

Chapter 5

Gender Mainstreaming in Security

Local ownership of security requires that all women, men, girls, boys, as well as lesbians, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex people (LGBTI) contribute to defining security threats and strategies. People affected by sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) may have different security needs depending on their gender identity. SGBV includes psychological or emotional violence such as sexual harassment, rape and sexual abuse, child sexual abuse, child marriage, female genital cutting, marital rape, dowry-related violence, female infanticide, killing of females because they are females, forced prostitution, sex trafficking, and sexual violence used during war. SGBV is directed against a person on the basis of their biological sex or their social gender roles. Males commit most SGBV violence. Females experience high levels of SGBV. Males can also experience SGBV. People with same sex sexuality, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer or other sexual identities also experience high degrees of SGBV. Gender mainstreaming includes the use of a gender sensitive analysis of threats, gender inclusion in the security sector, and gender accountability on security issues.

Gender Sensitivity

Gender-sensitive programming began in the 1990s to provide targeted protection services for women and girls suffering from gender-based violence. The security sector should be sensitive to sexual and gender-based violence. Security research should disaggregate data according to gender and sexual identity.

Observers of the first wave of gender sensitive programming questioned the agenda's exclusive focus on women and girls, pointing out that men and boys who share households with female victims may also suffer from the consequences of gender-based violence against women. Men, boys and LGBTI individuals may be victims of violence themselves and require assistance. There may also be a need to re-create non-violent social identities for male perpetrators of violence that harmonise with the new responsibilities that women have taken on. Organisations such as International Alert and Saferworld have been a pioneers of this so-called "gender-relational" approach that looks at gender as a dynamic concept shaped by individuals' relations to opposite genders as well as other factors such as age, social class, ethnic or religious background, geography, disability or marital status. A critical pre-requisite for gender mainstreaming of security is the transformation of those cultural attitudes that endorse and promote SGBV. Many peacebuilding organisations focus their work in this area. They encourage security actors, victims, perpetrators and society at large to question gender stereotypes that promote targeted abuses against women and men and re-invent alternative role models. For example, some societies may glorify physical aggression as a means to

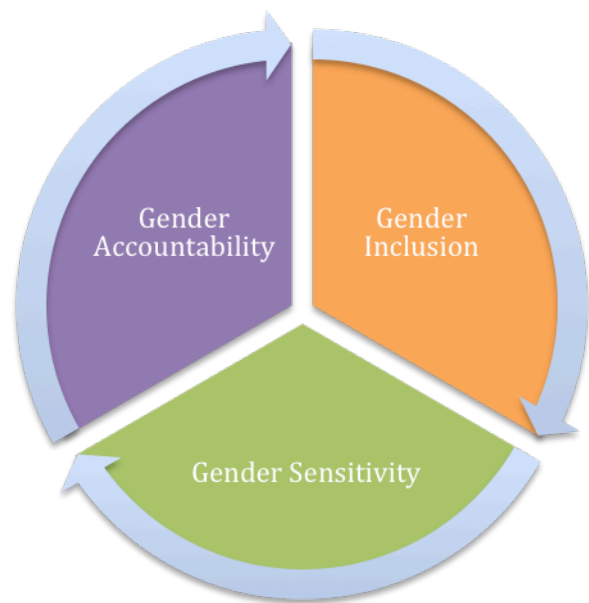


Figure 17: Gender Mainstreaming in Security

achieving manhood or submissive silence as an ideal of womanhood, and such values make the unreported occurrence of male violence against women more likely. Peacebuilding organisations encourage all stakeholders to abandon ideals that increase the likelihood of abuses and adopt and propagate new forms of behaviour that are equally respectful to all genders.

Gender Inclusion

It became clear that it was not enough for the mostly male security institutions to be sensitive to SGBV. Security institutions also needed to be more gender inclusive. With the advent of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in UN Security Resolution 1325 in 2000, the equitable inclusion of women into peace processes and post-conflict institution building became a second priority for gender mainstreaming in security. And observers again noted the need to broaden the understanding of gender.

Security forces should include women and people of diverse gender identities at every level. Members of police, army, courts and correctional facilities can all play an important role in preventing, addressing and ending the occurrence of sexual and gender-based violence. Male and female security actors can contribute to improving monitoring and reporting of gender-based violence, providing support services for victims, facilitating access to justice for victims, ensuring appropriate penal procedures for perpetrators, and raising awareness of gender-based violence among the population at large. Since justice and security sector actors have been seen to be perpetrating gender-based violence themselves, they have an even greater responsibility to set an example and work towards stopping abuses.

Women have a fundamental human right to participate in justice and security institutions. But there is also a more pragmatic argument for female participation. Female security actors may bring different skills and perceptions. Because of their gender socialisation, female security personnel may have more practice in listening and respecting victims. When working as police women, judges or prison guards, women are seen to be more likely to encourage victims who are hesitant to report abuses and less likely to let perpetrators off the hook.

Since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, many countries have committed to National Action Plans (NAPs) to ensure the more equitable representation of women in justice and security institutions. These institutions have been recruiting and positioning women on all levels of the police, army, and penal system and providing them with more career opportunities and professional development. Inclusion has also happened at the program-level. DDR programmes for example have been giving increasing attention to women, offering them vocational alternatives or financial plans and involving them in the planning and execution of weapons collection and reintegration programs. These efforts are seen to broaden local ownership and establish more legitimacy for on-going justice and security reforms.

Gender accountability: Mechanisms for oversight of the security sector should include people of diverse gender identities. Oversight boards and complaint hotlines also need to be able to hold the security sector to account for providing security as a public good to all people, regardless of their gender identity. Trained staff of representative of different genders should staff these mechanisms so they can process complaints effectively and hold offenders of SGBV accountable. People of diverse genders should participate in security reviews of national and local security sector performance and be able to influence security policymaking.

The following case studies show how peacebuilding organisations approach SGBV and the inclusion of women in different contexts.

Fiji: Women, Peace And Security in Security and Defence Policy

With Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls

On 19 May 2000, following the civilian led overthrow of the Labour Party led government the first step for a core group of women was to convene on May 21 what became known as the Blue Ribbon Peace Vigil. Because of the recurring role military in addressing instability in Fiji, women began to negotiate and communicate directly with the security forces. The National Council of Women Fiji made contact with the military, and as a result, the commander of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces brought together the members of the military council and other senior officers to meet with the representatives of the Peace Vigil.

The women's delegation presented what has become known as "The Women's Letter" to outline various suggestions, particularly the need for Fiji to return to parliamentary democracy, respect human rights, and uphold the 1997 Constitution as the supreme law of the country. The Fijian military received the "women's letter" respectfully and favourably. Fijian women's groups learned the importance of using the language of the military and security sector for future dialogue and peace initiatives.

Awareness of the impact of violence on women and women's roles in peace and security had been increasing at the global level with the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and 2122 reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

The challenge:

The security sector was not gender sensitive to women's security concerns and did not include women in security sector roles.

Theory of change:

Women's advocacy and relationship building with the security sector created opportunities for greater dialogue and opportunities for oversight.

Following the return to parliamentary democracy in 2001 local women's rights groups in Fiji such as FEMLINKPacific promoted UNSCR 1325 as a way to engage with the Fiji security sector to advance the growing global "women, peace, and security" agenda. Beginning in 2003, the Women, Peace and Security Fiji Coordinating Committee on 1325 (WPS Fiji) was established, following consultation with the Ministry of Women and a range of women's groups and NGOs including FEMLINKPacific. This built on the efforts of the Blue Ribbon Peace Vigil and focusing on increasing their own capacity to understand national security processes and also to begin raising issues about the transparency and accountability of the process - who was consulted, and what security threats were identified and prioritised.

Fijian women continued to send communication to the Fiji Ministry of Defence outlining that national security must include a sense of safety for women in their homes and communities. Fijian women saw the need to talk about human security as something that not only the military could deliver, but rather it was a societal commitment involving many government agencies, religious leaders, media and civil society groups. The National Security and Defence Review was an opportunity for women's civil society groups to participate in shaping a human security agenda together with the Ministry of Defence. Fijian women began to jointly explore options for women's representation on national security councils and other local or district/provincial level committees and delegations addressing security issues. Together, they documented factors that impede women from participating in security decisions. Fijian women's organisations worked with the state security sector to do the following:

- Provide policy advice on improving transparency, accountability and responsiveness.
- Monitor the implementation of international and regional agreements, as well as national and institutional policies.
- Provide capacity building for oversight bodies on gender issues.
- Identify early warning indicators or security threats and issues facing individuals and communities.
- Facilitate dialogue between local communities and security sector oversight bodies.
- Raise public awareness of how to hold security sector institutions accountable.

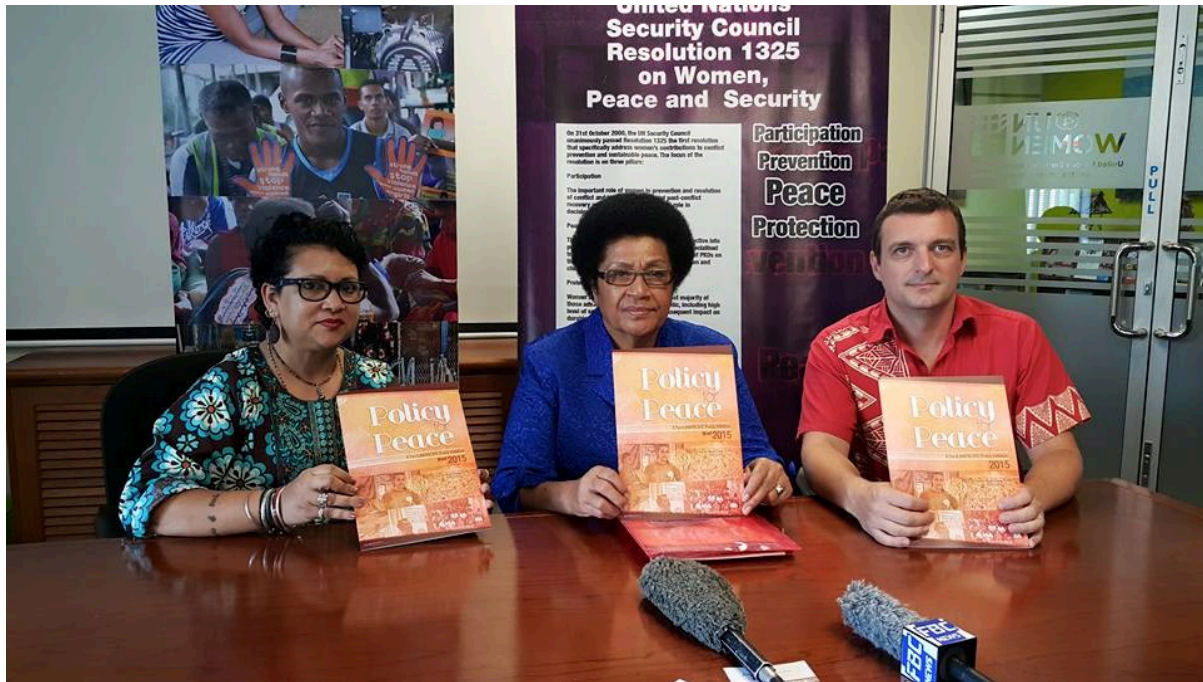


Photo 29: Women, Peace and Security launch of policy report. Photo Credit: FEMLINKPacific

The Fiji Women, Peace and Security Coordinating Committee, together with the National Council of Women, also made formal submissions to the National Security and Defence Review. Recommendations reaffirmed that defence and security is the business of men and women, therefore the organisational mechanism that deals with it should ensure that issues of men and women are given the same level of attention.” The National Security and Defence review provides an opportunity to take corrective measures of existing structures and processes that are out-dated. The women included these recommendations:

- The Minister of Women should be included as a member of the National Security Council;
- The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Women should be included as a permanent member of the National Security Advisory Committee;
- Women should be effectively and equitably represented on Provincial and District Security Committees;
- Women should be included in the National Security Assessment Unit;
- Gender balance in the decision-making levels of the security forces should be ensured and efforts made to recruit women into the Republic of Fiji Military Forces.

Fijian women also noted the importance of environmental security issues such as addressing the negative impact of extractive industries, preparing for natural disasters and the impact of climate change on food and nutrition security. Following the submission of the position paper, the Fijian Ministry of Defence invited the Women, Peace, and Security Coordinating Committee to make a presentation in front of the National Security and Defence Review.

The Ministry of Defence also indicated that they have committed the full implementation and mainstreaming of the fulfilment of state obligations under the UNSCR 1325 into their policies, plans and an integrated approach with Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This gained traction at the regional level and subsequently the UNDP Pacific Centre, in collaboration with PIFS, the University of the South Pacific and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) FEMLINKPacific - as the convenor of a regional network on the 1325 and the Citizens' Constitutional Forum held a series of three regional consultations on human security in 2008, beginning to outline roles and responsibilities of existing institutions to fulfil a human security agenda. The series of regional meetings and documentation contributed to the adoption of the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012 - 2015).

While the WPS CC in Fiji was disbanded, women-led NGOs such as FEMLINKPacific have persisted in engaging on national security policy advocating at national and regional level. Since 2014 the Women's Human Security First campaign and reports has been a basis of advocacy and engagement including a submission to the Hague 2015 National Security Policy review and it should be noted that the Ministry of Defence in Fiji has included a human security approach and implementation of UNSCR 1325 in its Strategic Plan.



Photo 30: Women conducting policy analysis. Photo Credit: FEMLINKPacific

Pakistan: Gender-responsive Policing

By Khola Iram

In response to violent extremist group's attacks on religious places, military and police installations, markets, funeral gatherings and even schools, Pakistani police departments diverted training and resources away from crime prevention toward counterterrorism. The police engaged mainly male officers with negligible if any role of female police. Building public trust in police and improving public-police relations was not a priority. Close collaboration between police and army and the militarisation of the police had further widened the gap between public and police leading to incidents where people took the matters in their own hands. With male officers involved in counterterrorism activities, women police could have been utilised in regular police work to improve public security.

The National Police Bureau acts as a Secretariat of the Ministry of Interior Pakistan and has the mandate to give advisory support to all police organisations on policy formulation and monitors implementation. In response to these challenges, GIZ and the National Police Bureau launched a Gender Responsive Policing Project in July 2009 with a vision to bring a positive change within the institutional landscape. The project worked nationwide through close collaboration with the bureau. The project aimed to provide gender responsive policing services to the community by support equitable participation of both men and women police officers. The main rationale of the programme was to improve the delivery of police services for women, girls, elderly people, children and minorities. It was observed that wherever women were engaged in active policing there was no report of corruption and very few complaints of delayed response. In the presence of female officers, women also no longer abstained from seeking police assistance due to fear or shame.

The program's key activities were the following:

Conducting a Gender Audit

A Gender Audit established a baseline understanding of current levels of gender awareness and sensitivity in the policing practices including recruitment and promotion, training and curricula, procedures and protocols, policies and services etc. Police officers in the mid-management level conducted the audit to ensure that the credibility of results was not questioned. The audit revealed striking gender gaps at all levels. Women police were segregated in women police stations and played an insignificant role in active policing. In response to the gender audit, the project adopted a multipronged approach for improving gender mainstreaming and sensitivity to gender-based violence in policing.

Introducing Gender-sensitive Operating Procedures

With input from police officers across Pakistan, the project developed Standard Operating Procedures for police to deal with women victims of violence. This led to the establishment of Ladies Complaint Units and dedicated women desks inside regular male-dominated police stations to assist women with complainants. For example, more than 60 women's desks were set up in the province of Khyber Pukhtunkhawa. Setting up women desks and ladies complaint units encouraged women to approach police for help, increased reporting of cases of violence against women, and resulted in improved responses to women's complaints.

The challenge:

The lack of gender sensitivity in police departments results in a lack of gender-based violence being reported and addressed, affecting human security for everyone.

Theory of change:

Enhance the role and positions of women within the police force to provide more adequate services for women suffering from gender-based violence.

Conducting Training Programs

The project brought together police training heads from all parts of the country to formulate gender guidelines for training. This enabled the establishment of a uniform countrywide standard of learning for each rank within the police form. Police trainers from police training institutes were trained as gender trainers to sensitise male and female police trainees to provide gender sensitive services to women seeking police assistance. Police received information and training on implementation of laws supporting women's safety from violence, which helps to motivate police officers to offer timely assistance to female victims and to fight crimes against women. The project included modules on gender responsive policing in mandatory police trainings and improved general understanding of gender issues. In addition, the gender trainers modelled new interactive training methodologies to improve the overall training environment.

Improving National Policies and Laws

The National Police Bureau with the technical assistance of the Gender Responsive Policing Project began to develop a Gender Strategy of Police. The project negotiated and mediated spaces for women in police. Despite initial resistance, the 2012 approval of the Gender Strategy of Policy provided national guidance on gender sensitive policing practices and provided a new rationale for gender mainstreaming. The Government of Pakistan had previously announced but had not implemented a 10% quota for women in all public jobs. Through the Gender Strategy of police the project ensured this quota in policing throughout Pakistan. Senior management was convinced to create proper positions for women police in mainstream policing. Police organisations now have to increase vacancies for women since more and more are applying for policing positions.

The Gender Strategy also highlighted that enhancing the role and position of women in active policing was not only a constitutional right of women, it was also an operational necessity to address violence against women. The philosophy behind gender responsive policing was to prevent and control violence at its roots. Gender roles often encourage women to practice using social skills such as empathy, communication and problem solving. The Gender Responsive Policing Project focused on women's strengths in these skill sets to address social problems. Violence against women was seen as a precursor of intolerance in society. Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to run away from home, use violence, seek refuge in drugs, and indulge in criminal activities or other activities that reflect societal intolerance and violence. Safety at home results in safe and tolerant societies.

Preparing Women for their New Role

Parallel activities supported the Gender Strategy. Specialised trainings were organised for women police to enhance their policing skills before negotiating for their enhanced positioning within their departments. A Women Police Network was established providing a platform for women police to table their issues and demand an active role in policing. Motivational workshops were held for women police to help them take pride in their work and stand by each other against all odds. The Women Police Network was linked with international and national organisations for technical assistance and advisory support.

Raising Public Awareness

The project worked with religious scholars, media, civil society, and philanthropists to promote the idea of gender responsiveness in policing practices and improve the acceptance of the role of women in police. National and International conferences were held on gender responsive policing advocating for the enhanced role of women in police for ensuring peaceful societies.

Placing women as role-models into the police forces

The women officers trained in the project were deputed in male police stations. For example, in Punjab Province a few women officers trained by the project were posted to male police stations to work shoulder to shoulder with their male colleagues. In Sindh Province, four

women were made head of male police stations (Station House Officers) and one senior woman was made head of a police district for the first time in the history of Pakistan. Media headlines on their achievements further motivated the women and their colleagues, as well as prospective women who see these female police officers as role models. Nationwide motivational campaigns were organised in girls' colleges and universities to inform them on women protection laws, violation of women rights, and motivating them to join police service to help the helpless in their communities.

Several international and national organisations are now working on gender responsive policing adopting the approach of the Gender Responsive Policing project and building on its successes. Other countries such as Sudan and India are using Pakistan's Gender Strategy of Police as a model for their own work to gender mainstream in policing.



Photo 31: Pakistani police officer working with Sudanese refugees. Photo Credit: CC Flickr/Albert González Farran, UNAMID

Pakistan: Training Women to Participate in Security Sector Policy-Making

Written with Allison Peters

Lack of training and support is a major obstacle to women's participation in security sector policy-making and programming. Security processes often exclude women in their development and implementation and women may need enhanced advocacy capabilities to address this exclusion. Often women in the security sector have no mentors or support networks and are provided little access to the forums that discuss national or local security priorities. Male policy makers may also often lack knowledge about how to craft inclusive security sector policies and programmes.

The Institute for Inclusive Security works through research, training, and advocacy to advance women's inclusion in peace and security processes. The central focus of their policy work and programming is to recruit, retain, and professionalise women in the security sector not just to train women to collaborate with the security sectors. Inclusive Security organises joint workshops and consultations during which women peacebuilders and security actors discuss how to better account for women's needs in security sector reform.

In Pakistan, Inclusive Security and partner organisation PAIMAN Alumni Trust held a series of multi-sectoral capacity building workshops to advance the inclusion of women in the country's policy-making on countering violent extremism (CVE). Inclusive Security and PAIMAN brought together female delegates of civil society from every province with women working in provincial and federal police forces and parliaments in Islamabad.

Based on a training curriculum developed with the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) (see box below for more detail), the initial workshops focussed on the role women can and should play in addressing CVE. These discussions were important to build trust and a common consensus around these issues among the women. Since it was their first opportunity to meet representatives from the other sectors, they needed to increase their understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities and think about how they could jointly contribute to CVE. The second workshop then focused on how they could address or work around the current shortcomings of the security sector in Pakistan. The women were able to formulate specific recommendations to ensure that the national action plan on CVE will give more attention to gender-specific needs and increase the recruitment, retention and professionalisation of women in the police force.

The challenge:

While research indicates policewomen are critical in fighting violent extremism and terrorism, women represent a little over one percent of Pakistan's police forces and remain largely excluded from decision-making processes around these issues.

Theory of change:

Ensuring women's priorities and perspectives are represented in national and provincial security policies and processes will enhance the effectiveness of efforts to counter violent extremism.

The partners equip select Pakistani women leaders in civil society, parliament, and the police to impact processes and dialogues related to countering violent extremism in Pakistan by:

1. Deepening participants understanding of women's roles in countering violent extremism, the existing institutions that develop policies related to security issues, and the impact that they can have on national security processes and dialogues.
2. Connecting participants to other leaders and policymakers in Pakistan, the US, and the region so that they can share information about the role of women in countering violent extremism and build a broader network.

3. Increasing the participants' advocacy skills so that they can effectively advance women's inclusion in security-setting policy processes and institutions, including Pakistan's law enforcement sector.
4. Building cross-sectoral collaborative approaches to increase women's inclusion in countering violent extremism and increase trust and information sharing between sectors.

"A Woman's Guide to SSR"

In collaboration with the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) Inclusive Security has produced a textbook with an accompanying curriculum – "A Woman's Guide to SSR" – which provides women in civil society with knowledge, skills, tools and examples to participate proactively in ongoing SSR processes. The guide explains the main SSR concepts and provides women with options on how to get involved. For example, it explains how to find out about security sector issues, how to approach policy-makers in different institutions, how to build coalitions or how to engage in advocacy. It also provides practical tools such as a list of relevant regional and international legal instruments, glossaries of jargon terms, as well as ample stakeholder maps or meetings agendas.

Nepal: Improving Access to Justice

Written with Joe Whitaker

Although security has improved overall since the peace agreement in 2006, violence against women and girls is perceived to be on the increase in Nepal. Domestic violence is widespread including beatings, intimidations and food rationing by family members or neighbours. But discriminatory socio-cultural practices such as polygamy, child marriage, dowry disputes, limited access to property or citizenship rights or witchcraft accusations are also rampant on the local level.

These grievances are countered by a very weak response from official security and justice actors. Although policy-makers have ratified progressive legislation, discriminatory attitudes or interference by political parties in formal justice institutions prevent many women and girls, in particular those belonging to ethnic minorities, to report their cases. Victims of SGBV may often not read nor speak the language of the court and may feel generally intimidated or discouraged by the formal procedures. Instead, they increasingly turn to informal justice institutions such as traditional village courts or mediation committees. But these informal mechanisms are just as prone to discrimination or interference. Since the state has little oversight over the informal justice sector, they leave the needs of women and girls largely unaddressed and allow perpetrators of serious crimes to evade formal punishment.

In order to improve the state oversight of informal mechanisms and improve access to justice for women and girls in Nepal, International Alert has worked in three main areas:

The challenge:

Discrimination and political interference prevents women from reporting and seeking redress for gender-based violence

Theory of change:

Give informal justice providers better knowledge of the national laws, gender equality norms and their role in respect to the formal sector, so that they will be better able to address the justice needs of victims of gender-based violence more effectively and equitably.

Training Informal Justice Providers

In collaboration with the Supreme Court of Nepal and the National Judicial Academy International Alert worked with two local civil society organisations, the Legal Aid and Consultancy Center (LACC), a legal resource organisation that promotes women's access to justice, and the Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD), an NGO that works for the protection, promotion and enjoyment of human rights. Together they trained almost 500 informal justice providers on the basic principles of Nepal's law and its justice system including international gender and human rights norms. Through the trainings, informal justice providers increased their knowledge and understanding of the formal justice system and the principles on which it operates. They understood their own role within the larger system, their mandate to handle civil disputes, and how they could complement the work of the courts in order to provide more equitable and fair justice, especially to women and girls.

Pushing for Institutional Progress

As part of on-going judicial reform in Nepal, the judiciary created a provision for Continuous Hearing to ensure speedier justice delivery by the courts and reduce large case backlogs. However, for some time this provision had not been implemented at the district level because district judges and court officials lacked a clear understanding of the procedures required to implement it and because of a lack of coordination among the different justice sector actors.

Recognising that justice seekers turned to informal justice providers even for criminal cases because of the speed of their judgements, International Alert collaborated with the Supreme Court to organise briefings for judges in the courts in six districts to discuss how to implement

Continuous Hearing. The briefings resulted in the adoption of the practice of Continuous Hearing by these six courts, demonstrating that justice could be delivered more swiftly in the courts, and eventually official guidance for Nepal's other district courts to replicate this practice.

Raising Public Awareness

International Alert has also been engaging in a broad public outreach campaign in Nepal. The aim is to make female justice seekers aware of their rights and increase their understanding of the justice system. The campaign included discussion programmes on problems of access to justice that were broadcast on radio stations in six districts and a video documentary about access to justice problems related to addressing SGBV that was broadcast on national TV and Facebook. In three districts, International Alert provided public information on women's rights, the law relating to SGBV and justice procedures through a mobile documentary show that reached approximately 500 members of the public in schools and other public meeting places.

One hundred and twenty non-state justice providers took part in exposure visits to courts, police stations, public attorney offices, Women and Children's Development Offices and other parts of the state justice system to demystify state procedures. Participants met with officials, including judges, and in at least one district (Banke), received presentations on how the state providers worked. The visits were also an opportunity for the state providers to request that criminal cases be referred to them and not be handled in the community.

Working with the Women and Children's Development Offices in six districts, International Alert and its partners held twelve public information sessions on the Government's GBV Reduction Fund. This Fund existed but was largely not being used because the local government structures were not sure of how or when to use it. The information session served a dual purpose of helping local government officials and WCDO officers understand how they could use the fund to assist victims of GBV, and gave victims and communities members at large an induction to the Fund and what women could request from local government representatives.



Photo 32: Traditional justice providers in Banke. Photo Credit: Saferworld

DRC: Transforming the Congolese Armed Forces

Written with Lena Slachmuislder

The Democratic Republic of Congo has seen the deadliest conflict since World War II. Following the overthrow of former President Mobutu Sese Seko in 1997, the country was plunged into several civil and regional wars, involving dozens of non-state armed groups battling with remnants of the Congolese army. The result was a death toll reaching 6 million, the destruction of rule of law, and a complete breakdown in the role of the Congolese Armed Forces in their obligation to protect Congolese civilians. The conflict led to the DRC being labelled the “rape capital of the world”⁵⁸ due to the frequency and intensity of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) inflicted by soldiers, non-state armed actors, bandits, criminals and even community members against women and men.

International civil society organisations responded to these extreme abuses largely through condemnation or seeking to use the UN or other international channels to pressure the government to discipline its soldiers. However, this had little effect on the abusive behaviour of the soldiers, and resulted rather in polarizing relationships between the civil society organisations and the Congolese Armed Forces, who felt attacked and not supported by these groups.

In 2006, faced with this situation, Search for Common Ground took another approach, building buy-in from the Congolese Armed Forces themselves for a programme that would use the military’s own in-house capacity to sensitise their own units and build bridges of cooperation with the communities they were meant to protect.

“We began another type of conversation with them. One about enabling them to become protectors, not perpetrators,” explained Lena Slachmuislder, SFCG’s Country Director at the time. “We listened, and heard that deep down, they also wanted to change. They knew that if the communities didn’t trust them, but feared them, that their own security was in danger. And they weren’t proud of their record of abuses. We created educational tools to resonate with the soldiers’ sense of self-esteem.”⁵⁹

SFCG also recognised that part of the obstacle was deep trauma and resulting prejudice and stereotypes by the communities, particularly in eastern DRC. These attitudes prevented the type of information sharing and collaboration that the soldiers depended upon to be able to effectively combat the armed groups and protect the communities under attack. The programme was thus designed to seek to change the perceptions by these communities, and have them participate in the overall reform process of the security sector in the DRC.

The challenge:

Security actors are perpetrators of violence and local communities fear them.

Theory of change:

When the security forces have the in-house capacity and appropriate tools to sensitise their troops and build bridges of collaboration with civilians, then relationships will improve and protection will improve.



Photo 33: Soldiers from the South Kivu 10th Region running a joint marathon with women’s organisations in Bukavu.
Photo Credit: Search for Common Ground

The first iteration of the program, entitled “Tomorrow is a New Day: Transforming Security Forces from Perpetrators to Protectors” began in 2006 with a pilot in the South Kivu province. Since 2006, SFCG has expanded the programme nationwide, reaching more than 40,000 Congolese soldiers of all ranks across the country in a programme that is “about them” and “not against them.”

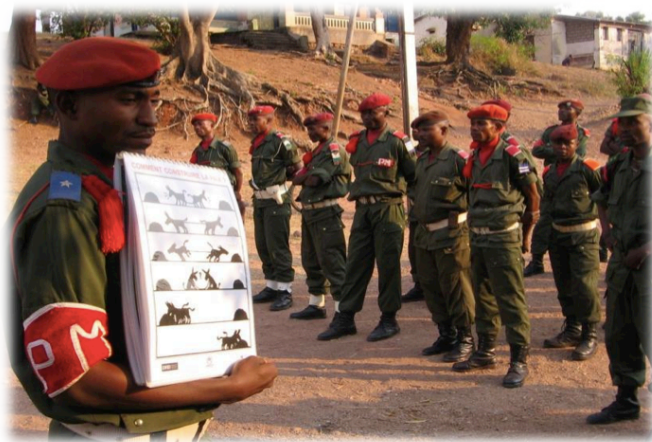


Photo 34: Training on peacebuilding for DRC armed forces
Photo Credit: Search for Common Ground

The project aimed to shift perceptions and attitudes around civil-military relations. It aimed to raise general awareness about the Congolese Armed Forces’ responsibility to respect human and protect civilians and build bridges of trust and collaboration among soldiers and civilians, particularly in the war-affected communities.

A key factor of success was the internal support the project was able to secure. The ‘Armed Forces Pastors’ (“Aumoniers”, in French), which occupied hierarchical ranks within the

Congolese Armed Forces, and the Programme of Civic and Patriotic Education, a unit which had been legally mandated by the Congolese Armed Forces Headquarters to train soldiers and that was headed by an experienced and respected General, were in favour of the project. The collaboration with the Education Unit permitted the pilot project to scale to a national level and maintain official buy-in at all stages of the project over the last 10 years.

Some of the program’s key elements were:

Interactive Training Materials for Soldiers

SFCG designed innovative training materials, which the soldiers themselves were able to understand and then deliver to their peers. This included translating human rights, civilian protection, SGBV and conflict transformation training into accessible ‘image boxes’ with simple training manuals, supported by pre-recorded audio sketches in local languages and comic books. The soldiers were trained in how to shift from one-directional communication to participatory methods in their trainings. The soldiers were even trained in how to build improvised participatory theatre sketches to translate the human rights and protection principles into accessible real-life examples in front of their units. SFCG worked with a documentary filmmaking team to produce a curriculum-driven educational film with a focus on sexual violence and masculinity, with a discussion guide, for outreach to the units. SFCG trained soldiers to be able to use this film and facilitate discussions, which included discussions about their role as soldiers, their own trauma, their own sense of strength and masculinity.⁶⁰



Photo 35: Cover of the “Tomorrow is a New Day” comic book, featuring Captain Janvier. Photo credit: Search for Common Ground

Community Outreach

After the project had gained traction by training thousands of soldiers within the various brigades and battalions, the Armed Forces committees then were coached as to how to design solidarity activities to build bridges of trust with the communities they were meant to protect. The criteria for these events relied on the soldiers and the local civil society organisations' joint assessment of the most damaged relationships. This meant that, for example, the Congolese Navy initiated actions with the local fishermen; the Military Police initiated collaboration with University Students, and Units in Bukavu worked closely with local women's organisations. These activities included soccer matches, clean-up activities, town hall meetings, marathons, and longer-term collaborations including joint farming projects.

Changing Social Norms

SFCG also used its expertise in communication for conflict transformation to reach a mass audience through radio and television programmes and comic books. A radio drama series in Lingala and Swahili was broadcast nationwide, featuring a dynamic cast of military and civilian characters whose daily lives reflected the drama, crises and collaborative solutions that were gradually coming to be a reality through the project. The programmes clarified key issues around the Security Sector Reform process, including how civilians and the army could best collaborate to ensure civilian protection. Other magazine format radio programmes reported on efforts to combat impunity by the mobile courts ("*audiences foraines*"), which were moving around communities to sentence military perpetrators of serious crimes. Hundreds of thousands of comic books were distributed around the country, portraying the negative and positive roles of soldiers and civilians, reinforcing and popularizing the social acceptability of the changes that were underway. Billboards were put up in specific communities, as well as murals painted on the regional military headquarters with powerful imagery demonstrating the protective role of the Congolese Armed Forces working hand in hand with civilians.

These various forms of media also reinforced each other. The main character in the comic book and radio drama was a certain 'Captain Janvier'; his name became so popular amongst military and civilians as the 'bad guy' that it became a frequent reference in every day conversations and discussions within the military units and amongst the general public. SFCG also launched complementary media initiatives, including one called 'the Real Man' ("*Vrai Djo*"), which highlighted examples of men, including soldiers, doing the 'right thing' faced with a temptation to abuse or harass a woman. This was also used in outreach and discussions with soldiers and the communities.

Measuring Impact

Within the highly fragile context of DRC, traditional monitoring was often challenging. A major measure of change however was the shift in perception of protection by the civilians before and after the project worked with soldiers deployed in their community. For example, in one evaluation, 54% of the populations of the areas of intervention reported relationships with the military as being good to very good, compared to only 32% in control areas. There were also powerful qualitative measures of change, such as the ability of a military unit that had participated in the programme to undertake an important, high-risk military operation in Katanga, without committing any human rights abuses. And the relationship building between communities and the soldiers led to numerous examples of collaborative problem solving and a de-stigmatisation of the relationships.

Overall this programme has inspired multiple projects within Search for Common Ground in Tanzania, Nigeria and Nepal. These experiences continue to reinforce the value of the Common Ground approach to the security sector, grounded in strengthening relationships of collaboration and enabling people to drive forward their own transformation.