

## Peacebuilding Commission Working Group on Lessons Learned

### *Gender and Peacebuilding: Enhancing Women's Participation*

29 January 2008

#### Chair's Summary

The meeting was chaired by H.E. Ambassador Carmen María Gallardo Hernández, Permanent Representative of El Salvador and included presentations by four panelists followed by a substantive discussion with the participation of members of the Peacebuilding Commission. In her introductory remarks the Chair noted that the founding resolutions of the PBC mandate gender mainstreaming in all of its work. The Chair also noted that gender equality has been identified as a cross-cutting issue for peace consolidation in Burundi and Sierra Leone – the first two countries on the Commission's agenda – and will be equally applicable to the third country under consideration, Guinea-Bissau.

**Ms Jennifer Klot** from the Social Science Research Council introduced the background note for the meeting and noted that challenges in the area of women and peacebuilding include, but are not limited to: a) addressing the particular impact of conflict on women; b) supporting women's full participation in peace negotiations, peacebuilding and recovery processes; and c) ensuring that recovery priorities redress inequalities of the past and set up the basis for more equal gender relations. She stressed the importance of strengthening the capacity of women's organizations and underlined the pressing need to address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) not as a "women's issue" but as a security concern. The latter would require reforming the security sector by establishing accountability systems, gender-sensitive recruitment and gender-sensitive risk assessments. She also noted that an important aspect of the prevention of SGBV and exploitation is the issue of psycho-social recovery of combatants during their transition back to civilian life. Research and programming in this area is underdeveloped and requires additional attention. Ms. Klot ended by stressing the importance of building an evidence-base for and systematically collecting data on gender and peacebuilding issues.

**Ms. Winnie Byanyima** introduced UNDP's approach to gender and peacebuilding which includes gender mainstreaming into all crisis prevention and recovery programmes and targeted interventions to enhance women's empowerment. The work of UNDP at the country level is guided by its Eight Point Agenda on Gender in Crisis Prevention and Recovery. Ms. Byanyima noted that post-conflict economic recovery can provide an opportunity to empower women and advance gender equality goals. In this regard, UNDP is engaged in sensitizing economic policy advisers to issues of gender to enable them to capitalize on opportunities for women and address constraints to women's participation such as limited land rights and mobility and lack of personal documentation in one's own name. UNDP also focuses on supporting state institutions to be gender-responsive, while UNIFEM has concentrated on empowering women to engage the state. Ms. Byanyima provided some specific examples of UNDP's work at the country level which could be up-scaled through the efforts of the PBC. In Darfur, UNDP is supporting access to justice for women and girls who are victims of sexual violence through a network of 61 Darfurian lawyers. Since 2005 over 2,000 people have had access to legal advice, many in relation to cases of SGBV, and 400 convictions have been secured as a result. Although such figures are negligible compared with the scale of violence in Darfur, it provides a good example of work that could be scaled up to make a greater impact.

**Dr. Anne-Marie Goetz** of UNIFEM focused her presentation on women's participation in decision-making in post-conflict situations. She noted that women's participation in electoral polls shows a marked increase in the years after conflict. This may be attributed to a number of factors such as activism and advocacy of women's groups during the conflict, quotas to guarantee women's participation, or to conflict precipitating changes in gender roles that put women on more solid footing to assume leadership roles post-conflict. However, women often face obstacles to their effective participation once they are elected to decision-making positions. For example, failure to address SGBV and end impunity for crimes against women often diminishes women's credibility as legitimate public actors. Sometimes policies and progressive legislation promoted by women have limited impact on the ground due to lack of resources or limitations of state structures. The 'litmus test' for women's effective participation often is their ability to create alliances in public life with men, the safety of women's assets and livelihoods and the degree of gender mainstreaming in processes such as the development of Poverty Reduction Strategies. There is a need to move beyond the sheer number of women present to questions of state capacity to implement effective institutional reforms for gender equality. Key questions to consider in this regard are: how do incentive systems work to motivate responses to women's needs? What constitutes good practice? What constitutes gender-sensitive institutional reform? Where is the system's capacity to respond? This requires coordination, overcoming segmentation and building a coherent response in the UN and beyond.

**Ms. Françoise Nduwimana** from the Pearson Peacekeeping Center began by stressing that Peacebuilding from a gender perspective means changing the system and power dynamics that led the country into crisis. It also requires questioning the discourse and the dominant paradigms that characterize women as the "pillars" of their community, silent and lacking in political agendas or needs. Sustainable peace would require fully including women and all segments of society as politically viable citizens. Ms. Nduwimana also stressed that security sector reform must be done holistically, in conjunction with justice sector development and legislative reform. Efforts should also focus on women's participation and local groups' involvement in civilian oversight of the security sector. Speaking specifically on Burundi, she noted that much focus has been placed on ethnic balance in the security forces with little attention to gender balance. As a result women make up less than 1% of the National Police in Burundi. Additional efforts are needed to recruit, train and retain women in the police force. Further support is also needed for the Violent Crimes against Women Prevention Units. She ended by noting that a lack of coherence can be observed in the fact that Burundi's Constitution guarantees protection for all civilians and prohibits gender-based discrimination, yet no law has been enacted to address sexual violence. In addition the *Family Code*, the *Law on Property Inheritance* and the *Penal Code* discriminate against women and as such are unconstitutional.

## Discussion

Representatives of El Salvador, the African Union, Norway, Denmark, the European Community, Sweden, Burundi, Sierra Leone, United Kingdom, Japan, the Russian Federation, Belgium, and Finland made comments and raised questions during the discussion.

PBC members thanked the presenters for convincingly arguing that the involvement of women and inclusion of a gender perspective are essential to achieving the objectives of the Peacebuilding Commission. They also expressed appreciation for the presenters' balanced approach to highlighting both the importance of women's full and equal participation in decision-making and the need to address gender-specific concerns such as gender-based violence in post-conflict situations. Some

members noted that post-conflict situations and transition periods offer a moment of opportunity where societies can be changed to advance human progress and promote gender equality and human rights. The concept of human security was brought up as a helpful lens through which to view the gender and peacebuilding agenda thus linking human rights, security and humanitarian concerns. Ms. Klot's background paper was cited by a few members as providing good guidance for states to bring to future discussions of this issue.

Several speakers noted that the PBC has begun consideration of gender and peacebuilding issues by including gender equality and human rights as cross-cutting peacebuilding priorities in the strategic peacebuilding frameworks for both Burundi and Sierra Leone. These strategies also include specific commitments on the part of the governments of Sierra Leone and Burundi and the PBC on critical issues such as support to national gender institutions, women's groups, and gender sensitive security sector reform. The Burundi Monitoring and Tracking Mechanism further identifies specific indicators for gender equality and women's empowerment. The challenge for the PBC now is to support the implementation of these strategies both in the field and at headquarters. In this regard concerns were raised about the limited capacity of national actors, the UN and women's organizations to implement the commitments contained in the strategies and the role of the PBC in mobilizing additional resources and attention for the issues of gender equality and human rights.

On the question of SGBV many members agreed that it should be viewed as a security sector imperative and not as a "women's issue" only. They further noted that a comprehensive approach to address SGBV would require working at the local level with women's groups to fight prejudice and stigma and also working at the national level to end impunity for such crimes. It was stressed that the existence of legal frameworks and policies would not end violence by themselves—implementation and enforcement are critical. In countries emerging from conflict often the national governments and other stakeholders are ready to address root causes of conflict, including marginalization of women, but often do not have the resources and the support to do so effectively.

Economic empowerment, in particular ensuring land and property rights, was also highlighted as critical to ensuring women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding processes. Some speakers noted the link between women's empowerment and overall poverty reduction recognizing that advancing women's rights has been shown to stimulate economic growth. In this regard, it was stressed that against the potential costs of combating violence against women, we must consider the costs of *not* addressing these issues, in terms of health care, the justice sector response and in the lives of individuals. In this connection, women's agency as generators of socio-economic progress and development, and not just as victims, was acknowledged.

Some members emphasized that the PBC should advocate more strongly for gender-sensitive planning in peacebuilding activities to help guide the Security Council. The SC Resolution 1325 on women peace and security was described as highly relevant to peacebuilding efforts. In the context of SCR 1325 implementation it has been observed that gender mainstreaming is effective in the preparatory phase of programming and planning but less so in the implementation and monitoring phase. A number of speakers noted that they have developed national action plans for the implementation of the SCR 1325 and wondered whether the PBC could further encourage the development of such policies. Such plans would need to include a monitoring mechanism for results-based reporting on implementation, clearly outlined responsibilities of all national entities involved in the implementation

of 1325, engagement of civil society, and a push for a greater gender focus in peacebuilding, in collaboration with regional organizations.

In the context of promoting regional approaches to peacebuilding, PBC was encouraged to take into consideration the ongoing efforts of the AU to develop a policy environment for gender equality and human rights. It was also noted that the African Women's Committee for Peace and Development can be consulted by the PBC to identify partners to advance women's participation in peace processes.

Some members stressed that achieving gender equality is a lengthy process requiring at times difficult changes in mindsets, traditions and behavior. As the first thematic discussion on gender and peacebuilding the meeting also raised a number of questions such as: what measures can be taken to remedy potentially destabilizing effects of gender mainstreaming in conservative post-conflict societies? How can the PBC support efforts to address the evidence gap in the field of gender and peacebuilding? How can the PBC focus attention on identifying gaps in security assessments and post-conflict needs assessments? Are there any good examples of work on gender and peacebuilding at the sub-regional level?

The meeting also generated a number of ideas and recommendations for possible follow-up action such as:

- A **research capacity** should be cultivated in countries of interest to the PBC, to improve data-collection and build an evidence-base on gender and peace-building issues. Local groups can play an important role in monitoring and reporting on women's role in peace-building, and the capacity of women's organizations should be strengthened in this regard.
- Women's **progress in elections** should be viewed in a medium to long-term perspective. In this regard, constitutional quotas and gender-sensitive public sector reforms – including incentive systems to motivate responses to women's needs – are vital to overcoming obstacles to women's participation in public life.
- The post-conflict window of opportunity for reconstituting the social order and for economic recovery should be used to **empower women and advance gender equality**. To this end, economic policy advisers should be sensitized to gender issues.
- Efforts to **promote women's access to justice** should be an integral part of resurrecting the rule of law and ending impunity. There is a need to develop institutional capacity within the UN system to marshal resources to provide **reparations** and **services** for women victims.
- While gender mainstreaming is often part of the planning phase of projects and initiatives, more attention needs to be paid to **monitoring** mechanisms for results-based reporting on **implementation**. In this context, lessons can be drawn from national action plans to implement Security Council Resolution 1325.
- As the involvement of women and inclusion of a gender perspective have been recognized as essential to achieving the objectives of the PBC, **another meeting** on this matter should be convened in the context of the Working Group on Lessons Learned.

The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking all of the panelists and participants for their substantive contributions and for the many questions highlighted. The Chair reiterated her commitment to continue the discussion of gender and peacebuilding issues in future meetings of the Working Group on Lessons Learned.