



## Establishing Support Networks for Women and Children in Post-Conflict Environments

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### Introduction

The hardship of armed conflict does not end when the fighting stops. Immediate problems include restoring lives and communities, repairing physical destructive and helping people to resume lives torn apart by the disruptive forces of war. Women and children suffer as victims of violence, but also from the impoverishment that follows the death of incapacitation of male providers; their sons, husbands, fathers and other male relatives. Communities lack the resources to serve their basic needs for security, food, places to live, medical services or education, much less the special needs to survivors of conflicts for psychological treatment and healing after the traumas of violence.

When conflict comes to an end, the area concerned has to create a safe and constructive pathway towards recovery of the social and economic standards. Post conflict areas around the world are trying exhaustively to achieve these standards, but are having increasing difficulties creating safe and supportive environments, specifically concerning women and children. While focus lies on the economic aspect of reconstruction, the newly installed governing bodies often forget there are more necessities when they attempt to establish a lasting peace and create a thriving society. The issues within these reconstructed states can often be traced back to gender-inequality, corruption among government officials, inadequate health care and insufficient post-traumatic care. When in conflict, the population frequently experiences traumatic events such as child soldiers, rape of women and a social stigma towards seeking help.

UN Global Forum on Women (UNGFW) is a unique UN institution for prioritizing and channeling essential assistance. This topic enables the UNGFW to help women in war-torn societies create a lasting peace, while enhancing human rights protection among all whom make up a particular society. Lack of resources composes complications when attempts to efficiently realize solutions are made. The UNGRW has to create a fitting solution to find and allocate resources, while avoiding corruption, to achieve a safer environment to disadvantaged groups within societies that live in post-conflict areas. Furthermore, the council has to craft a solution to the lack of sufficient healthcare and post-traumatic stress among children.

### Background

War and conflict affect both men and women's human rights. However, there are particular gendered dimensions to violence that have a disproportionate and differing impact on women and children. Though women have been, and are, active agents in peace and reconciliation efforts at all levels, women and gender analysis are regularly excluded from peace-making processes and decisions. Unfortunately, this absence of consideration has allowed the continuation of atrocities committed towards women and children even after conflicts have exhausted. This lack of representation becomes more palpable as states work to recover from conflict and women and children continue face excessive trauma as well as further endangerment.

A basic problem is financing support networks. Treatment for survivors of armed conflict is costly, and UN budgets and foreign aid spending



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is not increasing. The usual method for finding money for problems like this is to take it from other humanitarian, development and aid program. For many in the UN system, conflict survivors are in effect competitors for assistance. In lieu of clear priorities, they do not get much. A vital decision for the UN Global Forum on Women is whether new funding sources can be found, or new priorities established.

In addition to women severely lacking representation in peace making processes and political systems, women and children are also challenged with proper living conditions when displaced. As seen in the current refugee diaspora many refugees, notably women and children, are subjected to poor living conditions due to the difficulty of accommodating to such large numbers. While living as refugees many opportunities for sustainable work and suitable education are lost. Despite efforts made by the individual host countries, issues such as language barriers and the varying standards of education make it difficult to both track and ensure quality education opportunities.

### Role of the United Nations

*The Fourth World Conference on Women* held in Beijing in 1995 adopted the Platform for Action proposal which identified the impacts of armed conflict on women as one of 12 critical areas of concern.<sup>1</sup> While acknowledging the effects of conflict on women and girls, the Platform for Action also urges governments and the international community to take action by

stressing the role of women in conflict resolution and decision-making.

During its forty-second session in 1998, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women discussed the issue of women and armed conflict and proposed further action to be taken by member states and the international community to accelerate the implementation of the Platform's strategic objectives in this area, including the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all relevant policies and programs. Among the agreed conclusions of the session were measures to ensure gender sensitive justice, address concerns for women refugees and displaced persons, and improve the representation of women in peacekeeping, peace-building, pre- and post-conflict decision-making and the proactive effects regarding conflicts.<sup>2</sup>

*Security Council resolution 1325*: Also of foundational importance is Security Council resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325), a landmark legal framework on women, peace, and security, passed on 31 October 2000. This resolution highlights the importance of women and their role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, and in post-conflict reconstruction.<sup>3</sup>

This resolution in its entirety expresses the importance of equal gendered participation and complete involvement in all efforts towards maintaining and promoting peace and security

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<sup>1</sup> "Beijing Declaration." United Nations.  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/declar.htm>.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) [on women and peace and security]*, 31 October 2000, S/RES/1325,  
<http://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f4672e.html>



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for women and children. Furthermore, the relief and recovery portion of this resolution is particularly significant regarding the topic of this committee. As the world is continuously challenged with the increasing number of refugees the standard of living and quality of refugee camps decrease. The relief and recovery portion highlights the experience of women and young girls in refugee camps as a priority in post conflict situations.

Essentially, Resolution 1325 calls upon all actors and states to increase efforts in promoting participation of women and to incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties in conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The resolution provides a number of important operational mandates, with implications for Member States and the entities of the United Nations system. One of the strongest points of this resolution is the tremendous detail that depicts the role of women in international governance as grossly undermined as well as overlooked.

Resolution 1325 has changed the way the international community thinks about peace and security. The “Women and War” Conference, held November 3-5, 2010 by USIP and its partners, specifically highlighted the importance of Resolution 1325 through its impact on international law, women’s empowerment, the military, and global security.

*Security Council resolutions 1820 and 1888:* To expand upon resolution 1325, the UN Security Council established and implemented resolutions 1820 (S/RES/1820) in 2008 and

resolution 1888 (S/RES/1888) in 2009. These resolutions were produced to further express sexual atrocities committee during and after conflict as well as requesting actors to better respond to said atrocities.

More specifically, Resolution 1820 explicitly links sexual violence as a tactic of war with women peace and security issues. Additionally, this resolution seeks immediate response to sexual abuses committed in areas of conflict and post conflict by establishing training programs that ensure prevention and disciplinary measures.<sup>4</sup> Resolution 1888 specifically requests that the Secretary-General appoint a special representative on sexual violence during armed conflict. Both resolutions work to strengthen the foundation of Resolution 1325 by addressing sexual crimes and abuses that occur in areas of conflict and continue after the conflict is resolved.

The most influential in regards to post-conflict recovery and networking for women and children is Security Council resolution 1889 of 2009. A tremendous success in this specific resolution, as opposed to the previous resolutions, lies in the clauses that explicitly outline issues faced by women and children in post conflict settings. While reaffirming the initial priorities set by S/RES/1325 this resolution also addresses lack of education, loss of work opportunity, and data collection as major concerns. These areas of concern are stated in a preamble clause that reads

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<sup>4</sup> UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 1888 (2009) [on acts of sexual violence against civilians in armed conflicts]*, 30 September 2009, S/RES/1888 (2009), <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4ac9aa152.html>



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Recognizing the particular needs of women and girls in post-conflict situations, including, inter alia, physical security, health services including reproductive and mental health, ways to ensure their livelihoods, land and property rights, employment, as well as their participation in decision-making and post-conflict planning, particularly at early stages of post-conflict peace building.<sup>5</sup>

These are just a few examples of efforts made by the United Nations to respond to women and children in conflict. The body would like to address the issue of the content within the resolutions themselves, with the exception of S/RES/1889, as they do not go into depth regarding post conflict regions. Granted S/RES/1325 discusses the importance of quality refugee camps to ensure opportunities for women and girls in post conflict settings this, however, excludes other issues faced by the victims. Moreover, these resolutions predominately attempt to protect the human rights of women and girls rather than children in general. Please keep this in mind when constructing your own resolutions.

### Country and Bloc Positions

*Africa:* Since 2006, the African Union (AU) initiated the Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy, which focuses efforts towards peace negotiations, reconstruction after conflict, and maintaining peace after conflict. Acknowledging the delicacy of post conflict

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<sup>5</sup> UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 1889 (2009) [on women and peace and security]*, 5 October 2009, S/RES/1889 (2009), <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4acdd8512.html>

regions, the AU trends lightly when delving into the reconstruction of these areas to avoid further outbreaks of violence. These efforts have established focal points for the AU, especially regarding gender equality as well as the protection of women and children. These efforts have been made with the help of the Regional Economic Communities and have proven to have tremendously influenced the direction of the AU.<sup>6</sup> Despite this, violence and conflict continue to plague African states, particularly Central Africa, making it extremely difficult to eliminate dangers and establish proper networks and security for women and children post conflict.

*Asia-Pacific:* The Asian-Pacific region's focal point in providing women and children with support networks revolves around legal transitioning in post conflict environments. In efforts to ensure better conditions for women and children post conflict the Asian-Pacific region works closely with UN Women to transform justice systems previously notorious for the exclusion of gender equality.<sup>7</sup> This transition in the justice system is essential to properly implement goals made to improve conditions for the victims. This process recognizes the importance of persecution, reform, and reparations when conflict related violations are reported.

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<sup>6</sup> Kodjo, Tchioffo. "African Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (AU PCRDR) - African Union - Peace and Security Department." African Union, Peace and Security Department. <http://www.peaceau.org/en/page/70-post-conflict-reconstruction>

<sup>7</sup> "Rule of Law and Justice." UN Women | Asia and the Pacific. <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/peace-and-security/rule-of-law-and-justice>.



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*Europe:* The biggest areas of concern for European states are Eastern European states as many of these states were engaged in civil wars. During these conflicts, such as the conflict in Bosnia, women and children were heavily subjected to human trafficking, abuse, and displacement. Concerning Bosnia, women's participation in decision making bodies in Bosnia and Herzegovina went from having a female Prime Minister of Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia in 1983 to not having one single female minister in 2008. The post peace agreement elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina had a near catastrophic result for women's representation in the parliament and went from zero women representatives in the 1996 and 1998 elections. These low numbers contribute to the neglect women received after the Bosnian civil war leaving women and children to struggle with the traumas of war alone.

*Middle East:* Conflict in the Middle East has caused the largest refugee diaspora of our time, as conflict and insurgents continue to rising dangers women and children face as well. The refugee diaspora, over ten million people within Syria and beyond its borders, despite receiving support from the international community, continues to experience great difficulty while finding ways to accommodate to the sheer number of refugees. Refugee camps within their respective countries work with UNICEF to improve the standard of living within the camps. However, women and children within these camps still lack the necessary networks to receive education and work opportunities. Additionally, many of the conflicts in the Middle East involve the wide spread of extremist who contribute to the lack of security even in post conflict situations. "In areas controlled by the extremists women are deprived

of education, prevented from going out, stoned, flogged and killed on the slightest pretext, sold as slaves," explains Majdoline Hassan of the Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy. "Among the displaced and refugees, women have become the breadwinners to support their families because the men are in prison, or fighting, or missing."<sup>8</sup> Although many parts of the Middle East are very much so still involved in conflict there are few initiatives for women and children after the conflicts dissipate.

*South America:* Many South American countries have made remarkable efforts to increase the participation of women in peace building and recovery. Brazil, for example, has experienced an exponential increase in women involvement in politics in the past decade resulting in Brazil propelling itself as a progressive state for women. Although many countries, such as Columbia, require increased efforts to improve the conditions of women and children in post conflict environments.

### **Priorities for the UN Global Forum on Women (UNGFW)**

Considering that this issue is multi-faceted, the body will be challenged in several different spectrums. Delegates are expected to work together to produce a comprehensive resolution that tackles all factors that pose as a threat for

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<sup>8</sup> Black, Ian. "UN campaign highlights unsung work of women in Middle East peace-building." Women's rights and gender equality. 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/jun/09/united-nations-un-campaign-work-women-middle-east-peace-building-conflict-resolution>.



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women and children in post-conflict situations. Remember that the cost of war and conflict continues after the fact and can cause even more devastating results. The body encourages delegates to look further into the provided resolutions to see what can be done to specifically address post conflict areas. Essential questions for the UNGFW to keep in mind:

- Should the UNGFW stress principles of universal human rights for women and children, or focus on specific armed conflicts, such as Colombia, Kashmir, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen, or others?
- How can the international community ensure women's and children's safety in post-conflict areas?
- How to support the women and children refugees?
- What are some ways the UNGFW can empower women in these areas to take on influential roles in society?
- What is hindering women from taking on these roles?
- How can the international community tackle the challenge of providing sufficient healthcare to women and children?
- How can the international community both address and respond to post traumatic stress and lack of healthcare?
- How can the UNGFW counter the significant loss of educational opportunities for women and children post conflict?
- What are some approaches that can be taken to include women into the work force after conflict?
- How can the UNGFW influence states to incorporate transitional policies to improve enforcement of laws?
- How to fund post-conflict support networks? Will funds come from new country donations, or by reducing existing programs?



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