

**NGO CSW Forum Parallel Event
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New York City, New York**

**What would the UN Peace Operations Panel Recommend if it were led by
Women, Civil Society Organizations, and Local Actors Living in Conflict?**



Left to right: Justine Kwachu Ngum Kumche, Cristian Ngendahimana, Seconde Nyanzobe, Genevieve Jeanne Therese Michel, Tiffany Easthom, Sanam Anderlini



**Sponsors:
Nonviolent Peaceforce
Women Graduates-USA**

**New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women (NZFGW)
International Civil Society Action (ICAN)
International Federation of University Women**



For women's rights, peace and security

On



March 9th Nonviolent Peaceforce, Women Graduates-USA, New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women (NZFGW), International Civil Society Action (ICAN) and the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) co-hosted an NGO Commission on the Status of Women Parallel Forum Event on the theme: What would the UN Peace Operations Panel Recommend if it Were Led by Women, Civil Society Organizations and Local Actors Living in Conflict? Introduced by Rae Duff of NZFGW and IFUW, Sanam Anderlini (co-founder of ICAN) moderated. Panelists included: Justine Kwachu Ngum Kumche - Executive Director of Women in Alternative Action, Cameroon, Seconde Nyanzobe and Christian Ngendahimana from Fontaine-ISOKO in Burundi, Genevieve Jeanne Therese Michel - ProFin, Digicel Haiti Foundation and the YWCA-HAITI, Mary Akrami, Chair, Afghan Womens' Network and Tiffany Easthom, Nonviolent Peaceforce Country Director in South Sudan.

The theme of this workshop was In keeping with the theme of the CSW Conference, Beijing + 20 Action Plan. This Parallel workshop focused on Chapter E of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), Women and Armed Conflict and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 agenda on women, peace and security that was inspired by these section of the BPFA:

- E.1. Protection of women
- E.2 Reduction of excessive military expenditures
- E.3 Promotion of non-violent forms of conflict resolution
- E.5 Protection, assistance and training of refugee and internally displaced women.

Protection of civilians has become an increasingly important feature of effective UN peacekeeping mandates, and of their successful execution. It is important to ensure that women are included, especially in senior roles, in all country mandates for peacekeeping operations.

It's widely acknowledged that women have an important role to play as leaders and decision-makers in the prevention and resolution of conflict. But, while that's recognized, it's not something that's consistently applied in practice. For example, women should also be visible in roles within post-conflict accountability and transitional justice structures - something that, as well as its significant, post-conflict contribution, also helps encourage women and girls, particularly victims of sexual violence, to report offenses.

Through this workshop, several common themes were discovered among the suggested improvements to current UN Peace Operations. There are many tools currently available that could help Peacekeeping and Special Political missions to achieve their goals much more efficiently and constructively. The following recommendations came out of this CSW forum:

1. Listen: UN Peace Operations would be enhanced if mission planners spent significant advance time listening directly to people at the grass roots, especially

women, traditional and tribal leaders (not only men), in the conflict affected areas.

2. **Advance Work:** Civil society can play a proactive role in convening local leaders in advance of a UN mandate to define the needs for protection of civilians and the contributions that local civil society can make to civilian protection. This information can be provided to the Security Council.
3. **Collaboration:** Missions should collaborate with local civilians and civil society organisations (CSOs) who are already in country. Peacebuilding and women's initiatives need to be connected to peacekeeping. Human rights defenders' networks and health networks are also resources. This collaboration could help missions in several capacities. Local civilians and CSOs provide language and cultural skills necessary to cultivate relationships with local people. Local groups that serve as connectors need to be recognized. In many instances, working with local people can improve communication and understanding, build trust between the mission and the local community AND enhance protection of civilians.
4. **Protect identity:** When meeting with civil society, unless agreed to by the local individuals, mission staff need to protect the identity of those who share.
5. **Understand local limitations and circumstances:** Although each peacekeeping mission is already uniquely tailored to the country or region in which it is based, there are protocols in place that do not always benefit the given circumstances of specific conflicts. For example, many families in South Sudan purposely separate to help ensure the survival of at least some family members. Family Tracing and Reunification (FTR) projects, while well intentioned, are often dismissed because of the very specific circumstances under which families originally separated. After families are reunified, they are often left without any means to keep themselves safe or support themselves. Understanding these nuances could help FTR and other initiatives be more successful and sustainable.
6. **Context:** Missions need to understand and act on the interaction between their mandate and the dynamic context of the local area and conflict.
7. **Do No Harm:** Missions must have a complete commitment to Do No Harm approach and principles.

8. Focus on conflict prevention and transformation: Sometimes mission focus on conflict resolution and not longer term, more sustainable approaches of prevention and transformation.
9. Underlying causes: Missions should support local communities to address underlying causes of the conflict.
10. Resources: Missions should provide some of their resources to local CSOs who are doing civilian protection work.
11. Resources: Resource management systems need to be inclusive, non-divisive and transparent.
12. Change protocols for staff on the ground according to circumstances: Although the need to protect mission personnel who are in conflict regions is imperative, certain protective measures can play a part in negating the positive impact of the work being done on the ground. For example, Mary Akrami of the Afghan Women's Network spoke about making visits to communities with a security detail. Leaders of communities with whom she had previously worked did not want to speak to her because they did not trust her when it appeared that she did not trust them. There needs to be a balance between security and effectiveness, which could be reached by allowing personnel on the ground greater autonomy to decide on which security measures are appropriate and beneficial.
13. Ensure that gender make-up of peacekeepers is more equal: Missions need to include far more women. In many cultures, women are uncomfortable being accompanied by men and are less willing to participate in initiatives that may help to keep them secure when there are no female peacekeepers involved, especially when women are being accompanied to do things which they usually do outside of the presence of men. Women who have been victims of gender-based violence are often hesitant to talk with men about the offense. Providing more female peacekeepers could help ensure that women feel safe and more inclined to share their experiences and opinions leading to more efficient initiatives in the future.
14. Changing nature of conflict: Armed peacekeepers are typically trained for conventional warfare and thus, not well equipped to deal with current civilian protection needs. Both highly mobile non-state actors as well as the host country's security forces often threaten civilians.

15. Mission neutrality: Missions are often perceived as an extension of, or closely collaborating with the host government, who sometimes conduct attacks on civilians. Thus, the UN Mission loses trust and credibility.
16. Recognize the contributions civilians can and do make in directly protecting civilians: Both international and local civilians are protecting other civilians in violent conflict. Future peace operations should specifically take into account and include this complementary tool in the framing of mandates and provision of resources.
17. More civilians: While often not providing direct protection, civilian staff in missions play a positive role. Protection of civilian, human rights, gender and child protection advisors need to be increased.
18. Training: Mission personnel, both armed and unarmed, should receive training on how to connect to the grassroots and how to carry out unarmed protection.
19. UN Take Responsibility: UN missions should take responsibility for mistakes and misdeeds of their personnel. For example, they should take moral and financial responsibility for the Cholera epidemic in Haiti. UN personnel should not be immune in cases of rape and other forms of gender based violence.
20. Inclusive Negotiations: Women and civil society should be involved at all levels of negotiations assuring that those at Track 3 (grassroots) participate and have input into Track 1 processes.
21. Monitoring: Missions need to have ongoing monitoring that includes active input from local civil society with corrections made as a result of this monitoring. This must facilitate post-project evaluation processes.
22. FULLY IMPLEMENT UNSCR 1325. It's the law!

For more information, please contact Mel Duncan at:
mduncan@nonviolentpeaceforce.org

Appendix 1

Proceedings of the Workshop, together with the attached statements from NGOs submitted in advance, will be forwarded to the UN High Level Panel on Peace Operations for their consideration.

National Council of Women of New Zealand and the New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women

The key issue for military peacekeepers is that their basic training is to be soldiers, to do battle against a perceived enemy. Peacekeeping is seen as a way to keep opposing factions apart and to attempt to ensure that there is no more bloodshed. They seldom understand the root causes of the conflict, especially when their own country might have had some responsibility (through colonisation or policies in their own country) for the conflict. They may have a mandate to assist with development but this is often seen as “winning hearts and minds” rather than participating in genuine and necessary development projects that are based on building local capacity through working in partnership with local people, especially the women.

In countries undergoing conflict, the women are usually those trying to maintain a living and keep families together, while the men are fighting - or dead. These women are unlikely to be included and consulted as part of a peace exercise.

Peacekeeping missions are usually male-dominated. The men are often young, away from home and may be under extreme pressure due to the conflict. They need to relax during non-working time and often look to local women for short-term relationships. They do not understand the culture and the vulnerability of the women who may be hoping to get away to a peaceful situation. If civilian women were included in peace missions, they could monitor such situations, ensuring that both parties understood possible consequences.

How could current peace keeping operations benefit from the input of civil society organizations? What is, or could be, civil societies’ contribution to peace operations?

Civil society organisations, both local and international, work in local communities. Many have been in place for a long time and, if from overseas, have worked to understand the culture. They do not see themselves as permanent but are providing necessary skills until local people can take over again. Peacekeepers often have little respect for these organisations, considering them to be “do-gooders” who achieve very little. They do not understand the long-term aspect of development, especially

because most peacekeeper deployments are for only 6 months - they want to achieve as much as possible during that time, by doing it all themselves. CSOs in the peacekeepers' home country should always participate in pre-deployment training.

What would peace operations look like if they were designed to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war?

They would focus on the causes of the conflict, working with local people at community level to address the basic issues. They would include more civilians with development and mediation experience. Women would be key participants since they could relate better to the experience of local women.

International Federation of University Women (IFUW)

A main weakness of the way that UN peacekeeping operations focus on women and girls is that they are almost exclusively viewed as victims or potential victims of sexual abuse and violence, with little discussion of other gender-related problems or issues that occur as a result of armed conflict and peacekeeping operations. While IFUW strongly supports the adoption of Resolution 1325 and the resultant, important focus on sexual abuse and violence (albeit more could be done to advance that cause), it has overshadowed and silenced other necessary discussions about women, girls, gender, and peacekeeping.

Women's education in the Global South and less developed countries has seen many important advancements over recent decades. Much of the initial impetus originated from the advocacy efforts of women's civil society groups, including IFUW and its sister organisations, who called on policy makers to afford greater recognition and to make greater commitments to provide girls and women with access to learning. Great strides have been made at local and regional levels, especially in terms of primary education, as advanced through the Millennium Development Goals. Nevertheless, women and girls have historically been and still are disproportionately affected in terms of access to education, as evidenced by the fact that approximately two thirds of the 781 million illiterate people in the world are female.

The impact of girls' education in advancing lives of individuals and also the betterment of communities and societies is immeasurable. However, where an armed conflict or natural disaster causes the displacement and uprooting of families and communities, the majority of persons in those camps are women and children and yet one of the first things to be lost is the education of children and particularly of girls.

Paradoxically, it is that education that is crucial for the long-term peacebuilding and statebuilding, which modern-day, complex peacekeeping mandates are tasked to achieve.

One crucial aspect for the UN High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations to explore is the extent to which UN missions are fulfilling their mandates to implement and ensure fundamental human rights. In particular, it is important to explore the extent to which those rights are implemented by the UN, when running camps for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP camps). Such rights are not limited to the right to life and subsistence rights but also the right to education, an “enabler” right, without which the long-term implementation and achievement of human rights within a society and country is unattainable.

UN missions frequently are mandated to build national capacity and infrastructure, and to assist countries with state-building as well as peacebuilding. All of those long-term aims cannot be achieved and sustained without a focus on women’s rights to education in order that they are then able to participate in mid- and long-term strategies for post-conflict or post-disaster rebuilding and resolution.

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

The composition of the High Level Panel should have reflected the constituent gender makeup of the subject area to provide accurate representation of parties affected by conflict and violence. This would ensure that policies and strategies would be made with and by those who will actually be an active part of the solution and embrace the concept of “not about us, without us” at the table.

Chapter E of the Beijing Platform for Action, which outlines the role of women in Armed Conflict situations, especially as it relates to the victimization of women, should be supported and enforced. The inclusion of women in this process would provide for a greater range of strategic options and allow for commitment from organizations that will execute non-military options for peace. The current composition of the High Level Panel of primarily military personnel ensures that military solutions will be considered first. A peaceful, lasting solution needs to be the result of a collaborative, cross section of stakeholders.

Women Graduates-USA

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. believed in nonviolent strategies to resolve conflicts. He further admonished those working in any field of human conflict that they not restrict nonviolent strategies to resolving conflicts between individuals or groups of individuals as he successfully demonstrated, but to use the same nonviolent tactics for relations between nations. Yet, the options that are outlined in Section VII of the UN Charter written in 1946 address only two options when facing threats by nations: sanctions or military might. Yet, there have been citizen movements and organized civil society organizations that have demonstrated the success of many non-military or non-economic strategies that should be institutionalized.

Michael Nagler has written, “Spontaneous interpositions in conflicts have been used to stop conflicts since the dawn of civilization. However the idea of institutionalizing such a technique, of preparing for it ahead of time along more or less parallel but opposite lines to the way states prepare for war, goes back...to Mahatma Gandhi, who began referring to his volunteers as an 'army of peace' (*shanti sena*) almost as soon as he saw the effectiveness of nonviolence at first hand in South Africa in 1913.”

Women Graduates-USA urges the UN Peace Operations Panel to recognize and embrace the methodologies that fall under the general heading of “unarmed civilian protection.” Protective presence or inter-positioning is but one tactic. Since Gandhi’s time, civil society organizations have conducted such work and have documentation that attests to the success of bringing longer-lasting peace than through the use of violence to counter violence. We urge the Panel to look to these civil society organizations for guidance in developing new global strategies that will meet the changed nature of conflict in the world, and the challenge of protecting civilians whose casualties for outweigh those of the opposing armed actors.

AIDS-Free World

- It should be unimaginable that UN peacekeepers would ever commit rape, child molestation or sex trafficking. But accounts are not rare.
- In 2003, the UN declared “zero tolerance” for sexual exploitation and abuse, and began instituting reforms. The Secretary-General defines “zero tolerance” to mean that even one incident is one too many. Using zero as the measure of success, reform efforts have failed.

- The problem goes deeper than out-of-control soldiers whose cases reach the media. Reports are also filed each year against the UN’s own personnel—its staff, civilian police and military observers.
- Applying UN immunity to reports of sexual violence makes “zero tolerance” impossible. It is true that the UN is immune from lawsuits. But the drafters of the 1946 *Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations* never intended to shield sex offenders from criminal investigation or prosecution. They granted the organization immunity from legal processes to protect against frivolous lawsuits designed to obstruct the UN’s work—and they added that the Secretary-General can and must waive that immunity wherever it would “impede the course of justice.”
- When immunity applies to staff or experts on peacekeeping missions who have been accused of sexual exploitation or abuse, two things happen: first and above all, victims are denied justice. Secondly, a message is sent far and wide that peacekeeping personnel are untouchable—and “zero tolerance” is just a phrase.
- The Panel should:
 - State that the problem of sexual violence by UN peacekeeping personnel represents a fundamental double standard undermining the UN’s declarations of zero tolerance.
 - Call on the UN to reconsider the underlying framework that prevents full accountability for crimes of sexual violence by its own personnel, and obstructs justice for victims.
 - Recommend amending the 1946 *Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations* to remove any possibility of immunity, at any stage, for UN personnel accused of crimes of sexual violence.
- These fundamental changes in policy and practice are required to deliver justice for victims, to deter future crimes of sexual violence, and to remove the protective blue shield that is too often placed between sexual perpetrators and the law.

Senator Mobina S. B. Jaffer, Canadian Parliament and member of the Senate's Anti-terrorism and Legal and Constitutional Affairs committees.

Senator Jaffer also served as Canada's Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan from 2002 to 2006. From 2002 to 2005, she chaired the Canadian Committee on Women, Peace, and Security.

Peace operations should be more reflective of the people they are representing. Communities that are attempting to rebuild after conflict are made up of men, women, and children, all of whom need to find a way to reintegrate into a new society. They only want to ensure that all members' concerns are adequately represented is by ensuring the inclusion of women.

While the mandate for this exists via the UN Resolutions dealing with women, peace and security, the implementation of them has proven to be quite difficult. Peace processes today still require international pressures to be held accountable to the standard of including women that the UN Security Council had established as a necessity when it passed UN Resolution 1325 in 2000.

Women are a crucial part of the peace process, because they bring their unique perspectives to the table. Women's concerns in most post-conflict countries are focused more on the community, whereas men typically focus on individual needs. The collaboration of these two ideas creates the best chance of building a sustainable peace. Women's voices bring community issues such as education and adequate healthcare to the forefront of priorities. With the improvement of basic infrastructure, and better access for civilians, there will be less need for corruption to flourish. Often times, people resort to violence or corrupt means to an end because the system is so broken that they see their only option as functioning outside of the law. With more women involved in designing the reconstruction of post-conflict communities, more expansive needs will be addressed, and society as a whole will be more conducive to people and their needs. This will decrease the need to function outside of the law.

Ultimately, the ideal peace operations would be inclusive, both politically and socially. It would understand and translate the needs of the society into its rebuilding process, so as to give its members a true chance at sustaining the newly established order. These are key traits that are more likely to be developed if both men and women work on peace processes together, rather than each one doing so alone.