Regional Open Day: Partnerships for Peace

Women's Perspectives on Conflict Resolution, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding in South Asia

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1. Background of UNSCR 1325

In 2000, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. This landmark resolution recognizes the disproportionate effect violent conflict has on women, and outlines a framework for mainstreaming a gender perspective into all aspects of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction work. Moreover, the resolution calls for the effective protection of women from sexual and gender-based violence in conflict settings and emphasizes the need to ensure women’s active participation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace processes, post-conflict peacebuilding and governance.

Subsequent Security Council resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960 have demonstrated stronger Security Council determination to address gender-based violence, while also reiterating the value of women’s participation in the creation and maintenance of sustainable peace.

Eleven years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, some positive change has been achieved in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The protection of women and girls from gender-based violence is recognized as a priority challenge for humanitarian and peacekeeping practice. Women’s peace coalitions have grown in strength and transitional justice mechanisms are increasingly gender-sensitized. Gender mainstreaming has also been taken up in security sector reform and DDR programs. However, the transformative potential of UNSCR 1325 remains largely unheeded, and women’s perspectives are often absent in peace processes and post-war reconstruction efforts.

2. Introduction to the Regional Open Day

To commemorate the 11th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, UN Women South Asia Sub-Regional Office (SARO) brought together prominent South Asian women’s rights activists, peacebuilders and academics for an Open Day on Women, Peace and Security. The two-day consultation aimed to provide space to create a regional platform through which women’s experiences and contributions are recognized and their voices heard. Moreover, the Open Day sought to generate regional dialogue and strategies to ensure women’s participation and improved representation of women’s concerns in contemporary conflict transformation, peace negotiation and peacebuilding processes.

Women peace activists representing seven South Asian countries gather at the UN Women SARO office for the first ever Regional Open Day on UNSCR 1325.

Open Day participants included women from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
Participants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka engaged in vibrant discussions and knowledge-sharing with the goal of bringing gender issues to the fore in peace and security throughout the two-day event. This report compiles the deliberations, analyses and recommendations that were generated throughout the Open Day consultations. Day One consisted of brainstorming on key issues pertaining to women, peace, security and conflict transformation, as well as discussions on women’s experiences from the field. Discussions were triggered off by brief presentations on different issues by experts from South Asia. On Day Two, the delegates presented their specific recommendations to the UN Resident Coordinator who expressed his commitment to the Open Day’s agenda and pledged to take the women’s recommendations forward and disseminate them in the UN system.

The Regional Open Day on Women, Peace and Security was the first of its kind organized in South Asia. It brought together some of the best known women peace activists and leaders from South Asia and also marked the official launch of UN Women SARO’s program Women Count for Peace which aims to put women front and centre in post-conflict transformation processes. The Open Day sought to identify strategies to build sustainable partnerships between civil society actors and governments in the region in order to legitimize the women, peace and security agenda in form and spirit. It was also a significant advancement in regional dialogue and an instance of knowledge-sharing between experienced and dedicated women’s rights activists in the South Asia region.

3. Open Day: Day One

Session I

3.1 UNSCR 1325 and Women’s Peace Mobilization in the South Asian Context

South Asia is a densely scarred region affected by both international and internal conflicts and a constantly changing political climate. Women in the region are conscious of conflict and often bear the brunt of its devastating effects.
Despite these conflict realities, many states in the region refuse to take on the issues formulated in UNSCR 1325, as they refuse to recognize the reality of armed conflict within their borders. Therefore, the Open Day participants, while acknowledging that there might be genuine political issues related to internal security and external interventions in the different countries, emphasized the need to revisit the basic principles and tenets of UNSCR 1325. The participants called for the need to implement UNSCR 1325 through alternative means, such as framing women, peace and security issues in the language of human rights and focusing on existing commitments states have made under human rights mechanisms, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The Open Day participants emphasized the interconnectedness of the region’s conflicts, and highlighted the valuable grassroots work women have carried out through breaking boundaries and reaching across borders to work for peace and security. Organisations such as SAFHR, Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP), Women’s Democratic Association, SANGAT, South Asians for Human Rights and the South Asian Social Forum were commended for their crucial work in the areas of peace and human rights. The participants stressed the importance of rooting all programs on women, peace and security on the experiences and expertise of local South Asian civil society and women’s groups.

The participants reiterated the need to include women in conflict resolution and to recognize that women have been involved in rehabilitation, reintegration and refugee assistance for a long time. Dr. Nighat Khan, Director of the Institute of Women’s Studies in Pakistan, underlined that the ideas behind UNSCR 1325 are not new to the region. She gave an in-depth analysis of UNSCR 1325 in South Asia and the genesis of work on women, peace and security supported by UNIFEM SARO. It was pointed out that South Asia contributes the largest number of female peacekeepers and all states have women in their armies. The delegates also emphasized the need to challenge peacebuilding as an apolitical engagement and to use peacebuilding as a transformative agenda set out in UNSCR 1325 that necessarily questions both the patriarchal nature of states as well as the patriarchal development paradigms that are set in motion in the post-conflict reconstruction scenario.

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Kamla Bhasin, Advisor at the South Asian Network of Gender Activities and Trainers (SANGAT)

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3.2 The Impact of Violence and Conflict on Women

Professor Amena Mohsin from Bangladesh triggered off the discussions on the impact of conflict on women. Dr. Mohsin noted that the public/private distinction breaks down during conflict and is often violently reasserted in post-conflict moments to restore the ‘normalcy’ and order of the post-war era. Post-war societies become easily militarized, and a culture of impunity in which human rights violations, including those perpetrated by members of the state security services, go unpunished.

The participants reiterated that sexual and gender-based violence continue unabated in conflict settings, and the culture of shame following from sexual violations becomes heightened. The call therefore was to address the shame and guilt internalized by women survivors of sexual violence, and to develop a strong system for trauma counselling, psycho-social care and victim-support services in South Asian countries.

The discussions that ensued highlighted the need to also recognize and acknowledge the sexual and gender-based violence women suffer within the domestic sphere of the home. The focus on rape by enemy troops, while critical, sometimes obscures the increased domestic violence within the household, and a hierarchy of victims is created.

Furthermore, violent conflict enables the rise of fundamentalist elements in the society, such as religious fundamentalism, nationalism and militarism. The participants therefore called for addressing patriarchal controls both within the private sphere as well as outside.

3.3 Peace Processes and Peace Agreements

Rita Manchanda from India and Director of the South Asia Forum for Human Rights triggered off the discussions on women’s participation in all aspects of peace processes and negotiations, emphasizing that women’s participation is crucial to ensure that their needs and concerns will be addressed. She argued that without a socially entrenched peace dividend, women will not work for peace, and 50 percent of the society’s reconstruction capacity is missing. Women’s participation at the peace table is thus not only a normative value but also an instrumental one.

However, participants noted that women’s participation in peace processes is not sufficient without the inclusion of a gender perspective and feminist politics. The importance of documenting the peace work women do in South Asian conflict zones was also underlined. Documenting women’s peace work elucidates the contributions and skills women bring to peacemaking and peacebuilding, facilitating advocacy for UNSCR 1325’s implementation.
Gender is rarely mentioned in peace agreements. Christine Bell and Catherine O’Rourke’s research has shown that non-internationalized agreements are more likely to include gender-sensitive language and a broader, more inclusive agenda, as internationalized processes are often intimidating to women and are characterized by high levels of violence. As noted by Bell and O’Rourke, “the more internal a process is, the more accessible it is to input and influence from women”.

The participants also stressed the importance of drawing on the expertise of women who are around the peace table but excluded from official talks. For instance, in the GOI-Naga ceasefire agreement, women’s civil society groups were able pressure the parties to redefine the agreement to encompass civilian security issues and include independent monitors.

The peace table often amounts to mere conflict management, and the delegates asserted that it takes women around the peace table to take the process forward and make it transformative. As argued by Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath from WISCOMP, women’s exclusion from peace processes is not only a justice issue, but it is also a manifestation of structural violence that needs to be addressed. The participants highlighted the extreme vulnerability of women peacebuilders and strongly called for ensuring women peacebuilders’ personal security so that they can carry out their crucial work uninterrupted.

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3.4 Women and UN Peacekeeping

Although South Asian countries have contributed many female peacekeepers to UN peacekeeping missions, women still remain largely excluded from peacekeeping ranks. Professor Anuradha Chenoy from Jawaharlal Nehru University, India, triggered off the discussion on this issue and asserted that peacekeeping should no longer be viewed as a unilinear practice; rather, it is a process occurring simultaneously with comprehensive peacebuilding. The participants expressed their frustration over the refusal of South Asian states to accept peacekeeping missions due to their assertions that peacekeepers are only suitable to be deployed abroad. Moreover, the delegates mentioned the Indian all-female police unit deployed in Liberia in 2007 as a positive instance of women’s inclusion, and raised the question of why this best practice has not been replicated since.

In particular, the delegates stressed that:

- Peacekeeping missions’ mandate must be fully gender-mainstreamed.
- All peacekeepers must be trained in gender-sensitivity.
- The inclusion of women in peacekeeping missions must be supported.
- All UN peacekeeping missions must comprise a civilian peacebuilding component.

More support must be given to civil society initiatives and grassroots movements to ensure that comprehensive peace and security is sustained once the formal peacekeeping mission has ended.

3.5 Challenges of National Action Plans in South Asia

Discussion on the challenges of National Action Plans (NAPs) in South Asia was initiated by Kumudini Samuel from the Women and Media Collective, Sri Lanka. She pointed out that Nepal is the only country in the region to have adopted a National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325, as many countries refuse to take on NAPs, arguing that they bear no relevance to the country as there is peace, or, alternatively stating that it is impossible to devise a NAP in the midst of conflict. Ms. Samuel cautioned that merely having a NAP on UNSCR 1325 does not necessarily ensure a gender
transformative post-conflict scenario. One needs to be mindful of the content and politics of NAPs rather than just the form.

Bandana Rana, President of *Saathi*, Nepal, highlighted the benefits of Nepal’s NAP, stating it provides the government with a clearer guidance on which direction to take, ensures accountability and opens up space for broader dialogue.

The participants however voiced concerns about the implementation of NAPs and questioned where the responsibility for implementation is located. The women proposed that responsibility for UNSCR 1325 should lie with, for instance, the Ministry of Justice or Ministry of Foreign Affairs as they possess more resources to support the full implementation of NAPs. The importance and benefits of a holistic approach that involves different ministries was emphasised by the women. Civil society and women’s movements must play a central role in the formulation of NAPs to ensure effectiveness and gender-sensitivity. The participants also called for the need to devise a People’s Action Plan on 1325 in cases where governments are not willing or able to take on the planning and execution of NAPs.

### 3.6 Transitional Justice and the Rule of Law

Kalpana Kannabiran from India initiated the discussion on transitional justice and rule of law, highlighting that gendering transitional justice and establishing the rule of law are crucial components of successful peacebuilding. She emphasized that reinstating the rule of law uproots legislation that has become an instrument of oppression in conflict periods. The participants pointed out that extra-judicial killings and sexual assault by armies and police forces in the region is a serious issue demanding more attention.

**The delegates called for:**

- Ensuring women’s inclusion in transitional justice mechanisms and respecting women’s dignity, including that of women combatants, at all stages.
- Guarantees that crimes committed against women, especially sexual and gender-based violence, will not go unpunished and no amnesties are granted for grave human rights violations.

Preeti Thapa from the Asia Foundation in Nepal noted that when access to formal legal structures is difficult or impossible, informal structures and platforms must be created so that victims can come forth and express their issues. The participants stressed the fact that transitional justice is also about undoing certain oppressive and discriminatory laws. Traditional justice systems must be
democratized while formal legal systems must be made more accessible to all. Emphasizing the need to ensure that limits are drawn to the applicability of traditional justice mechanisms, Kalpana Kannabiran cautioned against the use of traditional mechanisms for grave crimes such as murder and rape. She also stressed that the existing gaps between domestic legal frameworks and international standards must be filled to ensure the realization of a just peace.

3.7 Relief, Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Reintegration

The Open Day participants highlighted that all relief, rehabilitation, resettlement and reintegration efforts carried out in post-war reconstruction must be viewed through a gendered lens, and Bandana Rana from Saathi, Nepal, triggered off these discussions. She emphasized that the special needs of former female combatants must be addressed, and the sexual and gender-based violence women face in the army must be tackled. She noted that very few female ex-combatants have approached the UN rehabilitation programs, partly due to the stigma they face upon returning to their communities.

Ms. Rana also highlighted that women often face difficulties in accessing rehabilitation programs, for instance due to difficulties associated with traveling long distances to places of training. Thus, more support needs to be given to single women and women with dependants to ensure they can benefit from resettlement training and enable them to return to civilian life.

Participants noted that most rehabilitation trainings are only offered to former combatants, and the needs of victims are severely neglected. The lack of adequate psycho-social and mental care was also raised as an issue of concern.

Session II

3.8 Challenges of Women’s Participation at the Peace Table

While increasing emphasis is put on enhancing women’s participation in peace processes, Open Day participants voiced concerns about the lack of focus on the role of women as decision makers. The lack of trust between men and women in peace negotiations was also raised as an issue of concern by participants from Afghanistan as they noted that it is still difficult for men to accept women in leadership positions. Afghan delegates maintained that men attempt to control peace processes and limit women’s full participation. There is a lack of political support and will of the government to include women as women’s capacities to perform as peace negotiators are commonly questioned.
The women raised concerns over the lack of protection and security of women peace negotiators. For instance, in Afghanistan there is no protection for the women members of the High Peace Council, while the men, belonging to powerful groups, generally have bodyguards and travel in armoured vehicles. Thus, the women underlined that:

- Processes must be put in place to provide for the personal security of women activists in peace processes.
- The international community must ensure that adequate resources are channelled towards ensuring women’s security.
- There is a need to address the high levels of harassment that occur within formal peacemaking and negotiation structures.

3.9 Benefits of Including Women at the Peace Table

A 2010 study by UNIFEM\(^2\) showed that fewer than 3 percent of peace treaty signatories are women, and women’s participation in negotiation delegations averages less than 8 percent. Most strikingly, women are absent from chief mediating roles in UN-brokered talks.

Women’s inclusion in formal peace negotiations is not only a matter of justice and equality – women’s participation transforms the agenda and influences the kind of peace that is being built. UNIFEM’s research highlights that women’s engagement, even as informal observers, has resulted in peace accords that address issues of significance to women. When women influence peace negotiations, more focus is given to judicial responses to sexual and gender-based violence, ensuring

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gender-sensitive security sector reform and DDR, and improving the protection of women refugees and internally displaced persons. Furthermore, women at the peace table demand increased political participation post-accord at both local and national levels. Peace negotiations can be seen as an opportunity that can be seized to transform the society’s political landscape, increase women’s participation and representation in elections and enhance their participation as decision-makers.

Allowing women’s civil society groups consultative access to negotiators and mediators is also crucial since there is a proven correlation between more inclusive negotiation models and a higher likelihood that peace agreements will hold and violence will not return. The UNIFEM study also emphasizes the correlation between women’s groups’ organized participation and greater gender-sensitivity in the texts of the agreements, which in turn enhances their comprehensiveness and legitimacy.

3.10 Experiences from the field

The multiple issues and challenges faced by women’s peace activists in the South Asia region were brought to the fore in the Open Day deliberations. The participants acknowledged that peacemaking and peacebuilding largely remain male domains in the region, and called for increasing cooperation and dialogue between women’s groups in the region to bring forward the aims of UNSCR 1325.

The delegates raised several issues regarding conflict and peacebuilding in their region, including:

- The Naga conflict continues to negatively affect women’s lives in India, and while there is much grassroots work done by women peace activists, their efforts are largely ignored. However, women’s groups were able to revise the GOI-Naga ceasefire agreement by pushing for the inclusion of civilian security.

- The need to disseminate knowledge on the meaning of UNSCR 1325 was raised, and the importance of talking to men and addressing masculinities was asserted as an important component of successful peacebuilding.

- In the Maldives, the level of commitment given to women’s political empowerment remains low, and while women come into leadership roles within communities and families, they are constrained from participating in formal decision-making and negotiation structures.

- In Pakistan, women are working towards de-radicalizing highly radicalized youth, and are engaging in protection, prevention and participation work in order to reintegrate men back into the society.

Bandana Rana, President of Saathi Nepal, shares her expertise on relief, rehabilitation, resettlement and reintegration programs.
The Kashmir conflict has compromised the peace and security of the people in the region and has had particularly extreme adverse impact on the people of Kashmir, especially women. Militarization produces devastating effects for the entire society, and the widespread psychological depression is also a serious issue to be tackled. The needs of refugees, internally displaced people and the problem of landmines are urgent issues that need immediate attention.

Nepalese participants flagged the importance of specific budget allocations and funding mechanisms to ensure the goals of UNSCR 1325 are met, while also highlighting the significance of documenting women’s peace work to elucidate women’s contributions to peace.

In Afghanistan, there is a huge difference in the representation of men and women in ministries, and women are lacking from the security sector. Violence against women is still rampant and remains unacknowledged. Afghan delegates also highlighted the successes of an Afghan-Pakistan dialogue which built trust between the two sides, enhanced the unity of civil society and strengthened women’s agency.

Sri Lankan participants emphasized that all disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration efforts must utilize a gender perspective. Special attention needs to be paid to ensuring that reintegration and skills-training programs do not reinforce gender-divisions and relegate women to stereotypically “feminine” occupations.

The participants proposed that the principles informing 1325 can be brought forward through the reporting mechanisms of CEDAW. It was also proposed that countries in the region should take on country-specific reporting on their progress and activities in implementing the provisions of UNSCR 1325.

“In transitional justice, women’s dignity needs to be at the forefront to ensure that women are not re-victimised.”

Preeti Thapa, Program Manager of the Asia Foundation, Nepal
4. Open Day: Day Two

On Day Two of the Open Day on Women, Peace and Security, South Asian women’s rights activists and peacebuilders delivered their recommendations to the UN Resident Coordinator who reiterated his commitment to the goals of 1325 and assured the participants that their concerns and suggestions would be taken forward in the UN system.

4.1 Remarks by UN Resident Coordinator Patrice Coeur-Bizot

Patrice Coeur-Bizot, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, attended Day Two of the regional Open Day to reaffirm the UN’s commitments to the UNSCR 1325 agenda. Mr. Coeur-Bizot acknowledged that the resolution has generated positive actions throughout the world, including the support for women political candidates in Afghanistan, DRC, Haiti and Nepal. Coeur-Bizot also applauded the improvement in global efforts to tackle the widespread sexual and gender-based violence women continue to suffer in conflict. In particular, he emphasised that since UNSCR 1325, peacekeeping has changed dramatically with an increase in the number of female peacekeepers and the participation of more women in negotiations, decision-making and security sector reform.

While recognising the positive effects achieved in the past decade, Coeur-Bizot highlighted that there is still much to be done to fully realize the demands set out in 1325. Calling for deeper partnerships between UN agencies, civil society, government and all stakeholders concerned, Coeur-Bizot was confident that women will play a more pivotal role in constructing sustainable peace and security in the region.
4.2 Recommendations from Women of South Asia

Highlighting the significant issues which were raised and debated during Day One’s consultations, the Open Day participants delivered a set of recommendations to the UN Resident Coordinator.

The participants proposed that any UNSCR 1325 activity needs to be linked to existing human rights treaty mechanisms that states can be held accountable to, such as CEDAW, ICCPR and the Beijing Platform for Action.

The key recommendations include³:

- South Asian states should move towards adopting a regional action plan on women, peace and security, and a Peoples’ Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 should be set up.
- More spaces must be created across the region for cross/intergenerational experience-sharing, analysis and advocacy.
- **Promoting knowledge creation:**
  - Women’s collective experiences of conflict and their peace work must be documented in order to elucidate the value women add to peacemaking. More emphasis must also be given to disseminating knowledge on the contents and significance of UNSCR 1325.
  - The experiences of women in and around the peace table must also be documented to identify challenges and define best practices.
- **Gendering the security sector:**
  - Women’s participation in the formulation of security policies must be enhanced.
  - Security sector reform must be attentive to the particular security needs of women.
  - The special needs of former female combatants must be taken into consideration in all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs.
- **Combating sexual violence and impunity:**
  - No amnesties should be granted for perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence and other grave human rights violations.
  - More support for psycho-social counselling and victim-support systems in the region is needed.
  - The special needs of ex-female combatants in UN-monitored cantonments must be addressed and special attention should be paid to gender-based violence. Reintegration programs for former women combatants need to be gender-sensitized.

³ A full and detailed list of recommendations can be found in the Appendix.
Peace agreements:
- Women at the peace table must be enabled to form strategic alliances and draw on the support of women “around” the table.
- The number of women in peace negotiations and in the framing of peace agreements must be increased, ensuring that the women bring with them a strong gender and women’s rights perspective.
- The peace process needs to be gender-sensitive, and the personal security of women peace negotiators must be ensured.

Additionally, the participants stated that:

- The concepts of peace and security need to be revisited – peace needs to be understood as the presence of social justice and the full realization of human rights, while security must be conceptualized as comprehensive human security.
- The intensified militarization of the state and society during conflicts and their aftermaths must be addressed.
- Specific budget allocations should be made to further the goals of UNSCR 1325 and to support the work of regional networks and regional-level work on gendering peace.
- Male peace negotiators and peacekeeping operations must be gender-sensitized, and the deployment of more women peacekeepers must be supported.
- All justice and reconciliation processes need to have a strong human rights approach to ensure that women’s dignity and basic human rights are not compromised.

“The post-conflict scenario is conflict through other means – the conflict might have ended but it continues through militarized mindsets, nationalist mindsets, patriarchies…”

Dr. Anuradha Chenoy, Professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Open Day participants also called for country-specific monitoring on UNSCR 1325 to hold states accountable and recognize the progress made in implementation. Partnerships between men and women in achieving gender equality were also stressed as a crucial factor in successful and sustainable peacebuilding. The women also emphasized the interconnectedness of conflicts in the South Asia region, and called for multilevel projects to be undertaken in a long-term and programmatic way.

The participants underlined that structural violence continues to wage a war against women in the...
aftermath of conflict, and women’s lives are negatively affected by neoliberal policies and the destruction of entire ecosystems. Moreover, the militarization of police forces in the region further exacerbates women’s insecurities. The women thus called for awareness-building and gender-sensitization training to the military as well as the police in the South Asia region. The women strongly called for a more political process of peacebuilding in the region, emphasizing the need to challenge patriarchal gender-neutral development paradigms that are imposed on societies in the name of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. Dismantling the patriarchal structures and ideology of the state and society as well as agencies like the World Bank and the IMF were highlighted as key processes towards the realization of a just peace in which human security is guaranteed.

UN Resident Coordinator Coeur-Bizot expressed his appreciation of the women’s comprehensive and crucial recommendations, and pledged to take their concerns and message forward in the UN system to other relevant agencies at the headquarters and in different countries.

4.3 Remarks by UN Information Centre Director Kiran Mehra-Kerpelman

Kiran Mehra-Kerpelman, Director of the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Delhi, delivered a message from the UN Secretary General which highlighted the importance of understanding peace as more than the absence of war: “living peacefully means having food and shelter, health care and education, freedom and dignity,” the Secretary General emphasized.

Mehra-Kerpelman also stressed that the UN believes that peace, development and human rights are all part of one continuum and cannot be tackled sequentially, and called for women’s full participation in all development paradigms.

4.4 Messages from Dr. Saba G. Khattak, Dr. Anis Haroon, Dr. Syeda Hameed and Ms. Sapana Malla Pradhan

In addition to the participants’ recommendations and inputs from the UN Resident Coordinator and UNIC Director, messages were also delivered by women holding state positions who were unable to attend the regional Open Day.

Sapana Malla Pradhan, Member of the Nepalese Constituent Assembly, highlighted the importance of a functioning public administration, rule of law, economic revitalisation and the engagement of women as pivotal components of successful peacebuilding. Ms. Pradhan mentioned Nepal’s National Action Plan and stated that a gender-sensitive truth and reconciliation commission is also in the
process of finalization. She stressed the need to hold UN peacekeepers accountable for their gender-sensitive behaviour, and stated that the state needs to recognize the prevalence of patriarchy and the ways in which conflict affects men and women differently.

Dr. Syeda Hameed, Member of the Planning Commission of India, underlined that women are not only victims of physical violence, but are also the worst sufferers in terms of health, education, sanitation and mobility. In the context of India, Dr. Hameed acknowledged that rural women’s energy and fuel needs, land rights issues, women’s agricultural capacities and the provision of health education and basic amenities, has been improved. India’s 11th Five Year Plan also includes strategies to incorporate these concerns. However, Dr. Hameed acknowledged that more efforts must be made to fully realize gender equality in the country and to particularly make special provisions for women affected by conflict in India. To this end, she called for well-coordinated efforts between the Government of India and the various state governments, asserting that each program must be budgeted using a strict multi-sectoral gender lens.

Dr. Saba Gul Khattak, Member of the Planning Commission of Pakistan, highlighted that the multiplicity of conflicts across South Asia requires state responses at the local, national and regional levels. Khattak underlined that addressing the needs of the displaced, advancing economic development and disarmament and integrating women’s perspectives are key issues for sustainable peacebuilding. She points out that Pakistan has been a “slow convert” to integrating women’s perspectives into conflict resolution and peacebuilding. However, Khattak states that some positive change has been created: for instance, most public documents are gendered, and judicial activism is an encouraging development. She expressed her appreciation that women’s movements in South Asia have asserted themselves in ensuring that the state apparatuses integrate their concerns in their work, ranging from bills to protect women against physical violence and assault to ensuring fundamental human rights during active conflict situations.

Dr. Anis Haroon, Chairperson of the National Commission of the Status of Women in Pakistan, reminded the audience that peace consists of security, prosperity and justice for everyone. Dr. Haroon noted that achieving peace in South Asia has not been given adequate attention and it has thus far remained only an elusive dream of the people in the region. She emphasized that the women of South Asia need to “create our own spaces and resolve our own conflicts”. Stating that violence should be renounced as a means of conflict resolution, Dr. Haroon asserted that efforts must go on to give peace a chance in the region.

“While UN Resolution 1325 is important, the solidarity of South Asian women’s movements and their long quest for peace through work with the state as well as in confrontation with the state, needs to be celebrated and applauded.”

Dr. Saba Gul Khattak, Member of the Planning Commission of Pakistan
5. Conclusion

The regional Open Day on Women, Peace and Security organized by the UN Women South Asia Sub-Regional Office brought to the fore the importance of enhancing South Asian regional cooperation on issues pertaining to UNSCR 1325. Since conflicts in South Asia are inextricably linked, a regional approach that builds on strong partnerships is crucial for ensuring that a gendered perspective is adopted in all aspects of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

As noted by UN Women SARO’s Deputy Regional Program Director Sushma Kapoor in her closing speech, “UNSCR 1325 possesses true transformative potential to bring about progressive and positive change in women’s lives throughout the region.” However, she also reminded that more remains to be done to ensure that 1325 does not remain mere words on paper. Open Day recommendations highlighted that a strong gender perspective must shape all peace negotiations and peace processes, security sector reform, peacekeeping, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs and justice and reconciliation processes. Further, knowledge creation and dissemination on UNSCR 1325 must be enhanced, and combating sexual and gender-based violence in times of war and peace must remain a top priority. In sum, the inclusion of women and gender perspectives is essential for achieving sustainable peace characterized by the presence of comprehensive human security and the absence of structural violence.

Dr. Roshmi Goswami of the Women, Peace and Security Unit, UN Women SARO, concluded the session by applauding the call for a more political and human rights approach to peacebuilding and conflict transformation in the region. Dr. Goswami reiterated the importance of a well-coordinated and sustained regional approach led by women peace leaders and activists of South Asia, while also assuring UN Women SARO’s commitment to that process. The session ended with a joint statement of recognition and support for peace activist Irom Sharmila’s decade-long fast for peace and against human rights violations in the state of Manipur in India.

The regional Open Day brought together dedicated women’s rights activists and peacebuilders to share their experiences, expertise, recommendations and challenges on issues pertaining to women, peace and security. Consolidating their cooperation throughout the two-day event, the UN and civil society actors strengthened their joint efforts to ensure that women play a crucial part in peacebuilding, and that gender equality is advanced in the conflict-affected areas of South Asia.

“We at the United Nations will work in common cause to unite our shared aspirations for dignity, security and opportunity for all. To all those seeking peace, this is your day, and we are with you.”

Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General
Open Day: Partnerships for Peace

WOMEN’S PERSPECTIVES ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION, PEACE MAKING AND PEACEBUILDING IN SOUTH ASIA

Day 1, September 27, 2011

UN Women South Asia Sub Regional Office

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<td>9.00 – 9.30</td>
<td>Arrival and Registration of Delegates</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.30 – 9.40</td>
<td>Welcome Address – Anne F. Stenhammer</td>
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<td>9.40 – 9.50</td>
<td>Objective of the Open Day: Partnerships for Peace - Roshmi Goswami</td>
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<td>9.50 – 10.50</td>
<td>Self Introductions</td>
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<td>10.50 – 11.05</td>
<td>The interplay of national, regional and international processes: South Asia &amp; UNSCR 1325 - Nighat S. Khan</td>
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<td>11.00 – 11.15</td>
<td>Tea/Coffee</td>
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<td>11.15 – 1.45</td>
<td>Brief start-up Presentations and Open Discussions on:</td>
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<td>Specificities of Impact of Conflict on Women – Dr. Ameena Mohsin</td>
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<td>Peace Processes and Peace Agreements – Rita Manchanda</td>
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<td>Relief, Rehabilitation, Resettlement &amp; Reintegration - Bandana Rana</td>
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<td>Role of Women in UN Peace Keeping – Dr. Anuradha Chenoy</td>
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<td>NAPs – Challenges in South Asia - Kumudini Samuel</td>
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<td>Transitional Justice and the Rule of Law – Kalpana Kannabiran</td>
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<td>1.45 - 2.30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>Chair – Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath</td>
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<td>2.30 – 2.40</td>
<td>South Asian experience on mobilizing For Peace – Kamla Bhasin</td>
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<td>2.40 – 3.00</td>
<td>Challenges of Women’s Participation at the Peace Table – Samira Hamidi and Najia Zewari (Afghanistan)</td>
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<td>3.00 – 3.45</td>
<td>Experiences from the Field – All delegates</td>
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<td>3.45- 4.00</td>
<td>Tea/Coffee break</td>
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<td>4.00 – 5.15</td>
<td>Experiences from the Field – All delegates</td>
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<td>5.30 - 5.30</td>
<td>Remarks from the Chair</td>
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<td>5.30 – 5.45</td>
<td>Wrap Up - UN Women.</td>
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<td>7.30 Onwards</td>
<td>Dinner at Shangri-La Eros</td>
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# Open Day: Partnerships for Peace

WOMEN’S PERSPECTIVES ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION, PEACE MAKING AND PEACEBUILDING IN SOUTH ASIA

**28th September 2011**

UN Women, South Asia Sub Regional Office

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<th>Speaker/Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>10:00-10:15</td>
<td>Welcome Address - Ms. Anne F. Stenhammer</td>
<td>Regional Programme Director, UN Women, South Asia Sub Regional Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:15-10:45</td>
<td>Inaugural address - Mr. Patrice Cœur-Bizot</td>
<td>United Nations Resident Co-ordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45 - 10:55</td>
<td>SG’s Message on Peace and Non-Violence</td>
<td>Ms. Kiran Mehra-Kerpelman, UNIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45 – 11.15</td>
<td>Messages on Peacebuilding &amp; State Responses</td>
<td>Dr. Anis Haroon (Pakistan)</td>
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<td>Dr. Syeda Hameed (India)</td>
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<td>Dr. Saba G. Khattak (Pakistan)</td>
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<td>Ms. Sapana Malla Pradhan (Nepal)</td>
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<td>11:15 - 12:15</td>
<td>Presentation, Discussion and Key Recommendations</td>
<td>South Asia Women’s Groups,</td>
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<td>12:15 – 12.30</td>
<td>UN Responses - Mr. Patrice Cœur-Bizot and</td>
<td>Ms. Anne F. Stenhammer</td>
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<td>Vote of Thanks</td>
<td>Ms. Sushma Kapoor, Deputy Regional Programme Director, UN Women, South Asia Sub Regional Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:40 – 12:50</td>
<td>Closing Comments – Dr. Roshmi Goswami, WPS, SASRO.</td>
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<td>12:50 Onwards</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>1:45 – 3:00</td>
<td>Film Screening – Pray the Devil Back to Hell</td>
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Open Day: Partnerships for Peace

WOMEN’S PERSPECTIVES ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION, PEACE MAKING AND PEACEBUILDING IN SOUTH ASIA

27th and 28th September 2011
UN Women, South Asia Sub Regional Office

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Recommendations from the Women of South Asia

Women’s movements in South Asia have asserted themselves in ensuring that the state apparatuses integrate their concerns in their work, ranging from bills to protect women against physical violence and assault to ensuring fundamental human rights during active conflict situations.

Peace is a multidimensional concept and encompasses comprehensive human security, economic, social, political rights. Justice and reconciliation processes must be based on a strong human rights approach that will ensure that women’s dignity and basic human rights are not compromised. Addressing the needs of the displaced, advancing economic development and disarmament and integrating women’s perspectives are key issues for sustainable peace-building. While UN Peacekeeping plays a pivotal role in the building of sustainable peace, gender remains inadequately addressed in the planning and execution of peace support operations. Peacekeeping missions as well as male peace negotiators must be sensitized on gender concerns and the deployment of women peacekeepers must be supported.

It is important that all activity around UNSCR 1325 activity be institutionalized and linked to treaty mechanisms that states parties can be held accountable to – CEDAW, ICCPR, ICSEC, CAT, CERD, CRC to name a few – and alternative means must be devised of framing issues of women, peace and security in the language of human rights.

We recognize that the full realization of the goals set out in UNSCR 1325 is only possible through a thorough interrogation of the patriarchal biases of governments.

The excessive focus of rehabilitation trainings on former combatants leads to neglect of the needs of other victims and survivors. Single women and women with dependants must be identified specifically and helped access resettlement training that will enable them to return to civilian life. Adequate psychosocial and mental care is an area of concern.

There is an urgent need to recognize, value and support strong civil society and grassroots initiatives and enhance women’s participation in conflict transformation.

Spaces must be created across the region for cross/ inter generational experience sharing, analysis and where relevant advocacy.

Action Plans and Budgets
The multiplicity of conflicts across South Asia requires state responses at the local, national and regional levels. South Asian states should move towards adopting a regional action plan on women, peace and security.

- The regional NAP must be implementable, specific, realistic and resourced.
- There is need for a People’s Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.
• Special budget allocations to programs implementing 1325 are necessary in order to bolster regional networks and cooperation.

**Knowledge creation**

The documentation of women’s peace work in South Asian conflict zones will help elucidate the contribution and skills women bring to peacemaking and peace-building, and will facilitate advocacy for implementation of UNSCR 1325.

It is important to document

- Women’s collective experiences of conflict;
- Local women’s peace work as evidence for the value that women bring to the peace process;
- The experience of women in and around the peace table to identify challenges and define best practices;
- Looking at peace agreements and peace processes, and understanding whether the inclusion of women has created a more sustainable peace, with a view to future understanding.

**Militarization and Security sector**

Armed conflict and its aftermath result in the militarization of the state and society, and political societies are undermined by prioritizing the security apparatus. It is our common experience that post-war societies become easily militarized, and a culture of impunity in which human rights violations, including those perpetrated by members of the state security services, go unpunished.

- Women face real dangers of extra-judicial killing and sexual assault by armies and police forces in the region -- a serious issue demanding close attention and scrutiny by international processes.
- The security sector remains male-dominated and there is a need to invest in more gender-sensitive security sector reform in post-conflict reconstruction. Security sector reform must be particularly attentive to the special security needs of women.
- Revisit the concept of security to understand security as comprehensive human security.

**Sexual Violence & Impunity**

Women suffer sexual and gender-based violence at various levels. Violence within the domestic sphere of the home often remains unacknowledged and unrecognized, as the focus largely remains on rape by enemy troops and the violence occurring within the household is neglected, resulting in the creation of a hierarchy of victims.

- There must be no impunity for sexual and gender-based violence. Transitional processes and negotiations around amnesty should exclude sexual and gender-based violence and other grave human rights violations.
- The absence of victim-support systems and psychosocial counselling to survivors of sexual violence must be addressed, and the special needs of former female combatants, including the stigma that ex-combatants are subjected to in the socio-cultural context of South Asia, must be taken into consideration in all disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs.
- The special needs of former women combatants in UN-monitored cantonments and monitor must be addressed and special attention paid to the prevalence of SGBV. More gender sensitivity is also required towards women combatants in UN-monitored cantonments. In these internationally supported processes there has been a lack of sensitivity towards preparing communities to reintegrate former female combatants and no gender sensitive
preparedness for reintegration of ex-women combatants into civilian life. There is a need for
gender-sensitive planning programs as well for the receiving communities.

Peace Building
The interconnectedness of the region’s conflicts, and the value of the grassroots work women have
carried out through breaking boundaries and reaching across borders to work for peace and security
must be written into accounts of peace-building and must shape action on formal international
mechanisms. Women’s close involvement historically in rehabilitation, reintegration and refugee
assistance must be formally recognized through their inclusion in conflict resolution. There is an
urgent need to increase the number of women, paying attention to ensure that these women bring
in a strong gender and women’s human rights perspective. Ensure greater participation of women in
peace agreements, women as peace negotiators and peace mediators.

- Peace processes needs to be gender-sensitive and must provide protection for women
  peace negotiators.
- Women at the peace table must have strategic alliances and draw upon the support of the
  women “around” the table.
- Allowing women’s civil society groups consultative access to negotiators and mediators is
  crucial since there is a proven correlation between more inclusive negotiation models and a
  higher likelihood that peace agreements will hold and violence will not return.
- Male peace negotiators, peacekeeping operations must be gender-sensitized. The
  deployment of more women peacekeepers must be supported.
- There is need to acknowledge the extreme vulnerability of women peace negotiators and
  ensure their security. Women’s participation at the peace table is thus not only a normative
  value but also an instrumental one. Women’s participation in the formulation of security
  policies must be enhanced.
- We also recognize that women’s participation in peace processes is not sufficient without
  the inclusion of a gender perspective and feminist politics.