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Is UNSCR 1325 Empowering African Women to Negotiate Peace?

Insights and Policy Options

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Effective funding, monitoring, and implementation** of the UNSCR 1325 indicators need to be aligned at the national level with other policy documents and UNSCR resolutions.
- **More studies should be conducted** to generate relevant statistics and evidence-based knowledge documenting the implications of not implementing the UN's resolutions on women, peace, and security in Africa.
- **African governments should institute affirmative action policies** supporting the enrolment of women in postgraduate programs on peace and security, public policy and diplomacy, leadership, mediation, and negotiation.
- **African governments should engage in dialogue** with civil society and share experiences of their efforts toward harmonizing the gender dimensions of security.
- **African governments should demonstrate greater commitment** toward training public and private sector officials and security forces on gender and gender-sensitive values and practices.

Africa faces formidable challenges with regard to the relatively few women influencing decisions and policies related to peace and security. A study on women's participation in thirty-one peace processes between 1992 and 2011 showed that of the fifteen African countries, only five had women on their negotiating teams (Burundi, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, and Uganda); five had women witnesses or observers (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda); two had women lead mediators (DRC and Kenya); and only one (DRC) had women signatories.¹ Although UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 "reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security,"² its full implementation remains a work in progress in Africa, as women's participation in peace and security remains more symbolic than substantive, and their capacity to influence and engage in peace negotiations is often resisted by local cultural norms and patriarchal hierarchies.

UNSCR 1325 Implementation in Africa: Progress and Challenges

Despite the challenges, some substantial progress has been achieved in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on the continent. The African Union and regional and national institutions have produced relevant policy frameworks

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¹Preventing Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations resolution 1325, 2015, <http://www.unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>

²AUN Security Council, Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security, S/RES/1325, adopted October 31, 2000, <https://www.documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf?OpenElement>.

and mechanisms, such as the African Charter on People and Human Rights (1981), the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women (2003), the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA, 2004), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development (2008). In addition, some member states have created national gender commissions, which all seek to promote women's empowerment, their protection, and their participation in peace and security processes.

Such efforts have not, however, overcome the patriarchal ideologies and values embedded in most African societies, which, along with weak political will, continue to undermine gender mainstreaming. Also posing formidable challenges to the implementation of the UNSCR1325 agenda are low levels of women's participation in politics and peace processes, limited awareness of the UNSCR 1325 at the grassroots level, lack of a critical mass of women's voices and experts in African peace and security, and a shortage of dialogue, collaboration, and strategic networking among women's organizations. Evidence from Burundi, the Central African Republic, the DRC, and South Sudan shows that women's participation has only been achieved after women put pressure on men, and mostly only to the extent of being included as observers. Poor coordination between governments and civil society organizations and financial constraints also impede women's participation in decision making. Also notable is a tendency of only a small proportion of educated urban women to participate in official negotiation teams, while men constitute the majority and dominate peace talks. This exclusionary participation has resulted in the instrumentalisation of a few elite women, which has compromised genuine inclusiveness of women's empowerment and participation in all spheres of peace and security in Africa.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the challenges facing the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Africa, the following recommendations are made:

- Effective funding, monitoring, and implementation of the UNSCR 1325 indicators need to be

aligned at the national level with other policy documents and UNSCR resolutions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- More studies should be conducted to generate relevant statistics and evidence-based knowledge documenting the implications of not implementing the UN's resolutions on women, peace, and security in Africa.
- African governments, in collaboration with institutions of higher education and research organizations, should institute affirmative action policies supporting the enrolment of women in postgraduate programs on peace and security, public policy and diplomacy, leadership, mediation, and negotiation to contribute to the emergence of a critical mass of expertise on women, peace, and security, as envisioned by the African Union's Gender, Peace and Security Program (2015-2020), and Agenda 2063.³
- African governments should engage in dialogue with civil society and share experiences of their efforts toward harmonizing the gender dimensions of security, based on the recognition that the violence, poverty, and insecurities that affect women's daily lives in peace or war-time are inextricably linked.
- African governments should demonstrate greater commitment toward training public and private sector officials and security forces on gender and gender-sensitive values and practices to eliminate or at least reduce drastically exploitative masculinist mindsets and hierarchies embedded in male-dominated public, corporate, and security institutions.

³African Union, *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*, 2014; <http://archive.au.int/assets/images/agenda2063.pdf>