

Preventing, Protecting and Empowering: Women, Peace and Security and R2P Sara Davies, Human Protection Hub

Protection Gateway

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On Thursday 25 October, Griffith Asia Institute's Human Protection Hub held a workshop on Women, Peace and Security (WPS): opportunities for alignment with Responsibility to Protect (R2P). With the assistance of colleagues from the Asia Pacific Centre for Responsibility to Protect (University of Queensland) and the Centre of Governance and Public Policy (Griffith University), this event was among the first of its kind in policy and academic circles. (...)

The dialogue focused on three central themes:

- 1) What states should do to realise the goals set out in UN Security Council Resolution 1325.
- 2) The advantages and disadvantages associated with the alignment of R2P with WPS in the fields of international policing and peacekeeping, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and transitional justice.
- 3) The extent to which the structural prevention ambitions of WPS can be assisted by association with early warning and assessment mechanisms relating to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

In relation to the first issue, participants found that the promotion of WPS National Action Plans (NAP) offers great potential for raising awareness of the expectations associated with Resolution 1325 among governments. Measures towards equitable representation in positions of authority, gender equality in legislation and political participation, are measures that contribute to international peace and security. However, thus far only 37 states have adopted NAPs. Moreover, most of these do not include clear implementation targets or mechanisms to ensure progress can be monitored. (...)

Recommendation: specific workshops on WPS NAP best practice should be encouraged at the highest political level, particularly amongst regional organizations with the involvement of civil society organizations.

Women remain under-represented in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacekeeping missions and policing. The persistent relative absence of women in key positions makes it difficult to know whether female peacekeepers, police, judges and senior officials make a

positive difference.

Recommendation: States and international organizations should introduce positive gender discrimination to increase the number of women engaged in conflict prevention, resolution and rebuilding and in senior positions in peacekeeping, policing and special political missions.

This requires new thinking on the training, sourcing and deploying gender responsive policing units from Security Council members and Troop Contributing Countries. The deployment of such specialists will contribute the evidence base for further positive gender empowerment. (...)

Recommendation: there is a need to better understand how the political economy of violence against women is related to R2P crimes, to understand the structural preconditions that make SGBV crimes more likely, and measures that might help reduce those underlying risks.

However, a number of concerns were raised about downside risks associated with the alignment of R2P and WPS:

First, there were concerns as to whether WPS was better understood as a Protection of Civilians (PoC) related agenda. Some participants suggested that PoC was more widely accepted than R2P and that it could be used to facilitate protection and humanitarian access in situations of armed conflict. By contrast, R2P, they worried, was a controversial concept. Aligning it with WPS might further stymie political progress without adding practical operational value.

Second, some participants worried that the R2P principle effectively reduced women to the status of passive victims in need of protection. (...)

Alternatively, a more optimistic view that was expressed sees initiatives such as Resolution 1325, R2P, PoC, the Children in Armed Conflict agenda as well as other initiatives such as MDGs beyond 2015, the evolution of the Human Rights Council, the work of the CEDAW Committee, the International Criminal Court and Peacebuilding Commission as steps towards addressing some of these problems and reconstituting the relationship between states and their female populations.

Clearly, more work is needed to clarify the connections between R2P and WPS as well as to identify and mitigate potential downside risks. As such, this workshop marks only the beginning of a dialogue on this issue. Plans are afoot to publish some of the papers from the workshop with in early 2013 as a springboard for further research and dialogue on these issues. (...)

Further details on the workshop be available at

[Human Protection Hub](#)

Events page in the coming week.

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