[III]

Women as Equal Participants in Conflict Resolution

Evidence from around the world and across cultures shows that integrating women and gender considerations into peace-building processes helps promote democratic governance and long-term stability. In order to achieve these goals, women need to be able to play a role in building and participating in the full range of decision-making institutions in their countries. These institutions, from civil society to the judicial and security sectors, must also be responsive to and informed by women's demands.

—United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security

8. Women's Role in Bringing Peace to Sudan and South Sudan

By Princeton N. Lyman

> [Women] *are part of the society and the mistake we do more often than not is we want to look at a woman's issue in isolation. . . . It has to be done as part of the society, and the society is together with men, and youth.*

—**from an interview of Merekaje Lorna Najia,** Secretary General of the Sudan Democratic Election Monitoring and Observation Program, conducted as part of the Profiles in Peace Oral Histories Project of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2013

WOMEN HAVE NOT PLAYED THE ROLE THEY SHOULD—indeed, must—in the ongoing Sudan–South Sudan peace process. Women have worked actively for peace in Sudan, both throughout the decades of civil war and in the various peace processes that ended the war in 2005. Strong women's caucuses and organizations in both countries continue to work for the people's betterment and for resolving internal conflicts within their countries (for example, Darfur in Sudan and Jonglei Province in South Sudan). But in the long, drawn-out negotiations between what has become two countries under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) from 2005 to 2011, women—in groups and as individuals—have been largely shut out along with most of civil society. The result, as Ambassador Donald Steinberg predicted in his chapter in this book, is that far less priority has been paid in these negotiations to matters of people's welfare. Thus, the peace has not been secured, and both countries are roiled by economic turmoil and distress.

As of June 2013, the National Congress Party of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement of South Sudan have carried out negotiations following the CPA. Even for those who follow the discussions, the state of the negotiations has not been altogether clear nor have the results been coherent. When major agreements and pledges of future peace and cooperation are announced by the two presidents, as happened in September 2012 and again in March 2013, they are followed in just a few months by recriminations, a breakdown of talks, and threats of war or economic retaliation. The whole process has dwelled heavily on political and security matters, sidelining equally urgent economic and social issues that affect the population at large: men, women, children, and families. The two governments remain stuck most of all in disputes over security, borders, and charges that each supports rebels in the other's country. Economic issues of value to the population at large, such as the predictable and stable flow of oil exports, open borders and trade, and banking cooperation, are all used more as weapons in political and security disputes than as priority objectives to be achieved.

As a result, Sudan remains isolated from international investment and badly needed debt relief. Extraordinary rates of inflation, at 40 percent or more, are dealing heavy blows to the people. Poverty outside Khartoum, hidden from view of those in the capital, rivals that in the far more undeveloped South Sudan. War along the border has threatened starvation for hundreds of thousands. More than 200,000 have become refugees since 2011. In South Sudan, more than one-third of the population is dependent on international food aid. Closed borders make food too expensive to buy, while lack of investment in infrastructure inhibits domestic food production. Only 15 percent of South Sudan's people are literate, and the country has one of the world's highest rates of maternal mortality. When oil exports were shut down during 2012, clinics ran out of vital pharmaceuticals and teachers went unpaid. Without new sources of livelihood, ethnic tensions are becoming endemic, causing not only armed clashes but also serious human rights violations. Surely this is not what South Sudanese fought for over more than four decades.

Indeed, the parties to these negotiations have faced tremendously complex tasks from 2005 onward. First, they had to create a government of national unity covering the entire territory—while simultaneously creating an autonomous government in South Sudan. As they negotiated, they did so without knowing whether the country would remain unified or whether, in the 2011 referendum, the South Sudanese

population would vote to secede. It was hard to make a final decision on almost any matter until that issue was resolved. Moreover, after decades of civil war, security has remained vitally important. Each side continues to harbor suspicions of the other, and for good reason: There is plenty of evidence that each side is supporting rebels inside the other's territory. In such a tense and mistrustful atmosphere, a dispute over a border can set off new violence and a return to conflict, as happened in 2012 when South Sudan attacked the Heglig oilfield of Sudan, and when Sudan bombed areas claimed by South Sudan. Moreover, men and women grow passionate when territory to which they have long been attached is threatened with becoming part of a foreign country or divided, as well as when their ancestral rights to property are at risk. Women and men have rioted in South Sudan over these matters when it appeared that the government might have compromised those rights in the negotiations; they have urged confrontation and even military action to protect their property and access to familiar territory.

So neither the negotiators nor those in the international community who largely accepted the way the peace process has been conducted should be blamed. But priorities have become misplaced. The ongoing disputes today reflect internal politics and jockeying among each country's rival elements as much as they reflect substantive and objective differences. The people's primary needs have been sacrificed for too long. Too many are paying too high a price. It is time to change.

At a September 2012 summit meeting between President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan and President Salva Kiir Mayardit of South Sudan, the two leaders signed nine cooperation agreements. These agreements covered security, nationality issues, oil sector arrangements, border openings, trade, and other matters that together provided the first full basis for the two countries to live in peace and cooperation. It was promising. But as of this writing, the agreements are in danger of being jettisoned as renewed arguments arise over security issues. Armed clashes on the border are once again being threatened, Sudan is again calling for an end to South Sudan's oil exports, conflict continues within Sudan's states of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, and tensions are again high. Both countries' people are still waiting for the dividends of peace, and if women cannot help bring those dividends home, then perhaps no one can.

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Shaping Peace

Fortunately, groups of women in both countries are demanding more access, more influence, and more direct participation in the relations between the two countries. When there was one Sudan, the women from both north and south were active together in women's organizations. Even after South Sudan's independence, these women remained in contact and came together in various internationally supported training sessions and for dialogue. In Sudan, members of the women's organization come from government and civil society, from various political parties and academic and professional affiliations, and from different ethnic and tribal groups and geographic parts of the country. Most found themselves frustrated by their lack of entrée to the peace negotiations. Since 2011, they have focused particularly on defending women's rights as the country prepares a new constitution and debates the role of sharia in its future.

In South Sudan, with far less institutional development and fewer strong parties, members of women's organizations are largely supporters of the ruling party and are mostly professionals but do represent a broad range of ethnic groups. After 2011, these women showed prominent patriotic support of the new government. Rather than pressing to engage in the negotiations, they made it a priority to take strong roles in mitigating the growing ethnic violence within South Sudan and in facilitating its internal political and economic development.

All that changed in early 2013 when the women from both countries came together to argue to their leaders and to the international community that it was time for peace and development and to demand a role in the negotiations for themselves. At the 20th African Union Summit held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2013, a Coalition of Women Leaders from Sudan and South Sudan issued a communiqué titled "Women Shaping Peace in Sudan and South Sudan." In the communiqué, they stated that they had as "delegates of the Coalition of Women Leaders from Sudan and South Sudan" gathered at the summit to "define our common priorities for the future and peaceful coexistence of our countries." Coalition members had done their homework. They had examined in detail the nine cooperation agreements signed by the two countries' presidents on September 27, 2012. The communiqué acknowledged the progress that had been made—but nevertheless went on to make a powerful statement:

However, we express our despair and grave concern about ongoing violence in both countries. We emphasize the desperate nature of our shared humanitarian crisis that takes lives on a daily basis. We fear a return to war if the issues of Abyei and border demarcation are not peacefully resolved and the Cooperation Agreements not successfully implemented. We express frustration at the increased conditionalities imposed on and continued lack of implementation of already signed accords. We call upon our leaders . . . to honor their commitments. . . .

We . . . affirm our rights as women to be included, consulted, and informed of decision-making processes that impact our lives. We decry the exclusive nature of the negotiations and especially the absence of women. We are frustrated by the lack of information about the process, for it only increase[s] *the divisions in our fragile social fabric.*[1]

The coalition did not shy away from the contentious issues that have preoccupied the negotiators. They proposed concrete entry points on security agreements, border issues, and nationality. They also laid down a series of recommendations on how women could be brought more centrally into the peace process. The recommendations were quite specific, including asking for guarantees that women would be on the boards, bodies, and task forces responsible for implementing the peace agreements; discussing women's particular security needs; explaining how training of military and police forces needed to be sensitive to women's safety; and calling for specific inclusion of women not only in the negotiations but also at the table with the international mediators in a process directed by the African Union.

If Women Can't Do It, Who Can?

It is too soon to know if this initiative will bear fruit. It comes late in the process when positions have hardened on both sides and when the negotiating process has been well established. The leader of the African Union mediation, former South African President Thabo Mbeki, has asked the coalition for a more specific proposal for how they would plan to participate. So far, nothing has changed in the structure of the mediation.

Perhaps most significant, while women are novw speaking out and organizing on these issues, there has been no public popular mobilization by women on behalf of

peace in either country as there was in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. No one yet knows how far these women are willing to go in Sudan and South Sudan to challenge their leaders, demand a change in priorities, and risk political or social retaliation for doing so. Without that, they are at risk of being ignored. Nor have women demanded more seats at the table from their own governments; party loyalties and competing interests have blunted those demands.

In retrospect, a formal role for women and other representatives of civil society should have been built into the negotiating processes of the CPA from 2005. Women's voices have been raised only intermittently, divided by national loyalties. As a result, they have not had nearly the influence that the issues warrant. But it is not too late. The coalition that was formed to lobby at the African Union Summit represents a step forward and deserves the continued support of the international community. Any continued failure of the leaders to achieve true peace and address the needs of their peoples will open the door for further strong criticisms from their populations—surely including women.

The international community can help keep women's roles and recommendations on the table through further support and training for the women's organizations that make up the Coalition, and by demanding attention to the Coalition's demands in the mediation. If the mediation does not provide a place for women and civil society at the negotiations, then donors could sponsor parallel meetings of those groups at the same site, as is now common practice at major United Nations conferences. Without those voices and more, without those women and other like-minded citizens organizing actively for peace, the prospect for true peace will remain uncertain. It is late, but not too late.

Note

1 "Communiqué: Women Shaping Peace in Sudan and South Sudan," Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 22, 2013, 1, available at <www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Communique_Women-Shaping-Peace_2013.pdf>.

9. Women as Agents of Peace and Stability: Measuring the Results

By Michelle Bachelet

We had been activists for decades. We felt we'd been politicians "with a small p"—informal politics—but this opportunity came to get engaged in formal politics because you had to get elected as a party to get to the peace table and so literally within the space of six weeks we founded a party, we produced manifestos, we developed policies, we went out and canvassed all over the country. . . . In the [Belfast Peace Agreement] *talks . . . if* [the women's coalition] *had not been at the table, there may not have been a chapter on reconciliation. It was the women's coalition that put those words in* [the agreement] *and talked about paying attention to young people and resources for our youth in the future.*

—from an interview with Monica McWilliams, co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and participant in the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations that led to the Belfast (Good Friday) Peace Agreement, conducted as part of the Profiles in Peace Oral Histories Project of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2013

THE WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY AGENDA first gained a foothold in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The goal of ensuring that women are part of making and keeping the peace was reinforced 5 years later with the unanimous adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in 2000. This emphasis on protecting and empowering women, both in and after conflict, grows from several sources. One is the global women's peace movement, which helped reveal systematic use of sexual violence in Bosnia and Rwanda; another is women's prominent role as peace activists and combatants in Central America,

left: UN Peacekeeper from Nepal arrives in Juba, South Sudan (UNMISS/Isaac Billy)

> *UNSCR 1325 has many goals, but focuses on two points: addressing the problems women face as victims or survivors of war, and promoting women as agents of peace*

Northern Ireland, South Africa, and other locations. Since 2000, this agenda has gained attention within the United Nations, especially with the 2010 creation of UN Women, dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment.

UNSCR 1325 has many goals, but focuses on two points: addressing the problems women face as victims or survivors of war, and promoting women as agents of peace. More attention has been directed toward protecting women and girls than toward promoting their role in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and postconflict recovery and peace-building. Ordinary people are now more familiar with the plight of women and girls plight in conflict zones, specifically widespread and sometimes organized sexual violence. More decisive action is needed, but at least after decades of discussing violence against women as a weapon of war, such violence provokes moral revulsion, and most agree that something must be done to address it.

But protection from violence had long been discussed before UNSCR 1325. The resolution emphasized the importance of women's participation in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peace-building. While this has been validated and endorsed many times since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, relatively few people actually know what it entails, why it is important, and what evidence connects it with more durable and stable peace and security. Why do we need quotas for women in parliaments and legislatures? Why do we need women at the peace table?

Why Resist Involving Women in Peace and Security?

I was the first leader of UN Women, the full-fledged UN entity devoted to the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality. UNSCR 1325 articulates a vision for women in the security field and posits a corollary, for which there is increasing evidence, to the salutary effects that women's engagement and gender equality have on development, economic growth, good governance, and public health, among others. Gender equality and women's participation in the workforce have been linked to higher gross domestic product per capita.[1] Women's equal access to land and other agricultural inputs can increase productivity by 2.5 to 4 percent and reduce the number of people suffering from hunger.[2] Companies with more women on their boards were found to outperform their rivals with a 42 percent higher return in sales, 66 percent higher return on invested capital, and 53 percent higher return on equity.[3] Women's involvement can have similarly positive effects in peace and security. In 2006, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted, "The world is starting to

grasp that there is no policy more effective [in promoting development, health, and education] than the empowerment of women and girls. And I would venture that no policy is more important in preventing conflict or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended."[4]

During Ban Ki-moon's first term as Secretary-General, the United Nations adopted four new resolutions on women, peace, and security; articulated a seven-point action plan on women's participation in peace-building; and appointed an unprecedented number of women to senior peace and security positions, both at headquarters and in the field. The number of women serving as Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, overseeing complex peace operations, continues to grow, albeit slowly.

Yet in the field, women's participation in peace and security is not yet prioritized or understood. In fact, it is still often dismissed or actively rejected and resisted. This reveals a troubling gap between the aspirations of global and regional commitments and the reality of peace processes and post-conflict peace-building. Conflict prevention and resolution, as practiced today, focus on neutralizing potential spoilers and perpetrators of violence rather than investing in resources for peace. That is a lost opportunity and is precisely what UNSCR 1325 attempts to redress by including a neglected category of peacemakers and social rebuilders: women.

UNSCR 1325 is an attempt to illuminate the often invisible, informal, and unrecognized role that women and girls play in preventing and resolving conflict, from peace activism to day-to-day interfamily and intercommunity mediation and reconciliation. It is an attempt to seize the opportunity and empower women at the moment in which crises and transitions have thrust them into new, unconventional roles, to bring women's voices forward, and to reap the benefits of inclusiveness and diversity in settings and processes that are almost exclusively male dominated.

Women do urgently need to be included at the peace table and in the halls of government. Women's engagement is also crucial in far more contexts, including peacekeeping missions, donor roundtables and other postconflict planning processes, rebuilding the security and justice sectors, designing and implementing conflict-related programs that range from community-led prevention to disarmament and reintegration, and all kinds of institutions of postconflict governance, including temporary institutions to implementing peace agreements.

UNSCR 1325 is an attempt to illuminate the often invisible, informal, and unrecognized role that women and girls play in preventing and resolving conflict

Measuring What Is Lost When Women Are Missing

Only recently have we begun to quantify what is lost when women are excluded from these processes. In general, data have not been widely collected and analyzed on the effects of women's social and political empowerment globally, although what data we do have show that empowering women is urgently important. But the data gap is especially broad in conflict contexts. Data are missing on such crucial aspects of women's lives as property ownership rates, levels of participation in local government, economic engagement, types of market access, and maternal mortality. Conflict-triggered population flight and displacement make gathering data still more complicated; some of the women most affected by conflict simply disappear from official view. Surprisingly little is known about what proportion of postconflict spending targets gender equality and women's empowerment, what proportion of demobilized combatants and people associated with fighting forces are women, what proportion of reparations target women and offer redress for crimes they have suffered, what numbers of women are hired after conflict to deliver public services, or what numbers of women are involved in peace negotiations and postconflict planning.

That is why UN Women sampled 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011 and analyzed them for gender participation. We found that women made up only 4 percent of signatories, 2.4 percent of chief mediators, 3.7 percent of witnesses to peace agreement signings, and 9 percent of negotiators. These figures indicate that women are markedly underrepresented at the peace table, far more than they are in other public decisionmaking professions and positions where the gap has been steadily narrowing—including in those that typically dominate peace talks, such as politicians, lawyers, diplomats, and members of armed groups.[5] Nor are the numbers of women involved in peace processes improving. In 2011, only 4 of 14 UN-supported mediation processes included *any* women as members of the negotiating parties.[6] In the first half of 2012, women's civil society representatives had participated in only one-third of donor conferences. No female leaders of nongovernmental organizations—*none*—participated in any of the eight meetings held in 2011 and 2012 by Contact Groups, comprised of countries that support or sponsor a particular crisis or peace process.[7]

Women's exclusion from peacemaking and conflict resolution can be seen wherever we look. Women routinely constitute a minority of beneficiaries of postconflict employment programs in spite of UN guidelines encouraging gender parity. At the

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end of 2011, women comprised only 3 percent of peacekeeping missions' military staffs and only 10 percent of UN police.[8] Since June 2010, women's share of senior UN positions has actually dropped slightly—to 18 percent in special political missions and 21 percent in peacekeeping missions.[9] In 2011, women represented about 20 percent of participants in UN-supported disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs, including socioeconomic reintegration and employment support and vocational and microenterprise training.[10] Women involved in postconflict countries' elections face more dangers than men tackling comparable tasks. For instance, consider that Afghan women comprised less than a quarter of all candidates in the 2010 elections and generally ran more security-conscious campaigns than did their male counterparts. Yet 6 of the 11 campaign workers killed during that campaign season worked for women's campaigns; 9 in 10 threats against candidates were against women.[11] In transition countries, female voters are four times as likely to be targets of intimidation than male voters. Women are attacked verbally and physically more often than men during voter registration or other civic activities taking place in public spaces.[12]

Perhaps one of the better known indicators of gender equality is the percentage of seats won by women in parliaments. As of March 31, 2012, women made up 20 percent of parliamentarians globally, and 18 percent in countries affected by conflict.[13] Clear evidence shows that, particularly in war's aftermath, electoral quotas and other types of temporary special measures are by far the fastest means of bringing women's parliamentary representation to the critical mass participation point of 30 percent, at which point having women in the legislature becomes normalized and spontaneously increases—which is why 30 percent was the target set by the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995.

UN Women's research into postconflict parliamentary representation found that when quota-based systems were present, women were 34 percent of those elected—whereas in countries without electoral quotas, women made up just 12 percent of parliamentarians. In 2011, postconflict countries that had elections with no electoral gender quota elected women, on average, as only 7 percent of their parliaments; in countries with a quota, women were, on average, 30 percent. In 26 postconflict countries' recent elections, women's political representation leaped after gender quotas were used, achieving and even exceeding quota levels in elections afterward. But in postconflict countries that never have electoral quotas, women's participation stayed

the international community has not consistently explained to postconflict national authorities how important it is to use quota systems to increase the proportion of women in elected bodies, or pressured them to put such systems into place
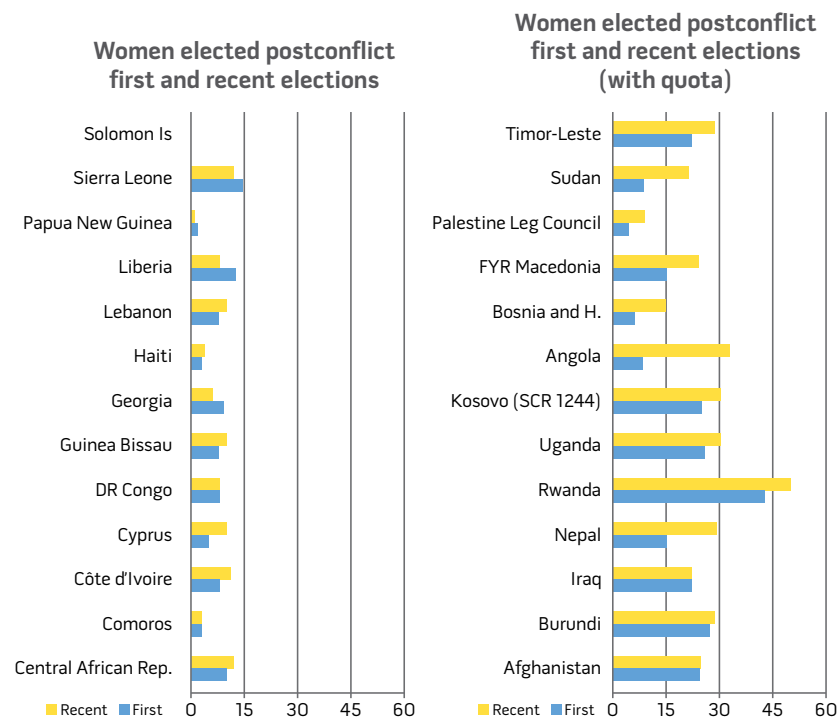
flat (see figure). Yet the international community has not consistently explained to postconflict national authorities how important it is to use quota systems to increase the proportion of women in elected bodies, or pressured them to put such systems into place.

Where Is the Evidence?

So what does all of this have to do with keeping the peace? After all, those who advocate for the goals of UNSCR 1325 do not simply argue that women have a *right* to participate in much greater numbers in preventing conflict or in rebuilding once peace is restored. They do not merely claim that women should be more democratically represented because they are 51 percent of the total population. Rather, advocates say that women's participation leads to a more secure, sustained, and stable peace. This point is often openly questioned or implicitly doubted. So where is the evidence?

Several types of answers are supported by evidence. First, research shows that more inclusive peace processes lead to higher quality peace agreements that are sustained longer. Social exclusion can drive conflict according to many of the national and international peace-builders. An inclusive approach to rebuilding means that more stakeholders have an investment in the new system of governance—which is thus more stable. Recent research has found a correlation between more inclusive and open models of negotiations and a higher likelihood that the resulting agreements will hold, preventing a relapse into conflict.[14] That is an important finding given that more than half of all peace agreements fail within the first 5 years.

Some people argue that women are more likely to work to build consensus in public debate, an approach that is of particular value to peace talks. Whether we accept this theory, women do indisputably insist that their own priorities and concerns should be addressed in a peace agreement's approach to governance, justice, security, and recovery aspects. Women's concerns generally include an insistence on quotas for women in postconflict elections, an insistence that land and property rights be extended to women, and demands for justice and redress for sexual and gender-based violence committed during the conflict. When these concerns are addressed and half the population can rest more securely, what results is a more robust and sustainable peace, a more rapid return to the rule of law, and increased trust in the new state and its government.

Women elected postconflict first and recent elections

Women elected postconflict first and recent elections (with quota)

we can find countless examples in which peace processes have broken down over a wide variety of factors: disagreement over the choice of mediator, internal dissension within armed groups, ceasefire violations, implementation delays, and irreconcilable differences over substantive topics like self-government, but a case in which peace negotiations were derailed by women's demands has yet to be discovered

right: Senator Barbara Boxer of California, right, presents Senate Resolution to recognize accomplishments of women in the military to Sergeant First Class Juanita Wilson, a wounded warrior, during Joint Services Women's History Month Observance on Capitol Hill, March 2010 (U.S. Army)

At the least, when women have had their say at the peace table and are part of the institutions and processes that implement the peace—from disarmament to constitutional reform, land reform, and transitional justice—then peace is built on a more representative diversity of views. Broadening the peace process by including women means the postconflict order is built on what matters to more constituencies than merely the fighting parties and the potential spoilers. The peace deal thus involves those people who can ensure broad social acceptance and commitment to its terms. All that makes peace stronger, more widely rooted, and more deeply supported.

Some argue that women's participation can hurt the peace process—but those arguments do not stand up to scrutiny. For instance, some argue that the parties might object to a female mediator. Certainly, they might. But for years now, negotiations have faltered over disagreements about the mediator or mediation team. Indeed, it has been one of the leading causes of negotiation failure. Those mediators have invariably been male. Yet no one ever assumes that those objections to particular (male) mediators should be extended to their entire sex, as happens often with female mediators.

Others argue that parties might object to including women's civil society groups because it could bring scrutiny toward atrocities those parties might have committed against women. But parties to peace negotiations generally do not object to involving civil society in general. Rather, parties tend to oppose including specific civil society groups whose point of view they oppose or that they perceive as biased against them. Women's groups are generally perceived as comparatively more neutral than other civil society groups, especially when they have a broad base and are representative. As a result, the parties are *less* likely to object to women's inclusion.

Finally, we are often told that women's demands could be at odds with the demands of one or both parties to the negotiations, and thus risk jeopardizing the agreement. However, nothing indicates that women would be less amenable to discussing and negotiating their demands than would other parties, or that their demands would be harder to discuss than many other provisions routinely included in peace agreements.

In sum, we can find countless examples in which peace processes have broken down over a wide variety of factors: disagreement over the choice of mediator, internal dissension within armed groups, ceasefire violations, implementation delays, and irreconcilable differences over substantive topics like self-government, but a case in which peace negotiations were derailed by women's demands has yet to be discovered.

when women are explicitly included in the peace and recovery, the consequences for human development are more immediate: more children in school, children better fed, houses repaired, and healthier families

"Building Back Better"

More and more people are aware that women's participation strengthens peace-building. By placing women at the center of security, justice, economic recovery, and good governance, everyone involved receives peace dividends that include faster job creation and better public services. Communities more rapidly receive the payoffs of peace. The massive challenge of building back better is more likely to be met. Meanwhile, if women are *not* included, the opposite occurs. For example, as the percentage of female-headed households surges during and after conflict, unless women find livelihoods and economic empowerment, they and their daughters are pushed into low-reward, high-risk work such as survival sex, slowing community recovery and normalization and deepening children's poverty and resentment. But if women can generate income and gain some economic security, they are faster than men to invest in child welfare and education, faster to build food security, and faster to rebuild rural economies. When women are explicitly included in the peace and recovery, the consequences for human development are more immediate: more children in school, children better fed, houses repaired, and healthier families. Recruiting women for jobs delivering public services in postconflict settings helps ensure greater access to and higher quality of such services for the overall population. That helps mitigate conflict by reducing tension and grievances over key basic services—not only security, water, food, and health services, but also education, employment, and registration services.

What is the evidence? While much more research is needed, and while there is a shortage of comprehensive and reliable data from conflict and postconflict settings, the number of empirical findings that support the positive role of women's participation in securing peace and stability continues to grow. For instance, a recent study in three conflict-affected settings showed that countries that adopted electoral quotas for under-represented groups, including gender quotas, in proportional representation systems with closed lists have experienced more stability.[15]

Or consider the evidence that having women delivering public services—as polling agents, police officers, registration officials, judges, court clerks, teachers, medical attendants, or agricultural extension agents—results in higher quality services for both men and women, improves women's access to services, and offers important role models for women's public engagement in public spaces.[16] In most conflict-affected settings, between 30 and 40 percent of families are headed by women; in some cases,

more than half are. Ensuring that these women have an equitable proportion of public service jobs is critical to improving their well-being and that of their families. When more women are in police forces, both men and women are more likely to report sexual violence.[17] Citizens respond positively to women in other areas of public service as well. For example, using female agricultural extension workers seems to increase the use of the service by both female and male farmers.[18] Having women community members involved in water and sanitation planning decisions improves the performance of water services, according to a 15-country study, because women tend to have an intimate, hands-on knowledge both of the water and sewer services and of the community's needs.[19]

Studies also show that when more women are in the labor force, prospects are better for peace and security. Countries with only 10 percent of women in the labor force are nearly 30 times more likely to experience internal conflict than states with 40 percent of women in the labor force.[20] Recently, the first comprehensive examination of women's employment-seeking patterns in conflict and postconflict situations revealed that women's participation in the labor force rises during and after conflict, often in low-wage and dangerous occupations; that even when earning much less than men, their contribution to family well-being was considerably larger; and that these spending patterns could contribute to postconflict family and community stability.[21]

Another body of evidence found that when states have more gender equality, they are less likely to rely on military force to settle disputes;[22] that having more female leaders is strongly correlated with lower levels of violence in a crisis;[23] that states with high fertility rates are nearly twice as likely to experience internal conflict as states with low fertility rates;[24] and that gender equality is significantly associated with improved respect for human rights[25] and lower corruption.[26] Levels of sexual and gender-based violence remain at higher than usual levels in certain conflict-affected settings, especially when sexual violence was a prominent feature of the fighting and a culture of impunity is still pervasive. But this may be reduced if, post conflict, more women are involved in governing, in delivering key frontline services, and in generating income. Studies have shown that when a society has high levels of violence against women as individuals, it is more likely to resort to violence to settle larger societal disputes. A recent study found that there is a strong and statistically significant relationship between women's individual physical security and states' relative peacefulness as measured along three different lines. This finding held when

compared with other variables more traditionally associated with state security, including wealth, level of democracy, and type of prevalent religion.[27]

According to a wide variety of studies, gender equality and women's empowerment improve economic growth and lead to better governance—effects that are especially important immediately after conflicts. For instance, a cross-country analysis showed that the conflict-affected communities that experienced the fastest economic recovery and the quickest drop in poverty were those in which more women reported higher levels of empowerment.[28] That makes sense coming atop a large body of research correlating the presence of women in power with a host of positive outcomes. For instance, when indexes of women's social and economic rights were low, indexes of corruption were high, according to a 1998 World Bank study of 80 countries.[29] Women's presence in politics increases the amount of attention given to social welfare, legal protection, and transparency, and helps restore trust in government, according to a 2000 Inter-Parliamentary Union survey.[30] A series of studies from India have revealed that children in villages headed by female leaders experience higher rates of immunization and school attendance; that women's high participation in local councils leads to greater investment in potable water, roads, and antenatal care, which drives down neonatal mortality; and that women in power serve as positive role models for girls and young women, raising their academic performance and career aspirations and making their parents more likely to invest in continued schooling for their girls.[31]

Beyond the academic literature, of course, there are the powerful stories of female peace activists. Some have begun to be better known and recognized at the highest levels, including as recipients of the Nobel Peace prize. In Liberia, women played a key role in advocating for peace and an end to that country's long and devastating civil war; they staged a dramatic showdown at the Accra peace negotiations, refusing to let the negotiators leave the room until they signed a deal. In Northern Ireland, women activists may have made the Belfast (Good Friday) Peace Agreement more durable and relevant to people's lives by including commitments to accelerate the release and reintegration of political prisoners, ensure integrated education and mixed housing, and involve youth and victims of violence in reconciliation. Afghan women participating in successive rounds of negotiations stood up for the rights of under-represented minorities such as the Uzbeks. (That is just one example of how women routinely speak on behalf of other marginalized groups and across cultural

gender equality and women's empowerment improve economic growth and lead to better governance—effects that are especially important immediately after conflicts

and sectarian divides.) Somali women have contributed greatly to building interclan alliances in a country that had been violently divided by clans. Women continue to play a prominent and courageous role in the wave of transitions and crises that have engulfed the Arab world since 2011. We suspect that the participation of women will be key to determining whether those revolutions bring about freedom and democracy.

As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated in his report on women's participation in peace-building, ensuring women's participation is critical "in shoring up three pillars of lasting peace: economic recovery, social cohesion, and political legitimacy."

Of course, all women are not by nature or custom attached to peace, nor are they necessarily better connected to grassroots communities. Just like men, women are exposed to and influenced by political, ethnic, or religious tensions. Like men, women may contribute to violence and participate in armed groups. But more than men, women often bear the extra burden of a vastly lower social and economic status, which puts them at a great disadvantage when situations are insecure. As the first victims of sexual and gender-based violence, women often see more clearly how conflict stretches from the beating at home to the rapes and killings on the streets and the battlefield. As such, they are critical in bringing peace back to their communities.

As one of its core priorities, UN Women spares no effort in advocating for women's engagement in peacemaking and peace-building. We support women's peace coalitions and participation in politics, lobby other actors at peace tables for the inclusion of women in all roles, and promote the political voice and institutional capacity of autonomous women's organizations, often severely damaged and lacking functional capacity, so they can mobilize and build constituencies and bridges across communities and develop common platforms. UN Women is a strong advocate for temporary special measures, such as quotas, the waiver of nomination fees, and women's access to public resources for political campaigns. We support female candidates' engagement with media and political parties; the registration of female voters, especially those living in rural and remote areas that need identity cards to be able to vote or access other services; and the monitoring of female candidates, voters, and election officials to ensure their safety.

Women's voices need to be heard and acted upon to build sustainable peace. This means that their voices need to be heard before, during, and after peace is consolidated. To ensure that the benefits of peace are broadly enjoyed by society and

as the first victims of sexual and gender-based violence, women often see more clearly how conflict stretches from the beating at home to the rapes and killings on the streets and the battlefield

that communities do not relapse back into conflict, women must participate equally—in their societies, governments, and other bodies—in times of peace, conflict, and transition. Promoting the full participation of women in peacemaking and peace-building requires a paradigm change. We must focus not only on the disruptive role of potential spoilers, but also on women's constructive potential for building a broad and inclusive social constituency for peace, justice, and democracy.

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10. Working with African Nations to Support the Role of Women as Agents of Peace and Security

By Carter F. Ham

I think the women who decided they were going to use methods that had never been tried before . . . women from all walks of life, including women from the informal sector (market women), who would sit all day in the sun and rain just advocating for peace and calling upon the leaders of West Africa [to] do something to change. So they went to the Accra peace talks and at one point, they locked the doors so that the warring faction leaders who were determining the new government would not come out. They even threatened to disrobe themselves if they didn't get a response! And I think all of those unconventional methods proved to be too much and so they began to respond. I do believe that because their actions were so different and so sacrificial, it got the attention of not only the West African leaders but of the international community at large and they put a much greater effort to bring the war to an end.

—from an interview with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, conducted as part of the Profiles in Peace Oral Histories Project of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2012

In December 2011, President Barack Obama issued the United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAP) to inform U.S. foreign policy around a simple but profound idea: women matter to the peace, stability, and security of the world. "To empower half the world's population as equal partners in preventing conflict and building peace in countries threatened and affected by war, violence and insecurity . . . is critical to our national and global security."[1] As a

left: Secretary John Kerry meets with African Women's Entrepreneurship Program Delegates at U.S. Department of State, August 2013 (State Department)

contributor to the development of the NAP, the Department of Defense (DOD) recognizes the vital role that women can and should play in peace and security around the world. Nowhere is this idea more important than in Africa—a continent with a population of more than one billion, including more than 800 ethnic groups, 1,000 languages, and an array of diverse cultural and religious contexts and histories.

A safe, secure, stable, and prosperous Africa is in the U.S. national security interest, yet almost half of all African countries are in an active conflict or recovering from a recently ended one.[2] In Africa's contemporary conflicts, more than 90 percent of all casualties are women and children, who also are more likely to be targets of sexual and gender-based violence.[3] In some of the most egregious cases, combatants use such violence as a deliberate tool for humiliation, terror, and control. Refugees and internally displaced persons of both sexes face violence and sexual exploitation, making it increasingly important for militaries and peacekeeping forces to understand the unique security needs of women and children. Of the 16 active United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions worldwide, 7 are in Africa, and 6 of those explicitly mandate the protection of civilians under the threat of violence. The majority of peacekeepers in Africa are, in fact, provided by other African states, to include those in support of the African Union Mission in Somalia.

As one of DOD's geographic unified combatant commands, U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) is devoted to and responsible for U.S. military relations with 54 African countries. The command recognizes that Africans are best suited to address their own security challenges, a concept that undergirds its engagements with partner nations and organizations. By working to help strengthen African defense capabilities so they are capable, sustainable, subordinate to civilian authority, respectful of the rule of law, and committed to the well-being of their fellow citizens, USAFRICOM also advances key U.S. foreign policy priorities to strengthen democratic institutions; spur economic growth, trade, and investment; advance peace and security; and promote opportunity and investment. Former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has stated that societies are strengthened when women are engaged as equal partners in all aspects of peace-building and conflict prevention, a sentiment that mirrors the NAP: "Deadly conflicts can be more effectively avoided, and peace can be best forged and sustained, when women become equal partners in all aspects of peace-building and conflict prevention, when their lives are protected, their experiences considered, and their voices heard."[4] With more than 500 million women

in Africa's contemporary conflicts, more than 90 percent of all casualties are women and children, who also are more likely to be targets of sexual and gender-based violence

in Africa, female voices are vital, so USAFRICOM supports the NAP by engaging partner countries' national security leadership to incorporate a gender perspective and women, peace, and security (WPS) initiatives in their planning and activities, while it promotes, supports, and encourages African partners to integrate women into their defense forces.

Command Support for WPS Initiatives and the NAP

The U.S. Government's focus on WPS is not new. As the 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) recognizes, "Countries are more peaceful and prosperous when women are accorded full and equal rights and opportunity. When those rights and opportunities are denied, countries lag behind."[5] Built on the NSS, the NAP was developed "as a comprehensive roadmap for accelerating and institutionalizing efforts across the United States government to advance women's participation in making and keeping peace."[6] When Secretary Clinton announced that President Obama had signed an executive order to launch the NAP, she noted that women have too much to offer to be ignored when it comes to peace and security: "Excluding women means excluding [their] entire wealth of knowledge and experience."[7]

On April 5, 2012, U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta signed a memorandum directing DOD to incorporate WPS concepts into its programs and policies. USAFRICOM already had begun including these initiatives into its planning and activities, but the DOD directive further reinforced the U.S. Government's political resolve on the issue and marked a turning point in driving a broad and systematic approach to advance agency progress.

The U.S. Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa (Presidential Policy Directive [PPD] 16), released in June 2012, builds on the NSS and NAP to articulate a forward-looking, innovative strategy for advancing a common vision to help promote and encourage democracy, economic prosperity, peace and security, and human dignity with African partner nations. PPD-16 outlines the interrelationship between these elements, stating, "Sustainable, inclusive economic growth is a key ingredient to security, political stability, and development, and it underpins efforts to alleviate poverty, creating the resources that will bolster opportunity and allow individuals to reach their full potential."[8] As part of the command's implementation of PPD-16, and as an important element in addressing security challenges in Africa, USAFRICOM works with its partners to advance women's access and full participation in

institutional decisionmaking related to conflict prevention, conflict management, and conflict resolution/humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The NAP complements and reinforces existing U.S. Government initiatives to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, a perspective that USAFRICOM fully supports. It has at its core "the goal of gender integration (or 'mainstreaming') to promote gender equality and improve programming and policy outcomes,"[9] but most importantly, it recognizes the importance of women's views and perspectives "as agents of peace, reconciliation, development, growth, and stability."[10] The NAP identifies five focus areas that are central to U.S. efforts to promote security, prevent, respond to, and resolve conflict, and rebuild societies: national integration and institutionalization, participation, protection from violence, conflict prevention, and access to relief and recovery. The NAP highlights the U.S. Government's commitment to prioritize gender issues and to integrate and institutionalize gender in U.S. policies, including a gender-sensitive approach in conflict-afflicted environments.[11]

National Integration and Institutionalization. In 2010, USAFRICOM formed the Women, Peace, and Security Working Group (WG)—prior to the development of the NAP—to serve as the principal advisory body for guiding the command's endeavors on gender issues. The WG worked with the National Security Staff on the formulation of the NAP itself and also worked with the Office of the Secretary of Defense to help shape the DOD Implementation Plan of the NAP. The WG continues to guide USAFRICOM efforts to integrate gender perspectives across the full range of its operations, exercises, and security cooperation activities through a focus on awareness, education, implementation, and assessment.

USAFRICOM's activities to prioritize gender issues both within the command and through external engagement with African, international, and interagency partners include a gender mainstreaming approach focused on leading and integrating efforts. To raise awareness of gender issues among the staff at USAFRICOM, the WG sponsors movie screenings that highlight WPS initiatives. The documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* (2008) illustrates the harrowing story of Leymah Gbowee, the woman who launched a movement called the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace to help put an end to civil war in Liberia and influence the ensuing peace agreement. A screening of *Weapon of War* (2009), about the use of rape as a weapon over two decades of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, provides command staff with insight into sexual violence, its impact on victims and society, and the motivation behind

perpetrators' actions. A question-and-answer session with the film's directors after gave staff the opportunity to learn more about the devastating effect of gender-based brutality. The group has also hosted staff events to address the importance of female participation in peacekeeping operations and in civil affairs engagement teams.

USAFRICOM has partnered with African nations that have expressed the desire to achieve WPS objectives, recognizing that the political commitment made by African leaders at the national and regional policymaking echelons plays a pivotal role in driving change and transformation at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels in African national militaries. Working bilaterally with several African partners, USAFRICOM has helped nations address gender within the broader context of security sector reform that is designed to help develop institutions operating under democratic norms, subordinate to civilian control, and have sufficient human and material capacity to provide for the security of their state and respective populations. USAFRICOM's security force assistance activities are an essential component of security sector reform and are commonly organized in four principal categories: strengthening civilian control and oversight of the military, professionalization of military forces, demilitarization and peacekeeping, and strengthening the rule of law.[12] USAFRICOM promotes the inclusion of gender-sensitive policies, along with traditional elements such as democratic accountability, human rights, and technical training as part of all security force assistance to increase the professionalism of African military forces.

USAFRICOM also assists its African partner nations with gender mainstreaming—that is, efforts to recruit, train, and retain women to build more representative military forces. Integrating women into national militaries offers a wider array of tools and optimizes skill sets for these entities to interact more effectively with the populace and to address needs for security across gender lines. Furthermore, military gender integration demonstrates and reinforces democratic core values such as equality and citizenship as a part of a strong, functioning national institution. Gender-based security sector reform includes training how women can be integrated successfully into a state's military forces, tailored to the state's sociocultural dynamics and religious traditions. One success of USAFRICOM's engagements to help expand opportunities for women in the armed forces can be found in Liberia, which has set a goal to have 20 percent of its military be female.

USAFRICOM assists its African partner nations with gender mainstreaming—that is, efforts to recruit, train, and retain women to build more representative military forces

USAFRICOM continues to refine its understanding of gender concepts in African peace and security through commissioned academic studies on gender issues to identify best practices about how to incorporate gender as an integrated part of its engagements with African partners.

Participation. USAFRICOM advances gender participation in African militaries through regional conferences and bilateral engagements with African partner nations. The command has responded to requests made by its African partners for assistance in advancing efforts to integrate women and their perspectives into African militaries. One example is the recent Annual Joint Warrant Officer/Senior Noncommissioned Officer Symposium, which included a one-day seminar dedicated to female attendees to share how we might assist African partners as they work to integrate WPS considerations. At the request of senior military and civilian officials from the Republic of Botswana, USAFRICOM is helping the Batswana government determine how it can expand the roles of women in the Botswana Defense Force. Other African militaries have requested assistance in improving gender integration within their forces as well.

USAFRICOM remains committed to listening to its African partners. In September 2012, a conference entitled "Leaning Forward: Gender Mainstreaming in African Armed Forces" brought together more than two dozen experts and practitioners from 14 African countries, the African Union, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to examine and highlight the progress made, challenges experienced, and opportunities available to enhance gender mainstreaming in African security forces. USAFRICOM cohosted the event with the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Participants discussed the potential role USAFRICOM could play in support of African efforts. A meeting with then– Secretary of State Clinton was among the highlights. "We're incredibly proud to be sponsoring this program . . . and to be working with all of you on the greater integration of women into the security and military forces," Clinton stated while meeting workshop participants who visited her State Department offices.[13]

The participants brought with them a broad range of experiences, expertise, and diversity that enabled rich discussions on several aspects of gender mainstreaming in the African security sector and armed forces. Experts at the workshop stressed the importance of militaries integrating gender perspectives into recruitment, training, and personnel management strategies. "In many ways the kind of training that has

gone on with peacekeepers and in your militaries to better integrate women's talents, experiences, perspectives makes us all that much more effective. . . . We are all in this together," stated Melanne Verveer, then–U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues.[14]

Protection from Violence. USAFRICOM takes seriously its objective to help African militaries understand, support, and adhere to civilian protection responsibilities, particularly those related to women and children. As the command's support for African partners' initiatives on gender mainstreaming leads to the creation of more representative military forces, it is critical that those forces know how to interact with and protect all segments of its population effectively. For example, USAFRICOM has designed specific mechanisms to combat abuse, exploitation, discrimination, and violence against women both within the military and by defense forces. The command raises awareness about and provides training and assistance to African militaries about sexual and gender-based violence, recognizing that female victims are more likely to report incidents and provide information to other women.

USAFRICOM supports the objectives of the U.S. Department of State's Global Peace Operations Initiative to further refine gender awareness and prioritization through engagement with peacekeepers charged with protecting civilians in humanitarian and UN peacekeeping missions. Through training courses that directly address issues about human rights, codes of conduct, discipline, and sexual exploitation, USAFRICOM regularly reiterates the importance of WPS considerations. In one such endeavor, USAFRICOM developed training materials and lessons to increase sexual and gender-based violence awareness of 700 Congolese soldiers as part of Operation *Olympic Chase*, a 6-month USAFRICOM training initiative focused on building the basic infantry skills of soldiers likely to deploy in rapid-response situations.

In August 2012, USAFRICOM hosted a conference entitled "Women, Peace, and Security Lessons Learned in Peacekeeping" at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center, in collaboration with the center's Women, Peace, and Security Institute. This conference facilitated a dynamic dialogue between international subject matter experts across all areas of peacekeeping operations and gender issues. Military and civilian participants from 15 countries engaged in lively discussions about the opportunities and challenges of integrating gender into peacekeeping activities. All agreed that gender-integrated peacekeeping forces are

more effective. Describing his observations while in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Patrick Cammaert, a retired Dutch general who has a chapter in this volume, stated that "it has probably become more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in armed conflict"—a sobering thought that resonated with conference participants.

Conflict Prevention. Governments must be able to protect their own citizens from threat or use of force by internal and external forces. Violence against women and children is frequently noted as a symptom of a dysfunctional state. The State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) continue to spearhead efforts to address the root causes for the vulnerability of women and girls, such as poverty, poor health, and lack of education and unemployment. Studies have shown that nations with gender equality norms are more stable and prosperous.

Presidential Study Directive–10 established that "preventing mass atrocities and genocide is a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility of the United States."[15] There is a nascent interagency effort to prevent conflict, mass atrocities, and violence against vulnerable populations through the establishment of early warning systems. Just as women and children are disproportionately affected by conflict, increases in violence against women and children often serve as early indicators of potential conflict within society writ large. In fact, recognizing that women are often the first group to see the dynamic of violence shift within the population—shifts that often result in conflict—USAFRICOM addresses conflict prevention through its work with an African initiative to develop early warning and response systems that incorporate gender-specific data in monitoring indicators for violence and mass atrocities against vulnerable populations.

USAFRICOM continues to look for ways it can assist partner nation defense forces to identify instances when the possibility of increasing violence may lead to mass atrocities and to stem the spread of violence before it results in mass atrocities. Through its relationships with African partner nations, U.S. Embassies on the continent, and access to civil society through a variety of mechanisms, USAFRICOM is in some ways uniquely positioned to support African authorities to prevent mass atrocities and mitigate the consequences of catastrophic events, helping its partners to recognize indicators for mass atrocities, which can entail either real or perceived threats against vulnerable populations. The command will continue to work with its interagency partners to develop coordinated engagement opportunities that draw on mutual strengths.

just as women and children are disproportionately affected by conflict, increases in violence against women and children often serve as early indicators of potential conflict within society writ large

Access to Relief and Recovery. USAID leads U.S. Government efforts on humanitarian disaster management and response. In response to USAID and partner nation requests for assistance, USAFRICOM supports disaster relief and associated efforts to address the security needs of women and children in conflict-affected crises and disaster. Additionally, USAFRICOM is working with partners to provide relief and recovery for victims of sexual and gender-based violence and, in one example, has funded construction, renovation, and repair of facilities that provide services to victims in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Beyond direct support through USAID efforts, USAFRICOM enhances the knowledge and capacity of militaries that deploy to areas of crisis. The command works to support the realization of the Africa Standby Force and its vision of regional rapid deployment capabilities and raises awareness of the WPS agenda in support of these capacity-building efforts via military-to-military engagements, training and mentorship, and conferences.

African Success

African states and regional organizations have also made great strides in prioritizing gender concerns and advancing gender perspectives in policies, protocols, and programs. In 2004, the UN Security Council encouraged its member states to develop NAPs in support of the WPS agenda. Currently, 43 UN member states have WPS NAPs, 12 of which are African.[16] The African Union has worked to institutionalize women's rights and gender equality and has urged its member states to do the same. In 2003, the African Union developed a *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*; in 2005, it completed a *Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa*. Similarly, Africa's regional economic communities have made notable steps in prioritizing gender through their organizations and planning. For instance, the South African Development Community has a Gender and Development Protocol and completed a plan for integrating women into their member states' national militaries.[17] USAFRICOM continues to engage these organizations to expand their regional capacity to address gender issues and advance WPS initiatives in Africa.

In many ways, Africa has been at the forefront of advancing a gender perspective in ending armed conflict and laying the foundations for sustainable peace. Women's advocacy groups in Liberia have played a tireless, consistent role over the course of

two civil wars and in postconflict reconstruction to end violence against women and children. Women organized the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) in 1991, taking to the streets during the early part of Liberia's first civil war to advocate for peace negotiations.[18] When the tenuous 1996–1997 peace agreement fell through, women reinvigorated the WIPNET to bring together Charles Taylor and warring opposition leaders to move peace talks forward. Their work was instrumental in advancing the disarmament process. Female advocacy networks played a proactive role as watchdogs, ensuring that each task laid out in the resulting Comprehensive Peace Agreement was implemented without fail. Groups such as the Mano River Women's Peace Network carry on the legacy of WIPNET as an active advocacy network, providing assistance from skills-based training to women for economic development to legal representation in cases of rape and other sexual and gender-based violence. Today, the improved security Liberia enjoys is owed in large part to the brave women of these grassroots efforts.

As USAFRICOM collaborates with African partner nations on WPS initiatives, there is a common recognition that local customs and traditions, dynamics, and power relations play a role in affecting how successful these efforts can be.[19] The roles of individuals of both genders are influenced by sociocultural dynamics, power structures, history, and religious backgrounds that contribute to the perceptions of individuals in all societies. As USAFRICOM works with its partners to promote gender-sensitive policies and approaches, it is important to recognize how societies differ in their identification and perceptions of gender roles. For example, because many African languages do not have a word for "gender," there can be an added challenge to support African partners as they develop WPS initiatives.

Looking to the Future
U.S. Africa Command is formulating a comprehensive plan to address WPS and related gender issues in its operations, exercises, and security cooperation activities in such a way that they are culturally sensitive, supportive of partner nation efforts, and contribute to African capacity at the national and regional levels. The WPS Working Group continues its internal discussions with command leadership and planners to determine how best to consolidate and institutionalize WPS initiatives. In partnership with African nations, USAFRICOM will continue to develop professional training modules on gender perspectives and sexual and gender-based

right: Women in Peace-building Network (WIPNET) members sing for visitors outside 10th anniversary celebrations of Comprehensive Peace Accord in Monrovia, Liberia, August 2013 (UNMIL/Staton Winter)

violence awareness, prevention, and response. USAFRICOM will also continue to improve coordination and support for interagency and international partners on women, peace, and security initiatives.

Heather Bush, Jennifer Duval, Caterina Dutto Fox, and Ann Stieglitz contributed to the development of this chapter.

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11. Women in Special Operations Forces: Advancing Peace and Security through Broader Cultural Knowledge

By William H. McRaven

Now more than ever—with increasingly agile enemies and complex problem sets—the U.S. special operations forces (SOF) community must diversify its strategies and the tactics it uses to execute them. Effectively using SOF in achieving national security objectives requires using an indirect approach to promote peace and security in hostile environments. Indirect actions are arguably more important than direct actions. These nonlethal activities can encourage and sustain second- and third-order effects, which over time engender long-term peace and security.

Women are invaluable contributors to special operations, especially in indirect action. I have spent considerable time in Afghanistan every year since 2003, traveling across the entire rugged country several times over. Due to both direct and indirect actions by U.S. SOF and partner nations, today's Afghanistan is the safest in 10 years.

SOF teams that include women in their cultural support teams provide greater access and action to the local population than all-male units do. Including women allows tailored, culturally sensitive engagement, opening up possibilities for interactions with local populations that would otherwise be closed to all-male teams. Increased interaction simultaneously boosts both traditional military information support and medical and civil affairs activities. These contributions increase the effectiveness of the overall mission as women positively shape the wartime environment and, in some instances, prevent conflict from occurring in the first place.

Doctrine defines *special operations* as special because success depends on long-term relationships with indigenous forces and populations as well as knowledge of

left: 1st Lt. Rebecca Wagner, USA, effects coordinator and Female Engagement Team officer in charge, counts with Afghan children of the Red Crescent Society orphanage and school (U.S. Army/Jeanita C. Pisachubbe)

the cultural, societal, economic, and political environments where these relationships occur. The greater our environmental knowledge and extent of our relationships, the more likely we are to be successful. Broad knowledge of the human domain, more than any other single factor, defines special operations.

Capital within the human domain is obtained through developing an understanding of and nurturing influence among critical populations. U.S. SOF are intentionally recruited to be a capable and diverse force, comprised of teams and components uniquely trained and exceptionally skilled. We will never fully understand the human domain when we have access to only half of the people who live within it, which means that women are and will continue to be a critical means to this end.

Past: Women and the OSS

Women have always played a significant role in U.S. development, diplomacy, and defense actions. For instance, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was the first organized effort by the Nation to implement a centralized system of strategic intelligence. It was the predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency and U.S. Special Operations Command—and one in five of its members were women.

Few Americans could identify the names of special operations legends Virginia Hall, Barbara Lauwers, or Elizabeth McIntosh. But not all these heroes are consigned to history's shadows. Fans of Julia Child and Marlene Dietrich might recall their off-camera roles as members of the OSS. Child, for example, notably contributed to creating a workable shark repellent for downed flight crews that was used on U.S. space missions with water landings.

Little is known about the quiet female professionals who served with General William "Wild Bill" Donovan in World War II. Donovan, historically considered the grandfather of special operations, described these women as "vital to an organization which touched every theater of the war." Along with establishing the OSS administrative offices, mail routing, and recruiting, these women worked in research and analysis, special operations, maritime units, counterintelligence, morale operations (comparable to today's information operations or military information support to operations), and even secret intelligence groups.

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right: Specialist Courtney Wade, USA, a combat medic with the 176th Engineer Brigade, listens to Afghan girls during first women's shura at Urgun District hospital, April 2011 (U.S. Air Forces Central Command/Stacia Zachary)

reaching women is crucial to the long-term success of any political, military, or security strategy

Present: Rise of Cultural Support Teams

But women took a leap forward within SOF more recently. Throughout the 1990s, special operations forces routinely employed women in support positions. Women were useful in assisting and running Medical Civil Action Programs and Medical Readiness Training exercises, especially where demographic studies revealed large numbers of women and children in the population. This practice was carried over to Afghanistan and Iraq. There, centrally based teams of male medical experts, augmented with female specialists or assistants, routinely rotated to distant military bases to assist operational units in engaging populaces. This improved effectiveness by giving the otherwise all-male operational units greater access and wider opportunities for placement with the population. As a result, demand for these women's capabilities outstripped available numbers.

In 2005, as the Iraq conflict evolved, insurgents began using women as contraband smugglers and suicide bombers. Because of cultural sensitivities, male Marines could not effectively evaluate whether individual Iraqi women were security threats. To counter this situation, the Marine Corps began employing women at security checkpoints. Recognizing its usefulness, the Marines evolved the Lioness Program from a single mission to help secure checkpoints into a larger mission that increased engagement with Iraq's women at large. The program made possible engagements that could otherwise have further alienated an already skeptical Iraqi populace.

This concept spread to Afghanistan. A Marine patrol team searching for two men suspected in an improvised explosive device attack in Farah Province used its attached female engagement team (FET) to gain village elders' permission to search homes. The team found local women receptive to dialogue and seized this opportunity to distribute basic supplies, thus building long-term trust and rapport. The commander's after action report recommended actively integrating FETs into the ongoing allied counterinsurgency campaigns throughout Afghanistan.

The word was out. In 2009, two official requests asked for female screeners as well as medical and linguistic support personnel. In response, Special Operations Task Force–81 (SOTF-81) sent a small group of female Marines and Sailors (already stationed and working in Afghanistan) to augment teams in the field and support village stability operations. In June 2010, SOTF-82 deployed with a group of five female Marines attached. Those five formed the SOTF-82 FET.

Momentum increased. A cultural support team training program was quickly set up at U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) to respond to the growing demand for female special operators in current theaters. These women, volunteers from across the Services, were carefully selected and trained for face-to-face engagement with otherwise relatively inaccessible elements of the Afghan population, primarily women, children, adolescents, and the elderly.

This training program formally recognized these teams' abilities to bridge a cultural gap that before was insurmountable for the all-male U.S. SOF. In most Afghan local cultures, the values and norms of Pashtunwali and the principle of *purdah* keep the sexes segregated, except within family units. As a result, American and allied male soldiers were entirely cut off from Afghan women, who are statistically half the Afghan population. Yet reaching women is crucial to the long-term success of any political, military, or security strategy. Ignoring half (or more) of an engaged population throughout an enduring presence exponentially increases risk. Knowledge from and an understanding of Afghan women were needed to operate effectively within the country, pursue enemies, coordinate with partner forces, and build lasting trust with allies.

Continuing this trend, USASOC sent its first group of cultural support teams into Afghanistan in January 2011. These teams were tasked with two distinct types of missions: locate contraband and support humanitarian assistance and civil military operations. In addition to supporting tactical objectives, a unique group of women—female teams comprised of coalition medics—routinely partnered with local physicians and Afghan commandos to provide medical and humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan's women and children.

These examples demonstrate why cultural support teams composed of SOF women are essential to mission success in any operation where the population is to be engaged. They enable access otherwise impossible or culturally counterproductive and yield richer, fuller, more accurate understandings of an operating environment that would be unachievable using traditional all-male SOF teams alone. Not surprisingly, demand for female cultural support teams has tripled since 2011.

Angel of Death
Major Allison Black, USAF, the first female AC-130H Spectre navigator to employ the lethal aircraft's weapons systems in combat and the first female Air Force Combat Action Medal recipient, gave an account of how she earned the moniker the "Angel of Death" in support of Operation *Enduring Freedom* in 2001.

While on a combat mission in Afghanistan, Major Black's AC-130 crew unleashed more than 400 40 millimeter (mm) and 100 105mm rounds onto enemy positions in the target area. Impressed with the power and potency of her team's assault, a Northern Alliance general working alongside the U.S. team openly declared the AC-130 gunship's infrared laser a "death ray."

This general called the enemy by radio, taunting that there were American women coming to thwart al Qaeda. "The 'Angel of Death' is raining destruction, so surrender now," he mocked.

Not only did these insurgents quickly succumb, the Northern Alliance general later recalled the success of Major Black's mission as a teaching point to Afghan women by stating, "Look what America allows their women to do. One day our country will have similar freedoms."

women in the cultural support teams may view the battlespace differently, and in doing so may have the potential to observe nuances overlooked by all-male SOF teams

Looking Forward

Women's participation in special operations forces, both past and present, has resulted in increased access and capability. SOF teams featuring women can gain access to nearly every demographic within a population. When women are included in SOF interactions with local populations, atmospherics change and different topics of conversation are introduced. Most significantly, adding women to a small team can reduce the negative effects presented when local women and children are approached and engaged by foreign males. Addressing these effects can be the difference between short- and long-term peace and security.

U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) takes a strategic approach to counterinsurgency that involves building trust and rapport among populations. SOF teams must be in touch with the female populace for practical and functional purposes; these individuals can administer medical and health care, assist with basic community coordination, complete security screenings, and conduct debriefings and related tactical questioning. The absence of women from cultural support teams can render these tasks nearly impossible. As evidenced in Afghanistan, close and collaborative contact between foreign men and women can often be taboo. Depending on location, forced engagement between sexes can instantly destroy months of gained and invaluable trust.

Through environmental understanding, persistent engagement, and working through and with others, SOF can play a key role in protecting women and children from violence. Adding women to SOF units increases the team's ability to assess the cultural climate and understand the local environment. Diversity begets diverse perceptions and observations; situational awareness is enhanced and the SOF operators become more effective. Women in the cultural support teams may view the battlespace differently, and in doing so may have the potential to observe nuances overlooked by all-male SOF teams. Just as important, as mentioned previously, having a woman present might stop preventable cultural conflicts from escalating into actual ones.

But we must be careful and deliberate in when and where we insert this capability. We must respect the culture, mores, and attitudes of those we work with, and we must carefully consider the potential impacts of instilling our own cultural beliefs on others. Simply put, past achievements in Afghanistan and Iraq are no guarantee of future success in asymmetric environments in other corners of the world.

Conclusion

In the fall of 2012, USSOCOM took a hard look at the current cultural support team program. The command conducted a comprehensive review of lessons learned, operational analyses, and personal interviews from team members. Following this review and as a preparation for future command needs, USSOCOM proposed advancing cultural support teams into a more forward thinking, globally focused effort.

In January 2013, assignment rules restricting women from combat positions were lifted. This decision effectively opens up all Department of Defense positions to women, pending approved exceptions and congressional notification as of 2016. As a result, several SOF career paths and support opportunities are available to women, including all Air Force Special Operations Command aviation positions, civil affairs, military information support operations, signals intelligence, female engagement teams, and most recently, the cultural support teams.

I support these ongoing explorations. Women should have opportunities to test new ground. As we have seen in recent and past conflicts, women broaden strategic and operational capabilities. While their contributions are evident and notable, U.S. Special Operations Command admittedly remains in the neophyte stages of testing the boundaries of what female support to SOF can provide in modern warfare. As opportunities for women in the military expand, the SOF community will provide a rich environment for women to further grow their already proud legacy as key contributors to operational success in all phases of U.S. military operations.