



The Boston Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights

Workshop on Strategies for Grassroots Implementation of Resolution 1325

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Carol Cohn is the program director of the Boston Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights. Her current research examines gender mainstreaming in international peace and security institutions, focusing on the passage of UNSC Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, and the ongoing efforts by NGOs and UN entities to ensure its implementation.

Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls and others founded fem'LINKpacific, a women's media NGO established to increase the visibility of gender issues and women's stories within the context of the crisis and through community media initiatives. Ms. Bhagwan-Rolls was the Youth and Media representative on Fiji's delegation to the 1995 Fourth World Conference

on Women. She was appointed by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women to the experts meeting on “Women and the Media” in November 2002.

Monique Kande is a founding member and president of the International Foundation of African Women for Development, a pan-African organization for women’s capacity building, and has long been active in the fields of peace and development. She is a founding member and executive secretary of the Congolese Women’s Caucus. Created to push for women’s involvement in the Inter-Congolese Dialogues, the Caucus brings together women from throughout different sectors and the full political spectrum in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Vjosa Dobruna served as the minister responsible for democracy building, civil society, and independent media. A pediatrician and human rights activist, Dr. Dobruna is founder of the Center for the Protection of Women and Children. Caught up in the flood of refugees during the 1999 “ethnic cleansing,” Dr. Dobruna created a similar center in Tetova, Macedonia, providing emergency care to traumatized women.

Ala Talabani is a cofounder of Women for a Free Iraq and the Iraqi Women’s High Council, a consultative body established in October 2003 that has drafted policies on the role of women in Iraq’s post-conflict reconstruction. Following the fall of Hussein’s regime, Ms. Talabani returned to Iraq where she was nominated, though not appointed, a member of the Iraqi Governing Council and deputy to the minister of social affairs.

On Tuesday, November 4th, 2004, the Boston Consortium held a workshop on strategies for grassroots implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325. The participants in the workshop were 39 women peace-builders from around the world who were in Cambridge for the Women Waging Peace Colloquium, and for the Women and Security Executive Training Program run by the Kennedy School of Government’s Women and Public Policy Program.

The workshop was moderated by Carol Cohn, who started by summarizing basic information about 1325, including:

- A description of what is encompassed by its 18 points;
- A brief summary of how it came into being and the critical role played by NGOs;
- An explanation of the legal status of Security Council resolutions and the Council’s capacities (or lack thereof) to implement its resolutions;
- An update on the efforts to transform UN policies and practices in accord with 1325.

The purpose of the workshop was for women in conflict zones to learn from each other about the ways it is possible to use 1325 in their own local struggles for peace. Women who have been using 1325 in four different regions were each asked to speak to the following questions:

- 1. *How did you hear about Resolution 1325?***
- 2. *What are the problems you are using 1325 to address?***
- 3. *How are you using 1325? Who are you partnering with?***
- 4. *What barriers do you face?***

After each woman spoke, Dr. Cohn took a couple of minutes to highlight some of the strategies that emerged from the speaker's account – strategies which might be useful in other contexts as well. (In this document, these strategies are listed, indented, below the notes from each speaker's talk.)

Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls, Fiji:

- 1. How did you hear about Resolution 1325?*

The coup in Fiji happened on May 19, 2000, and we mobilized on May 20th through a peace vigil that the National Council of Women coordinated during the coup. We had been in touch with women's organizations in New York. We were in communication about a whole range of issues including 1325. We started working with 1325 in 2001 when we reconvened the Melanesian group. We met to start formulating a plan of action on how to implement the Resolution at local, regional and national levels.

- 2. What are the problems you are using 1325 to address?*

A lot of people just looked at what women were doing in not just Fiji but in the other countries as well. The attitude was that women go to peace vigils, but wouldn't actually go to peace-building or conflict transformation or anything addressing security issues, which would be conflict prevention for the future. We were considered fly-by. We did, though, have a working relationship with UNIFEM. But we were very under-resourced, and wanted to find ways to blend this into our national machinery.

- 3. How are you using 1325? Who are you partnering with?*

Following Beijing, the government had set its own plan with five priority areas, including gender mainstreaming, women under law, violence against women and children, micro-enterprise and economic development for women and women in decision-making. We were working very closely with the mainstream women on this. We worked in partnerships, pushing the government to follow through on its commitments.

For the Pacific Island region, we have many different organizations, and so far regional security has really focused on capacity-building of police forces in the different countries. We were working at a national decision-making level, but we knew that we will have to tackle the regional security level (increased militarization). During our own hostage crisis in 2000, we actually did dialogue with the military, and found that we were speaking two different languages -- we spoke women's policy and they were trying to get bullet-points. We had to learn to communicate with the security sector.

We have also established women's community media as a way to spread information, and make 1325 a reality at community level. We have funding to establish a regional magazine, which will be called *FemTalk 1325* and we will use it as a tool to highlight what 1325 is about, and what women are doing.

4. *What barriers do you face?*

We need to get funds, and though the Pacific is a small region, we are divided into different countries. To me, it's about thinking globally and acting locally, about using the Resolution and making it plausible locally. We need to ensure that women are no longer silent, so that Fiji as a small country doesn't fall into the typical cycle of coups.

Strategies that might be used in other contexts as well:

- Linking to existing ministries
- Looking at pre-existing policy commitments in the government, to hold them accountable
- Working at the regional, not just the local and national levels
- Developing effective ways to communicate with the military
- Using the extent to which governments care about international reputation and norms
- Creating different kinds of communication/ media to reach all women

Monique Kande, Democratic Republic of the Congo:

1. *How did you hear about Resolution 1325?*

We heard about the Resolution from UNIFEM

2. *What are the problems you are using 1325 to address?*

Given women's general exclusion from the peace table, strategic efforts were made to ensure that the peace processes for the DRC take into account the perspectives of women. This did not happen through any commitment on the part of the negotiators to include women in the process; rather, it came about through the efforts of women themselves to ensure that they were not entirely sidelined in the process of the peace negotiations. Women's movements organized themselves to lobby, and decided to write a memorandum to the government, telling them, "Our country has signed the Resolution 1325 -- and now we need to implement it! Even in the facilitator or mediator offices, there were no women and no gender perspectives-- so much for the Resolution!"

The opening of the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUC) brought more problems. We organized ourselves and went to see the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to ask for the Code of Conduct, and to see what could be done. A strategy was established, in which women from one of the networks were selected each week to go to the mission to discuss gender and conflict.

We also wrote a letter to the UN Security Council. Then we spent two years writing to everyone we could think of, from the national to the international level. Nobody replied to our declarations or the letters we sent out. But the good news is that things were moving: at the national level we raised awareness about gender issues; and MONUC appointed a Senior Gender Advisor and a Code of Conduct was put into place.

The Gender Office was led by Amy Smythe, from Sierra Leone. Finally someone is there, and she is doing a good job from the inside, training the military and the police. She also helped us translate 1325 into the four official languages, and she found out that even in the government, people didn't know anything about it, much less how to use it.

Women committed to learning how to use human rights instruments in order to advance a culture of peace, and to build democratic institutions characterized by respect for the rule of law, good governance, gender equality and international equity. Women learned that they themselves were responsible for advancing jurisprudence in respect to women's interests in their countries. They institutionalized the Congolese Women's Caucus and other coalitions to continue to fight for their rights and for the use of resolution 1325 in DRC, especially in the transitional government and beyond.

3. How are you using 1325? Who are you partnering with?

We are using 1325 in undertaking activities to mainstream gender into the transitional government, so as to ensure women's adequate representation and qualitative participation; and at the methodological level, which addresses how women's specific concerns and needs, are articulated within the constitution and electoral processes. After the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD), we went to see political parties and government to lobby and advocate for 1325. In civil society we had a large network of organizations, which we organized thematically. We required that in each organization we have a gender focal point. We asked to have a Gender Commission. We requested that each ministry have a gender focal point -- not only in Kinshasa, but in the local councils as well. This is what we have to do in the transitional period -- because from the earlier bureaucracies there was no response. If we don't do it now in the transition, we will never get another chance.

I remember that in the political ICD commission, women were the first to suggest the political system we have now -- one president, and four vice-presidents. Back then, everybody thought we were crazy -- no, of course, nobody recognizes that we were the ones who advocated for it. Unfortunately we didn't get what we asked for (i.e. a Gender Commission), because of the

vulnerability of the newly-founded peace, the nature of conflict, and the political environment. Ultimately many things changed, though, because women became more aware, they were very committed, and the movement was very strong.

4. *What barriers do you face?*

The mentality of both men and women still needs to change, but there are major social and cultural barriers. We also face a lack of financial resources, and the problem of how to maintain momentum.

We have to work to make sure that advances for women that were made during the transitional period become permanent -- because right now, many men think that all this will just change back to the way things were. Also, the current parliament is only 7% women, and we wanted 30%. And the government only has 4% women. We have to figure out how to insert better representation of women in the new constitution. Also, we need more workshops to interest and inform women about elections.

Strategies that might be used in other contexts as well:

- 1325 was used as an advocacy tool at multiple locations, from parties to the peace talks, to the transitional government, the UN Security Council and the peacekeeping operation, “everyone we could think of, from the national to the international level.”
- Making voices heard eventually had a cumulative effect, though they were initially ignored. Eventually bodies responded to the continued pressure, though slowly.
- The creation of networks of women to advocate for 1325 implementation and women’s rights.
- Translation of 1325 into local languages is part of creating those networks
- Advocating for a combination of both a Gender Minister, and gender focal points in other ministries in the capital and in local councils.
- Strategizing and advocating to insert gender perspectives at *all levels* of the government

Vjosa Dobruna, Kosovo/a:

1. *How did you hear about Resolution 1325?*

When Kosova became part of the UN protectorate, it became important to present how the UN was performing in regard to women. Much earlier, in 1994, I participated at the WILPF meeting in Geneva with women from the former Yugoslavia. From that meeting recommendations were made about the need of UN to work on the “empowerment of women” in peace negotiation and peace building. We wanted to put women on the agenda. Resolution 1325 was result of the long advocacy process of many women and women’s groups around the world.

2. *What are the problems you are using 1325 to address?*

After the Resolution was adopted in 2000, we had a chance to act quickly in Kosova. Women’s groups translated the Resolution, not only into the native language, but also to make it more accessible; we simplified the UN language. Next step was to network with other women in the region to come up with support and strategize in regard to SCR 1325. Through UNFEM, a women’s group in Italy has supported women’s NGOs creation and launch of about twenty TV shows explaining the Resolution and issues related to the resolution. Many roundtable debates were organized, not only in Kosova, but also in Macedonia, Albania, and in Bosnia & Herzegovina. Through these and other activities, we built a network around the Resolution.

However, Kosova women have failed to see the Resolution actually implemented by the UNMIK (UN Mission in Kosovo). When the UN assembled a group of “experts” to draft the basic law (constitutional framework), no woman -- either national or international -- was included in the group working in Kosovo. Women organized in protest, and send a letter to all the actors and decision makers. The letter to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Angela King raised a flag, but had very little impact on outcome. When Kofi Annan visited Kosova, three women representatives at the meeting advocated for the inclusion of women in the process of designing the future of the country as a peaceful place for all citizens! The Secretary-General promised to advocate for the full compliance of the UN administration in Kosovo with SCR 1325, but results from that meeting and those promises are nil!

3. *How are you using 1325? Who are you partnering with?*

The introduction of quotas in the electoral regulations was a first step that opened the door for women. Today, we have about 30% of women in each parliamentary election. It is difficult to form a caucus in this kind of (proportional) parliamentary system, but Swanee Hunt (then US Ambassador to Austria) made an effort to bring all these women together across party and ethnic divides. Women are organized currently around two main issues: on the reform of the electoral system, to rely not only on gender quotas, but also set-a-side seats for underrepresented groups and open lists as a way to create more transparency in choosing the representatives. The second issued is advocacy for full inclusion of women from civil society and women experts in the future technical negotiations with Serbia. The Women’s Lobby -- a coalition of women activists, women from political parties, and acknowledged women leaders -- has already published the platform for future negotiations and their involvement in the process.

Recently an Office of Gender Affairs was established. It develops policies of mainstreaming gender perspectives in the governmental structures. Also “gender focal points” are set in each

ministry and for each 30 municipalities. Gender focal points tend to have very good working relationships with civil society, and we are working on introducing this model to the region, Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro.

After the war and with deployment of NATO troops in Kosova, advocacy work has succeeded in establishing a gender-training for the troops before they are deployed to the missions. Also, since the police force immediately after the war was only internationals hired by UN (police coming from 52 different countries), the task was to introduce them to women's perspectives and the respect for human rights in aftermath of war. In 2001 we developed the first curriculum on how to train UN police on gender issues. It was the first time the UN allowed local women's groups to do training on gender -- usually it was done by international experts. They had gender training by Kosovar women for one week, and we managed to introduce a code of conduct for them-- because in Kosova trafficking of women is a big problem and the first 'beneficiaries' are men in the peacekeeping mission. It was difficult to negotiate anything because they were saying, "What are we going to do with 42,000 men here?" Later, we managed to advocate their ban from about 22 places where we were fairly certain that trafficked women were employed. I think the UN should be more determined and evaluate implementation by Security Council members, not only by local actors.

4. *What barriers do you face?*

My experience in transitional societies is that decision-makers and power-brokers tend to ignore and even ridicule women's work in reconstruction and women's demands to be involved in negotiating the future from women's perspectives. Even if a country can afford to disregard women's expertise, from a human rights perspective and the perspective of the democratic right of participation, countries should be 'forced' to come up with annual reports and admit their shortcomings, and then do something to address them, particularly in the countries where the UN is involved.

Strategies that might be used in other contexts as well:

- Translate 1325 into local languages
- But also, simplify 1325 – that is, translate it into user-friendly, non-“UN-ese” language, rather than a direct word-for-word translation
- Create television shows explaining 1325, raising funding for them from the UN and women's groups in other countries
- Organize roundtable discussions about 1325, as part of creating a women's network across different regions
- Pressure the UN to implement 1325 by writing to the Secretary-General and his Special Representatives, as well as the Security Council
- Work to meet UN headquarters representatives and Security Council representatives when they make visits to the country
- Work to reform the electoral system to introduce gender quotas, set-a-side seats for underrepresented groups, and open lists as a way to create more transparency.

- Work for full inclusion of women from civil society and women experts in negotiations
- Create a Women's Lobby – in this case a coalition of women activists, women from political parties, and acknowledged women leaders – to create a platform for future negotiations and to lobby for women's involvement in the process.
- Lobby internationally as well as nationally to create national change local women's groups organize to be the ones providing gender training to UN peacekeepers, and to

Ala Talabani, Iraq:

1. How did you hear about Resolution 1325?

In March this year, a friend of mine who worked internationally as a women's rights came and discussed 1325 with me. This was a few weeks before the war in Iraq. She explained the Resolution and how we can use it -- we were certain that the war was going to happen. So I went back to Iraq and began talking to other women about how to use and get advantages from 1325.

2. What are the problems you are using 1325 to address?

We've had three conferences in Iraq, one in Baghdad, one in the south and one in the north, and women from nearly all cities participated. In the first conference, we had a workshop for participation and democracy, and we tried to explain the Resolution, which these women (and many of them were lawyers, university lecturers etc) had never heard of. We came with recommendations at the end of the day, and said that we need equality between men and women with regard to rights and responsibilities.

The disaster was that we didn't know who to give our recommendation to -- at that time there wasn't a government, only the CPA, the Coalition Provisional Authority, which the USA and the UK set up. A few days after that, they formed the Governing Council. In it, there are 25 members, and only two women -- there were three but one of them, as you may have heard, was assassinated. We tried to say that we want an appointment with the Governing Council, but they didn't give us that chance. To be honest, the woman who was assassinated was trying to push that, but she couldn't.

The second conference, in Babylon, came up once again with many recommendations, including the representation of women in the Constitutional Committee, asking for future quotas in all political bodies, including but not restricted to the national parliament. Again, out of 25 ministries, there was only one woman.

3. How are you using 1325? Who are you partnering with?

Why didn't we try to lobby the UN? Unfortunately, there was an attack on the United Nations headquarters in Iraq. We had met with Sergio Vieira de Mello, the head of mission, and he was very supportive and said we should have a whole ministry for gender, but a few days later he was killed. We never gave up and decided to lobby the political party leaders. We went to them with a copy of 1325, and most of them had never heard about it, some never bothered to look at it. We have leaders who don't even shake hands with us, so it was hard to explain, and some were trying to tell us "We know that Iraqi women suffered a lot, but don't let the Western ideas be among you, you don't need this Resolution, you can sit together and discuss the need."

There was the third conference, and we began to concentrate on the civil society. There were few organizations, civil society groups were just being established in the south.

4. *What barriers do you face?*

So, our challenges are fairly clear. We need to have the men also understand how important this is, and what this Resolution is.

Strategies that might be used in other contexts as well:

- Use 1325 in trainings on women's rights in newly democratizing settings, as an underpinning to the right of political participation
- Bring 1325 to political party leaders to educate them and to use it as an advocacy tool
- Increase the number of women on committees and local councils
- Create local learning centers and mainstream 1325 in education
- Be sure to have the CVs of competent women
- Do leadership training (go beyond conferences, speak outwards)
- Get a critical mass of women, so that it isn't always the same person that becomes responsible for carrying the torch
- The Constitution Committee is the future: there must be women on it