

Project overview

The Women, Peace and Security project is an ongoing study of the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in eight conflict-affected countries: East Timor, Kosovo, Liberia, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Sudan. The study also has a regional dimension focusing on UN SCR implementation processes in the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the European Union (EU). The project is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The context for this research project is the passage of Resolution 1325 by the UN Security Council in October 2000, which urged member states to promote increased representation of women at all 'decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict'. The resolution also called upon the Secretary-General 'to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys to pursue good offices on his behalf'.

Also envisaged was an expanded role for women in UN field operations; the introduction of a gender perspective to peacekeeping operations and greater attention to the needs of women and girls during peace processes. Eight years on, the results of the resolution are undeniable: gender advisers have been incorporated into UN peacekeeping operations, UNIFEM and the Office of the Secretary-General's Gender Adviser/Office for the Advancement of Women have put out two major publications on women, peace and security; and a number of field projects in different operating environments have focused on the particular needs of women and girls.

However, the changes in UN peacekeeping and field operations, and the many scattered and isolated activities relating to gender, have not translated into the systematic type of transformation intended by Resolution 1325. Women remain grossly under-represented at the decision-making level of key national and regional institutions and mechanisms dealing with conflict prevention, management and resolution. There is as yet no effective strategic framework for translating the resolution into systematic change and action within key institutions.

This study examines the role of women in continually evolving peace and security processes in conflict-affected countries. In so doing, it addresses the gap between advocacy and practice with regard to the SCR 1325, and questions the assumptions on which it is based, as well as the ability and legitimacy of external actors to bring about gender-related structural changes in conflict-affected countries.

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