Taking action for women, peace and security in Myanmar – the need to progress implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325

Key points

- As a member of the UN, Myanmar has an obligation to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325), which was adopted unanimously on October 2000.
- UNSCR1325 was the first resolution passed by the UN Security Council to specifically address the impacts of war on women, and women’s contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace.
- UNSCR1325 establishes the need to increase the participation of, and decision-making by women in peace negotiations and implementation processes, incorporate gender perspectives in all peace and security efforts. It also establishes the need to take specific measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly sexual violence and other crimes.
- The Resolution is subject to a High-level Review in 2015 on implementation progress to date. In Myanmar, implementation has been slow and there is a pressing need to accelerate progress.
- Myanmar should develop a National Action Plan (NAP) on Resolution 1325, outlining policies that the country will take to fulfill the resolution's objectives. NAPs address political, social and security policies and require interagency coordination.

Background

Effects of Conflict on Women

The nature of violent conflict has changed in recent decades. Civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by violence, insecurity, displacement and a wide range of harms related to armed conflict. In Myanmar, and as is the case around the world, women and girls are disproportionately and uniquely affected by armed conflict.

As a result of their different positions and status in society, women and girls experience war differently than men. Violent masculinities become the dominant norm. Women and girls, as well as many boys, all too often are subject to gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, used as a ‘tactic’ of war to systematically humiliate, violate and damage communities and individuals. This has lasting impact on women, their families and communities long after a war has ended.

Women’s Participation in Peace Processes

Reflecting the male dominance of war-making, peace dialogue and negotiations are seen as the domain of men. Inclusion of women in ceasefire and peace process negotiations is minimal in Myanmar. Exact figures are hard to determine of the numbers of women involved as negotiators, advisers and facilitators. However by all parameters, the numbers of women are incredibly low. There is only one woman on the NCCT involved as a negotiator but she does not participate all the time. On the government side men have exclusively dominated the negotiations. The most consistently substantive roles involve two women from civil society play important roles as facilitator and technical expert to the NCCT. However, we know that women are one of the most affected and most vulnerable groups in situations of armed conflict, and that it is women who best understand and are able to represent their needs.
Women bring a unique and critical understanding of violent conflict, and with it, insights into causes and possible solutions. This needs to be harnessed through their equal and full participation throughout and at all levels of peace processes. It was highlighted that it is substantive and quality participation (the ability to exercise influence), not just inclusion, throughout the whole peace process that results in processes that have gender perspectives better included. Without this there is a real risk that peace will not be inclusive, and therefore not sustainable.

UNSCR1325
In 2000, the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 concerning women, peace and security was adopted unanimously. The UN Security Council is the UN body with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. As a UN member state, Myanmar agrees to accept and implement the decisions of the UN Security Council. UNSCR 1325 urges all actors – States, UN agencies, NGOs - to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all peace and security efforts. It also calls for specific measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Invoking custom, tradition or religion are not accepted as reasons or rationale for the exclusion of women.

Issues and Actions
UNSCR1325 High-level Review in 2015
This year, the UN Security Council has convened a High-level Review to assess UNSCR1325 implementation progress at the global, regional and national levels. Problematically, implementation of UNSCR1325 has been slow in Myanmar and urgent action is needed in this anniversary year. Of particular urgency is that the Myanmar Government, as with all UN member states, has been called on by the Security Council to develop and implement a UNSCR1325 National Action Plan. A National Action Plan is needed to initiate strategic actions, identify priorities and resources, and determine policy actions, responsibilities, budgets and timeframes. Developing a plan is also a process of awareness-raising and capacity-building in order to overcome gaps and challenges to the full implementation of the resolution.

Action required from Parliamentarians
1. Read the resolution: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/
2. Find out more about it by discussing and meeting with Myanmar NGOs, INGOs, UN agencies and civil society organisations.
3. Arrange training for key government officials involved in the peace negotiations on UNSCR1325
4. Meet with parties to the conflict and civil society to discuss the development of the UNSCR1325 National Action Plan
5. Seek support from Myanmar NGOS, INGOs, UN agencies, civil society organisations who stand ready to support this process

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