

# Gender in Peacebuilding

In recent years gender in relation to armed conflict and peacebuilding has come to the fore as an issue for international attention. UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, adopted in 2000, acted as a catalyst in this process. The Resolution calls for greater support for women's participation in, and gender-sensitivity of, peace and security efforts.

Yet, while various efforts are undertaken to ensure peace and conflict interventions pay more attention to gender, women and others excluded from power continue to be left out of official peace efforts, and their contributions to peace and their experiences of conflict ignored. Furthermore, there is still a limited understanding of the links between gender, violence and peace. At Conciliation Resources we work to make peace processes more inclusive and to further understanding of gender in relation to peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

## Women, armed conflict and peace

Women have always played key roles in armed conflict, be it as nurses, carers, combatants or workers. Women also contribute to peace in a multitude of ways. Yet these contributions often go unrecognised and remain undervalued because they take place outside official, high-level forums, or because they do not fit with activities traditionally associated with peacebuilding. As a result, skills, insights and energy are overlooked; and a misleading image of women as mere victims of conflict, and passive beneficiaries of interventions, prevails.

### Women building peace

In 2013 Conciliation Resources published an *Accord Insight* on women and peacebuilding. Nine articles drawn from editions of the *Accord* publication series published between 1998 and 2010 illustrate the diverse roles women played in addressing violence and building peace in contexts as far apart as Bougainville and Sierra Leone, Aceh and Northern Ireland. These range from influencing elites, promoting community reconciliation or social development agendas, maintaining dialogue between warring factions and providing humanitarian relief.

[www.c-r.org/accord/women-peace](http://www.c-r.org/accord/women-peace)

Our publication *Women building peace* [see box] highlights the varied roles that women do play in addressing violence and building peace. The case studies show how women find innovative ways to contribute to peace, how their efforts influence the structural changes necessary for sustainable peace, as well as the challenges they face as women peacebuilders.

In our geographic programmes we also look at the experiences and roles of women, while recognising that all parts of a community have a role to play in sustaining peace. We include initiatives to ensure women are part and parcel of peace efforts. In the Philippines, we are supporting women's engagement in the drafting of the new Basic Law of the Bangsamoro. In areas affected by the Lord's Resistance Army conflict, in East and Central Africa, we promote women's engagement in local community protection efforts.

### Monitoring the UK Government's implementation of women, peace and security commitments

With GAPS we prepared a review of UK WPS implementation efforts in 2013, as included in an EPLO publication on implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Europe:

[www.c-r.org/unscr1325-europe](http://www.c-r.org/unscr1325-europe)

Through advocacy at the international policy level we press for the translation into practice of international commitments to women, peace and security (WPS) by national governments and international organisations. In the UK we pursue this through the civil society network Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS-UK); at EU-level through the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO). Through these joint efforts we have secured better National Action Plans for implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the take-up of gender, peace and security concerns in other peace and conflict policy areas.

### Inclusive peace processes

We work to achieve more inclusive peace talks. But we also support and promote peace efforts outside official negotiations. The challenges to participation in official peace negotiations that women and other

non-elite, marginalised groups face are symptomatic of the exclusionary nature of peace talks. A more fundamental shift is needed – away from exclusive peace negotiations and towards more inclusive and legitimate peace processes.

During the Mindanao peace negotiations we participated in the International Contact Group, a hybrid mediation-support mechanism, comprising representatives of external governments and international NGOs. Through our longstanding relations with local civil society we helped society at large to engage with parties at the table and the facilitator of the talks.

In Colombia we support a civil society initiative called the *Ethical Pact for a Country in Peace* set up by women's organisations to broaden and deepen the current peace process. The initiative calls on Colombian society, policymakers and the international community to support the 'transformation' of Colombia to a peaceful society, by signing up to 15 'actions' to tackle deep-seated societal issues that need addressing in order to move towards peace.

“ *We are focused on winning wars, not winning peace. Peace requires a great deal more.*”

Rosa Emilia Salamanca, partner organisation CIASE, Colombia

Drawing on our experience and learning from our work in diverse conflict contexts we generate new thinking on peace processes at policy level. In October 2013 we organised an event in New York to make the case for a fundamental shift in implementation of the UNSCR 1325 – away from an exclusive focus on women, towards a broader focus on power, the links between gender and violence, and the case for inclusive peace processes.

## Gender in practice

### What do we mean by 'gender'?

Conciliation Resources understands gender as referring to the social constructions of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity refers to the qualities, behaviours and attitudes associated with or deemed appropriate for 'men'; femininity being used for characteristics linked with 'women'. Masculinity does not exist except in contrast with femininity – and vice versa. Gender is produced through interactions with other power systems such as race and class, resulting in a multiplicity of 'masculinities' and 'femininities'. Gender is about power and ordering relations among people and activities.

Analysis of conflict dynamics and peacebuilding opportunities in the contexts in which we work underpins our engagement, and we aim to ensure that our analysis is gender-sensitive. This means that we

pay attention to the links between gender, violence and peace in a particular context, which in turn enables a tailored approach that takes into account variations in experience, need and interest among people, and goes some way towards addressing power imbalances in the conflict-affected areas in which we work.

In Jammu and Kashmir we supported a civil society initiative that brought together Islamic scholars (Ulema), civil society representatives, and representatives of the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons to discuss the situation of half-widows. This resulted in a landmark ruling by the Ulema, stating that half-widows – women whose husbands disappeared during conflict – could remarry within four years. This is important because it will help tackle the socio-economic uncertainties of the women and their dependents.

In the Philippines we facilitated discussion on Muslim women's participation in peace processes, including through the production of a short comparative paper looking at Muslim women's engagement in other contexts. The process put forward suggestions on how Bangsamoro women could participate in ways compatible with social norms.

Finally, gender-sensitivity is not just something we advocate and practice in our engagement in conflict-affected areas and in discussions with policymakers. We also work to ensure that our organisational practice is inclusive, and aim for internal policies, recruitment processes and decision-making structures that enable us to draw on greater diversity and inclusion.

**For more information visit our website:**  
[www.c-r.org/gender](http://www.c-r.org/gender) or contact **Sanne Tielemans**,  
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### Related resources:

Innovation in mediation support: The International Contact Group in Mindanao

[www.c-r.org/innovation-mediation-mindanao](http://www.c-r.org/innovation-mediation-mindanao)

Kashmiri Women across the Divide: Kashmiri Women Mapping Initiative

[www.c-r.org/kashmir-women-mapping](http://www.c-r.org/kashmir-women-mapping)

Breakthrough ruling on Kashmir 'Half-Widows'

[www.c-r.org/kashmir-half-widows](http://www.c-r.org/kashmir-half-widows)

Muslim Women in Peace Processes: reflections for dialogue in Mindanao

[www.c-r.org/muslim-women-peace](http://www.c-r.org/muslim-women-peace)

Ethical Pact for a Country in Peace

[www.c-r.org/ethical-pact-colombia](http://www.c-r.org/ethical-pact-colombia)

Gender, violence and peace: a post-2015 development agenda

[www.c-r.org/genderpeace-post2015](http://www.c-r.org/genderpeace-post2015)

Gender, Peace and Security: Taking UNSCR 1325 to the next level

[www.c-r.org/gender-peace-security](http://www.c-r.org/gender-peace-security)

Accord

[www.c-r.org/accord/legitimacy](http://www.c-r.org/accord/legitimacy)

[www.c-r.org/accord/participation](http://www.c-r.org/accord/participation)