

# BUILDING PEACE

3 WOMEN, MEN, AND PEACE

## STORIES OF WOMEN AND MEN: AGENTS OF CHANGE



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Women Photographers from  
Iran and the Arab World

THE POTENTIAL OF MEN  
IN POST-WAR DEMOCRATIC  
REPUBLIC OF CONGO

AFGHANISTAN'S  
ONLY FEMALE MAYOR  
SPEAKS OUT

WOMEN, WAR, AND  
PEACE: AN INTERVIEW  
WITH ABIGAIL DISNEY



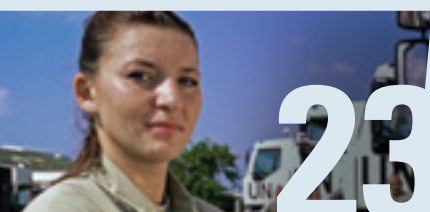
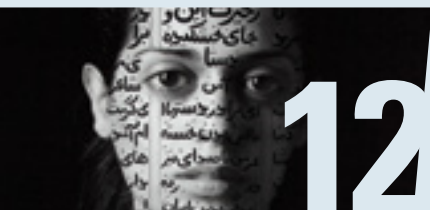
Alliance for  
Peacebuilding

# BUILDING PEACE

A FORUM FOR PEACE AND SECURITY  
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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WOMEN, MEN, AND PEACE



## FRONT COVER

### Image Credit:

*Roja*  
Shirin Neshat (Iranian born, born in 1957)  
2012 | Photograph, gelatin silver print  
with India ink

© Shirin Neshat  
Courtesy of Gladstone Gallery,  
New York and Brussels  
Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

*Roja [Patriot]* is from a photographic series called “The Book of Kings.” *Roja* comes from a part of the series called “The Patriots” that focuses on Iranian youth and portrays their connections to the past and their desire for change today. The Arabic calligraphy on the subject’s body, a classic art form usually reserved for men, is an acknowledgement of tradition and a flouting of it.

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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dear Reader,



Ending violence and moving forward in the fragile social, economic, and political setting that follows a conflict poses challenges to women and men alike but also creates unique opportunities. We dedicate Issue 3 to gender and peacebuilding, exploring how women and men can reconstruct war-torn nations. Our authors include civil society activists, policymakers, educators, students, filmmakers, and philanthropists—people working for change from multiple vantage points. They write from and about Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran, and places in between, affirming a recent quote by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, executive director of UN Women, “Gender equality is also smart peacebuilding.”

Making peace is a process, but a formal moment when peace is declared almost always sets the stage for what comes next. In her 2012 study, “Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace,” Desirée Nilsson looked at eighty-three peace agreements and found that these agreements are 60 percent less likely to fail when nongovernmental actors and political parties participate in the negotiations. This is as strong a case as any for including women, minorities, and other underrepresented groups in peace processes.

Security Council Resolution 1325, which the United Nations adopted in 2000, focuses specifically on women, peace, and security, mandating the role that women can and should play in peacebuilding. It offers global leaders and local communities a tool to advocate for inclusion and participation, as Sofi Ospina describes in her article. In another piece in this issue, Valerie M. Hudson writes, “The treatment of women

in a society is a real barometer of the degree to which a society is capable of peace.” It is crucial that we understand the role of women in pushing for social change in Egypt, appreciate the progress toward gender equality in postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina, look at how women photographers are creating change from behind the lens in Iran and the Middle East, and learn about women governing in Afghanistan.

But the conversation about gender and peacebuilding is actually about inclusion and participation: social, cultural, economic, and political. We cannot talk about including women in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding without being attentive to where this leaves men. Alexa Hassink and Donald Steinberg write persuasively about the dangers of leaving men behind in peacebuilding strategies. In every culture and every part of the world, women are powerful agents in making and building peace. As we move ahead in 2014, let us create even more opportunities and support those women and men who strive for positive change.

Warmly,

**Jessica Berns**  
Editor-in-Chief

# What is UN Security Council Resolution 1325?

Source: Author (Sahana Dharmapuri)



**U**nanimously adopted on October 31, 2000, UNSCR 1325 is the first legal framework from the United Nations Security Council focused specifically on women, peace, and security. The resolution addresses the specific effects of war on women and the many roles women should play in peacebuilding.

## Why is Resolution 1325 important?

Resolution 1325 mandates a role for women in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. It validates women's experiences in wartime and reaffirms their role as peacemakers and peacebuilders.

## THE FOUR PILLARS OF THE RESOLUTION



### PARTICIPATION

Resolution 1325 calls for increased participation of women at all levels of decision making related to peace and security, including in national, regional, and international institutions; in mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict; in peace negotiations; in peace operations, as soldiers, police, and civilians; and as special representatives of the UN secretary-general.



### PROTECTION

Resolution 1325 calls for the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, including in emergency and humanitarian situations, such as in refugee camps.



### PREVENTION

Resolution 1325 calls for improving strategies to prevent violence against women, including prosecuting those responsible for violations of international law, strengthening women's rights under national law, and supporting local women's peace initiatives and conflict resolution processes.



### RELIEF AND RECOVERY

Resolution 1325 calls for advancement of relief and recovery measures to address international crises through a gendered lens. This includes respecting the civilian and humanitarian nature of refugee camps and accounting for the particular needs of women and girls in the design of such camps and settlements.

Source: UN Security Council Resolution 1325, [http://www.usip.org/gender\\_peacebuilding/about\\_UNSCR\\_1325](http://www.usip.org/gender_peacebuilding/about_UNSCR_1325).



ON THE GROUND

EGYPT



# A REVOLUTION ASKS QUESTIONS

Doaa Abdelaal

**I still remember how I felt celebrating with thousands on Tahrir Square the night Hosni Mubarak was toppled.** I was happy and proud. I believed that change would come. Whenever I feel confused or frustrated now, I recall those feelings to encourage me to continue moving toward change.

On Tahrir Square in 2011, I was surrounded by waves of smiling people shaking hands, singing, and dancing. Suddenly a question rose in my head that has haunted me ever since. On the way back home that day, when my father asked me why I was silent, I asked him, "What is next?" He did not reply, but his friend started talking about different experiences in other countries. I listened carefully and said, "So it is not going to be easy and we should be ready."

The change I dream of will not come easily, or without commitment and sacrifices.

After hundreds of incidents, clashes, protests, marches, sit-ins, and political settlements, I am experiencing another emotion: anger. I am angry with the people who believe that we failed, and I am angry with mocking questions such as "Where are the women?" because some analysts cannot see beyond the number of women in parliament or a constitution drafting committee.

I would like to tell them that revolutions do not give answers; they only raise questions that may not have answers yet. The Egyptian revolution is not an exception.

The women and men who believe in revolution as a process to change and challenge stereotypes and rigid lifestyles saw the January 25, 2011 revolution as a window that finally opened after years of struggle. This window is small—it might be difficult to fit through it—but I am sure it will not close. And we are making our way through the window now, day by day, to a changed and freer society.

We struggled for years to create a society that respects personal freedoms as well as equality of all human beings. The January 25 revolution was an opportunity for a younger generation to emerge who believes that justice must be the basis for treating people regardless of gender, faith, class, race, and ethnicity. I keep asking Nada, a 25-year-old acquaintance, why she decided to leave her work in a reputable multinational company for a women's rights nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Boulaq, a Cairo neighborhood considered to be a slum. She always has the same answer: "Because if the women in Boulaq did not get their rights, then no woman in Egypt will get hers, regardless of her class or how 'free' she thinks she is. To empower women and develop the country you need to start with the very basic needs." For Nada and many other young women who work to realize the dream of change, gender equality cannot be achieved without changing the overall political system that oppresses us.

We have faced hundreds of setbacks in the past three years. The social, economic, and political systems in Egypt oppress us, hinder our creativity, and impose curfews that limit our movement. But when I feel stuck and worn down, I recall the feeling I had on Tahrir Square and the vision before me that evening, of thousands of young women and men who believed that a revolution depends on a dream, on laughter and celebration.

I forget my anger and frustration at the slow process of change when I hear of young women continuing to work to change the

## The change I dream of will not come easily, or without commitment and sacrifices.

rules of the game in political parties. They are not just filling out membership forms; they argue that they must be a part of decision making and agenda setting, making it clear that they will not stop pushing for reforms. Another acquaintance, Naiera, struggles inside her political party to bring youth vision to the agenda. "It is difficult to bring the youth vision to established parties who have money and power," she says. "But we know that youth can make a difference and contribute to change and that's what motivates us to be organized and unified."

I forget being tired when I see that men are joining the struggle, not just fighting for women's rights but for gender equality. We are together pushing for change; together we paint our dreams on the walls.

My anger returns, however, when I remember how much we risk as women in our public and private struggles. In November 2011, when clashes erupted between security forces and activists who wanted to protect the Tahrir Square sit-in protestors, I was delivering medical supplies to a field hospital with a friend. She looked at me and asked, "How much tear gas have we inhaled in the last few days?" I was not sure how to reply. Then she smiled and said, "I want to be a mother one day and am struggling to give our children an Egypt free of oppression, but I hope my body gets rid of the poisons of the tear gas so it will not affect the health of my babies." She was dreaming in the middle of the gas clouds, reminding me that in the midst of our struggles we should not forget our personal dreams.

I hope my mixed feelings and emotions will stay with me forever. These feelings and the questions our revolution poses are needed

to create alternatives, to pave new roads, so we are not trapped between two options only: a militarized regime or another that is based on religious fundamentalist thinking. We pose questions such as "Where do we go next?" and "How should we organize ourselves?" to try to understand our present and our future. It is difficult but we need to keep those questions alive. We believe that another world is possible, and without any ready answers, we continue to work for it.

*Doaa Abdelaal is a women's rights activist who works in Egypt, the Middle East, and North Africa with women and youth groups. She is a board member of an international solidarity network called Women Living Under Muslim Laws and an active member of Ikhtyar Collective for Gender Research and Studies in Egypt.*

Source: Flickr  
(Nehal El-Sherif "A woman casting her ballot in al-Mahalla city" 23 May, 2012)







Source: Author (Sharada Jnawali)

# MAHESWARA THRIVES

## IN BUILDING PEACE FROM BELOW

Sharada Jnawali

**Born to a farming family in a village in the Sankhuwasabha district of Nepal,**

Maheswara Shrestha Bajracharya spent her childhood herding cattle, ploughing, caring for siblings, and cooking for her family. In a society with strong gender discrimination, Maheswara's parents restricted her from going to school. But she was interested in education, and attracted to the sports that her peers in the community enjoyed, so despite her parents' objections, she secretly entered the first grade at the age of 11.

"I was beaten up badly when my parents found out that I got admitted to the school," Maheswara recalls. She protested and continued to go to school, but as an exchange, she had to take cattle along for grazing and tie them up outside the school compound until classes finished. In addition, she faced constant assaults, both verbal and physical, and received plenty of household chores to complete. Yet her perseverance and zeal for education compelled her every day to school. Her passion for sports was unusual—especially rare among the girls in her remote district of Nepal.

Maheswara was 17 when she got married, under family pressure, and had her first child the following year. Her husband expelled her for giving birth to a girl, and she went back to her parents' house seeking security and support. Her parents did not receive her well, and her brothers accused her of leaving her husband's house because she was eyeing her parents' property. In Maheswara's words, "One day I went to a river side attempting suicide. I thought of my child for a while and gave up the idea of suicide and made my commitment to give a better life to my daughter." She vowed to complete her education and rejoined the school in the ninth grade, paying the necessary fees by selling her earrings.

After she completed high school, Maheswara found a job with British Nepal Medical Trust (BNMT) as an aide. Alongside other girls her age, she felt comparatively wealthy. Her income now made her husband want to reconnect with her. She went back to him for the sake of giving the father's name to her child. She had a second child. Then her husband died in an accident, leaving her with yet another stigma as a single woman. The Maoist conflict was heightening during the time, leaving other women widowed as 200 people were killed or disappeared in the district. Maheswara approached various organizations for support, knocking on the doors of NGO and government offices, but was only humiliated and intimidated. Meanwhile, she lost her job with the BNMT.

A gradual strengthening of the institutional arrangements to address issues of conflict victims opened doors for Maheswara and other women in similar situations. Women in Human Rights (WHR), an umbrella organization for single women, heard about

**"One day, I went to the riverside to attempt suicide. I thought of my child for a while and gave up the idea of suicide and made my commitment to give a better life to my daughter."**

Maheswara and called her to join the organization as a focal person in the district to support the cause of preventing discrimination against women on the basis of marital status. Maheswara formed a seven-member district committee of single women and got it registered in WHR. Together with WHR and Rural Reconstruction Nepal, she secured resources from the local government district development committee and mobilized them in community activities for building peace. She has now shifted to advocacy for women's rights and gender equality, lobbying for women representation in peace negotiations, mobilizing women for social and economic reforms, and attending meetings and seminars on related issues. As a strong believer in using sports as a method for peace-building, she continues to be involved in athletics. Sharing her sports certificates and medals with the national government gave her the opportunity to serve as a district instructor and she is pleased to constructively engage with the youth. Now a sports coach and mother of two children with household and NGO responsibilities, she is a unique member of the community.

"I am pleased with what I have now," says Maheswara. "I am helping two of my daughters go to college. I am no longer afraid of speaking about and presenting issues before

the authorities. I am welcomed in my community meetings and trusted for managing resources. I hope to raise the status of all women in my village to the same height."

*Sharada Jnawali has been engaged for fourteen years in conflict analysis, prevention, mitigation, and reconciliation, working with public institutions and nongovernmental organizations. She now serves as a consultant to the Asian Development Bank.*





# WHY PEACE DEPENDS ON WOMEN

Dewi Suralaga

**One-quarter of the world's population—1.5 billion people—live in societies affected by war, where fundamental human needs go unsatisfied and communities are divided and insecure.** The lives of women and children are most deeply affected: According to UN Women, the number of women affected by conflict-related rape and sexual violence, forced displacement, and abduction far exceeds that of men. In the absence of men—drawn away or perished in fighting—women often have sole responsibility for taking care of their families financially, even as discrimination and violence against women and girls influence their economic and political opportunities, their mobility, their personal health, their ability to get an education, their families, their communities, and, ultimately, their country.

The background paper for the 2013 global technical review of UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security coordinated by UN Women states that levels of gender equality and women's security in society are firmly correlated to indicators of

national health, economic growth, corruption, and social welfare. During and after a conflict, women have an immediate understanding of the many implications of violence and must be involved in peacebuilding processes to identify what needs to be done to establish greater security for themselves, their families, and their communities. This security is not only about ending the shooting but also about raising the quality of daily life, reducing day-to-day violence and fear, strengthening justice for women, and improving relations within communities. Addressing women's needs and priorities and protecting them from violence can therefore strengthen peacebuilding processes, socially, economically, and politically.

“Based on 100 years of experience it is our conviction that there is no such thing as ‘peace’ when women are not on board. There is no excuse for not having women on the negotiation table. This lesson should be implemented in current crises like in Syria, South Sudan, or the Central African Republic,” states Simone Filippini, Cordaid's executive director.

## **During and after a conflict, women have an immediate understanding of the many implications of violence and must be involved in peacebuilding processes to identify what needs to be done to establish greater security for themselves, their families, and their communities.**

### **Developing a Barometer for Security in Women's Lives**

According to UN Women, in the major peace agreements signed between 1992 and 2010, only 2.5 percent of signatories were women. Peacebuilding processes rarely include women's priorities, which in turn significantly undermines the prospect of sustainable peace in many countries. Cordaid, one of the largest development organizations in the Netherlands, is working with a collective of local women's groups in Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other countries to strengthen local women's capacities to improve the collection of information about the insecurity women face in their communities. In this initiative, called "the barometer of local women's security," local women themselves document and monitor the security situation from their own perspectives.

The barometer process has quickly revealed that women's perceptions of security are drastically different and far broader than traditional paradigms of state security. For example, local women identified three priorities for regular monitoring: effects of militarization and armed conflict; access to justice and legal services for women who are victims of violence; and access to rights and entitlements, such as property rights—particularly for the most vulnerable women, such as those widowed by conflict. Using a series of indicators or conditions under each theme, local women not only are generating the evidence needed to raise awareness about their concerns and lobby for change but also are breaking the isolation of vulnerable

women and giving them a voice. The barometer connects women, raising their collective awareness and, therefore, their collective power to take action to address their concerns about security in their communities. They are using information to connect and empower themselves and promote security through their eyes and their lives.

### **Afghanistan: Unveiling Women's Security Issues**

The government of Afghanistan is working on a peace deal with the Taliban and other insurgent groups, but Afghan women's groups are concerned that the deal will compromise the gains in women's rights in the past decade. High-profile international pressure, along with tireless lobbying from the Afghan women's movement, however, has resulted in the inclusion of women in the peace process. This is a significant victory, as the majority of Afghan women still have difficulties leaving their homes without being accompanied by their husbands or a male relative, and around 80 percent of women are illiterate and affected by gender-based violence.

The 2010 Loya Peace Jirga, in which 1,500 delegates from all walks of life in Afghanistan participated, included 160 women. In another step forward for women in the public domain in the country, nine women were elected to be among the sixty-one members of the High Peace Council, which operates under the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program. Afghan women's key demands are loud and clear: Any peace negotiations must address the root causes of conflicts and

secure the rights and gains of women. In February 2014, the Women's Committee within the Afghan High Peace Council issued a petition for people to sign on to their call: "To end the current bloodshed and establish nationwide peace and unity, we call on the government, armed opposition groups and the international community to participate in peace talks and urge the conflicting parties to declare a cease-fire and to reach peace."

The Afghan Women's Network (AWN), a coalition of 112 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and 5,000 individuals, has led the way in supporting women's participation in the official peace process, along with grassroots peace initiatives. AWN's effectiveness in national and international policy arenas is built on the legitimacy and credibility of its membership and extensive processes of local consultation.

### **Colombia: Breaking the Glass Ceiling**

The government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are negotiating a peace deal to resolve four decades of armed conflict in the country. The prolonged conflict has disproportionately affected women and girls: 76 percent of the 1,497 assassinated indigenous persons were women; the number of women's rights defenders assassinated increased by 200 percent between 2009 and 2010; and 80 percent of the 4,744,046 people displaced are women and children. The National Women's Network (*Red Nacional de Mujeres*) in Colombia has so far organized eighteen regional and three national forums

to discuss the peacebuilding process in their country, and in 2013 the persistent efforts of the women's organizations yielded positive results. In October 2013, six women's networks organized the Women's Peace Summit and submitted recommendations to the peace negotiators. In November 2013, the assembly reached its first agreement regarding political participation and includes a statement that "everything about the extent of political participation including its implementation was carried out taking into account a gender perspective and ensuring the participation of women." In response to the continued pressure from the women's movement in the country, in the same month, the president appointed two women as the first female chief negotiators to join the Colombian government's negotiating team with the FARC. The effect of these appointments remains to be seen, but they offer the promise of women's perspectives and approaches being taken into account as the country continues its progress toward peace.

In the meantime, the women's movement is already looking ahead and preparing its position for the postconflict period. Women continue to consult widely on complex issues such as land distribution and the demobilized guerrilla. They debate the most productive steps toward reconciliation, including whether ex-combatants should be permitted to settle back in their communities or be prosecuted. The opposing groups are part of the same communities, but how will women feel to have to live alongside the very people who raped them and killed their husbands? The women fully realize that until those issues are properly resolved, the wounds will remain open and become a fertile ground for new conflict.

**Sustainable peace will remain elusive unless all citizens of a country—men and women—have the same opportunities to exercise their political, economic, and social rights.**

### The Future of Resolution 1325

Implementing the obligations of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in ways that create political and cultural shifts in promoting women's actual participation in peacebuilding remains a challenge. Three main conditions need to be addressed to realize the commitments made in Resolution 1325 and related resolutions.

First, the concept of security used to frame problems related to conflict and violence needs to center on people rather than the state. Interventions of the United Nations and donor countries usually pay lip service to the importance of human security and then continue to focus on issues that may not serve the best interest of the people, such as providing technical training to security forces without fundamentally reforming them or taking care of women as victims of violence instead of involving them in resolving it.

Second, the commitments made in Resolution 1325 and related resolutions need to be measured and reviewed within a stronger accountability framework. National action plans to implement Resolution 1325 are uneven and flimsy in many parts of the world. Civil society can contribute to establishing standards and developing monitoring processes, such as the barometer initiative to measure local women's security. The contribution is even more relevant now because since October 2013 state signatories have been obliged to report their implementation of Resolution 1325.



Source: Enver Rahmanov

Finally, sustainable peace will remain elusive unless all citizens of a country—men and women—have the same opportunities to exercise their political, economic, and social rights. This has been said many times, but it continues to be a daily problem in many conflict-affected areas. Full and meaningful community participation, including women leaders and networks, is essential to ensure more equal gender relations and the inclusion of all views on how to build and sustain peace.

*Dewi Suralaga is policy advisor for women and peace and security at Cordaid, one of the largest development organizations in the Netherlands. Together with more than 600 local partners Cordaid has been fighting poverty and exclusion in the most fragile conflict areas in the world for over a century.*





# SHE WHO TELLS A STORY

Women Photographers from Iran and the Arab World

Kristen Gresh

Over the past decade, and particularly since September 11, 2001, exhibition organizers, art critics, and the international market have paid more attention to contemporary art from Iran and the Arab world. A variety of cultural initiatives has brought about this change, but it is also an effect of the growing political turmoil in the region. One of the most significant developments is the increasingly important role of women photographers, whose remarkable and provocative work is challenging stereotypes and providing alternative images of the region from those that we are inundated with in the media.

*She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran and the Arab World*, at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, was the first major North American exhibition of this exceptional photography, introducing the pioneering work of twelve leading contemporary Arab and Iranian women photographers. The exhibition and accompanying book highlight the rich variety of artistic expression and diversity of approaches the photographers have taken to portraying their native lands. As notions of international, national, and personal identity—and in some cases the countries themselves—are being

dismantled and rebuilt, the photography reflects the complexities of a region undergoing unparalleled change, balancing its contradictions while challenging stereotypes and addressing social and political issues.

In Arabic, the word *rawiya* means “she who tells a story,” which is also the name of a recently founded small collective of female photographers based in the Middle East (Iranian Newsha Tavakolian and Jordanian Tanya Habjouqa, both included in the exhibition, are founding members of Rawiya). The photographs in the exhibition are themselves a collection of compelling narratives about contemporary life. They pose questions about concepts of identities and the ways they can be layered, constructed, fragmented, and staged, as the artists reflect on the power of politics and the legacy of war. The photographers explore the visible and the invisible, notions of voice and language, the permissible and the forbidden, and the coexistence of life and war. Ranging in style from fine art to photojournalism, the images offer insight into major political and social issues in a part of the world that is historically misrepresented and often misunderstood.



Metro #7  
Rana El Nemr (born in 1974)  
2003 | Chromogenic print  
Reproduced with permission.  
Courtesy of the artist  
Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

**The photographs in the exhibition are themselves a collection of compelling narratives about contemporary life.**



*Untitled #2*  
Gohar Dashti (Iranian, born in 1980)  
2008 | Photograph  
Courtesy Galerie WHITE PROJECT Paris. Reproduced with permission.  
Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



*Women of Gaza 3*  
Tanya Habjouqa (Jordanian, born in 1975)  
2010 | Car on beach with family behind  
© Tanya Habjouqa | Courtesy of the artist and East Wing  
Contemporary Gallery | Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

On women artists in Iran in “Contemporary Art in the Middle East,” Lebanese-Iranian freelance curator and gallery owner Rose Issa points out a paradox regarding perceptions of the country: “Iran, the same country that supposedly represses women, can also produce [women directors such as] Samira Makhmalbaf, Rakhshan Bani Etemad, Mania Akbari, and Forough Farrokhzad.” She also highlights some of the young women photographers today who have overcome perceived obstacles to working in Iran. Iranian-born professor and author Hamid Naficy also discusses the emergence of particularly strong women film directors from Iran in recent decades. In “Poetics and Politics of Veil, Voice, and Vision in Iranian Post-Revolutionary Cinema,” Naficy states, “The rise of differently situated women directors is emblematic and constitutive of the forceful emergence of women into the public space in many spheres, including politics, cinema, television, press and performing and visual arts.”

In her book *Art Press*, Omid Rouhani comments that after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Iranian women artists “began looking for ways of proving and expressing their identity, and did so well before men. This autobiographical, personal vision of

collective social and individual issues, both existential and philosophical, was more prominent in work by women. And in this regard a new phase began with the presidential elections of June 2009: beyond questions of self-discovery, feminism and equality, new issues await today’s women artists.” Women have frequently been at the heart of, or very active in, social change, as seen in the recent protests in Iran and the Arab world.

Newsha Tavakolian, born and based in Tehran, feels significantly empowered as a female photographer and as an Iranian woman. “When you see me at my work,” she said in a 2012 interview, “I always wear long, long *abaya* and my *hijab* because then I have power that way.” Even as the government requires women to wear a *hijab* in public, women such as Tavakolian use the covering to wield more autonomy and agency.

While the majority of photographers in this exhibition do not wish to be categorized solely as women photographers, several recognize that their experiences differ from those of their male counterparts. Egyptian photographers Rana El Nemr and Nermin Hammam refer to being in privileged

positions as women. As Hammam stated in a 2012 interview, “Gender comes into play in the way people respond to me as a female photographer.” She suggests that in her series *Uppekha*, the images would have been different if she had been a man because her subjects would have reacted differently to the experience of being photographed.

*She Who Tells a Story* seeks to use the photographers’ aesthetic as a tool to help understand the complexities of a region that are too often simplified. It is an invitation and opportunity for all, not only to discover new photography but also to shift perspectives and open a cultural dialogue.

*Kristen Gresh is the Estrellita and Yousuf Karsh Assistant Curator of Photographs at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. She curated the exhibit “She Who Tells a Story: Women Photographers from Iran and the Arab World,” which ran from August 27, 2013 to January 12, 2014 at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston.*





*Mother, Daughter, Doll series*  
 Boushra Almutawakel (Yemeni, born in 1969)  
 2010 | Photograph, chromogenic print (archival C-print)  
 © Boushra Almutawakel  
 Courtesy of the artist and East Wing Contemporary Gallery  
 Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Source: Author (Orzala Ashraf)

# MAKING THEIR OWN PATHS TO PEACE

Orzala Ashraf Nemat

**Afghanistan's political history and the ongoing violence across the country have directly affected women's political participation and status in society.**

By the mid-1990s, the systematic subordination of women resulted in their absolute disappearance from the public sphere. This, however, does not mean that women were not resisting. Often in invisible ways—by turning their homes into girls' schools and by empowering women through home-based economic activities such as embroidery and carpet weaving—women challenged the ruling system that kept them at home. Other women served as health workers, abiding by the Taliban rule to always be accompanied by a close male relative while reaching out to communities in many parts of the country.

The effects of migration, the denial of fundamental rights, and the psychological toll of long-term war and violence are evident on the faces of Afghan women. However, as great as the consequences of war are on Afghan society in general, and on women in particular, they have turned women into strong and dedicated agents of change—in contrast to the international media's portrayal of Afghan women as passive, helpless victims who need saving and support. Women's leadership in local councils is based on their patronage and kinship links to village elites rather than on their technical or formal skills. I also observe that, contrary to the international community's portrayal of rural Afghanistan being very closed to women's public roles, depending on the locality and

other conditions, Afghan villagers have been quite open to women in the public sphere. However, getting men and women in the same room or truly and fully integrating women's voices in the village plan is still a challenge, and even though their role is sometimes symbolic, women in the villages now have a space in local governance.

Since 2013, international political and financial support has allowed women to return to the public sphere. But this international support, along with central government programs and projects, must be seen as the means—not the end—in Afghan women's struggle for gender equality and women's rights. The key is Afghan women themselves, their capacity to lead and pioneer the change they envision under the view that rights are gains, not gifts.

Although Afghanistan's cities are growing rapidly, the majority of the population is still rural. My research over the past three years focuses on how international and national programs and policies have influenced village-level governance structures and norms. How do local communities receive the conditions associated with these interventions? Do they resist or accept them? I looked at a common condition to include women in community development councils (CDCs), village-level councils that many see as a form of local governing structure.<sup>1</sup> These councils identify and prioritize development needs and the projects proposed to meet them. The overall intervention is part of the World Bank's larger Community Driven Development project known in Afghanistan as the National Solidarity Program (NSP), led by a government ministry and facilitated by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). I see this as a form

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of global governance conduct in which both international/transnational and central government institutions and actors strive to establish a set of formal local governance institutions and reconfigure the social relations among the population. The rationales and intentions of each party may differ, but sociopolitical relations change in some way as a result.

I am optimistic about how women are being accepted into the CDCs. Despite high levels of skepticism from many national and international actors about whether women would actually take part in these councils and be accepted, examples of open rejection and resistance to women's inclusion are very few across the country. The fact that there has not been strong resistance disproves the notion of Afghanistan as a strictly tribal and traditionalist society, static and closed to change. Such acceptance, of course, may not be unrelated to the fact that the interventions bring resources to the

community and strengthen the authority of local elites. But the openness to include women on development councils, albeit in a symbolic way in most cases, exists nonetheless.

The women most successfully installed in the local councils have ethnic or kinship ties to the village elites, who, in most cases, lead the councils. Though a high level of politics is also involved in electing male representatives, patronage is a key determinant in allowing women access to the councils and women with no such ties are often excluded. Whether the women can be effective in their representation depends very much on their capacity and position within their community, their level of knowledge and experience, and how courageous they are in speaking their minds. Councils with stronger and more active women members secure better access to resources for women. Councils with women as only symbolic representatives have almost failed to gain any direct support for village women.

1. Discussions on the official status of the CDCs as formal local governance institutions are ongoing between the concerned ministries. In a joint policy document titled "Policy for Improving Governance and Development in Districts and Village, May 2013" produced by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and Independent Directorate for Local Governance, CDCs are recognized as a form of local governance until the constitutionally legitimate village councils are established. Article 13-17 of the policy elaborates on the agreement specifically in this regard. The Council of Ministers needs to approve this document for execution.



Another important factor is the role of facilitating partners and their female social mobilizers who directly work with these women.<sup>2</sup> Najiba Hussaini, a widow elected as CDC deputy in a village in the Yakawlang district of Bamyan, was a refugee in Iran and used to be her community's female focal point in the camp where she lived. She became deputy chief of the CDC when her village merged with a neighboring village to meet the standard population size criterion for the NSP. The two villages agreed that the positions of chief and deputy should be divided between them based on who won the majority vote. The facilitating partners informed villagers that the deputy CDC post must be filled by a woman. In the ensuing elections, the larger village won the majority vote for the CDC chief position and Hussaini became CDC deputy with the responsibility not only to address the concerns of all women from both villages but also to make sure her home village received a fair share of the resources allocated for each CDC.

As she is articulate in explaining the needs of her community's women, Najiba is also called to the district assembly to advocate for her council's needs. She has never been to school and is illiterate but carries her notebook, pen, and mobile everywhere she goes and does not see her illiteracy as a problem. "I can't read and write, but many do. I save in my mind what people discuss. When it comes to numbers, I ask someone to make notes of numbers in my notebook. Hence, I don't miss anything," she says with confidence. However, her CDC has not brought long-term-funded projects to the women of her constituency. She believes this is due to inexperienced facilitating partner staff. "It was my job in the council to explain our needs and priorities," says Najiba. "But she [the social mobilizer] was not capable of drawing our priorities into a good proposal for addressing our needs. We did not get what we wanted not because of my illiteracy but because of her lack of experience."

Jamila, a long-time teacher, is CDC deputy in a village in the Behsud district of Nangarhar. She has been a teacher for the past twenty years, including a term under the Taliban regime. She led a number of home-based classes in her village in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As a teacher and family member of her village's elite majority tribe, Jamila enjoys a higher level of authority. She has been an active member of her village council by bringing in resources and even mobilizing her village men to contribute to building a school for girls and boys in her village. "We found a donor for our school construction, but their condition was that local residents should contribute 20 percent," she says. "I went house to house in our village and ensured that everyone contributed in some way to raise the 20 percent. The commander in our village contributed seven truckloads of stones for construction material, a businessman paid 10,000Afs, another village elite paid 15,000Afs, and the rest of villagers who were unable to pay in cash or kind agreed to take part in labor work. This way we contributed the 20 percent to the overall budget. And the school was built."

As the stories of Najiba and Jamila illustrate, the key indicator for selecting or electing women to local village councils is not their technical capacity or level of education, but their kinship ties and their ability to take the initiative and lead. The challenges these women faced mainly concerned their experience in working on development projects and how well their mobilizers put together a project that met local women's needs. Localities and their contexts obviously differ and nothing can be generalized, but in both cases, the women have not taken transformative approaches to challenge the dominant patriarchal system and continue their efforts within conventional gender roles. However, the fact that they are able to step into the room where decisions are made is an important milestone worth recognizing.

Additionally, the high level of openness that local communities have shown in including women in CDCs has been partly a function of the conditions donors have placed on the program, where women's participation is tied to financial resources. But women can and should seize such opportunities to further strengthen the leadership capacities of women in rural communities. However, men's lack of resistance to women's participation in local governance suggests that their inclusion, at this stage, is not a direct threat to the actual rulers of the communities. If and when local women leaders begin to challenge the power of village elites, this scenario could change.

The gains rural Afghan women have made in finding and negotiating their place in local governance are only a small example of their lives. They may not look like women in cities or have the same level of technical capacity and education, but their ability to lead and mobilize women is significant and their contributions should be seen as a strong untapped resource immensely valuable for the future of the country and its local governance relations. International and central government support and commitment are important, but the dedication and readiness of Afghan women over the past decade indicate that they are already making their own paths toward changing the status quo.

*Orzala Ashraf Nemat is a scholar and prominent civil society activist from Afghanistan. She is currently based in London, where she is working on her doctoral dissertation on the role of international and central state interventions in local governance in Afghanistan.*

2. The way NSP is operationalized requires NGOs to act as facilitating partners. Then each facilitating partner sends a pair of social mobilizers (male and female). The social mobilizers are the "knowledge experts" who play an important role in ensuring that the councils gain access to block grants.



# A MAYOR SPEAKS OUT

Azra Jafari

**As mayor of Nili, Afghanistan,** I am guided by the Afghani saying, “You will harvest what you planted before.” It is important for me, and women like me, that we do something now for the future of our children. Afghanistan is on the correct path and, as a mother, I seek to build stability, security, and laws so that none of our children will face violence, war, discrimination, or migration, as we have.

I became mayor from the outside. Involvement with government processes through civil society brought me into direct contact with the government of Afghanistan and the Afghani people, my people. So I have always cared about my country and have found different ways to contribute to my community.

Being mayor of Nili is challenging, and not only because I am a woman. When I started working as mayor there was no city named Nili. It looked like a big village and I worked from scratch. My first fundamental initiative was to create an infrastructure plan for Nili,

which the municipality ministry confirmed. I then sought to implement the plan, but unfortunately neither the central government nor the international community has been attentive enough, nor have they provided the funds we need. So while we have a plan for what Nili City needs, we do not yet have roads, electricity, water, canalization, or entertainment places. I have also tried to develop education, cultural, and civic activities, including schools and vocation centers for women and youth. I have focused on capacity building for women to help them in the areas of economic development and women’s rights.

Some people in Afghanistan do not believe a woman should be mayor, but the people of Nili support me. Both men and women are equal. We have the right to live, study, work, think, and make decisions for our society and the destiny of our country. A society in which women are not present in politics, culture, and the economy will be an incomplete and imperfect community.

Without women’s involvement, we will not achieve true democracy or development. In today’s Afghanistan, the presence of women in political, social, and civil activities and affairs is significant. I may be the only female mayor in the country, but there are others in public service.

The world should know that Afghanistan is not only a land of guns, terrorism, bloodshed, violence, and opium. It is a country with an ancient history and a rich background. We honor our constitution and our laws and have as much freedom of speech as elsewhere in the region. My wish is for my people and my country to benefit from development and feel safe and secure.

*Azra Jafari is the mayor of Nili, Afghanistan. She took office in December 2008, appointed by President Hamid Karzai, and is the only female mayor in the country.*



Source: Flickr (Endre Vestvik, "Marcerine," 24 Nov 2006)

# FINDING PEACE FOR MEN

## IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Alexa Hassink

**The eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is sometimes called the most dangerous place in the world to be a woman.** In reality, it is an equally dangerous place to be a man. The year 2014 marks twenty years since one of the world's most destructive wars began, resulting in horrific levels of sexual violence, displacement, economic upheaval, and poverty. At least seven state and more than twenty-five nonstate armed groups have operated largely with impunity in a series of violent conflicts that seems to never end, only change.

Well over three million civilians have died. Millions more have lost their homes and live in extreme poverty. Sexual violence remains a reality for women and girls and is widespread against boys as well. The extent of the suffering is partially documented in the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)—created and coordinated by Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women—which is one of the most comprehensive studies ever on men's practices and attitudes as they relate to gender norms, attitudes toward



**In the DRC, nearly two-thirds of men and women reported having lost the capacity to love or care for others. In the wake of conflict, gender relations are skewed, economic instability produces further stress, and egregious acts of violence are imbued with a sense of normalcy. Men in particular struggle to live their day-to-day lives, to reestablish their livelihoods, and to reconstruct their identities.**

gender equality policies, household dynamics including caregiving and men's involvement as fathers, intimate partner violence, health, and economic stress. IMAGES has been carried out in ten countries, including the DRC, with additional partner studies in Asia. In June 2012, the survey and accompanying qualitative research were implemented in the DRC by Promundo-US, the Institute for Mental Health, and the Sonke Gender Justice Network, with 708 men and 754 women between the ages of 18 and 59 years as subjects in four different areas in eastern DRC: Goma, an internally displaced persons camp (Mugungu 3), a military base (Katoyi), and two villages (Kiroche and Bweremana). The preliminary results, released in November 2013 in Kinshasa, DRC, found that approximately 70 percent of men and 80 percent of women reported at least one traumatic event due to the conflict, including being displaced, being injured, having family members injured or killed, or being forced to have sex.

The tragedies that accompany conflict are often reluctantly accepted as the price of war. As peace talks ensue and guns are relinquished, a country may be prematurely considered fixed, healed, or a postconflict state. While the prevalence of guns is more easily measured, assessing the state of social and relational well-being, or lack thereof, in a community is more elusive. In the DRC, nearly two-thirds of men and women reported having lost the capacity to love or

care for others. In the wake of conflict, gender relations are skewed, economic instability produces further stress, and egregious acts of violence are imbued with a sense of normalcy. Men in particular struggle to live their day-to-day lives, to reestablish their livelihoods, and to reconstruct their identities. As one man in Goma described, "We are not men anymore, we lost our responsibilities, our masculinity."

Men's roles are in part constructed around their ability to function as providers in their families and communities. Boys are shown various pathways to manhood, an outline of what they need to accumulate—often land, livestock, a home, and a bride—to fulfill their socially prescribed roles. Conflicts often derail these paths and, in the aftermath of war, ex-combatants may lack either the skills or opportunity to provide an income for their families as civilians. Most men, even if they possess marketable skills, face a disrupted and stagnant economy. In the DRC, IMAGES revealed that 71 percent of men after conflict (versus 39 percent before conflict) reported never having enough means to support their families. In the same survey, 76 percent of men reported feeling stressed or depressed because of not having enough income or work. Many women and men reported stress related to lack of income, lack of work, and displacement as triggering men's depression, substance and alcohol abuse, and use of violence. A man in Goma talked about not having enough money to purchase food, "When she [my wife] accuses

me of not bringing home anything, sometimes I feel like killing her. What kind of a man am I being insulted by his own wife?"

In the DRC, IMAGES found that men also reported losing their manhood due to injuries from conflict. As one soldier recounted, "A man measures himself by the level of sexual performance. When I lost sexual power due to my injuries, I was not a man anymore." Soldiers felt that a lack of acknowledgement by the government of their injuries (through salaries and benefits for their efforts) was insulting to their manhood. Men tended to cope with vulnerability, extreme stress, and trauma through alcohol and substance abuse



Source: Flickr (CIFOR, "COBAM workshop group," 31 Jul 2012)

**However, men's experiences of conflict as perpetrators, witnesses, victims, brothers, fathers, and friends of victims, and how their experiences contribute to violence in the aftermath of armed conflict, must also be considered for gender relations to move forward equitably and for violence to dissipate.**

and often through continued violence. As the wife of a soldier said, "When my husband is not happy and he drinks a lot, he can be very violent when having sex. He beats me a lot."

It is impossible to look at the way forward for the DRC without reflecting on why violence and abuse may continue after war and conflict end. Men, although primarily nonviolent and often victims of violence themselves, are the most frequent perpetrators of violence. While many studies and efforts focus on empowering and assisting female survivors of sexual violence in postconflict settings, fewer examine the effects of conflict on men's social roles and how the shifting roles and perceived loss of masculine identity may contribute to further violence.

Women suffer incalculable losses in conflict, and efforts to include and elevate women's various perspectives as leaders in peace-making processes are needed; they are part of the solution for the DRC's future. However, men's experiences of conflict as perpetrators, witnesses, victims, brothers, fathers, and friends of victims, and how their experiences contribute to violence in the aftermath of armed conflict, must also be considered for gender relations to move forward equitably and for violence to dissipate.

Men's multiple identities must be understood and efforts must be made to engage men as gender-equitable agents of change, with women as their advocates and equals in the peacemaking process through the construction of healthy, nonviolent, and gender-equitable identities as valued community members, as fathers, and as supportive partners. During this process, mental health services should be offered to men, addressing and unpacking their roles as perpetrators, victims, and witnesses of violence and introducing positive coping mechanisms and treatment for alcohol and substance abuse where necessary.

Men and women both benefit from inclusive approaches to rebuilding peace after conflict. In the eastern DRC, Promundo-US is working with its partners, Heal Africa and Women for Women International, to address the root causes of men's violence—including power and the effects of exposure to multiple forms of violence—through group therapy. These Living Peace Groups are a part of sexual and gender-based violence prevention programming; they aim to provide psychosocial support to men coping with stress, loss, and trauma, with the goal of reducing violence and sexual violence in the community. Recent interviews from Heal Africa with participants' partners provide hope for the way forward. As one woman reported, "When my husband was in trouble, he could

not talk to anyone. He would just come back home and go straight to bed. It was difficult to know if he had a problem until he reacted violently. However, ever since he joined the male group therapy he comes back home and tells me what is going on with kindness. He advises me and together we look for solutions."

Promundo-US continues to see the power in approaching men from a positive perspective, seeing their potential for nonviolence and for choosing peace. It is launching a new campaign, Living Peace ([www.menbeyondwar.org](http://www.menbeyondwar.org)), to redefine how individuals, communities, and governments view and work with men. The campaign will share and elevate stories of individual men who choose to live peacefully after conflict, advocate for inclusive and equitable peace policies, present programming that shapes nonviolent masculine identities, and engage men as women's allies in peacebuilding. This initiative will help create opportunities for men and women, as well as communities and governments, to reenvision what it means to be a man as a pathway to sustainable, and living, peace.

*Alexa Hassink is a program associate and communications officer at Promundo-US, working on engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality and ending violence against women. She previously worked with Peace Corps in Morocco as a rural health educator, focusing on maternal and child health.*



# THREE MYTHS ABOUT WOMEN IN PEACEKEEPING

Sahana Dharmapuri

**When we ask about the presence of women in peacekeeping operations,** we might as well be asking to see a fantastical creature, like the mythological female warrior Lady Triệu Thị Trinh, a nine-foot-tall Vietnamese woman who rode into battle against the Chinese in the third century AD upon a massive elephant.<sup>1</sup> Today's rarified creature—a female soldier or police officer in peacekeeping—is present in less than 4 percent of UN peacekeeping operations globally. The most recent statistics show that women account for about 2 percent of personnel in UN military components and about 9.8 percent of the UN police force.

Still, women face myths that hinder gender equality in peacekeeping. Here are three myths we can do without.

## Myth 1: It's All About Women

**Wrong.**

Peacekeeping operations are intended to stabilize postconflict situations and monitor the enforcement of peace agreements. In order to accomplish this, it is vital that they effectively provide security for the whole population. Including more female peacekeepers and a gender perspective increases

1. Gerard J. DeGroot, "A Few Good Women: Gender Stereotypes, the Military and Peacekeeping," *International Peacekeeping* 8, no. 2 (2001), 23–28.



## Not surprisingly, field studies have shown that teams comprising male and female soldiers outperform female-only teams.

a peacekeeping mission's ability to meet its mandate. A gender perspective is an analytic tool that illuminates the different experiences of men, women, boys, and girls as they relate to a mission's mandate. Both men and women can use a gender perspective in their work. Multiple studies by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and United Nations show that a gender perspective improves the operational effectiveness of missions in three key ways: It enhances the situational awareness of a mission, increases credibility and confidence in the mission, and helps to address defensive measures.

Attention to both men's and women's distinct experiences in conflicts reveals comprehensive information on the area of operation, including the identities of local power brokers, access to resources, and community security threats, risks, and needs. Such thorough information gathering about the effect of a peacekeeping operation on the local population can improve a mission's capacity to accomplish its goals. As Brigadier Karl Engelbrektson, force commander of the Nordic Battlegroup for the Swedish Genderforce, has remarked, "Understanding the role of women is important when building stability in an area... If women are the daily bread winners and provide food and water for their families, patrolling the areas where women work will increase security and allow them to continue [to work]. This is a tactical assessment... Creating conditions for a functioning everyday life is vital from a security perspective. It provides the basis for stability."

### Myth 2: An Equal Number of Female and Male Soldiers in Peace Operations Means We Have Achieved Gender Equality

*Not really.*

Historically, whenever women have been integrated into male-dominated environments, whether in government or in military institutions, they have met with obstacles, derision, and bluster. Lieutenant General Claes-Goran Fant relates an anecdote from Sweden's past that illustrates this point: "In the beginning of the last century an aggressive and loud debate arose regarding women being given the possibility of work in the governmental sector. The argument was that the wrists of women were too weak to write through several layers of carbon paper." Peacekeeping is no exception. Even with increasing numbers of women in peacekeeping forces, the prevalence of social norms and behaviors that perpetuate inequality between men and women can hinder women's full participation in the

peacebuilding process. The solution is to involve more men, not just women, to promote gender equality in peacekeeping.

Men, especially male military and political leaders who are key decision makers and norm setters, need to be fully engaged in the effort to increase women's participation in peacekeeping and in integrating a gender perspective into peacekeeping missions. Without large numbers of women in military components of missions, it makes sense to engage men in strides toward gender equality. In 2009, the UNMIL/Liberia Office of the Gender Advisor and the Office of the Force Commander appointed a male military gender officer under direct supervision of the force commander. In addition, UN guidelines call for the appointment of gender military advisors to peacekeeping missions. South Africa, Sweden, Norway, and Ireland already have military gender advisors in their national forces. These advisors may be male or female officers and are a crucial addition to the chain of command of an operation because they are trained in both the language of military components of peace operations and gender equality goals.

Not surprisingly, field studies have shown that teams comprising male and female soldiers outperform female-only teams. According to a 2009 study by the Swedish Defense Research Agency on operational effectiveness and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Afghanistan, mixed teams were more

**In Afghanistan, mixed teams were more effective in gathering information, were viewed as more credible, and provided enhanced force protection because they could speak to men, women, boys, and girls in the population.**



Source: Author (Sahana Dharmapuri)

effective in gathering information, were viewed as more credible, and provided enhanced force protection because they could speak to men, women, boys, and girls in the population, resulting in a more nuanced understanding of their area of operation. Lieutenant Commander Ella van den Heuvel, former gender advisor at International Security Assistance Force Joint Command, pointed out in a 2011 interview that “from a practical point of view. . . if you have four military women in your detachment, you can form one female engagement team (a women-only team), but you can form four mixed teams if you don’t use female-only teams. And what do you think is more effective—patrolling an area with one female-only team where you engage with only women or patrolling in four areas where you can engage with women, men, boys and girls?”

A 2013 study by this author, *Not Just a Numbers Game: Increasing Women’s Participation in Peacekeeping*, found that men in high-level UN positions cited specific examples of how a gender perspective made their work in the field more effective. However, these men do not collaborate with each other to promote gender equality in peacekeeping missions. This is a missed opportunity.

### Myth 3: It’s All About Sex

#### *Think again.*

The presence of UN peacekeepers has been linked to sharp increases in sexual exploitation and abuse in Cambodia, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Balkans.<sup>2</sup> Because of this, most assume that the primary aim of including women in peacekeeping operations is to address sexual violence. This is a very limited understanding of the women, peace, and security mandate. In fact, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 calls for the inclusion of women as well as a gender perspective in peace operations to address a range of human security problems in conflict.

A mission that provides training for a local community on evacuation processes for disaster and conflict situations should include both men and women for protection and prevention purposes. When war breaks out, men usually join the fighting or flee, and women are left to take care of the elderly, the children, the sick, and themselves. Training women on evacuation processes ahead of time serves the aims of both protection and prevention. It is important to make such training available to the entire

community, especially where the peacekeeping mission does not have a direct mandate to protect civilians. Excluding a gender perspective from such security problems wastes precious time and effort, ultimately disadvantaging local populations.

### Shattering the Myths

To be truly effective and fulfill mission mandates, men and women in peace operations need to be trained to understand how conflict affects women, men, boys, and girls differently and what the different security realities are for every part of the population. It is not solely about women or about sex: The goal of gender equality in peacekeeping is to improve the effectiveness of a mission to deescalate violence, increase protection, and serve the entire conflict-affected population to create sustainable peace.

*Sahana Dharmapuri is an independent expert on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and former Harvard fellow. For a more detailed analysis of the subject of this article, see her Policy Paper, “Not Just a Numbers Game: Increasing Women’s Participation in Peacekeeping,” July 2013, at <http://www.thegenderadvisor.com/publications.html>.*

2. For comprehensive accounts of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, see Chiyuki Aoi, Cedric de Coning, and Ramesh Thakur, eds., *Unintended Consequences of Peacekeeping Operations* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2007). For the UN’s perspective, see *Comprehensive Strategy to Eliminate Future Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, UN General Assembly report A/59/710, New York, March 2005.

# SECURE WOMEN, SECURE STATES

Valerie M. Hudson

**In a 2008 survey by Global Rights and Partners for Justice, 87 percent of Afghan women respondents reported that they had been abused,** almost all by intimate family members, particularly husbands. Afghanistan is also a highly unstable nation, ranking seventh in the world on the Fund for Peace's Failed States Index and last on the Global Peace Index. Is this a coincidence?

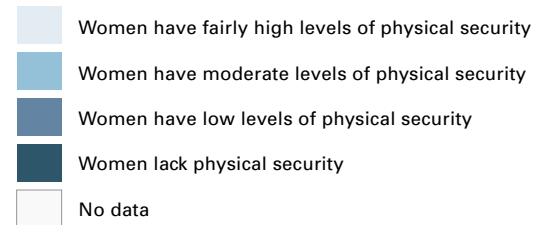
Most agree that an unstable, warring nation is likely to produce stressed, traumatized households. But the causal arrow may also point in the opposite direction. When a society normalizes violence and oppression

between men and women, the two halves of humanity in households and communities, effects may be felt nationally.

Academic research has investigated the possibility that the security of women and the security of the nation-state are integrally linked.

In "Gender Equality and State Aggression: The Impact of Domestic Gender Equality on State First Use of Force," Mary Caprioli indicates that states with higher levels of social, economic, and political gender equality are less likely to rely on military force to settle disputes.

Women's physical security (sealed 2009)





## **The overall level of violence against women was a better predictor of state peacefulness, compliance with international treaty obligations, and relations with neighboring countries than indicators measuring the level of democracy, level of wealth, and civilizational identity of the state.**

Caprioli and Mark Boyer, in “Gender, Violence, and International Crisis,” show that states exhibiting high levels of gender equality also exhibit lower levels of violence in international crises and militarized interstate disputes.

In “Gender Equality and Intrastate Armed Conflict,” Erik Melander has replicated these results, finding virtually the same pattern with respect to intrastate incidents of conflict.

Caprioli and Peter Trumbore in “Human Rights Rogues in Interstate Disputes” find that states characterized by gender and ethnic inequality as well as human rights abuses are more likely to become involved in militarized and violent interstate disputes, to be the aggressors, and to rely on force when involved.

My colleagues and I at the WomanStats Project extended this examination of the connection between the status of women and peace. In a series of empirical analyses over 140 nation-states, we found that the overall level of violence against women was a better predictor of state peacefulness, compliance with international treaty obligations, and relations with neighboring countries than indicators measuring the level of democracy, level of wealth, and civilizational identity of the state. In ancillary analyses, we also found that polygyny was a risk factor for state instability and that nations with discriminatory family laws had higher

levels of violence against women. We are currently in the process of demonstrating the relationship between marriage customs, systems of political governance, and indicators of state instability.

Now that the empirical picture has become clearer, we can ask why these associations hold and look at what implications they have for policymaking. That the associations are so robust tells us something important already: The treatment of women in a society is a real barometer of the degree to which a society is capable of peace.

This is not because women are altruistic, peace-loving angels, for they are not—although, as Malcolm Potts and Thomas Hayden rightly remark in their book, *Sex and War: How Biology Explains Warfare and Terrorism and Offers a Path to a Safer World*, “Women have never shared men’s propensity to band together spontaneously and sally forth to viciously attack their neighbors.” The reason the associations between violence against women and general stability of a nation hold is because how the two different but interdependent halves of humanity live together in a society tells us how that society copes with difference and conflict arising from that difference. The difference between sexes is usually the first difference encountered in life because it is manifested in one’s own parents. If a society’s culture suggests that sexual difference is handled by male interests trumping female

interests and that conflict is resolved through violence, protected by group-sanctioned impunity, this becomes the template within that society for dealing with all differences—ethnic, religious, cultural, and ideological. If violent subordination is the norm in nearly every household, how can the state ever be stable or at peace?

A policy implication of the research findings regarding the link between gender equity and state security is the empowerment of women and girls. If society rejects impunity for violence against women and champions equal voice and equal representation for women in all important decision making, from the home to the state, these old, dysfunctional templates will crumble. The security of women influences the security of states in a way that we, as a world, must finally recognize and act upon. Just as former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asserted that the subjugation of women is a direct threat to the security of the United States, so the world must develop its own Hillary Doctrine, or pay the price in national and international insecurity.

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# IS RESOLUTION 1325

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

Sofi Ospina

**Recognizing the enormous effects of armed conflict on women and children and women's role in building peace,** the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 in 2000. The resolution calls on parties to conflict to protect women's rights and to involve women throughout the processes of peace-making, peacebuilding, and postconflict reconstruction.

In 2010, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations conducted an assessment of the effects of the implementation of Resolution 1325 by twelve peacekeeping missions. In some cases, the results were substantial, in others modest, and inevitably they varied across countries. But the assessment concluded that the resolution is making a difference for women in conflict-affected countries.

Women's groups have used Resolution 1325 to argue for their rights to participate in peace processes. They have directly lobbied warlords and political leaders to consider their needs and aspirations. More women have been included in peace talks, but overall their formal participation remains below 10 percent. In Darfur, women were engaged in peace talks in 2007 but were absent from official negotiations in 2010 in Doha, and the peace agreement in Côte d'Ivoire was signed without women's participation. As women are usually underrepresented in the decision-making structures of insurgency groups, political parties, and governments, their participation in peace negotiations is often informal rather than official. More work is needed to make Resolution 1325 known to all those engaged in peace processes.

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Resolution 1325 has positively affected women's participation in politics, helping to sensitize a range of stakeholders to the benefits of women's political inclusion. This has resulted in more gender-sensitive electoral laws and more women on electoral boards and civic education teams. In Timor Leste, the national council rejected a 30 percent quota for women in the 2001 constitutional assembly election, but the UN mission encouraged political leaders to include women on party lists, provided incentives to complying parties, and organized training for potential women candidates. Women won 27 percent of the seats, and in the 2007 election, a more empowered women's movement successfully negotiated a 25 percent quota. Meanwhile, a quota in Afghanistan has resulted in increased representation of women in legislative bodies. Overall, the participation of women as voters has increased in most of the countries reviewed.

Gender-sensitive reforms in security sectors are helping to change traditional ideas on the roles of women. The national police forces in Liberia and Timor Leste have adopted policies to increase the recruitment of women; Liberia has set a formal 20 percent target of female participation. In both countries, where violence against women is widespread, specialized police units have been created to address gender-based violence. However, sexual violence continues to be used as a strategy to demoralize, humiliate, and intimidate local communities. In many places, there is

near-total impunity, partly as women remain silent because of shame and fear of retaliation. Far more needs to be done collectively to ensure the security of women and girls. In Darfur and Chad, peacekeeper patrols and escorts have improved protection of female displaced people and refugees in their camps. The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of women ex-combatants—another facet of the issue of women and security—remain a challenge. More gender sensitization of officials in charge of these programs is needed to ensure women benefit equally as men.

Legal and judicial reforms have led to greater gender awareness in the drafting of constitutions and legislation. Laws violating women's rights have been amended in line with Resolution 1325 and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Sierra Leone, for instance, adopted four new laws between 2007 and 2009 addressing domestic violence, women's inheritance and marriage rights, and children's rights. This legislation is in reaction to Operational Paragraph Number 9 of Resolution 1325, which talks about modifying or enacting laws to fight discrimination against women or traditional or customary laws that violate women's rights.

Resolution 1325 has undoubtedly contributed to improving women's rights. It has empowered women's groups and has been used to sensitize decision makers, and its

provisions are highly pertinent in conflict-affected settings. But the resolution is only a tool. More effort is needed to increase the number of women and men skilled in its use to shape change nationally and locally.

*Sofi Ospina is a renowned Colombian peace and gender activist. She is currently involved with two women's groups seeking an end to the armed conflict in Colombia—the National Women's Network (Red Nacional de Mujeres–Cali) and Women for Peace (Mujeres por la Paz)—and advocates for the inclusion of civil society representatives and women in peace talks. Ospina previously coordinated a review of Security Council Resolution 1325's implementation for the United Nations' peacekeeping department.*



## NOTES ON POLICY

# THE ROLE OF MEN IN ENGENDERED PEACEBUILDING

Donald Steinberg

**The term “gender” is usually considered synonymous with “women” when it comes to peacebuilding.** In that sense, applying a gendered lens to a peacebuilding activity means taking women’s perspectives into account and more effectively using women’s contributions. To create sustained peace, however, we must understand gender as including men and women, encompassing men’s roles not only as perpetrators of violence or leaders of peace processes but also as victims and witnesses of violence and agents of change in conflict and postconflict societies.

In order to build peaceful and inclusive societies, we must first move beyond the simplistic notion that men are inherently more aggressive and violent than women. While men are up to six times more likely

to commit and be victims of homicide, this has as much to do with early exposure to violence, economic frustration, militarization of societies, boys’ coming of age rituals, and gender-based access to light weapons as it does with testosterone. Similarly, even as we observe that women have a greater capacity to work across ethnic and class divisions and bring new skill sets and negotiating styles to the table, we know that these skills are not innate talents exclusive to women and instead are due to context and circumstances.

Similarly, we must avoid the stereotypical and even dangerous notion that men end the war and women build the peace. Our field must exploit the role of men as resources in promoting gender equality, peace, and stability.

**To create sustained peace, however, we must understand gender as including men and women, encompassing men's roles not only as perpetrators of violence or leaders of peace processes but also as victims and witnesses of violence and agents of change in conflict and postconflict societies.**

I have long advocated for greater inclusion of women in peace and security work. One of my proudest moments at the US Agency for International Development was announcing in 2011 our new Global Women's Leadership Fund to support women's participation in peace negotiations, political dialogues, and donor conferences with funds for training, transportation, child care, and physical protection. This protection in particular is essential, since one of the most dangerous professions in the world is that of a woman peacebuilder. Yet despite more than a decade of work, conferences, resolutions, and pressure from senior leaders, men still slam the doors to peace conferences and reconstruction coffers in the faces of women.

An October 2013 symposium at the US Institute of Peace on men, peace, and security highlighted the central questions in seeking this more inclusive approach to gender in peacebuilding: How does male behavior shape conflict and violence, and how does conflict affect male behavior? What social, cultural, and economic drivers influence the development of men and boys? How do these drivers reflect in exaggerated and violent gender identities? What are the challenges for men and women alike in adjusting to life after war? How can local and international actors, governmental and nongovernmental, respond to and intervene in problems of hypermasculinities after conflict?

While advocating for an approach that sees men as important resources in postconflict settings, I also accept a basic truth: The current system that leaves peace processes in the hands of men who act in traditional ways and keep women on the outside looking in simply does not work.

I learned this lesson the hard way two decades ago. In 1994, serving as President Bill Clinton's special assistant for African affairs, I supported the Angola peace negotiations, which bore fruit in November of that year with the signing of the Lusaka Protocol. This agreement promised to end two decades of violence that had cost up to a half million lives. Addressing an audience in Washington after the protocol was signed, I was asked about the role of women in negotiating and implementing the protocol. I responded that not a single provision in the agreement discriminated against women. "The agreement is gender neutral," I declared, a little too proudly.

President Clinton then named me US ambassador to Angola and a member of the Joint Commission charged with implementing the peace accords. It took me only a few weeks after my arrival in Luanda to realize that a peace agreement that calls itself gender neutral is, inherently, discriminatory against women and far less likely to succeed. Most telling was the exclusion of women from the commission itself. At each meeting of

this body, 40 men and no women served on the delegations of the Angolan government, National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), the United Nations, Portugal, Russia, and the United States. This silenced women's voices on war and peace and meant that issues such as internal displacement, sexual violence, abuses by government and rebel security forces, and the rebuilding of social services such as maternal health care and girls' education got short shrift.

The Lusaka Protocol was largely silent on a wide variety of other issues as well, including human trafficking, displacement-related burgeoning of HIV/AIDS cases, and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in civilian hands. Where were the training programs for men on these issues? Nothing in the commission members' backgrounds as military commanders would have given them special insights into girls' education, mother-child health care, or related concerns.

The peace accord was based on thirteen separate amnesties that excluded the possibility of prosecution for atrocities committed during the conflict. One amnesty excused actions that might take place in the future. Given the prominence of sexual abuse and exploitation during the conflict, including rape as a weapon of war, these amnesties meant that men with guns forgave other men with guns for crimes committed against women. The men at the table were ill-informed on issues related to transitional justice, truth and reconciliation commissions, and past examples in which amnesties were offered too freely. This flaw also undercut a return to the rule of law and introduced cynicism within segments of society about efforts to rebuild and reform the justice and security sectors.

Similarly, we launched programs to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate ex-combatants into their communities. These men received a little money and demobilization kits consisting mostly of seeds and farm tools.

We did not offer ex-combatants the psycho-social assistance programs we offered to women and children. We then transported these men back to communities in which they had no clear roles. They lacked marketable skills and their communities had learned to live without them during the decades of conflict. As elsewhere around the world, the result was a dramatic rise in alcoholism, drug abuse, divorce, and domestic violence, along with the breakdown of the coping mechanisms that gave women some protection during the conflict. Thus, the end of civil war unleashed a new and even more pernicious era of violence against women. It was particularly tough for young boys who had never grown up with girls as peers and tended to view all women as bearers, bush wives, messengers, and cooks.

In response, we brought out gender advisors and human rights officers and launched programs in maternal health care, girls' education, humanitarian demining, transitional justice, microenterprise, and support for women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). But it was too little, too late. The peace process was already viewed generally as serving the interests of the warring parties rather than the Angolan people. When the process faltered in mid-1998 because of insufficient commitment from both the government and especially UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi, civil society stayed on the sidelines and did not press the leaders to prevent a return to conflict. The country relapsed into war, and another three years of fighting ended only with Savimbi's death in 2002.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325, passed in 2000, was our collective response to situations like Angola. In four pages, this impressive resolution spells out the major challenges to bringing a gender perspective to issues of peace and security, explicitly stating that "effective institutional arrangements to guarantee the protection and full participation [of women and girls] in the peace processes can significantly contribute

to the maintenance and promotion of international peace security."

But even Resolution 1325 contains a bias, as it tends to put the burden for change on women themselves. One sign of this bias: The resolution contains forty-six references to women, girls, and females, and only one reference to men, boys, or males.

Unless men who currently control peace-building processes come to see it as in their interest to allow space for women and voluntarily surrender power and control, we will likely repeat what happened in Angola. How do we change such perspectives? We start by examining the motivation of men who run these processes.

I often address orientation programs for UN officials going out to lead peacekeeping operations as special representatives, police commissions, and force commanders. I begin by saying that their positions require empowering women—as defined by Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, and others. Their eyes glaze over. I then talk about women's rights and raise concepts of equity and fairness. A few are interested, but mostly the reaction is the same. I try to personalize the argument by reminding them that the disempowered and victimized women could be their sisters, wives, and daughters. A little more interest is evident, but still there is no broad ownership. They start to perk up only when I tell them that their peace processes will fail and that, as a result, their careers will suffer and their reputations will be permanently sullied.

I remind them that women are the ones who will give them many of the best ideas and the most reliable local information. If they want to know where the next rebel attack is going to occur, they should not talk only to regional governors or military commanders; they should ask the women in the marketplace whose families' safety depends on having the latest information. If they want to know whether justice and security sector reforms are working, they should not only

talk to judges and generals but also ask women trying to access that justice system or seek protection from the police and army. If they want to know if their Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration programs are effective, they cannot talk only to camp managers or demobilization organizers; they need to ask the women who are the eyes, ears, and consciences of the communities to which the fighters are returning.

And the peacekeepers should not ask only for information. They should involve women in all programs as planners, implementers, and beneficiaries, under the watch phrase, "Nothing about them without them." This is the only way to build fair, just, and lasting peace.

*Donald Steinberg currently serves as president of World Learning, a nonprofit organization working throughout the world to train a new generation of global citizens to build peace, prosperity, inclusion, and good governance. He served as deputy administrator at the US Agency for International Development, where he focused on the Middle East and Africa, reforms under USAID Forward, integration and mainstreaming of gender and disabilities into agency programming, and enhanced dialogue with development partners.*



## NOTES ON POLICY



# A MODEL NATIONAL ACTION PLAN IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Samra Filipovic-Hadziabdic  
and Mariam Mansury

### **The vision of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted on October 31, 2000, is historic:**

It recognizes women not only as victims of war but also as agents of change with the potential to stem violence, reconcile communities, and sustain peace in conflict-affected environments across the globe. Since 2000, forty-three countries have developed national action plans (NAPs) to fulfill the promise of Resolution 1325 and meaningfully advance women's inclusion in security processes and decisions.

The action plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was launched in 2010. It was the first NAP of its kind in southeast Europe and one of the first to be adopted in a postconflict country. BiH's Agency for Gender Equality, established in 2004, developed the NAP

through a year-long series of consultations with relevant government and civil society actors. The agency's mandate includes developing national policies to promote gender equality, preparing annual reports on the status of gender issues in BiH, and evaluating laws and by-laws adopted by the government with a gender lens. A twenty-member coordination board was established in June 2011 to monitor NAP implementation; members include officials from relevant ministries and agencies such as the ministries of defense and foreign affairs, as well as representatives of civil society organizations.

After the NAP expired at the end of 2013, key questions remained: Did the plan inspire measurable policy change to advance women's

inclusion in peace and security processes? Did implementation have meaningful effects across BiH? To answer these questions, the Agency for Gender Equality commissioned an assessment from Resolution to Act, a groundbreaking new initiative supporting countries creating or implementing NAPs and similar strategies. The results confirm that the BiH NAP is, in many ways, a global model; the country has even received awards from the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for effective NAP implementation.

There are three primary reasons for BiH's success. First, the NAP goals fit within existing government mandates on peace and security, maximizing the skills of experienced personnel and promoting cooperation across government sectors. Second, thanks to Agency for Gender Equality leadership, the NAP is widely viewed as an organic national strategy rather than an international obligation. The agency is a highly valued technical resource, offering government officials practical and realistic guidance on how to integrate the NAP into their daily work, and its coordination board facilitates collaboration among key policymakers. Members were involved in drafting the NAP and have met regularly for three years, resulting in a strong commitment to implementation. Finally, the NAP is a platform for realizing meaningful change. The agency worked with local government entities to develop localized NAPs in municipalities that experienced some of the most intense violence

**The NAP goals fit within existing government mandates on peace and security.**

**The NAP is a platform for realizing meaningful change. The agency worked with local government entities to develop localized NAPs in municipalities that experienced some of the most intense violence during the war. These plans focus on addressing women's most pressing daily security concerns.**

during the war. These plans focus on addressing women's most pressing daily security concerns. Additionally, the NAP has been used to prioritize the recruitment and retention of women police officers, offering a fresh face to a security force that is all too often associated with the past conflict.

Challenges remain. More is required in harmonizing the NAP with internal policies and processes. The current evaluation framework also does not adequately capture the intermediate progress in transforming society's views on women's inclusion in peace and stability processes. Moreover, NAP goals are not prioritized within institutional strategies, resulting in inadequate funds for implementation. The Agency for Gender Equality is addressing these gaps in preparation for launching a new NAP in 2014. The coordination board for the implementation of the NAP recently signed a memorandum of understanding with thirteen civil society organizations for collaboration on the NAP, the only partnership of its kind in the country. Efforts are already under way to develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system. Taken together, such steps will create an even more effective NAP that contributes to lasting peace for all.

*Samra Filipovic-Hadziabdic is director of the Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As advisor to the president of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, she also established and directed the Gender Center.*

*Mariam Mansury is the Community of Experts manager for the newest program at Inclusive Security, Resolution to Act. She is responsible for managing the process of recruiting, selecting, deploying, and liaising regularly with each of the community's experts.*

# DEVOTION AND DEFIANCE: MY JOURNEY IN LOVE, FAITH, AND POLITICS

Authors: Humaira Awais Shahid with Kelly Horan

**This autobiography is personal and political, as many women's stories are.**

Humaira Awais Shahid is a Pakistani activist, journalist, and mother who ultimately became a parliamentarian to effect positive change for women in her country. Humaira tells her story through frank and compelling prose, and her dedication to her country and her family are themes of the book. Her story reminds us that big changes, political, social, or economic, often hinge on small and personal matters; in Humaira's case, it was the support of her family.

With a first career as a university lecturer focusing on gender and literature, Humaira later began working for her husband's family newspaper conglomerate, editing the "women's section" of the paper. What started as a medium for gossip and fashion advice ultimately became her weapon. Humaira dedicated herself to gender equity, focusing her fight in two areas: the practice of using girls and women as collateral for loans, and acid crimes, where women thought to be unfaithful or disloyal are disfigured with acid. Humaira explains candidly that her education, her privileged upbringing, and the political contacts of her husband's family granted her elite status. Yet, while others in her situation might rest comfortably, Humaira used her social position, commitment, and tenacity to realize political change for women in her country not as fortunate as her. As a mother in a country where women's roles can be rigid and defined, Humaira depended on the unwavering moral, emotional, financial, and logistical help from her husband and family to effect the political and social change she aspired to achieve.

Taking her cause from journalism to politics, Humaira ran for office and was elected to the Punjab Assembly and later to the Pakistan Parliament. Having attained a position of influence, Humaira devoted herself to creating and moving forward legislation on acid crimes, defying those who told her it was impossible, a spirit that inspired the title of the book. She writes, "Some officials were openly dismissive of my effort, outright condescending. Why do you want to stress yourself out by trying to accomplish something that can never be achieved?" Flying in the face of critics, Humaira facilitated an inclusive social change process that led to the 2011 Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act, which made acid attacks a crime against the state, providing Pakistani women victims unprecedented legal protection and providing legal guidance for the state to prosecute offenders.

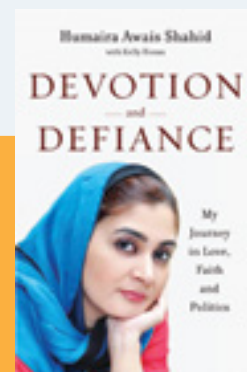
While earlier in her career, Humaira sought to effect social and cultural change through academia and journalism, elected office became the most effective channel to create the impact she desired. She understood how to work across divides; she brought men and women from inside and outside of politics together in order to find support for the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act. Her commitment to the cause was unwavering, and she persevered throughout a life-altering tragedy in her personal life, the sudden death of her husband early in their marriage.

Humaira achieved success in passing the unique legislation because she was empowered by the support of her family to create change that would help others. While most Pakistani mothers are expected to remain home to care for their families, Humaira's

devoted support system afforded her the freedom to pursue a career and achieve the legislative success that protects so many fellow women who cannot protect themselves. A universal truth is that personal support from those close to us can enable us to realize success that would otherwise be impossible.

As Humaira concedes herself, it is true that her station in life made it easier for her to become a journalist and activist, both low-paying positions, and to access the networks that became useful in her campaign and ultimately in parliament during her fight to pass her signature legislation. Nonetheless, Humaira's story is inspirational in that she used her privilege to facilitate change for *all* women. Her landmark legislation provides previously nonexistent guidance to the state on how to punish perpetrators of gender-based crimes as well as unprecedented protection for female victims. The act has changed the lives of all Pakistani women for the better and can be used as a model for parallel legislation in other countries, paving the way for continued political action on gender equality.

*A senior member of the British House of Lords, Baroness Mary Goudie is a global advocate for the rights of women and children. She is on the board of Vital Voices, an organization dedicated to empowering women leaders worldwide, is involved in promoting gender equity with both the G-8 and G-20 coalitions of nations, and is the chair of the UN Women Leaders' Council to Fight Human Trafficking.*







# WOMEN, WAR, AND PEACE

▲  
A still from the *Women,  
War & Peace* series

An Interview with  
Abigail Disney

**I**n October 2013, Alliance for Peacebuilding president Melanie Greenberg and *Building Peace* editor-in-chief Jessica Berns spoke with Abigail Disney, philanthropist and filmmaker, about the role women play in contributing to social change and building and sustaining peace in their communities and nations. The interview reveals the genesis of the award-winning documentary, *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, which Disney produced in 2008, as well as her most recent initiatives for change.

Disney cofounded the Daphne Foundation, which works with low-income communities in the five boroughs of New York City. She also founded Peace is Loud, which amplifies women's voices for peacebuilding using the power of media. She was an executive producer of the 2011 PBS series *Women, War & Peace*. Disney serves as a board member for a number of organizations, including the Global Fund for Women and the Peace Research Endowment.

Source: Photo provided by Women, War & Peace

**When we were making *Women, War and Peace*, we had four edit rooms open simultaneously. We were working on documentaries about women and war in four very different places, but the resonances coming across the monitors were quite powerful.**

**Building Peace:** What initially sparked your interest in documentary films focusing on women, war, and peace?

**Disney:** I went to Liberia in 2006, just a few months after President Sirleaf was inaugurated. While there, I heard the story that *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* is based on: that women across different religious, ethnic, and educational lines effectively came together to push for an end to the long-standing civil war. I came back home obsessed with that story, saying to people that someone should make a documentary on this. Eventually my brother, who is a filmmaker, said I should make the documentary. I come from a filmmaking family, so I decided to go for it and tell the story myself.

**Building Peace:** What do you understand to be universal about the experience of women and war?

**Disney:** When we were making *Women, War & Peace*, we had four edit rooms open simultaneously. We were working on documentaries about women and war in four very different places, but the resonances coming across the monitors were quite powerful. You'd be in the Afghanistan edit room and you'd hear a woman describe the life of a refugee and then you'd go into the Colombia room and you'd hear almost the same thing word for word.

When you talk to combatants about war, they tend to describe the specifics of their war and their context, but women civilians all describe one thing: fire and metal, running and starvation, and fear. For civilians, war is reduced to a handful of very common experiences.

**Building Peace:** Were there stories that *Women, War and Peace* didn't capture that you wished it had?

**Disney:** Yes! Every country has a story worth telling. I wish we could have shared the story of the women on different sides of the Sri Lankan conflict who had lost children and came together to reconcile. Or all the rarely recognized women in Northern Ireland who pushed that peace process forward. Or the mothers in Moscow who protested against their sons going to fight in Chechnya. There are so many important stories still to tell about the creative and important ways women stand up to war.

**Building Peace:** How do audiences in the United States react to your films?

**Disney:** Audiences in the United States don't think of themselves as part of the country that's fighting in a war. This is a terrible tragedy for us as a country, and it's a crime against the people who are out there risking their lives and fighting all the time. We cannot forget the wars we are fighting. That's why there should be a draft and a war

tax, so that the people who are paying the highest price for the war, their lives that is, will not all come from a separate, easily forgotten class. It will be the responsibility of all of us.

**Building Peace:** How do men react to your films?

**Disney:** We've actually shown the film to three or four different all-male schools, and it's been a very interesting experience. One question invariably comes up, "Why are there no good men in your film?"

I always say there are lots of good men in the film if you really watch. Men are carrying grandmothers on their backs, helping refugees, and finding water. Men are all over the place doing good things. I then turn the question back to the male audience and ask why they didn't notice them. Why does a small, good deed by a man go unnoticed? Must men be showcased doing the big, important, highly visible deed?

This connects to peacebuilding. In making peace, there is no room for the hero narrative and we all need to understand and accept this. Peace comes because people make a decision to stop fighting. We need to begin understanding leadership not as big, heroic moments but as the ability to move people in the right direction.

**Building Peace:** This relates to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the formal role of women as peacemakers, builders, and leaders. Despite the passage of 1325, why aren't women's roles expanding?

**Disney:** 1325 is important but I think it can seem lofty and lack concreteness. The value of documentary films is that they offer a concrete picture of what 1325 is meant to embrace and encourage. We have heard from peacebuilders that the films provide tangible evidence of what is possible and the impact women can have.

# In making peace, there is no room for the hero narrative and we all need to understand and accept this.

**Building Peace:** How can documentary films contribute to social change? You just mentioned one way, by making abstract ideas more concrete.

**Disney:** Starting out, the goal was to use documentary film to make women visible. They're never going to matter in the future if we can't show the way they mattered in the past both to themselves and to others.

However, once the film was made and we starting showing it worldwide, I realized it was serving a different, unintended purpose: to motivate women to act in their own contexts. Even if women haven't been through conflict themselves, they have the same experience of being blocked from processes. They know what it is to yell and yell and never be heard, and they are motivated by the planfulness of the Liberian women in *Pray the Devil* and they want to talk strategically about creating change in their own environments. I did not expect that our films would unlock so many other movements.

**Building Peace:** What do you think about the argument that women are natural peacebuilders?

**Disney:** I'm not comfortable with that logic. I don't want to make any kind of claims for women as natural peacebuilders or as being automatically peaceful. Women are as capable of leading us into war as men. However, as a matter of general behavior, women tend to live at the heart of what we associate with peacefulness: raising families and assuming responsibility for the basic

well-being of their families. Many of us associate peacefulness with gathering around the table with family, and that's what women are in charge of. So they have an affinity for peace that can't be denied.

**Building Peace:** Do you see a difference between how women of different generations understand peace and their role in creating change?

**Disney:** I see huge generational differences among women in the developed world specifically. Often, women in their twenties have the impression that everything is equal and fair and good between men and women. And then they get to a certain point in their lives—marriage, babies, career, for instance—and they realize that women still have to fight. Nobody wants to be a feminist at 20! I think most women get there because something happened to them.

In the developing world, the young women are ready to get out there and fight for change, and frankly, I think they want the older women to make way for them to come up. Right now, I don't see a lot of room for the younger generation to rise, and I think that's a bit of an issue across Africa.

**Building Peace:** As a philanthropist, how are you supporting exchange of stories and strategies among women?

**Disney:** My foundation recently launched an organization called Peace is Loud, the purpose of which is to create that environment where peacebuilders, men and women, can share their stories. We need to be heard, to commit, and

to work for peace. Peace is Loud comes from something that Sugars, an elder woman featured in *Pray the Devil*, said, "Peace is not an event. Peace is a process." And that process is loud and messy. We are trying to promote an understanding that peace may be an agreement to disagree amicably. Peace is dynamic and ever changing.

**Building Peace:** Do you see a bright spot in terms of a community of women or a community of men and women in the world where incredible change and activity are taking place?

**Disney:** The bright spot is that women are connecting around the world in ways they never had an opportunity to before, talking to each other, learning from each other, and getting strength from each other.

A still from the *Women, War & Peace* series



Source: Photo provided by Women, War & Peace



# Women as Leaders and Peacemakers

**“You can’t just say, ‘include women, include women.’ You have to strengthen the capacities of women.”**

VISAKA DHARMADASA  
Chair of the Association of War Affected Women (AWAW) in Sri Lanka

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

1909

**The Socialist Party of America creates the first National Women’s Day.** As the women’s suffrage movement gains traction the following year, Socialist International meets in Copenhagen to establish a Women’s Day.

1911

**Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland** formally recognize International Women’s Day.

## WOMEN IN ELECTED OFFICE

1980

**Iceland elects Europe’s first female president, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir.** Vigdís was the first woman in the world to be elected as head of state in a democratic election.

1988

**Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan becomes the first woman elected to lead a Muslim country,** paving the way for Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (Britain’s first female prime minister) and President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro of Nicaragua (Central America’s first female leader).

2006

**Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is elected president of Liberia,** becoming the first elected head of state in Africa.

## WOMEN’S RIGHTS BECOME INTERNATIONAL LAW

1975

**The World Conference of the International Women’s Year in Mexico City** sets the precedent for additional conferences discussing women’s rights.

1995

**The fourth annual World Conference on Women, Action for Equality, Development, and Peace** formally recognizes the rights of indigenous women. Hillary Rodham Clinton’s speech, “Women’s Rights Are Human Rights,” challenges the assumption that women are unable to debate openly and speak freely for themselves.

2000

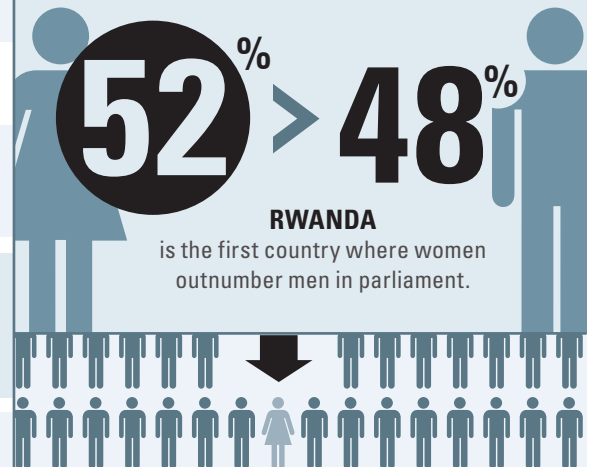
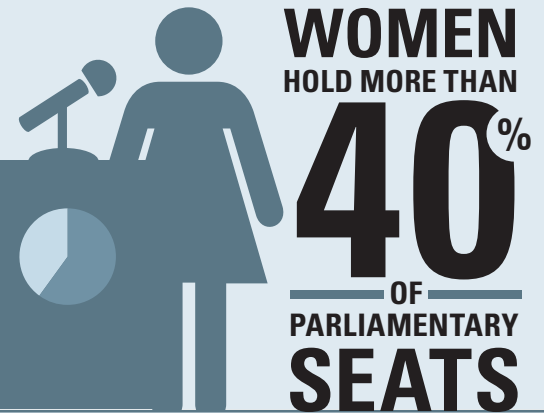
**The United Nations passes Security Council Resolution 1325,** acknowledging women’s role as peacemakers as well as the significant effects of violent conflict on women. Member states are challenged to increase the representation of women in all institutions and mechanisms dealing with the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict.

## INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF WOMEN IN PEACEBUILDING

2011

**Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee, and Tawakkul Karman are awarded the Nobel Peace Prize** for their nonviolent struggle for the safety of women and for women’s rights to full participation in peacebuilding work.

In **SENEGAL, SEYCHELLES, and SOUTH AFRICA**



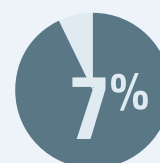
**SAUDIA ARABIA and SOLOMON ISLANDS** have the lowest representation of women in parliament.

**“[I]t is past time for women**

**to take their rightful place, side-by-side with men, in the rooms where the fates of peoples, where their children’s and grandchildren’s fates, are decided, in the negotiations to make peace and in the institutions to keep it.”**

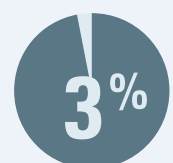
HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON  
Former United States Secretary of State

## WOMEN CURRENTLY MAKE UP ONLY



**OF NEGOTIATORS**

**&**



**OF MEDIATORS**

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