, modern or traditional, the nature of the structures that underpin each society determines the destinies of their citizens – for good or bad.

Underlying societal structures are the values, beliefs and attitudes that determine how people are treated and whether or not they can freely pursue their aspirations. Ultimately, (in)security and (in)justice and their enablers are potentially gendered, creed driven, age based or fraught with other identity patterns. As such, citizens are unlikely to experience (in)security and (in)justice in the same way.

It is therefore not surprising that the inequities which reduce the value of women, for example, are sharply manifested in situations of violent and armed conflict. It is in these situations that the protagonists are able to embrace, without restraint, their values and beliefs. In such circumstances, women are objectified as a bounty to be captured. Not surprisingly, they become sex slaves, bush wives, and chips to be bargained away in difficult circumstances. Those who were not valued as equals during peacetime could not possibly be treated as equal citizens in times of war.

Much depends therefore on the extent to which a society is able to negotiate and ensure a level playing field for its citizens so that no group and/or persons has/have to endure inequities that prevent the realisation of their dreams and aspirations. The role of governance is to mediate diversity in society and manage competing demands so they do not become the basis for exclusion and escalation of conflict into a larger crisis. Governance can make the difference between whether people live well or in abject poverty and squalor; whether they live in relatively peaceful and just societies or in constant fear for their lives with uncertainty about the future.

In practice, governance and its relationship with peace and security is not such a simple thing to grasp. Where massive governance deficits abound, the typical aspirations of an individual described above can prove unobtainable. This might be due to the structure of the environment or factors external to that environment. Even with the best governance, competing aspirations and demands among citizens can create conflict which, if not adequately mediated, can result in a lack of security.

Perhaps the more challenging causes of unfulfilled potential and exclusion of citizens are structural factors to be found in dominant attitudes, values, norms and culture. These have the potential to sustain inequality in society, not least gender inequality. An existential crisis results when the laws and policies in that environment sustain such inequalities, or fail to address them. This paper draws attention to how new opportunities and/or policy frameworks can be effectively brought to bear to reduce the insecurity resulting from such inequalities.

Summary critical question

Where policies are nonexistent and attitudes, norms and values that promote and sustain inequality persist; what opportunities exist in society to bring about a transformation in gender inequality?

Why conversations about state and nation building matter

The relationship between governance, peace and security in Africa and the gender dimensions of this relationship cannot be divorced from the various layers of conversation about nation and state building taking place in specific national contexts. The protection of citizens and their collective welfare, alongside the pursuit of equity and justice, is the ideal to which all states (ought to) aspire. The idea that a collection of people or communities would submit their sovereignty to a group of people in exchange for such protection underpins the notion of statehood. It is therefore arguable that every society invariably crafts a governance arrangement and creates institutions of governance capable of providing citizens with this protection.

If we are to avoid the disconnects between mainstream peace and security discourses and policy interventions on gender equality, an examination of conversations that a society has about nation building and within this, its overall welfare, is an appropriate starting point for any discussion of gender in(equality) in Africa. The plight of African peoples under colonial rule is not a useful starting point given that prevailing conditions did not permit more robust conversations beyond that which the people of the colonies had with their colonisers about freedom and self rule. The rare exceptions in this regard are Liberia and Ethiopia which, in theory, were never colonised.

Political independence offered African states and their peoples a unique opportunity to craft their own systems of government, suited to their own realities. But the conversations between African peoples and their rulers have not occurred in the relatively straightforward pattern suggested above. Interestingly, many African states did not take the opportunity offered by the transfer of power from the colonialists to systematically initiate potentially difficult conversations about the terms under which they would live together. Notwithstanding new constitutions and republican declarations, many colonial state institutions and systems of governing were retained or simply transferred without real change (Olonisakin and Okech 2011).

Nonetheless, conversations have occurred directly or indirectly between African leaders and peoples, even if these were not ever neatly planned or organised. *Conversations* in this regard are not just about the formal discussions, forums, national dialogues and sovereign conferences in which governments and leaders create spaces for citizens to debate their interests and needs. Rather, *conversations* here refers to the variety of ways in which people in a society negotiate the terms of their lives and living (Hendricks and Olonisakin 2013). Those conversations are to be found, for example; in the processes of constitution making, leadership selection or elections and succession, power sharing, formal and informal discussions around revenue allocation, the place of religion and gender, the relationships between ethnicities, nations, regions, generations and the protection of citizens; among others.

Aligning the diversity of needs and interests among groups divided along ethnic, regional, creed, age and gender lines into a collective national narrative is undoubtedly difficult to achieve. It requires a process of debate and dialogue. Across the board, African countries have not necessarily prioritised these conversations. Citizens have simply become involved as the opportunities present themselves. What is interesting to note about these conversations is that they occur in a variety of ways, including peacefully and violently, and they generate varying degrees of attention and responses from decision makers. Periodic elections, for example, have provided opportunities for conversations around leadership selection and succession. Those conversations have been violent at times. But the conversations about gender and intergenerational issues rarely occupy centre stage.

Nonetheless, while the trajectory of one society is different from another as they encounter these conversations, the issue of gender (in)equity has repeatedly received less attention than most other issues. Indeed, in nearly all areas of governance, it is often relegated to the background. The reason for this is not unrelated to the dominant attitudes, values and cultures that promote gender inequality. This is a pattern that has replicated itself across Africa. The difference from one country to another is a matter of degree rather than of substance. Women's inequality has remained firmly embedded in societal norms and values which have often shaped women's participation in the conversations and the demands that they make.

Summary critical questions

The central questions for the women's movement – and those seeking to achieve equality for citizens across African societies – are:

- How can this logjam be broken through improved governance?
- What role can peace and security play in this regard?

The role of peace and security in bringing gender to the core of governance

Increasingly in the past two decades the arena of peace and security has become the mirror that is held up to states and societies as a measure of the effectiveness or deficit in governance. Invariably, part of the measure of progress or deficit is the way in which a cross section of citizens is treated within specific national contexts. If one accepts that governance is an important factor in mediating the diversity of interests, needs and identities; the nature of the fate that befalls citizens across the board tells us a lot about the state of governance in that society.

The treatment of women and young people, for example, often says a lot about the progress realised in governance. But the experiences that provide evidence of the status of this class of citizens have not necessarily been pleasant, even if they have served as important entry points for advancing conversations about the rights of these groups. As such, some ambivalence surrounds the manner in which the arena of peace and security serves to draw attention to the issue of gender inequality. Nonetheless, the two entry points discussed below have provided perhaps the best moments of opportunity to bring issues of gender equality to the fore of governance and security debates, particularly in Africa.

Entry points in peace and security for conversations about gender inequality

Two possible entry points have been highlighted by events in the last two decades. These entry points potentially provide opportunities for advancing conversations around gender (in)equality.

One entry point occurs when there is an outbreak of violence within society in part because other national conversations have escalated into armed conflict and civil wars. Interestingly, those conversations have not necessarily been about gender equality but about other forms of exclusion and various demands for a more inclusive system of governance. But a chance is created for those whose issues have been treated as minority issues to align themselves to these bigger campaigns.

When conflict escalates into violence, the content of the conversation that predated the violence is soon relegated to the background as observers and potential interveners' attention is drawn to the conduct of the armed conflict. It is at these stages that we have seen abuses against women and young people, ranging from random acts of violence to targeted and systematic use of violence, including rape. Since 1989, the experiences of war in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Cote d'Ivoire have reinforced the focus on this systematic use of violence. The argument has been made elsewhere but is worth reinforcing here: the way populations are treated in times of war is a reflection of the values and beliefs held about those populations in peacetime. Invariably, the structural factors which underline women's inequality in peacetime rear their head in wartime leading to the large scale abuse of women in some contexts.

The somewhat positive outcome is that such conflict brings issues of gender inequality and, more specifically, the women's agenda to the fore of international attention. Unsurprisingly, once attention is drawn to the grave abuses committed against women, there is massive expectation for something to be done. Typically actors, particularly women's groups and organisations with an interest in addressing this issue, use these episodes as opportunities to build momentum and to seek redress particularly during peace processes and post conflict reconstruction. Across countries affected by armed conflict, we have seen local as well as international nongovernmental actors undertake awareness campaigns around violence against women.

Peacebuilding and post conflict reconstruction, which provide the **second entry point** to draw attention to gender inequality, have significant value for several reasons. First, the effort to achieve a resolution of armed conflict offers an opportunity to return to the root causes of the conflict in question. By so doing, the potential exists to revisit the structural causes of conflict, which might invariably shine light on gender inequality in the affected society. Second and related in some cases where armed conflict has threatened the collapse of the state, there is an opportunity to return to the drawing board, revisiting old conversations that led to conflict while introducing new ones that include gender equality among others.

As previously indicated, it is rarely the case that issues of gender inequality are the direct focus of the national conversations that led to armed conflict. However, peace efforts directed at these conflicts offer a chance to draw attention to gender inequality in the affected society. Typically, there are expectations that peacebuilding interventions in such settings might seek to transform the dynamics between the ruling elite and local populations, thus setting them on a common course of nation building. As a natural part of that process, issues of gender inequality might be brought to the fore.

Interestingly, much of the effort in peacebuilding has focused on bargaining between elite groupings without a fundamental reordering of elite mindset and approaches in favour of collective, citizen centered national agendas. The possibility that the elite mindset will be geared toward achieving gender equality is not guaranteed. This is perhaps the key challenge confronting efforts to achieve a transformation of conflict and – by extension – a transformation of state and society relations in Africa.

Peacebuilding interventions in Africa have at times invited criticism from scholars and activists. But they do offer the potential to swing the tide in favour of women and other minority groups and/or issues through, for example, improved human rights. Peacebuilding, which typically combines a two pronged process of institution building and reconciliation, is well suited to dealing with issues of gender inequality in conflict affected societies. Specifically, the development of path forging policies as well as the creation of transformative institutions, offer a good chance of changing the tide in favour of women.

In this regard, the democratic transition plans often imposed from above as a form of state building in the effort to build sustainable peace, still offer perhaps the best chance to improve, if not transform, gender relations in post conflict situations. As discussed further below, some of these interventions have brought about gains. This is part of the role that United Nations Security Council Resolutions such as 1325 play. The big question that remains is whether, and how, concerted action can be focused on sustaining any momentum generated for bringing gender related structural change to the forefront of the peacebuilding agenda.

Summary critical questions

- How do the interests and activities of a cross section of actors converge?
- How can their collective interests be sustained for long enough to generate the transformative change desired for women?

Convergence of action on gender related security issues

The brutal conduct of armed conflict in Africa in the last two decades has created an opportunity to shine a light on the atrocities committed against women. From wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone to those in Burundi, Rwanda and the DRC, the issue of gender inequality was brought to the fore of global discourse. In effect, the voices of different categories of actors converged as a first step towards articulating concrete action. These include the media, or what has become known as the 'CNN factor', where gendered violations such as rape as a strategy of conflict have been brought to the fore through media. In 2001, the International Criminal Tribunal finally recognised rape as a crime against humanity.

The massacres in the Lutheran Church in Monrovia in 1990, the Harbel Massacre in 1993, the sexual exploitation and abuse of women and girls by humanitarian workers in refugee camps in West Africa in 2002, the mass amputation of limbs in Sierra Leone evident from 2006, the mass rape of women in the DRC, and the atrocities committed in the Rwandan Genocide, were all first exposed by the media. Indeed, the scale of the crises in Rwanda and in former Yugoslavia, particularly Bosnia in the 1990s, served to draw global attention to crimes against humanity, including the heinous crimes committed against women in war.

The media has thus been crucial in bringing war atrocities, including the issue of abuse of women, to the fore of international attention – although the challenge of media sensationalism remains an issue (Vogt 2011).

While not dismissing the issue of the media's sensationalist reporting, we must not underestimate its impact on upscaling the attention of policy and decision makers at national, regional and international levels. This, in part, enables a second group of actors to amplify their voice. This includes nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), including women's organisations, which are able to boost their work and gain a much needed audience with policy actors within a relatively short window of time. It is undisputed that the first effective layer of activism that drew UN Security Council members' attention to the plight of women in war was civil society in the form of NGOs and other actors which constitute the women's movement (Barnes 2011). This movement, whose advocacy began gradually in response to the atrocities visited on women in situations of armed conflict, was able to build up a campaign to place gender issues on the UN's peace and security agenda. Interestingly, it is here that academic work is embedded. They have tended to support these efforts with much needed intellectual work, which has at times underpinned evidence provided to the policy community.

We have seen, also, what can happen when a third group of actors – policy and decision makers – take up specific agendas and champion the cause of particular groups. This was the case, for example, with the governments and ambassadors of Bangladesh, Jamaica, Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. These actors put their weight behind NGOs to champion the issue of women in peace and security processes at the United Nations in 2000 (Hill, Cohn and Enloe 2004). This led to the adoption of UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 in October 2000. To be certain, UN Resolution 1325, which is discussed in the next section of this paper, was ground breaking. It was the first time that the concerns of women in the peace and security arena was placed on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council.

These experiences have shown that aligning the work and interests of a range of actors – media, policy and activist world, and academia – is crucial to building momentum for change. Within Africa, some key actors and groups have been instrumental in placing 1325 on the agenda of regional organisations and national governments. The role of women's groups and the bilateral donor community has also been prominent in this regard.

The real challenge, however, is keeping the momentum by maintaining the cross section of actors' interest in drawing attention to the gender gaps in peace and security processes, and in championing the movement towards change. For the media, there is often another hot story to pursue until the next crisis occurs. For others in the women's movement, the focus is often a single issue, the result of a lifelong commitment, one which at times carries with it a challenge of proselytising. As such, it is often up to this group of committed activists to sustain the attention of other actors. The extent to which this agenda remains at the fore of the attention of critical global, regional and national actors responding to conflict remains the key to driving change.

Summary critical question

To what extent has hard earned policy change transformed lives and delivered gender related structural change on the ground?

What change has concerted action on women, peace and security produced for Africa?

There can be no doubt that concerted action of the nature described earlier has produced results in policy change. Resolution 1325, for example, is the cumulative work of advocacy, awareness raising and agenda setting by a cross section of actors in civil society and government. This resolution was not the product of a one off event. Advocacy by women's groups has grown by accretion as the impact of wars in places like Bosnia and Rwanda became apparent, and as efforts intensified in pursuit of the objectives outlined in the outcome document of the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, Platform for Action (Barnes 2011).

Annual forums such as the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) became a convening point for strategising about issues of women affected by armed conflict. It was in one such annual convening of the NGO Caucus on Women and Armed Conflict at the CSW that the idea arose of placing the issue of women in peace and security processes on the UN Security Council's agenda (Cohn 2008). By 1999, there was increased momentum as a group of NGOs led by International Alert led a global campaign on 'Women Building Peace: From Village Council to the Negotiating Table'. Supported by some UN agencies such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the civil society coalition pushed for the UN Security Council to take up this agenda. The Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan of Action of May 2000 maintained this momentum. It underscored the need to include gender dimensions in peace support operations, not least training, leadership and mission structure (Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan of Action 2000).

Interestingly, one practice which coincided with this process, and is often perceived to be a result of the adoption and application of Resolution 1325, is the inclusion of Gender Units in peace operations. Two missions – United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) – began this trend in 1999. This marked a significant step in UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations' (UNDPKO) approach to gender related issues. This has no doubt enhanced subsequent efforts to implement UN Resolution 1325.

Nonetheless, Resolution 1325 goes beyond earlier policy instruments and approaches, which were mostly ad hoc in nature. It transcends plain declarations and affirmation of women's rights in situations of armed conflict. It demands concrete action from a number of constituencies. The resolution focuses on a number of issues around the impact of armed conflict on women, and their role in conflict management and resolution processes.

A core message through the resolution is the need to integrate a gender perspective into peacebuilding and post conflict reconstruction. The provisions of Resolution 1325 are typically summed up as the 3 Ps: the *protection* of women, the *prevention* of armed conflict and the increased *participation* of women.

Overall, Resolution 1325 is better conceived in pragmatic ways and not as a panacea to the challenges faced by women in peace and security processes. It is the result of a negotiated process – a compromise document that had to find common ground for all signatory states – and not just the states that were enthusiastic about promoting the women, peace and security agenda. As such, it could not meet the expectation that it would go deep enough to address the gender inequalities embedded in the discourses surrounding international security institutions and processes as highlighted by academics and analysts (Barnes 2011; Cohn 2008).

The starting point for the application of Resolution 1325 has been the United Nations system itself. In the past decade, visible efforts have been made to mainstream gender across the system. The Secretary-General's study on *Women, Peace and Security* of 2002 was the product of a Task Force led by the UN Office for the Advancement of Women, now called Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues (OSAGI), in which key UN agencies and offices participated. The Secretary-General's annual reports on the same topic have also provided accounts of the progress being made across the UN to implement Resolution 1325. In addition, a cross section of UN agencies and offices have developed policy documents on women, peace and security. The promise of continued implementation of 1325 is held, in part, by the development of the UN system wide Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (of 2005 and periodically updated) – a process also led by OSAGI.

Application and impact of 1325 in Africa

Africa has been at the receiving end of much of the effort resulting from the adoption of Resolution 1325. The effort to implement the resolution has been visible at several levels in Africa. The first includes United Nations peace operations in Africa, which often serve as the channel for implementation of Resolution 1325 in conflict affected countries.

UN peace operations and UN presence on the ground

The logic of the intervening role of peace operations and, by extension, the UNDPKO in addressing gender inequality is easy to understand. As the leading actor for the restoration of peace in conflict affected states, it is the local society's first point of contact with universal norms, principles and policies in the peace implementation process. UNDPKO is best suited to begin the implementation of 1325 soonest in those settings. It can do so in a number of ways. It can:

- serve as a model by making its own internal framework and practices reflect the principles of 1325
- reflect gender perspectives all through its programme design and implementation
- reach out to influence communities and systems in the countries where UN peace missions are present, through its mechanisms and staff, and in particular through its gender offices.

Peace operations' mandates that came into being after the adoption of 1325 are now explicit about the implementation of the provisions of 1325. UN operations have consistently included gender elements in their periodic reporting.

It is tempting to be self congratulatory about attempts to implement Resolution 1325 within UN operations. Ideally, the concern and attention of policy makers and practitioners, as well as a readily interested and energised women's movement, should by now be directed to one issue: *how best can we achieve similar results in the terrains where such peace operations are not present?* But thus far anecdotal evidence suggests that all of the above remains an aspiration rather than a reality. Presently, post conflict environments where the UN is present, and where the weight of its institutions and policies can be brought to bear, do not number more than seven in Africa. In those settings, there is no real evidence that gender relations are transformed or that gender equality is a living reality.

Serious gaps remain in peace operations' application of 1325. Indeed, peace operations have become a microcosm of the deeper structural issues that serve as obstacles to achieving gender equality. The attitudes and values exhibited by many peace operations staff – who do not necessarily believe in or subscribe to gender equality – is a big part of the problem. As such, many are content to do no more than take a *technical* approach. Invariably, only the individual gender adviser or peace operation staff member with a genuine commitment to gender equality take the extra step to tick the box.

One must hasten to add that while being potentially the first point of visible and organised UN contact with the organised parts of conflict affected states and societies, actors connected to the UNDPKO and peace missions are often not the only UN presence on the ground. Apart from their contributions to multidimensional peace operations, other UN agencies, including UN Women (formerly UNIFEM), UNDP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and UNFPA are often present in conflict affected societies. While these agencies may interact with local communities in their respective areas of work expertise, opportunities always exist to reflect gender perspectives in their work, and many of them often do. Indeed, agencies like UNFPA and UNDP, who are not directly tasked with application of 1325, have taken steps to implement programmes related to 1325 in a number of post conflict contexts.

However, these agencies face the same challenge of the technical, box ticking approach. Although this is supported only by anecdotal evidence, what makes this claim credible is that there is no visible transformational change on issues of gender and security in the places where the UN has presence, even if some incremental progress is realised. Indeed, as cases of sexual exploitation and abuse in the DRC continue, it is clear that the very canker being fought through these resolutions and other programmatic interventions has persisted. Sexual violence against women continues unabated, even among peacekeepers, despite the UN's zero tolerance policies.

Within and across the UN however, there is reasonable indication that much effort has been taken to institutionalise a gender perspective as part of the process of changing the organisation itself. This has been visible in the following ways:

- representation in decision making positions
- women's participation in peace and security processes, including in peacebuilding and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR)
- visible (even if limited) action against UN peacekeepers found to have abused women in situations of armed conflict.

Critical challenge

The single most important challenge that confronts UN institutional mechanisms is to lift the impact of Resolution 1325 beyond the level of individual commitment, and to act beyond mild technical solutions.

Application of Resolution 1325 and related agenda by African regional organisations

The degree to which African states and regional organisations have embraced Resolution 1325 is reflected in the state of application of regional instruments and of national action plans. There is no significant UN presence in much of Africa. Altering policy and practice of countries in these regions offers a reasonable chance to change their habits and performance. The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) presents an ideal framework for implementing Resolution 1325 and building an overall gender perspective in the African Union Commission's (AUC) work – and in the policies member states ratify. Given that the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) form part of the building blocks of

APSA, implementing Resolution 1325 and related policy frameworks in the RECs is vitally important for transmitting the values and principles of the resolution.

At the African Union level, perhaps the most visible manifestation of the internalisation of Resolution 1325 is the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) of 2004. The declaration explicitly mentions 1325 and confirms the AU's commitment to some issues relating to women, peace and security. These include tackling gender-based violence and gender mainstreaming in peace processes.

SDGEA's articulation of the AU's commitment to the empowerment of women at the highest political levels will need to be matched by a willingness and ability to apply and systematise these principles into the organisation's daily life.

A number of RECs have also taken steps to address gender related security issues. Two RECs stand out in this regard: Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Southern African Development Community (SADC). RECs such as the East African Community (EAC) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which have visible peace and security components, have not made tangible or concrete moves toward addressing gender issues in their security architectures.

ECOWAS has addressed gender and security issues through a Conflict Prevention Framework. The framework devotes a component to women, peace and security – and the development of a Plan of Action to promote it. The Directorate of Human Development and Gender is now implementing the Action Plan over a three year period, from 2013 to 2016.³

SADC too has taken important steps toward addressing women's peace and security issues in the following ways:

- a Declaration on Gender and Development
- a SADC Heads of State Protocol on Gender and Development, 17 August 2008
- a Gender Policy.

All of these have provided opportunities for SADC to apply the principles of 1325 (Machingambi-Pariola 2011, pp.203–205).

Notwithstanding these developments at the AU, and within RECs such as ECOWAS and SADC, there is very little real change – within those institutions or within member states. Perhaps the best evidence of progress, or the lack of it, is the degree to which these organisations have themselves implemented 1325 principles, or taken gender perspectives in their peace and security work. For example, women are hardly represented in decision making positions in peace and security programmes. Interestingly, within the African Union, the Commission has achieved better results in appointing women into senior leadership positions at the level of Commissioners and Directors, where there is near gender parity. But the organs and associated institutions have fared far worse (Musa 2009). ECOWAS' appointment of a woman into the position of Commissioner for Peace and Security in 2012 is now read as a positive step. However, there is not yet any indication that this was the result of a systemic shift.

A look at the interaction between thematic issues in the AU reveals no in depth or organic linkage between departments. The engagement between the Gender Directorate and the Peace and Security Department (PSD) is an example of this. Although this relationship is not the only one that suffers the same challenge, which is also noticeable between the peace and security and political affairs departments. Engagement between gender and peace and security has not been automatic and indeed has been facilitated by outside actors. As such, while the gender department now actively participates in PSD's programmes, it is often a once off, box ticking function.

The AU's own peace missions should be a natural channel for the introduction of gender perspectives and for implementation of women, peace and security programmes. The fact that the few missions planned and executed under the auspices of the AU so far have given visible focus to gender considerations is telling. And there have been a few AU military and political missions including, for example, in Burundi, Comoros, Sudan and Somalia. Clearly, the issue of gender equality, particularly in peace and security contexts does not occupy a central place in the AU's security agenda.

3 Discussion with ECOWAS officials in Abuja, Nigeria at the ECOWAS Partners' Meeting, April 2013

Application of Resolution 1325 at the national level

The effort to apply Resolution 1325 transcends UNDPKO and UN agencies and regional institutions. By 2004, proposals for implementing Resolution 1325 were being put forward. For example, the UN Secretary-General in his report to the Security Council that year on the agenda of Women, Peace and Security, proposed that member states take steps to implement Resolution 1325 at a national level.⁴ Gradually, the development of National Action Plans (NAPs) on Resolution 1325 became a regular part of the agenda of a number of member states. National level implementation has tended to focus on three areas:

- participation of women in peace and security decision making processes
- protection of women and girls
- gender training.

As at early 2013, more than 35 countries had approved National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security (NAPs). Less than eight of these are African countries. The following African countries approved NAPs in early 2013: Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Senegal and Uganda.⁵ It is instructive that African countries with approved NAPs are those which have experienced significant armed conflict in all or parts of their states. The notion of 'twinning', in which a donor country teams up with a war affected country in an exchange learning process on Resolution 1325, has also been observed. But it does not completely explain this trend. For example, Ireland has twinned with Liberia and Timor.

While such twinning may have facilitated the war affected countries development of NAPs, they potentially raise concerns about ownership of these plans. It has been observed that, notwithstanding the participation of donor countries in this way, the processes of developing these plans in the African countries concerned have been, by and large, inclusive in addition to which they have looked at women, peace and security issues in a holistic way (Barnes 2011, p.26). This issue aside, it would seem that post conflict contexts in which peacebuilding is actively undertaken offer an opportunity to include gender issues in ways that are not possible in countries that have not experienced open armed conflict.

Even with these few African countries that have NAPs, it is difficult to observe real transformation in the key areas. Perhaps one exception is Rwanda. Although here the progress realised in the high numbers of women represented in government institutions and processes clearly predates Resolution 1325. Even when the high representation of women in Rwanda's parliament is put to the test across all security related areas in Rwanda, the trend is not sustained. Careful research is required to see the extent to which this is the case. Overall, across these countries, the contents of NAPs vary significantly. And there is no clarity about how to measure progress in the absence of monitoring frameworks or indicators. However, it may very well be that Resolution 1889 could be used for this purpose. In summary, at the national level, there is not yet a qualitative shift towards the introduction of gender perspectives in peace and security processes.

Overall, the expectation that regional actors and member states will be able to make a positive change in the practice of institutions and society is far from being fulfilled.

Missing gender narrative

There is not yet a narrative that moves Africa towards transformation in gender relations in peace and security processes. UN interventions are simply taken as part of a general process of peacebuilding; they do not often transform relationships and institutions in country toward gender equality. Regional organisations and national governments have also not demonstrated adequate commitment to a qualitative shift in gender inequality on the ground.

4 See United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security, S/2004/814

5 Non-African countries with approved National Action Plans include Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Netherlands, Nepal, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom. Available: <http://northeastnetwork.org/resources/un-security-council-resolution-1325-national-action-plans> [Accessed 04 April 2013]

Why is transformation elusive?

Despite continuing data gathering by academics and civil society organisations, knowledge production on gender and security remains a work in progress. There are gaps in our knowledge on these issues. This means that some of the available evidence is anecdotal; a substantial number of ideas are based on sketchy evidence and not subjected to rigorous testing.

It is, however, possible to draw preliminary conclusions from observable trends – if only to make recommendations about what should constitute the focus of attention in addressing critical gaps. It is difficult to challenge any claim that the dividends on the ground are too little when weighed against the effort and investment made to redress gender inequality. This, despite the relatively significant investment in women, peace and security concerns – which is arguably low in relation to overall international community investment in mainstream peace and security issues in Africa (Barnes 2011 p.22). The observations below capture some trends. These might begin to offer preliminary pointers as to why there has been a failure to transform the African governance terrain for gender equality, particularly in the arena of peace and security.

Observations: shortfalls in research, policy and practice

When weighed against the expressed goals, at least in the declarations and stated policies, there are noticeable gaps. These have remained consistent in some areas over the last two decades. They include; for example; analysis, policy and practice of gender, peace and security which keep gender isolated from the field of security. Some gaps are highlighted here.

In academia, policy and practice, not least in Africa, the subject of gender (in)equality is treated as a side issue to peace and security. Or at least as a subject that is linked to peace and security only tangentially and in segments. It is rarely seen as a subject that is organically linked to security or that gender (in) equality is a function of this phenomenon at every level of interaction and throughout all peace and security processes. Typically, research and scholarly analysis about gender, peace and security – which is in very short supply in Africa – does not often take a comprehensive approach. Although this problem of superficial linkage and segmentation from peace and security is not limited to Africa, it is acutely endemic in Africa.

Typically, studies and/or writings on gender, peace and security in Africa – dominated by the work of NGOs – are compartmentalised and deal with the relationship between gender and one aspect of peace and security. There is a tendency for analysts to refer to gender in relation to peace and security in isolated ways. For example, ‘Gender and Security Sector Reform (SSR)’, ‘gender and peacekeeping’, without a more structured analysis of the connections of gender to the core of peace and security. The existing works that do not take this peripheral, isolating approach are the exceptions. This deserves further investigation so we can understand what accounts for this piecemeal approach. Are the actors simply responding/ reacting to events on a case by case basis? Or are they outlining issues in a way that attracts donor funding? We need to know more about this trend.

Invariably, policy institutions tend to adopt incomplete analyses and approaches to the linkages between gender and peace and security in their core documents. There is thus a tendency to focus more on the marginalisation of women and less on the gendered nature of the peace and security system and why that marginalisation persists. It is therefore critically important that analysts, policymakers and the women’s movement in Africa rethink and re engage with the issue of gender, peace and security.

The lack of conviction by those leading or facilitating peace processes and missions of the need to transform gender relations in their area of operation, and to see related policies as *not* separate from mainstream security policy, is a major contribution to the lack of progress. Two patterns persist in this regard. Typically, gender is treated as an aside from exigencies of the moment, something far removed from efforts to end imminent violence and pressing security issues or to negotiate peace. There is therefore no real interest in engaging with concerns about gender inequality in peacemaking processes.

Thus most mainstream security processes including, for example, DDR and SSR are instinctively treated entirely in isolation to gender considerations. Gender is typically included as an add on after facilitators of these processes are prodded to do so.

A related factor, which is perhaps more of an underlying driver of the above tendency is the recurring attitude of many peace mission staff as well as staff of peace and security institutions and programmes. These attitudes arguably derive from the norms, values and culture that have shaped their own understanding of gender issues.

Invariably, whatever the reason for pushing gender issues in the security environment to the sidelines – whether due to a different understanding of the exigencies or due to the negative impact of norms and values – it is relatively easy to retreat to the provision of technical solutions. This approach to gender is not uncommon among international actors. It is unlikely that real change can occur without a corresponding commitment that goes beyond the ticking of checklists aimed at meeting institutional reporting directives or donor reporting requirements.

A glaring distinction is often noticeable in situations where individual gallantry and commitment is shown by staff of peacemaking and security institutions who genuinely pursue transformation. But such individual commitment rarely translates into systemic change in the institution unless the individual concerned occupies a strategic position. Moving beyond the reliance on individuals' goodwill is important. However, the issue of targeting strategically placed individuals cannot be ignored. This is where the issue of ensuring that women occupy leadership positions in peace and security institutions remains critical. The pursuit of higher numbers in this regard is not an end in itself. But it must be pursued alongside the recruitment of women with the right focus on gender equality as well as norms and values that uphold the principle of gender equality to enable such women to take gender perspectives when occupying a leadership position or position of authority.

Women leaders and activists have, even if inadvertently, reinforced the status quo – not least due to their capacity limitations. In an overwhelming number of cases, women activists in their narratives and practice are unable to successfully take a strategic approach that would enable them to engage in holistic thinking about peace and security so they can participate in all parts of this field. Understandably, they restrict themselves to their vantage points. These can be narrow and invariably relegates them to the periphery of strategic conversations in peace and security. Thus, their exclusion from mainstream peace and security processes becomes relatively easy to achieve either by design, or by omission, on the part of mainstream policy actors.

We also need to address the above within the context of the overall support that is given, particularly to women's rights organisations, in terms of funding and technical assistance – which is disproportionately less. This often leaves them weak institutionally to engage at strategic levels, especially in a sector that is deeply entrenched in patriarchal ethos and practice.

Conclusion

The concerted action and momentum that lay behind UN Resolution 1325 remains valid and useful for continuing to sustain the energies that promote change. But this is insufficient to bring about real change on the ground. It requires, in addition, another set of commitments and alliances in the societies immediately plagued by persistent gender inequality. The majority of African countries fall within this category. The recommendations proposed as part of the effort to deal with the challenges, particularly the gaps, identified in this paper are in the summary.

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