WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

For many people around the world, peace and security is an elusive dream. On a daily basis, they live in fear of violence, abuse, and impunity by state or non-state actors. More than 30 wars are raging today, while many other countries are perpetually on the verge of conflict, as authoritarian or weakened governments provide fertile ground for instability. In these fragile or conflict-ridden environments, civilians and communities suffer the most. Ninety percent of casualties in armed conflicts are civilians, an overwhelming majority of whom are women and children.[1] Often, women are targets of pervasive gender-based violence before conflict breaks out, during war, and in post-conflict settings.

Violence and instability are not inevitable. Funders, policymakers and activists increasingly are recognizing a powerful, yet under-utilized, force for peace: Women.

Women make the difference. Consider these examples:

- **Syria, 2013:** Women are playing a critical role in protesting against the Assad regime and demanding democratic reforms; they lead relief and development efforts and act as mediators within their communities as the civil war rages.

- **Mali, 2012–2013:** Women are mobilizing across ethnic and other divisions to call for human rights and an end to violence, and are using informal channels to urge armed groups to participate in peace dialogues.

- **Pakistan, 2008–2012:** Women in parliament played a key role in the passage of more than 20 laws in four years for the protection of women and children. Women are on the forefront of leading rehabilitation efforts in areas affected by humanitarian crises or extremist violence.

- **Rwanda, 2006:** Despite ongoing governance challenges, female parliamentarians used a participatory legislative and leadership approach to introduce and gain support for a domestic violence bill, providing a model for strengthening the democratic process.

- **Northeastern India, 2005:** Naga women mediated among factions and expanded dialogue to maintain a ceasefire and promote peace and reconciliation.

- **Liberia, 2003:** Thousands of women mobilized and demanded an end to the civil war, organizing a sit-in outside of the peace negotiations and blocking the exit until a peace agreement to end the war was reached.

- **Sierra Leone, 2002:** Women-led civil society groups organized protests that ended the war. After the war, women played a significant role in re-integrating former fighters back into communities.

- **South Africa, 1996–1998:** Women from all races played a critical role in a participatory process that articulated a new national security framework based on human security and development.

Why Women?

Women are on the front lines — not just as victims and combatants — but as powerful change agents. In country after country a similar pattern emerges: women and women's organizations are effective advocates for ending violence and promoting the rule of law, human rights, and justice. After conflict ceases, women are leading recovery and rehabilitation efforts for their communities.

A growing body of evidence shows that the participation of women in all aspects of peacebuilding has a tangible impact on human security.[2] Despite distinct political contexts, stakeholders and cultures, there are persuasive common findings:

- **Women frequently bridge political, economic, social and cultural divides.** Women show an aptitude for building broad coalitions for peace and creating openings for dialogues and compromises among parties to conflict.[3]

- **Women are often vocal advocates for preventing conflict before it breaks out.** In numerous countries, women are on the forefront of campaigns to curb escalating violence and defuse tensions between groups.[4]

"The only way to achieve our goals — to reduce the number of conflicts around the world, to eliminate rape as a weapon of war, to combat the culture of impunity for sexual violence, to build sustainable peace — is to draw on the full contributions of both women and men in every aspect of peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peace building ... women's participation in these activities is not a 'nice thing to do.' ... This is a necessary global security imperative."

—Secretary Hillary Clinton,
Remarks at the 10th Anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, UN Headquarters (Oct. 26, 2010)

- **Women and women's groups are typically perceived as more neutral and trustworthy** than other interest groups in conflict settings; their involvement can create a climate for increased buy-in and confidence in negotiations by all parties.[5]

- **Women often have in-depth knowledge of local context and community needs,** and this knowledge is critical to humanitarian assistance, peace operations and sustainable peace agreements.[6]

- **Women often leverage their status and influence within families and communities for peace,** abetting efforts to persuade armed actors to cease violence and negotiators to stay at the peace table.[7]

- **Women's participation in post-conflict political structures expands the public policy debate.** Women are more likely to press for consideration of political, economic, and social issues that are fundamental for democracy and long-term peace, such as human rights and education. Studies have documented a correlation between higher numbers of women in political institutions and lower levels of corruption.[8]

- **Women's education and empowerment in the labor force leads to lower poverty rates and higher economic growth.** Women typically invest in their families and communities, leading to better opportunities for their children and creating a foundation for prosperous and peaceful societies.[9]

- **Women's status in a country is a major predictor of peace.** Where women have few rights or opportunities to participate in decision-making, there are higher levels of violence and conflict. Changes in the treatment of women are among the first indications of instability in a society.[10]

Why Now?

After years of persistent advocacy by civil society organizations, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 in October 2000. This seminal document, largely drafted by civil society, mandates the consideration of gender issues and recognizes the need for the full participation of women in all peace and security processes. The UN Security Council subsequently adopted additional resolutions that focus on ending conflict-related sexual violence, instituting an accountability system, and addressing obstacles to implementation of UNSCR 1325. The UN and a host of other international and regional organizations have adopted policies to further progress in these areas.

Governments around the world are developing National Action Plans to guide national-level implementation of Resolution 1325. As of May 2013, at least 39 countries have national plans in place. The U.S. Government released its first National Action Plan in December 2011, and key U.S. agencies responsible for foreign policy and national security formulated specific implementation plans in 2012.

The past decade has seen enormous growth in the number of civil society organizations and networks — from the local to the international levels — that are building the capacity of women to effectively work for peace. These civil society organizations are utilizing the new policy mandates to press for women's inclusion in formal decision-making and to address women's needs.

Where are the Women?

UN figures indicate that women constitute fewer than eight percent of peace negotiators and fewer than three percent of signatories of peace agreements.[11] No woman has ever served as chief mediator in UN-sponsored peace talks.[12] Few women have been selected for senior positions in UN peace operations.

Women remain significantly underrepresented in national leadership positions. They are largely missing from the senior-positions of the governing and societal groups that influence decisions about armed conflict and long-term recovery from conflict. Even the worst perpetrators of violence and abuse during conflict typically are given a seat at the table while those most committed to peace — often women and women's groups — are left out.

What are the results of the exclusion of women? Approximately 60 percent of conflicts re-erupt in violence within five years after ending.[13] Excluding women, who are often civil society leaders pushing for sustainable peace agreements, is no way to achieve long-term peace.

Funders Must Prioritize Women and Gender

The vision of Resolution 1325 remains only partially realized. Today, only about 16 percent of peace agreements reference women or gender at all.[14] Women remain on the sidelines of formal peace processes and decision-making roles. Governments are failing to adapt policy structures and processes to mainstream women, peace, and security. There are repeated lost opportunities to support peacebuilding efforts by women.

There is also resistance to change. Many policymakers and practitioners continue to view this agenda as a "women's issue" that can be addressed after other objectives are accomplished. Culture and tradition are still offered up as unacceptable excuses for the perpetuation of violence against, and exclusion of, women. In the meantime, conflict rages on, peace agreements fail, and countries fall back into cycles of violence.

Much more needs to be done. Women, peace, and security work is substantially under-funded and under-prioritized by policymakers and advocates for peace and human rights. A 2012 Peace and Security Funders Group report documented the relative paucity of foundation funding and the lack of any dedicated grantmaking program, despite evidence of growing interest by funders. Many valuable and effective organizations and initiatives remain starved for funds.

The Role for Philanthropy

The philanthropic community has an important role to play in gender mainstreaming, taking existing programs to scale, and maintaining momentum on these issues. Specifically, funding support is needed in such areas as:

- Policy Advocacy
- Women's Organizations and Coalitions
- Research/Documentation
- Training/Capacity Building

The philanthropic community can send a powerful message to organizations in the peace and security field by making gender and women's participation strategic priorities. Funders have the leverage to improve how organizations pursue peace and security so that it is truly inclusive and effective.

Join us in our efforts to support this critical agenda. Together, we can make the world a more peaceful and secure place for everyone.

THE DIFFERENCE A GRANT CAN MAKE

In 1999, the Ford Foundation gave a moderate-sized grant to the UK-based organization, International Alert, to launch a campaign with other NGOs called Women Building Peace: From the Village Council to the Negotiating Table. The Campaign's ambitious goal was to build on earlier work of many others and push the United Nations and other international organizations to formally recognize women's vital roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. One year later, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325. The campaign and its many allies could not have done it without this grant.

Women peacebuilders and Secretary-General of the UN, Ban Ki-Moon discuss implementation of Resolution 1325. Photo provided by The Institute for Inclusive Security, Hunt Alternatives Fund.

Endnotes

1 United Nations, Global Issues, Women, Peace and Security. http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/women/peace.shtml

2 Human security re-conceptualizes traditional concepts of security to focus on security of the individual, not the state. See Richard Jolly and Deepayan Basu Ray. "The Human Security Framework and National Human Development Reports." UNDP, National Human Development Report Unit. NHDR Occasional Paper 5. May 2006.

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5 Laura McGrew, Kate Frieson, Sambath Chan. "Good Governance from the Ground Up: Women's Roles in Post-Conflict Cambodia. Women Waging Peace Policy Commission. Mar. 2004.

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8 World Bank Policy Research Report. "Engendering Development through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voice." 2001.

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10 Valerie Hudson, "What Sex Means for World Peace," *Foreign Policy*. 24 Apr, 2012.

11 UN Women, Gender Issues, Women, War & Peace. http://www.womenwarpeace.org/

12 Ibid.

13 Human Security Project, Human Security Report 2012. Canada: Human Security Press, 2012. http://hsrgroup.org/docs/Publications/HSR2012/2012HumanSecurityReport-FullText-LowRes.pdf

14 UN Women, supra.

Cover Image: Acheh Women's League demonstration in 2006 in support of the peace process. The banner reads, in part: "Women want peace after all the suffering. We have had enough."

Photo provided by Shadia Marhaban.

For more information on how you can promote Women, Peace and Security, please contact PSFG Director Alex Toma at atoma@peaceandsecurity.org or 202 251–6148.

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