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## WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN ADDRESSING PEACE AND SECURITY

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### Summary

More than a decade after the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, women's leadership and participation in peace building around the world is yet to be fully recognized. Yet women's leadership and participation in addressing peace and security is both a moral imperative and a right which goes beyond them being considered the unfortunate victims of conflict. It is important to recognize women as agents of change, and as partners in reshaping and rebuilding communities affected by conflict. This policy brief interrogates what international and regional frameworks guide women's peace and security as well as the key principles behind these frameworks. It looks at progress made in Ghana including the key challenges in achieving women's participation and leadership. Finally, it makes recommendations for Ghana's full implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325.

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## Global Overview and Policy Frameworks

Women and children bear the brunt of conflict and wars. All over the world, women are subjected to terrible atrocities during conflicts such as rape, sexual abuse and abduction. They are the majority of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees, and they are also known to be participants in the waging of wars,<sup>1</sup> yet they are often the unrecognized stakeholders in peace processes.

Yet women's participation is both a moral imperative and a right which goes beyond them being considered the hapless victims of war. They are also important agents of change and partners in reshaping and rebuilding communities affected by conflict.

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 emphasizes the importance of equal women's participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace. It also calls for the inclusion of women and a gender perspective at all levels of decision-making; for the need to increase women's role in decision making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution, and endorses the inclusion of civil society groups in peace processes. It calls on all actors involved in such processes to adopt mechanisms supporting local women initiatives.

Thus, UNSCR 1325 went beyond the historical image of women as exclusively victims of war and acknowledged their leadership role as participating peacemakers, peace-builders and negotiators. The resolution calls for the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls and zero-tolerance of impunity for war crimes against women including gender-based violence.

Before the 2000 commitments, there were several other commitments which identified obstacles to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. They include, but are not limited to, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW-1979) and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995).

Africa itself has also established regional and continental instruments and mechanisms that recognize the importance of women's roles in matters of peace and security and the rights of women to participate in the promotion and maintenance of peace. Foremost is the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)<sup>2</sup>.

The last few years have also seen the development and adoption of a number of national gender frameworks within the sub region. Following strong advocacy efforts by women's groups and activists on the need to enact legislation and policies to address inequalities, some countries have domesticated some international frameworks to suit their local context, while others have adopted specific legislation to protect women, especially in the area of peace and security. Liberia adopted the following laws and policies; Inheritance Law (2003), Rape law (2005), and the National Women's Plan of Action (2008). Ghana on its part, established The Domestic Violence Act (2007) and the National Women's Manifesto (2003).

There has been some progress in the national implementation of UNSCR 1325, with 6 countries in Africa having developed National Action Plans. Uganda, Guinea Bissau, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire adopted national action plans (NAPs) while Burundi, Guinea, Ghana, Gambia and Nigeria are in the process of developing NAPs. ECOWAS is also in the process of developing a regional Action Plan on Resolution 1325.

### Progress Made in Addressing Women's Peace and Security in Ghana

Ghana is signatory to UNSCR 1325, CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. All of these mandate governments to involve women in pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict processes as prescribed by these international instruments.

Ghana also plays a pivotal role in peace and security in the sub region. The UN Secretary-General's Report of 2011 acknowledged Ghana's role in the

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<sup>1</sup> Women were combatants in conflicts in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Namibia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Liberia and Algeria.

<sup>2</sup> Other regional protocols include: The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1986), The Dakar African Platform for Action (1994), Addis Ababa Declaration on the Dakar Platform for Action, The AU Gender Policy adopted by the AU Heads of governments in (2000), The solemn declaration on Gender Equality (2004), ECOWAS Gender Policy and the SADC's Protocol on Gender and Development.

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deployment of women police officers from Ghana to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

Within and outside of Ghana, there have been very effective mechanisms on women's leadership in peace processes that we can draw upon to consolidate Ghana's efforts at realizing the women's peace and security agenda.

Global Open days on UNSCR 1325 are held in countries all over the world to gain a better understanding of how that resolution has impacted women. On September 25th 2011, the Open Day was held in Ghana. The event also commemorated International Peace Day<sup>3</sup>. The voices of women peace actors working nationally as well as in conflict affected communities were heard and their concerns on the security agenda presented to the UN Resident Coordinator of Ghana and the Minister for Women and Children's Affairs. The reports from Ghana as well as other countries where the Open Days are held inform the Security Council of progress made in addressing women's participation in peace and security during the Annual Open Debates on UNSCR 1325, which are held in October.

Institutionalizing women's role in peace building within the security sector remains vital. In Ghana, the Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Centre, a peacekeeping training and research operation for West Africa, has hosted the startup of the Women, Peace and Security Institute (WPSI) with the support of the United Nations (UNDP, UNWOMEN and UNFPA) for the past two years. WPSI has developed the blueprint for mainstreaming gender into KAIPTC's main operations by way of a fully-fledged autonomous institute which will come into effect in 2012. The Institute will support training and research on gender, peace and security through academic and non-academic courses accessible to women.

### **Ongoing Challenges in Implementing UNSCR 1325 in Ghana**

The general view that the implementation of the resolution presents challenges for countries experiencing relative peace is true for Ghana. This is

due to the localized nature of conflict, as opposed to the open type of conflict experienced in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Many in Ghana therefore do not view the resolution as relevant to their situation.

Lessons learned over years of interaction with women in conflict situations in Ghana show that women actually participate actively in peace processes and mediation in Ghana but their efforts are largely found in the informal sphere.

A review of Ghana's security institutions also shows that they are dominated by men. Ghana's police service has a disparity of zero females to 8 males in some cases. In the military, though women are present in peace support operations, the sex ratio is very low, ranging from approximately 1 to 8 males in the Cote d'Ivoire mission in 2010 and 1 to 4 males in the DRC mission in the same year.

Ghana has established a Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit of the Police Service, (DOVVSU), to respond to situations of violence against women. DOVVSU has statistics on rape and other incidences of gender-based violence which require further disaggregation to show those forms of violence that occurred during the various pockets of internal conflict experienced in Ghana and how they affect women.

As Ghana approaches another election year in 2012, and noting that conflict and tension are inherent in elections as observed in countries like Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire, steps should be taken and proactive measures put in place to safeguard the peace currently being enjoyed in Ghana. It then becomes critical to draw attention to the provisions of UNSCR 1325 for women to be at the forefront of all peace efforts. Key recommendations towards achieving women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace in Ghana are proposed below.

### **Recommendations for Ghana's Full Implementation of UNSCR 1325**

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC), and with support from development partners and civil society, the Ghana

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<sup>3</sup> The Ghana open day event was organized by WANEP, AWANICH, UNWOMEN, UNDP, UNFPA and KAIPTC

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National Action Plan (GANAP 1325) should be adopted and implemented. The Plan addresses the priorities for women's leadership in peace and security in Ghana. GANAP 1325 would require strong accountability mechanisms and adequate resourcing for proper implementation.

There is a strong need to work with institutions concerned with publicity such as the National Commission for Civic Education, the media, schools and faith-based organizations to educate target groups including political parties and youth groups on the need for peace, women's leadership and participation in peace processes before, during and after the elections.

Women in conflict prone areas should have their capacities built to participate in and monitor elections in those communities. Women peace building organizations should participate as monitors and observers in the upcoming elections to ensure that peace prevails. Religious and traditional leaders should be brought on board to ensure the peaceful conduct of elections.

Partnerships should be established between women led organizations/networks and women in political parties and government to adopt Affirmative Action legislation that will enhance women's representation in national governance. CSOs will need women politicians to represent their policy views and interests while women politicians will gain credibility and strength if they have a strong civil society constituency supporting their work in government.

UNSCR 1325 needs to be taken to the grassroots through a series of 'training of trainers' to create awareness and ownership of UNSCR 1325 from the top to the bottom. The Peace Council should also be actively engaged to integrate principles of UNSCR 1325 into their peace building processes. This approach will empower communities to support women's effective participation in peace-building processes.

Partnerships of women organizations, development

partners, the United Nations, youth groups and the media will be required to sustain capacity development, knowledge management and advocacy with relevant government institutions and the media. Research and the communication of efforts of women peacekeepers and activists must be supported as well.

Ghana's peace advocates would need to continue outreach and networking activities with other African women's advocacy and training networks like Femmes Africa Solidarite, Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange, The Women in Peace and Security Network-Africa, Women in Peace Building Program of the West Africa Network for Peace building and the African Women's Active Non-Violence Initiatives for Social Change, which are all civil society organizations supporting advocacy and leadership capacity-building to enhance women's participation in peace processes in Africa.

Continuous advocacy with the security sector and peacekeeping missions is required in making the recruitment process more gender sensitive so that women will be encouraged to apply to the sector. Women already in the security sector should also be encouraged to rise to the highest ranks. More women in the security sector and in civil society need to be engaged in ongoing small arms control efforts as well.

There is a clear need for specialized training, skills development and increased funding of institutions and organizations addressing gender based violence. National and international funding mechanisms must be sought to ease budgetary constraints for dealing with all forms of violence against women and girls. Such funding mechanisms like the United Nations Trust Fund (UNTF)<sup>4</sup> should be accessed to support institutions like DOVVSU.

With this years 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence being held on the theme *From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World*, let us renew the call for action towards women's leadership in peace and security.

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<sup>4</sup> UNTF information can be obtained at [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)

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