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WOMEN'S ISSUES IN PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEBUILDING

This chapter derives from a United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada) public dialogue, held on February 26th, 2007, in Vancouver, to mark the 50th Anniversary of UN Peacekeeping. The event included a public forum and a closed experts' roundtable. Participants of the closed experts' roundtable and panelists at the linked public dialogue event discussed a gendered perspective on Canada's commitment to UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Among the themes explored were the various roles of women in post-conflict societies and the importance of bringing a gendered approach to the institution of peacekeeping. Participants also examined ways to better institutionalize gender considerations. The opinions expressed in this chapter and the recommendations are derived from UNA-Canada's consultation process and are not necessarily the views of the organization. In addition, the recommendations do not represent agreement by consensus among the participants, and may not include all views outside of this limited consultation process.

The closed roundtable featured **Lubna Abalderhamn**, National Congress of Black Women Foundation; **Dr. Mary-Wynne Ashford**, Department of Education, University of Victoria; **Katharina Coleman**, Professor, University of British Columbia; **Angela Contreras-Chavez**, Doctoral Candidate—War Crimes and ICC, Simon Fraser University; **Constable Michel Drayton**, Royal Canadian Mounted Police; **Cheshmak Farhoumand-Sims**, Professor, St. Paul's University, Ottawa; **Alroy Foneseca**, Policy Analyst, Department of National Defence; **Patsy George**, President, UNA-Canada Vancouver Branch; **Rosanna Hille**, Partner, Hille-Magassa & Associates, **Susila Dharma** International; **Senator Mobina Jaffer**, Government of Canada; **Nisaa Jetha**, Intern, Senator Jaffer's Office, **Sarah Kambites**, programme Manager, UNA-Canada; **Stacey Makortoff**, Academic Programme Coordinator, EFP-International (Canada); **Moussa Magassa**, Programme Coordinator and Partner, Immigrant Services Society of BC, and Hille-Magassa & Associates; **Lisa Mighton**, Rapporteur and Local Liaison, UNA-Canada; **Lauryn Oates**, Independent Consultant, International Human Rights, Development, and Gender Equality; **Corwin Odland**, Communications Officer, National Defence Public Affairs Office Pacific; **Julia Payson**, Volunteer, International Humanitarian NGO; **Emily Schroeder**, UNA-Canada; **Claire Trevena**, MLA, North Island; and **Captain Zsuzsanna I. Toth**, Canadian Forces. **Kathryn Gretsinger**, Journalist and Radio broadcaster, moderated the event.

BACKGROUND: WOMEN'S ISSUES AND UN PEACE OPERATIONS¹

Global attention on gender considerations in peace and security contexts has come a long way in the last fifteen years.² In the early 1990s, it was quickly realized that contemporary armed conflicts increasingly targeted civilian populations. Women and girls, in particular, were found to endure unimaginable suffering during armed conflict. As a result, in 1995 “women and armed conflict” was identified as one of the critical areas of concern at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, prompting the adoption of gender-sensitive language within the field of conflict. In 2000, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on “women, peace and security” to address the impact of war on women and to underline the importance of their participation in all facets of UN peace operations. The resolution also recognized the contribution of local women to decision-making in conflict prevention and their proactive role in building local capacity as part of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. That same year, the 1998 Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court also recognized rape and other sexual violence occurring within the context of war, as crimes against humanity.

Reflecting on the above developments, in 2002, Secretary General Kofi Annan stated in his report on women, peace and security that:

We can no longer afford to minimize or ignore the contributions of women and girls to all stages of conflict resolution, peacemaking, peace-building, peacekeeping and reconstruction processes. Sustainable peace will not be achieved without the full and equal participation of women and men.

Indeed, women are involved in all facets of conflict. It is with these words that we first set out to define and understand the gender dimension of conflict.

UNDERSTANDING THE GENDER DIMENSION OF CONFLICT

Men, women, boys, and girls experience conflict differently, and therefore they have distinct needs in the post-conflict phase. Yet programmes are often ‘gender blind,’ meaning that they do not take into account the different experiences of women and men. This results in the development and implementation of narrow policies. Contrary to common belief, women are both victims of, and participants in armed conflict. They are also players in the post-conflict phase, acting as agents of change. As a result, it is essential to understand the gender dimension of conflict, if peacekeeping and peacebuilding are to succeed in the long-term.³

¹ In this chapter, the term ‘peacekeeping’ refers to operations authorized by the United Nations (under Chapters 6, 7 and 8 of the UN Charter) to monitor cease-fires and/or support the implementation of peace agreements, and to initiate peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction activities.

² Gender refers to the differing roles, and social relationship among, men, women, boys, and girls. These roles are shaped by social, cultural, economic, and political conditions, as well as expectations and obligations within society, which in turn influence how each group is affected by armed conflict. See Birgitte Sorensen, *Women post-conflict reconstruction: Issues and sources*, The War-Torn Societies Project, Paper no. 3 (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1998).

As victims, women are particularly vulnerable to threats of violence. For example, sexual and gender-based violence (i.e., the issue of rape as a weapon of war) is still a major problem in armed conflict, as demonstrated by the thousands of children born out of rape and the growing risk to women of acquiring HIV/AIDS in conflict settings.

Women actively participate in armed conflict. For example, women are believed to make up one-third of FARC members in Colombia and up to 30% of the fighting force in El Salvador; in addition, about 12% of the RUF in Sierra Leone were women. When returning to civilian life, female combatants face particular challenges and are often stigmatized by their communities.

Women also play a crucial role as actors for change. According to the 2004 Report of the Secretary General on women, peace and security, “Women can call attention to tensions before they erupt in open hostilities by collecting and analysing early warning information on potential armed conflict. Women play a critical role in building the capacity of communities to prevent new or recurrent violence. Women’s organizations can often make contact with parties to conflict and interface with Governments and the United Nations.”⁴ Women can also help children affected by conflict to reintegrate into civilian life. The role of women is even greater when they are involved during the early stages of a peacekeeping mission. Yet, women are often marginalized from mission planning, peace negotiations, and implementation of peace processes.

Gender must be recognized as a vital component of plans and programmes to avoid, mitigate and resolve conflict situations, and to build sustainable peace. Doing so involves mainstreaming gender⁵ perspectives in all aspects of UN peace operations to ensure these operations are relevant to all stakeholders involved, responsive to their needs, and effective in the promotion of equality.

INSTITUTIONALIZING THE INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN UN PEACE OPERATIONS

Participants of the roundtable first explored ways to better institutionalize gender in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. It was recognized that these are two different kinds of missions, however, often the same issues related to gender apply. Katharina Coleman emphasized the importance of institutionalizing gender as a routine process if it is to be considered in the early stages of mission planning; otherwise, she notes, it will be forgotten. When a peace operation is being launched, it is already too late to be thinking about gender. This comment provided a useful starting point for participants’ discussion.

³ United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UN DPKO), “Gender and UN Peacekeeping Operations,” October 2005. Available at: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/index.asp>.

⁴ Report of the Secretary General on Peace, women and peace and security, 2004. Available at: <http://www.peacewomen.org/resources/1325/SGReportWPS2004.pdf>.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

At the beginning of 2006, women constituted approximately 1% of military personnel and 4% of police personnel in UN peacekeeping missions.⁶ Women also account for 30% of the international civilian staff and 28% of the nationally recruited civilian staff.⁷ While women are said to be underrepresented at all levels of UN peace support operations, participation is nonetheless increasing. In fact, the UN has recently deployed the first all-female UN peacekeeping force, comprised of 105 Indian policewomen, to Liberia.⁸ This deployment sends a strong message: women can bring unique benefits to conflict zones.

Research shows that women peacekeepers can play a key role in field missions. According to UNIFEM's 2000 Independent Experts Assessment on Women, War and Peace, the presence of women in peace operations (including female police, interpreters, and specialists) makes a positive difference. According to the report, the presence of women:

- Improves access and support for local women;
- Facilitates communication with victims of assault, sexual abuse, violence, etc.;
- Can provide a greater sense of security to local populations (women and children);
- Helps create a safer environment for women in which they are not afraid to talk;
- Makes male peacekeepers more reflective and responsible;
- Broadens the repertoire of skills and styles available within a mission;
- Can help to reduce conflict and confrontation.

In light of this information, several participants noted the need to put more focus on ways to improve gender considerations in policy planning. Women need to be brought into the planning process and need to be part of creating solutions.

Angela Contreras-Chavez observed that current mission planning is largely conducted by men. Men also make up the large part of the peacekeepers. Greater female participation at all stages of peacekeeping, from planning to monitoring to evaluation and closing of peacekeeping operations was discussed. It was recognized that it is not sufficient to consult with “experts in gender” before implementing a peacekeeping operation; the voices and recommendations of women need to be incorporated during meetings of stakeholders, meetings between Peacekeeping forces and representatives of development agencies. Cheshmak Farhoumand-Sims stressed that women should themselves understand gender issues if their presence at the table is to be meaningful.

⁵ Gender mainstreaming refers to “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.” See the Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, A/52/3, 18 September 1997.

Referring to his experience in Côte d'Ivoire with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Constable Michel Drayton talked about a conference they organized on the promotion of gender and human rights. Out of nine Canadian police officers present, there were three women, one of whom was in charge of the UN police detachment. Constable Drayton observed that the presence of women made a positive difference for the local community, and earned a lot of respect for the UN.

Contreras-Chavez also argued that there is not enough knowledge sharing and knowledge management among peace operations. In her view, more 'lessons learned' are necessary, more questioning of why things happen again and again, and more humility to allow openness to change. Lessons learned regarding the involvement of women in peace processes are also important to give future missions a basis on which to build. Canadian development agencies such as Inter-Pares and Equi-terre and Oxfam Canada have a long standing reputation for working in partnership with local communities. Contreras-Chavez argued for more funding for development agencies, which over the decades have acquired a great deal of knowledge regarding the structural roots of violence and conflict in regions where Canada sends peacekeeping forces. With the increasing threat to the personal safety and life of peacekeeping personnel, the current federal government is considering a shift in policy by eliminating key development agencies (eg. CIDA), while increasing the funding for more Canadian military presence overseas. She suggested that this move might be counterproductive in the long run by disempowering the women's movement that Canadian development agencies have been trying to support. To these comments, Senator Mobina Jaffer noted that the UN has manuals and plans establishing how to gender mainstream peacekeeping missions. What is missing, however, are the resources to proceed with the implementation of these plans.

Moussa Magassa, for his part, noted that in looking at issues of gender, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, the 'civilian peacekeeping movement' should not be overlooked. He explained that the concept of peacekeeping in general has shifted in that there are now more alternatives. Military alone is not enough; civilian efforts have to be included, as women are crucial players in these efforts. Magassa proposed looking into the possibilities for deploying nonviolent civilian peacekeeping missions where women could do more.

INCREASING PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL POPULATIONS

The participants discussed the importance of working with and strengthening local community groups. This implies empowerment through and within their own community. As Magassa noted, the objective should be to listen and work with local women, as opposed to taking them out of their community to train and build capacity.

⁶ See "Press Conference By Peacekeeping Gender Advisor," United Nations, 29 March 2006. http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2006/060329_Lampety.doc.htm

⁷ DPKO Factsheet, September 2006, www.un.org/Depts/dpko/factsheet.pdf

⁸ "First all-women peacekeeping unit at work in war-torn Liberia," *Ekklesia News Briefing*, 29 January 2007. Available at: http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/content/news_syndication/article_070129women.shtml.

Farhoumand-Sims stressed the importance of remembering that the local community has skills and knowledge that need to be drawn on. In her view, it is extremely important not to assume that capacity and agency are absent. Locals know what is culturally appropriate, they know the area, and they know what needs to be done to strengthen their community. It is thus important that local NGOs, when partnering with local communities, value local staff. On this issue, participants viewed the current system as valuing international staff over local staff and stressed the importance of hiring more local workers so that communities have a greater stake in development projects, increasing their chance of success.

By ignoring their expertise, the international community begins from scratch every time there is a conflict situation instead of benefiting from the knowledge of the partners that are already there. By the time a mission is on site, the local people with indigenous knowledge have too often become displaced, and their experience and expertise has been lost. Missions need to work for greater continuity and community development.

Contreras-Chavez highlighted this issue further, stating that too often we ignore the local people who have the best concept of the structural violence that is occurring. She spoke about the need to guarantee the knowledge and experience of local and international development agencies to be incorporated at the design-stage of peacekeeping operations. “Lessons learned” were mentioned as part of a methodology to reach a sustainable peace where the structural causes of violence are acknowledged and addressed so that when (or if) the peacekeeping operations are completed, the post-violence society is equipped to retake all the development programmes that a civil war or armed conflict may have interrupted or sabotaged.

Lubna Abalderhamn, herself a Sudanese refugee and now a leader in Vancouver’s refugee community, noted that civilians in post-conflict societies are often removed from peace policy and peace agendas. As a result, she believes training local women would be beneficial in order to familiarize them with the policy discussions that will likely impact their future. Abalderhamn noted that this training could be done through poetry, or storytelling, or other forms of entertainment education.

On a positive note, Captain Toth observed that in her experience as a peacekeeper in Sudan, engagement of local populations is happening. She also noted that Canadian Forces see their role more as background facilitators in that they believe that the local people already have the solutions.

PRIORITIZING CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The issue of consultation was raised numerous times by participants. According to Farhoumand-Sims, experts often enter a community with decisions made about how something needs to be done, rather than consulting with the locals about what they actually need. In her view, consultation with communities is essential in order to develop projects that are appropriate to the local context and that will ensure success. Communities also need to champion the projects to ensure a sense of ownership over these projects.

With that come questions about engaging local communities where communication networks are poor. How do we communicate effectively with women on the ground to make them a part of the peacebuilding agenda? How does information typically travel in a particular community? Oates suggested that involving local populations necessitates the use of creative strategies. For example, she mentioned that in certain communities, consultation may involve going from door to door handing out flyers with text and pictures, while in other communities it may involve identifying local stakeholders and addressing the community through them. Where literacy is particularly low, the dissemination of messages through the use of pictures may be the most effective. What is important is that consultation occurs with both men and women nationals, and that the means of consultation and information dissemination are appropriate for the local context. There was also a discussion regarding hiring local women in the field as part of the United Nations mission, to ensure that there is local expertise informing planning and implementation.

The group also discussed the challenges of working with local groups, especially in contexts where the international community could be viewed as favoring one side. For example, Coleman questioned the emphasis put on the need to engage the local populations. In certain situations where a society is divided, it becomes difficult to manage the need to engage locals on the one hand, and the need to address and ensure impartiality and neutrality. She noted that there have been some horrendous experiences where impartiality was lost because an organization accepted too much advice from a certain section of locals or particular societal groups. Engaging the population is much more challenging in situations with societal or ethnic warfare. One way to offset this is to engage in projects with all of the different communities and groups.

INVOLVING MEN IN WOMEN'S ISSUES

It was generally agreed by the participants that finding ways to involve men in championing women's rights is critical for gender equality to truly begin to happen. Stacey Makortoff pointed out that training to women-only groups in an attempt to empower them may instead feed the culture of gender exclusion and create more conflict. Including gender issues in peacebuilding means that partnerships between men and women must be created right from the beginning, otherwise the inclusion of 'gender' cannot concretely happen. Farhoumand-Sims added that the most successful empowerment of women occurs when men are also championing women's rights, and men and women are working side by side in partnership to address concerns within their communities. Making a reference to her fundamental belief as a Bahá'í, she remarked that 'unless men and women are equal, you will never have peace.'

WORKING WITH THE DIASPORA

Participants were unanimous in their recognition of the role that Canada's extensive number of immigrants can play in the planning and training for peace operations. The various groups within Canada are part of the country's vast global expertise which is still an underutilized resource. There is a need to make better use of the local diaspora community in Canada.

Their involvement is crucial if Canada is to create policies and train for peacekeeping in a way that is appropriate to the local context of a country. Diaspora communities know the local language, the customs, and most are enthusiastic about being involved.

Constable Drayton mentioned that the RCMP already makes use of this expertise by conducting trainings led by the Canadian diaspora. For example, some of the training he received was conducted by members of the Côte d'Ivoire diaspora living in Ottawa.

While agreeing on the role of the diaspora, Senator Jaffer discussed the need to go beyond just talking to the diaspora groups and to actually hire them to go overseas. For example, she argued that there is frustration among the Sudanese diaspora in Canada, because they are often expected to go for free to help their native country, while a Canadian-born will be hired and paid for the same deployment. There seems to be an assumption that people in the diaspora will donate their time and expertise. Senator Jaffer was clear that we should not expect this to be the case. In failing to utilize the diaspora communities, policy-makers are passing up the opportunity to tap into the wealth of information and expertise that exists right here in our own country.

REMAINING CHALLENGES FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEBUILDING

FACILITATING THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN UN PEACE OPERATIONS

Coleman pointed out that individuals choose to go on peacekeeping missions. As a result, in order to make it more accessible for women to deploy as part of peacekeeping missions, she suggested conducting a survey of women soldiers, police officers, and civilians, asking them about the conditions under which they would consider deploying, and the different factors that would affect their decision (child care, shorter contracts, all-female units, etc.). CANADEM has in fact conducted such survey.

In 2001, as part of the Canadian Committee on Women, Peace and Security Sub-Committee on Capacity Building, CANADEM volunteered to draft a discussion paper on Canada's domestic capacity and perceived barriers to the advancement of women in international peace support operations.⁹ While the report noted that more women are serving in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, more work is needed to enhance their presence both at UN headquarters and in the field.

⁹ CANADEM, "The Advancement of Women in International Peace Support Missions: A Draft Discussion Paper on Canadian Domestic Capacity and Perceived Barriers" (Ottawa: CANADEM, 2001).

Examples of UN or mission-based barriers included:

- Sexism and nepotism in UN hiring processes;
- Limited opportunities for advancement to higher ranks;¹⁰
- Sexual harassment by superiors, colleagues and local authorities;
- Cultural barriers, as evidenced by the cultural attitudes toward women outside Europe and North America;
- Discrimination regarding women's dependency status, as women are often discouraged from bringing their families;
- Urgency and length of required commitment.

Examples of Canadian-based barriers included:

- Biased recruitment process;
- Family commitments, precluding greater participation of women during certain stages in their lives;
- Lack of information on international opportunities;
- Lack of international experience and training;
- General lack of coordination and support of Canadian civilians by the Canadian Government.

While the report targeted civilian women actors, the barriers identified are widely representative of the barriers faced by women soldiers and police officers. Captain Toth mentioned, however, that the Canadian Forces is making adjustments to better encourage women's involvement. For example it is already possible to lessen the time of one's tour of duty.

Coleman further mentioned that it would be useful to analyze the various campaigns for recruiting potential women civilian peacekeepers and ensure that these campaigns not only reflect women's needs, but also making it clear that women have an important role to play as part of the organization.

OVERCOMING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (SEA) IN UN PEACE OPERATIONS

Women are also a principal victim of the growing problem of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in peacekeeping missions. Widespread allegations of SEA have not only generated negative publicity for UN peacekeepers, but have also undermined UN peacekeeping

¹⁰ For example, since the beginning of the 1990s, 5 women have been appointed as Head of mission or Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG). At present, however, there are no women appointed as SRSGs and 2 women appointed as Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (DSRSG). A number of women are also currently serving in other high-level UN appointments related to peace and security.

mandates and compromised the reputation and objectives of peacekeeping missions. Despite this negative impact, much work is being done to rebuild trust in UN peacekeeping and the UN in general. For example, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has identified the eradication of sexual exploitation and abuse as one of its main priorities and has adopted a comprehensive strategy — including a zero-tolerance policy regarding crimes committed by peacekeepers — to eliminate SEA in peacekeeping missions. DPKO efforts to combat SEA include raising awareness at headquarters and within missions, improving training of peacekeepers, strengthening discipline of personnel accused of misconduct, and ensuring accountability for their actions. While progress has been made in addressing the problem in its aftermath, there is still a lack of enforcement mechanisms to prevent SEA from happening in the first place.

IMPROVING GENDER TRAINING

In May 2006, the Human Security Programme at Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) funded a study to assess the extent to which gender training is integrated in the preparation of Canadian personnel preparing for deployment in peace operations.¹¹ Overall, the study highlighted the need to include specific gender awareness components to the training received by military and police personnel, as well as the use of case studies that emphasize the concrete applications of gender in field missions. With regards to civilian training, the study noted the lack of “overall vision of what civilian training for a [peace operation] should look like” and concluded that “there is simply no standardized curriculum within which to integrate a gender module.”¹²

These findings were despite the fact that in 2002, Canada jointly developed a Gender Training Initiative (GTI) with the United Kingdom. This training initiative provides training material for a three-day course on gender perspectives in peace support operations for both military and civilian personnel and was used by the UN to develop its own training modules for peacekeepers.¹³ The tool, however, is said to have limited application due in part to an inadequate focus on practical ways of integrating gender. Gender training is also not mandatory. As a result, it is unclear who currently uses the tool.

On this basis, participants addressed the need for more gender-specific peacekeeping training both for pre-deployment and within missions. Most participants agreed on the lack of gender training for Canada’s international security forces. Constable Drayton, on the other hand, specified that he had received, along with his colleagues, one week of intensive training in Ottawa pre-mission, ‘a lot of it on gender’. Senator Jaffer also noted that the UN has a useful training manual on gender, although she was told that they are lacking the resources to implement it.

¹¹ Ann Howarth-Wiles, “Gender Training provided in Canada for Personnel involved in Peace Support Operations: Moving Forward” (Ottawa: DFAIT, May 2006).

¹² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³ See Gender & Peacekeeping Online Training Course, 2002. Available at: <http://www.genderandpeacekeeping.org/>.

It was also questioned whether peacekeepers are taught peace building strategies or about concepts of Peacebuilding (how to work with the civilian population to achieve local solutions for peace). It was agreed that these concepts are not commonly understood or agreed to, and therefore they are not part of any existing orientation or training provided before deployment. This is despite the documented research that effective Peacebuilding strategies must include gender perspectives.

Internationally, Contreras-Chavez believes that there should be more gender training of peacekeepers in their home countries by local women. Training of peacekeepers should begin at home, instead of in international training Centres and at mission location. For example, she talked about a group of ex-military soldiers from a developing country that were sent as peacekeepers in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In her opinion, because sexism was so ingrained among these groups, it is not surprising that there are issues of sexual abuse by peacekeepers on foreign missions.

Captain Toth also spoke about the huge impact that the cultural background of the diverse peacekeepers has on relations with the locals. For some peacekeepers, the locals were barbarians and nothing could be done to change their minds. For others who actively engaged with local people, their experience was different. Moreover, it should be recognized that gender training is often not culturally relevant for different countries. As a result, a priority of gender trainers should be to adapt gender training to reflect the customs, norms and values inherent in the country where a peacekeeping mission is due to deploy.

STRENGTHENING CULTURAL SENSITIVITY WITHOUT PERPETRATING OPPRESSION

Several participants advocated for a greater willingness on the part of Canada to push against claims of culture when it is being used to prevent justice, especially of women.

Senator Jaffer raised the possibility of reinforcing institutions that are repressive in an attempt to be respectful of cultural diversity. As she explained, the desire to be culturally sensitive leads one to believe that culture is static and unchanging, but it is actually dynamic. She favored a more vigorous approach to issues of gender equality, defaulting less to saying 'that's their culture, let's back off', and being more willing to ask if certain practices are harmful and disempowering for women. If so, it is important that Canada addresses these concerns through a human rights lens and defines such activities as unacceptable. In her opinion, actors working side-by-side with women in the field have a responsibility to attempt to change culture, or at least not reinforce it in cases where it is disempowering for women. In the same way, Sarah Kambites cautioned against focusing too much on cultural norms and traditions, especially when they are designed to hold women back and prevent them from voicing their opinions and concerns.

Farhoumand-Sims further explained that culture is often the problem, and religion may be given as an excuse for why a certain culture cannot be changed. She also noted that certain international institutions are part of the problem; by respecting a local culture that denies the inclusion of women, they get in the way of women's increased involvement in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. She warned, however, that as an outsider, voicing these

concerns can be problematic. In her view, international institutions must work together with local women, allowing them to be the voice of criticism and speak to the origin of these systems of oppression (one example is women in Afghanistan discussing their rights in Islam).

ADDRESSING MILITARIZATION OF AID & GENDER DYNAMICS

Participants also discussed the challenges surrounding the militarization of aid and its impact on gender dynamics. The discussion focused on the changing role of the military with regards to humanitarian assistance. As Farhoumand-Sims described, traditionally, the role of the military was viewed as creating a secure environment, in turn allowing humanitarian agencies to go in and do their work. Soldiers currently also build wells, schools and deliver food aid, creating what is often referred to as the ‘blurring of lines’ between the military and humanitarian assistance. She noted that when soldiers deliver aid, they compromise the security of aid workers by undermining the already tenuous neutral space that aid workers operate in. This makes international and local aid workers more vulnerable to attack by those who suspect them to be part of the military, or even as locals who have collaborated with foreign forces. She further mentioned that when aid is delivered by soldiers, it is much less likely to reach women and children than when it is delivered by aid workers. In her opinion, it is impossible to engage in peacebuilding when there is a blurring of the lines between humanitarianism and militarism. The militarization of aid, she concluded, is not in the interest of any of the groups involved.

Senator Jaffer concurred suggesting that instead of trying to get the military to do everything from diplomacy to police training to aid delivery, Canadians from diverse sectors should be included in the provision of other skills.

Farhoumand-Sims further noted that militaries bring with them a culture of peacekeeping and women, and this includes an increase in prostitution, human trafficking and a rise in violence. It is difficult to have them tasked with somehow preventing these crimes, when the military may be part of the problem.

IMPROVING AGENCY COMMITMENT TO WOMEN-SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES IN KEY PARTNER COUNTRIES

Participants elaborated on the situation in Afghanistan, focusing particularly on the situation for women. Farhoumand-Sims, discussing her recent trip to the region, found that the situation for women had not greatly improved since the beginning of the international community’s involvement in Afghanistan. The maternal mortality rate remains very high with Afghanistan, as it has the second highest rate of mortality in the world, while the literacy rate remains low. She noted that the international community is spending ten times more on the military than it is spending on development. To make matters worse, continued war has fostered a culture of violence that has resulted in increasing violence against women. Not enough attention is being paid to the critical role that women play. ‘Without women,’ she insisted, ‘we cannot have sustainable peace.’

Having just returned from six years in Afghanistan, Lauryn Oates further cited the acute

differences in available resources for women living in Afghanistan compared to Canada. By contrast to the resources found in Canada, Afghanistan has no rape hotlines, few hospitals, and both hospitals and the police are not trained in dealing with rape cases. Only a handful of resources exist in the entire country for women who have been raped.

Several participants observed that very little of CIDA funding is currently earmarked for women's capacity-building. As a result, participants advocated for allotting more of CIDA's aid specifically for women-specific programmes and local initiatives that work on engaging men in gender equality issues. Participants also argued that more money needs to go to skills building and training for women who are widows, to improve the education sector and school enrollment, to protect schools from violence, as well as to fund educational entertainment projects and creative strategies aimed at reducing domestic violence and early enforced marriage. Farhoumand-Sims also emphasized addressing the underlying issues in Afghan society, including poverty and illiteracy. There is a need to deepen our understanding of the root causes of the conflict and avoid falsely categorizing sections of society as homogenous.

While discussions on this issue focused primarily on Afghanistan, CIDA's role in committing to women-specific programmes should also be extended to all key partners as identified in the organization's engagement strategy.

SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325

IMPROVING GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN FIELD MISSIONS

To improve mainstreaming of gender perspectives in field missions, the UN has recently introduced gender advisors to the DPKO headquarters and field missions to support the implementation of SC Resolution 1325. Their role is to provide practical guidance and innovative strategies for addressing the specific needs of women and men in every aspect of UN operations (including DDR, police, military, mine action, elections, human rights and the rule of law). Ten peacekeeping missions currently have a full-time gender advisor.¹⁴

BRINGING WOMEN TO THE NEGOTIATION TABLE

Senator Jaffer noted that Resolution 1325 recognized that it is women who are most affected in conflict, and that women must be included at the peace table. Women affected by war must have a say as to what types of programmes will be put in place post-conflict and as part of the peace deal. Senator Jaffer also cautioned against peacekeeping and peacebuilding materials and training that portray women only as victims of violence, as women can also be part of the solution to violence. Portraying their roles with greater diversity makes it easier to argue for the inclusion of women as active participants at the negotiating table when peace

¹⁴ UN DPKO, "Gender and UN Peacekeeping Operations."

policy is made. As an example, she discussed the importance of, and success in bringing Sudanese women to the negotiating table during the most recent round of negotiations in Darfur. While many of the men involved in the negotiations were in exile, the women were from the camps. Their presence brought a much more community-oriented solution, and ensured that the reality on the ground was taken into account.

A benefit of including women in policy creation is that, at the end of the process, they share the same knowledge as men, and can consequently be considered as equal partners in the implementation of peace agreements. Too often, women are not brought into policy creation. The attitude is one of ‘we’ll start this programme and then begin to include women.’ Peace negotiators are also at fault, stating that they will include and involve women once the agreement is signed. In reality, it is difficult to make any substantive change when women are brought in after the elements of the agreement have already been decided upon. As Senator Jaffer argued, more women need to be involved, both within the United Nations where decisions are made, and at the table when peace agreements are being negotiated. It is also important that women be given delegate status when they do come to the table, and that they be provided with adequate financial support to make their attendance possible.

It is important to remember, however, that women are not a single unified group; they emulate the same class, ethnic, and social divisions that society at large has. Consequently, not all women share the same views, and opinions of the specific needs of women in a particular situation will differ. In talking about Afghanistan, Farhoumand-Sims relayed the importance of increasing efforts to address women in Afghanistan, but also the need to target different groups of women (urban/rural, class, clan) with policies that reflect their particular situations.

RAISING AWARENESS IN CANADA

The point was raised that little is being done in Canada to raise awareness about and enforce UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Senator Jaffer also suggested that the disbanding of the Resolution 1325 committee was one of the repercussions of the Canadian government’s cuts to women’s funding. Created by the Government, the Canadian Committee on Women, Peace and Security was comprised of government officials, parliamentarians, and civil society representatives. Their primary focus was on advocacy, capacity building, gender training, and the protection of the rights of women and girls. In 2005, they held their Third Annual Symposium, the aim of which was to discuss the Government of Canada’s initiative to develop a National Action Plan regarding the implementation of Resolution 1325 in Canada.¹⁵

Oates noted that in her work with local nonprofit organisations in Canada, and community-

¹⁵ DFAIT, “Women, Peace and Security,” 2006. Available at:
http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/foreign_policy/human-rights/women_peace-en.asp.

building in British Columbia, people are not aware of Resolution 1325 and of its implications for women. She viewed this as a failure of Canadian society to communicate and raise awareness on the issue. Still, the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee (CPCC) was praised for its work in distributing flyers on Resolution 1325 to girls and prompting them to think about the implications of this resolution on their lives.¹⁶ This flyer has since been translated into Daru and Pashtu, and is being used in Afghanistan.

Patsy George noted that a high-level panel on UN reform has recommended to the Secretary-General that the UN create its first full-fledged agency for women. She urged governments to make that happen, and called on them to make Resolution 1325 and the resolutions from the Beijing conference the priorities for this agency. She urged Canada to devote resources to such an initiative and push for female Canadian experts to be part of it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above clearly demonstrates the efforts and improvements that have been made to integrate a gender perspective in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. Among the achievements is the landmark adoption of SC Resolution 1325, which “[marked] the culmination of years of intensive work on behalf of NGOs, governments and UN Agencies.”¹⁷ Still, much work remains to be done. For example, many stakeholders are still in the process of understanding the implications of Resolution 1325 and are attempting to devise appropriate policies that reflect their commitment. In addition, the concepts of ‘gender’ and ‘gender mainstreaming’ are still foreign to many organizations and countries, requiring greater outreach and awareness building on the part of the UN and Member States such as Canada.

Many themes and directions for future work emerged from the February 26th event. These are presented below.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS (DPKO):

1. Institutionalize a gendered perspective at the UN level by:
 - a. Pushing for greater participation of women within all aspects of DPKO activities. More specifically, DPKO should encourage consultation with UNIFEM counterparts on mission planning.
 - b. Allocating specific resources to put into action the numerous reports, studies and plans on how to increase women’s involvement in peace processes and on ways to improve gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. This could be achieved in collaboration with UNIFEM.

¹⁶ The CPCC Gender and Peacebuilding Working Group is committed to translating international commitments on gender equality and peacebuilding into concrete actions on the ground and to promoting the contribution and active participation of women in human security and peacebuilding activities. To achieve these goals, the GPWG uses several avenues, including public awareness campaigns, building political support, engaging in a dialogue with politicians and government officials, and publishing reports and research on issues related to gender and peacebuilding. See Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee (CPCC), Gender and Peacebuilding Working Group. Available at: http://www.peacebuild.ca/upload/fact_sheet.pdf

¹⁷ DFAIT, “Women, Peace and Security.”

2. Create systems that encourage greater female involvement in policy planning of peace operations and planning of missions. This could be achieved by:
 - a. Ensuring, to the extent possible, that there are an equal number of women planning missions at the UN level.
 - b. Demanding that women have equal representation at the table when peace negotiations are occurring.
 - c. Ensuring that women are awarded delegate status and provided with the necessary resources enabling them to come as equals in international forums.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS ON THE GROUND:

1. Ensure that peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions work closely with local communities by:
 - a. Encouraging partnerships with local NGOs and allowing local NGOs to take the lead. This will ensure local ownership of projects.
 - b. Supporting the hiring of local staff in the development and implementation of projects. DPKO should also encourage international organizations to do the same.
 - c. Ensuring that local community leaders (women and men) are involved in the day-to-day planning of missions on the ground. They are best able to point out those who are the key stakeholders in their societies. Women leaders will also help in identifying the specific needs of women in a particular region.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNMENTS AT THE UNITED NATIONS:

1. Increase the number of Canadian females that are deployed as part of peace operations. This can best be achieved by addressing women's concerns and barriers to deployment (such as those identified in the CANADEM poll). Polls should be conducted of Canadian Forces and RCMP women to identify whether the same barriers apply to them, and if not, to specifically address those barriers. Recruitment efforts should make it clear to Canadian women that they have an important role to play in peace operations.
2. Increase gender training for Canada's international security forces by having female trainers and experienced women peacekeepers give courses on gender and the protection of women and children. Women from diaspora communities in Canada should provide pre-deployment information on local culture and customs.

3. Include Canadian diaspora in the dialogue on Canadian peace operations, and draw upon their understanding of local culture and customs, as well as language.
 - a. Use diaspora to provide cultural, language, and gender training to civilians and military personnel before they are deployed.
 - b. Hire the diaspora to represent Canada and to be involved in the work developing their native countries.
4. Support greater Canadian involvement with gender mainstreaming of UN peacekeeping missions.
5. Provide a peacekeeping orientation / training programme in Canada pre-deployment for all peacekeepers (military and civilian) that includes approaches and techniques for Peacebuilding and intercultural communications and relations.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CIVIL SOCIETY AND NGOS:

1. Raise awareness about United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 among Canadian citizens and its implications for Canadian women.
2. Engage in the development of the international initiative to establish a standing “peace army”, ready to respond to requests to provide nonviolent international presence where that will help reduce violence and allow local people striving to achieve peace and justice to continue their important work. This movement is made up largely of women.
3. Build transnational networks to build capacity of women for peacebuilding.