

THE STOCKHOLM FORUM ON GENDER EQUALITY

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' PARTICIPATION IN PEACE AND POLITICS

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Contributors: Host – Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Moderator – Mia Odabas and Rapporteurs – Kamber Güler (SI) and Luisa Michels Kieling (SI)

OVERVIEW

Women remain largely excluded from peace processes and underrepresented in political functions, in spite of substantial efforts to change this.

This panel aimed to explore avenues to enhance women's and girls' participation in peace and politics, both as part of their full enjoyment of human rights and in order to increase legitimacy and sustainability of peace and political processes.

A range of methods are already being used, such as quotas and women's advisory bodies, networks and commissions. These and other tools need to be explored, multiplied and used more effectively. There is also a need to promote an active civil society and free media and counter the shrinking democratic space where women activists and journalists are often particularly targeted.

Panellists were asked to offer insights and ideas on how women's and girls' participation in peace and politics becomes a non-negotiable reality that provides real influence and input into processes at all levels.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Where are we?

There is a momentum for women's participation in peace processes with support from many countries in the UN Security Council. UN has managed to change the language in resolutions and written statements to become more gender equal and making women's rights more visible on equal terms. There is still work to be done on the ground and in the field – not least amongst peacekeepers, police, military forces, et cetera where women need to be present.

Full understanding on these issues throughout the UN system is needed, which can only be fulfilled by training and education. Women also need to be present within the UN system through country representatives, taking part in peacekeeping missions, in negotiations and in the solutions.

Sweden started a women mediation network – to date consisting of 15 women – deployed in different parts of the world among peacekeepers.

If we need to talk about women's competences – or lack thereof – let's also start to look into men's competences or lack of the same.

The African Union commission has parity – 5 men and 5 women in top level positions. The ambition is to achieve gender balance in the whole commission by 2025. More education is necessary – with specific focus on women in order get women elected in political processes. It's not enough to get women to vote in elections – they also need to be engaged in the political processes and decision making.

Steiner: The first woman in the world to have parity in parliament was Rwanda. UNDP is supporting women to access the political process – through training and information. But to address the broader development setting is also necessary as it's not just about numbers. We need to make it normal for women to be central and integral to the political process.

The UNDP Spotlight project focuses on extreme violence and the combat of violence against women – initiated by Amina Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary General together with EU and UN. It's the largest initiative ever on the issue of peacekeeping and the development pathway, and also focuses on counterterrorism and state violence as a result of radicalisation. The UNDP report 'Journey to extremism' also focuses on the fact that women are on the frontline of being victims. Not just numbers, not just in one area – but gender in the development process is key.

GBV – how can we recruit women if women always feel threatened or are subject to violence? More men need to understand that gender equality is a win/win for everyone.

Countries where women are represented in politics and parliament become more peaceful. Also, peace is more sustainable when women are included, and conflicts take longer to resolve when women are not part of the process.

Tools that may be working are for example quotas to correct discrimination and create change. We need a critical mass of women to support each other and be role models.

In some contexts, lack of funding for women political leaders is a huge problem. Social pressure from families, husbands and others is restricting women to participate – and may even result in GBV. But women need to be part of the political, economic and social platforms – enabling women to have financial freedom and job opportunities. To educate women in rural areas in order to strengthen gender equality on a broader base in society is also vital.

Norway: If we are to convey a message, it's vital that the peacekeeping missions also include women – for example as mediators. An example is Colombia where Norway took an active part as mediator: when civil society was demanding more of a role, the process changed the dynamics. Playing alongside the civil society is key in these processes. In pre-peace processes it can be used to make sure there is a level playfield. It's also important to include women in the implementation face.

Somalia: Civil society in Somalia could and should be an ally in the peace process, especially since some women have important roles in their clans and therefore have access to power. Somalia – as a country coming into a new era after conflict – offers a lot of development opportunities to tap in to. The government is fully committed to reconciliation and to involving women in this process – not only as support but also actively taking part in the practical work. There's a strong process in increasing women in parliament: in 2014 only 14 per cent were women, but since 2016 it was 25 per cent. One gender equality goal is to have at least 30 per cent of women in parliament by 2020. Today gender equality is a political area that stands for itself – with strong goals.

Iceland: The world's first country with a women president. Iceland has implemented a policy where companies need to prove that they offer equal pay to women and men – supervised by the state. So, why is Iceland so progressive? Role models are very important, and the first women president of Iceland, who was also a single parent, was a starting point for this development. So were political policies to support women to enter the labour market – for example by implementing policies supporting things like parental leave and day-care services.

Ukraine: There's a new position in government to put gender equality higher up on the agenda. It's important to bring forward women's voices – also from civil society.

Albania: Good example from the Western Balkan region with women representation. They have a 30 per cent women quota for parliament, and in local government there are several places that have a 50/50 equality.

Media is also playing an important role – not least to visualise women role models.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Where do we go from here?

- Importance of engaging men in the work on gender equality – engage them in the dialogue, see them as important agents of change as we need their support and engagement in the process. Promoting women's rights needs to include everyone in society; otherwise it will take decades before we reach any sort of sustainable change.
- Adequate funding connected to women's rights and gender-based violence. Violence against women is an important political matter. To achieve change we need to encourage women to actively drive these issues forward, and we also need the support of men.
- African Union: Organise a meeting for African political parties – ruling and opposition – to have liberalism and parity in the next election.
- Ukraine: Prepare a plan of implementation recommendations of the CEDAW committee and prepare a nation action plan on 1325 – include sexual violence!
- Iceland: There are always new challenges and therefore we can never lean back thinking we are done. So, we need to continue with, for example, equal pay being implemented everywhere in the labour market in Iceland.
- Somalia: Use the window of opportunity – achieve higher level of gender equality in parliament in the next election and continue the work with the constitution review process.

- Women need support of their families – fathers and brothers – supporting girls striving to become active agents of society. Therefore, we need to increase male participation when discussing issues on gender equality – and also in the work on challenges.
- UNDP – focus on leadership by example by making sure that women have the same opportunities as men and to actively recruit women into leading positions. We need to gender-balance senior leadership.
- We also need to focus on issues such as sexual abuse and harassment – how do we deal with these issues? UNDP has an objective to raise the threshold of people trying to get away with abuse. Make them accountable.
- We need to look into the procedures, culture and approaches connected to these issues. UN actually has zero tolerance – but we need to change the culture making it possible to actually report cases of abuse – and ensure there are adequate support systems. ■

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