

TOWARDS FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF UN SCR 1325 IN THE PHILIPPINES: CRAFTING A NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR WOMEN AND PEACEBUILDING

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This article presents the results of a national workshop on the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (SCR 1325) conducted in the Philippines by the International Women's Tribune Centre in partnership with the Sulong CARHRIHL (Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law) Network and the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women. The workshop drew attention to the importance of a national action plan in ensuring the full implementation of UN SCR 1325 at the national and sub-national levels. This article outlines the key principles and tasks that need to be taken into account in the crafting a Philippine national action plan. It also provides updates on current efforts in developing the Philippine national action plan.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was adopted in 2000 by the UN Security Council as a policy framework to strengthen women's role in peace building. Its most important message is that women are not only victims of violence; they are also a powerful force toward peace building and decision-making on peace and security issues. The key commitments of UNSCR 1325 include:

- Ensuring gender balance in all levels of decision-making
- Gender perspective in all reports
- Protection and respect of human rights of women and girls
- Gender perspective in post-conflict peace processes and in peacekeeping

As a Security Council Resolution, it mandates automatic adoption by member-states of the UN. However, in spite of this strength as a policy framework, the full implementation of UN SCR 1325 is still weak. Women continue to be excluded in peace processes and mechanisms. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against women continue in situations of armed conflict. Also, best practices in adopting a national implementation plan have been observed mainly in countries in the North. Ironically, countries in the South where violent conflicts persist are yet to prove their political will to fully implement UNSCR 1325. Thus, the challenge to compel member-states to comply with the provisions of and to make them accountable to the full implementation of UN SCR 1325 remains.

While, there has been a strong NGO lobby for the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 by member-states, this active lobbying has been arguably concentrated in New York City and in other urban centers in Northern countries. The urgency of building a constituency for the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 in countries in the South clearly depend in part on the ability of NGOs and of civil society organizations in general to champion the cause of UNSCR 1325. Towards this, it is imperative to improve their understanding of the history, objectives, provisions, and implications of the resolutions, and to develop in them a sense of ownership of the policy.

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It is in this context that the International Women's Tribune Centre in partnership with the Sulong CARHRIHL Network and the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women organized a national workshop in the Philippines on the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (SCR 1325). The national workshop on SCR 1325 took place on December 5, 2007 at Astoria Plaza, Ortigas, Manila. The objectives of the national workshop were as follows:

1. To bring together various stakeholders on peace and security issues in the Philippines to explore the possibility of developing a 1325 national action plan and discuss the value added of such plan;
To examine existing national policies that respond to the provisions of Resolution 1325 --i.e., women and armed conflict section of the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development and discuss the facilitating and hindering factors in their implementation;
2. To raise awareness of Resolution 1325, its history, key provisions, gains, gaps and challenges in implementation; and
3. To discuss ways of strengthening the implementation of Resolution 1325.

The workshop on Resolution 1325 that was held in the Philippines has several unique features:

1. It was the first 1325-focused national workshop.
2. It was the first time that members of the security sector including the Department of Justice, Department of National Defense, the Philippine National Police and the National Police Commission participated in a discussion on national policies that highlight women's involvement in peace and security issues.
3. It was one of the initiatives that reached out to underrepresented groups in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao and other remote islands including Muslim women's organizations and faith-based groups.
4. The Philippines has two existing national policy frameworks --namely the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development (PPGD) and the Framework Plan for Women (FPW) which both contain provisions parallel to those in Resolution 1325

The roster of invited participants to this workshop indicates the organizers' definition of stakeholders on peace and security issues in the Philippines. It is therefore an interesting to note that the national workshop brought together participants from many different organizations in the Philippines. Representatives from peace organizations and women's organizations from different geographical locations, sectors, and levels of organizations were present. Representatives from government, the police, academics and media practitioners, representatives of people's organizations, and foreign donors were present in the whole day workshop.

Clearly, the organizers of the national workshop believe that women and civil society organizations are not the only stakeholders on peace and security issues in the Philippines. Government institutions, including the police and military, should be recognized by women and civil society organizations not only as antagonists but as

important stakeholders in peace and security issues. Likewise, peace and security issues in the Philippines are the concern of both national level agencies and grassroots level organizations.

WOMEN AND PEACEBUILDING

Through the years, women have found themselves actively involved in brokering peace agreements between warring groups in different parts of the country. Countless women engage in peace building at the grassroots level in their everyday lives, though they remain nameless and faceless to the general public. In the literature on peace building and conflict resolution, the type of peace initiatives where women peace builders in the Philippines are actively involved may be categorized under Track 2 that includes informal and backdoor processes of peace building. Their initiatives may also be categorized under Track 3 that includes peace building at the community and grassroots level. More recently, women peace advocates have also been actively involved in formal peace processes at the national level. This type of involvement is categorized under Track 1 that includes formal and national level peace processes.

It is important to note however that while women are actively involved in all the tracks of peace building and conflict resolution, their participation in Track 1 that entails exercising leadership and decision-making, is conspicuously less compared to the participation in this Track of their male counterparts. It must also be mentioned that women's participation in official and national level peace processes in the Philippines is a result of the advocacy of a few women who are in high-level government positions. It is never institutionalized as a policy. UN SCR 1325 would help ease the gender inequality in decision-making at all levels through its provision on strengthening the leadership role of women in peace building.

It is equally important to note that the active involvement of women in all the different tracks in peace building and conflict resolution should not be attributed to their nature as women. Women are not essentially more peace-loving than men. Society, in the course of history and through enduring social institutions, has assigned to women the role of nurturing and peace-making. Peace building is therefore a role expectation reserved to women rather than a trait that is natural to women.

Peace building is an option that could be freely chosen by informed individuals and their communities. Women peace builders should therefore recognize the imperative of sharing the role of peace building with men. Corollarily, the measure of success of women's peace building should not be limited to an increase in the number of women occupying decision-making positions in peace mechanisms and processes. A more important measure of success would be the transformation of institutional practices towards greater equality and fairness and towards greater tolerance and respect for those who may seem different to us.

There is a strong women's movement in the Philippines that has consistently fought against all forms of patriarchy and sexism wherever they may be found. It is to the credit of this vibrant women's movement that legislations pertaining to violence against women have become a priority for government. But while violence against women in the context of personal and intimate relationships remain an urgent issue, addressing violence against women in the context of armed political conflict becomes equally imperative especially if we are not to lose sight of the fact that both are structural in their origins. Thus, aside from the issues of prostitution and sex trafficking as well as domestic violence, violence against women in the context of armed political conflicts should also

become a priority legislative agenda for both government and civil society organizations. Effectively harmonizing these two concerns into a coherent or into parallel policy agenda remains a challenge to women peace advocates and their organizations.

CRAFTING A NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN *TURNING RESOLVE INTO MATERIAL GAINS FOR WOMEN AND PEACE*

It has been noted during the national workshop that it has been seven years since UN SCR 1325 has been adopted but still only a few know about its existence. The Philippine government has yet to commit itself to the full implementation of UN SCR 1325 at the national and local levels. At best, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) has organized two workshops for gender-responsive peace building in cooperation with the World Bank. The NCRFW has also formulated a Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development, which contains provisions that may relate to the intentions of UNSCR 1325. However, both initiatives have not yet explicitly laid out specific mechanisms towards the full implementation of UNSCR 1325. The PPGD in particular is hindered by its mandated focus on socio-economic programs which the present government administration considers as the key to peace building.

The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process claims that there are now more women who are involved in formal peace processes at the national level as women peace advocates have been appointed as members of government peace panels. The office also claims that it has earmarked part of its budget to support the conduct of gender sensitivity trainings. Still, the OPAPP has not yet integrated the full implementation of UN SCR 1325 into its national peace plan.

Participants at the national workshop agree that a specific government agency that could be mandated and held accountable to the full implementation of UN SCR 1325 needs to be identified. The NCRFW is recognized to be the lead government agency in the promotion of women's agenda that allows it to coordinate with different government agencies. However, the NCRFW cannot demand direct operational control over the implementation of specific policies and programs which are coursed through other government agencies. It is not a department level agency which means it does not participate in high-level decision-making. This also reflects the fact that the Philippine government's commitment to gender mainstreaming and equality is mere lip service. On the other hand, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, as part of the Cabinet, may insist on having direct operational control over policies and programs related to women and peace building. However, the OPAPP should assert itself into the Cabinet's security cluster.

Given all these, it becomes clear that it is not enough to have a policy framework that promotes women's empowerment and peace building. Unless this policy framework is translated into a substantive and robust action plan, the policy framework will remain useless in promoting women's empowerment and gender justice. Civil society organizations need to claim UN SCR 1325 as an important tool for women's participation in all levels of decision-making on peace and security issues, and demand its full implementation from government. They need to work hand-in-hand with various other stakeholders to build a strong constituency base for the Resolution. While the UN SCR 1325 as a policy framework is universal in its utility and application, the effective implementation of its provisions requires an examination of the specific context within which the full implementation of the policy framework would take place.

TOWARDS FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF UNSCR 1325 IN THE PHILIPPINES

In an effort to build basic unities regarding the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the Philippines, participants at the national workshop were asked to join workshop clusters where they could discuss and debate with other participants. The organizers of the national workshop identified key provisions of UN SCR 1325 around which workshop clusters were formed. Participants in the national workshop were thus grouped into three workshop clusters:

Cluster A: ensuring women's participation in peace processes and conflict resolution bodies and processes

Cluster B: promotion of a gender perspective in all areas related to peace processes and conflict resolution

Cluster C: addressing the special needs/the protection of women in conflict resolutions

Each workshop cluster analyzed existing gaps that hinder the full implementation of specific UN SCR 1325 provisions. Specifically, each workshop cluster was asked to discuss gaps in terms of governance structure including the mechanisms for government and civil society partnership; and in terms of policy/program coherence at different levels of governance. Each workshop cluster was also asked to formulate recommendations, which would help bridge these gaps and to identify concrete actions, which they could undertake after the national workshop towards the full implementation of UN SCR 1325.

Common themes which emerged from the three workshop clusters are as follows:

1] There is a need to mandate a specific government agency to be the leading and accountable government agency for the full implementation of UN SCR 1325.

Participants in the national workshop arrived at a consensus that the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process should be mandated as the lead government agency for the full implementation of UN SCR 1325. While the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women is mandated to coordinate with government agencies on the basis of its cross-cutting agenda, the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, as a regular member of the Cabinet, has more clout in relation to other agencies in the Executive branch.

2] There is a need for a National Action Plan for the full implementation of the UNSCR 1325.

While there are already existing processes and mechanisms for both women's empowerment and peace building, there is still no explicit policy and program and concrete implementation mechanisms that would strengthen women's participation in all tracks of peace building or that would promote women's agenda in conflict resolution. For example, the National Peace Plan which is part of the Medium-Term Development Plan for 2004-2010 is deafeningly silent on women's role in peace building. Moreover, many provisions of the Human Security Act of 2007, specifically those pertaining to the suspension of human rights in emergency situations, seem to contradict the essential provisions of UN SCR 1325, which insists on the protection of women's and children's rights even in situations of violent conflict. Evidently, there is apparent incoherence in government policies and programs, which relate to women's empowerment and peace building.

3] There is a need for civil society coalition to champion the full implementation of UN SCR 1325.

UN SCR 1325 is an important tool for women's empowerment and peace building, which was borne out of the persistence and resilience in struggle of both the women's movement and the peace movement. But UN SCR 1325, as a tool, can only be truly useful if it was effectively and appropriately employed. As noted earlier, the effective and full implementation of UN SCR 1325 rests largely on the vigilance and active mobilization of civil society organizations.

4] There is a need to institutionalize a mechanism through which government and civil society coordination could materialize.

The orchestration of efforts to fully implement the provisions of UN SCR 1325 is best achieved through regular and transparent dialogues between government and civil society organizations, who are all stakeholders in strengthening women's participation in peace building. The institutionalization of communication channels between government and civil society should not be limited to the appointment of women peace advocates from civil society into government positions. What needs to be built are governance institutions where the autonomy of each participating sector could still be maintained.

5] There is a need to increase the awareness government, civil society, and the general public on the provisions and implications of UNSCR 1325.

One important achievement of the national workshop was the increased awareness of participants on the provisions and implications of UNSCR 1325 and their consensus on the need to expand the reach of awareness-building regarding this policy framework. Participants agree that many of their colleagues in the agencies which they represent are still unaware of UN SCR 1325. They also agree that the existing gaps and incoherence in governance structures, policies and programs may be attributed to a lack of awareness or appreciation of the bases, objectives, and provisions of UNSCR 1325. Participants recognize that the process of awareness-raising could also be an important process for consensus-building on specific tasks which may be undertaken towards the effective and full implementation of the UNSC Resolution. Thus, awareness-raising efforts should not be limited to top-level tiers of leadership; it should also reach down to the grassroots where women's role in peace building is experienced as part of everyday life.

WAYS FORWARD: AN IMMEDIATE PLAN OF ACTION

In addressing the needs identified heretofore, participants in the national workshop agreed to immediately undertake the following specific tasks:

1. Meet with the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process.
2. Conduct dialogues with government agencies that have strategic roles in peace building, such as the Department of National Defense, the Philippine National Police, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the Department of Interior and Local Government.
3. Lobby for the designation of OPAPP as lead agency in implementing UN SCR 1325
4. Initiate the formation of a Government – Civil Society working group on Resolution 1325.
5. Conduct a stakeholders' strategic planning conference.
6. Conduct seminars and trainings on UN SCR 1325.

Participants in the national workshop were also able to identify general tasks that need to be continuously addressed not only to ensure the full implementation of UNSCR 1325, but more importantly to consolidate the gains of women's peace building efforts in the Philippines.

1] On Institution Building and Training

- Immediately enhance women's leadership skills by giving them fast-track trainings.
- Women peace advocates should consciously expand the network of gender-sensitive men by conducting more gender sensitivity training seminars for men, and to actively tap this network in pursuing gender-sensitive peace building.
- Insights from the long and rich experience of women peace advocates should be consciously documented and disseminated to the younger generation to ensure institutional continuity and development.

2] On Research

- Conduct studies related to women and peace building. For example, analyze the impact of women's inclusion in institutions that were previously exclusive for men (e.g. military, police, peacekeeping forces, etc). It would be instructive to find out how women's inclusion has led to substantive changes in outlook and practices in previously exclusively male institutions, or why women's inclusion has failed to transform these institutions. Another example would be to analyze gaps in terms of positions held by women in peace building mechanisms.

3] On Policy Advocacy

- Continue policy advocacy at the national level while maintaining close links with communities at the sub-national level.
- Identify women peace advocates and lobby for their inclusion in decision-making mechanisms and processes related to peace building.
- Civil society organizations should clarify how the armed conflict is a specific context where intense violence against women could be found, and should thus be treated as an equally urgent legislative agenda. Women peace advocates should consciously define their common ground for action with advocacy efforts revolving around violence against women.

4] On Media/Public Advocacy

- Women peace advocates should recognize that mass media are in a strategic position to disseminate information about UN SCR 1325 in particular and in creating the discourse on the role of women in peace building in general.
- Organize UN SCR 1325 training for media practitioners.
- Women peace advocates should continuously work with media towards building a network of women peace advocates among media practitioners.
- Media need to monitor the implementation or the violations of UNSCR 1325.
- Media's images of women should change from women as victims to women as powerful agents who have rights and legitimate claims.

CONCLUSION

The one-day national workshop turned out to be a crucial first step towards crafting a national action plan for the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the Philippines. The most significant achievements of the brief but very productive national workshop include the following:

1] Participants gained understanding of the history, objectives, key provisions, and status of implementation of UNSCR 1325, thus building an initial support group for further awareness-raising initiatives.

2] Participants were given a venue to collectively analyze the impediments to the full implementation of UNSCR 1325, and to identify specific steps that they could collectively undertake.

3] Participants were able to form among themselves a cross-sectoral network composed of women's organizations, civil society groups, government agencies, academe, media and faith-based organizations which would initiate succeeding activities, thus ensuring the sustainability of efforts towards the full implementation of UN SCR 1325.

4] Participants were able to arrive at a consensus that the OPAPP should be mandated as the lead agency in the full implementation of UNSCR 1325, thus identifying an initial basis for further advocacy campaigns.

ONGOING ADVOCACY

Following the national workshop in December 2007, Sulong CARHRIHL, NCRFW, OPAPP and IWTC have held several meetings to follow through on the workshop recommendations. A draft of an Executive Order CREATING A COMMITTEE FOR WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY that will be presented to Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for approval and signature has been formulated. There have also been initial discussions with members and staff of the Philippine House of Representatives regarding a parallel legislative advocacy.

The next immediate steps in the development of a 1325 national action plan in the Philippines is the organizing of a national conference on 1325 and development of monitoring mechanisms and indicators. The national conference on 1325 hopes to build a broad constituency of peace activists and advocates working towards the full implementation of Resolution 1325 in the Philippines. There is also a keen interest to develop national monitoring mechanisms and indicators for 1325 Implementation. The various peace and security stake holders in the Philippines have repeatedly expressed commitment to ensure that the Philippine national action plan on Resolution 1325 will actually make a difference in the lives of women in conflict-affected areas. The monitoring mechanisms and indicators are seen as an instrument that will guarantee that the 1325 national action plan will not be just another policy that will not be enforced.

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