#16Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence
Originally published between November 24 2014 and December 10 2014

#16Days: Taking Action Against Gender Violence
November 24 2014

On November 25, 1960, three of the Mirabal sisters - Patria, Minerva and Maria Teresa - were murdered. The sisters were political activists and held up as symbols of popular and feminist resistance to Rafael Trujillo's brutal dictatorship in the Dominican Republic. When the bodies of the sisters were found at the bottom of a precipice, a shocked and outraged nation rose up against Trujillo's rule and quickly toppled his repressive regime.

To honour of the Mirabal sisters, November 25 was named the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women by a feminist conference in 1981. This day was officially recognized by the United Nations in 1999.

It is fitting then that this day begins the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, an annual campaign allows individuals and groups around the world to symbolically link violence against women and human rights, to denounce violence, and to work toward a more peaceful world.

The 16 Days includes other important dates, including International Women Human Rights Defenders Day (November 29), World AIDS Day (December 1), International Day of Persons with Disabilities (December 3) and the Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre (December 6), before ending on Human Rights Day (December 10).

It also has an annual theme to focus attention and activities. This year, the theme is “From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Let’s Challenge Militarism and End Violence Against Women” and the priorities are: 1) Violence Perpetrated by State Actors, 2) Proliferation of Small Arms in Cases of Intimate Partner Violence, and 3) Sexual Violence During and After Conflict.

Throughout this year’s 16 Days, the WPSN-C will publish a series of blog posts on these topics, and co-host two related events in Ottawa.
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On November 28, the network will co-host a film screening of The Invisible War with the School of International Development and Global Studies at the University of Ottawa. Directed by award-winning film-maker Kirby Dick, the film examines the high level of sexual assault within the US military and follows several survivors as they seek justice and healing. A panel discussion and Q&A exploring sexual violence within Canada’s military and communities will follow, featuring Noémi Mercier (Maclean’s), Julie S. Lalonde (Hollaback! / Draw the Line) and Joan McKenna (Ottawa Police).

On December 2nd, the network will also support an event with Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, Oxfam Canada and Match International on the topic of "Is This Canada's Watershed Moment on Violence Against Women?" The event will be held on Parliament Hill and feature a discussion on this question with Members of Parliament and civil society. See the 16 Days calendar for further details and registration information.

Our members are also hosting events and campaigns throughout the 16 Days. On November 26, the Institute for International Women’s Rights-Manitoba will hold a panel discussion titled “From Peace in the World to Peace in the Home” at the University of Winnipeg, while Nobel Women’s Initiative will profile women's rights activists from around the world in a series of blogs.

For more info on these events, please see our events page or join us on Facebook and Twitter where we’ll be posting regular updates.

To find out what else is happening in communities across Canada, also have a look at Women In International Security Canada's event calendar or the 16 Days campaign's official calendar.
It is the most powerful and advanced military organization in history, but it is failing hundreds of thousands within its own ranks.

About half a million female soldiers in the US military have been raped, and military women in combat zones are now more likely to sexually assaulted by their fellow soldiers than killed by enemy fire.

It is this shameful and under-reported truth that award-winning filmmaker, Kirby Dick, explores in *The Invisible War*. Featuring personal interviews and footage, the film follows several survivors of sexual assault as they rebuild their lives and seek justice from an unyielding military system that promotes perpetrators and punishes victims of sexual violence.

We invite you to hear their stories at our film screening and panel discussion of *The Invisible War* on Friday November 28. The event will be held in room 4004 in the Social Sciences Building at the University of Ottawa. Doors will open at 5:30pm and the screening will start at 6:00pm. Please note that space is limited, so guests are encouraged to arrive early!

Following the screening, a panel including Noémi Mercier, author of a recent exposé on sexual violence within the Canadian military published by L’actualité and Maclean's magazine, Julie S. Lalonde, founder of Hollaback! Ottawa and developer of bystander intervention project Draw the Line, and moderator Caitlin Maxwell, feminist lawyer and researcher of sexual violence in the Canadian military, will discuss issues of sexual violence in Canada's military and communities, and participate in a Q&A.

Opening remarks will be made by Colonel (Ret'd) Michel W. Drapeau, lawyer, professor and former Director, National Defence Headquarters Secretariat and Secretary, Armed Forces Council.
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The event is free and open to the public. Follow us on Facebook or Twitter for updates.

This event will be co-hosted by the WPSN-C and the University of Ottawa’s School of International Development and Global Studies as part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.
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#16Days: A Time to Challenge Militarism and End Gender-Based Violence – In Canada and Around the World!
November 27 2014

There is so much in this year's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence theme that resonates for us in Canada today.

A new national conversation on violence against women has been launched by Ghomeshi-gate. Whether or not it will be translated into concrete change remains to be seen, but at least issues are being raised. People – women and men – have spoken out on the prevalence of sexual harassment on Parliament Hill and the implications for women’s participation in national politics.

Public opinion bubbles with outrage over lack of action on violence against indigenous women.

At the same time, the Government of Canada is at war and has launched airstrikes against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Once again we are challenged to ask how military action contributes to peace. Although the horrors of the ISIL movement, including violence against women and girls, are well documented, many questions can and should be raised regarding how bombing and airstrikes will bring about a resolution to the complex situation.

Our government engages in bellicose rhetoric on the conflict in Ukraine. Yet it is not clear that Canada is doing anything in that country in the spirit of Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Where is the support to Ukrainian women to help them participate in peacebuilding and help resolve this crisis?

In the midst of all these developments, the call for a discussion on women’s rights -- both domestically and in Canada’s foreign policy -- couldn’t be more timely. A coalition of over 100 organizations has called for a leaders’ debate on women’s rights issues as part of the next federal election campaign. The campaign is called Up for
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**Debate.** These issues deserve a higher profile as we choose our national leaders and as politicians tell us how they would govern.

During the 16 Days of Activism Campaign, there is certainly much to talk about. And there is even more to act on.

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*Beth Woroniuk is a member of the WPSN-C Steering Committee. You can follow her on Twitter at @bethottawa.*
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#16Days: Women leaders in the DRC weigh in on Peace, Security and Cooperation
November 28 2014


The growth of militarism is quite evident in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where armed groups and the government are locked in a perpetual state of war. Women and children are suffering the most as demonstrated by the countless cases of sexual violence and child soldiers. In hopes of ending systemic violence in the DRC, eleven African countries and four international organizations signed the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region (PSC Framework) on February 24, 2013.

The PSC Framework itself does not specifically focus on women; it outlines national, regional, and international commitments to help end violence in the DRC. However, the report reviews the first year of the ongoing implementation of the PSC Framework, while focusing on women and gender issues. It thoroughly analyzes the gains, obstacles, and future opportunities in each of the three fields. Part III of the report is worthy of a special note. It explores the views of key female leaders in the Congolese civil society regarding the national implementation of the three key PSC Framework commitment areas: Security Sector Reform, Consolidation of State Authority, and Economic and Social Development.
Thus far, the focus of the initiatives stemming from the Framework has mainly been on security sector reform (SSR) and consolidation of state authority. The respondents agreed that the focus on these priorities is well-placed. In regards to SSR, they believe that the most urgent aspect is striving to achieve well-functioning and responsible defence and police forces. This is emphasis is understandable since much of sexual violence against women is committed by state’s forces. Therefore, they believe that an appropriate amount of funds should be allocated for SSR in order to achieve effective security and defence sectors that will be able to regain the population’s trust. Furthermore, they emphasized the importance of the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, resettlement and reintegration for establishing a more secure environment for women (and everyone else) and the importance of consistently applying existing national laws against sexual and gender-based violence. Lastly, the lack of women in the officer ranks and higher leadership positions was cited as a major obstacle to ensuring that SSR benefits women.

In regards to the consolidation of state authority, the participants viewed it as a multidimensional and comprehensive process. Consolidation must be done both within the country, by ensuring an effective public administration and a monopoly on the use of force, and outside it - by maintaining good relations with the neighbouring countries. The women expressed concern that current consolidation efforts of state’s authority do not properly take into account the needs of women and exclude them from the decision-making process. Furthermore, they are concerned that cases of sexual violence are not properly dealt with, and perpetrators go unpunished.

Lastly, in regards to building sustainable development and peace, the women agreed that economic development is essential for peace and vice versa. Unfortunately, they are left skeptical of the government’s commitment to these issues. Indeed, one participant stated that many Congolese people believe that “state authorities want the country’s conditions to remain chaotic and insecure [in order] to remain in power ... [and] to gain more money.” Thus it comes as no surprise that none of the leaders were aware of any concrete development initiatives on the ground that arose from the national implementation of the PSC Framework. Considering that the high unemployment often leads to criminal activity, homelessness, and juvenile delinquency (all of which contribute to insecurity), it is surprising that the DRC government ranks economic and social development last in a list of six priority areas in the national implementation of the PSC Framework.
In conclusion, the report demonstrates that women leaders from civil society should be included in the decision-making process as they definitely have a unique perspective on the initiatives undertaken and their impact on women.

Margaryta Yakovenko is a recent graduate from the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa. She specializes in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and security sector reform. She is currently interning with Women, Peace and Security Network - Canada.
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#16Days: Lessons from Burundi:
Connections between Gender, Conflict and the Spread of HIV/AIDS
December 1 2014


During conflicts, women are often subject to rape and other forms of sexual violence in an effort to demoralize the enemy. As a result, they are extremely vulnerable to contracting HIV/AIDS. Exploring the case of Burundi, the authors of this journal article argue that “pre-conflict gender relations and what happens to them in conflict and post-conflict periods create structural vulnerabilities for the possibility of the spread of HIV.”

The article begins by explaining how pre-existing gender relations have created structural vulnerabilities for the possibility of the spread of HIV. The structure of Burundian family is described as patrilineal and patrilocal thus women either “belong” to the father or to the husband. They often do not have a voice when it comes to any decision-making in family matters. On the other hand, men have a lot of power over women and can easily divorce their wives whenever they wish. If a husband kicks out his wife from their home for whatever reason, and her family does not accept her back, she is often forced to use her body to support herself thus further increasing the chances of contracting and/or spreading HIV. Moreover, since Burundian men travel often, women are left vulnerable to other men - often the relatives of the husband - while the husbands often have sexual relations with other women. These conditions have greatly contributed to the spread of HIV prior to the start of the conflict.

During the conflict, there were various factors that made women more vulnerable to contraction of HIV: the combatants took up bush wives, raped, or had multiple sexual partners and then come back home without getting tested; many people relocated often as they were trying to escape violence and many of them moved into rebel camps and internally displaced people camps where rape was quite common; the
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long duration of the conflict prevented any efforts at educating people about HIV; and lastly, soldiers and rebels were deployed across the country and both often raped women from the nearby communities. Thus the duration of the conflict, the extensive deployments of forces, and the mobility of people created by the conflict made women very vulnerable to the contraction and spread of HIV.

After the conflict, the ex-combatants were shunned by the communities and thus found it hard to find wives, which contributed to them having numerous sex partners. For married couples, it was not easy either. The wives could not demand that their husbands get tested thus became vulnerable to contracting the disease. Moreover, if they got pregnant, they were often shunned by their families. Without any other alternatives to make a living, these women were often forced to sell their bodies.

Female combatants were also excluded from DDR process. The commanding officers who provided the lists of people to go through the process did not their bush wives to claim married status, as it would negatively affect their social status in the post-conflict political context. Furthermore, female ex-combatants were neglected by the victorious ruling elites who led the rebellion, since many of them were responsible for the sexual violence.

The methodology used for this case study was not rigorous. The informal interviews with a focus on narratives and the undisclosed total number of interviewees make it hard to generalize the findings to all of the Burundi or beyond. The authors justified their approach by highlighting the sensitivity of the subject in general, and especially in the cultural context of Burundi. The findings are nevertheless very interesting and somewhat intuitive.

Indeed, gender inequality that is cemented in the cultural norms of Burundi, and many other countries in Africa and around the world, often translates into subjugation of women. As a result, it inhibits a woman’s ability to take control of her life and health; for example, she can’t ask her husband to get tested for HIV. Conflicts make the situation much worse for women. The increased movement of people raises the possibility of spreading HIV. Moreover, the absence of husbands during the conflict makes the wives more vulnerable to sexual violence from the rebels or soldiers. All of these conditions are very likely to be present in most countries that are experiencing conflict and/or gender inequality. Therefore, more case studies are needed to augment our current knowledge and understanding of pre-conflict gender relations and what happens to them in conflict and post-conflict periods to
see how they contribute to the possibility of the spread of HIV. By fully understanding these effects, we will be better able to find effective solutions to stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS.


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#16Days: Feminism and Man-hating
My Perspective on Emma Watson’s Speech
December 2 2014

The latest buzz on women’s rights has been on the speech delivered by Emma Watson. She was promoting the HeForShe campaign launched by UN Women on September 20, 2014.

I’d like to pick up on her comment that, “the more I have spoken about feminism the more I have realized that fighting for women’s rights has too often become synonymous with man-hating.” I agree.

I have been working on women’s rights advocacy and implementation at the national level in Canada and overseas for 16 years. In that time I have been told by some people that they were surprised I didn’t hate men. They found it shocking that I (and colleagues of mine) even chose to engage men in the process to address and eliminate violence against women. An initial oversight, by many, is that the approach we take to eliminate violence against women includes addressing gender-based violence against men.

To exclude men in the process of establishing and implementing women’s rights is to exclude one significant contributor to the problem. How can we have women’s rights if one of the parties is not included in the conversation? And when I say conversation, I don’t mean a gathering where men are blamed or isolated. I also don’t mean a conversation where gender violence against men is not acknowledged. I mean a genuine exchange involving curiosity, understanding and collaboration.

Consider what Ms. Watson asked: “How can we affect change in the world when only half of it is invited or feel welcome to participate in the conversation?”
To isolate men undermines the aim of establishing women's rights. It also undermines the aim to establish gender rights.

Ms. Watson said, “I've seen young men suffering from mental illness unable to ask for help for fear it would make them look less “macho”…” and “I've seen men made fragile and insecure by a distorted sense of what constitutes male success. Men don't have the benefits of equality either.”

She’s right.

We need to engage all genders in addressing sexual and gender based violence in order to eliminate it.

I'm not saying women who have experienced violence by men should necessarily sit with them, make peace and establish rights. I am saying that a process needs to take place.

In safe spaces women and men, separate from each other, need to acknowledge the suffering they have experienced, come to terms with it and work on healing. Compassion and understanding of oneself and each other needs to be a part of the process.

A genuine dialogue needs to take place with all genders. We need to examine how we have come to a place where women, the root of communities, are devalued and how men are stripped of the ability to feel and be vulnerable. We need to do so with compassion and curiosity.

My hats off to Emma for delivering a speech with a very strong and simple message to engage each other. It is my hope that the HeForShe campaign bridges divides, helps eliminate sexual and gender based violence and helps establish and reinforce women's rights.

Photo: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon greets British Actor and UN Women Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson at a special event organized in support of their HeForShe campaign. UN Photo/Mark Garten

Jo-Ann Rodrigues is a Gender Equality and Conflict Resolution Consultant. This post was originally published on her blog, JO-Talk, on September 25, 2014.
#16 Days: When sexual and gender-based crimes are committed in the context of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes

December 3 2014

Sexual and gender-based crimes are difficult to prosecute and secure convictions for under any conditions. When they are committed as acts of genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes -- and are dealt with as part of the international justice system -- the situation is even more fraught and complicated. However, the past year has seen positive steps taken toward improving the documentation, investigation, and prosecution of such crimes.

When individual countries lack the capacity to do so, the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigates and prosecutes sexual and gender-based crimes within the context of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. In fact, six of the eight situations currently under investigation at the Court include charges for gender-based crimes. However, there have yet to be any convictions on sexual or gender-based charges (in fact, there has only been one conviction to date on any charges whatsoever).

The Prosecutor of the ICC, Fatou Bensouda, has previously recognized the importance of appropriately addressing sexual and gender-based crimes -- and the challenges involved in the effective investigation and prosecution of them -- by making it one of the key strategic goals in the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP)'s Strategic Plan for 2012-2015. (It is strategic goal three: "enhance the integration of a gender perspective in all areas of our work and continue to pay particular attention to sexual and gender based crimes and crimes against children.")

In June of this year, Bensouda published a Policy Paper on Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes. The policy paper explicitly acknowledges the gravity of sexual and gender-based crimes and acknowledges the need to apply a gender analysis to all crimes within the Court's jurisdiction. The policy paper is very specific in noting that it wishes to identify how the crimes it investigates are related to inequality between women and men, as well as differential power relationships. There is also a
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recognition of the challenges that are particular to such crimes, including under- or non-reporting, the stigma victims face, and limited investigations and the resulting lack of evidence.

Also in June, in London, the UK government convened a Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. At the Summit, an International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict, subtitled "Basic Standards of Best Practice on the Documentation of Sexual Violence as a Crime under International Law" was presented. The protocol includes standards for preliminary considerations, planning, identifying survivors and witnesses, interviewing and physical and documentary evidence.

There have been concerns in the past regarding the balance struck between the ICC's push to get cases to trial in a timely manner and persecuting the full range of crimes that may have taken place in a given situation. Too often, it has been felt, gender-based crimes have not been thoroughly pursued as a result of the difficulties in investigation and evidence-gathering peculiar to these types of crimes. It can only be hoped that the best practices of evidence gathering promoted by the Protocol (and it's future revisions) will be more universally adopted -- and thereby improve the ICC's capacity to successfully prosecute sexual and gender-based crimes.

The Policy Paper is also clearly intended to address this, although how much of an effect it will have in practice is still open to debate.

For right now, closing arguments were heard this fall in the ICC's case against Jean-Pierre Bemba, the former Congolese vice-president, who has faced charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes for events that took place in the Central African Republic. The case is significant both for focusing on rape as a weapon of war and of prosecuting Bemba, not for ordering the mass rapes and sexual assaults, but for not stopping them. (This is the first time the Court has applied this 'command responsibility' concept to charges.) Brigid Inder, the executive director of the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, is quoted in a recent article from Al Jazeera, as saying, "We hope this case will change that record and usher in a new era of accountability for sexual violence before the ICC." A verdict is expected next year.

Although there have been previous charges dealing with sexual violence, they have failed to result in convictions. We will have to wait and see if the Bemba case results in one. But with the introduction of new tools -- and greater interest and attention on the issue -- we can hope that future prosecutions will arise from a thorough
gender analysis combined with improved investigative and evidence-gathering techniques.

Resources

Gender Report Card on the International Criminal Court 2013

Policy Paper on Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes (International Criminal Court. Office of the Prosecutor)

Strategic Plan for 2012-2015 (International Criminal Court. Office of the Prosecutor)

International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict

Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice

Endnotes

1 The International Criminal Court (ICC) is an international organization separate from the United Nations system and based in The Hague. It is the first permanent international criminal court and deals with the most serious crimes -- genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes -- when countries are unable to do so. Previous trials and tribunals only dealt with particular situations in specific locations and time periods (for example the Nuremberg trials after the Second World War and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda after the genocide there). The founding document of the ICC, the Rome Statute, came into force in 2002 and has been ratified by 122 countries to date.

2 A good summary of the gender dimensions of the specific situations and cases at the Court is found in the Gender Report Card on the International Criminal Court produced each year by Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice. The Report Card also addresses issues faced by victims and witnesses, as well as structural and organizational issues within the ICC.
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Photo: Fatou Bensouda, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC)
UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

Monique Cuillerier is the Membership & Communications Director of the World Federalist Movement - Canada. A version of this article appears in the upcoming issue of WFMC's newsletter, Mondial.
Although over the past two decades great strides have been made to include women in international, political, and security affairs, recent statistics demonstrate a lot of work still needs to be done. In 2012, UN Women published a report “Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence”, which demonstrates how little women have been engaged in the examined 31 peace processes from 1992 to 20011. It found that in all of these peace processes “only 4 per cent of signatories, 2.4 per cent of chief mediators, 3.7 per cent of witnesses and 9 per cent of negotiators” were women. In only five cases, the percentage of female negotiators was above 10 per cent.

Even years after the adoption of Resolutions 1325 in 2000, women are still excluded from peace processes. Indeed, several recent peace processes from 2008 to 2011 (Central African Republic, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Iraq, and Yemen) did not include any women at all. Considering the prevalence of violence against women in these countries, the exclusion of women is a major failure. Their input would have been instrumental in helping to address the effects of the conflicts on women and in devising the most effective ways of including women in the subsequent peacebuilding efforts. Indeed, the lack of women representation in peace processes is a major issue since they map out the way peacebuilding will unfold in post-conflict era. Without an input from women, it is unlikely that women’s concerns will be addressed or their strengths will be properly drawn upon. This is unfortunate because women have much to contribute to the peace processes and subsequent peacebuilding efforts.

In her journal article “A Country of their Own: Women and Peacebuilding”, Theodora-Ismene Gizelis states that “the social roles of women for nurturing interpersonal relationships make them effective peacebuilders”. An examination of women’s contributions to peacebuilding and peace processes shows that Gizelis is
correct to make such a claim. Indeed, the Accord Insight documented many roles that women performed in peacebuilding in several countries such as Cambodia, Sierra Leone, northern Uganda, Papua New Guinea–Bougainville, Northern Ireland, Angola, Sudan, Indonesia–Aceh, and Somalia. In these countries, women have greatly contributed to peacebuilding by: “promoting consensus and inclusion as a key strategy, advancing broader issues of social justice, and building peace beyond the negotiating table”. At the negotiating table, they broadened the agenda by including issues such as, equality, access to land, and reconciliation. These issues are not of importance to the armed parties that are typically present at the negotiation table, but the solution to them is vital for achieving long-lasting peace. For instance, women in northern Uganda helped to prepare communities for the reconciliation and integration of ex-combatants by using prayer meetings and peace education. Moreover, the Northern Ireland’s Women’s Coalition (NIWIC) ensured that issues of victims’ rights and reconciliation were included in the Belfast agreement. Furthermore, in Somaliland in 1993 and in 1996, women lobbied elders to intervene to end the conflicts and mobilized funds for the peace meetings. Therefore, women have an important part to play in peacebuilding, but the discussion about their potential contribution should being at peace negotiations with proper input from the women themselves.

Photo: UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, inducts Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Wangari Maathai, as UN Messenger of Peace. Photo credit: Mark Garten / United Nations.

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In 2001, in his discussion paper “Demilitarising Minds, Demilitarising Societies”, Howard Clark suggested that demilitarisation should be viewed at two different levels, the surface level and the deep level. The surface level demilitarisation concerns the actions taken to put an immediate end to the fighting, such as “disbanding forces, surrendering arms, implementing ceasefire agreements”. It is the effort of diverting the conflict and pushing “the personal, political or other agendas... from the military to the political arena”. It does not, however, require fundamental attitude changes. On the other hand, deep demilitarisation “seeks to address the roots of militarisation and undo the legacy of war and militarisation as part of an effort to reconstruct society on a different basis”. It requires “social struggle” and seeks to “address causes of violence and offer alternative, non-military approaches”. It must be led by the communities in conflict and cannot be forced by international community.

It is useful to apply this distinction to South Sudan’s case. The protracted war with Sudan has entrenched militarisation in the society with great ramifications for the people. As a result, the people are more likely to resort to violence instead of discussion in order to solve political and/or everyday disputes. Transparency is reduced and military needs trump over civil rights. Moreover, divisions between different ethnic groups are widened as suspicion and intolerance of the Other grows. Although the international community is working hard on the surface level demilitarisation, South Sudan surely needs deep level demilitarisation if it wishes to find sustainable peace.

To achieve deep demilitarisation, the initiative must be locally generated and everyone from the community needs to be involved. Since almost half of the South Sudan’s population is female, their exclusion from the peace talks is detrimental to achieving sustainable peace and deep demilitarisation. Luckily, South Sudanese women are taking steps towards correcting that. South Sudan for Peace and Development and other women coalitions organized a public debate “Women’s
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*Action for Peace*, which will “provide stakeholders with first-hand accounts of the realities for women, and for their families and communities on the ground, as a means to foster effective dialogue and develop lasting solutions.” The lead coordinator of the event and former Deputy Minister for Gender, Child and Social Welfare Priscila Nyanyang said that the purpose of the event was to come up with ways “to advance the cause of peace, healing and reconciliation”.

The emphasis on healing and reconciliation is important as it complements the current attempts at reaching a peace agreement. The current surface level demilitarisation efforts such as establishing peace talks and arms control management are integral and, to an extent, a pre-requisite effort for the deep demilitarisation efforts such as Women’s Action for Peace and the general disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration initiatives. South Sudanese women organizations are showing the potential and an interest in leading deep demilitarisation efforts in South Sudan, which should be avidly encouraged and supported by the international community. With the international community and the government focusing on the surface level demilitarisation and supporting women organizations' efforts on deep demilitarisation, South Sudan is much more likely to achieve sustainable peace.

Photo: Soldiers of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) redeploy to form a new Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) battalion with the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), under the terms of the agreement of the Abyei road map in 2008. Photo credit: Tim McKulka / United Nations.

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#16 Days: Progress on Women, Peace and Security Issues
December 9 2014


Security Council Report, an independent non-for-profit organisation that provides “information about the activities of the UN Security Council and its subordinate bodies” for the stakeholders and the general public, published the 4th Cross-Cutting Report on Women, Peace and Security in April 2014. This and preceding cross-cutting reports on women, peace and security specifically deal with women, peace and security issues and the way the Security Council addresses them. In general, the reports track the new work of the Security Council as it relates to women, peace and security matters, analyze relevant statistical information, and highlight relevant trends.

The fourth report is quite comprehensive in nature even though it focuses mostly on the developments in the last year. It starts by discussing and analyzing key developments at the thematic level in the following areas: Security Council activity on women, peace and security; “Arria-Formula” meeting on women, peace and security; field perspectives from gender practitioners in peacekeeping operations; and the work of the Special Representative on sexual violence in conflicts. Next, it dives into a cross-cutting analysis for 2013 by looking at Security Council resolutions, country-specific presidential statements, Secretary General’s reports on country-specific situations, and UN Mission mandates. Furthermore, it analyzes the application of UN’s Zero-Tolerance policy and the work of the several Security Council Sanctions Committees. Lastly, it briefly discusses Security Council’s dynamics as they relate to women, peace and security agenda.

The report discusses various women, peace and security related trends that deserve a special mention. On the thematic front, one unfortunate trend has been that the Security Council’s language has become more restrictive: using “sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations” instead of “conflict-related sexual
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violence”. The former usage ensures that reporting is done only in situations where security is a matter of “international peace and security and therefore is outside the purview of the Security Council”. As a result, it forgoes the reporting of sexual violence outside of armed conflict or post-conflict situations. Another thematic trend is the domination of protection-related language in the Security Council resolutions; the resolutions focus much less on the participation of women. Indeed, of the nine resolutions in 2013 with “new, substantial and operational references to women, only one included comparable references to both protection and participation elements”.

The most intriguing section of the report is the cross-cutting analysis for 2013, which provides a statistical analysis for women, peace and security in country-specific decisions of the Security Council. For instance, of the 30 resolutions on country-specific situations that could be reasonably expected to refer to women, 28 actually referred to them. Moreover, in the operative paragraphs of these resolutions, only 73.3 percent contained references to women and 65.6 percent mentioned women, peace and security issues. In addition, the report examined country-specific and thematic presidential statements, which are statements made by the President of the Security Council on behalf of the Council, adopted at a formal meeting of the Council and issued as an official document of the Council. They are usually made “in response to a significant development on the group in situations on the agenda or to highlight key points following a thematic open debate.” Of the 12 country-specific presidential statements that could reasonably be expected to address the women, 10 actually contained a reference to women. Of the nine thematic presidential statements that could reasonably be expected to address women, four actually did – which was a decrease from five out of six in 2012.

The report concluded with some recommendations for the Security Council, some of which are as follows:

- Cease to view women, peace and security as an add-on component to a mandate rather than being a central part of it
- Request more robust reporting on gender issues and include a separate section on women, peace and security in the Secretary-General's country-specific reports
- Request troop-contributing countries to undertake pre-deployment training in order to prevent sexual abuse by their troops

Overall, the report clearly outlines how women, peace and security issues are approached by the Security Council. These issues are clearly more on the forefront of
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the Council decisions than they were in the past; however, as the report demonstrates, there is still much the Security Council can do to push women, peace and security agenda forward.


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#16Days: Overview and Summary  
December 10 2014

As this year's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence comes to an end, we take a look at some of the in-person ways that WPSN-C and its member organizations and other interested parties marked the campaign.

Women in International Security (WIIS) Canada took the lead in organizing Canadian programming around the campaign and began with a campaign launch at Ottawa City Hall that included speakers representing WIIS Canada, Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW), UNHCR Canada, the Ottawa Police Service, and the Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC). There were spoken word poetry and musical performances, as well as the launch of the campaign video. Representatives from partner organizations, including WPSN-C, took part in a candlelighting ceremony. Photos and more details of the launch, as well as from the many other events held by WIIS-Canada and partner organizations, are available on the WIIS-Canada website.

From Peace in the World to Peace in the Home

About 40 Winnipegers came out on a cold winter's night to participate in a special event during the 16 Days Campaign. There were refreshments and a warm sense of support for women’s activism in room 2M70, at the University of Winnipeg on November 26th. A resources table included the postcard addressed to Canada's political leaders regarding gun control. A special song, written and performed by Darcia Senft for Peace Days, “One Step Closer”, was particularly appreciated by everyone. The event closed with the song and video UN Women’s “One Woman”.

(Photos: "Orange" participants on Nov. 26th - from L to R: Roxana Obasi, Emily Rempel, Mary Scott, Meenu Kapoor, Gertrude Hambira, Marilou McPhedran, Nancy Cosway)

In response to the international appeal from UN Women to "Orange Your Neighbourhood" during the 16 Days of Action to Counter Violence Against
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Women, the sister organizations of the Institute for International Women's Rights at Global College (directed by Marilou McPhedran) and the community-based Institute for International Women's Rights - Manitoba (hosted by co-chair Mary Scott) teamed on the evening of Nov. 26th (Day 2 of the 16 Days of Action) for an interactive session on The Compassion Games (presented by Darcia Senft of Winnipeg Peace Days) to explore global to local responses to gender-based violence. Roxana Obasi helped the audience understand the incentives that perpetuate FGM/C (‘female genital cutting’) in her native Cameroon, Gertrude Hambira demonstrated the costs of being a human rights defender in her native Zimbabwe and Ellen Judd provided contextual analysis situating violence against women and girls in our increasingly militaristic cultures. Following the panel moderated by Marilou McPhedran, Tolu Illelaboye briefed the audience on the 'Youth Vital Signs' report card hosted by the Winnipeg Foundation while Jazmin Papadopoulos and Giselle Roch of Voice of Women-Manitoba described the young women’s peace camp curriculum being translated into French to be used by Girl Ambassadors for Peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo - followed by an open discussion among all members of the audience.

The 16th of the 16 Days for Action countering violence against women and girls is on International Human Rights Day - December 10th. For more information on "oranging your neighbourhood" as part of the 16 Days of Action, visit UN Women.

Invisible War film screening and discussion

On November 28th, WPSN-C co-hosted a screening and panel discussion on the documentary, The Invisible War, with the University of Ottawa’s School of International Development and Global Studies.

The Invisible War follows several survivors of rape as they seek healing and justice from the US military.

Opening remarks were made by Colonel (Ret’d) Michel W. Drapeau, a lawyer and professor with thirty-four years of military experience. Col. Drapeau has represented
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a number of survivors and argued that the Canadian military needs to do more to support them and to bring perpetrators to justice.

Following the screening, Noémi Mercier, author of a recent exposé on sexual violence within the Canadian military published by L’actualité and Maclean’s magazine, Julie S. Lalonde, founder of Hollaback! Ottawa and bystander intervention project Draw the Line, and moderator Caitlin Maxwell, feminist lawyer and researcher of sexual violence in the Canadian military, reflected on the connections between the issues raised in the film and their work.

Mercier revealed that The Invisible War was the inspiration for her investigation into sexual assault within the Canadian military. She observed that although things have changed since Maclean's investigated this topic in the 1990s, they have not changed enough, and her recent research indicates continued issues of sexual violence and impunity in Canada's Armed Forces.

Lalonde made a number of strong and thoughtful points. She argued that we tend to think that there is a hierarchy of sexual violence when in fact we should see it as a continuum. If we as a society tolerate "less bad" sexual violence and allow it to continue unchecked, we create an enabling environment for "more bad" sexual violence. Lalonde also observed that because the topic of sexual assault is taboo, the person who draws attention to the problem is often considered the problem, as many people seek to avoid the issue. Though high profile sexual violence cases and campaigns may help reduce this stigma, they can also spur resistance.

About 50 people attended the event and many participated in a lively Q&A after the panel discussion.

The event was sponsored by MATCH International, with food and drink donations from Starbucks. The Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre also provided counselling and crisis support.

(WPSN-C member Canadian Voice of Women for Peace has also raised concerns regarding sexual violence in the Canadian military. A presentation and fact sheet, originally from the Commission on the Status of Women 57th Annual Conference in 2013 is available.)