



PRIO

Symposium on Women's Rights and Empowerment in Afghanistan

PRIO Gender, Peace and Security Update

Issue 4 2014

The PRIO Gender Peace and Security Update is an electronic newsletter launched by PRIO's Gender Research Group in response to growing interest among the public for information about women, peace and security issues. The newsletter will keep readers informed of the latest developments both internationally and in Norway in relation to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security and subsequent resolutions.



Rula Ghani, First Lady of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Photo: Norway MFA/ Kilian Munch.

On 23 November, leading Afghan women's rights activists met with representatives of their own government and international organizations in order to ensure new commitment to an agenda for securing women's rights over the next 10 years. The High Level Oslo Symposium on Women's Rights and Empowerment in Afghanistan was hosted by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the Afghan and US authorities, PRIO, the Afghan Women's Network, and Georgetown Institute of Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS).

In addition to the co-hosts, other civil society actors, Afghan women's organisations and politicians, international and local experts, and international

organisations were also represented among the attendees.

Importantly, the Oslo symposium was held in advance of the London Conference on Afghanistan, which took place on 3-4 December. The findings of the symposium could therefore provide valuable input for further discussion in London. The symposium was a direct follow-up of two previous events on the same topic – one conference hosted by PRIO and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2007, and a symposium convened by GIWS in 2013.

Making Progress: Afghanistan's New National Action Plan

The last 13 years have seen great improvements in the situation of many



Thematic session, panel I, with moderator Melanne Verveer, Executive Director Georgetown University, Institute for Women Peace and Security on the left. Photo: Norway MFA/ Kilian Munch.

Afghan women, on wide ranging issues such as political participation, education, health and employment.

The aim of the symposium was thus to take a closer look at how to sustain and advance the gains made by women and girls in Afghanistan in the time to come. Afghanistan made further progress on the issue of advancing women's rights and empowerment only a couple of months ago, when the government adopted a new National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. This was an important recognition of the key role Afghan women play in building peace, and shows commitment on behalf of the government to ensure an inclusive and stable peace process.

The Oslo Symposium therefore came in a very timely manner, providing a forum for in-depth discussion on the ways in which the international community can support this progress as well as sending an important message of international support for important reforms such as the National Action Plan.

High-Level Engagement

The symposium began with a high-level opening session, where Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg and First Lady of Afghanistan Rula Ghani were keynote speakers. The opening session also included a high-level panel discussion, where Foreign Minister of Norway Børge Brende was joined by colleagues from Afghanistan and the United States, including Afghanistan's Minister of Women's Affairs Hussun Banu Ghazanfa and U.S. Senator Robert P. Case Jr. Hasina Safi, Director of the Afghan Women's Network, represented the Afghan civil society. The aim of this session was to signal commitment to the cause and to stake out a course for the future.

The high-level opening was then followed by two parallel thematic sessions with roundtable discussions. The first panel was moderated by Melanne Verveer, Executive Director of the Institute for Women, Peace and Security at Georgetown University, and discussed issues relating to human rights, justice and political participation. The second panel was moderated by PRIO director Kristian Berg Harpviken, and focused

on education and economic empowerment. Both panels consisted of highly qualified international and Afghan experts, representing the international community, non-governmental organisation and Afghan civil society. This combination of committed and knowledgeable individuals ensured many engaging and interesting discussions.

PRIO research informs discussions

In order to ensure a sound basis for debate, PRIO produced two background papers on the main topics in advance of the symposium.

Kristian Berg Harpviken and Lida Nadery Hedayat released the paper "Where do Afghan Women Stand on Education and Economic Empowerment?" which provides a short overview of progress made in terms of Afghan women's education and empowerment. The paper discusses specific issues related to basic education, vocational education, higher education, work life and business engagement.

The second background paper is called "Women's Rights and Political Representation: Achievements and Challenges", and is written by Timor Sharan and Torunn Wimpelmann. This paper



PRIO Director Kristian Berg Harpviken. Photo: Norway MFA/ Kilian Munch.

gives a brief overview of the main achievements and challenges for Afghan women's participation in politics and their access to justice, as well as presenting the most important reflections amongst key stakeholders about possible ways forward. Both PRIO papers suggested specific issues for discussion, and were important contributions to an informed debate on the issue.

Outcomes: Messages from Oslo

The Oslo symposium resulted in some important messages on the topic of women's advancement in Afghanistan. Firstly, the symposium acknowledged the great progress that has been made, especially in terms of legal and policy achievements such as the National Action Plan for Women, Peace and

Security. It also stressed that measures to improve the situation of women have had positive results, for instance with regards to increased election of women to parliament and increased numbers of girls in education and women participating in the labour market – although it was also recognised that progress remains partial and fragile. Secondly, the symposium provided several specific recommendations in the fields of governance, human rights, justice, security, education and economy.

These recommendations also addressed some overarching issues, including strengthening the capacity of women's civil society and following up the proposal of an independent commission on the status of women. The key message from the Oslo symposium, however, was the mutual commitment by Afghanistan's new government, Afghan civil society and international partners to take decisive action to advance gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment. ■

“A Slow but Unstoppable Revolution”

In partnership with the Helsinki-based Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) and the UN Department of Political Affairs (UN DPA), PRIO organizes the High-Level Seminar on gender and Inclusive Mediation Processes. Below, Crisis Management Initiative (CMI)'s gender and inclusion expert Antonia Potter Prentice looks at how far we've come during the past two years in sharing the message of the importance of including women and gender issues in peace processes:



Antonia Potter Prentice, Crisis Management Initiative Senior Manager on Gender and Inclusion, (center) discussing with the participants. Photos: PRIO/ Taral Jansen.

We've just concluded the fourth (in the series of six) high-level seminar on gender and inclusive mediation processes. This time the seminar, which alternates between Finland and Norway, was held in Oslo on 18-20 November. With these seminars, we aim to:

- improve peace processes by increasing women's effective participation in them, and

- improve peace agreements by guaranteeing that issues important to women are acknowledged in them.

The seminars are run in partnership between CMI, the United Nations Department of Political Affairs and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), and are funded by the Foreign Affairs Ministries of Finland and Norway.

By now our partnership has hosted 100 high-level participants. They represent primarily the UN but have also come from the African Union, the European Union, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organ-

isation of the Islamic Conference, as well as from diplomatic missions and private diplomacy organisations. More than one third have been women. The participants are personally invited on the basis of their seniority, and mediation experience and responsibility.

Open and engaged participants

As organisers we were struck this time in Oslo by the open and engaged attitudes of even the most seasoned medi-

ators. They shared with us their convictions and the difficulties they face with an honesty that shows how seriously they take the issue. One envoy pointed out that “belligerents competing for power may not have habits of consultation, and may cite cultural reasons for not including women; but just because this is difficult and complicated does not mean we should not be doing it”. Another noted that we are seeing “a slow but unstoppable revolution” in terms of women’s active and meaningful participation in matters of peace and security.

It was good to see how nuanced the views have become too. As one senior mediator stated: “we need to be politically literate and visionary, and recognise that women bring their politics to the process too”. This was a refreshing reflection, taking us beyond the perhaps tired stereotype of women as simple peacemakers. Women have multiple and complex identities just as men do, but their persistent marginalisation has highlighted their gender identity in ways which have been damaging to women’s political participation.

We also discussed how the magic recipe for moving forward depends ultimately on the combination of a strong women’s movement on the ground, combined with supportive political leadership, and sustained and targeted financial support.

Further spreading the gospel

With two seminars left to go in the series we are concentrating on further streamlining the modules to maximise participants’ opportunities to wrestle with the opportunities and challenges they face in the real cases they work on.

We are also concerned with how to maximise and sustain the impact of the seminars beyond their lifespan as they are due to end next year. We will continue our strategising on how to do this in early next year. Our aim is to particularly use the occasion of the 15th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in autumn 2015 to showcase the results of the seminars. We are also looking into how to make the materials and expertise more broadly available and effective, and how to follow up

with the mediators and envoys who need further support to help concretely implement what they have learned in their processes.

The next target – a tougher one of course - is to think about how this thinking, tools and tips can be also made effective and available for the conflict parties themselves. This would help them to see how much better their cause could be served through an inclusive and gendered approach.

Surveying the animated discussions between the participants, some of whom must never have imagined earlier in their careers that they would find themselves in such a seminar, CMI’s Executive Director Tuija Talvitie reflected on the even more positive future prospects. “If we can come this far in the first fifteen years since resolution 1325, imagine how much further we can go in the next fifteen years”.

- Antonia Potter Prentice, CMI ■

Report Launch: OSCE Study on National Action Plans

On 22 October, the OSCE Study on National Action Plans on the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (<http://www.osce.org/secretariat/125727>) was officially launched at PRIO. Although all OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) members have committed to Resolution 1325, implementation of the resolution has been slow and uneven between countries. To address this problem, the OSCE commissioned an analysis of the 27 National Action Plans for the Women, Peace and Security agenda that have been developed by its member states.



The keynote speech was delivered by Monica McWilliams, Professor, Transitional Justice Institute, University of Ulster. Photo: PRIO/ Taral Jansen.

The different strategies were analysed in light of the four pillars of the WPA agenda - participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery - in order to capture the most important aspects of Resolution 1325. The aim of the report was to analyse strengths and weaknesses, and to present 'best practices' and concrete tools for implementation.

Ambassador Miroslava Beham, OSCE Senior Advisor on Gender Issues, was a guest speaker at the seminar. She emphasised that the OSCE has a comprehensive approach to security, and that gender equality and non-discrimination are at the centre of its security agenda. The organisation therefore includes gender mainstreaming into all aspects of its work. However, Beham also highlighted some difficulties the OSCE is facing in terms of implementation, both internally and in different member states. In particular, she noted that the situation in Ukraine exemplifies some of the remaining challenges to the WPS agenda. The study will therefore provide valuable and concrete guidance for OSCE's further work on the issue.

Christin Ormhaug, PRIO researcher and author of the report, presented its main findings and some important recommendations. Bjørg Skotnes, Coordinator for Women, Peace and Security at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also commented on the report. Skotnes further assured the audience that the Ministries will use the OSCE report actively when developing a new Norwegian National Action Plan. ■

Gender-Based Violence in War and Conflict – Approaching and Assisting Survivors

On 31 October, the training manual "Mental health and gender-based violence – helping survivors of sexual violence in conflict" was presented at a PRIO breakfast seminar.



Nora Sveaass, University of Oslo, and Inger Skjelsbæk, PRIO, presenting at the seminar. Photo: PRIO/ Marit Moe-Pryce.

Victims of sexual violence suffer grave physical, psychological and material damage, which may destroy their lives as well as the lives of their children. This may in turn create serious obstacles for sustainable peace and development. It is therefore important that the international community develops knowledge and expertise to sufficiently address the needs of these victims. The training manual on mental health and gender-based violence is a step in this direction.

The manual is developed by the organisation Health and Human Rights Info (HHRI) for helpers who assist and support to women exposed to gender-based violence and sexual trauma during armed conflicts and other emergency situations. In particular, it is developed for situations where access to mental health professionals may be limited.

Nora Sveaass, clinical psychologist and Associate Professor at Department of Psychology, University of Oslo, and chair of Health and Human Rights

Info, introduced the manual and its applicability. Sveaass has many years of experience from working with survivors of trauma and forced migration. Comments were made by Vibeke Risa, Head of Thematic Unit in Field Operations at the Norwegian Refugee Council, and by Annika With, co-author of the manual and trauma patient counsellor at the Modum Bad Clinic. PRIO Senior Researcher Inger Skjelsbæk gave an introduction on The general picture of Gender Based Violence in War and Conflict and acted as chair. ■

Seminar on Women, Peace and Security in NATO

Two years ago, NATO made a landmark decision to appoint Norwegian diplomat Mari Skåre the Secretary-General's first ever Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security. Having recently stepped down from this position, Skåre visited PRIO on 28 October to attend the seminar "NATO and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda – Achievements and Challenges" and share her thoughts and reflections from two years on the job.

The seminar provided important insights into NATO's work with SC Resolution 1325 and related resolutions, as well as personal experiences and reflections from Skåre herself. Specifically, Skåre worked to implement a gender perspective in NATO's two central focus areas: collective defence and crisis management. This has resulted in some significant achievements. For instance, Skåre noted that a gender perspective is now incorporated in security and defence reform in member states, and NATO has also strengthened the role of gender advisors in crisis management.

Moreover, the organisation collaborates closely with the UN, other regional organisations and civil society to promote the WPS agenda. Skåre also emphasised that the greatest achievement so far has been to establish the Special Representative as a permanent position. However, NATO still faces challenges regarding WPS, especially due to a traditionally male-dominated organisational culture.

Dr Anita Schjølset, former Senior Researcher at the Norwegian Defence University, also commented on the topic. She stressed that the Norwegian armed forces are still far from achiev-

ing gender mainstreaming in conflict resolution. In particular, Schjølset argued that there is need for a coherent understanding of the relevance of gender perspectives in military planning and operational effectiveness, to ensure that it is not treated simply as an ad hoc-issue. The seminar was chaired by Torunn L. Tryggestad. ■

Successful Doctoral Defence by PRIO Researcher Torunn L. Tryggestad

PRIO Researcher and leader of PRIO's Gender Research Group, Torunn L. Tryggestad, successfully defended her doctoral dissertation titled "International Norms and Political Change: 'Women, Peace and Security' and the UN Security Agenda" at the University of Oslo on 15 December. The topic of her trial lecture was "Women, Peace and Security - from rapid norm diffu-

sion to backlash? Assess the potential of countervailing forces to slow down or reverse progress."

In her thesis Tryggestad looks at how the normative framework of 'Women, Peace and Security' (WPS) has emerged as a legitimate international security concern, and has become an integral part of the discourse on international peace and security. She argues that a normative framework has emerged and is now influencing political change within the realms of UN peace and security politics, without this being fully acknowledged in mainstream international relations literature. How has this notable normative turn in UN peace and security politics come about? Who are the actors involved in this process and what does the interrelationship between them look like?

The dissertation is available online through the University of Oslo's electronic database (DUO). ■



PRIO Researcher Torunn L. Tryggestad recently defended her doctoral dissertation on Women, Peace and Security. Photo: PRIO/ Martin Tegnander.

International News

The UN Security Council held its annual open debate on Women, Peace and Security on 28 October. The [presidential statement](#) highlighted the particular needs of displaced women, and the impact of violent extremism on women. It also welcomed the commission of a global study on the implementation of Resolution 1325.

The UN Secretary-General appointed a High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on 31 October, consisting of three females out of a total of 14 members. Having received extensive criticism for lack of commitment to gender equality, the Secretary-General appointed three additional women to the Panel on 1 December. For more information, see [UN Women website](#).

Gynecologist Denis Mukwege received the 2014 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in Strasbourg on Wednesday 26 November for his commitment to helping victims of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. ■

News from Norway

The Norwegian diplomat Ms. Rita Sandberg and her Cuban colleague Mr. Rodolfo Benitez on 20 November [announced a deal had been negotiated](#) between FARC and the Colombian government to release Columbian general Ruben Dario Alzate and two other hostages. ■

News from PRIO

A new study by OSCE and PRIO on National Action Plans on the implementation of Resolution 1325 in the OSCE region was launched at PRIO on 22 October (see separate story).

PRIO organized the seminar “NATO and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda – Achievements and Challenges” with Mari Skåre, former NATO’s Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, on 28 October (see separate story).

PRIO organized the seminar “Gender-Based Violence in War and Conflict – Approaching and Assisting Victims” on 31 October (see separate story).

The fourth High-Level Seminar on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Processes was held in Oslo on 18-20 November. The seminar was hosted by PRIO in cooperation with the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) (see separate story).

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with PRIO and other co-sponsors, hosted the [Oslo High-Level Symposium “Advancing Women’s Rights and Empowerment in Afghanistan”](#) on 23 November (see separate story).

A new project on “Equal Peace? Women’s Empowerment in and Multicultural Challenges in War-to-Peace Transitions” led by PRIO Senior Researcher Inger Skjelsbæk has been funded by the Research Council of Norway.

Torunn L. Tryggestad successfully defended her PhD thesis at the Department of Political Science, University of

Oslo, on 15 December. The title of her thesis is “International Norms and Political Change: ‘Women, Peace and Security’ and the UN Security Agenda.”

Inger Skjelsbæk

- Gave a presentation on “Conflict-Related Sexual Violence” at the High-Level Seminar on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Processes. 18-20 November, Soria Moria, Oslo.
- Gave an introduction on “The general picture of Gender Based Violence in War and Conflict” at a PRIO Breakfast Seminar on Gender-Based Violence in War and Conflict. 31 October, Oslo.
- Gave a lecture at the Cyprus Course on Peace and Conflict, organized by the Research School in Peace and Conflict. 6-10 October, Cyprus.
- Gave two lectures at the University of Oslo, Department of Psychology, on gender, violence and identity. 17-18 November, Oslo.

Torunn L. Tryggestad

- Gave two presentations on ‘Violence against women in armed conflicts’ for Nordic parliamentarians, in preparation for their attendance at IPU convention. 6-8 October, Stortinget (Norwegian Parliament), Oslo.
- Gave an introduction on ‘Gender and Mediation’ at Nordic Meeting on Peace and Reconciliation. 28 October, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo.
- Attended a workshop on ‘Gender Mainstreaming: Indicators for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325’, organized by USIP, WIIS and Belgrade Centre for Security Policy. 6-7 November, USIP, Washington DC.
- Co-organised and gave presentation on ‘Normative Frameworks for

Women, Peace and Security' at High-Level Seminar on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Processes. 18-20 November, Soria Moria, Oslo.

Ragnhild Nordås

- Presented the SVAC project and database at the University of Essex, UK on 25 November, and at the University of Konstanz, Germany on 14 November.
- Project meetings and Training in Research Methodology in Bukavu, DRC, together with ICART (International Centre for Advanced Research and Training), project partner in the project "Female Empowerment in Eastern DRC." 13-29 October, DRC.

Gudrun Østby

- Project meetings and organization of Training in Research Methodology in Bukavu, DRC, together with ICART (International Centre for Advanced Research and Training), project partner in the project "Female Empowerment in Eastern DRC." 13-29 October, DRC.
- Kickoff meeting for the project Armed Conflict and Maternal Health in Sub-Saharan Africa, including a half-day policy seminar with representatives from UNFPA, Norad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Norway-based NGOs working with maternal health related topics. 20-21 November, Oslo.
- Op-ed in Dagsavisen together with Henrik Urdal & Ida Rudolfson "Utdanning skaper fred". Østby appeared in Dagsnytt atten same day to discuss the Peace Prize. 10 December, Oslo. ■

Recent PRIO Publications

Hedayat, Lida N. and Kristian B. Harpviken (2014) *Where Do Afghan Women Stand on Education and Economic Empowerment?* PRIO Paper. Oslo: PRIO

Hernes, Helga (2014) *Global Aspects of Women's Political Participation*. PRIO Policy Brief, 7/2014. Oslo: PRIO

Leiby, Michele, Ragnhild Nordås and Gudrun Østby (2014) *The Legacy of War: Domestic Violence in Post-Conflict Peru*. Prepared for the Rethinking Gender & Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Workshop, Yale University, December 15-16, 2014.

Ormhaug, Christin (2014) *OSCE Study on National Action Plans on the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. Vienna, September 2014.

Ormhaug, Christin (2014) *National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security in the OSCE Area* PRIO Policy Brief, 5. Oslo, Norway: PRIO.

Sharan, Timor and Wimpelmann, Torunn (2014) *Women's Rights and Political Representation: Past Achievements and Future Challenges*. PRIO Paper. Oslo: PRIO

Skjelsbæk, Inger (2015) "Women, War, Violence and Peace-making – international developments". In Ericsson, Kjersti (Ed) *Women in war – the Norwegian example*. London: Ashgate (Forthcoming).

Tryggestad, Torunn L. (2014) *International Norms and Political Change: "Women, Peace and Security" and the UN Security Agenda*. Doctoral dissertation submitted to the Department of Political Science, University of Oslo. ■

Other Recent Publications

Escola de Cultura de Pau (2014) *Gender and Peace*. No. 3, October 2014.

Egnell, Robert, Petter Hojem and Hannes Berts (2014) *Gender, Military Effectiveness and Organizational Change: The Swedish Model*. Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan.

Lackenbauer, Helenè and Michael Jonsson (2014) *Implementing UNSCR 1325 in Capacity Building Missions: A study of NTM-Afghanistan, EUTM-Mali and EUTM-Somalia*. Report no FOI-R – 3925 – SE. Ministry of Defence, Sweden.

Tielemans, Sanne (2014) *Where are the Women? Building Peace beyond the Negotiating Table*. Building Peace: A Forum for Peace and Security in the 21st Century. Conciliation Resources, London.

World Economic Forum (2014). *The Global Gender Gap Report 2014*. Geneva 2014. ■



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The PRIO Gender, Peace and Security Update is published by the PRIO Gender Research Group with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway. If you wish to find out more about our current research projects, please visit our website www.prio.org/gender. If you have any comments or inquiries regarding the newsletter, please contact the editors: jenlor@prio.org