



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Tenth Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament

INNOVATING FOR GENDER EQUALITY:

Making development, peace and democracy a reality for women and men

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BACKGROUND NOTE

Theme 2: Peace: Innovating to end violence against women and harmful practices, in particular in conflict situations

Violence against women (VAW), as well as such harmful practices as child, early and forced marriages and female genital mutilations, find their roots in patriarchal cultures that legitimize discriminatory attitudes and unequal gender social norms. No country escapes this. One in three women throughout the world will experience physical or sexual violence by a partner or sexual violence by a non-partner during their lifetime. Violence against girls is of particular concern. Worldwide, nearly 50% of sexual assaults are against girls 15 or younger. In the developing world one in three girls is likely to be married before reaching 18.

Because such violence and practices are exacerbated during conflict, it is of paramount importance for women to contribute to peace processes and effective responses to VAW in conflict situations. **Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security** promotes women's participation in conflict resolution and peace processes and the inclusion in peace agreements of measures to ensure respect for the human rights of women and girls, "*particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary*". It also provides a framework for addressing gaps in legislation both to combat violence against women and to promote gender equality. It stresses in particular the responsibility to protect women and girls from violence during and after conflict.

As we celebrate the 15th anniversary of Resolution 1325 we must also take stock of the progress made. It is true that many countries emerging from conflict have adapted their legal frameworks to address discrimination and violence against women, and an increased number of peace agreements have included a gender component. But many obstacles remain, and implementation is still a challenge.

What is needed to alter the patterns conducive to VAW is an innovative, transformative approach focused on **prevention, engagement of men and youth and the use of ICTs and the media**. The new Sustainable Development Goals provide a useful framework in this regard:

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

5.b Enhance the use of enabling technologies, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all

Also relevant in this connection is the **131st IPU Assembly outcome document**, which affirms that

“The media, including social media, can be major allies in educating and raising awareness. They must not perpetuate stereotypes and gender inequalities or appear to condone violence against women.”

Areas for discussion

- **Protecting women and girls in situations of conflict.**
 - o *For instance in refugee camps:
The rate of early marriage among Syrian refugee girls in Jordan is 51 percent. How can such issues be addressed?
It has been argued that survival sex and trafficking in refugee camps can be prevented by giving priority in the allocation of resources and resettlement opportunities to the most vulnerable women and girls. What are host and relocation countries doing about this?*
 - o *Violence and women’s empowerment:
In conflict and post-conflict countries, only 9% of landholders are women, compared to 19% globally. Is the political economy of VAW in conflict being fully addressed in the implementation of Resolution 1325?*

- **Innovative ways to engage women in peace-building and reconciliation.**

*Women currently head only 19% of all UN field missions. From 1992 to 2011 fewer than 4% of signatories to peace agreements and 10% of negotiators at peace tables were women.
With respect to the refugee camps, Syrian women have recently met outside the negotiation room to demand involvement in the Geneva discussions. Their demands have not been met to date.*

 - o *What else is needed to fully integrate women in peace processes?*

- **Innovative ways to engage men and youth.**

*Evidence-based research indicates that effective engagement of men and boys results in fewer reports of VAW. To be successful, violence prevention activities with male and female attendants must be of sufficient duration and intensity. FGM prevention programmes in Senegal, for instance, have included community interventions 2-3 times a week over 6-8 months.
In conflict settings, the UNHCR 2011-2016 strategy for combating VAW in camps includes engaging boys and traditional and religious leaders to challenge gender norms conducive to violence.*

 - o *What other innovative means can be used to engage men and youth to achieve behavioural change?*

- **Innovative use of ICTs and the media – including the social media.**

*Technology can do both good and harm. It may also be difficult to access given the gender divide. ICTs, and the social media in particular, offer great potential as tools for early warning and real time monitoring of human rights violations generally, and VAW is certainly no exception.
Platforms such as USHAHIDI have been used in Kenya, to monitor post-electoral violence in 2007, and now in Syria to map the humanitarian situation based on first-person accounts from Facebook and YouTube (<http://crisis.net/projects/Syria-tracker/>).*

 - o *Would the provision of training and relevant materials for women be useful for purposes of prevention?*

 - o *What potential do such media offer as a means to challenge stereotypes, so as to empower women?*