

‘[It’s] like a rubber band.’ Assessing UNSCR 1325 as a gender mainstreaming process

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Abstract

The principal aim of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality by implementing gender as a central component at all levels within the UN system. Previous work has focused on gender mainstreaming as an abstract concept, whereas this paper empirically examines efforts to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and by doing so evaluates the process of mainstreaming. This paper suggests that gender mainstreaming has limited potential to achieve gender empowerment and equality. A lack of benchmarks and targets within UNSCR 1325 undermines the Security Council’s commitment to women’s experiences of armed conflict. Gender mainstreaming has largely not been implemented at a macro-level (within the UN), although at a micro-level, civil society organisations have made some attempts to use UNSCR 1325 to achieve gender empowerment. Ultimately, however, UNSCR 1325 is not radical enough to be used as a transformative gender mainstreaming tool.

Introduction

Gender mainstreaming is a gender equality policy initiative, which was initially formulated within the Beijing Platform and Declaration for Action (BPFA).¹ Its principal aim is to achieve gender equality by implementing gender as a central component at all levels within the UN system.² Compared to equality initiatives premised on equal treatment and non-discrimination, mainstreaming is based on equality of impact, a process supposedly achieved by analysing whether policies adequately reflect a gender perspective at all stages of design, implementation and evaluation.³

Gender mainstreaming has received considerable attention from feminist academics (e.g. Beveridge and Nott, 2002, pp. 299–311; Squires, 2005, pp. 366–88), however, it has largely been analysed as an abstract concept. There has not been any in-depth examination of how gender mainstreaming operates on the ground. In order to address this gap, this paper critically evaluates micro-level initiatives to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security.⁴ UNSCR 1325 has dual aims: first to empower women at all levels of decision-making, and second to reduce gender-based violence in conflict. The use of mainstreaming policies in this context appears particularly progressive since women’s experience of armed conflict has largely been ignored in policy formation prior to the adoption of UNSCR 1325.

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1 Fourth World Conference on Women, Declaration and Platform for Action, A/CONF.177/20, 15 September 2005 at Strategic Objective E on women and armed conflict at para. 25 and 326.

2 Report of the Economic and Social Council for the year 1997, A/52/3/Rev.1, 18 September 1997 at 24.

3 Supra note 2 at 24.

4 SC Res. 1325, 31 October 2000.

As gender mainstreaming has not been substantially examined from an empirical perspective (e.g. Moser, 2007) there has also been little attention paid to the way in which gender mainstreaming functions as a process. This shift in analysis is important, as gender mainstreaming is essentially a process which should include an evaluation of the impact of all policies on both men and women at all stages of design, implementation and monitoring. A number of key mainstreaming strategies can be identified that situate UNSCR 1325 as a process rather than merely an abstract concept, principally:

- Gender-sensitive training.
- Introduction of a gender perspective when negotiating and implementing peace agreements.
- Introduction of a gender perspective in peacekeeping operations and where appropriate a gender component in field operations.
- Progress check on gender mainstreaming throughout peacekeeping operations.

This paper draws on empirical research undertaken with civil society organisations. Despite the relative lack of understanding of how gender mainstreaming functions as a process, both macro- and micro-level actors have not been deterred from using UNSCR 1325. The final aim of this paper is to consider how actors use gender mainstreaming. While it will be argued that gender mainstreaming has its limitations, on the ground it appears that civil society actors are employing gender mainstreaming as a gender equality initiative to secure women's empowerment.

Research methodology

The data for this paper are drawn from interviews with civil society actors working in the domain of peace and security. Thirty-one women and two men from twenty-seven women's, human rights and conflict resolution organisations were eventually interviewed.⁵ Interviewees were asked about their first-hand experiences of working on the gendered dimensions of conflict in the following countries: Afghanistan, Haiti, Israel–Palestine, Kosovo, Mongolia, Nepal, Northern Ireland, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.⁶ Questions were designed to elicit responses that would provide insight into the use of UNSCR 1325 at the micro-level.

The individual accounts explored here are not intended to quantify exactly the impact of UNSCR 1325. This is not to diminish the value of this information, as it offers valuable insight into civil society actors' perceptions, which are likely to be shaped by their understanding of government and external actors (Kenny, 1994, p. 1). Practically, a drawback of this method is that interviews can prove time-consuming for the interviewees, which may be off-putting, particularly for those individuals in the field who face significant pressures in terms of security, technology and time. A further limitation was the low response rate, with the participation of only 27 out of a potential 166 organisations. While this low response rate could be read as reflecting UNSCR 1325's failure to penetrate the public sphere, it may be due to other reasons. UNSCR 1325 is a relatively young instrument in policy terms. Many individuals were only in the primary stages of incorporating the themes of UNSCR 1325 into projects, and as a result were not in a position to give clear answers. Despite assurances of confidentiality, others felt that their current work was too politically sensitive and any involvement might jeopardise their programmatic activities.

5 Twenty-eight individuals were working directly on gender issues while four individuals were working within the broader context of peace, security and human rights. One individual was not directly involved in gender issues or conflict. Both grass-roots organisations and international NGOs participated.

6 All interviewees have been anonymised.

'As a tool it becomes very empowering.' Gender equality and women's empowerment

The majority of respondents welcomed the adoption of UNSCR 1325, which was perceived to be an important policy development by many, as exemplified by one interviewee:

'Within the organisation there is a strong sense that 1325 fits well into the gender analysis, allowing for stronger gender awareness.'

A few respondents had found the framework useful in fostering dialogue with governments, police and security forces:

'One thing that we have noticed is that it has been easier to talk to the militaries about training before going on peacekeeping mission when we have had the opportunity to refer to UNSCR 1325.'

According to interviewees in Nepal, army and security personnel forces have now acknowledged the need to include training not only on human rights but also on gender. This process however, was not seen to be indicative of increased receptiveness towards the concept of women's rights and empowerment. As one respondent stated:

'I would not say that the police and army are very receptive to women's issues, forget 1325, you know women's issues at all, but there's always an entry point . . . in this globalisation, this age . . . it deals with security and peace, women are also there [and it's a] Security Council Resolution so it is to do with their work directly.'

In some senses, this perception reinforces the view of security as a 'hard' issue, with gender merely appearing as a subsidiary component of UNSCR 1325. Nevertheless, in some instances UNSCR 1325 has positively influenced legislation⁷ and government policies, and is perceived by some respondents to be a very empowering tool:

'It is very empowering tool because yes, when you are not listened to, when you are rejected and your presence is denied and you become invisible in such situations, as a tool it becomes very empowering in situations where you can hang on to it.'

An example was given by one interviewee about a centre dedicated to feminism in Israel, which collaborated with the Shinui (the party for the secular and the middle class) and the then Labor–Meimad Parties, to draft an amendment to the 1956 Equal Representation of Women law, in July 2005. According to the interviewee, the themes contained within UNSCR 1325 were central to the amendment's text, which mandated the inclusion of women in the design of all domestic, foreign or security policy and peace talks.⁸

Despite this considerable achievement, which is a testament to the driving force of grassroots activists' awareness-raising of UNSCR 1325, provision for 25 percent minimum representation was replaced with the wording, 'suitable expression will be given to the representation of women from a variety of population groups, given the circumstances',⁹ diminishing the certainty of adequate representation. Given the nature of this discretionary provision, the inclusion and composition of

7 A private members draft bill, 3979, was brought before the Knesset (Israeli Parliament), which specifically referred to UNSCR 1325 and sought to amend the 1956 Equal Representation of Women Law.

8 Marcia Freedman, 'International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Israeli–Palestinian Peace' at Brit Tzedek v'Shalom Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace; at http://ga3.org/btvshalom/notice-description.tcl?newsletter_id=3535885 [last accessed 4 December 2008].

9 Ruth Sinai, 'Law: Women must be included in peace talks, policy decisions' 21 July 2005; at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/602695.html> [last accessed 29 August 2005].

women is dependent upon unspecified criteria, which lack transparency. Without any clear assertion or targets for participation within UNSCR 1325, the authors may have had little authority to support their proposition.

In other contexts, the lack of gender mainstreaming using UNSCR 1325 has not necessarily hampered efforts to gender-sensitise peace and security processes. In Nepal, interviewees felt that the UN donor working group on UNSCR 1325 had created energy to push the resolution at other forums where the peace process is discussed. Interviewees felt that this commitment might not have occurred without the existence of a specialised working group on UNSCR 1325.

Although discriminatory laws are not explicitly referenced within UNSCR 1325, civil society actors have used the resolution innovatively to gain substantive advances. For example, the abolition of four discriminatory laws under the Nepalese country code (*Mulki Ain*) was seen by one interviewee to be largely due to the advocacy of the Women's Human Rights (WHR) Single Women Group.¹⁰

There have also been positive steps taken to ensure greater inclusion of women in political decision-making. For example, the interim constitution provided for at least 33 percent of women candidates in the Constituent Assembly elections in Nepal.¹¹ Some interviewees expressed concern that this figure, based on candidacy, would not necessarily be reflected in the electoral outcomes. In the Constituent Assembly elections, which eventually took place in April 2008, women gained 33.2 percent of 575 elected positions, which was perceived by one respondent to be a significant recognition of women as decision-makers.

Paradoxically, although UNSCR 1325 contains no specific affirmative action provisions, a few respondents felt that governments had responded positively by recognising the need to appoint more women to decision-making posts. In the case of Colombia, one interviewee recognised that a quota system already in operation had ensured respect for women in high-level positions, compared to women at the micro-level who continued to experience discrimination. This experience problematises the objectives of UNSCR 1325, because fundamentally inclusion does not guarantee that a gender perspective will be mainstreamed, nor that gender discrimination will be prevented at all levels of society.

If mainstreaming is intended to go beyond representation by engendering policy and legislation, inclusion based on a liberal feminist interpretation of equality will not be sufficient. While increasing the representation of women ensures greater visibility and is important symbolically, there is no guarantee that women's approach to decision-making differs substantively from men's (Charlesworth and Chinkin, 2000, pp. 81–82).

In Sri Lanka, participants suggested that some advances had been made in women's access to decision-making. One respondent initially argued that the appointment of the subcommittee on gender was due to the tireless work of women during the past twenty years, but later conceded that UNSCR 1325 may have been influential by helping to promote the inclusion of gender issues in peace talks:

'This subcommittee was appointed partially because some of our leading feminists had some political clout with the then ruling party (UNP) . . . I also believe that [organisations] were able to work on this issue at a very early stage because of the financial assistance given by UNIFEM and other international organisations in their efforts to promote 1325 . . . therefore I would conclude that 1325's existence helped to a certain extent.'

10 The following provisions in the *Mulki Ain* have been repealed: (i) property of a deceased husband no longer needs to be returned to the paternal family after remarriage; (ii) there is no longer any need to reach age thirty-five in order to inherit the property of a deceased husband; (iii) male consent is no longer required when acquiring a passport; (iv) women no longer need the consent of their adult sons or unmarried daughters to sell or hand over ownership of property.

11 Interim Constitution of Nepal 2063 (2007) Part 7, Constituent Assembly, Article 63 (4).

Although the subcommittee did not participate directly in Track I negotiations, they were able to make suggestions. The respondent envisaged that the visibility of women would not become a reality without some form of compulsory quota and suggested that the NGO lobby should have pushed harder for the inclusion of women at the main negotiating table.

Cockburn (2007, p. 139) makes the assumption that UNSCR 1325 is easy to grasp. Interviews, however, suggest that the language needs to be demystified and contextualised at the micro-level in order to have any real chance of impacting on gender relations. Concerns were raised that UNSCR 1325 is susceptible to adverse interpretations which go against the spirit of the resolution. However, dependent on the actor involved, this manipulation could potentially have positive repercussions. As one interviewee explained:

'UNSCR 1325 is like a rubber band, you can stretch it and it can encompass so many things but then it can shrink back again.'

This observation suggests that women's organisations are managing to engage with policy-makers on issues such as conflict prevention, which is only touched upon within the preamble of UNSCR 1325.

Potentially, NGOs and grassroots organisations have the capacity to drive policy, which may in turn help to crystallise important norms on women, peace and security. For example, in the case of Israel, where the Optional Protocol to CEDAW¹² has not been ratified, one respondent felt that the language of UNSCR 1325 had added international backing to concerns:

'1325 gives an international language, broader demand. It is something to work with, recognised throughout the land and not just the region. It has made it possible to get legislation . . . it is also a way of creating awareness and discussion so it has been very, very helpful.'

Whether the framework of UNSCR 1325 will successfully mainstream gender within peace and security operations is not clear. It appears that a number of conceptual and operational obstacles have hampered the overall success of initiatives.

'It is perhaps a gross exaggeration to say 1325 has had an effect.' Does UNSCR 1325 really make a difference?

While overall interviewees were positive, perceptions of the impact of UNSCR 1325 were mixed. The majority of respondents were using UNSCR 1325 in advocacy on issues including the accountability of actors in cases of gender-based violence against women. For example, Nepalese NGOs use UNSCR 1325 at the district level to train women peace volunteers, who then disseminate information on violence against women and human rights within communities in order to enhance gender relations on the ground. A minority of organisations, whose activities centre directly on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, concentrate on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes by devising gender-sensitive training modules for peacekeepers. However, the extent to which UNSCR 1325 has impacted on peace and security processes seems uncertain. As one interviewee stated:

'It is perhaps a gross exaggeration to say 1325 has had an effect. Outside of feminist circles I can't say that it has penetrated the broad public of women and men.'

The approach of some civil society organisations was also criticised by one respondent who strongly disputed the use of the resolution to try to achieve rights:

¹² Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women GA Res. 54/4, 15 October 1999.

'1325 is not known about and if it is known about, it isn't really considered... It is just a resolution. It is not a source; it does not create any rights. From the human rights framework and the bundle of human rights involved you can already draw out the right to participate.'

This comment however, fails to recognise that UNSCR 1325 explicitly references substantive rights. Further, organisations are using UNSCR 1325 and, perhaps to a greater extent, the BPFA.¹³ Reliance on these instruments reinforces limitations within the existing human rights system. Feminist academics have traditionally felt that the guise of neutrality in human rights instruments is neither representative nor inclusive of both genders (Charlesworth, 1999, p. 381). As central actors in the development of UNSCR 1325, women's organisations may prefer to back policies and tools which openly acknowledge the gendered dynamics of armed conflict.

Greater emphasis does need to be placed on the linkages between UNSCR 1325 and substantive human rights provisions, and while it may appear that some women's organisations credulously employ UNSCR 1325 as an instrument without fully appreciating its rights-based limitations, even official UN statements on the resolution appear misleading. Rhetoric on UNSCR 1325 feeds into this false conception of 'rights'. In the Secretary-General's 2004 report on women, peace and security, it was stated that:

'Resolution 1325 (2000) holds out a promise to women across the globe that their rights will be protected and that barriers to their equal participation and full involvement in the maintenance and promotion of sustainable peace will be removed.'¹⁴

In a sense, the UN seems complicit in promoting a misguided understanding of rights, but this approach could be deliberately taken in order to build up important norms in the women, peace and security matrix.

A few interviewees suggested that UNSCR 1325 seemed far removed from the day-to-day reality of armed conflicts, pointing to the complexity of applying generic instruments to highly contextualised settings:

'In some conflicts the warring parties are often uneducated. For example the Lords Resistance Army [operating in and around Uganda] has no political platform and seems simply to kill/rape for the sake of killing and raping. These parties have no respect for UN resolutions, nor perhaps do they understand them.'

This perception prompts the question of whether conceptual clarity would make any difference in practice.

'One of the major obstacles is [that UNSCR 1325 is] conceptually unclear.' **Conceptual obstacles with UNSCR 1325**

Concerns were raised that a number of conceptual obstacles proved problematic in the design of organisational strategies using UNSCR 1325. When applied in the context of Nepal, a predominantly Hindu society composed of multiple ethnic and indigenous groups, conceptual tensions were seen to arise from conceptions of gender. The use of generic language was criticised for failing to engage with multiple identities based on class, caste and ethnicity:

13 For example, the Cambodian government's Ministry of Women's Affairs does not use UNSCR 1325 as an overt tool but instead bases its five-year strategic plan on the BPFA.

14 United Nations Report of the Secretary-General, Women and peace and security, S/2004/814, 13 October 2004 at para. 121.

'One of the major obstacles is [that UNSCR 1325 is] conceptually unclear on the concept of substantial model of equality, negative attitude toward the affirmative [action] in favour of disadvantaged groups etc.'

This comment echoes general constraints with mainstreaming policy on the basis that one facet of identity is prioritised at the exclusion of others.

Several respondents engaged with the gender dimensions of peacekeeping operations expressed concern that key processes including DDR were ill-defined, which could result in practical implications for the input of bilateral donors when designing DDR programmes:

'In practice, planners for instance refuse to elect all women that joined armies or militias for DDR programmes, as this would be much too expensive. So it is an obstacle how to deal with the various groups of women within (ir)regular armies (e.g. women associated with the armed groups, female combatants, sex slaves, dependents), and who to provide what DDR assistance. Key is to clearly define who is a female combatant.'

Although clause 13 of UNSCR 1325 is centred on the recognition that planners should afford women as well as men in the design of DDR processes, this comment suggests that there is a systemic failure in the remit of DDR programmes. Current DDR practices fail to account for reintegration processes deemed integral to a feminist model of peace, which requires sustained non-violence (Golan, 2004, p. 2). By focusing on disarmament and demobilisation, which require fewer finances, rather than reintegration processes, the use of UNSCR 1325 as a gender mainstreaming tool may be undermined.

A few interviewees felt that donor agencies want to see deliverable results, which are not available through community-based reintegration processes that address trauma by providing psycho-sexual and social services. For example, a typical DDR programme may include vocational training, HIV testing and monetary compensation in exchange for a weapon.¹⁵ A significant number of women play multiple roles in irregular armies and militia as support workers, cooks and sex slaves. As a result of these roles, which do not require arms to be carried, women may be denied important reintegration services. Unarmed, ex-combatant women were perceived by interviewees to be one of the hardest categories of individuals to support in long-term reintegration strategies:

'... emphasis is on vocational training – a very quick way of seeing results. With psycho-sexual and social services addressing trauma, it's a much longer process and [the donors] don't see deliverable results.'

Further, some interviewees expressed concern that the resolution did not contain any provisions concerning reparations and repatriation policies for those displaced internally or externally, or regarding women's ongoing protection as refugees. According to one interviewee, donor agencies' failure to provide sustained financial support meant that many peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities had been forced to stop prematurely.

In the case of Nepal, which has been affected by a violent Maoist insurgency for the past decade, a culture of violence and intimidation remains intact (Raj Upreti, 2006). Some interviewees felt that Maoist attitudes towards disarmament presented practical obstacles which hindered the adoption of a gender-sensitive DDR policy. According to one interviewee, the Maoists appear to be more positive

15 Working group session on DDR, Promoting Women's Participation in Peace and Security Processes Operationalising UN Security Council 1325, 18–20 November 2004, Joan B. Kroc Institute of Peace and Justice, University of San Diego.

towards reintegration, though this does not necessarily represent acknowledgement or concern for the reintegration of female combatants:

‘The Maoists will not talk about any kind of DDR process which they see as inappropriate and humiliating, making discussion on disarmament difficult but they are keener on reintegration as many of the Maoists in the camps are not genuine combatants and the Maoist leaders need a face-saving way of getting them out of the camps before the UN verification.’

It would appear that combatants continue to be strictly defined according to whether arms are carried or not, by the UN Mission on Nepal (UNMIN), which is charged with registering combatants and weapons in the cantonments. This leaves little hope that DDR processes will adopt a gender-sensitive approach accounting for multiple combatant roles. According to one interviewee, the international community recognises the issue of women in Maoist cantonments but interaction between the UN and the Nepalese government has proved contentious:

‘The UN estimates . . . that 20 percent of the Maoist army in UN monitored cantonments are women. The international community, led by the UN, recognised this would be an issue early on but it is the government that has responsibility for conditions in the camps and they have not done much for either men or women in the camps (disease, snakes, tents blowing away – all this before monsoon has even started).’

It is unclear whether the situation in Maoist cantonments has improved since these interviews were conducted. As the social hierarchy of Nepal is built on caste and class, the challenges for women’s reintegration into society appear particularly pertinent. One interviewee felt that community level reintegration may be further compounded by the Maoist insurgency’s modification of women’s social/cultural identity and status. In particular, the respondent felt that communities would be reluctant to accept Maoist women back into society as their traditional roles had changed fundamentally.

This point highlights the significance of UNSCR 1325’s ability to respond to women’s roles in wartime. In the framework’s uneasy mix of protection and empowerment measures, the positive shift in women’s social roles from victim to actor is by no means explicit. The increased participation of women in decision-making seems to be based on the inherent assumption that new spaces or gender entry points will automatically be created.

‘Some of us are even accused of obstructing peace.’ Practical obstacles to implementation

For the majority of participants, physical insecurity presented a major practical obstacle to fulfilling the objectives of UNSCR 1325. One respondent discussed the hostility towards any promotion of peace and protestation of war crimes in Sri Lanka. In some instances, the interviewee’s organisation had faced threats and was prevented from carrying out field visits, questioned by both the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels and the government of Sri Lanka (GOSL). With no guarantee of physical security, any discussion of violence, women’s rights and peace has proved to be particularly difficult. The interviewee discussed the reluctance of all parties to broach the topic of human rights violations:

‘Even after the ceasefire agreement the [human rights] violation continues in Sri Lanka and parties involved in peace negotiation would not want to talk about these violations. It is the women’s groups that talk publicly about the ongoing child recruitment, political killings and kidnappings and some of us are even accused of obstructing peace.’

This adverse reaction to women’s organisations may not necessarily be culturally specific. Potentially, women’s organisations face a backlash against outspoken statements which are perceived to extend

beyond the confines of conflict, striking at the core of patriarchal power structures. Physical security risks were reiterated by respondents in other contexts.

Interviewees from Colombia described how most civilians, let alone women, continue to be unprotected during conflict. Women continue to be openly targeted for expressing support for either paramilitaries, guerrillas or the government in rural areas. Equally, for some humanitarian aid agencies which operate on the principle of neutrality, the promotion of women’s rights, or even acknowledging women, may not be feasible. According to one respondent, under the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, any outspoken comments highlighting the plight of women may have made it difficult for humanitarian aid agencies to continue working in the country. To this interviewee, the benefits of limited health-care provision to Afghan women outweighed any overt political statements:

‘Afghanistan is different compared to many countries as women were so obviously targeted and very limited in what they could do and with terrible consequences if they broke Taliban law. In relation to Resolution 1325, yes it could be used to try and promote women’s access to health. But on the flip side by taking a stance and highlighting the women’s plight, it may also make it very difficult for [...] to remain working in Afghanistan.’

The politically contentious nature of UNSCR 1325 is not the only practical obstacle. Some interviewees felt that derogatory attitudes of expatriate staff working in international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) also limited feasible advances in gender equality. For instance, one interviewee discussed how male expatriates involved in the recruitment of local Afghani staff seemed to develop views towards Afghani women which impacted on their employment:

‘Afghan culture seemed to rub off on them [male expatriates], it also made it difficult for women expats at times whilst I worked in Afghanistan. Male arrogance.’

This point resonates with literature on mainstreaming in post-conflict reconstruction and security. For example, Whitbread (2004, p. 43) discusses how Oxfam programme staff viewed women in their traditional roles and tended to focus on victim-centred support services at the expense of programme activities that would support women’s empowerment. A failure to bring women into employment or peace negotiations reinforces definitive and restricted gender roles at a point in time when a window of opportunity exists to expand the positions and interests of women.

Although UNSCR 1325 urges increased representation of women at all decision-making levels, there are no benchmarks for incorporating women into both Track I and Track II level negotiations. As one respondent in Israel noted, while many qualified female army officials and negotiating lawyers are present, women’s voices are usually excluded from negotiations. Even in Track II negotiations, proceedings are dominated by what the interviewee referred to as ‘security types’, largely men from a military background.

Although this interviewee had been involved with Track II negotiations, their position did not seem entirely secure: ‘I’m hanging on by my fingertips to stay in there.’ Describing their involvement as a ‘token peace activist’, the interviewee attributed their inclusion in the process to their role in a peace organisation, rather than on the basis of their gender. Negotiating environments may present practical and operational obstacles based on the negative attitudes of male decision-makers which could impact on women’s capacity to negotiate successfully. When questioned on these points, the interviewee felt that the presence of women in itself was a major achievement, but the question of how well these women were received by their fellow male decision-makers was more difficult to answer. According to the respondent, during the Geneva Initiatives,¹⁶ Track II negotiations brought

¹⁶ Applying to both the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the Geneva Accords were signed in 2002.

together ex-security personnel, politicians and peaceniks and these personnel had mixed attitudes toward women negotiators:

'From the security types the attitude is that women don't generally know anything about security and see them as 'soft'. The politicians were generally more open. As a representative of peace, whether you are a man or a woman, it is generally seen as bleeding hearts and that you have been duped by the Palestinians.'

This perception suggests that it may make little difference to the process whether peacemakers are male or female if a negative attitude towards 'peace' pervades negotiations. In particular, this comment suggests that women's reception by male counterparts may be more contingent on ideology rather than on the basis of gender.

The 'security types' perceived lack of conviction in women negotiators' knowledge of security perpetuates the idea that the language of security is encrypted in a masculine sphere impenetrable by women. If we look to Cohn's work on defence intellectuals' use of abstraction in discourse on nuclear weaponry, we see how metaphors on nuclear missiles exude hyper-masculinity (Cohn, 1987, pp. 694–95). In learning this language, Cohn was able to engage in discussion on military defence, though when she stepped outside of this discourse she was ill-received:

'What I found was that no matter how well-informed or complex my questions were, if I spoke English rather than expert jargon, the men responded to me as though I were ignorant, simple-minded or both. It did not occur to anyone that I might actually be choosing not to speak their language.' (p. 708)

Taking these experiences into consideration, integrationist mainstreaming strategies, which simply 'add women and stir', will be limited in remit if they fail to address discriminatory gendered language and practices.

'Oh another UN resolution.' Making top-down instruments relevant

Another major challenge is how UNSCR 1325 can be made relevant in local and national contexts. A significant number of respondents who took part in this study felt that societal attitudes ultimately impinged on the success of top-down gender equality initiatives. For example, some interviewees identified existing gender inequality at the level of policy formation as a major obstacle to implementation of the resolution. According to one respondent, 80 percent of all policy-makers in Mongolia are men, and there is a lack of support and significant resistance to women's involvement in policy-making. Sensitising men to women's human rights was a major challenge voiced by the majority of respondents.

For those respondents working in INGOs, the negative attitude towards the resolution was perceived to reflect local civil society's negativity towards the UN as a whole, rather than demonstrative of UNSCR 1325's perceived sense of externality in local contexts:

'In terms of local response, in Liberia, the women's movement had been quite strong and pushed from the outside so the response to 1325 was more positive than somewhere say Haiti, where civil society is more negative towards the presence of the UN. In Haiti there tends to be a push back against the resolution as a reflection of the local response to the UN in general.'

According to this interviewee, in campaigns designed to encourage the appointment of gender advisers in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Haiti and Congo, responses to gender mainstreaming had been mixed and micro-level officers were less accepting of gender adviser appointments. The hiring of a gender adviser by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UN DPKO) was perceived by the respondent to be a relatively big step. When a gender adviser was appointed in Congo, it happened to

coincide with a sexual exploitation scandal, and a code of conduct officer was already in post to consider problems of this nature.

Describing the hindering effect that these different titles had on gender mainstreaming efforts at the local level, the respondent suggested that local actors had difficulty differentiating between a gender adviser and a code of conduct officer:

'At the local level they find it difficult to grasp the difference between a gender advisor and a code of conduct officer. When faced with why they don't have a gender adviser, the attitude becomes, well we have a code of conduct officer so why do we need a gender adviser.'

While these job titles may appear self-explanatory to the respondent, conceptual tensions could arise at the micro-level if gender is ill-defined. In this particular case, the code of conduct officer was in post to assess any behaviour adverse to women's physical security, such as sexual violence or abuse by peacekeeping personnel or other actors. This role contrasts with the much wider remit of the gender officer role, which considers more broadly how peacekeeping and DDR policies affect both men and women. This lack of comprehension seems quite reasonable given UNSCR 1325's hazy conceptual objectives on how empowerment measures should relate to the broader goals of gender mainstreaming in a peace and security context.

It would seem that there are very real challenges for introducing top-down mainstreaming initiatives. The imposition of universal gender mainstreaming models upon context-specific situations could be detrimental to peace processes if external actors fail to take account of social and cultural conditions in the design of strategies. This point was raised by a number of interviewees, for instance:

'People say "Oh another UN resolution, there have been so many UN resolutions which we have not been able to take care of, which we have not been able to fully commit to, and now there is this new UN resolution?"'

Another interviewee recognised that external conflict resolution programmes do not sit easily with socially and politically charged conditions on the ground, expressing scepticism about outside interventions:

'Often the solutions come from outside of the country and are not necessarily engaging the forces of peace . . . The outside forces find it easier to disengage because firstly there are often barriers in terms of language and culture. Secondly, the whole society is extremely politicised. Other reasons are security and fear on a human level. It is difficult to deal with society in an even-handed way.'

This observation reflects that external donor agencies and INGOs may not fully appreciate internal tensions, which could lead to resistance towards third-party involvement, thus preventing the adoption of an agenda-setting model of mainstreaming. Even though UNSCR 1325's use as a mainstreaming tool appears progressive, if narrowly applied in a manner which restricts the engagement of third-party actors, the framework's objectives could potentially be undermined.

In line with this dilemma, one interviewee explained how both the Colombian government and civil society are working on UNSCR 1325 separately. According to the respondent, the Colombian government does not refer explicitly to UNSCR 1325 because they principally associate it with being a tool of women's organisations as opposed to a policy instrument for national governments. This may relate to the perception of UNSCR 1325 as a soft law instrument resulting in little recourse if the Colombian government fails to implement provisions. While the Colombian government has implemented some internal policies which potentially fall within the remit of UNSCR 1325, these were not directly attributed to the resolution. For example, a quota law has increased the political participation of women in politics and there are now six women ministers out of thirteen in high-level positions, including one woman minister in defence.

This respondent suggested that women's organisations also potentially negated the broad applicability of UNSCR 1325, by viewing it as a tool which belonged to women in conflict areas rather than as a broader framework to integrate women into politics within peaceful societies. Another respondent, also in Colombia, echoed this sentiment, describing a lack of sensitisation on the part of civil society actors, pointing to the resolution's potential use in areas often neglected, such as conflict prevention. These perceptions highlight areas of UNSCR 1325 which require greater clarification. At present, whether the resolution can be successfully extended to include conflict prevention initiatives, as per the preamble of UNSCR 1325, stands open to interpretation. Differing expectations of actors at the macro-and micro-levels may also problematise the application of mainstreaming policies in highly politicised peace and security contexts. In order to scrutinise these challenges in greater detail the role of Norway in peacebuilding will be examined.

'The one who really wears the shoes knows where it pinches.' Norway's role in peacebuilding

While Norway appears to champion gender equality at home, it is debateable whether the same standards are routinely applied in Norway's international development programmes. In Sri Lanka, the Norwegian government facilitated peace negotiations and headed the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM),¹⁷ which oversaw ceasefire violations. One interviewee pointed to a lack of women within the Norwegian delegation throughout the six rounds of Sri Lankan peace talks. The respondent felt that this absence of women at the negotiating table lacked congruity with Norway's own standards of gender equality. When compared with previous peace negotiations this raises the question of whether Norway was more responsive to the status of women, or whether it had made little difference in practice. It is difficult to measure this aspect without clear gender-sensitive indicators prior to and during the peace process, but the respondent felt that the Norwegian peace monitors had not been particularly responsive to complaints from mothers, whose children were forcibly recruited by the LTTE.

When Norway latterly appointed a woman, the respondent suggested that this may encourage all parties to adopt an egalitarian approach:

'If Norwegians appoint women to their main delegation then we can demand the government and the tiger rebels to appoint women in their delegation as well.'

Echoing gender mainstreaming literature, this experience is demonstrative of rigid gender schemes which may be upheld by the international development community rather than male national leaderships (Handrahan, 2004, p. 436). As Handrahan states:

'... the lack of "gender mainstreaming" seems not to result from an inability on the part of the international community to know better, but rather suggests its inability to consider its own patriarchy and the damage this does within international development paradigms.'

During conflict resolution, opportunities to mainstream gender and integrate women into political processes should not be overlooked by outside mediators and facilitators. Inherent operational difficulties, however, may arise from the intersection of multiple aspects of identity with gender, which often fail to resonate with the experiences of external actors. As one respondent stated:

'It is human nature, the one who really wears the shoes knows where it pinches, so whatever the effort you make you still find that there are some missing linkages.'

17 The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) was created by both the LTTE and GOSL following the ceasefire agreement of 22 February 2002. Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland were all involved in the SLMM. The SLMM ceased to exist with effect from 16 January 2008 as a result of abrogation of the ceasefire.

This type of problem seems particularly pertinent in the case of Nepal, where Norway funds the UN Donor Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. Nepalese society is underpinned by a strict caste system, and in some instances internal caste systems operating within a caste, which has effectively marginalised vast sectors of the population. As one interviewee stated:

‘We have cultural discrimination, caste also relating to culture and tradition; and gender also relating to culture and tradition. That’s why both are related, and within the caste there is also gender discrimination.’

However, the impact of this lack of homogeneity also risks undermining a common platform for gender equality. The women’s movement in Nepal is fragmented and gender is often perceived as secondary to broader issues. Social inclusion is based on marginalised groups, which undermines the adoption of a gender perspective in policy-making. Additionally, women’s organisations are often divided along party-political lines, which results in further fragmentation. Although Nepalese women are often encouraged to stand together by external donor agencies, respondents from the Norwegian embassy acknowledged that this was not always an easy task:

‘We try to also say that in Nepal . . . stand together as women, not as groups, different groups only working together so the Dalits do their thing, the Brahmins do their thing, but that they fight together as women because I think it’s one of the successes of the Nordic countries, the population is quite equal, we don’t have a lot of different ethnic groups so it was easier for the women’s movement to stand united in Norway, Finland and Sweden.’

As recognised by the interviewee, in contrast with Nepal, greater ethnic homogeneity has served to strengthen cohesion amongst women in Scandinavia. Another interviewee suggested that when Nepalese civil society actors stand together as a group, many indigenous and minority groups feel that their individual concerns are diluted. These factors demonstrate how subtle intersections between gender, race and ethnicity may ultimately impinge on the success of gender mainstreaming initiatives, particularly if overlooked by external interventions.

Some significant issues arise regarding the role of external agencies when the cases of Sri Lanka and Nepal are compared. The Norwegian delegation’s lack of women in the SLMM has been defended by INGOs on the basis that any imposition of Norway’s egalitarian standards would risk the failure of the peace process.¹⁸ Equally, encouraging women to stand together as a common platform in Nepal could also be perceived as the imposition of Norway’s egalitarian approach. This contrast in approach may reflect a shift in Norway’s political agenda. Engagement with respondents in Sri Lanka occurred prior to the development of the Norwegian National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 in March 2006. Discussing Norway’s engagement in Nepal, one interviewee spoke of the ‘new’ gender-sensitive government in Norway, under which the NAP had been adopted. This domestic development may have impacted on Norway’s role in peacebuilding. Building on these specific experiences it is important to consider the perceived impact that macro-level leaders have on micro-level mainstreaming practices.

‘But what about the UN missions that come here?’ External agencies

On the surface, the policy-oriented language of UNSCR 1325 appears to have brought the relationship of women, peace and security within the mainstream of the Security Council’s mandate. Many

18 ‘Involving Men in the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security’ GAPS (Gender Action for Peace and Security); <http://www.peacewomen.org/resources/1325/Men&1325.pdf> [last accessed 15 July 2007].

responses however, contained a strong sense that UNSCR 1325 remains an instrument of women's organisations, as exemplified by one interviewee:

'Women's organisations were using UNSCR 1325 by the time the resolution had been crafted in New York . . . as soon as the resolution came out civil society started recalling the resolution and developing initiatives around UNSCR 1325.'

A major practical obstacle to implementation of UNSCR 1325 is perceived to be a lack of leadership by external agencies. For instance, the majority of interviewees picked up on gender neutrality within UN agencies and systems, despite UN rhetoric on the importance of increasing women's representation at all levels of decision-making. This suggests that organisations had expected the UN to lead by example. When the resolution was initially passed, local actors expected greater support from UN agencies:

'When [1325] was passed . . . I thought it needs to [be] known [at the] decision-making level, that's why I knock every door, the UNDP, even UN agencies nobody listened to this because it had not been internalised by the UN system, only the one small document had passed.'

Although the international women's movement helped to drive the adoption of UNSCR 1325, gender mainstreaming appears to be undermined by weak ownership at the macro-level. The time lag between adoption at the Security Council and programming UNSCR 1325 within respective UN agencies has impinged on the UN's ownership of the resolution. This clear lack of internalisation within UN agencies has created a negative impression that the UN itself does not adhere to the principles of UNSCR 1325, as highlighted by a number of interviewees in Nepal. For instance:

'We've looked at the commissions that have come – all of the commissions are very gender imbalanced, sometimes there is hardly a woman in it, at the UN level . . .'

Further, external agencies have recognised that in some instances UNSCR 1325 appears to be marginalised from mainstream peace processes. Respondents from the Norwegian embassy in Nepal felt that since UNSCR 1325 has been agreed upon, it should form part of all transitional justice working groups. Currently, a separate working group focuses exclusively on UNSCR 1325. Even within the UN's peace and security programmes and operations, UNSCR 1325 is not perceived to have been mainstreamed:

'UN system is extremely gender insensitive to tell you very frankly so that is the reason that there is a watchdog kind of group . . . That is the strategy that we have to take at the moment but of course in the future it would be very good if we could mainstream it in all three groups and we don't have to use this separate group.'

UN level Arria formula meetings have faced strong criticism for failing to engage high level decision-makers (Hill, 2002, p. 29). These issues were reiterated by interviewees:

'The thing is like in the other three groups, it is mostly heads who go there and the men who have real power decision-making and those kind of things while in the 1325 group it is mostly junior officers.'

To interviewees, the political agenda of external agencies has impinged on how diplomatic missions respond to UNSCR 1325. For instance, internal rules were seen to prove more stringent than the resolution itself:

'We can use this [NAP] because it says about Norwegian personnel that are going out on UN missions should be trained and sensitised and be informed by 1325 so we can ask our own

government if they are trained so that’s a good thing. I haven’t actually asked that question yet without being embarrassed . . .’

Interviewees felt that the interpretation of specific concepts by multilateral donor agencies has also impacted on understandings of equality, pointing to the way in which social inclusion is often taken to be synonymous with gender. This potentially undermines the adoption of a gender perspective in policy-making. As one respondent stated:

‘I think for the World Bank and ADB [Asian Development Bank] it’s much broader, it’s not only about 1325 . . . for them it’s very much [about] inclusion . . . we feel there’s very little charity on this whole issue about social inclusion because when we talk about this whole issue of inclusion they take it synonymous to gender.’

Competing top-down policies were perceived to weaken the application of gender mainstreaming initiatives, and it was explained that these dimensions need to be addressed by policy-makers in order to ensure that gender equality initiatives are not usurped. Equally, external agencies’ political contexts make it difficult to advocate for women’s inclusion, as exemplified by one respondent:

‘Personally given that the UK has only 15 percent female MPs it can feel a bit rich telling Nepali politicians they need to be more inclusive. The UK (and the UN) probably needs to get better at including women in its political process before it can really talk to other countries about involving women in peacebuilding.’

This comment effectively reinforces reformist arguments, which seek to enhance decision-making structures and macro-level gender architecture in order to ensure the greater inclusiveness of women.

A number of concerns also surfaced regarding the perceived impact of external peace monitors, which some respondents felt exacerbated tensions. In practice, many INGOs and donor agencies have mirrored governments’ actions in how they apply their own policies. For example, suggestions were made that donor agencies operating in Nepal have also acted in a divisive way by directing compensation towards security forces’ widows, without addressing the position of Maoist widows. A number of Nepalese NGOs expressed concern that if INGOs did not take proactive steps to work with UNSCR 1325, it made it particularly difficult for national-level NGOs, without any resources, to implement the resolution.

It is important to note that literature on UNSCR 1325 in Nepal is often co-sponsored by INGOs (e.g. Action Aid Nepal and WHR 2006). While Nepalese NGOs may benefit from capacity-building in order to produce this literature, the extent to which these publications are driven by external agencies is debatable. Too much outside intervention by INGOs may nullify local-level attempts to control the conceptual schema of UNSCR 1325. It is difficult to know whether NGOs have taken ownership of UNSCR 1325 in Nepal or whether their responses relate to the conflict resolution and peacebuilding agendas of external agencies.

It would appear that civil society actors have not been deterred from using UNSCR 1325, despite the fact that provisions often seem external to micro-level political, social and cultural dynamics. Rather than demonstrating increased receptiveness to new concepts in gender equality policy, the momentum within civil society to use UNSCR 1325’s substantive themes may be in response to issues which organisations are already working on, such as gender-based violence. Civil society actors may feel that UNSCR 1325 has conveniently encapsulated these issues.

Discussion: evaluating perspectives from the field

This paper has highlighted that the process of implementing gender mainstreaming is highly complex, and often quite difficult. Practical and operational obstacles heavily influenced the

perceived impact of UNSCR 1325. The majority of obstacles to implementation appear to be based on internal sociopolitical and cultural dynamics, particularly in pluralistic societies, rather than the conceptual clarity of UNSCR 1325. Discrimination based on other facets of identity, including race and ethnicity, reinforce a strong sense of impunity towards social inequality. At present it is unclear whether gender sits easily within the broader aims of social inclusion, though how these two policy initiatives are combined and applied in practice remains a challenge. This does not mean that UNSCR 1325 cannot be used, however.

As evidenced by NGO networks at the micro-level, UNSCR 1325 provides a framework to raise awareness about women's empowerment and to address taboo issues including gender-based violence. If, for example, the use of UNSCR 1325 as an awareness-raising tool creates a norm of zero tolerance towards interpersonal violence at the district level in Nepal, the resolution will have been developed beyond its restrictive remit centred on violent armed conflict to include structural violence, demonstrating the applicability of UNSCR 1325 in the private sphere.

The process of mainstreaming suggests that there are significant tensions at the interface between macro-level mainstreaming policies and micro-level mainstreaming practices. While in theory UNSCR 1325 has engaged multiple actors to facilitate an agenda-setting model of mainstreaming, empirical research findings suggest that women's inclusion in peace and security processes continues to follow an integrationist model of mainstreaming which falls short of redressing gender-blind peace and security processes. Civil society efforts to mainstream gender in security sector reform using UNSCR 1325, have been somewhat weakened without the full co-operation and support of actors at the macro-level. Key areas of the resolution are at risk, including DDR processes which rely on the resolute determination of the UN to address the gender dimensions of field operations and staffing structures within the UN.

There are two main models of gender mainstreaming: integrationist and agenda-setting models. Integrationist models of mainstreaming, underpinned by an 'add women and stir approach', incorporate women without addressing how existing structures and decision-making mechanisms often fail to account for the experiences of both men and women. By contrast, the agenda-setting approach seems to have some semblance of a practical framework, through the incorporation of a range of actors, including civil society, to reorient existing policy paradigms in order to reflect a gender perspective (Squires, 2005, pp. 374–75).

This paper highlights that, potentially, the adoption of an agenda-setting mainstreaming model could prove to be transformative, particularly in the aftermath of conflict when a window of opportunity exists to re-orient gender-blind security paradigms. Post-conflict dynamics, however, are highly politicised, particularly where concepts such as ethnicity, culture and identity intersect with and cut across gender even more acutely. In practice, this means that universal instruments such as UNSCR 1325 may not have the capacity to respond to highly contextual settings and could therefore be perceived as irrelevant by parties to conflict.

If there is not an existing culture or recognition of gender equality, the concept of gender may appear external to local dynamics at the micro-level. This sense of externality may also influence local actors' responses to UNSCR 1325. This is not simply a matter of a North–South divide in terms of development. Gender is not a straightforward concept to those without prior knowledge or experience of the term. Even high-level policy-makers at the EU level are perceived to have little real understanding of gender issues (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002, p. 342). If the positive transformation of women's roles cannot be guaranteed by the process of gender mainstreaming, the inclusion of affirmative action provisions in legal and policy instruments becomes increasingly important to advance norms of representation.¹⁹

19 The ICCPR recognises that affirmative provisions may be an important element in securing gender equality. Human Rights Committee General Comment no. 18: Non-Discrimination, 10 November 1989.

Conclusion

Principally, UNSCR 1325 seems overwhelmingly external to the internal dynamics of individual countries, which leads to the question of whether generic mainstreaming tools can be effectively applied in conflict prevention, resolution and reconstruction mechanisms. UNSCR 1325 remains an instrument of grass-roots organisations, which lack the financial capital to implement the framework in a systematic and consistent manner. Empirical research highlights the contentious relationship between external and local actors at the interface where macro-level mainstreaming policies meet with mainstreaming processes on the ground. Projects tend to be donor-driven and ad hoc. Outside interventions, while not always deliberately imposing standards on local actors, add to the resolution's perceived sense of externality by failing to challenge discriminatory social practices. As a result, the international community's commitment to the gender-sensitisation of peace and security processes is undermined by mixed messages.

Despite UNSCR 1325's 'externality', the resolution's importance and relevance to a diverse range of organisations working in a peace and security context suggests that although UNSCR 1325 may appear culturally blind, it is a well-intentioned instrument. Much more difficult to ascertain is how the 'impact' of UNSCR 1325 on gender relations should be measured, and this is a question which requires further detailed investigation.

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