

Think-piece on Gender Peace and Security

September 2014

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What should be the objectives of advocacy on gender, peace and security? i.e. what are we trying to change?

The objective is to change the perception of security, to move away from a militarised view of security towards a human security approach with a gender perspective. Gender, peace and security (GPS) will include the perspectives on men and women on conflict and conflict resolution. Due to persisting unequal power relations between men and women, Kvinna till Kvinna prefers to use the concept of women, peace and security (WPS), as we have identified a need focus specifically on women's perspectives. A precondition for a lasting solution to conflict is an active participation of women so that women's perspectives, competence and experiences from the war are regarded as important as those of men and inform peacebuilding policies. This will lead to more sustainable peace and more equal societies.

What strategies should we use to meet these objectives? i.e. how are we trying to change things?

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation's work is based on gender analysis with the perception that, in order to increase women's meaningful participation and power in conflict resolution and peace building, women peace builders, women human rights defenders, women activists and women's organisations need to be strengthened, empowered and heard. A strong women's movement is the most effective way to combat gender based violence, as shown in the study (2013) *Feminist mobilisation and progressive policy change: why governments take action to combat violence against women*, which states that countries with the strongest feminist movements have, other things being equal, better policies on violence against women than those with weaker or non-existent movements. Increased financial and institutional support to women's organizations and increased networking and regional / international collaboration is key to change.

What strategies does your organisation embrace in the advocacy on gender, peace and security?

We do not use the definition "gender, peace and security" since our activities are primarily focused on enhancing the WPS-agenda which was constructed from a gender analysis. We argue that it is necessary to continue to work to strengthen women's organisations, women leaders, women's participation and security specifically, in order for women to gain access to decision making arenas, whereas the term GPS indicates a wider range of actions and strategies and may be relevant in broader discussions.

We build our advocacy work on the expertise and experience of our partner organisations located in conflict affected countries. We use concrete examples from their work and bring them to relevant fora at international and regional levels. We also connect our work on the ground to the academic world to establish evidence based facts that we use in our advocacy work.

In the gender analysis we do, we identify patriarchal structures and men's position of power as an obstacle to women's human rights, human security of both women and men and sustainable peace. We see the role of men in the work towards gender equality as critical, and we consider it necessary to work with men and with the perception of masculinities, but before any real change can happen it is fundamental that women and women's organisations are empowered and enter into power arenas.

Do you see UNSCR 1325 and following resolutions as useful tools and would you recommend continued advocacy for their implementation to national governments, international and regional organisations?

Kvinna till Kvinna's advocacy efforts have a strong focus on UNSCR 1325 and following resolutions. We also, together with our partner organisations, make use of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform, the Universal Periodic Review to the Human Rights Council and agreed conclusions from the Commission on the Status of Women, etc.

As for the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, in the Swedish case it is not always easy to put into practical use since action plans are somewhat a "strange bird" in the everyday life of Swedish authorities. Swedish authorities' activities and priorities are steered by other forms of governmental documents, so called appropriation warrants. Having said that, the national action plan on 1325 has been an important tool for advocacy and led to significant changes in some areas, for example the Swedish Armed Forces have increased the number of deployed women and trainings on UNSCR 1325 for personnel and the WPS perspective made its way into much of Swedish government funding priorities for development aid. The national action plan also proved important when in specific lobbying activities, such as influencing the Swedish government to include WPS into the negotiations on Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), and advocacy efforts regarding foreign policies, for example emphasising the importance of Swedish government or parliament representatives to arrange for meetings with women's organisations and WHRD when visiting conflict regions.

If you think UNSCR 1325 and following resolutions as limited / misleading, what alternatives do you see?

We see them as useful tools and think they should be used for advocacy. They should be linked, maybe more strongly to the broader WPS agenda and documents like CEDAW, Beijing Platform, UPS, CSW conclusions, and relevant resolutions/declarations from the UN (such as the recent GA resolution on WHRD from 2013).

How do we ensure that issues related to women's empowerment and equal rights of women do not get diluted in the gender, peace and security debate?

Gender analysis and gender mainstreaming is relevant for all kind of security strategy work and security policies, but in order to make sure that the issues of women's empowerment and women's human rights do not get diluted, we argue that we need to stick to the Women Peace and Security agenda . Power relations in international security persist and therefore a specific focus on women is still very relevant.

The continued imbalance in power relations risks causing GPS becoming "Men, Peace and Security". Whether or not with good intentions we risk a development where policy makers downsize WPS programmes in favour of GPS programmes, with the argument that with GPS programmes they target both men and women. Strong opponents to WPS also get a free card to ignore WPS completely. Both scenarios open up for the danger of men being re-identified as key for funding programs and strategies thus again making them "gatekeepers", the opposite of the whole intention of the WPS agenda.

In order to keep the WPS agenda accurate and relevant, however, there is a need to increasingly look into factors previously somewhat ignored, such as the role of men and the concepts of/myths on masculinity, when we do our analysis and to become better at formulating what a gender analysis of conflict is. Strategies and work on masculinities is important, but the work on identifying problems and solutions must be balanced with the empowerment of women to be relevant and successful. We also need a more complex understanding of the target group "women" and the women's organisations where a developed gender analysis would include age, social / economic class, ethnicity, sexual identity, etc.

For a more detailed explanation on Kvinna till Kvinna's approach to gender, peace and security, please see visit the following webpage:

<http://kvinnatillkvinna.se/en/>