Keeping 1325 Alive
Originally published October 2015

In the wake of the 15th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), as well as the 5th anniversary of the release of Canada’s National Action Plan (C-NAP) to implement UNSCR 1325, the Women, Peace and Security Network – Canada (WPSN-C) is presenting a new blog series, Keeping 1325 Alive.

Among other topics, it will consider:

- Canada’s role implementing UNSCR 1325;
- The Canadian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS);
- The global effort of remarkable women and grassroots organizations to advocate for UNSCR 1325; and
- How to ensure governmental bodies uphold promises made on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) issues.

As we approach the 15th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, we will pose questions to stimulate and encourage discussion to Keep 1325 Alive! Please stay tuned to remain part of the important discussion of UNSCR 1325 by visiting the comments section, our Facebook page or Twitter feed.
Keeping 1325 Alive: What is a Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan? 
October 16 2015

Purpose:

A WPS NAP is a blueprint or tool drafted by a national governmental body to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). There are 4 themes within UNSCR 1325 that a WPS NAP can aim to include:

- **Equal participation of women in all decision-making levels,**
- **Conflict prevention,**
- **Protection of the rights of women in conflict areas (with a focus on preventing and protecting against sexual violence in conflict)** and,
- **1. Access to relief and recovery services for this population** (PeaceWomen, 2013).

WPS NAPs are one method that can be used by the state to accept the responsibility to uphold the human rights platform for women and girls within the nation, as well as on a global scale to **ensure gender mainstreaming and equality**, and to promote peace and conflict resolution for all. Countries can implement WPS NAPs with the aim to “**improve monitoring and evaluation to enhance accountability, and build coherence and coordination among government agencies**”.

**Overview of what a WPS NAP should look like:**

In broad terms, like any other goal-oriented plan, a WPS NAP should contain SMART characteristics. It should include **Specific goals with Measurable indicators or outcomes**; these goals must be **Attainable**, **Relevant** at the domestic level and **Time-bound** for effective evaluation. Participation from civil society and grassroots women’s organization is crucial during the development phase and when evaluating
the implementation process of the NAP. Civil society groups play a critical role in holding governments accountable to uphold these decisions in practice. However, it is important to note that the ability of a nation to effectively implement their NAP depends on their “capacity to implement, monitor and finance” the entire plan (p. 6).

**WPS NAPs in the Real World:**

Since the introduction of the UNSCR 1325 in 2000, a number of countries around the world have launched NAPs to address key WPS issues. As seen in our previous blog post, there have been a total of 6 additional resolutions since UNSCR 1325 that have been introduced; however, implementation into ‘real world’ practice has been significantly variable. According to a study completed in 2014 by The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), there are multiple key components that should be included within the planning and implementation phases that are occasionally ignored by implementing states. Following is a short list of the most significant components that are often ignored, but should be addressed within an NAP:

- **Clear goals with concrete actions**
- **Domestic relevance**
- **Critical involvement of civil society**
- **Effective monitoring and evaluation processes**
- **Participation of women in all levels of decision-making**
- **Focus on conflict prevention and the role women can play in this**
- **Focus on preventing sexual violence, especially in conflict (OSCE, 2014)**

One of the major short-comings of the implementation of NAPs on a global scale as specified by OSCE (2014) is, “a need for a better understanding of what gender mainstreaming means in concrete and practical terms; an understanding that goes beyond a mere balance in the number of women and men” (p. 8). This is an essential piece which tends to be absent from the discussion and should be placed high on the governmental agenda when discussing WPS NAPs.

*In summary, to Keep 1325 Alive, it is crucial for nations to develop a WPS NAP, but real effort is needed to ensure proper and effective implementation. Share with us your thoughts on different WPS NAPs around the world, what nations are doing right, and what you think can be improved. We would love to hear from you!*

Also, please follow us on our Facebook page and Twitter feed!
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**Countries that have developed WPS NAPs:**

(Info taken from [PeaceWomen.org](http://PeaceWomen.org))

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Switzerland

Estonia

United Kingdom

Bosnia
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Keeping 1325 Alive: Women in Peacekeeping:
Security Council Resolutions From 2000 to 2015
October 19 2015

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 recognized the importance of involving women in conflict resolution and peacekeeping activities. Since 2000, there have been a total of 7 resolutions adopted by the UN regarding Women, Peace and Security (WPS). This blog post will summarize and highlight key components of these 7 resolutions and how their implementation impacts WPS issues.


UNSCR 1325 was the first resolution developed by the UN to acknowledge gender equality and the involvement of women in conflict resolution and peace processes. This resolution was ground-breaking for the WPS mandate. It focused on emphasizing and recognizing the dire need to involve women in peacekeeping and peace-building and promoted gender equality by “mainstream[ing] a gender perspective” in peace operations (p. 2). Through active lobbying by multiple women’s organizations worldwide, the adoption of this resolution encouraged UN member states to also adopt and implement this strategy based on the four pillars of:

1. Prevention – ensuring an active female role in conflict resolution;
2. Protection – of women and girls in conflict situations;
3. Participation – “in peace processes, conflict prevention and reconstruction processes”; and
4. Relief and Recovery – during the rebuilding and recovery process, it is crucial to involve women within all levels of decision making.

UNSCR 1325 emphasizes all of these core concepts regarding the involvement of women in all decision-making levels with the goal to potentially avoid or minimize conflict situations. The adoption of this resolution was revolutionary at the time as this was a move away from the notion of merely making conflict situations safer for women and girls/children.


To take UNSCR 1325 one step further, UNSCR 1820 was adopted to further emphasize gender equality and active female participation in conflict resolution and during peacekeeping operations. This resolution recognizes the continued existence of
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Originally published October 2015
obstacles that prevent women from gaining equal access to involvement in these
discussions. The development of this resolution is crucial as it introduces and stresses the importance of preventing and adequately responding to
sexual violence in conflict situations. Upon the adoption of this resolution, sexual
violence was recognized by the UN as a “tactic of war” and thus is to be treated as a
war crime to ensure the protection of civilians from sexual violence through a zero
tolerance policy, as it was demanded by the Security Council for “immediate and
complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence
against civilians”.

Security Council Resolution 1888 (Adopted in 2009)
To further build on both UNSCR 1325 and 1820, UNSCR 1888 expanded the discussion
of sexual violence in conflict. Not only was there a focus on improved response
mechanisms, through leadership and support, there was also improvement within
the monitoring and reporting mechanisms within this resolution. To achieve this, the
Resolution requested the appointment of a Special Representative specifically to
“provide coherent and strategic leadership” to prevent and respond to sexual
violence in conflict (p. 4). It also included the importance of “retraining peacekeepers,
national forces and police” to enhance the zero tolerance policy of sexual violence
that was first adopted with UNSCR 1820.

Security Council Resolution 1889 (Adopted in 2009)
UNSCR 1889 was adopted by the Security Council to improve monitoring and
accountability of UN member states to uphold all of the Security Council Resolutions
with regards to increasing the involvement of women throughout all levels of conflict
resolution and other peace processes. This resolution calls for member states to
recognize women not as victims of conflict, but as “leaders and stakeholders who
can help address and resolve war”.

Despite progress, issues with UN member states’ monitoring and reporting
mechanisms within UNSCR 1820 and 1888 arose. In response to this, UNSCR 1960 was
adopted and improves on this by ensuring “specific and time bound commitments
to address sexual violence”, by involving the use of sanctions committees, and by
strengthening data analysis in regards to sexual violence in conflict (p. 1).

Security Council Resolution 2106 (Adopted in 2013)
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**UNSCR 2106** is the fourth resolution involving sexual violence in conflict which has been adopted and focuses on providing *increased accountability mechanisms* for dealing with those found guilty of practicing and promoting sexual violence in conflict.

**Security Council Resolution 2122 (Adopted in 2013)**

As for the most recent resolution adopted by the UN, **UNSCR 2122** attempts to resolve obstacles surrounding the implementation of these resolutions for WPS issues. There were multiple gaps noted within the previous resolutions on WPS, therefore leading to the adoption of UNSCR 2122. These gaps were noted specifically within the pillar of participation, and this resolution **aims to address and stress the importance of the participation of women** in all aspects of conflict resolution and peace building processes.

*We want to hear your opinions!* Let us know what you think the next course of action should be regarding United Nations Security Council Resolutions on WPS – should we continue to further develop and strengthen the UNSCRs, should there be a new Resolution, or should we focus on implementation? **Add to the discussion!**

*Comment below!*

Check out our Facebook page and Twitter feed.
Keeping 1325 Alive: Four Strategies to Reduce Sexual Violence in Conflict: South Sudan
October 20 2015

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Comment below!

Check out our Facebook page and Twitter feed.

Today’s blog post will address an article by Spangaro et al., (2015) entitled ‘Mechanisms underpinning interventions to reduce sexual violence in armed conflict: A realist-informed systematic review’ and will apply it to the local South Sudan context.
Sexual violence is used as a tactic of war in many conflict areas worldwide, by both military and rebel groups, and even within and by the humanitarian community. The direct consequence that sexual violence has on victims is catastrophic, traumatic and life-long. Many victims are unable and/or unwilling to access treatment centers, and receive psychological support due to factors such as lack of awareness of available services, social stigma surrounding sexual assault, and mistrust in existing resources. This can perpetuate the traumatizing experience resulting in the possible untreated physical trauma, STI or HIV infection, as well as the short and long term psychological effects. Preventing and protecting against sexual violence is key, however, providing survivors of sexual violence with treatment that fits within the cultural context of the community is just as crucial. There are a number of mechanisms of intervention that dominate most strategies to reduce sexual violence in conflict and to provide treatment to survivors, and this post will discuss 4 of them.

These underlying mechanisms include:

1. There is help for the problem, which consists of spreading awareness of available resources;
2. It's safe to tell, which ensures strict confidentiality to minimize stigma and other social consequences;
3. We can work together to address this problem, and understanding that
4. We already have ways to address this problem which are generally more likely to be accepted if implemented by members within the community in comparison to western interventions.
These mechanisms are applicable within different communities around the world that experience sexual violence in conflict, and can be used as a framework to formulate possible effective solutions for prevention and treatment.

The South Sudan Example:

To provide context to this theoretical framework, I will briefly apply it to the current status of sexual violence that is ongoing in conflict areas in South Sudan since the outbreak of civil war in December 2013. With this ever-growing conflict, came the relatively common use of sexual violence as a tactic of war. This is used as a weapon on all sides, including the Government security forces and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA). While it is difficult to collect statistics on victims and survivors of sexual violence, the UN released a report in May 2014, addressing sexual violence in high conflict areas. While severe under-reporting of sexual violence exists in South Sudan, they were able to gather data within a few states. In the Central Equatoria State there were 27 reports, in Jonglei State there were 11 reports, in the Upper Nile State there were 21 reports and in the Unity State there were 25 reports following the outbreak of conflict in December 2013. While intense conflict acts as a barrier to introducing new solutions to prevent sexual violence and for receiving adequate care, there are also many other social factors within South Sudan that play a role in the reporting and treatment process. Throughout many communities, the social consequences of reporting sexual assault tend to be perceived as more traumatic than the act of sexual violence itself; therefore silence tends to be the most socially acceptable means of dealing with this traumatic event. Within this social context, young women tend to be seen as powerless, and victim blaming can be rampant (Tankink, 2013). Therefore, there is a failure of the mechanisms regarding
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‘it is safe to tell’ and ‘we can work together to address the problem’. While survivors of sexual violence may be aware of resources within their communities, they may fear social repercussions related to confidentiality issues and the overall perceived lack of support from community leaders (Tankink, 2013). Confidentiality plays a major role determining whether or not survivors of sexual violence in South Sudan will seek assistance. Within a qualitative study by Tankink (2013) entitled ‘The silence of South-Sudanese women: social risks in talking about experiences of sexual violence’, she found that ‘public sharing’ of experiences of sexual violence was generally not an option; however, survivors of sexual violence were much more willing to ‘privately share’ their experiences to individuals from outside their community if ensured strict confidentiality. In this context, building on interventions that promote strict confidentiality and protection from external stigma through the mechanism of ‘it is safe to tell’, and if possible if introduced incrementally, working together to build external support from the community, could be extremely beneficial.

Sexual violence in conflict is a multifaceted and complex problem which takes many forms worldwide. It is crucial for the global community to stress the unacceptability and zero tolerance for its use as a weapon of war (UNSCR 1820, 1889 and 2106). However, using legal repercussions alone to deter sexual violence is not always useful in areas that lack adequate prosecution, as legal accountability may be weak at the local or national levels. Along with advocating for improved prosecution, assessing the local context of a community affected by sexual violence is crucial when devising other interventions to prevent and reduce sexual violence in conflict, while offering effective treatment to survivors. There is no one size fits all solution and nations must recognize the specific needs of affected communities by assessing the domestic relevance of chosen interventions.
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Sexual violence in conflict must come to an end, and it is the responsibility of local and international leaders to address this intolerable practice in all corners of the globe. It is important to stress that among these leaders, the participation of women in all levels of decision making is crucial for addressing sexual violence in conflict and promoting peace and conflict resolution.

The blog series, Keeping 1325 Alive, was written by WPSN-C intern Michelle Grover.

To Keep 1325 Alive, what are some solutions you use that involves women addressing sexual violence in conflict? What is working well locally and internationally? What is lacking thus far? We would love to hear from you.
Keeping 1325 Alive
Originally published October 2015

By Megan Nobert, PhD Candidate in Law and independent consultant on international criminal law, human rights and gender equality

To me, UNSC Resolution 1325 is not just a piece of paper; it is a series of promises we made to ourselves and the world that we will not stand for sexual violence in conflict. I have kept this resolution with me all these years, holding onto the belief that there is power in its words, that there is hope so long as we have these resolutions, these principles to seize onto in the dark moments.

Throughout the past 5 years, I have focused my work on sexual violence in conflict zones. My goal has been to help reduce the number of instances of sexual violence and to help those women and young girls who have been subjected to the crime. I have been lucky enough to be allowed to do this work as both an academic and professional, in several different countries with several different organizations. The astonishing and resilient women I have met throughout the past 5 years have been such an inspiration. Their determination and strength in the face of utter adversity is what has kept me going through the beginning of my career. I cannot thank them enough for allowing me to enter their lives, for their kindness and their compassion.

As I head into the middle years of my career, I know that my focus is changing. I am still inspired by these women and I will continue to fight for them on any front that someone is willing to send me. However, the group of people I want to help has expanded to include my fellow humanitarians, other women like me.

This was not a natural shift, but the result of a traumatic experience. In February of this year, while working in South Sudan, I was drugged and raped by another member of the humanitarian community. There has not been any justice yet. My assaulter was sent out of the country, with full pay, instead of being fired. I was not given the opportunity to file a complaint with his organization. Turning to the police was not a realistic option, given that the local officials are known to dismiss charges of sexual violence. It was a horrible moment, and there were many dark days for me after this happened.

Yet, while there may not be justice for me, there can be for someone else. Right now, I am trying to start a dialogue on sexual violence against humanitarians, not in
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opposition to sexual violence against local communities, but as a parallel conversation highlighting the many sections and nuances of sexual violence in conflict.

My focus may be expanding but it remains as strong as ever. I will keep UNSC Resolution 1325, its existing companions and those still be drafted near to me. When I head back into the field however, I want to add a few other UNSC Resolutions to my arsenal. I want to add UNSC Resolution 2175, which condemns the increasingly common attacks on humanitarian workers. I also want to add UNSC Resolution 2222, which condemns attacks on journalists and associated personnel, and any other similar resolutions that are to come.

UNSC Resolution 1325 and its companion resolutions were created to ensure that sexual violence in conflict did not occur without impunity. We have these incredible amounts of tools at our disposal, and my goal is to use them to make sure that what happened to me does not happen to anyone else. I will use them to ensure that impunity does not continue to exist. I will continue to fight for those who are not able to currently fight for themselves, to the best of my ability. These are not just meaningless pieces of paper or empty words.
Since Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) was adopted by the United Nations in 2000, there has been a slow uptake of improving the participation of women in conflict resolution and throughout peace processes. Today we will discuss and summarize key components found within the International Peace Institute’s publication ‘Reimagining Peacemaking: Women’s Roles in Peace Processes’ that was released in June 2015.

This report pinpoints the multiple barriers that continue to prevent the involvement of women throughout the decision making process regarding conflict resolution and peacebuilding. As this report suggests, the way in which a problem is represented plays a major role in defining the participation of women within the peacebuilding process. Where, “if the goal of a peace process is only to end violence, then women—who are rarely the belligerents—are unlikely to be considered legitimate participants. If the goal is to build peace, however, it makes sense to gain more diverse inputs from the rest of society” (p. 1). The underrepresentation of women within the peacebuilding process is exacerbated by a lack of research providing evidence that the involvement of women in the peace process does indeed provide positive results. Therefore, this report aims to present and compile evidence regarding the participation of women in all levels of decision making to provide recommendations for “reimagining the traditional approach to peacemaking” and improving the participation of women (p. 2).

The first section presents the multiple barriers to women’s participation:

- From a traditional standpoint, peace negotiations are discussed “behind closed doors” between governments largely comprised of male leaders, thus
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ignoring input from local organizations, the public and more specifically the participation of women.

- There is resistance of change from current decision makers to allow room at the table for “new constituencies”, including women.
- Many women’s organizations wishing to participate in the peacemaking process are repeatedly questioned regarding their “credibility, constituencies and qualifications” (p.4).
- While there are those committed to increasing women’s participation in the peace process, many mediation teams consider that time constraints do not always allow for this, implying that the benefits of involving women do not outweigh the proposed risks of not.
- “Women’s groups were only included when local and international organizations (as opposed to mediation teams or negotiating parties) lobbied strongly for their participation” (p. 8).
- During a panel discussion after the release of this report, co-author Marie O’Reilly stated “the short term goal of ending violence is emphasized at the expense of the longer vision of how to build peace, and this rationale feeds into the exclusion of women”. Again, this boils down to how the problem of conflict is represented by those at the negotiating table.

It is stressed within this report that women experience war and conflict in ways much different than men, as they bear the brunt of conflict’s secondary effects such as the “breakdown of social order, human rights abuses, economic devastation and the spread of infectious disease” as well as high accounts of domestic violence during and post conflict (p. 5). Therefore, the male and female representations of conflict and security are viewed through lenses that are vastly different from one another, and without the participation of women, this additional representation is often silenced leading to a “continuum of violence and insecurity” (p. 5).

To address these barriers, the report compiles new evidence from qualitative and quantitative research studies demonstrating the importance of the participation of women:

- Issues relating to the root causes of conflict are addressed when women are involved
- “Women’s physical security and gender equality in society correlate with broader peace and stability in states” (p. 6)
- When women’s organizations are asked to participate within the peace process, it was found that positive correlations occurred only when these groups had a strong level of influence. This demonstrates that “women's
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Inclusion does not hinder reaching agreements as it is sometimes argued" rather, it helps improve them (p. 11).

- When women’s organizations have a high level of influence within the negotiation process, they are frequently able to actively mobilize the process towards effectively reaching a peace agreement.
- “Peace agreements are 64% less likely to fail when civil society representatives participate” which also applies to the participation of women, as with their involvement, a peace agreement “is 35% more likely to last for 15 years if women participate in its creation” (p. 12).

Utilizing this evidence, this report then discusses strategies for meaningful participation, which include:

- Building coalitions using normative strategic arguments: as mentioned above, women’s participation in peace processes only occurred with strong lobbying from local organizations, this means that building strong women’s coalitions within the local context is extremely important regarding influence and inclusion.
- Establishing a credible selection process: since civil society organizations are frequently questioned regarding their credibility, it is important for the selection process for those participating in negotiations to be transparent and “carried out by constituents in conjunction with quotas” (p. 28).
- Creating the conditions to make women’s voices heard: this can be done by ensuring a greater number of female participants, as well as redefining the make-up of the authorization or “ultimate decision making power” given to the mostly male actors.
- Keeping power politics – and the public – in mind: by ensuring adequate use of political influence and considering the cultural context regarding gender roles, this will benefit and improve participation of women in the decision making process.

Participation of women in the peace process is crucial, and this document provides the evidence that demonstrates this importance.

Read the full report here.

We would like to hear feedback from you. What are some strategies that you think would improve the participation of women in peace processes? Comment below!

The blog series, Keeping 1325 Alive, was written by WPSN-C intern Michelle Grover.