



Office of the NATO Secretary General's  
Special Representative for Women,  
Peace and Security



# Women, Peace and Transforming Security

Visions of the Future of Women, Peace and Security for NATO



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# Foreword

## Women, Peace and Security at NATO: A Bright Future Ahead

Twenty years ago this month the United Nations Security Council adopted what was and still is a landmark Resolution. Rising from the ashes of so many wars, UNSCR 1325 highlighted the major impact that conflict has on women and girls. UNSCR 1325 was unique at the time: it constituted a fundamental shift in global thinking about conflict and its aftermath, bringing gender considerations to the fore and paving the way for what has become known as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

The recognition by the Security Council of the importance of integrating gender perspectives into a security framework did not come easy. It was a real struggle to move women's rights from what was seen as its natural fit in development into the world of security and defence. Eventually, and thanks to constant lobbying from civil society, interested nations, and individuals in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the road to the adoption of 1325 was cleared. While the Resolution does not seem a change-maker today, in 2000 it was revolutionary. UNSCR 1325 dismantled the artificial barrier between issues of gender inequality and international peace and security, which was a vital first step to establishing new norms.

NATO has directly responded to the demands of UNSCR 1325 by drawing on the WPS global framework to inform its approach to integrating gender across the Alliance's core tasks of collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security. Over the years, it has introduced a broad architecture of policy and guidance to further advance the agenda. NATO Allies and partners are making WPS an integral part of their everyday business in both civilian and military structures. Its contributions are essential to ensuring the Alliance remains ready today to respond to the security challenges of tomorrow.

As NATO welcomes this 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it asks: 'Is the WPS agenda still fit for purpose'? In response, we have begun a wholesale review of our work on WPS, from the efficacy of Gender Advisors, to an assessment on the full implementation of WPS across Headquarters, NATO missions and operations, to collating and compiling best practices. We are also ushering in mechanisms for heightened accountability, knowing that commitment must be matched with action demonstrated through achievable, time-bound goals, backed by monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

We have shored up our connection with women's civil society organisations and promote their voices in our work. The Civil Society Advisory Panel has become the foremost mechanism for civil society engagement reinforced through the 'Women's Defence Dialogues', a series of informal consultations that enable diverse communities of women from Allied and partner nations to discuss and define what security and defence means to them.

Our experience has only underscored the importance of integrating gender perspectives into all our activities. Only when gender considerations are seamlessly woven through all NATO core tasks and functions will we provide a foundation on which the principles of WPS can flourish.

Two decades, ten resolutions, and thousands of women's voices will agree that UNSCR 1325 is still very much relevant today. But as we move forward, can WPS adapt to future demands and future changes in the security environment? Can WPS help identify ways to respond to the gendered security implications of climate change, of new technologies, even of pandemics? Can WPS bridge the divide between protection and participation, between the theoretical and practical? The essential and cosmetic? Civilian and military?

This series of essays explores a broad range of security challenges from cyber and technology threats, to the gendered security implications of climate change and pandemics. A diverse group of experts and practitioners has provided think pieces on various aspects of emerging areas in which a gender perspective will be important.

Greater empowerment and more effective protection of women is not only of benefit to women, but to everyone. In 2000 it took a global movement to get resolution 1325 in place; in 2020 it will take a global movement to continue to do the work, building on that critical foundation. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all who contributed to this series and to all who work on WPS around the world. As we forge a path towards the next twenty years, NATO will do its part and continue to build and strengthen its role in advancing Women, Peace and Security and, in doing so, contribute to creating a lasting foundation for security for all.

**Clare Hutchinson**

NATO Secretary General's Special Representative  
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# NATO 2030 and WPS: What are the Connections?

By Megan Bastick

On 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg launched “NATO 2030”: a vision for NATO’s strategic orientation over the next decade. It was a powerfully presented analysis of the challenges facing NATO Allies and proposed major changes in how NATO understands itself. Three themes stand out. First, that NATO is not only a military but a *political* alliance. Secretary General Stoltenberg suggests NATO members should use NATO more politically. Issues such as climate change, regulation of cyberspace, new technologies - all issues that affect Allies’ security should be brought to NATO’s table. Second, that NATO should take a more *global* approach, looking beyond the North Atlantic context. The rise of China, specifically, is framed as a significant challenge for NATO, demanding closer collaboration with partners in Asia and the Pacific. Third, that NATO is not only an alliance for collective security but a mechanism to *compete* in a more competitive world. This frames economic and technological competition as aspects of NATO’s understanding of security.

Where is the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in NATO 2030? The importance of women’s full and equal participation is strongly communicated in the promotional video, which shows women in uniform, female decision-makers, even feminist darling Jacinda Ardern. But, in the substance of NATO’s new strategic direction, the WPS agenda is difficult to find. There is no reference made to it and, more importantly, key values of the WPS agenda are missing. NATO declares human rights as one of its common values, but human rights are not yet mentioned in NATO 2030. Where we might hope for a vision of global peace, we are given a vision of NATO Allies and Partners being winners in a now global competition to be the strongest and the richest.

NATO’s most recent WPS Policy is built upon three principles: integration, inclusiveness and integrity. These can provide a set of approaches to develop NATO 2030 in a manner more conducive to achieving the commitments of the WPS agenda, and to peace, stability, and NATO’s democratic legitimacy.

## **Integration**

In NATO’s WPS policy, “integration” means integrating gender perspectives in everything that NATO does. NATO has made a lot of progress in gender mainstreaming, including the development of Gender Advisers, gender training, and institutional and operational structures. Many people in and around NATO have worked with skill, commitment and selflessness to achieve these things, and their successes should

be celebrated. But, NATO has not yet at the political level meaningfully embraced the WPS agenda, which is something above and beyond gender mainstreaming.

The WPS agenda offers NATO a new way to understand the world. It is a vision that NATO personnel often share when they reflect upon their experiences working with local partners in Afghanistan, Kosovo and other recent missions. The WPS agenda offers a vision grounded in peace: collaboration, interdependence and community, rather than competition. It offers a vision grounded in human rights: equality between women and men, protection of all people from violence, overcoming discrimination of all types.

As others before me have observed, NATO's approach to WPS has tended to understand gender perspective as a means to make NATO more effective at what NATO already does. But, the WPS agenda is not meant to make war more effective: it is supposed to help end war. Integrating WPS in NATO 2030 would mean centring human security and human rights. It would make connections with the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development and climate action. It would prioritise strengthening multilateral systems for dialogue and cooperation, rather than competition and division.

### **Inclusiveness**

In NATO's WPS policy, "inclusiveness" means both gender balance within NATO and national forces and institutions that are more responsive to the needs of women and men. NATO is leading on this in important ways: offering encouragement to members and partners to ensure that their armed forces and defence establishments become more inclusive of women, creating space to talk about LGBT inclusion, magnifying women in senior positions, delivering training on gender-based violence. But there is scope to do so much more.

The WPS agenda envisions "inclusion" as understandings of and approaches to security that are based upon broad and diverse participation, wherein all sorts of people's voices and interests are represented. It relies upon meaningful and consequential consultation with civil society, willingness to invest in building trust and to listen to alternative perspectives.

In developing NATO 2030, NATO has already committed to consulting civil society, the private sector, and young leaders. NATO 2030 is an opportunity to do something radically different: to go beyond NATO's customary circles of security think-tanks and individuals picked by ministries of foreign affairs. It could expand and replicate the model developed by the WPS Office of a Civil Society Advisory Panel and proposed Women's Defense Dialogues, to build sustained, multi-level structures for consultation. It could embark upon a global listening project. Meaningful, inclusive consultation would offer NATO opportunities to find new, less militarized ways to work toward shared values of freedom and democracy.

## **Integrity**

“Integrity” within NATO’s WPS policy refers to accountability and meeting international standards. NATO members should be applauded for adopting a policy on sexual exploitation and abuse: a critical step for NATO’s integrity and credibility as regards WPS. For NATO members and partners who have adopted a WPS National Action Plan or committed to Feminist Foreign Policy, integrity demands much more than just this.

Integrity means having principles and living up to them. For a government, it means holding oneself to the same principles around the table of the North Atlantic Council or the Military Committee as when launching one’s WPS National Action Plan or speaking at UN forums on sustainable development or human rights. This is challenging, of course. For a start, defence Chiefs of Staff are not as familiar with human rights and development issues as they are with military hardware. It requires commitment to new types of national and NATO-wide conversations about the role NATO plays for peace.

In developing NATO 2030, NATO nations are at a critical juncture. Do they take their commitments to combat climate change and poverty, to overcome racism, to achieve gender equality into NATO — or do they check them at the gate?



# Refocusing on Relief and Recovery: How NATO Can Support the Fourth Pillar of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

By Lauren Blanch, Beth Eggleston, Pip Henty

The fourth pillar of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda – relief and recovery – has been labelled a ‘siloed latecomer’.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, this fourth pillar was only added to the agenda in 2007, seven years after adoption of the ground-breaking United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325.<sup>2</sup> Whilst there has been much focus on the preceding three pillars of prevention, protection and participation, a lack of investment in relief and recovery in the form of effective humanitarian action risks undermining all pillars, and the WPS agenda as a whole. This paper looks at how military actors, including NATO, can also support relief and recovery efforts resulting in better outcomes for women and girls.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UNSCR 1325 approaches and we take stock of progress and priorities, it is timely to look at what can further support the implementation of the WPS agenda. Humanitarian action – defined as the delivery of assistance, protection and advocacy – can support not only efforts under the relief and recovery pillar, but work under the pillars of prevention, protection and participation. Whilst military actors in many countries have been champions of the WPS agenda, there has often been a focus on outputs such as the number of women in their ranks, number of gender advisors trained etc. rather than the impact of operations on the ground. A key area of impact is how military forces can be an enabler for the humanitarian community to fulfil its mandate in times of emergency.

There is of course an inherent tension between principled humanitarian action, which is based on humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, and the political nature of peace and security. Understanding that these lines of effort can be complementary is important, and realising that humanitarian action must not be co-opted by political objectives is critical. Historically, WPS has been framed within a security lens, and at times, is largely implemented by security actors. This paper

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1 O'Reilly, M 2019, "Relief and Recovery: A siloed latecomer", in E Davies & J True (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace and Security*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

2 Ibid.

will briefly explore some key areas where NATO can invest to further build on their contribution to the relief and recovery pillar.

## **Coordination**

Effective coordination during emergencies is what allows humanitarian operations to have maximum impact whilst protecting humanitarian principles. Promoting the knowledge, awareness and appetite to perform the function of humanitarian civil-military coordination (CMCoord) within NATO is key. This function is often siloed to personnel working in civil-military cooperation (CIMIC), however taking a more mainstreamed approach could enhance coordination and deconfliction across an operation.

There is solid guidance around how militaries can best interact with humanitarian actors including the most recent 'Recommended Practices for Effective Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination of Foreign Military Assets (FMA) in Natural and Man-Made Disasters'<sup>3</sup> and from the Indo-Pacific region 'Asia-Pacific Regional Guidelines for the Use of Foreign Military Assets in Natural Disaster Response.'<sup>4</sup> In addition to current NATO doctrine on the military contribution to humanitarian response<sup>5</sup>, the constantly evolving Multinational Force Standard Operating Procedures<sup>6</sup> provides extensive guidance around the policies, mechanisms and considerations that need to be taken into account when operating in the same space as humanitarian organisations. These approaches could be further embedded in NATO training and exercises, where relationships with humanitarian actors can be built in advance of engagement in the field.

## **Planning and Preparation**

It is well known that NATO has strengths in planning and exercising for operations, however there could be further efforts to ensure humanitarian actors are able to meaningfully participate in military exercises that have a humanitarian assistance/disaster response focus. This could further elevate the role the humanitarian principles play in practice. This of course has resource implications for humanitarian agencies who cannot afford to provide personnel for numerous or lengthy exercises. Solutions to address this need to be explored to enable the appropriate expertise to be involved and for strategic relationships to be formed. Enabling more interaction in advance of operations will not only support relief and recovery objectives under the WPS agenda, but also efforts under the Protection of Civilians agenda<sup>7</sup>, the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>8</sup>, and the Agenda for Humanity.<sup>9</sup>

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3 <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/180918%20Recommended%20Practices%20in%20Humanitarian%20Civil-Military%20Coordination%20v1.0.pdf>

4 [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Guidelines\\_FMA\\_Final.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Guidelines_FMA_Final.pdf)

5 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/625788/doctrine\\_nato\\_humanitarian\\_assistance\\_ajp\\_3\\_4\\_3.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/625788/doctrine_nato_humanitarian_assistance_ajp_3_4_3.pdf)

6 <https://community.apan.org/wg/mnfsop/m/documents/307456>

7 <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/poc20-twenty-years-protection-civilians-challenges-progress-and-priorities-future>

8 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

9 <https://agendaforhumanity.org>

## **Directions in Relief and Recovery**

The relief and recovery pillar has perhaps the greatest scope for learning and interaction between NATO and the international humanitarian system. The concept of the humanitarian–development–peace nexus enables further exploration of the tensions between humanitarian principles and political imperatives and the need to address vulnerability before, during, and after crises. In order for the relief and recovery pillar to have maximum impact, work in this area must focus on the most vulnerable, address issues of accountability, and be locally led. Current humanitarian reform processes, in particular the localisation agenda and supporting local leadership during crises, will change the way that the international humanitarian actors, and indeed international military forces like NATO, will engage in disaster relief in the future. There must be more emphasis on local humanitarian organisations and supporting the lead role that government of the affected states play.

## **Where to From Here?**

Now is the time to resource and respect principled humanitarian action and the critical role that it can play in the lives of women and girls during times of crisis. Tools, standards and policies that have been developed in the humanitarian sector could be leveraged and utilised by those working to implement the WPS agenda. Ensuring that the interaction between humanitarian and military actors can be better coordinated and investments made in institutional relationships will contribute to strengthening the relief and recovery pillar of the WPS agenda.

Although humanitarian action and addressing suffering wherever it is found are central to supporting women and girls in times of violence, the political process of peace negotiations and participation of women within these processes remains essential. As the former UNHCR chief Sadako Ogata stated, 'there are no humanitarian solutions to humanitarian problems.'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Tan, V 2005, 'Ogata calls for stronger political will to solve refugee crises', UNHCR, May 27 2005, viewed 24 June 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2005/5/4297406a2/ogata-calls-stronger-political-solve-refugee-crisis.html?query=central%2520america>.



# Gender Equality becomes Digital: A Gender-Technology Chapter for the Future WPS

By Diana De Vivo

Emerging and disruptive technologies are progressively transforming the way we live our lives and have a profound impact on societies around the globe. While, on one hand, we all welcome the undoubtable benefits that derive from the development and use of those technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning and big data among others, we are compelled, on the other hand, to think about their implications on security, peace and stability. Technological advances in the field of robotics, human enhancement, autonomous weapons systems, nanomaterials, 3D printing, driven by digital transformation, will gradually redefine the concepts of security, peace and stability as conceived traditionally and redesign the boundaries of warfighting, hence determining a transition to new, non-kinetic, battlefields.

In this context, the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda represents a crucial opportunity to take stock of what the agenda has achieved in 20 years of execution and apply critical lenses to look at new challenges WPS will need to confront in the future - a future where technology has a predominant role and impact on the lives of men and women around the world. To this end, disentangling the gender-technology nexus becomes paramount, as a lack of attention to gender-dynamics in the technology sector hampers the potential for inclusive and sustainable progress.

Today, women and girls are 25% less likely than men to know how to leverage digital technology for basic purposes, four times less likely to know how to programme computers and 13 times less likely to file for technology patents<sup>1</sup>. Only 12% of AI researchers are women and women represent only 6% of software developers<sup>2</sup>. Further, 200 million fewer women than men own a mobile phone, as reported by the OECD in a 2018 study<sup>3</sup>. Globally, there are still vast disparities in internet access and usage, with 22.6% of Africa's female population accessing the World Wide Web compared to 33.8% of men in 2019<sup>4</sup>. As reported by the United Nations, the gender digital divide widens as technologies become more sophisticated and expensive,

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1 UNESCO, I'd Blush if I could – Closing Gender Divides in Digital Skills through Education, 2019.

2 Ibid.

3 OECD, Empowering Women in the Digital Age – Where do we stand, 2018. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/social/empowering-women-in-the-digital-age-brochure.pdf>

4 Statista, Global Internet Usage Rate 2019, by Gender and Region. Available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/491387/gender-distribution-of-internet-users-region/>

enabling increased transformational use and impact<sup>5</sup>. In recent years, gender biases have been already exposed in AI technologies, systems and processes, as AI algorithms are largely designed by men and thus ignore the different nuances of gender and intersectionality. The most popular digital voice assistants, such as Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri technology display how gender imbalances in the digital sector can be 'hard-coded' into technology products.<sup>6</sup> This outlines the need to inject gender theory in machine learning<sup>7</sup> and other emerging technologies as the over-representation of men, coupled with low gender sensitivity in the design of those technologies, could silently erase decades of advances in gender equality.

While those represent only some of the numbers reflecting the emergence of a global digital gender divide, *offline factors* such as poverty, gender discrimination, lack of education and gender stereotypes are preventing women and girls from reaping the benefits of digital technological advances, leaving them behind in a fast-expanding sector. In a time when technology becomes the backbone of almost every segment of society, these gaps, if not addressed in a timely way at local, national, and global levels, will continue perpetrating harmful inequalities, and could constitute future drivers of violence and conflicts. If we only consider that gender equality becomes digital, autonomous weapons systems could represent the digital weapons of the future used to perpetrate a new type of gender-based violence, it is certainly evident that technology embodies looming challenges the WPS agenda will be confronted with.

It is crucial, therefore, to open a gender-technology chapter under the WPS agenda that begins assessing the broad spectrum of effects of emerging and disruptive technologies on women's rights and gender equality as a whole. In particular, this chapter should address the urgent dispute of enforcing digital rights as human rights (and women's rights) and confront serious human rights violations in the digital age, such as intimidation, cyber-bullying, digital sexual exploitation and abuse, enhanced discrimination, among others, which have a disproportionate impact on women and girls.

Consequently, the chapter should call for an increased representation of women in the technology sector and enhanced participation in the design and development of emerging technologies, such as robotics, machine learning and AI. Research, government policy, and design principles should include gender awareness and analysis, by being conscious of issues that may have invisible gender-based dimensions - such as owning a phone - and developing gender sensitive computer codes and speech taxonomies.

The impact of the digital gender divide in the developing world, on education, equal opportunities and employment, should be equally examined to multiply investments and development goals in digital education that help reverse the trend of deepening digital inequalities. Encouraging the employment of gender-disaggregated data to monitor and address gender inequality in the technology sector will contribute to this effort. Further, greater inclusion of women in the digital economy and increased

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5 UN University, *Taking Stock: Data and Evidence on Gender Equality in Digital Access, Skills and Leadership*, 2019.

6 UNESCO, *Explore the Gendering of AI Voice Assistants*, 2019.

7 Leavy, S. (2018), *Gender Bias in Artificial Intelligence: The Need for Diversity and Gender Theory in Machine Learning*, 1st International Workshop on Gender Equality in Software Engineering.

diversity in innovation bring both economic and social value. As reported by the OECD, inventions arising out of mixed teams are more economically valuable and have higher impact than those in which only men are involved<sup>8</sup>.

Today, the digital transformation offers new avenues for the economic empowerment of women and can contribute to greater gender equality, if channelled with an inclusive and sustainable approach. Peaceful and inclusive societies cannot be erected without addressing the digital gender divide with a whole of society approach, from families encouraging women and girls' careers in STEM<sup>9</sup> to governments addressing digital rights and women's digital empowerment, to ensure women and girls are not left behind by the accelerating pace of the digital revolution.

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8 OECD, *Bridging the Digital Gender Divide – Include, Upskill, Innovate*, 2018.

9 Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.



# Harnessing the Power of Women in NATO: An Intersectional Feminist Perspective of UNSCR 1325

By Magdalena Howland

As we reach the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, we should not only reflect on its positive impacts, but also how its implementation can be improved. With the increased focus on the importance of understanding intersectional identities in feminist theories, this essay calls for their recognition within the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in NATO nations and bodies. Intersectional feminist theory is a critical approach, highlighting how different social identities, such as ethnicity, race and social class, can impact a person's experience of their gender<sup>1</sup>. In the context of UNSCR 1325, intersectional feminism recognises the varied experiences of women in conflict depending on social factors alongside their identity of being a woman. Through the analysis of the British military and the NATO Mission Iraq (NMI), I will be arguing that only through adopting an intersectional approach to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 women can be fully involved in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and subsequent peacebuilding.

UNSCR 1325 states that there should be “*an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls*”. The truth is that the impact of armed conflict on all women is not the same; women's intersectional identity can further marginalise and disproportionately negatively impact their experience of conflict and peacebuilding processes. Since October 2018, NMI has been helping to strengthen Iraqi security forces and Iraqi military education<sup>2</sup>. As recognised in UNSCR 1325, implementing a gender perspective is vital in ensuring that this is achieved. However, the truth is that certain ethnic groups in Iraq have been disproportionately impacted by Daesh. Unless this is recognized, effective implementation of a gender perspective within this mission cannot be fully achieved. There have been countless reports of crimes against humanity, including rape, enslavement and torture of Yazidi women by Daesh. Yazidi survivors, such as Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Nadia Murad, have called attention to the fact that a large proportion of abducted Yazidi women remain missing<sup>3</sup>. This highlights that unless the differing impact of Daesh on religious and ethnic groups is recognised, effective education and training in this NATO mission

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1 Maria Carbin and Sara Edenheim, “The intersectional turn in feminist theory: A dream of a common language?”, *European Journal of Women's Studies* 20, no.3 (May 2013).

2 [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_166936.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_166936.htm)

3 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-45759221>

cannot be achieved, as large groups of women continue to be affected by the impact of Daesh. Simply mainstreaming gender within missions is not enough; without the recognition of women's further identities, appropriate and effective peacebuilding will not be achieved.

To be effective, an intersectional approach to UNSCR 1325 needs to be implemented through all levels of NATO nations and bodies. This includes the recruitment of personnel in the military in NATO nations. Taking the British armed forces as a representative example of an Alliance member, it is evident that women in general remain under-recruited. Female personnel constitute little more than 10% of the UK Regular Forces<sup>4</sup>. Even though there have been clear attempts through marketing strategies such as televised advertisements to encourage female recruits, the number remains low. Worse still, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) personnel (both female and male) only make up 7.6% of the regular forces, suggesting the representation of BAME women is vanishingly small, despite them making up 16% of the female working-age population in England and Wales<sup>5</sup>. Even though the British Army advocates for diversity, the truth is that the army is not representative of the British society. When linking this back to UNSCR 1325, unless the low number of non-white recruits is acknowledged within gender mainstreaming processes, the number of non-white women joining NATO's armed forces will continue to remain low, further inhibiting female recruitment in general.

The recruitment of female personnel from diverse backgrounds links closely to the active implementation of an intersectional feminist approach within missions. The British Army on its website states that "*the more diverse a team is, the greater the pool of skills available*"<sup>6</sup>. Considering the use of female-only teams has been common in missions in, for example, Iraq (Team Lioness) and Afghanistan (Female Engagement Teams) with the aim of increasing engagement with female civilians, more diverse female teams will further benefit this. For example, a wider representation of religions within female personnel would help overcome religious barriers as well as allow for a broader range of skills and knowledge. By recognising the benefit of intersectionality at all levels, increased engagement and participation with female personnel and civilians can be achieved.

It is important to recognise that the implementation of an intersectional approach is not simple, as intersectional identities are personal and thus no blanket approach can be implemented. However, by starting to recognise intersectionality and by avoiding the homogenisation of women as a whole, NATO would take a step in the right direction. Simply collecting data on the breakdown of female personnel can be a positive step in diversifying the recruitment of women within the military. Few, if any, Alliance military websites provide data on the breakdown of gender by factors such as religion, ethnicity, race etc. The importance of this extends beyond national forces, and it is important that NATO bodies and structures also effectively mainstream gender.

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4 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/712124/Biannual\\_Diversity\\_Statistics\\_Apr18.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/712124/Biannual_Diversity_Statistics_Apr18.pdf)

5 <https://www.bitc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/bitc-factsheet-bame-women-mentalhealthandcovid-19-may2020.pdf>

6 <https://www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/our-people/>

UNSCR 1325 reaffirms the “*important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building*”, but if only white women are represented in the NATO political discourse, strategies of prevention and resolution of conflicts will never accurately represent all levels of society.

In the year the Secretary General launched NATO 2030, it is important that the Alliance also considers diversifying and adapting its approach to gender mainstreaming, in a drive towards the goals of UNSCR 1325. Although this will be challenging, the success of the resolution in the past twenty years shows that progress can be made. Only by adopting an intersectional approach to the engagement of women in both the political and military sides of NATO will the Alliance harness their true potential in the prevention and resolution of conflict, and building lasting peace.



# Gender Equality and Female Service in the IDF

By Pnina Sharvit Baruch

One of the important pillars of the NATO policy on WPS is integrating more women into national military forces, ensuring gender equality therein, and applying gender mainstreaming practices. This short article will examine these topics while focusing on Israel, where women have served in the military since before the establishment of the State in 1948.

Military service in Israel has been mandatory for both men and women since the establishment of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Initially, women were drafted in order to “assist” male soldiers and officers, but much progress has been made since. An important benchmark was the 1995 High Court of Justice ruling that de facto forced the IDF to open the Air Force’s pilot training course to women. Since then, the demand for official equal opportunity has increased, alongside a rejection of the bureaucratic and economic excuses used to justify the failure to afford such equality.

Today, women account for approximately 40% of those serving in the IDF. Almost 90% of all positions in the IDF are currently open to women, although in practice many combat positions are only theoretically accessible to women and are not actually filled by them. With that said, administrative positions that were once considered to be strictly female roles are now assigned to both men and women, and many men today serve as clerks. Despite this progress, and although women make up 40% of the officers in compulsory service, the percentage of women drops among the higher ranks, with women comprising only 25% of captains and majors and only 20% of lieutenant colonels. Beyond these ranks, the representation of women is sparse, with only one woman major general appointed to date.<sup>1</sup>

Ensuring equal opportunities for women in the military derives first and foremost from the duty to respect gender equality. In addition, making full use of women’s potential contributes to better fulfilment of the military’s goals. Furthermore, the IDF is a substantial source for the labour market of high-quality personnel with skills derived from military training and from contending with complex challenges. By offering women similar opportunities to men, their full potential can be utilized, not only during their military service but in civilian life as well. It is therefore worth examining the gaps that remain and how to address them.

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<sup>1</sup> Pnina Sharvit Baruch, “What is the appropriate model for female service in the IDF?” Memorandum No. 159, Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), September 2016; Netta Moshe, “The Service of Women in the IDF,” the Knesset Research and Information Center, May 16, 2013 [in Hebrew]. For updated data see: Tali Stambolchic, Neomi Somer and Shlomit Naffolina, “Trailblazing women”, IDF, March 8, 2020 at <https://www.idf.il/en/>.

One pretext for limiting women's service in certain positions is the shorter duration of their compulsory service. While in some cases women are given the option to volunteer and extend their service in order to gain such positions, this still leads to fewer women seeking such positions. Therefore, an equal period of service for men and women would encourage more opportunities for women.

As for combat roles, it is claimed that women lack the physical ability to carry out operational missions and endure the operational environment. It is further argued that there aren't enough potential female candidates who are both capable and interested in such positions, making it unjustified to invest in the required adaptations to enable women to fill them. However, the limited number of potential candidates is in great part a result of the message given to women soldiers – that they indeed are not suitable for such tasks. Furthermore, women who do manage to attain such positions often encounter a macho, unwelcoming environment. This requires mental fortitude that not all possess, and in part explains the reluctance of many women to undergo this experience. Still, this was true of every new area that women joined – whether as the first women doctors, engineers, or film directors. The presence of women in these professions is now taken for granted, and their contributions are undeniable. Therefore, even if there are only few potential candidates, they should not be denied the opportunity to fill these roles; otherwise we create a vicious cycle that ensures the continued exclusion of women. This requires introducing “gender mainstreaming”, namely, adapting the system and the working environment for the integration of women. An example of this is developing equipment that is suitable for the physical build of an average woman. Awareness of such elements is necessary from the planning stage, in order to prevent a heavy lever from becoming a physical obstacle to the possibility of integrating women. The IDF has made much progress in making such adjustments, and this has led to opening more positions to women. Hopefully this trend will continue.

Eliminating obstacles to the full inclusion of women in the military also requires addressing the cultural military environment itself. This includes ensuring awareness and firm treatment of cases of sexual harassment – an area the IDF has focused on in recent years. It is also important to undermine chauvinist and sexist concepts and attitudes that fall short of harassment. An additional challenge in Israel is overcoming pressure from religious circles that oppose women serving in close contact to Orthodox male soldiers.

It is essential to have women reach higher ranking positions, which is beneficial both for the women themselves, as well as for advancing the interests of the military. Diverse perspectives in decision making forums lead to better results. Overall, the mere inclusion of a larger portion of the population within the pool of people competing for senior positions increases the possibility of finding and appointing high quality individuals, including high quality women. However, breaking through glass ceilings without external assistance, such as quotas or affirmative action, is extremely difficult, and more should be done in this regard.

Another barrier faced by women is combining a military career with having a family. The military system should take work-life balance into account and make it easier, to the greatest extent possible, to combine family life and military service. This would be

beneficial for men as well, who frequently miss out on being active fathers at critical stages of their children's lives. For example, greater efforts to adhere to meeting timetables and refraining from unnecessary rescheduling would save many person-hours and would also allow for a better combination of professional and family obligations.

Military service has a huge impact on future opportunities in Israel's workplace. This is especially the case for retired senior officers who have direct access to power centres in the realms of business, politics, and society. Therefore, military service affects women's potential professional development after leaving the army as well. Moreover, since military service is conducted in a definitive period of life, it affects women's self-identity. If women are sent the message that they are less significant than men, this can resonate in their self-esteem in their later years. If, on the other hand, women are granted the opportunity to make use of their full potential in the IDF, everybody wins – the women, the military, and society at large.



# A Risk Management Approach to Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by NATO Personnel

By Anna Shotton

In 2019, NATO issued a Policy on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)<sup>1</sup> by its personnel. This policy commits Commanders and Heads of NATO Bodies to create an environment conducive to the prevention of SEA, and to consider SEA 'risks factors and risk mitigation strategies in the planning and conduct of NATO and NATO-led operations, missions, and other Council approved activities'. This piece explores what NATO can learn from United Nations (UN) peacekeeping's adoption two years ago of a risk management approach to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and other forms of misconduct in its field missions. UN peacekeeping's risk management approach to misconduct is described in its SEA Risk Management Toolkit (2018)<sup>2</sup>, and its broader set of Misconduct Risk Management Tools (2019)<sup>3</sup> covering all forms of misconduct, including SEA, sexual harassment, abuse of authority, theft, fraud, and drunk driving.

## Why take a risk management approach to SEA<sup>4</sup>?

Taking a risk management approach to preventing SEA has several benefits for NATO. Firstly, it enables NATO leadership to be more effective in preventing SEA. By providing a good understanding of which forms of SEA are most likely to happen and why, leadership are better able to prevent SEA. The UN has developed a typology of different types of SEA risks that are likely to occur in their field missions, and generic risk factors that cause or contribute to the risk (see "Tool 6. Examples of SEA Risks and Risk Factors" in the SEA Risk Management Toolkit). This allows UN field missions to direct their attention and resources to the forms of SEA that are most likely to occur in their specific context and to target awareness raising campaigns to communities that are most vulnerable to exploitation. For example, in some missions, the key SEA risk relates to military and police contingent personnel engaging in transactional sex with adult women (e.g. living in close proximity to UN contingent camps), whereas in other missions, the key SEA risk relates to civilians and individual police and military staff officers sexually exploiting their domestic workers in their private accommodation. Being able to anticipate the likely forms that SEA might take in a particular context allows UN field missions to put in place more effective prevention strategies.

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1 [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_173038.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_173038.htm)

2 [https://conduct.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/dpko-dfs\\_sea\\_risk\\_toolkit\\_28\\_june\\_2018\\_modified.pdf](https://conduct.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/dpko-dfs_sea_risk_toolkit_28_june_2018_modified.pdf)

3 [https://conduct.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/misconduct\\_risk\\_mngt\\_tools\\_consolidated\\_vf\\_24\\_09\\_2019.pdf](https://conduct.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/misconduct_risk_mngt_tools_consolidated_vf_24_09_2019.pdf)

4 Based on DPKO-DFS SEA Risk Management Toolkit [https://conduct.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/dpko-dfs\\_sea\\_risk\\_toolkit\\_28\\_june\\_2018\\_modified.pdf](https://conduct.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/dpko-dfs_sea_risk_toolkit_28_june_2018_modified.pdf) (2018)

Secondly, it can help leadership take more informed decisions about where to focus its attention and resources when addressing SEA. At a global level, NATO can use risk management to understand the risk profiles of different NATO missions and operations, and ensure that more attention and resources are allocated to missions/operations where there is a higher risk of its personnel engaging in SEA. The same approach can be taken at a country-level, to identify higher- and lower-risk locations and prioritise resources accordingly. For example, within a country, the UN Field Mission's conduct and discipline experts undertake regular 'SEA/misconduct risk assessment visits' to all UN locations to assess the level of risk of UN personnel engaging in SEA and other forms of misconduct in that location and identify ways to mitigate these risks. Over time, this creates a 'map' showing which UN locations present a higher risk of personnel engaging in SEA and other forms of misconduct, and where additional resources are needed to prevent misconduct (e.g. in the form of more frequent oversight visits by leadership, additional training on UN standards of conduct, or repairs to broken fencing around the UN camp).

### **What does a risk management approach to addressing SEA look like?**

UN Field Missions are expected to develop an annual work plan describing how the Mission will prevent and address SEA by its personnel. This is accompanied by a risk register that describes the main risks to the achievement of the results described in the SEA work plan and how these risks will be addressed. This work plan and risk register is 'owned' by a working group in the Mission that consists of mid-level management drawn from the military, police and civilian components of the Mission.

Best practice is to develop the Mission's annual SEA work plan and risk register through a consultative process such as workshop involving all parts of the Mission and members of the UN Country Team such as UNICEF. During this workshop, the UN Field Mission is taken through a four-step process, described in the SEA Risk Management Toolkit. Step 1 is to understand the context and identify all risks to the successful achievement of the Mission's objectives on SEA. For example, a change in the Mission's mandate could require new deployments to remote locations where there is limited external oversight of UN personnel, thus creating new SEA risks for the Mission. Once a list of all SEA risks has been identified, step 2 involves assessing which risks are the most severe. Although the UN provides scales to encourage a consistent approach to assessing risks, this process is more art than science, and relies heavily on professional judgement and knowledge of the local context. During step 2, priority risks are identified to allow management to focus its attention on the biggest risks. Step 3 involves treating risks, which essentially means identifying ways to reduce or mitigate risks. Step 4 consists of monitoring risks to track how well the Mission is addressing risks, and to monitor whether risks facing the Mission are changing. This type of risk monitoring is typically done verbally through meetings with mission management.

### **What can NATO learn from the UN's experience?**

Two lessons can be drawn from the UN's experience of introducing SEA risk management in its field missions. Firstly, introducing a risk management approach to SEA requires a shift in mindset: managers and commanders need to accept that

SEA risk management is part of their core management and command functions. This is not easy to do and it takes time. Strategies that can help create this shift in attitude include: articulating clearly what is expected of managers and commanders on SEA risk management (e.g. through guidance, training, and communications) and conducting risk management in a participatory way to get buy-in and ownership from all components of the mission.

And secondly, SEA risk management needs to be implemented flexibly. In UN field missions that are considered low risk for SEA<sup>5</sup>, the UN has found it more useful to take a broader approach and look at all forms of misconduct. Indeed, in many UN field missions, other forms of misconduct are more prevalent and are more likely to occur such as sexual harassment, abuse of authority, fraud, theft, and drunk driving. Since the 'Me Too' movement, much of the humanitarian aid community has similarly broadened its approach and now addresses sexual exploitation and abuse together with sexual harassment<sup>6</sup>. In smaller UN Field Missions where there are few resources to work on conduct and discipline issues, the UN has also found it more practical to adopt a 'light-touch' approach to SEA risk management (e.g. conducting risk analysis through a one-hour meeting instead of a workshop).

## **Twenty years on**

Since the passing of Security Council resolution 1325 in 2000, considerable progress has been made by international organisations to acknowledge that their personnel can be part of the problem and commit sexual violence in situations of conflict. Peace and security organisations such as the UN, NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the African Union (AU), are all moving to put in place and implement policies to prevent SEA by their personnel, albeit at different speeds. Risk management is another useful tool that international organisations can use to be more pro-active, and to put in place measures now that will prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in the future.

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5 Low risk means there have been few incidents in the past of UN personnel engaging in sexual exploitation and abuse of the population, and the risk of UN personnel engaging in this form of misconduct is perceived to be low.

6 For example, see the approach of humanitarian organisations that are part of the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) described at: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-champion-on-protection-from-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-and-sexual-harassment>; and the approach of the UK Government contained in its safeguarding enhanced due diligence checks for external partners described at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-enhanced-due-diligence-safeguarding-for-external-partners>



# UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and the Challenge of Gender Mainstreaming in Maritime Operations

By Valeria Eboli

One of the main current challenges of UNSCR 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) is its applicability to military operations at sea.

Military operations to counter piracy or tackle human trafficking and migrant smuggling have long been conducted, but the scale and intensity of the migrant crisis in recent years has been significant. Navies of many nations have engaged in numerous non-combatant evacuation operations or humanitarian and disaster relief operations, resulting in significant numbers of civilians requiring rescue and potentially boarding warships.

Warships involved in NATO-led operations in the Mediterranean such as Operation Sea Guardian as well as European Union-led military operations such as EUNAVFOR MED Sophia (until 2019) and EUNAVFOR Med Irini face the possibility of having to embark large numbers of civilians in need of rescue. Such NATO and EU operations are deployed in the Aegean Sea and Central Mediterranean where a massive migration flow is ongoing. As a consequence, search and rescue activities are not uncommon<sup>1</sup>.

After saving those in need of rescue, many of whom may be women, migrants are embarked on board the warship for a short period until they can be safely landed ashore. These situations require a suitable response in relation to gender mainstreaming on board.

UNSCR 1325 is tailored to armed conflicts taking place “on land”. It makes reference to the adoption of a gender perspective during armed conflict, post-conflict reconstruction, and peace processes. It is aimed at mitigating the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, emphasizing the role of women in peace-building and stressing the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution.

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<sup>1</sup> Several international legal instruments deal with this issue, such as the Convention on the High Seas (1958), the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) (1974), the Maritime Search and Rescue the International Conventions on the law relating to vessels in distress. Nevertheless, beside any treaty-based obligation, which may vary from State to State, the obligation to save lives at sea comes also from a general customary law rule. It is also enshrined in Article 98 of Montego Bay Convention, which mentions the duty to render assistance at sea.

There are no specific references to military operations deployed at sea contained in UNSCR 1325. Indeed, the resolution refers specifically to “field operations” but remains silent on nautical matters. Nevertheless, gender mainstreaming cannot but increase operational effectiveness, and the applicability of the principles of UNSCR 1325 and the broader WPS agenda is important.

So, there is a need to analyze how WPS principles such as participation, protection and prevention can be applicable to operations at sea, bearing in mind the specific features of the maritime domain. The implementation of UNSCR 1325 in a maritime operation appears more challenging than on land, and requires a much more nuanced approach.

First, women at sea do not all belong to the same (more or less) homogeneous society. They make up, instead, a heterogeneous group, composed of people of different nationalities and, due to circumstances, some of them can be particularly vulnerable. In fact, in many cases, they may be victims of human trafficking or survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)<sup>2</sup>.

Second, the military, contrary to what happens in a theatre of conflict on land, does not have community counterparts with whom to liaise in order to build relationships. At sea, civilians may end up inside a military environment (a warship), with all the related security concerns. Furthermore, the room available to host them on board and the provisions required to sustain and support them is limited.

Third, as a consequence of the above, the length of time civilians stay on board is short. Medium or long-term considerations in dealing with them are not required.

The impact of such specificities on the possible actions related to gender is significant. Both NATO and the EU have had to face such challenges and showed a shared interest in dealing with the issue in their respective military operations at sea and both of them relied in their practice on the principles of UNSCR 1325.

At first glance, for instance, it seems possible to ensure gender equality, especially in relation to the treatment offered to women on board and, in general terms, to the female (military and civilian) personnel working in the framework of the operation. However, some actions related to long term women’s empowerment (i.e. aimed at redressing power imbalances and giving women more autonomy to manage their own lives), appear less feasible in the short time period during which civilian women are on board. Nevertheless, such a goal could be achieved for instance through the

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2 The ongoing migration flow is a mixed one. Some individuals are seeking international protection, fleeing from armed conflicts or from countries where they fear persecution on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or where violations of human rights occur. Others may be considered migrant workers, i.e. looking for better conditions of life, due to social, economic and demographic inequalities, instability, environmental degradation, climate change. For all of them, the journeys are usually organized by criminal migrant smuggling networks, which help the migrants to illegally cross international borders. Some of them may be deemed victims of human trafficking, in the hands of exploitative criminal organizations, which use the massive flow for their “business”. They usually report being subjected to violence and abuse by migrant smugglers or human traffickers. See Joint Europol-INTERPOL Report Migrant Smuggling Networks Executive Summary, 2016, at <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/europol-and-interpol-issue-comprehensive-review-of-migrantsmuggling-networks>, EUROPOL, Migrant smuggling in the EU, 2016, at <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/migrant-smuggling-in-eu>, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), The World Fact book, 2016, at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

training of personnel, if such a task is envisaged in the mandate of the operation, in the long term.

Gender mainstreaming is fundamental to guarantee that opinions, concerns and requirements of women and men are included equally into every aspect of an operation, from planning to execution. It may be assessed that in maritime operations the aspects related to the pillars of prevention and protection prevail over that of participation.

Furthermore, in relation to a maritime operation, it cannot be ignored that different legal frameworks may be applicable on board different ships, due to the applicability of the domestic law of the flagged vessel as well as other various international laws. This can have an impact on gender mainstreaming and has to properly be taken into account. So the development of specific guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures in the framework of NATO and other international organizations is particularly suitable in this field.

Any form of cooperation among different international organizations to provide shared guidelines in this field would have a positive impact, and all mutual and joint efforts cannot but result in increased effectiveness. In particular, cooperation between NATO and the EU is of considerable significance. Following the Joint Declaration by the Secretary General of NATO, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission, a specific bullet point on “Operational cooperation including maritime issues” was mentioned.<sup>3</sup> Gender mainstreaming in maritime operations could easily fall under this umbrella.

Furthermore, NATO works with other international organisations, such as the EU, the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN), and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in the context of the Regional Acceleration of Resolution (RAR) 1325 Initiative, which aims at intensifying mutual cooperation amongst the international organizations involved.

Deepening the cooperation on gender mainstreaming in maritime operations would represent a remarkable effort to deal with emerging challenges in a collaborative and more beneficial way. Regardless of the absence of express provisions relating to the maritime domain, the fundamental principles of UNSCR 1325 remain a cornerstone for military operations at sea.

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3 Council of the European Union, Council conclusions on the Implementation of the Joint Declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, CFSP/PESC 1057 CSDP/PSDC 661 COPS 372 POLMIL 153 EUMC 147, Brussels, 5 December 2017 (OR. en) 14802/17.



# Abandonment of Past, Fragility of Today and Sustainability of Tomorrow: Moving WPS Equity Forward

By Aimal Hakim, Robert Lord-Biggers, Nargis Nehan,  
Natalie Trogus, Susanne E. Jalbert

Afghanistan stands on the precipice of an historic, albeit precarious, peace. The prospect of a peace deal that would bring the Taliban into a new unity government presents both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, such a peace would open new ground for reconstruction and the cessation, or at least reduction, of decades-long armed conflict. On the other hand, bringing conservative Taliban policies into formal governance threatens to rollback hard-fought, socially progressive political gains made over the past 20 years, particularly the rights of women.

On October 31, 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). As a UN Member State, Afghanistan committed to observing the principles of the UN Charter, international treaties, and UNSCR's commitments to women's rights. The Government of Afghanistan has now developed a National Action Plan (NAP), which is intended to recognize women's expertise and lived experience<sup>1</sup>. The NAP attempts to address challenges women face in the aftermath of war.

## **The Afghan NAP - From a Wish List of Dreams to a Genuine Women's Empowerment Agenda**

The Afghan NAP is an important document for a post-conflict society and a development agenda for the women of Afghanistan, but its success is dependent on domestic and international political will to prioritize the rights of Afghan women. There are two fundamental challenges to the implementation of the NAP: first, it lacked an inclusive drafting process, and the document fails to provide clarity on timelines, implementation plans, or impact measures. The drafters failed to establish baseline values for key indicators, and as such it will also be difficult to accurately measure any change under the NAP. Second, it does not connect local peace building efforts with a clear strategy for community engagement<sup>2</sup>. In August 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan launched a second NAP promising to address the challenges identified above.

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1 [https://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/egm-womens-meaningful-participation-in-negotiating-peaceen\\_0.pdf](https://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/egm-womens-meaningful-participation-in-negotiating-peaceen_0.pdf)

2 <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2017/11/28/afghanistans-national-action-plan-a-wish-list-of-many-dreamswazhma-frogh-102017/>

However, with rapidly shifting political circumstances related to a pending peace deal with the Taliban, the level of commitment to women’s empowerment remains unclear.

**“Women’s empowerment in Afghanistan is real, it’s genuine, it truly has happened, and I always say that it’s an investment by the international community that really paid off in terms of where we started 19 years ago and where we are now.”**

*Adela Raz, Permanent Representative  
of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the UN<sup>3</sup>*

The Afghan government has a progressive vision for the future of the country, and for women in particular. To realistically apply existing laws and policies, their vision will be difficult to implement without significant investments in institutional strengthening and capacity-building—much less developing and implementing new policies to promote gender equity. Conversely, the Taliban has an alternative vision for the country as well as a parallel policymaking process, generally dismissive of women. In a recent statement, a Taliban leader wrote that they “will find a way to build an Islamic system in which all Afghans have equal rights, where the rights of women that are granted by Islam—from the right to education to the right to work—are protected.”<sup>4</sup> Remember during the Taliban’s 1994 to 2001 tenure, the same gender equality policy language was used. Clearly the Taliban’s commitment to equity was purely rhetorical, as evidenced by women’s utter exclusion in that era. Women were systematically removed from virtually all forms of socio-economic participation and human rights protection.

### **Moving WPS Equity Forward**

Moving forward, NATO can meaningfully, equitably assist the government of Afghanistan pursuing the following recommendations:

**Adopt a roadmap to ensure women’s participation in the peace process.** Launch a viable peace roadmap that designates specific entities and mechanisms to pursue a peace agreement that encompasses women’s participation and voices. Build the peace process from the ground so citizens own the subsequent peace agreement, not political elites. Involve all segments of Afghan society across all 34 provinces to cultivate credibility and recognize the value of the Constitution. The Council of Peace should be prepared to focus on post-peace scenarios, empowered to play an advisory role, and be committed to uphold women’s rights.

- **Institute a women’s affairs committee as part of the peace plan.** As NAP has no clear role for civil society, the government must immediately devise a concept for their peace advisory board. To mute current criticism, the committee on Women’s Affairs under the advisory board must ensure women have meaningful visibility, voice, full participation, and representation on the peace negotiating team, as well as presence in the Council of Peace, the National Reconciliation Council, and the Provincial Peace Council.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ipinst.org/2020/03/womens-inclusion-in-afghanistanpeace-talks#2>

<sup>4</sup> Haqqani, Sirajuddin, “What We, the Taliban, Want,” The New York Times (February 20, 2020), available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/20/opinion/taliban-afghanistan-war-haqqani.html>

- **Establish a national roster of female negotiators from all 34 provinces.** Afghan women today are politically savvy, involved, and informed. Women have intellect, experience and the capacity to contribute to peacebuilding, consultation, and negotiation processes. Women can bridge political fissures on the path to peace. Women engaged in peace talks should produce a peace framework as soon as possible to guarantee their rights and an orderly transition to peace.
- **Increase UNSCR 1325 and NAP awareness to institutions involved in peace and security.** Sectoral strategies, policies, programs, and projects must be connected to broader NAP requirements. Understanding the NAP's four pillars (Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery)<sup>5</sup> and the expected outcomes is vital for participating ministries, especially security ministries. NATO should galvanize awareness about the role of women in the peace process and support increased consultation, negotiation, and management capacity.

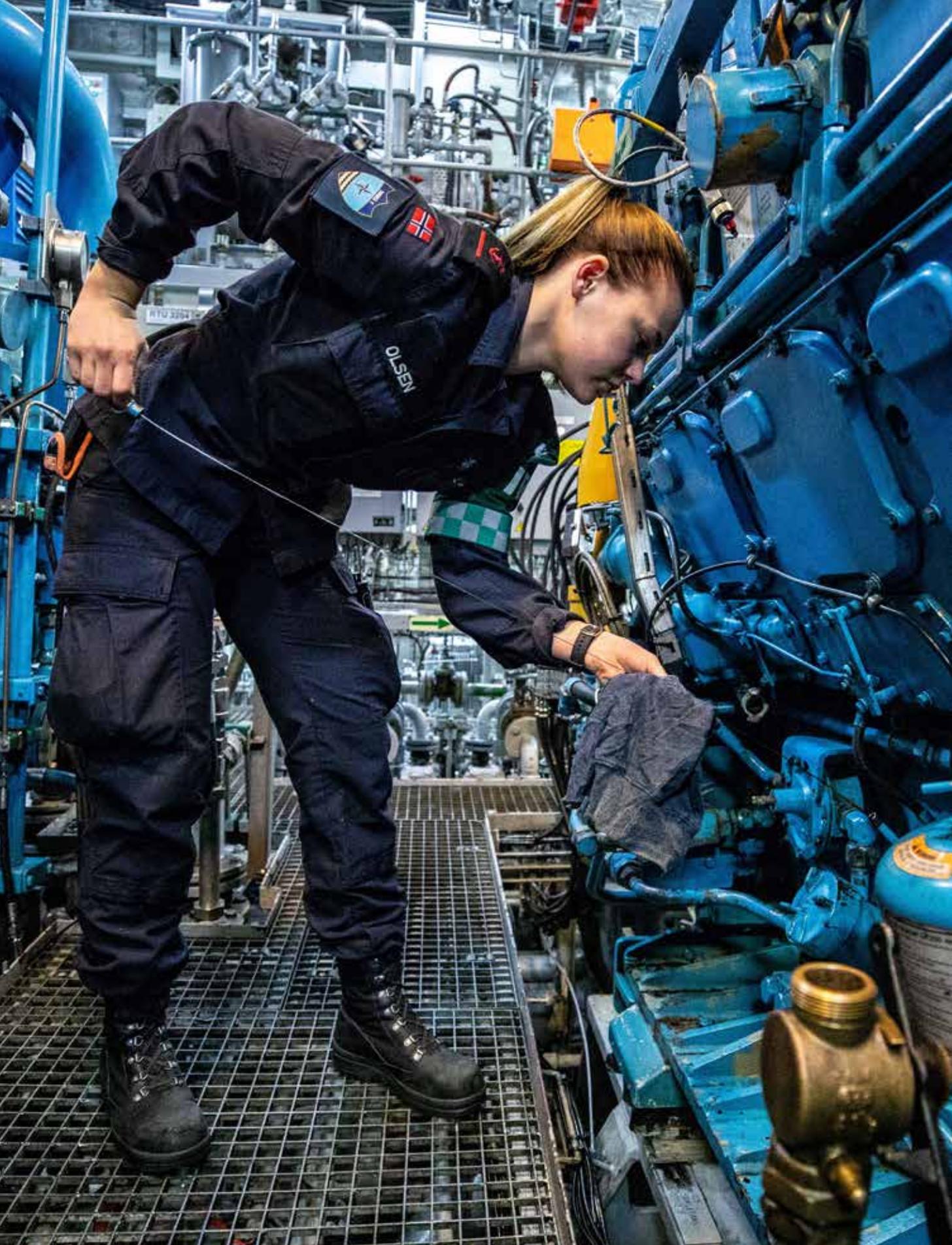
### **Where Should Afghanistan's Implementation of UNSCR 1325 be in 10 Years?**

- I. **UNSCR 1325 is fully supported in centres of influence.** Afghan men advocating for and engaging in equitable change is crucial to the successful implementation of the WPS agenda. Cultural perceptions of male-female relationships must evolve to reach critical mass. We must cultivate broad-based support among men in particular to support women in senior government positions and other decision-making roles.
- II. **WPS tri-lateral sector growth is robust.** Civil society, the defense sector, and the security sector must be united in their messaging and support of women's rights. Civil society plays a key role by issuing evaluative reports to keep the military and police accountable for WPS implementation. Targeted collaborative engagements with senior Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior representatives will ensure that the defence and security sectors support the needs of the population they are mandated to protect.
- III. **WPS international engagement to the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) leadership demonstrates stability.** To date, little leadership attention is paid to the mission task of implementing UNSCR 1325 into the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior. No gender lens is applied to RSM social media posts, intelligence briefings, operations, or daily advisor staff analysis. RSM leadership needs to exhibit that gender perspective is important.

If WPS business continues as usual, it will remain a dream. If the peace process provides strategic and political support to women, then in 10 years women will be among Afghanistan's main players in all national affairs. Women must be seen, heard, and protected as transformational national leaders. In 10 years, NATO, too, can be seen as a leader in Afghanistan by actively engaging male champions to thread WPS messages and policies into civil society, defence and security sectors, and modelling visible gender lens leadership.

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5 Ibid, particularly the endnotes, which offer excellent research citations



# WPS – What’s Next? Climate Risks and Gendered Responses

By Susan Harris Rimmer

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and National Action Plans (NAPs) are being translated in most nations into a strategic national security environment which does not adequately address non-traditional security threats. Non-traditional threats include international organised crime, terrorism, illicit trafficking (in drugs, wildlife, humans, arms, etc.), piracy, infectious disease/pandemics, and illegal migration flows.<sup>1</sup> These are joined now by emerging non-traditional threats, such as anthropogenic existential risks and cyber-attacks, but also the potential for conflict in space, armed conflict, and disruptive technologies (dual use, Artificial Intelligence, encryption), and anti-microbial resistance. But most national security analysis is still focus primarily on traditional interstate conflict and kinetic warfare. Moreover, most national defence strategies struggle in particular to address those threats termed anthropogenic existential risks, such as the incremental risks posed by climate change.<sup>2</sup>

I argue that the security risk posed by climate change is bleaker and more fundamental than most traditional security analysts seem to accept, and this makes the implementation of the WPS agenda more liable to marginalisation or failure in the future. The evolution of threat assessments is a global challenge.<sup>3</sup> Expert and UN opinion is converging to the idea of climate risks acting as a ‘threat multiplier’. As the UN Security Council debated in January 2019, climate change has a multitude of security impacts - rolling back the gains in nutrition and access to food; heightening the risk of wildfires and exacerbating air quality challenges; increasing the potential for water conflict; leading to more internal displacement and migration.<sup>4</sup> Climate change is already forcing millions of people from their homes, and future storms, droughts, rising seas and other impacts of climate change will further exacerbate people’s vulnerabilities. Due to socially constructed roles and responsibilities, climate-related disasters have different impacts on men, women, girls and boys. The most recent research found climate impacts will exacerbate violence against women.<sup>5</sup>

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- 1 Carroll, Jacinta. ‘Australia’s New National Security’. Australian Outlook, AIIA. 27 November 2017, <http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/foreign-policy-national-security/>
  - 2 Bostrom, Nick. ‘Existential Risk Prevention as Global Priority’, Global Policy, Vol. 4, Issue 1 February 2013: pp. 15-31, available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1758-5899.1200245>
  - 3 Beinart, Peter. The Threat of Threat Assessments. *The Atlantic*. 31 January 2019. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/01/worldwide-threat-assessment-evades-big-questions/581704/>
  - 4 UN News, Climate change recognized as ‘threat multiplier’, UN Security Council debates its impact on peace. 25 January 2019, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/01/1031322>.
  - 5 ICUN, 2020. Gender-based violence and environment linkages: The violence of inequality. Itzá Castañeda Camey, Laura Sabater, Cate Owren and A. Emmett Boyer Jamie Wen, eds. Available at <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-002-En.pdf>

In addition, the academic consensus as represented in a recent Nature article shows broad agreement that climate variability and change shape the risk of organised armed conflict within countries.<sup>6</sup> In conflicts to date, however, the role of climate is judged to be small compared to other drivers of conflict, and the mechanisms by which climate affects conflict are uncertain. The experts predict that as risks grow under future climate change, many more potential climate–conflict linkages will become relevant and extend beyond historical experiences, and they predict the current risk will increase five-fold.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, the next phase for the WPS agenda must deal with more sophisticated and intersectional threat assessments, risk analysis and gender analysis that is fit for purpose to deal with the intersection of gender, climate and conflict. There is increasing evidence that violence against women and human rights abuses generally may be important indicators of conflict, including in countries that otherwise appear stable, and that this information might contribute to identifying where to focus national and international efforts on conflict prevention.<sup>8</sup> States can continue and increase investments in gender- and age-disaggregated data, enhancing our ability to understand the unique ways that men, women, boys and girls experience insecurity, and measure progress against the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, but this data collection must include climate impacts.

Due to the first phase of WPS, many UN member nations have built a deeper understanding of the gendered nature of conflict through targeted training before international deployments. Many nations now regularly include WPS-specific interventions in training designed to develop improved participant understanding of how military operations impact the local population and how the local population impacts the conduct of military operations; and the criticality of applying a gender perspective to all stages of an operation. Now military agencies must pivot to understand that increasingly frequent and severe climate-related disasters should be considered a fundamental threat to national and regional stability, and that there will be gendered impacts.

However, not every nation uses a gender-sensitive conflict analysis tool consistently across government and international interventions. By contrast, the core of Canada's WPS strategy has been the adoption across government of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+).<sup>9</sup> First, states should adopt a common tool, and go further by adding gender indicators in conflict early warning systems to better monitor and respond to experiences of insecurity of women and girls, and sexual and gender minorities.<sup>10</sup>

Second, states should make serious progress in promoting peace by supporting women of all backgrounds and ages to participate in processes to prevent conflict and build and sustain peace. The 2015 Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 confirms that the 'local' must clearly be

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6 Katharine J. Mach, Caroline M. Kraan, W. Neil Adger, Halvard Buhaug, Marshall Burke, James D. Fearon, Christopher B. Field, Cullen S. Hendrix, Jean-Francois Maystadt, John O'Loughlin, Philip Roessler, Jürgen Scheffran, Kenneth A. Schultz & Nina von Uexkull. 'Climate as a risk factor for armed conflict'. Nature Vol 571, pp. 193–197 (2019).

7 Op cit.

8 Hudson, V, Ballif-Spanvill, B, Caprioli, M & Emmett, C, Sex and World Peace, Columbia University Press, 2014.

9 <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acs/index-en.html>

10 Saferworld, Gender and Conflict Early warning. 2014, available at <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/810-gender-and-conflict-early-warning>

the most important factor in our analysis of conflict.<sup>11</sup> There is growing realisation of the importance of localised, inclusive, culturally contextualised processes as central to national and international efforts to enhance WPS aims. These networks will be crucial in disaster and climate responses.

The participation of women's networks could also provide access to a wider array of information sources or perspectives for conflict analysis purposes, as long as women's participation is not instrumentalised for this purpose. Similarly, connecting the emerging youth, peace and security agenda with WPS will strengthen UN member approaches.<sup>12</sup>

To ensure that states are best-positioned to strengthen both their internal analytical capability and operational efforts, states should invest more in:

- data on gender-based violence and gender inequality;
- the development of coherent, gender-responsive conflict analysis tools and training for internationally deployed staff and country desks;
- local women's, youth and sexual minority networks to ensure access to diverse conflict perspectives to enhance each state's understanding of context; and
- analysis of the intersection of gender and emerging threats, such as climate change, but also new technologies and surveillance, countering violent extremism and political polarisation.
- The next phase of WPS must reform the definition of security threats; and must do so with great urgency.

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11 UN Women, Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace, A Global Study on the Implementation of United Security Council resolution 1325. 2015, available at [https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf)

12 Berents, H. 'Australia Should be a Regional Leader on Youth, Peace and Security', Australian Outlook, 24 April 2018, available at <http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/australia-should-be-a-regional-leader-on-youth-peace-and-security/>



# Inclusion and Participation are Not Enough: Reshaping Institutions Through WPS

By Lauren Bean Buitta and Erin Connolly

This year is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. Not nearly at its midpoint, 2020 has already been a year of significant disruption. Amid a global pandemic, recession, and anti-racism protests, the security ideals upon which nations have been built are in flux. Nations are faced with systems that no longer serve their interests or have never served broader community interests. The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda provides an opportunity to recalibrate institutions that are failing to conform and whose inception was informed by the security ideals of a homogenous group. The Alliance must reshape its institutional ideals to reflect what the world is finally realizing: women's inclusion and participation are not enough. Systemic innovation is required.

Women have emerged as the apparent dark horse of the pandemic response race. Women's political leadership<sup>1</sup> amid this global crisis is celebrated and studied, only affirming what WPS advocates have long argued: women's security contributions are not valued, until they can no longer be ignored. While women's leadership should be recognised and celebrated for its efficacy amid one of the most pressing security challenges of recent history, women's security expertise remains systematically under-utilized and undervalued. While WPS has made significant progress<sup>2</sup> over the past two decades, it is not a static set of resolutions.

In the next decade, WPS can be more than an agenda; it can become the architecture for new security and defence norms, strategies, and institutions that are needed to confront more diffusive, and sometimes unanticipated, global security threats. Just as male notions of protecting "bodies, borders, and boundaries"<sup>3</sup> have defined the last century of security institutions, so too can women's security notions define a new path forward for the next 100 years.

Importantly, in many countries, the rights of girls and women may not exist or are concealed or oppressed. In the United States, for example, systems designed to protect women and girls have too often failed to do so; this includes the judicial and political systems.

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1 <https://www.nbcnews.com/now/know-your-value/feature/covid-19-era-female-leaders-are-shining-here-s-why-ncna1227931>

2 <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>

3 Bennett, G.M. (2009). *National Security Mom*. Wyatt-MacKenzie Publishing.

Therefore, girls and women often work outside of systems and institutions to establish security for themselves, and perhaps their families and communities. Thus, they do not adhere to stringent notions of security imbued in so many institutions and societies. Girls and women adapt; they innovate.

This adaptation is in part a response to widespread systemic failure to recognise the needs of women and girls. In the United States, COVID-19<sup>4</sup> has disproportionately impacted women and marginalized communities<sup>5</sup>, exacerbating existing racial, gender, and income inequalities. Women have been most vulnerable<sup>6</sup> in the capacities in which they are a majority – at home and in healthcare. Yet, efforts to encourage girls' participation in male-dominated industries are falling short. Girls' confidence in pursuing STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) careers declines by 20% after high school. However, the career “leaky pipeline” is often blamed for the lack of women in positions of leadership. These issues are connected and demonstrate how trying to “include” women in a system designed by—and for—men does not create the required change for all, or even some. The recent State Department 2020 WPS Action Plan also acknowledges<sup>7</sup> that, “As more women claim opportunities for their full participation in political processes, including in leadership roles, they have encountered increasing levels of harassment, intimidation, and abuse.” In short, the current systems aren't working.

To create a new path forward, security and defence institutions must develop an understanding of how women and girls experience security and what skills women and girls harness to secure themselves, their families, and communities. These insights can inform policies and strategies that redefine institutions, serve as roadmaps for new security ideals around defence, crisis management, and cooperative security, and inform education and training programs for girls and women in security.

As NATO reflects on a way forward, girls and women continue to remain vulnerable to varied threats to their physical security in addition to disproportionate<sup>8</sup> exposure to gendered digital threats. If NATO chooses to innovate and imbue its ideals, strategies, and institutions with WPS priorities, laying the groundwork must begin today. Strategic partnerships with other nations, industry, and civil society as well as funding must be mobilized to bring security education and training to girls and women at the community-level. While 83 countries emphasized their WPS commitments through National Action Plans, less than 25%<sup>9</sup> received actual funding for implementing them as of 2020. Meanwhile, countries who claim to financially support and prioritize WPS initiatives often fail to provide the requisite funding. The initial US \$4 million<sup>10</sup> to advance the inclusion of women at the Department of Defense (DOD) in fiscal year 2019 is not even a full one percent of the total<sup>11</sup> \$1.3 trillion DOD budget.

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4 [https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/06/24/882109538/where-the-women-arent-on-coronavirus-task-forces?fbclid=IwAR2H2T40Aw-OZV30HP6uLBpZMDXgy3JY7BjeKx\\_lg6zRd2xVBaoYSZaRgUI&t=1600434714704](https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/06/24/882109538/where-the-women-arent-on-coronavirus-task-forces?fbclid=IwAR2H2T40Aw-OZV30HP6uLBpZMDXgy3JY7BjeKx_lg6zRd2xVBaoYSZaRgUI&t=1600434714704)

5 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25815&LangID=E>

6 [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_175694.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_175694.htm)

7 [https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/20-01943-SGWI\\_v11\\_forWeb\\_Bookmarks508.pdf](https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/20-01943-SGWI_v11_forWeb_Bookmarks508.pdf)

8 <https://inkstickmedia.com/battling-a-new-era-of-disempowerment/>

9 [https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2020/04/28/women\\_peace\\_and\\_security\\_at\\_twenty\\_115231.html](https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2020/04/28/women_peace_and_security_at_twenty_115231.html)

10 <https://oursecurefuture.org/blog/make-2019-women-peace-security>

11 <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2019/5/13/how-the-pentagon-can-build-on-natos-success-with-women-peace-amp-security>

While goals, implementation strategies, and funding are critical, sustainability is also required. If not for sustainability, NATO and other institutions will continue to confront an identity crisis. There are two key sustainability vectors. The first is vertical – or multigenerational – sustainability. In order to remain reflexive, sustainable institutions require multi-generational engagement. This requires adults working closely with youth through sustained engagement, advocacy, and mentoring. For girls, where a lack of mentorship is an impediment to advancement, this is especially crucial. This is particularly pertinent today in a rapidly changing security environment shaped by technology. The NATO Young Professionals Program<sup>12</sup> offers positive steps towards meaningfully including young voices, but more is required.

The second sustainability vector is horizontal among women around the world working on behalf of WPS. A new path forward creates tremendous opportunities to mitigate systemic discrimination, but technological innovation also poses significant challenges<sup>13</sup> to women's advancement. How will those with greater access to technological innovation and advancement fair in contrast to those with limited or no access? And how might technology disrupt any existing WPS equilibrium that exists among women from different nations? How might technology shape differing security norms among women and how will differing norms challenge the existing WPS agenda? Predictive analysis and discourse among WPS advocates and institutions is required to anticipate potential fractures in the advancement of the WPS agenda.

A global disruption has revealed the fragility of security ideals and institutions amid a changing, globalized environment. Innovative approaches that build bridges and reflect the complex interdisciplinary nature of the 21st century security environment are required. The lived security experience of girls and women and their inherent innovative aptitudes offer a needed perspective that must be catalysed through engagement, education, and advancement; fostered through government programming, partnerships, and funding; and advanced through policy, strategies, and institutions. Efforts to reframe security must not be designed to merely include girls and women as participants in the current system, but to activate girls and women to redefine the system themselves.

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12 <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/175210.htm>

13 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joanmichelson/2019/06/30/is-ai-really-biased-against-women/#719b6d942119>



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# Gender Perspectives in Addressing the Impact of Disease Outbreaks

By Sara Consolino

As the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has currently spread in 213 countries<sup>1</sup> around the world and turned out to be a major global security threat, the vulnerable and poorest segments of the population are the most exposed to the crisis caused by the pandemic. Included in this category are the elderly, the most economically deprived people, those with disabilities and chronic illness, youth, and minority groups<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, it has become imperative to avoid potential discrimination in the measures adopted to address the pandemic crisis and its effects in order to cushion the perpetuation of the inequality and focus on bridging the divide with the disadvantaged categories. In particular, this pandemic has undoubtedly revealed the uneven burden that women especially have to bear during a global health crisis.

First and foremost, the disruption caused by the coronavirus-related lockdown is undermining the fight against gender-based violence (GBV). The delay of programmes and efforts to tackle violence against women, female genital mutilation, and child marriages have been broadly compromised. The surge in cases of GBV is mainly due to two factors: the interruption of programmes aiming at ending violence and offering social assistance and support; and the constraint of being obliged to stay inside, a limitation greatly suffered by women who live with their abusers<sup>3</sup>. In fact, UNFPA (UN Population Fund) foresees a one-third reduction in progress to end gender-based violence by 2030<sup>4</sup>.

Other significant side effects of the lockdown are correlated to sexual and reproductive health services. The health facilities have been closed or their services have been impacted by substantial limitations, making medical support inaccessible for many women. The UNFPA estimated that these consequences of the lockdown - and the subsequent inability to use modern contraceptives - would result in millions of additional unintended pregnancies<sup>5</sup>.

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- 1 Worldometers, Coronavirus <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>, accessed 25 June 2020
  - 2 Everyone Included: Social Impact of COVID-19, The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), (27 April 2020), <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/everyone-included-covid-19.html>, accessed 25 June 2020
  - 3 Millions more cases of violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation, unintended pregnancy expected due to the COVID-19 pandemic (28 April 2020), <https://www.unfpa.org/news/millions-more-cases-violence-child-marriage-female-genital-mutilation-unintended-pregnancies>, accessed 25 June 2020
  - 4 Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage, [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19\\_impact\\_brief\\_for\\_UNFPA\\_24\\_April\\_2020\\_1.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19_impact_brief_for_UNFPA_24_April_2020_1.pdf), accessed 25 June 2020
  - 5 Ibid.

Moreover, women are severely affected by both the intensification of childcare needs caused by the temporary closings of schools and day nurseries, and the impossibility of relying on professionals to help their loved ones who are old, disabled or sick at home<sup>6</sup>. This situation is adding to gender inequalities and the very poor access to other alternatives is increasing the amount of stress that falls on women's shoulders. Assisting these women in their roles of caregivers during the crisis is one of the most urgent and essential policy challenges.

Last but not least, women are severely exposed to the negative economic impact of COVID-19. The employment crisis caused by the pandemic puts them more at risk: women aged 24 to 35 are already 25% more likely than men to live in extreme poverty<sup>7</sup>. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has identified that "the basis for the vulnerability of women, especially rural and indigenous women, to chronic poverty is found in discriminatory labour markets and the social exclusion of political and economic institutions"<sup>8</sup>.

These kinds of detrimental effects can be also noted during previous health crises, such as the 2014-2016 West African Ebola outbreak or the 2015-2016 Zika epidemic<sup>9</sup>. It becomes evident that women are hard-hit by disease outbreaks, and the efforts taken so far are not effective enough. In order to confront similar crises in future and guarantee overall stability, a more inclusive and resilient approach to recovery from these health emergencies should be agreed on.

Amongst the challenges that policymakers have to face in this context, there is indeed the necessity of integrating a gender perspective with the measures implemented. In this social crisis, a pivotal step forward along the path to gender equality would be taking into account the distress and suffering women are facing in this atypical situation as well as the need for effective gender-responsive actions from their governments and global leadership.

In the first place, raising awareness and disseminating information are key for governments and leading international organisations. Promoting communication campaigns, programmes and projects that enforce the understanding of women's fragile condition during this troubled period are the opening move to acknowledge the situation and start taking powerful actions:

*"A gender lens requires looking at a situation from two angles: through one lens, we view the realities, needs, perspectives, interests, status, and behaviours of men and boys, and through the other, we view those of women and girls. Combined, they help us understand gender dynamics and provide a more comprehensive view of*

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6 The Impact of Covid-19 on Gender Equality, Titan M. Alon Matthias Doepke Jane Olmstead-Rumsey Michèle Tertilt, National Bureau of Economic Research (April 2020), [https://www.genderportal.eu/sites/default/files/resource\\_pool/w26947.pdf](https://www.genderportal.eu/sites/default/files/resource_pool/w26947.pdf), accessed 25 June 2020

7 Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women, United Nations (9 April 2020), <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/report/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en-1.pdf>, accessed 25 June 2020

8 Briefing Note: The Economic Impacts of Covid-19 And Gender Inequality, United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), (April 2020), [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/PNUD\\_GENERO\\_COVID19\\_ENG\\_FINAL\\_3.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/PNUD_GENERO_COVID19_ENG_FINAL_3.pdf), accessed 25 June 2020

9 COVID-19 and Gender Equality, Save the Children <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/covid-19-and-gender-equality>, accessed 25 June 2020

*a situation or society. Such an analysis shapes our understanding of the underlying causes of destabilizing violence and of how to build resilience that can help prevent and mitigate conflict*<sup>10</sup>.

Secondly, economic disadvantages and extra burdens that women face have only been compounding during the pandemic. It is inescapable that one of the best ways to empower women starts with improving their employment conditions, now more than ever, in order to adapt to the new situation. Leadership should be urged to consider putting into practice innovative changes in the workplace to help women rising above the daily obstacles they have to face. Hence, it would be beneficial to investigate new practices such as:

- introducing policies that evaluate women not according to the number of hours at work, but using assessments based on results;
- adopting family-friendly Human Resources practices and inducing men as well to benefit from paternity leave or flexitime, relieving some of the burden women have to carry while taking care of family demands;
- encouraging continuity in nurturing women's ambitions and supporting their passion for work by providing them both with mentoring programmes and challenging developmental experiences and opportunities to train them for executive positions, eventually assisting them all along to overcome the "glass ceiling"<sup>11</sup> that blocks their path to the C-Suite;
- ensuring the provision of functioning internet connectivity and other remote work tools to encourage teleworking;
- developing new community-based initiatives such as time banks designed for offering time for the care of others.

Not only are these measures necessary under ordinary conditions, but during challenging and extraordinary times such as health crises they become fundamental.

Most importantly, the inclusion of women in decision-making processes aimed at responding to the pandemic is critical in implementing women-centred policies. NATO's Civil Society Advisory Panel on Women, Peace and Security is surely moving towards this ground-breaking direction, including in the panel not only civil society leaders representing Allied and partner nations, but also representatives who bring to the table views and needs of conflict-affected areas. These zones are the most exposed to the negative impacts of disease outbreaks, consequently having profound repercussions on women.

Advancing full participation of women in policy making, especially in countries that lack a history of women in positions of leadership, can lead to more just, peaceful, and secure societies - constructively impacting on the pursuit of human development goals.

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10 Women on the Frontlines of Peace and Security, National Defense University Press, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/Books/women-on-the-frontlines.pdf>, accessed 25 June 2020

11 On Women and Leadership, Harvard Business Review

Coordination between national and international bodies are crucial to provide a rapid and efficient response to the crisis; organisations such as NATO and the United Nations should play a key role in supporting decision-makers in fragile and conflict-affected situations, and encourage them to adopt strong and cohesive gender-sensitive policies.

One poignant case study is Iraq; according to a recent research conducted by Oxfam, the country has registered a worrying increase of GBV during the COVID-19 outbreak: “In April 2020 four UN agencies issued a statement to urge the Iraqi Parliament to speed up its endorsement of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law. This law has been blocked in parliament since 2019”<sup>12</sup>. The NATO training and capacity-building Mission in Iraq (NMI) already contributes to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and it is “adding advisory activities at the institutional level to the initial training activities (...) to reform and strengthen Iraqi security institutions and structures”<sup>13</sup>. Considering the extreme vulnerability of fragile and conflict-affected situations, as soon as a health emergency occurs, concrete actions should be swiftly undertaken to protect women and girls, namely:

- maintaining operative sexual and reproductive health services, psychological support, hotlines and emergency numbers to assist women victims of violence – even through messaging apps to facilitate the communications;
- increasing funds to invest in programmes for women’s economic empowerment, improving their capacity building and resilience for the future;
- ensuring distance learning services, providing women and girls with all the tools necessary to stay connected to the internet;
- assuring the public that justice and the rule of law are not deferred, offering virtual legal services, police and justice assistance;
- stimulating consultations (also online) between administrations and representatives of women’s local organisations, incorporating their requests and suggestions in the measures implemented in response to the crisis.

Encouraging women’s and girls’ empowerment to shape their own future will positively improve governance and ensure the realization of universal equality. As we are approaching to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), it is worthwhile to bear in mind – in particular during these times of crisis and great inequality – one of their milestone concepts: “Women’s rights are human rights”<sup>14</sup>.

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12 Gender Analysis Of The Covid-19 Pandemic In Iraq, Oxfam Research Report (June 2020), <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rr-gender-analysis-covid-19-iraq-220620-en.pdf>, accessed 25 June 2020

13 NATO Mission Iraq, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (17 February 2020), [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_166936.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_166936.htm), accessed 25 June 2020

14 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action - The Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September 1995, [https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing\\_Declaration\\_and\\_Platform\\_for\\_Action.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf), accessed 25 June 2020

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**Nargis Nehan**, named the Iron Woman of Kabul by Bloomberg, is former Minister of Mines and Petroleum, founder of EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy, a civil society organisation operating in 15 provinces of Afghanistan for empowerment of women and youth, and founder of Silsila Consulting Firm focusing on development of public and private sectors. She was living as a refugee in Pakistan and returned back to Afghanistan as soon as the Interim Administration was established to take part in reconstruction of her country. She has experience of over two decades serving in public and private sectors in numerous high-ranking posts including, but not limited to, the Ministry of Finance as DG Treasury, Kabul University, as Vice Chancellor of Administration and Finance and Ministries of Education and Higher Education as Advisor. During her service, she has earned the reputation of a dedicated reformer, women's rights activist, and integrity practitioner.

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**USMC Lieutenant Colonel Natalie Trogus** is a Combat Engineer Officer in the United States Marine Corps. She has served in the Marine Corps for 21 years and has six combat deployments. On her most recent deployment, as a foreign security force advisor and Regional Affairs Officer, she served as the Afghanistan Ministry of Defense Gender Advisor, Resolute Support Mission (RSM)/Operation Freedom's Sentinel, from July 2019 – to July 2020. During this time, she advised and assisted the Human Rights and Gender Integration Directorate in gender integration efforts within the Ministry of Defense. She also supported the Gender Directorate in the implementation of the Afghan National Action Plan 1325 and assisted the Ministry of Defense in establishing 34 Gender Advisor positions across the Ministry of Defense and Afghan National Army, a first of all nations implementing the UNSCR 1325 WPS agenda.





