

24 years of WPS Agenda : Time for Pragmatics

UNSC Resolution 1325 : A women's issue?

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If you want to make peace... prepare for peace

(reinterpretation of the 4th century Latin quotation)



1. Background to the adoption of R1325

1915 - creation of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

- Context 1st World War. 30 years before the creation of the UN
- 8 countries including Belgium (US, DE, UK, NO, NL, SE, HU) – The Hague
- Defense of women's right to participate in decision-making on peace and security issues

2000 - UNSC unanimously adopts Resolution 1325

- Context of a decade of major conflicts (Rwanda, Darfur, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Bosnia, etc.)
- Result of lobbying by women's associations in the North and South, in the wake of the UN Cairo (1994) and Beijing (1995) conferences
- International recognition of a Resolution officially associating women and conflicts (victims of conflicts **and** peacemakers) for the 1st time
- Binding R like other UNSC resolutions (even if contested by legal experts), transversal with respect to all incoming UNSC resolutions. 9 other resolutions following R 1325 broaden the scope (e.g. children – girls and boys – and not only girls)
- African initiative: Namibia, Madam Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah (Minister of Foreign Affairs)
- Presence of Mali in 2000 (elected member)
- Active role played by Bangladesh (Asia)

Comments

- **This is not a R imposed by Western countries on the countries of the South**
- **This is not a matter of Western women trying at all costs to impose their values and standards on the whole world**

After a quarter of a century of recognition of this issue

After more than 100 years of lobbying...

Where is the implementation of R 1325?

2. Mali : the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (Algiers Agreement) 2015

National Action Plans (NAPs) = contextualisation of R 1325 = refutation of the criticism that R 1325 does not take account of specific contexts

- BE: one of the first countries to adopt a NAP (2009)
- NAPs initially produced by Western countries and mainly catalogue of outward-looking actions
- Western countries consider themselves eternally safe from armed conflict
- BE: 4th NAP (2022-2026). Internal strand: combating gender stereotypes, focus on Defence and Police. External strand: support for countries in conflict/development cooperation budget
- 2012: Mali NAP (from Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme/MPF) in the context of violent internal conflict resulting in thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees (women and girls victims of rape, forced marriages, stoning, etc.) + jihadist terrorists

Signing of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, 2015, under the aegis of the international community

- Unjustified under-representation of women (3) in relation to the violence suffered
- BE launches a gender analysis of the Agreement + 1 economic recovery programme for women victims (with UN Women in Gao, Timbuktu, Menaka) (background BE's 3rd NAP: focus on Mali)

Observation: no trace of the 2012 NAP. Women are not a priority

- BE analysis officially validated by the Malian authorities
- But Malian authorities consider the 2012 NPA to be obsolete
- A new NPA has been written (MPF - BE - UN Women) (2015-2017)
- Catch-up work, work done backwards (women's demands were not taken on board at the outset) + lack of documentation on the abuses + internal shortcomings of the judicial system, itself hostile to taking women's grievances on board.

What happened next?

- Victims' pillar: intense lobbying of the authorities by local women's rights associations. Few tangible results (on the contrary: e.g. release of the perpetrators of the abuses as a bargaining chip for prisoners, etc.). Creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission with no resources (but motivated). UN lobbying on gender/DDR issues
- Negotiation pillar: BE-UN Women lobbying for the inclusion of women in the Agreement Monitoring Committee. Reactions: "we have our values, our culture, our women are not ready, etc.". Rejected.

Comments

- Was R 1325 an opportunity for Mali, ranked among the last African countries in terms of gender indicators?
- Was it a lever for positive change for women and girls?

NOT SURE AT ALL

- A country in conflict is often a weakened and unstable one, suffering from a variety of conflict-generating ills, and not a favourable context in which to initiate change.
- All efforts have come up against "cultural and religious resistance", i.e. patriarchy and the gender stereotypes that go with it.
- R 1325 tackles head-on the roles that have traditionally been divided between men and women for centuries. War is mainly a man's business. It follows very masculine codes, while the suffering of women and children is seen as inevitable and secondary collateral damage.
- The R 1325 is a truly revolutionary resolution per se. Little wonder that its implementation is being held up.

3. Mali: a special case or a representative one?

The Malian conflict has been bogged down for 12 years with spill-over into Burkina Faso and Niger. The agreement was never implemented and is now considered obsolete.

- **Would the inclusion of women have led to lasting peace?**

Without establishing a direct link between cause and effect, studies show that peace agreements are more durable when women are included in accordance with the recommendations of R 1325 (35% chance of exceeding 15 years) + a positive impact on political stability.

- **Ceasefire agreements and gender-sensitive provisions:**

1990 - 2016: 9% out of 267 agreements

- **Participation of women in peace negotiations :**

1992 - 2018 : 13% - 2020 : 23% - 2021 : 19% - 2022 : 16%

(notable backlash: context of crises and increase in male autocracies)

- **Women heads of negotiating missions :**

Only 2 women in the UN history

4. Conclusions

Little progress and even setbacks

R 1325 is not playing the role expected of it. After ¼ of a century of debate and over 100 years of demands, women's voices are still largely unheard, even though the inclusion of half of society should be the norm and not the exception.

The **explanations** put forward include **Lack of funding** (versus the explosion in military budgets), **Specific contexts** (Western standards, intrusion into sovereignty, etc.), **Societal resistance** (discriminatory male culture permeating family and religious norms, etc.), **Lack of political will** (reluctance to cede a piece of power) are **undeniable facts that are all rooted in the same reality:**

The pervasiveness of patriarchal social and cultural norms with their attendant stereotypes about women and the violence that accompanies them, including against those who seek to combat them (defenders of women's rights).

In 2022, Moussa Faki (African Union) declared: "*Toxic masculinities encourage boys and men to adopt high-risk behaviour and endorse a culture of violence. Men as a group benefit from the association of masculinity and privilege*". In 2023, Antonio Guterres (United Nations) added: "*Patriarchy is a major obstacle to a culture of peace*".

5. Recommendations

- Keep the issue on the international agenda (slow evolution of mentalities with advances and regressions) (**political level**)
- Demand the inclusion of women in peace missions (**political and diplomatic levels**)
- Collate good practice (data is scattered and difficult to compare) in order to identify the levers responsible for global successes (e.g. Liberia, Colombia, Indonesia, etc.) and their replicability (**research and study level**)
- Include men at local level (weakness of R 1325: too focused on women only). On this subject, see the evaluation of the BE programme in Mali (economic recovery of women victims: raising men's awareness to overcome the obstacles of patriarchy) (**field programme**).
- Support local women's associations (mediators, negotiators, etc.), forgotten by the international community. Women mediators are international and never local (**field programme**)