



## **2011 INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF AID EFFECTIVENESS**

### **SUBMISSION BY THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM (AUSTRALIA)**

#### **Introduction**

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is the oldest women's peace organization in the world. It had its origins in 1915 when women from both sides of the conflict came together at a meeting in The Hague to discuss ways to put an end to the war. From that meeting delegations were sent to the governments of all the combatant nations. Today it has headquarters in Geneva, consultative status with the United Nations and operates in forty countries. It works towards disarmament, non-violent conflict resolution, environmental sustainability and non-violent social transformation, including the achievement of gender equality.

WILPF acknowledges the work the Australian aid program has made in recent years to support the participation of women in peace processes in countries suffering violent conflict and in peacebuilding and post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction. We are concerned, however, that this support has been piecemeal and that there are currently no formal policies to guide the advancement of gender equality in development activities and, as yet, no national action plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, to specifically support the participation of women in peace processes and peacebuilding.

The involvement of women in peace processes, both formal and informal, has clear benefits: Peace processes establish the conditions and foundations for just societies that take into account diverse perspectives – women's inclusion is essential to this. The involvement of women generally affects the range of issues addressed in policy and decision-making contexts, with issues of health, education, nutrition, childcare and human security brought to the table when they might otherwise have been overlooked. Finally, women's involvement is a vital element of inclusive social justice. All are essential to ensure the effectiveness of aid activities in such environments..

## **Why gender equality is important**

Gender equality is defined as a concept that ensures there are no disparities in access to health and education, economic and political resources and opportunities as well as a safe living environment and the lack of discrimination between and amongst males and females.

Contributing to gender inequality are women's limited or lack of time, money and visibility. The concept of 'empowering women' means strengthening the ability of women and girls to control their own destinies through not only having equal access to social services, resources and opportunities but also being able to exert their rights, capabilities, resources and environment.<sup>1</sup>

Gender inequalities are costly and undermine aid effectiveness and development impacts. It has been estimated that persistent inequality and discrimination against women due to restrictions on access to employment and education alone cost between USD58 and USD77 billion per year in the Asia Pacific region.<sup>2</sup> Gender equality and women's empowerment, on the other hand, are powerful multipliers of development efforts.<sup>3</sup>

In those countries or communities suffering violent conflict, the social fabric and trust are destroyed and building peace, promoting reconciliation and carrying out rehabilitation and reconstruction are more complex tasks than political and military leaders alone can effect. As conflict escalates, the patterns of discrimination against women tend to worsen. Consequently, women become more susceptible to the marginalisation and sufferings that are engendered by armed conflict. This increases the socio-economic inequities between genders. To achieve sustainable peace and security, it is therefore necessary to address the social structures that institutionalise the disparities between men and women. This means transforming structures and conditions that are a result of a history of male domination.

Overall, women hold only 19 per cent of parliamentary seats, have fewer educational and employment opportunities than men, earn lower incomes than men, have less access to finance and suffer from social restrictions that limit their opportunities for advancement. In some countries they cannot vote, own or inherit property or move freely outside their homes.

At the international level, the United Nations has never appointed a woman as lead mediator. In 60 years, only eight women have ever been appointed as UN special envoys. Only 2.4 per cent of all signatories to 21 major peace agreements in the past 20 years were women. Only 8.2 per cent of UN police personnel are women.

## **Role of women**

Professor Elisabeth Porter has defined peacebuilding as "Involving all processes that build positive relationships, heal wounds, reconcile antagonistic differences, restore esteem, respect rights, meet basic needs, enhance equality, instill feelings of security, empower moral agency

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<sup>1</sup> Kaucz, Antonia: 'Gendered Evaluation' – AES Conference Paper, 7 Sept 2007

<sup>2</sup> ESCAP *Surging ahead in uncertain times: economic and social survey of Asia and the Pacific 2007*

<sup>3</sup> DAC *Guiding Principles for Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*

and are democratic, inclusive and just”<sup>4</sup> To produce balanced programs and a balanced society, it is essential for women to be involved in all these processes.

Women-led civil society organizations (CSOs) often emerge in crisis setting in response to their communities’ needs. Such organizations often have specialized knowledge, insight and resources, including profound commitments to preventing violence, that are critical to the success of peace processes.

In many instances, particularly at the community level, women are active in mediation and prevention of conflict, negotiating with state and non-state armed actors. Their actions are frequently the early instigators of peace processes. Yet much of the efforts of Pacific peace-women have been outside the orbit of official peace and security policy spaces and much of their work, and to some extent, the women themselves remains invisible. As a result of this invisibility, women were almost completely omitted, for example, from the peace talks immediately following the Solomon Islands crisis – despite the pivotal role they had played – on their own initiative – in bringing about the truce that began the peace process – and despite the enormous contribution women have made to peace processes elsewhere, such as Bougainville.

In the immediate aftermath of conflict their organizations are critical to state building and good governance and provide services that the state is unable to undertake. Yet women’s efforts receive little recognition and they are consistently denied access to formal processes and their needs receive little attention in peace agreements and subsequent post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction. Consequently, it is only the voice of belligerents, that is those who use violence, that is heard.

The involvement of women is essential for a balanced and sustainable outcome to peace processes so that areas such as human rights, health, education and social welfare receive as much attention as disarmament, security, economic recovery and governance. The Beijing Platform for Action, 1995 states that “in addressing armed and other conflict, an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes should be promoted so that before decisions are taken an analysis is made of the effects of women and men, respectively.”

The DAC Guidelines on Conflict Peace and Development Cooperation state that "giving women influence in decision-making and support for effective mechanisms for participation are key elements of a gender aware approach..... Early in the consultation process means should be sought to ensure that women are represented in the local institutions.....mechanisms to give all actors a voice in decision-making processes should be set up as soon as possible".<sup>5</sup>

The United Nations Security Council recognised that international peace and security are advanced when women contribute to peace-building and are included in decision-making processes when it passed Security Council Resolution 1325 in October 2000. The resolution makes women relevant to negotiating peace agreements, peacekeeping operations and

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<sup>4</sup> Porter, Elisabeth, 2007: ‘*Peacebuilding. Women in International Perspective*’

<sup>5</sup> DAC *Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation, 1997, para 92*

reconstructing war-torn societies and is the first Security Resolution to specifically address the role of civil society.

SCR 1325 calls upon the Security Council, the UN Secretary-General, member states and all other parties (i.e. militaries, humanitarian agencies, and civil society) to take action in four inter-related areas

- Participation of women in decision-making and peace processes
- Gender perspectives and training in peacekeeping
- Protection of women in armed conflict and post conflict
- Gender mainstreaming in United Nations reporting systems and implementation of programs

In the Pacific region, femLINKPACIFIC is the most prominent organisation implementing UNSCR 1325 and has gained some traction in bringing attention to women's peace and security issues using UNSCR 1325. This includes representations to the Pacific Forum Regions Security Committee on the development of a 1325 Regional Action Plan.

Together with the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), femLINK has conducted two Peace Talks training courses for women's organisations and policy makers from relevant Government departments. A Peace Talks training manual has been developed and an annual Policy document produced on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 focusing on three areas: human security, security sector governance and enhancing women and security.

In Fiji, femLINK's Rural Women's Media Network has trained more than 50 young women and linked up with at least 1000 women in their local communities through consultations and broadcast activities. A primary aim of this capacity building is the implementation of 1325.

FemLINK's partner in Bougainville, the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency (LNWDA) undertakes UNSCR 1325 awareness training workshops in village communities, documents women's stories while continuing to take an active role in raising awareness on women's issues, human rights and gender equality. It continues to speak out against violence through a local radio network and uses the Policy document as the basis for negotiations with the PNG government.

FemLINK's partner in Solomon Islands, Vois Blong Mere (VBM) distributes copies of femLINK's Policy document to government officials and women in communities. Their aim in providing these is to assist their participation in provincial peace summits being facilitated by the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace and provincial peace officers. VBM is a core member of the Solomon Islands Women, Peace and Security Committee working to implement UNSCR 1325 into the reconstruction of Solomon Islands following the 1998-2003 conflict.

## **Role of the aid program**

WILPF supports the current work of the Australian aid program, particularly those programs that include the participation of women in peace processes. Given that a peaceful and equitable environment is the prerequisite for stability and country's economic development we would urge that those programs that help advance gender equality and ensure women's equal participation in all stages and levels of peace processes including post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction are expanded and adequately resourced. WILPF particularly supports the full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security – to be guided by a fully resourced and accountable Australian National Action Plan (NAP).

AusAID works in those countries that have a low gross national income and which have a low rating on the Human Development Index. A large percentage of the bilateral programs operate in countries that are experiencing, are recovering from or are vulnerable to conflict. Such 'fragile' states have high gender disparities.

An essential aspect of Australia's focus on poverty reduction and its support for civil society and democratic processes should be the mainstreaming of gender and development considerations into all stages of program and project design and implementation. Gender equality is an integral part of universal human rights and is an important development goal in itself.

The Australian aid program has a long history of support for gender equality through comprehensive policies. In 1997 the Government adopted a revised Gender and Development aid policy to strengthen the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men as participants in and beneficiaries of development. This policy also reinforced many of the critical areas of concern reflected in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.

The Gender and Development policy aimed to improve women's access to education and health care and economic resources; promote women's participation and leadership in decision making at all levels; promote the human rights of women and assist efforts to eliminate discrimination against women.

In 2007, an updated policy, *Gender Equality in Australia's aid program*, identified four interrelated factors that needed to be addressed to achieve gender equality, all relevant in conflict affected situations:

- Access – to all resources provided in conflict-affected areas;
- Decision making – in formal and informal institutions;
- Women's right – in all peace and development initiatives;
- Gender capacity building – increase capacity to promote women's rights

However, following the change of government in 2007, this policy has never been revised to be consistent with the current government policies and WILPF is concerned that there is now no formal policy to guide the implementation of programs or activities aimed at fully advancing gender equality.

The aid program should ensure that gender equality is treated as an integral and fundamental aspect of the prevention and resolution of violent conflict and the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It should include, of course, a concern with masculine constructions that instigate, tolerate and sustain violence and it must engage men specifically in non-violent methods of conflict resolution. By ensuring this, women will have increased opportunities for access to and full participation in power structures at all levels and to be fully engaged in peace-building processes.

### **Obstacles to women's participation**

The Beijing+15 Pacific Regional Report noted that with a few rare exceptions, there remains little evidence of serious attempts being made to significantly increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and to protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts. For example, no Eminent persons Groups (EPG) formed by the Pacific Islands Forum to address peace and security issues in the Pacific have ever included a female member. Occasionally, EPG missions have included a reference to gender in the terms of reference, or have involved consultations with women's groups. While providing some avenues for advocacy on the gender dimensions of peace and security, this limited approach perpetuates the notion that women are a mere interest group rather than half the population with an equal voice and contribution at all levels of peace and security dialogue.<sup>6</sup>

Other more specific obstacles are:

***Funding resources:*** The Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) to the United Nations on Women, Peace and Security's Working Paper on Civil Society's Participation in Peacemaking and Peacebuilding says that despite the rhetorical support for the women, peace and security agenda and the development of NAPs, women's peace efforts have limited resources. Funds that do exist for this agenda are overwhelmingly directed at sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) related issues, leaving women's participation and organization development marginalized. Any funding that does exist is not tailored to the reality of working in crisis settings. It is typically for time-limited projects with specific goals and outcomes. This forces women's groups to try and fit their work into the parameters of a specific project rather than allowing them the flexibility necessary in crisis contexts and peace processes.

***Limited institutional capacities:*** The CSAG Working Paper also points out that women's NGOs focus on local level issues when dealing with the impact of conflict, that is, at the sub-national level. They have little access to information generated by the state or international community and it is often difficult for them to make the linkages to the international processes or policies related to the women, peace and security agenda. And yet they often knowledgeable about and adept at addressing aspects of the problems, e.g. lack of security and their community's needs. But they cannot sustain their work or build their capacities without significant technical, political and financial support. In post-conflict situations they are even more stretched since donor funds tend to be directed to building state capacities.

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<sup>6</sup> Beijing+15 Review of Progress in Implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in Pacific Island Countries and Territories, 2010

## **Conclusion**

While the Australian aid program has made a number of serious efforts to mainstream gender equality into its programs and has made some effort to support the participation of women in peace processes, these efforts have not been consistent or sustained. There are currently no formal policies to guide the integration of gender equality into programs and no National Action Plan to guide the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Most of the efforts have come from NGOs and from middling level public servants. There has been virtually no buy in from senior management or at the Ministerial level. This lack of interest would seem to indicate a lack of understanding of the efficacy of including women in peace processes and ultimately on all aid activities. We assume it is not a lack of interest in conflict prevention or in protecting people in vulnerable positions. We would urge that greater attention be paid to integrating gender equality into programs in conflict prone situations in order to increase the effectiveness of those programs.

## **Recommendations**

1. That an up to date gender equality policy be developed for the aid program
2. That a properly resourced and accountable Australian National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 be finalized and implemented
3. That Australia support the development and implementation of a Pacific Regional Action Plan on UNSCR 1325
4. That Australia provide practical support, including long term institutional and programmatic funding for NGOs working internationally and nationally on women's peacebuilding activities

(This submission has been prepared by Barbara O'Dwyer on behalf of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's Australian Section)