

8. Women, peace and security

Overview

The women, peace and security agenda (WPS) consists of eight United Nations Security Council resolutions that inject a gender perspective into various peace and security fora. This perspective calls for women's participation in preventing armed conflict and in peacebuilding, as well as for the protection of women and girls in conflict. The foundational resolution of the WPS agenda, UN Security Council Resolution 1325, was adopted unanimously in October 2000. It was the first Security Council resolution to specifically address the impact of armed conflict on women, and women's contribution to conflict resolution and sustainable peace. This formal agenda has also given rise to a transnational epistemic community of governments, private sector actors, researchers and, most notably, civil society. Many within this community have their origins in the women's peace movement.

While the WPS agenda has been lauded for promoting a better understanding of the relevance of a gender perspective within the overall international peace and security discourse, there has also been some criticism over the lack of political will and funding for its implementation. Additionally, insufficient implementation strategies as well as tools of evaluation and monitoring remain issues of concern.

Section I provides an introduction to the WPS agenda. It sets out the historical context for the WPS agenda and its further evolution, tracing the origins of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and providing an overview of the eight subsequent resolutions.

Section II provides an overview of events in 2015 relevant to the WPS agenda, with a focus on the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2242, the most recent addition to the WPS toolbox. In addition, the 15th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, commemorated in 2015, provided an opportunity for formal reflection on the current and future direction of the WPS agenda. Thus, this section also examines four key review processes: the High-level Review of Women, Peace and Security; the Global Study on the implementation of resolution 1325; the Report of the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (HIPPO); and the Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture. The latter two reports provide important insights into the current status of implementation of 1325 specifically within UN peace operations and peacebuilding.

Section III provides two case studies on implementation of the WPS agenda, one on security sector reform and the other on the health sector, demonstrating that all parts of society and government have a role to play in realizing the WPS agenda.

An optimistic assessment of the WPS agenda notes that it has created a norm of gender mainstreaming and increased gender awareness around conflict, especially regarding sexual violence in armed conflict. However, major hurdles remain with regard to implementation and in creating substantial change in the daily lives of women affected by conflict.

Theresa Höghammar, Emma Bjertén-Günther and
Rachel Irwin