

THE STOCKHOLM FORUM ON GENDER EQUALITY

WHAT IS REQUIRED TO MAKE SECURITY A REALITY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS EVERYWHERE?

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OVERVIEW

The number of armed conflicts has increased in recent years. Millions of people face extreme insecurity as a result of armed conflicts as well as other crises.

More and more actors recognise the complex nature of security and see the need for a new response. A response that, in line with concepts like human security, builds on closer coordination between security, humanitarian and development work in order to protect and empower vulnerable people.

However, discussions on security still often lack an understanding of the fundamental differences between women's and men's security and overall reality. Efforts are now being made to adapt the way the international community is working to address insecurity in all its forms. One example is that the United Nations Secretary-General has launched an ambitious reform program that puts prevention of armed conflict at its core and stretches across the entire spectrum of the work of the United Nations.

This panel aimed to explore how these and other efforts may be guided by an inclusive approach, informed by gender aspects of security and characterised by women's and girl's effective and meaningful participation.

KEY TAKEWAYS

Where are we?

An increased number of armed conflicts can be seen in the world during the last few years. We need a new response with closer cooperation between security, development and humanitarian work in order to protect and empower the victims – often women and girls.

There is a lack of understanding of differences between women's and men's security which is why it's vital that international actors and the UN is working to address the question on 'what is security?' to focus on exactly these differences.

Lise Bourgon is the first woman in the military position as Brigadier-General and Director General of Operations in the world. Canada has a genuine and deep-rooted focus on gender equality in the private as well as the public sphere – and through role models show women and girls that they can do whatever they want in their lives.

The Canadian Elsie initiative – a team effort between MFA and the Armed Forces – targets the UN about gender presence and works to insentience partner countries to send more women forward. But it takes time to change society and eliminate traditional roles so women can occupy any position they want.

Both quantity and quality are important – to team up education and programmes to develop the gender integration in these countries. It's vital to equip and train women, giving them the necessary skills and leadership tools in order to lead the work on the ground. Canada has been inspired by the Swedish feminist policy.

Estonia has been active on the international arena and the UN Security Council – gone from recipient country to a contributor in issues concerning security and armed conflict matters. Estonia is also running for a position on the Security Council.

Reforms nationally in Estonia: since independence, there has been a high level of educated women and a high involvement of women in the labour market. Some issues, however, have never been properly addressed – but rather continued on since the time of the occupation when many problems were hidden and seen as family matters – such as gender-based violence (GBV) and pay gaps, for example. It has taken some time to raise awareness on these and other gender equality issues, but today this is a priority with several policies in place.

The question of security is increasingly indivisible – the globe is shrinking but there are different divisions of security: hard security and soft security, how men and women are differently affected by conflict, etc. Today we address the issue of how women can play an important role in the solutions of conflicts, and also highlighting, and including, other vulnerable groups in the discussion.

According to traditional patterns we put much more money on hard security – military operations and means – while much less resources are focusing on soft security, which is often where women are affected.

Today the military is trying to focus on the soft security as well as the hard security, mainly through raising awareness on gender and women's situation in conflict. Gender advisors, who have important roles in the military arena today, are linked directly to commanders on the ground. But the military only has access to the information it has, which makes understanding needs connected to soft power difficult. Therefore, it would be valuable to collaborate with civil society on these issues in order to increase information within the military. The military needs to understand the situation on the ground, and through collaboration with CSOs, new opportunities would be offered. Civil society organisations are, however, cautious about collaborating with military services.

According to Fatou Bensouda, head of the International Criminal Court (ICC), it is necessary to look at the reason behind the establishment of the ICC 20 years ago to understand the

aim and role of this institution. It was founded to ensure that there would be investigations, prosecutions and accountability in cases of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and, soon to be implemented, crimes of aggression. So far, 120 states have ratified the ICC. The mandate of the ICC is that the responsibility of investigating these crimes is still in the hands of the nation concerned, but if action is not taken, the ICC has the right to pursue independent investigations to get away from impunity.

However, what we have seen in recent conflicts – as well as before the establishment of the ICC – is that GBV and violence against children is very common in the context of conflict, making women and children extremely vulnerable groups during such circumstances. It's vital to pursue investigation and prosecution of these crimes, and today prosecutors of the ICC are obliged to pay special attention to GBV and violence against children in conflicts – specifically with reference to the new policies on these issues implemented under the office of Ms. Bensouda. The new policies offer an opportunity to reach tangible results where focus on the implementation is prioritised.

It is not acceptable that women are absent from conflict solutions. Women bring different perspectives and other questions to the table – and these need to be addressed. The marginalisation of women is not acceptable – 50 per cent of the population cannot be left behind. However, women also need to take up the responsibility first and foremost as women and take charge in driving the agenda forward. If there is a glass ceiling, it's not there to stop you – it's there to be shattered.

According to Ms. Sopo Japardize, Gender Adviser to the Prime Minister of Georgia, accountability is of utmost importance to secure the enjoyment of human rights. In the Security Council, there is a zero-tolerance policy of misconduct – especially regarding sexual exploitation and abuse. There is emphasis on the role of the member countries to secure the access to prompt investigation, prosecution and punishment of the crimes – the meaning of justice. Accountability has a highly deterrent effect and is therefore vital for progress and for moving in the right direction.

Natalia Kanem is highlighting ending sexual and GBV as part of UNFPAs mandate with the highest priority to make women and girls more secure in conflict, and we know that these cases are under-reported. The missing ingredient is that we don't have the data to be able to prosecute and investigate these cases. Gender-segregated data collection is absolutely necessary. Resolution 1325 and the resolution of Youth, Peace and Security should be prioritised in the continued efforts. The UNFPA report 'The missing peace' was just launched, highlighting the role of youth and bringing new data on how they see their role in peace and security processes.

The ingredient needed is the notion of peace: in your home, in school and in society. Women and girls subject to GBV and sexual abuse shouldn't need to feel shame – bringing double victimisation to these women not being able or allowed to properly explain what has happened to them.

Red Cross: The most important step to protect women and girls is to intervene and take seriously the discussion on both formal and informal norms and laws connected to sexual and GBV, which is still highly prevalent and often invariable.

Gilles Carbonnier gives examples of how the Red Cross has taken necessary steps to train police and armed forces – and even non-state armed groups – for example in Jordan and Lebanon – on sexual- and gender-based violence and the special vulnerability of refugees and migrants in these contexts. Discussion is needed on specific measures on how security and safety of these groups can be improved in the local contexts.

In the Central African Republic, there has been initiatives working with farmer groups as there is a huge challenge with women being subject to sexual violence when going to the fields. Actions have been taken to support these groups with creating safe spaces where the community – and the victims – can conduct a dialogue directly with the militia groups.

Margot Wallström: It's not a question of soft power or hard power – it's a question of smart power. We need to focus on the prevention of conflicts – and also become smarter in how we see early signs of conflict. Here the women can play a vital role. We should turn to women for the early warnings of conflict, as these often are most visible in the private sphere: an increase of GBV at home, children being kept from going to school due to increased insecurity, men starting to collect weapons, etc. Signs like these need to be considered.

It is also important to invite the women's right organisations to discuss these issues with the Security Council, making them a partner in the process by sharing information and experiences with the aim to improve the safety of women and girls in contexts of conflict.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Where do we go from here?

- Prevention is where we need to start – and it should be at the top of the agenda.
- We need to start with ourselves – all international agencies need to look closer into gender equality, equal opportunities and accountability.
- Element of solidarity – in every region, continent and throughout the world, there are dots that connect us. Anxiety for a young girl that grows up to have the expectation that she deserves to be safe – in her home, in school and in her life, during her entire life cycle. This is vital.
- There is no division between hard and soft security. Women should be involved in the whole process of conflict solving.
- It's important to use culture as a means of discussing gender equality and women's rights – inviting poets and writers who can communicate eloquently while discussing the element of equality.
- Create space for women and girls to raise their voices and put light on their experiences.
- Transform the belief of every adolescent girl that her worth is just as important as that of others. Girls should have the same human rights and the right to HER voice.
- Multidimensional actions are needed to solve conflicts more efficiently. Problems have different angles, and solutions should tackle all of them. Women participation is essential to reach this multidimensionality.
- No one can create change alone – so we all need to join in together to stop the violence against women and girls.
- Fighting impunity and guaranteeing accountability and justice – not just making it illegal but also making it despicable, non-ethical and sub-moral.

- Changing norms and the value system.
- Joining forces, building alliances, acting together, speaking with the same voice to push the agenda forward. It's also important to have political will, effective institutions, good policy, legislative mechanisms, and professionals that are enforcing and implementing necessary policies and following up on the work being done.
- More girls in school, more women in the police and military, more women in politics, putting an end to sexual- and gender-based violence in all areas of society – in the home, in society and in war and conflicts. More perpetrators in ICCs courtroom. More development, which means less conflict.
- More women – more peace...and nothing about women without women. have this in mind as they put up any new development plans. Safety assessment tools such as conducting women safety audits can be one way to improve women safety in urban areas.
- Come up with global tools to look at success projects that have been implemented in other cities, based on public engagement and public participation in making cities safer.
- Sustainable urban planning must entail planning for all, both poor and rich, without prioritising one at the expense of the other. It is as important to have a bottom-up approach to planning, design and architecture as to policy-making.
- Know your facts and know your area; this cannot be stressed enough.
- Equality must be a cornerstone. Everyone should have the same possibility and access to public spaces. In some cities we have to reclaim the space and see who the different stakeholders are and also use social media as a tool to create solutions.
- There are official channels to hand in proposals and suggestions, but today mostly men are using this opportunity. We must reach and involve more women.
- Plan projects with sustainability and long-term perspectives – not just pilots or start-up projects.
- Plans have to be sustainable; we need to plan for the future and for future populations; and we have to be both visionary and innovative. Focus on integrated strategies that are sustainable, not just short-term projects with a political agenda of just showing quick results to voters.
- We need to make sure the architects and urban planners manage to translate the citizens' ideas into reality. There is an increasing need to use technology to contact and network with young girls. Researching out to likeminded is crucial to find tools to increase participation in urban planning as well as to capitalise on the latest inventions and other tools.
- Find ways of scale up good activities globally to other cities.
- Focus on social norms is focusing both on boys and girls in applying a gender perspective. Bringing in young men into the project to discuss norms and the importance of decent behaviours turns out to be very effective. ■

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