

**WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY**

**In this issue**

The Prospects and Pitfalls of 1325	1
For Women, Dry Statistics Can Be Power	2
What the U.S. Undid for Women in Iraq	3
India's Female Peacekeepers Inspire Liberian Girls	4
Sri Lanka Widows Struggle To Put Life Back Together	5
Actions Not Speeches Needed For Women's Rights	6

**DISCLAIMER: The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung or of IPS.**

Voices of the South on Globalization is a monthly newsletter intended to inspire a meaningful North-South Dialogue by raising awareness for global interdependences and by offering a forum for voices from the South in the globalization debate. Each edition presents short analyses or commentaries from a Southern perspective on one particular issue of the globalization process.

Voices of the South on Globalization is published by IPS in Germany with financial support from the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

For further information please contact:  
IPS-Inter Press Service Germany  
Ramesh Jaura  
Marienstr. 19/20, 10117 Berlin  
Tel.: ++49-(0)30-28 48 23 60  
Fax: ++49-(0)30-28 48 23 69  
rjaura@ipsonline.eu

**The Prospects and Pitfalls of 1325**

Ten years after the Security Council issued its landmark resolution 1325 on October 31, 2000, designed to address the "disproportionate and unique impact of war on women", UN officials and international human rights advocates say it is high time the principles it espouses move from paper to reality.

Their press conference at UN headquarters Oct. 21 was also the culmination of Global Open Day - a UN initiative to synthesise proposals and conversations held in 27 conflict-affected countries from June to September this year.

"The objective was to put in mind that it's been a good decade now that we've been pushing for this," said Anne Marie Goetz, chief advisor of Governance, Peace and Security at UNIFEM, "and it shouldn't have to take a formal occasion to encourage women's voices to be heard, at all times, in all decision-making. [We] must get straight to a new start in the new decade. Women count for peace."

Resolution 1325 is ambitious, comprehensive and far-reaching. It is the first resolution to formally address the particular atrocities that women endure in wartime, and to acknowledge women's indispensable role in conflict resolution and post-war peace building.

It also recognises the need for participation of women in justice and security sector reforms, as well as provisions for safeguarding the land rights, employment and economic security of women.

Yet on the 10th anniversary of 1325, women's participation in international and local peace building efforts remains disgracefully low.

According to reports from the 'Say No - UNITE' campaign, less than eight percent of peace negotiators are women; less than three percent of post-conflict spending is dedicated to women; and only 14 women in the world currently hold positions as heads of state.

"When you look at the global trend," Nepali human rights advocate Mandira Sharma told IPS, "there has been only a minimum improvement in women's leadership positions - in that regard there is no reason to celebrate."

Sharma is executive director of the Advocacy Forum, an organisation that has played a leading role in defending the rights of civilians caught between the brutalities of the Nepali government and the Maoist insurgents.

Harassment, threats and pressure notwithstanding, Sharma and her team of 50 human rights lawyers continue to fight for victims of torture, sexual abuse and enforced disappearance.

Sharma is a woman on the front lines of struggle, yet despite her forthright admission of the resolution's limitations thus far, she remains hopeful of its potential.

"I think 1325 is a very important tool for activists like us on the ground to push for the agenda of women in peace negotiations," Sharma told IPS. "It opens up the discourse in a whole new way and this is really wonderful." "One of the major problems with implementation is member states. You cannot throw the ball into their court. [Continued on page 6, column 2] ➔

## For Women, Dry Statistics Can Be Power

While women have made strides forward in areas like job market participation over the last two decades, in 2009 only 14 women in the world held the position of head of state or government, and of the 500 largest corporations, just 13 had a female CEO.

Those are just a few of the revelations in "The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics", a compilation of the latest data on the status of women in countries around the globe, released Wednesday in conjunction with the first ever World Statistics Day.

The report illustrates the direct contribution of hard data to social progress, painting a complex picture of the successes and shortcomings on the path to gender equality through statistics and analysis.

"This report is released today, on the occasion of the first ever World Statistics Day, as it demonstrates how official statistics provide policy-makers with useful and impartial data," said Paul Cheung, director of the UN Statistics Division (UNSD), which has produced the report every five years since 1995.

The report focuses on eight key areas: population and families, health, education, work, power and decision-making, violence against women, environment, and poverty.

There are approximately 57 million more men than women in the world, with some countries, especially in Europe, experiencing an obvious "lack" of men while others have fewer women, for example, China, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In the majority of countries, there is little difference in the proportion of underweight girls and boys, suggesting that there is no difference in nutritional status between the sexes.

However, the gender digital divide is widespread. In general, it is more pronounced among less developed countries with low Internet penetration, although it is also evident in several developed countries with high Internet penetration, education statistics show.

Concerning work issues, women aged 25 to 54 now have higher labour force participation rates in most regions as compared to 1990, but on average women are still rarely employed in jobs with status, power and authority or in traditionally male blue-collar occupations.

The report's chapter on poverty reveals that married women are often left out of decision-making on how their own earnings are spent. Limited access to financial resources increases women's economic dependency on men, making them more vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks.

Contributing to women's poverty is the denial of inheritance and land ownership rights based on traditional cultural norms and practices.

The report's chapter on violence against women shows that female genital mutilation is decreasing slightly, although it continues to be widely performed. The decline seems to be faster among women with higher education.

Education also plays a fundamental role concerning attitudes towards domestic violence in Africa. Many less or uneducated African women find it appropriate for a wife to be beaten by her husband for specific reasons like arguing with him, refusing to have sex, burning food and venturing outside without telling him, it says.

In the introduction, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon notes that the report "finds that progress in ensuring the equal status of women and men has been made in many areas, including school enrolment, health and economic participation. At the same time, it makes clear that much more needs to be done."

In fact, while the report shows progress in the availability of gender statistics, it also underlines the lack of regular, consistent and reliable statistical measures on the status of women.

Data from nearly all countries are available on the UNSD website, although those countries where more targeted intervention is needed might not be on the list, Francois Coutu, a public information officer with UNSD, told IPS.

Another problem is that even when statistics are available, it is not possible to compare them and data are also lacking in details, leaving out essential information, said the chief editor of the report, Srdjan Mrkic.

Statistics are available for nearly all countries in the world, but often only general information is provided, stressed Mrkic. Statistics, including characteristics such as age, marital status, education, ethnicity and religion, which are fundamental details to properly understand and develop policies to rectify violence against women, are available in "The World's Women 2010" for approximately 50 countries.

The UN Statistical Commission, established in 1947, has elaborated international methodological standards and guidelines in many statistics areas while making data more available across countries and regions than ever before.

Still, "increasing the capacity to produce reliable statistics, especially about gender equality, remains a challenge in many countries," stressed Mrkic, with lack of funds disadvantaging developing countries. - Chiara Magni | IPS



## What the U.S. Undid for Women in Iraq

Interview of THORAYA AHMED OBAID, executive director of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund

The U.S.-led invasion and then occupation of Iraq brought a sharp setback to the rights of women in that country, UNFPA head Thoraya Obaid tells IPS in an interview.

The view that Muslim societies are necessarily backward on the position of women arises from stereotyping, she says. And she speaks of herself as a Muslim woman who does not fit the stereotype.

Obaid spoke to IPS Wednesday at the launch of the annual UNFPA report, focused this year on the role of women in peace building. Excerpts from the interview:

**Q: Is there any evidence that women are better than men at peace building and rebuilding?**

A: There is evidence that not only in peace building and rebuilding but in other areas as with migrant workers, the priorities for women are usually different. As a result women invest in the family, and during conditions where there is war or natural disaster, you will find that women can even cross borders to be able to keep the family together, and are able to negotiate the safety of their families. So in that context we see that women should be a part of any peace building negotiations.

**Q: Women can play that role when they have an opportunity, but is there any sign that women are getting more such opportunities?**

A: Sadly, no. Opportunities are still limited because the recognition that women can play that role is still limited. We are saying that if we invest enough in women, in their education, in empowering them to have a voice, to raise their voice, and if we recognise their voices and find space for them to play a role in peace building, then they will do a good job.

Liberia is a very good example of that. It's women who walk the streets saying we want peace. But society still does not recognise the real value of women, and that is a real problem.

**Q: There is a widespread perception that the position of women in Islamic societies is low. But in Iraq women had many rights, that vanished after the Americans came along.**

A: I worked in Iraq for eight years until the invasion of Kuwait. We were there as a part of the Economic Commission for Western Asia, and we worked with women's groups there at that time, and certainly, by the time we left the Federation of Iraqi Women had put together the best family laws you can get from all the different sects, and also labour laws. But then the invasion came and the whole thing went apart. When the U.S. came in, they went back to the family laws of 1958. That tells you how far they have gone back. What they did was to cancel everything that was previous. And that is not really a good judgment for women. It was quite a bit of difference.

**Q: How does this square with the perception that left to themselves, Muslim societies are backward, and that the U.S is the progressive one?**

A: That is a political question in many ways. There are stereotypes of Muslim countries, and Muslim women. I'm a Muslim woman, and I don't fit that stereotype. There are many like me. I come from Saudi Arabia, and see where I am right now. This is the stereotyping of a people and also of a religion, and as a result assumptions are based on such perceptions. In many ways it is perceptions that hinder Muslim women in many places.

**Q: Is the U.N. making a difference, or does it just produce reports?**

A: Look at the report we are putting out on Security Council resolution 1325. This has brought the issue of women as peace makers and peace builders into a higher level of political awareness. As a result, at least 19 countries are putting into place their own plans on how to bring women to end violence against women in wars, conflict and natural disasters, in camps and so on. These studies are important because they mobilise political leaders and I think that is a very important role for the United Nations.

**Q: What does this report say that is significant and new?**

A: The new trend we are trying to bring into the discussion about women is the three R's – Resilience, Renewal, and Redefining roles. Women are always seen as victims. We are saying women are not victims. Women have the resilience, they keep the families together. And with renewal, when we are rebuilding after a crisis, we should not rebuild society as it was before, with all the inequalities and inequities in it, but on a new human rights paradigm that will bring equality.

**Q: How can the MDGs targets be met in relation to conflicts?**

A: A part of conflicts is poverty, and poverty brings conflict. So MDG 1 on poverty cannot be achieved if there is no peace and security. Each of the MDGs requires peace and security.

And with MDG5 on maternal health, for a long time actors in the humanitarian field did not recognise that women have special needs. In war and natural disasters, they do deliver babies, they do have biological functions that require special attention. There is a need to take care of their integrity and their dignity. So we are looking at MDG 5 because we want women to deliver babies in a clean state, and that they are safe.

More importantly [is] that they are protected from violence - when violence takes place, that they are provided with the services that support them but also that perpetrators of violence are brought to justice. Violence against women is part of the MDG5 target on universal access to reproductive health.

– Interview by Sanjay Suri | IPS ☑

## India's Female Peacekeepers Inspire Liberian Girls

It is break time at the Victory Chapel School in Congo Town. Children dressed in their royal blue uniforms with bright yellow and white trim fight to get under the shade of the only mango tree in the yard. It is the start of the dry season and the scorching sun will soon be almost unbearable to stand in.



This small school, on the outskirts of Liberia's capital, Monrovia, is much like any other in the city until you see what stands beside it. More than a hundred female peacekeepers patrol the grounds of a big white fenced compound, the

first all-female unit of UN police in history.

The women are an arresting sight: dressed in their blue army combat uniform, black boots, the signature United Nations blue cap and each carrying an AK-47. But the school children are so used to their presence they barely give them a second glance.

"It surprised me at the beginning because it is my first time to see different people come around me," says Wokie Sarchie, a fifth grade student at the school.

The Indian peacekeepers arrived in Liberia in 2007. Their main role is guarding the president's office on Capitol Hill on the other side of the city. When they are not protecting the president, they are often here helping the teachers at the school.

According to Jickson Sargeor, the principal of Victory Chapel School, the Indian peacekeeping contingent provides the children with medication, lessons on using computers and Indian dance and self defense. In addition, the principal believes the Indian women have brought a much more important message to the children.

"It has made the girls to believe that they are not just people to sit at home, they are people to get out there," he says.

Sandra Weah, an eighth grade student, toyed with the idea of following her peacekeeper role models into the security field, but her new love for dancing and music made her change her mind. "For me I wanted to be an army woman but then when I saw my friends doing music, I decided to leave the army to go and be a musician."

The female contingent of peacekeepers came to Liberia in response to the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Liberia is the first African country to complete a National Action Plan to implement the resolution.

Picture above: Indian peacekeepers drilling in Liberia.  
Credit: Christopher Herwig | UN Photo

Fourteen years of civil war in the West African state saw some of the worst atrocities women and children have ever experienced on the African continent. More than 60 percent of women say they were raped, according to the UN Mission in Liberia, UNMIL.

When Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first female president, took office in Liberia in 2005, increasing the number of women in the country's security services was one of her top priorities.

The numbers speak for themselves. Five years ago, one in 20 police personnel was a woman. Now, nearly one in five is female. According to UNMIL, applications from women to join the police force tripled the year after the female Indian peacekeepers arrived.

There is still some way to go with the armed forces, where women make up less than one in ten. But Carole Doucet, the UN Gender Advisor in Liberia believes this is still an achievement.

"It is still an improvement from the one in one hundred figures from 2005," she says.


### CHALLENGES

There are still many challenges facing the full implementation of Resolution 1325 in Liberia, especially in the rural areas. Poverty, access to education and the lack of economic power put women in a difficult position. A recent article in one of the capital's newspapers found children as young as ten were having sex with men for as little as three U.S. cents.

But in Congo Town, at the Victory Chapel School, there is a feeling that the next generation of Liberians are growing up with the view that women can do anything and everything men can do.

Schoolteacher Gloria Adjor, a young woman herself, believes the peacekeepers are giving women the strength and inspiration to stand shoulder to shoulder with the men.

"The Indian people have come and taught us that we women too are necessary to do the work they are doing," she says. "We believed that not only men do these [kinds of] work but women too are capable of doing it."

"It makes the boys to feel that women are also part of society. It also makes boys think women can do what men do," says Principal Sargeor. – **Tamasin Ford and Sonnie Morris | IPS** 

## Sri Lanka Widows Struggle to Put Life Back Together Again

Having to take care of eight teenage children is not an easy task for 70-year-old Yamunadevi (not her real name). But these youngsters are her grandchildren, orphaned by Sri Lanka's civil war of more than two decades. "I have no option. I have to take care of them, otherwise they don't have anyone else," said Yamunadevi, who hails from Alampiddi, Mullaithivu district in the north.

Four of her grandchildren lost their parents during the last phase of this South Asian country's bloody war, which ended in 2009 with a military victory by the government. The other four are left with only their father, who is now the sole breadwinner.

"I am not sure how long I can keep sending all of them to school," Yamunadevi remarked. Her story is all too common in Sri Lanka's former war zones. Women young and old are left to fend for themselves and their families because their male relatives have been killed or went missing during the last battles of the war, which was waged by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in its search for a separate homeland for minority Tamils.

Almost 300,000 people were forced to flee their homes during the last bout of fighting alone, between August 2006 and May 2009. Over 290,000 war-displaced citizens have since returned to their villages or live with host families. Their troubles, however, are far from over.

There are more than 89,000 widows in their early twenties and mid-thirties in the former conflict zones, government officials say. According to the deputy minister of child development and women's affairs, M A M Hizbullah, some 49,000 widows -- majority of whom are wives of Tiger rebels killed in action -- live in the country's east, and another 40,000 in the north.

In his native Batticaloa district, the deputy minister said, there are some 25,000 widows, of which 8,000 had three children each. Hizbullah said that he had approached the Indian government -- India has always kept a close watch on developments in its neighbouring country -- for assistance to help the widows. But in some areas, programmes targeted toward their needs have already begun.

"We have plans to start a garment factory here," said Roopavathi Ketheeswaran, a government official in Kilinochchi district, adding that women often find it hard to find regular work unless programmes are designed with their needs in mind.

Even when they find work, the pay is sometimes a pittance. Seventeen year-old Ravindranathan Valarmadu, who hails from Pillumalai village in eastern Batticaloa district, for example, earns about 17 U.S. dollars a month from working as a milk collector six days a week.

This kind of situation, when many expected the end of the conflict to bring about better lives, can make widows feel helpless. "When you don't have a husband, when you don't have family and you are alone, it can be tough," Rasanayagam Rahulanayani, the government agent for Vaharai division in eastern Sri Lanka, told IPS.

"When assistance also slows down, the women can feel very vulnerable," said the official, who revealed that she had lost her father in the conflict.



"Widows and single mothers still find it hard within a very male-dominated social system," Rahulanayani explained. Traditionally, Tamil society dictates that men take the lead, and women are expected to follow, so that widows who now have to make all decisions, including taking care of the family business and dealing with private and public officials, may not always be fully comfortable with their new role.


Saroja Devi, a 27-year-old mother of two who was waiting to meet Rahulanayani, says her husband went missing while the family escaped the war in the north. "I don't know where he is, or even if he is alive," Devi said.

Subsequently, Devi moved back to the east, where she hails from and where she has some family near Vaharai. "He was detained by the Tigers for awhile when he refused to help," Devi said. "We were running thorough shell fire when he went missing. There was shell fire all day and I don't how we escaped." At this point, Devi's search for her husband is one that is more hope than anything else. Meanwhile, she has to eke out a living for her family.

There are hardly any jobs available in Vaharai, which lies deep in the interior of Batticaloa district, and where the key occupations are fishing and farming. "I'm not doing anything right now. I help out my family members in the fields and they give me some money," Devi said, adding that she had no choice but to sell all her gold jewellery -- or starve.

Standing next to Devi in the queue, 29-year-old Navunad Sudha no longer has jewellery -- they had been long sold. Sudha's story is similar to Devi's. She hails from the Vaharai, married a man from the north, and was separated from her husband while fleeing the fighting.

But unlike Devi, Sudha believes that her husband, who disappeared in April 2009, is in government custody. "I will look for him till I get some proof," Sudha said.

Meanwhile, the challenges of day-to-day existence press on Sudha, who is seeking help from government officials to buy a sewing machine. "I stitch clothes at home to make some money," she said. — **Adithya Alles | IPS** 

## Action Not Speeches Needed For Women's Rights

Has the world become safer and more peaceful for women and girls in the past 10 years? Not so much, says former United Nations Security Council President Anwarul K. Chowdhury, the Bangladesh ambassador to the UN who held the rotating Security Council presidency in 2000 and 2001, made a presidential statement on equality between women and men in security and peace in 2000 that led to the adoption of Resolution 1325.

As a former career diplomat, Chowdhury said he is still strongly committed to the implementation of the resolution because of his experience as a UN official in conflict-hit countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. But the implementation of his work has been slow.

In April, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon announced a set of indicators to implement the resolution. The indicators basically ask developing countries to collect data on women's participation in peace and security issues. But the secretary general acknowledged that it would take two to five years for full implementation, Chowdhury said.

"(Data collection) will be a burden for developing countries. As a result, they will not give (it their) full attention." Instead of focusing on statistics, the key to turning the resolution into reality is to make the secretary general's role more active and engaged, he said.

"I want the secretary general to discuss it with all the world leaders. He should tell them, 'What is happening to 1325 in your country?' In doing so, Chowdhury said, the secretary general could eliminate the two- to five-year wait. He also argued that it is crucial to involve the private sector, especially multinational corporations, because they are becoming an important player in peace and security.

"They employ a lot of people, for example, in Iraq. Security there is controlled by the private sector," he said. "And they're not bound by the UN resolution or anything. They're guided by profit-oriented involvement, making money. So I want them to be involved."

Getting all of the parties related to Resolution 1325 on board, however, has not been easy. In the case of UN peacekeepers, some have committed acts of sexual abuse against local women, but the UN has not been able to stop it, according to Chowdhury.

If a man from one of the member states is involved in sexual violence, a report is made and he is sent back to his home country. The report is also sent back, asking the army to make an inquiry and punish him. This year, 39 cases were reported, but the UN has dealt with only 13 of them.

In many cases, the punishment — such as being docked a month's salary — is small compared with what those peacekeepers have done, he said. "It's a miscarriage of justice," he said, adding that the head of the UN mission should be held responsible in these cases. While much still needs to be done to improve women's involvement in peace and security issues, Chowdhury is still hopeful.

– Excerpts from an interview with Japan Times on Sep. 15.

### ➔ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The UN is accountable - it is a Security Council resolution, after all," she noted. "The fate of most South Asian countries is that our governments do not take seriously the recommendations of the UN So we need the UN to be more vocal, to take more concrete measures and to force the member states to implement the commitments they make at a national level," Sharma said.

Unfortunately, the UN in turn is severely hampered by a lack of funding and inadequate local institutional support. Addressing a press conference Oct. 20 on the latest "State of World Population" report, Barbara Crossette highlighted several blocks to implementation at the local level.

"It's easy to sit in New York and say okay, we have 1325, we have post-conflict plans, we have action plans, we have everything. But I always think of the line that was handed back to me by an African woman. I said, 'Your country has resolution 1325' and she said: 'Show me.'"

For many observers, the horrific conditions in which women around the world continue to languish cannot wait years to be resolved. Others, like Safaa Elagib Adam, secretary general of the Community Development Association in Khartoum, are more patient, placing faith in the slow but steady turning of the tide.

"Resolutions like this are very important at the grassroots level," Adam told IPS, stressing that 1325 is a mechanism, rather than a solution, in the process of achieving equal participation of women at the national and international level of peace building. "Even without a national platform to ensure its implementation, 1325 is affecting the Sudanese government and women are using it as a tool to approach the negotiations table," she said.

Adam was one of the founding members of the Community Development Association, an organisation that works for sustainable peace in Darfur at both the grassroots and national levels. The group also works with IDPs, women and youth on improving their livelihood and achieving economic stability through vocational trainings and workshops.

As a woman activist living in the thick of a conflict zone, her testimony goes a long way in assessing the condition of 1325. "Unfortunately, I have to confess that the dissemination and awareness of 1325 is very low," she told IPS. "During the Abuja Peace Talks, I had a chance to meet with members of various factions. They do not believe in 1325. They believe that peace talks are a political issue only for men. That is their mentality."

"But little by little, as there is more recognition of 1325, men are reluctantly agreeing to recognise women as part of the negotiating process." - Kanya D'Almeida | IPS