Session: Masculinities and the Making of Peace and Violence
Looking at Multiple Identities of Men in Both Processes

After the Battles are Lost and Won

* Incredible lack of accountability when gender is overlooked in peace processes
* Small space for women in peace processes
* More experienced gender advisors are needed in peace-building work
* Militaries, the hyper masculine organisations, must be engaged with to change their attitudes to gender issues
The session ‘Masculinities and the Making of Peace and Violence’, held during the 2nd MenEngage Global Symposium 2014 — Men and Boys for Gender Justice, organised in New Delhi from November 10-13, reflected upon the pressing issues, new horizons and possible solutions related to masculinity’s intersections with violent conflict, militarisation and peace-building. It explored the militarised masculine identities which contribute to conflict in many contexts—and the possibilities for transforming those into different and non-violent identities. The session looked at possible short and long term strategies to engage men for peace-building, demilitarising masculine identities and strategising on how to embrace non-violent identities. The session was moderated by Joseph Vess of Promundo, USA.

‘NEGligible Roldes FOR Woven in Peace Profiles TODAY’

Cate Buchanan, Director, Surviving Gun Violence Project, Australia, focusing on the necessity for more gender advisors in the peace process system, said women are being excluded from substantive participation in peace talks in conflict areas in different parts of the world. One of the trends emerging in the recent past is the conflation of inclusion and participation of women. UN resolution 1325 (on the impact of armed conflicts on women and girls) (See Box ‘United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325’), other resolutions and the whole range of other normative standards argue consistently that women’s participation in all matters of peace is essential, she said. “We want women's inclusion and participation but what you’re increasingly seeing is the dropping of participation and broad references to inclusion,” Buchanan said.

Explaining why this is important, she gave an example from a place where she is involved in the peace process. “One grouping, representing 16 armed groups, comes together to negotiate with the government and the military. What we have is 16 individuals who are representatives of these armed groups -- 15 of them are men and there’s one woman.” In a recent round of ceasefire talks, a member of the government told this woman to be quiet and also used a phrase that referred to her gender and ethnic identity. “None of her male colleagues, ostensibly on her side, came to her defence. Her participation evaporated from that moment. So on paper they have a woman but she’s been effectively silenced not just by the opposition but also by her own colleagues and this is a trend that we see consistently and it is really a fine line between thinking carefully and critically about inclusion,” Buchanan said.

Another issue, she said, is that men dominate the field of international mediation in peace processes. “There’s an incredible lack of accountability when gender is overlooked or women are excluded in the processes,” she said. “We have a lot of women in the frameworks but when international mediation processes particularly don’t abide by or implement them, it is very difficult to have any accountability in the system. Peace agreements also continue to have incredibly weak references to gender across the border on really important issues. We know that gender and women’s rights issues get pushed further and further down the agenda,” Buchanan said. Now Resolution 1325 has led to the emergence of gender advisors in peace processes in the last 15 years. They are deployed by a wide range of entities in the UN, regional organisations, private contractors and NGOs.

‘Peace process work on ground is shabby, say affected women’

Isabelle Geuskens, Executive Director, Women Peacemakers Program, Netherlands spoke about UN resolutions on the impact of war on women in conflict areas and peace-building in such places. “We were very supportive in 2000 when the United Nations Security Council passed resolution no. 1325 which was about the international community recognising the impact of war on women’s lives,” Geuskens said, adding that “it also recognised the key role women play as leaders in concrete solutions, peace-building and building of their societies.” However, the main obstacle women have been facing is that society has no general analysis of violence. “This means that the men have not been on board on 1325 and that women need to have safe spaces for themselves,” she said.

Geuskens said research has shown a correlation between gender equality and violence. The more patriarchal the society is the more is the focus on using power to dominate other people. “And there is a militarisation of the society,” she said, pointing out that there are lots of privileges that come with that for men but it’s really important to highlight the costs.

Buchanan: “What we see in the field of gender advisors is that it’s pretty mixed. Gender advisors are often working with very hostile colleagues within their organisations as well as with their counterparts.”
"The cost of militarization is dehumanisation of men's lives -- men are taught to kill others and put their own lives at risk. Then there is the aftermath of working in a bossy environment -- lots of domestic violence, alcohol abuse, depression among men and suicides. Those are the costs that come with the post-conflict phase."

Anthony Keedi, ABAAD: Resource Center for Gender Equality, Lebanon spoke about young boys in a village close to Akkar in North Lebanon near the border with Syria. The boys play games in which they run around on the street shooting each other with toy guns and trying to win over other groups. One of the groups would be the regime, the other group would be the resistance or opposition and the third group would be the Daesh, the Arabic word for the organisation known as Al-Sham or ISIS. People in the region admit it's disturbing to see young boys playing these violent games. But at the end of the day, boys will be boys, is the common refrain. "This is how these boys learn to resolve conflicts. When someone disagrees with them or when two persons have different opinions on anything, the way to resolve that conflict is through violence," Keedi said. They also learn that power, dominance and violence are the most important things they can develop as young boys. But being vulnerable or caring, feeling for the other person, having empathy, those aren't the things that win the game. "Being able to negotiate these are not the things you learn to value when you are a young man growing up in a conflict area where power, dominance and violence are reinforced every single day even as a child playing a game," he said.

"At another level boys who don't want to play such violent games or are not necessarily good at being violent or dominant, are psychologically tortured by the rest of the boys. Such boys have two choices -- they can 'reform' to the traditional gender stereotype and learn to be violent or they can obey the violent ones and do what they are told. And where are the girls? The girls are not allowed to play. They are on the sidelines, playing with dolls or playing house or at home doing chores while the boys are outside playing. And if a girl is brave enough to say, 'no I want to play with you', she is teased and laughed at.

'ENGAGE WITH MILITARIES TO PUSH GENDER ISSUES'

Robert Egnell, Visiting Professor, Georgetown University, USA, introduced himself as an activist and researcher working with military organisations, studying the use of violence as a political tool and as someone who works with peace-keeping operations. Military organisations, he said, are the final bastion of exclusive hyper masculine organisations. They use violence to achieve political ends. In that sense they are perpetrators. But we also look at the military as a solution sometimes. This is where it gets tricky when it comes to UN Security Council resolution 1325 on the impact of war on women and girls. "But we also look to the militaries as the protectors, as those defending women in eastern Congo and that means whether we like it or not the military is at the core of everything we are talking about here. But when you reduce the military to its most simple function, it's about violence. It's a tool to achieve political ends through the means of violence," Egnell said.

"When we ask them about the purpose of the violence, they say it is to defend the nation, the people and the constitution. If you are familiar with Joshua Goldstein's work on war and gender, you will know that this is part of every society.

"All this is more than just normalisation of violence. It's more than just having boys feel comfortable holding a gun. It's glorification of that violence"
“Societies want to defend themselves, and because we need military institutions to defend society, we also need to populate them with experts in violence, which traditionally have been men and we have consciously socialised these experts.”

“How can we engage the military to create small but perhaps incremental changes for peace? I know it is a very controversial argument that we should help the military become more effective by teaching them gender issues and gender awareness. We have to work from inside as well. We should definitely continue to push the military outside through legislation, through activism, non-violent movements of pacifism, we also have to work from within, change their mindset. We have gender champions within the military. One of the most powerful ones is General Morrison of Australia. So, it’s a matter of working with and not against.”

David Onen Ongwech, Programme Manager, Refugee Law Project, Uganda discussed the issues of men who are victims of sexual violence in refugee groups. This violence greatly distorts their sense of masculinity, and can lead to a cycle of violence against their spouse and children. “Interventions are needed at both the community level, including engaging with elder men, and at the structural level, including addressing legislative deficiencies,” said Ongwech.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

- It was adopted unanimously on October 31, 2000, after recalling resolutions 1261 (1999), 1265 (1999), 1296 (2000), and 1314 (2000)
- The resolution on women, peace and security acknowledges the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls
- It calls for the adoption of a gender perspective to consider the special needs of women and girls during conflict, repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction
- Resolution 1325 was the first formal and legal document from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) that required parties in a conflict to prevent violations of women’s rights, to support women’s participation in peace negotiations and in post-conflict reconstruction, and to protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict
- It was also the first United Nations resolution to specifically mention women
- The resolution has since become an organising framework for the women, peace and security agenda, which focuses on advancing the components of resolution 1325

Criticism of Resolution 1325

Gender Essentialism
- Feminists criticise the resolution for relying on essentialist portrayals of women, rendering women as perpetual victims and ignoring women’s agency to bring about both violence and peace
- For example, reports of violence against civilians tend to emphasise “women and children” as victims to illustrate the brutal nature of violence. Conversely, this framing also implies that men are not victims, despite male victims of sexual violence or gender-based violence of killing men because they are men
- Gender essentialism also assumes that women are innately peaceful, usually due to their experience as mothers, which is one of the main reasons that people use to argue for including women in peace processes
- Another frequently-cited gender essentialist argument is that women are natural coalition builders and are more likely to work with members of other groups. Resolution 1325 incorporates these assumptions and they are frequently cited in the Secretary-General Reports, advocacy movements and National Action Plans. The result is that women often feel the need to conform to certain stereotypes and that women who do not fit these ideals are marginalised in politics and policy.

Gender Mainstreaming
- UNSCR supports gender mainstreaming or the incorporation of a gender perspective into all policies and programs, in peacekeeping missions and other UN programs related to peace and security
- Critics argue that other parts of the resolutions, such as having a Senior Gender Advisor, lead to the segregation of women’s rights from all other peace and security issues. Women’s issues become sidelined in a “gender ghetto” and remain outside the mainstream. By limiting women’s issues to Gender Advisers or officers, security institutions continue to view gender issues as a niche topic and the institutions remain male-dominated systems
- Germany initially did not implement a 1325 National Action Plan for this reason, arguing that it had mainstreamed gender concerns into its government agencies and policies, although it later implemented one in 2012

This synthesis paper is also available in other languages

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