

Getting Some Action Implementing National Action Plans on SCR 1325

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UNIFEM UK, with support from UNIFEM National Committees in other countries, organised a very successful parallel meeting at this year's session of the Commission on the Status of Women. It offered an opportunity to showcase good practice in implementing Security Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, particularly in relation to establishing National Action Plans. The event was sponsored by the UK Mission to the UN and was also supported by the UK National Alliance of Women's Organisations. Wendi Momen, Secretary of UNIFEM UK, chaired the meeting and the opening address was given by Joanne Sandler, Acting Executive Director of UNIFEM.



Zarin Hainsworth (UNIFEM UK), Wendi Momen (UNIFEM UK) and Simone Ovar (UNIFEM in Italy)

Joanne Sandler began by saying that the 52nd session of CSW this year was a momentous one as the priority theme of **Financing for Gender Equality** relates to all aspects of empowering women and especially to **Security Council Resolution 1325** on women, peace and security. The resolution may have been adopted and its 8th anniversary commemorated but so far not enough has been done to implement it. This has had dire consequences for women in areas of conflict and post conflict. Joanne stressed that implementation must be addressed and monitored in detail and that more women need to be involved in peace and reconstruction processes.

Zarin Hainsworth, President of UNIFEM UK, explained that all governments are required by SCR 1325 to draw up National Action Plans for implementing it. She gave an overview of progress so far and considered what such a Plan should contain. Above all, it must be specific and Zarin gave gender training as an example. Detailed standards must be laid down such as the content and method of delivery, how much training is to be given and how it is to be evaluated.

The UK National Action Plan has a structure that allows non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to have a real say. A coalition of NGOs (Gender Action for Peace and Security) has been set up to lobby and educate, an all-party parliamentary group on 1325 has been established, there is a cross-Whitehall (government departments) group to ensure that departmental specialists monitor progress, and there will be quarterly meetings between the government and NGO representatives.

Simone Ovar of the **UNIFEM National Committee in Italy** began by saying that the end of conflict does not always mean the end of violence. She outlined some of the Italian government's efforts to address the implementation of SCR 1325. It is working in Iraq and Afghanistan on post conflict gender issues, particularly those pertaining to health and the judicial system as well as women's human rights overall. It is also working in Lebanon and Somalia, countries with historical links to Italy. In addition, and separate from government efforts, the local council of the city of Turin has specified that 1325 is something they should be actively supporting.

Mehri Afsahi from the **UNIFEM National Committee in Sweden** gave a brief exposition of the Swedish story on 1325 implementation which began in 2003. An umbrella organisation was set up with a remit to provide information, advocacy and awareness raising for which they received government financial support. NGOs collaborate to increase lobbying power and to build relations with the government. A vital step in developing a National Action Plan was organising training sessions for 150 women who then went on to lead study circles on the issues of women, peace and security. Internationally Sweden has involved women from diverse backgrounds in interacting with other countries, including those with conflict situations such as Sudan. The idea was to create space for meeting, training and exchanging ideas.

Junko Sasaki from the **UNIFEM National Committee in Japan** said that her country had not yet drawn up a National Action Plan and its situation could best be described as emerging along this path. In 2007 the Japanese Mission to the UN acknowledged that 1325 must be implemented but wanted to ensure this would happen in a structured and orderly fashion. UNIFEM and other NGOs have good relationships with the Gender Equality Bureau of the Japanese government and there is evidence of national awareness raising. As well as providing finance to help peacekeeping in several countries, Japan sent a female peacekeeping force to East Timor.

Delegates from a number of other countries contributed to the discussion and there was particular interest in a report from **Cote d'Ivoire** where a National Action Plan was adopted in December 2007. This followed a great deal of preliminary work by many NGOs, including collaboration with UNIFEM. The Plan has four main elements: protection of women and girls against violence, involving women in decision making processes, equal participation by women and men in post-conflict reconstruction and increased capacity (women and men) in the reconstruction process. SCR 1325 has been translated into local languages and also into pictures for people who are not literate.

Themes emerging from the discussion included -

- The lack of women in senior decision making positions - which often require field experience that women typically do not have
- The need to involve both government and civil society and to use mechanisms such as education, awareness raising and lobbying to bring the two together in implementing 1325
- The importance of NGOs in influencing peacekeeping processes
- The need to ensure that National Action Plans are not static and that implementation of 1325 is properly funded

Speaking after the meeting Zarin Hainsworth said "1325 is a groundbreaking international instrument. We need to continue to make it stronger by ensuring its implementation in all areas of governance including in troop supplying countries, conflict and post conflict regions, and countries supplying personnel to the UN. We must work to ensure that within the UN structure itself all the articles become a reality in action as well as wonderful ideals."

