

Security Agenda

20 Years

Implementation

UNSCR 1325 @ 20

Past challenges

Resolution

Women

Future Possibilities



Future Possibilities

Past challenges

Peace

Future Possibilities

Security Agenda

# Policy Brief

*UNSCR 1325 at 20: Past challenges and Future Possibilities of Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*

## Introduction

This policy brief sets out an analysis of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, the inaugural resolution of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, which is now in its 20th year. The brief commences with an overview of the significance of UNSCR 1325. In assessing the Agenda's achievements over the past 20 years, the policy brief takes a critical lens, providing a snapshot of barriers which have impeded successful WPS implementation. The brief concludes with four key considerations for WPS implementation going forward, so that the Agenda can effectively contribute towards creating sustainable peace, justice and security for all women across the globe.



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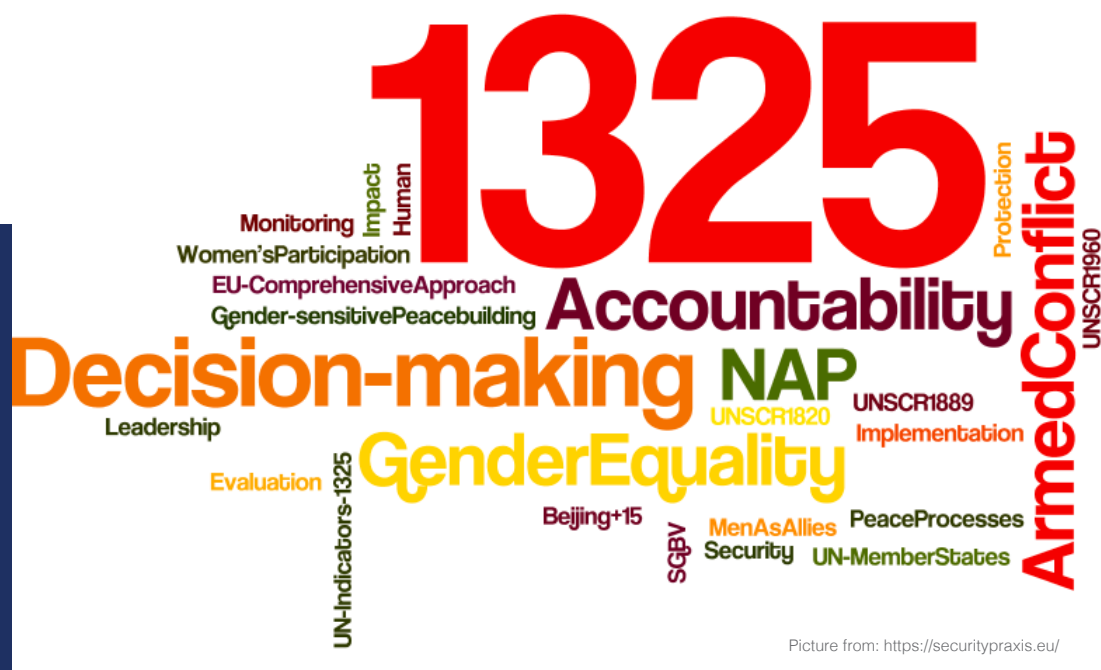
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## UNSCR 1325 at 20: Past challenges and future possibilities of implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda



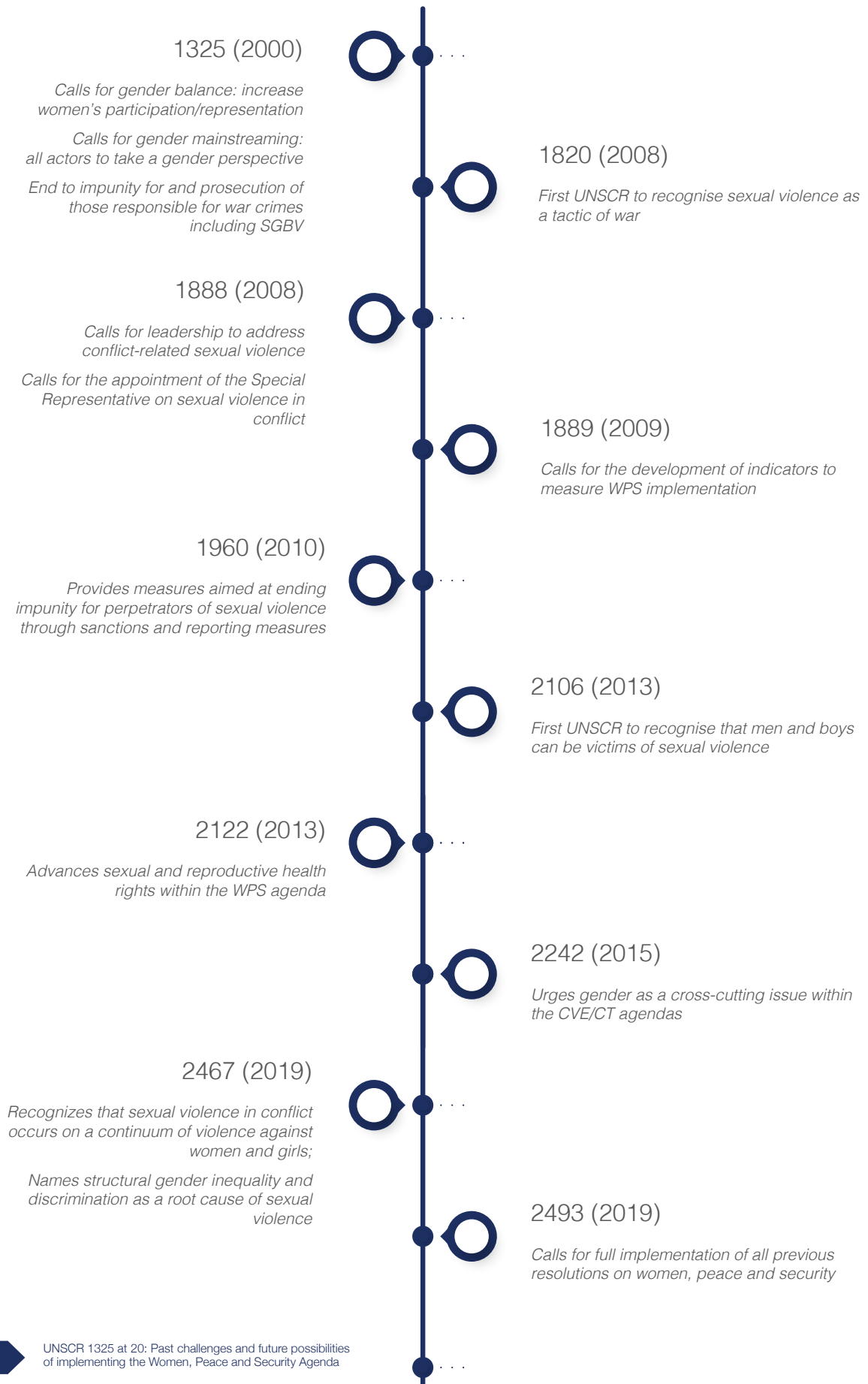
### What is the significance of UNSCR 1325?

UNSCR 1325 is the inaugural UN Security Council Resolution on WPS, and its adoption in 2000 by the UN Security Council marked the creation of the WPS Agenda. Arising from a long history of feminist activism from civil society, UNSCR 1325 is described as being much more than a number or a resolution. UNSCR 1325 has been hailed as a historic watershed political framework that shows how women and a gender perspective are relevant and necessary to negotiating peace agreements, achieving justice and accountability for victims of sexual and gender-based violence, planning refugee camps and peacekeeping operations and reconstructing war-torn societies for sustainable peace.<sup>1</sup> Structured around four pillars of participation, protection, prevention, relief and recovery, the Agenda aims not only to 'highlight the experiences of women within the contemporary global security architecture, but to fundamentally transform that architecture'.<sup>2</sup>

1 A. Swaine, (2009) 'Assessing the Potential of National Action Plans to Advance Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325)', *Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law*, 12, 403-433.

2 K. Lee-Koo, (2016) 'Engaging UNSCR 1325 through Australia's National Action Plan', *International Political Science Review*, 37(3), 337-8.

Now, the WPS Agenda is a global policy framework made up of 10 UN Security Council resolutions:



The obligations in the resolutions extend from the international to the national level. They guide work to promote and protect the rights of women in conflict and post-conflict situations. Additionally, as binding Security Council resolutions, they should be implemented by all Member States and relevant actors, including UN system entities and parties to conflict.

The resolutions call on member states to implement their commitments under the Agenda in a variety of ways, including through shifts in domestic, regional and international policy. The implementation of the WPS agenda is tracked through the “UN Strategic Framework on Women, Peace and Security 2011-2020” which includes targets and a set of global indicators adopted by the Security Council that cover each of the four pillars.

## UNSCR 1325 at 20

# 20 years on, what has UNSCR 1325 achieved?



*...The pandemic has resulted in economic crises across the world, resulting in additional resource limitations and a shift in government funding priorities...”*

In many respects, the achievements have been limited, described by some as ‘a mixed but generally disappointing record’,<sup>3</sup> stemming from a failure of political will, inadequate funding, and ad hoc methods of implementation. In the Agenda’s 20<sup>th</sup> year, it is clear that there remains an enduring gap between the normative advances of women, peace and security and actual implementation on the ground. Despite many global and regional commitments and initiatives, ‘the number of women involved in formal peacemaking processes remains low; and many peace agreements do not include gender provisions that sufficiently address women’s security and peacebuilding needs’.<sup>4</sup>

This is perhaps because there is currently no enforceable mechanism to hold states accountable when they fail to implement the WPS resolutions. COVID-19 has also presented additional challenges to WPS implementation, not only because of the way the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities. The pandemic has resulted in economic crises across the world, resulting in additional resource limitations and a shift in government funding priorities. In many instances, this has meant that funding for WPS implementation has significantly decreased.

3 P. Kirby & L. Shepherd, (2016) ‘The futures past of the Women, Peace and Security agenda’, *International Affairs*, Volume 92, Issue 2, March 2016, 374.

4 DPPA, (2019) Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, ‘Women, Peace and Security’, available at <https://dppa.un.org/en/women-peace-and-security>, accessed 1 December 2020.

It is interesting to observe that National Action Plans (NAPs) have emerged as the primary mode of WPS implementation for member states. This can be linked back to statements made by UN Security Council President in 2002,<sup>5</sup> and the UN Secretary-General in 2004<sup>6</sup> who both invited member states to prepare NAPs to commence their implementation of UNSCR 1325. Since that time, 86 countries have adopted a National Action Plan in support of UNSCR 1325 (as of September 2020), constituting 45% of all UN Member States, with many countries now on their second and third iterations.<sup>7</sup> There are 11 Regional Action Plans (RAPs) in place.



*...86 countries have adopted a National Action Plan in support of UNSCR 1325 (as of September 2020)...*

Notwithstanding widespread adoption of NAPs, many gaps remain between ‘their promise and their capacity to facilitate safer, more stable local communities’.<sup>8</sup> This is largely due to the fact that many NAPs are not inclusive in their design, have minimal budget allocation and inadequate resourcing, poor transparency regarding monitoring and evaluation processes, and are accompanied by limited political will.<sup>9</sup> Funding remains a critical impediment to meaningful implementation. Of the 86 NAPs adopted to date, only 28 (33%) include an allocated budget for implementation.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, in many instances, the creation of a NAP has become more about a box ticking exercise rather than a substantive commitment to implementing the WPS Agenda.

5 UNSC, ‘Presidential Statement on Women, Peace and Security’, S/PRST/2002/32, 31 October 2002.

6 UN Secretary General, ‘Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security’, S/2004/814, 13 October 2004.

7 WILPF, National Action Plans of Member States, available at: <https://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>, accessed 1 December 2020.

8 M. Jacevic, (2018) ‘WPS, States, and the National Action Plans’, *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, edited by S. Davies & J. True, Oxford University Press, 273.

9 Ibid, see also F. Gumru & J. Fritz. 2010. ‘Women, Peace and Security: An Analysis of the National Action Plans Developed in Response to UN Security Council Resolution 1325.’ *Societies Without Borders* 4 (2): 209-225.

10 See above note 5.



*...There has also been significant criticism of the overwhelming focus on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) at the expense of other forms of gendered violence..”*

Further, a concerning trend has emerged where the NAPs of some countries (represented in the Global North), are outward focused, and instead are transformed into tools of foreign policy rather than focusing on insecurity faced by women in their own countries. This is in stark contrast to the NAPs of countries in the Global South which are almost exclusively focused on domestic issues. In this way, the design and implementation of many NAPs – who is involved, who is the subject of the plan, who is left out – has meant that NAPs themselves can become sites of political contestation, and raise broader questions about the purpose and scope of the WPS Agenda.

There has also been significant criticism of the overwhelming focus on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) at the expense of other forms of gendered violence.<sup>11</sup> In particular, the almost exclusive focus on CRSV in a number of Resolutions obscures everyday sexual and gender-based violence and positions CRSV as an extraordinary form violence, rather than viewing it through a continuum. This was somewhat rectified with the adoption of UNSCR 2467 in 2019 which recognised, for the first time in the WPS resolutions, that gendered violence occurs on a continuum that spans across times of peace, conflict and post-conflict reconstruction. This is a welcome but long overdue inclusion in the WPS agenda and reflects contemporary feminist thinking on violence and gendered insecurity.<sup>12</sup>

The absences and silences within the texts of the resolutions also have had consequences for WPS implementation. In particular, the exclusive focus on women (which is not defined), and no mention of transpeople, an erasure of Indigenous perspectives, little consideration given to women with disability and an overarching theme of heteronormativity has almost certainly impacted the design of WPS programming and the effectiveness of implementation. Going forward, it is essential that WPS practitioners interrogate these issues of 'inclusion and exclusion of troubled representations ... to allow for the identification of sites of contestation and offer a better understanding of the everyday needs and experiences of those the WPS Agenda regulates'.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See above note 3.

<sup>12</sup> R. Sigsworth & N. Valji, (2011) 'Continuities of Violence against Women and the Limitations of Transitional Justice' in S. Buckley-Zistel and R. Stanley (eds.), *Gender in Transitional Justice*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 115. See also, C. Cockburn, (2004) 'The Continuum of Violence A Gender Perspective on War and Peace', in Ed. W. Giles, *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones*, University of California Press, 24-44.

<sup>13</sup> M. de Almagro (2018) 'Producing Participants: Gender, Race, Class, and Women, Peace and Security', *Global Society*, 32:4, 395.





## Future directions of UNSCR 1325

'UNSCR 1325 was not designed to change women's lives within a static context, but to change the context itself in order to create organic possibilities for women's human security.'<sup>14</sup>

While it is imperative to interrogate the failings of the WPS Agenda, the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 also provides a ripe opportunity to discuss its future direction. Legal Action Worldwide highlights the following four key considerations in designing future pathways of WPS implementation.



### Grassroots WPS implementation

- Critical to the Agenda's future success is ensuring that voices from the grassroots are heard. It is essential that affected communities are centrally involved in the design of WPS programming as well as taking into account insights and lessons learnt from those who are actually implementing UNSCR 1325 on the ground.
- In some circumstances, this may necessitate a shift from a state-centric mode of WPS implementation to community-driven localisation initiatives. These initiatives are 'people-based, bottom-up strategies that are based on the premise that local ownership and participation leads to more effective policy making and policy implementation'.<sup>15</sup>
- This also requires creative and innovative approaches to WPS messaging to ensure that the Agenda can be understood and contextualised to meet the needs of affected communities.



### Intersectional approach

- An intersectional approach to WPS programming is essential. Not all women (or all men) share the same needs and perspectives; rather, these are deeply shaped by gender, class, religion, age, ethnicity, sexuality and other factors. Each of these factors will play a role in shaping an individual's identity, experiences, and perspective.
- Different identities may not only impact victims' experiences of violence; they can also intersect to compound the obstacles victims may face in seeking accountability, justice, and redress.



*...UNSCR 1325 was not designed to change women's lives within a static context, but to change the context itself in order to create organic possibilities for women's human security..."*

<sup>14</sup> Koo-Lee, above note 2, 338.

<sup>15</sup> A. Fal-Dutra Santos, (2018) 'From Best Practice Example to a Standard Practice: Conference on the Localization of UNSCR 1325 and Supporting Resolutions', *Global Network of Peacebuilders*, available at <http://peacewomen.org/node/101319>, accessed 2 December 2020.



- When designing projects aimed at WPS implementation, it is critical not to generalize across diverse populations, but rather to consider the ways that a range of factors can impact individual and group perspectives. Who can and expects to be given the protection of the state?



*...This requires a commitment from member states to allocate budgets and adequately fund planning, implementation and evaluation of WPS projects...”*



### *Funding*

- An Agenda cannot be implemented if it is not appropriately funded.
- This requires a commitment from member states to allocate budgets and adequately fund planning, implementation and evaluation of WPS projects, ensuring there are sufficient resources for consultations with affected communities and civil society.
- A significant amount of WPS programming to date has been focused on participation. Member states need to also ensure that there is adequate funding for WPS implementation programming across all four pillars, in particular prevention and relief and recovery.
- Given governments are dealing with competing priorities, made more complex by COVID-19, it is crucial that WPS practitioners are able to design effective advocacy messages to communicate to government as to why funding WPS programming remains a necessity. Civil society must be able to demonstrate to government how effectively funding WPS projects can contribute to a country's economic recovery and can benefit the entire country as a whole.



### *A cautious approach to further resolutions*

- Given the ad hoc and limited implementation of the WPS Agenda to date, Legal Action Worldwide cautions against the adoption of further resolutions, until significant progress is made with regard to implementing the existing resolutions.
- As the Agenda remains largely unimplemented, future resolutions may be seen as more empty promises to affected communities and jeopardise the integrity of the Agenda.
- Additional resolutions also risk watering down or backsliding of achievements in earlier resolutions, particularly in contentious areas such as sexual and reproductive rights.



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