



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



Women, Peace and Security

DFAT's implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325



HE Matthew Anderson, Australian Ambassador to Afghanistan, and Colonel Susan Coyle, Deputy Commander Joint Task Force 636, escort the Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs (centre), on an official visit to Afghanistan, January 2015. Credit: DFAT

Ministerial foreword

Gender equality and women's empowerment are central to global peace and security. Sustainable resolutions to conflict should be built on the involvement of women in decision-making, the prevention of sexual violence in conflict, and peace processes that take into account the needs and experiences of both men and women and the different impacts that conflict has on them.

2015 marks the 15th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325—a ground breaking resolution that represents a commitment by the international community to ensure women's participation and protection in fragile, conflict and post-conflict settings.

Australia has been a strong and consistent advocate for women, peace and security. This agenda was a priority for Australia during our term on the UN Security Council and beyond.

On this anniversary, together with the Global Study on the Implementation of Resolution 1325 and the Secretary-General's High-level Review, we must progress our efforts to deliver these commitments.

This booklet highlights how Australia, through our foreign policy and aid program, is contributing to international efforts to deliver the promises of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and advance the women, peace and security agenda. It sets out how we are working with the UN and its agencies, partner governments, civil society, women and women's organisations to ensure that women have a central place in international peace and security efforts.

The Hon Julie Bishop MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs



From left: Young women from Indonesia, Pakistan, Burma and Cambodia show their support for Security Council Resolution 1325. Credit: Linking the Networks Project, JERA International.

Contents

Ministerial foreword	1
Introduction	4
Working at a global level	7
<hr/>	
Advancing women, peace and security on the United Nations Security Council	9
Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls	13
From global commitments to local action	17
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Supporting women’s participation in peace processes	18
Putting it into practice—in the Philippines	19
Putting it into practice—in Burma	21
Putting it into practice—with the Caribbean and the Arms Trade Treaty	23
Putting it into practice—in Timor-Leste	26
Responding to women’s needs in conflict and post-conflict settings	29
Putting it into practice—in Uganda	30
Putting it into practice—in Syria	32
Putting it into practice—in Iraq	34
Putting it into practice—in Sri Lanka	36
Preventing and responding to violence against women	38
Putting it into practice—in Afghanistan	39
Putting it into practice—in Solomon Islands	42

Introduction

In a world of continuing instability and violence, the implementation of cooperative approaches to peace and security is urgently needed. The equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women, 15 September 1995

2015 marks the 15th anniversary of the passing of United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Australia is a proud supporter of this important agenda through its foreign policy and aid program.

Resolution 1325 is an international landmark. For the first time, women's experiences of conflict, and their roles in resolving conflict, were explicitly linked to the world's peace and security agenda. In passing Resolution 1325, the Security Council has recognised the importance of addressing the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and promoting their active participation in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict resolution.

Resolution 1325 has been followed by six resolutions, each strengthening the commitment to women's participation and including a focus on preventing, and responding to, sexual violence in conflict. Together, these resolutions frame the women, peace and security agenda.

Australia's work to implement these seven resolutions is guided by the Australian National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security 2012–2018 (National Action Plan)¹. This whole-of-government plan provides a coordinated approach to integrating gender into Australia's peace and security efforts. It identifies the strategies and

1 Available online: <http://www.dpmc.gov.au/office-women/publication/australia-national-action-plan-women-peace-and-security-2012-2018>

actions that Australia is undertaking, nationally and internationally, to advance this important work. This includes specific responsibilities and actions for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (Office for Women); Department of Defence; Australian Federal Police; Attorney-General's Department; Australian Civil-Military Centre; and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security

Resolution 1325 (2000): Addresses the impact of conflict on women and recognises the contribution of women in preventing and resolving conflict and their role in maintaining international peace and security.

Resolution 1820 (2008): Recognises conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war used by warring parties to achieve military or political end and resulting in impunity, which requires specialised military and police responses.

Resolution 1888 (2009): Provides for more effective implementation of Resolution 1820, including by establishing a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to provide high-level leadership, and establishing women protection advisers within peacekeeping missions.

Resolution 1889 (2009): Focuses on post-conflict peacebuilding, includes a strategy for increasing the number of women participating in peace talks, and calls for the development of global indicators to measure the implementation of Resolution 1325 by the UN and Member States.

Resolution 1960 (2010): Reaffirms the earlier commitments required to address sexual violence in conflict and mandates the creation of tools to combat impunity by listing perpetrators and establishing monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements.

Resolution 2106 (2013): Requests all actors, including the Security Council, to do more to implement earlier resolutions and to combat impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict. Acknowledges the importance of civil society, including women's organisations, in preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict.

Resolution 2122 (2013): Sets in place stronger measures to improve women's participation and representation in conflict resolution, especially through leadership positions. Reaffirms that gender equality is central to achieving international peace and security. Sets out the need for humanitarian aid to ensure access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including for pregnancies resulting from rape.

The National Action Plan was the result of extensive national consultations between government departments and agencies and the Australian public, including representatives from civil society and non-government organisations (NGOs).

The women, peace and security agenda and National Action Plan provide Australia with a holistic approach. Both are organised conceptually around these five themes:

1. conflict prevention
2. participation
3. protection
4. relief and recovery
5. normative work.

Australia recognises that coordinated efforts across all themes are critical to address the root causes of conflict and create sustainable peace.

The first progress report of the National Action Plan², published in 2014, demonstrated that the Australian Government is tracking well against its responsibilities.

To mark the 15th anniversary of the passing of Resolution 1325, this booklet features case studies from Australia's foreign policy and aid program. These illustrate how DFAT is implementing its responsibilities and commitments under the National Action Plan across all five themes, and improving the lives of women and girls living in conflict zones.

Themes of the women, peace and security agenda

Prevention: Incorporating a gender perspective into conflict-prevention activities and strategies, and recognising the role women play in preventing conflict.

Participation: Recognising the important role women play in all aspects of peace and security, and enhancing women's meaningful participation through:

- ensuring more equal representation of women and men in Australian peace and security institutions
- working with international partners to empower local women to be involved in formal peace and security processes in fragile, conflict and post-conflict settings.

Protection: Protecting the human rights of women and girls by working with international partners to ensure their safety, physical and mental wellbeing, and economic security and equality, with special consideration for protecting women and girls from gender-based violence.

Relief and recovery: Ensuring a gender perspective is incorporated into all relief and recovery efforts to support specific needs and recognising the capacities of women and girls.

Normative work: Raising awareness about, and developing policy frameworks to, progress the women, peace and security agenda, and integrating a gender perspective across government policies on peace and security.

2 2014 Progress Report—Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012–2018. Available online: <http://www.dpmc.gov.au/office-women/publication/2014-progress-report-australian-national-action-plan-women-peace-and-security-2012-2018>

Working at a global level

At a global level, Australia works with other governments, civil society and the UN to ensure that international actions and commitments to peace and security progress the principles of Resolution 1325 and reflect the experiences, needs and roles of women and girls in fragile, conflict and post-conflict situations.

Australia works with other governments within the UN system to:

- recognise and address the different impacts of conflict on women and girls
- call for the accountability of perpetrators of sexual violence
- advocate for the appointment of gender advisors and women protection advisors in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations
- encourage women's full and effective participation in all levels of decision making.

These global commitments foster international awareness of the issues affecting women in fragile, conflict and post-conflict situations and form a shared commitment to translate such awareness into action. They contribute to an international evidence base on how to effectively integrate a gender perspective into peace and security efforts. Global commitments through the Security Council also directly translate into action by UN agencies and peacekeeping forces, including through the role and composition of international peacekeeping missions, relief and recovery programs and processes, and actions that protect and promote human rights.

Through its foreign policy and aid program, Australia has given priority to integrating a gender perspective into global peace and security efforts, across all elements of the women, peace and security agenda—conflict prevention, participation, protection, relief and recovery, and normative work. Australia's strong and consistent advocacy during its term on the Security Council (2013–14) assisted in further embedding the women, peace and security agenda into the Security Council's work. The Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls played a key role in reinforcing these efforts and promoting this agenda internationally.

HE Gary Quinlan, Former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN, briefs the press following Security Council Consultations on Syria. Credit: DFAT



Australia's advocacy is matched by practical activity. For example, Australia supports the deployment of civilian gender equality and gender-based violence specialists through the Australian Civilian Corps as part of stabilisation and recovery assistance to fragile states and countries experiencing or emerging from conflict or natural disasters.

Australia supports UN agencies responsible for women, peace and security and protection concerns, including UN Women, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and International Committee of the Red Cross. Specific examples of such support include:

- A commitment under the Australia–UNHCR Partnership Framework (2013–2016) to implement UNHCR's strategy to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in refugee and internally displaced populations.
- Funding for UNICEF and UNFPA to support the Gender-based Violence Area of Responsibility, the global forum for coordinating the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian settings, to create more accountable and effective approaches.
- Funding for UN Women's work to build women's participation and influence in decision making to prevent and resolve conflicts, as well as to support national partners and governments to better implement Resolution 1325.

Advancing women, peace and security on the United Nations Security Council

Significant progress has been made since the Security Council laid the foundation for the women, peace and security agenda in the landmark Resolution 1325. Australia has supported all seven resolutions advancing this work, affirming our determination to place women centrally in the resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding.

The Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Increasing women's participation in preventing conflict and building peace, media release, 20 October 2014

During Australia's term on the UN Security Council in 2013 and 2014, the Security Council faced more simultaneous conflicts—with a bigger impact on civilians across a larger area of the world—than at any time since World War Two. During this period, Australia played a central role in advancing the women, peace and security agenda.

Australia worked consistently to advance gender equality as a cross-cutting issue across the Security Council's work to promote international peace and security. Australia worked closely with other Security Council members to advance the agenda, resulting in unprecedented attention to women, peace and security across the breadth of the Security Council's work.

Australia played an important role in the drafting and adoption of two new Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security during its term—Resolution 2106 and Resolution 2122. Resolution 2106 sets out the framework for the UN's work to address sexual violence in conflict, and combat impunity for perpetrators of such violence. Resolution 2122 sets out the UN's concrete commitment to improving women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution efforts, and in post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. During Australia's term, five open debates were convened on women, peace and security. In addition to resolutions 2106 and 2122, a Presidential Statement (2014–21) on women, peace and security was adopted in October 2014, and specific language on gender secured in the majority of Security Council products adopted during Australia's term.

The Security Council’s debate on sexual violence may only take place once a year, but our work to end this barbaric practice—this crime—must be a daily commitment and attract serious action by us across the whole of our agenda. The Council must take every opportunity and use every tool it has to end this abhorrent crime, and to provide survivors the justice and services they need to rebuild their lives.

HE Gary Quinlan, Former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN (2009–14), Statement to the Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict, 25 April 2014

The Security Council’s work on women, peace and security advanced significantly during Australia’s term. Australia consistently promoted these issues across the breadth of the Security Council’s mandate, including to ensure women’s participation in decision making, their protection from conflict-related sexual violence, and to ensure greater attention to ensuring accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence. To enable effective implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, including the commitments in the new resolutions, Australia consistently promoted the inclusion of gender-specific language in the drafting and renewing of peacekeeping mission mandates, including the new peacekeeping mission in Mali, and the UN political mission in Somalia.

Under Australia’s Presidency of the Security Council, in September 2013 and November 2014, Australia also worked to ensure women, peace and security was a key element of these two landmark resolutions adopted by the Council.

Resolution 2117—the first ever on small arms and light weapons—was passed a few months after the agreement to the Arms Trade Treaty. It recognised the impact of small arms and light weapons on civilians, particularly women and children. It emphasises the importance of women’s full participation in combating the illicit transfer, accumulation and misuse of small arms. Resolution 2185—another first—secured the role of police in peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding. Drawing on Australia’s experience in gender-responsive policing in Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu, Resolution 2185 emphasised the importance of women’s participation in policing and peacekeeping, reinforced the critical role of police in preventing and responding to sexual violence (including for evidence collection and accountability for perpetrators) and urged more women to be deployed as UN police in peacekeeping missions.



At the Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, Member States discussed the theme of 'Displaced Women and Girls: Leaders and Survivors', 28 October 2014. Credit: UN Women/Ryan Brown

The full and effective participation of women is vital for developing and enhancing police and other security services, building ties between police and the communities they serve, and for promoting a successful transition to stable post-conflict societies. This has been a priority for Australia throughout our [Security] Council term.

The Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Australia secures strong support for UN policing, media release, November 2014

During its term, Australia took the lead in the drafting of Security Council resolutions relating to Afghanistan³, ensuring a priority focus on human rights, especially for women and girls.

Embedding the women, peace and security agenda across the breadth of the Security Council's work has included building understanding among its decision makers on the varied and critical roles of gender practitioners in the field. In support of this, Australia and Guatemala co-hosted an Arrria-formula⁴ meeting of the Security Council in May 2013 on the role of gender advisers in peacekeeping operations. This provided Security Council members, UN Peacebuilding Commission members, UN Member States and key civil society actors the opportunity to hear from gender advisers, women protection advisers and UN police who were working on sexual violence crimes and deployed in peacekeeping missions, on the practical challenges of implementing the women, peace and security agenda on the ground.

³ Within the Security Council, this position is referred to as 'pen-holder'. This Security Council pen-holder takes the lead on drafting all Security Council decisions on a situation-specific or thematic matter.

⁴ Arrria-formula meetings enable a member of the UN Security Council to invite other Security Council members to an informal meeting, held outside of the Security Council chambers and chaired by the inviting member.

Australia has also worked to build broader acceptance and support among key decision makers on women, peace and security issues. Activities included:

- co-hosting a forum with Rwanda, in the lead-up to the Council's adoption of Resolution 2122, on the critical importance of women's participation in peacebuilding, featuring women peace leaders and the head of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (September 2013)
- hosting an event at the 58th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women on best practices in implementing Security Council Resolution 2122, featuring women involved in evolving peace processes in Colombia, South Sudan and Syria (March 2014)
- co-hosting an event with Rwanda, during the lead-up to the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, on the role of UN police peacekeepers in addressing conflict-related sexual violence (June 2014)
- co-hosting a forum with Rwanda, ahead of the Security Council's annual open debate on women peace and security, on the role of national militaries in supporting gender-responsive peacebuilding, showcasing the innovative approaches of the Australian Defence Force and Australian Federal Police in attracting, recruiting, retaining and promoting female officers (October 2014).

The women, peace and security agenda continues to be a priority for Australia's UN engagement. Australia will participate in key UN processes in 2015, including the High Level Review and Global Study on Resolution 1325, reviews of peace operations and peacebuilding architecture, the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and the negotiation of a post-2015 development framework.

In 2015, the UN Secretary-General is undertaking a High Level Review and Global Study on Resolution 1325 to reflect on progress made and ongoing challenges in implementing the Security Council's women, peace and security agenda.

Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls

Reflecting the Australian Government's commitment to gender equality, in 2011 Australia established the role of the Ambassador for Women and Girls as a dedicated advocate for the promotion and protection of women's human rights around the globe. Since 2013, Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls, Natasha Stott Despoja, has worked to ensure that gender equality is a central focus of Australia's diplomatic and development efforts. The Ambassador advocates internationally for: women's political, economic and social empowerment; the elimination of violence and discrimination against women and girls; and the enhancement of women's participation in decision-making and leadership roles.

The Ambassador's participation at multilateral and regional meetings, in tandem with her bilateral advocacy, ensures that Australia is a strong voice in international efforts to empower women.

Promoting the women, peace and security agenda is central to the Ambassador's role. This includes advancing the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as peacebuilding efforts, and advocating for the protection of women and girls in conflict. The Ambassador is active in international fora, encouraging global attention and strong commitment to the agenda.

The use of sexual violence in conflict is an appalling human rights abuse; and the absence of women from conflict prevention initiatives and peace negotiations has profound and devastating consequences for the preservation and rebuilding of lasting peace in conflict-affected states. My advocacy on these issues is a core element of my work as Ambassador.

Natasha Stott Despoja, Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls

Haja Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (left), with Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, and Natasha Stott Despoja, Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, at the 58th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, March 2014. Credit: DFAT



The UN Commission on the Status of Women is the principal global policy making body dedicated to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. At the Commission's 58th Session, in March 2014, Australia promoted the effective implementation of the women, peace and security agenda with governments and civil society representatives from around the world. The Ambassador for Women and Girls hosted a panel discussion on 'Promoting Women's Roles in Peace Processes' with the United Kingdom and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which discussed successes in and challenges to women's leadership in peace negotiations, specifically in the evolving peace processes in Colombia, South Sudan and Syria.

In October 2014, Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls spoke at the annual Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security. Addressing the theme 'Displaced Women and Girls: Leaders and Survivors', the Ambassador reinforced Australia's commitment to encouraging women's leadership in humanitarian settings affected by conflict.

Displaced women and girls are not merely victims. Their leadership and participation in preventing and resolving conflict, as well as reconstructing post-conflict societies, must be harnessed. This includes in refugee camps and displacement settings where women must play a central role in the design and delivery of gender-sensitive programs.

Natasha Stott Despoja, Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, Statement to the Security Council, Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security: Displaced Women and Girls: Leaders and Survivors, 28 October 2014



Natasha Stott Despoja, Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, speaking at the annual United Nations Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, October 2014. Credit: DFAT

At the annual event, in the context of unprecedented global displacement resulting from humanitarian crises, the Ambassador highlighted the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls, including their vulnerability to violence, child, early and forced marriage, sex trafficking and the need to access sexual and reproductive health services. The Ambassador outlined the practical support Australia provides on the ground to address these types of challenges.

Australia also works with the United Kingdom and other nations beyond the Security Council to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict, both as a tactic of war and an international war crime. In 2013, Australia signed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Minister for Foreign Affairs became a Champion of the United Kingdom's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative.

In June 2014, the Australian Government facilitated the Australian Dialogue on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. The Dialogue harnessed the combined expertise of representatives from the diplomatic, aid, military, policing, civil society and academic communities, to develop recommendations and shape Australia's work to eliminate sexual violence in situations of armed violence. The outcome was a set of actions to which Australian Government agencies committed, on addressing the prevention of, and strengthening the capacity to, respond to sexual violence in conflict.

The Ambassador for Women and Girls presented recommendations from the Australian Dialogue to the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in London (June 2014). The Ambassador and Australia's Chief of Army Lieutenant General David Morrison AO, represented Australia at the Summit—the largest ever meeting on the issue.

Sexual violence in conflict targets the most vulnerable members of society. It is not only an occurrence in conflict situations, but is exacerbated there. It is an exacerbation of existing imbalances and injustices within society, of which gender inequality is the most cross-cutting of all.

Natasha Stott Despoja, Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, London, June 2014

HE Paul Madden, British High Commissioner to Australia, and the Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the Australian Dialogue on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, Parliament House, Canberra, June 2014.
Credit: DFAT



Australia supported the International Protocol on the Investigation and Documentation of Sexual Violence in Conflict, launched at the Summit. The protocol sets out basic standards and best practices for documenting and investigating sexual violence crimes. At the Summit, Australia renewed its commitments under the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012–2018).

The world is facing more simultaneous, major crises than at any time since World War II and it is women and girls who are disproportionately affected and harmed. The tragic consequences of gender inequality are present in all countries, but especially in conflict-affected states. One of the great challenges as we develop and implement the post-2015 agenda, is to ensure that international commitments under UNSC Resolution 1325 are realised: that women are properly protected in conflict and post-conflict settings and participate fully and equally in peacebuilding efforts.

Natasha Stott Despoja, Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls

From global commitments to local action

To ensure that women benefit from Resolution 1325, the international community must translate global commitments into practical, local action.

All five themes of the women, peace and security agenda, and Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, are important at country and local levels:

- **Prevention:** women's role in preventing conflict needs to be supported at local level where women can make a major contribution to stopping conflict from starting and stopping it from escalating.
- **Participation:** local women need to be involved in formal peace and security processes in fragile, conflict and post-conflict settings that affect their communities.
- **Protection:** women and girls must be safe in their own homes and communities.
- **Relief and recovery:** women's specific needs and capacities must be recognised as part of supporting and rebuilding communities during and after conflict.
- **Normative work:** new government policies at a national and community level within a country should progress the women, peace and security agenda.

Australia's aid program provides practical support on the ground to protect women and girls in conflict and to assist women to play an active role in all stages of peace processes. Australia is working with partner governments, UN agencies, civil society organisations and women's rights organisations at a local level to ensure women are included in peace processes and rebuilding communities and to prevent and respond to violence against women.

Supporting women's participation in peace processes

Women's meaningful participation is central to realising the intentions of UNSCR 1325. By increasing the representation of women in peace and security processes and institutions, it is more likely that issues affecting both women and men will be considered and valued, and that peace will be more sustainable.

Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012–2018)

Supporting civil society and women's organisations is key to promoting equality, increasing women's participation in preventing and resolving conflict, building peace, and ensuring relief and recovery.

Women play a critical role in negotiating and building peace in their communities. They can be a source of innovative ideas and solutions for peace, and can play a key role in building community support for peace. Ensuring that all members of a community are part of decision-making helps address the causes of conflict and build sustainable and lasting peace.

Resolution 1325 reaffirms the importance of women's significant role and meaningful participation in peace processes. In practice, this means increasing the representation of women, and including gender perspectives, at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms used to prevent, manage and resolve conflict.

However, increasing women's participation in peace processes is more than a question of numbers. It is about empowering the skilled women at the forefront of peace work, who are experts in human rights, ethnic violence and conflict resolution.

To put these commitments into practice, women and women's organisations need resources, funding, training, time and space to be able to be part of decision-making and participate actively in peace processes and peacebuilding.

Putting it into practice—in the Philippines

Australia recognises the importance of supporting women’s involvement in peace processes to ensure lasting impact in conflict-affected areas. In the Philippines, Australia has supported peacebuilding initiatives in Mindanao since 1996, and continues to support the peace process between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro in March 2014 was a significant step towards peace and stability in Mindanao after four decades of conflict and more than 100 000 deaths.

Australia supports the Women Working for Normalization project, coordinated by Women Engaged in Action on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (WE Act 1325). This network of 37 women’s rights, human rights and peace organisations works to ensure that women participate in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. It also promotes security through the implementation and monitoring of the Philippine National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

The Women Working for Normalization project secured women’s engagement in the formulation of the Bangsamoro Basic Law, which will establish an autonomous region in Mindanao. WE Act 1325 gathered the perspectives of more than 200 women in conflict-affected areas of Mindanao on issues including decommissioning and arms control, human rights, policing, reconciliation and transitional justice. Recommendations were submitted to members of the negotiating panels drafting the peace agreement and those drafting the Bangsamoro Basic Law.



WE Act 1325’s capacity building training, part of the Women Working for Normalization Project. Participants represented academia, civil society, community, media and local government, September 2013. Credit: WE Act 1325

The Women Working for Normalization Project aims to see women active in transforming conflict-affected communities to an improved quality of life. WE Act 1325 works to see women prevent and resolve conflicts in the community, monitor human rights and international humanitarian law violations, and advocate for arms control. To achieve this, the group conducted capacity building activities for women from across Muslim Mindanao.

In all phases of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding, we want to see women’s perspectives considered. Most importantly, we want to see them actively participating in processes and mechanisms that will lead to normalization, and in the building of peace and security on the ground.

Jasmin Naro-Galace, Coordinator, WE Act 1325

Jasmin Nario-Galace, who represents civil society from around the world, speaking on the Arms Trade Treaty Negotiations before handing over a civil society petition to the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, UN headquarters, 2012. Credit: Eskinder Debebe (UN)



Ms Nario-Galace, an internationally regarded peace educator and disarmament campaigner and Executive Director of the Centre for Peace Education at Miriam College, Manila coordinates WE Act 1325. She was one of three women who spearheaded the drafting of the Philippine National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

Ms Nario-Galace has highlighted the impact women have had in the formal peace negotiations in the Philippines and emphasised how the high number of women on the negotiating teams, technical working group and legal teams influenced language in the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro and made the process more inclusive.

Putting it into practice—in Burma



During the first training of the Women's Peace Leadership Programme, participants creatively identified the aspects of their leadership they wanted to develop, January 2015. Credit: Tikka Hun

After more than five decades of conflict, the government in Burma is negotiating with 16 ethnic groups to end the conflict that has plagued the country since independence. Ensuring women's participation is critical for inclusive and sustainable peace. Responding to this need, Australia supports the Women's Peace Leadership Programme to build the capacity of women engaged in Burma's peace process. The program is being delivered by the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies⁵.

While focusing on Burma, the program also brings together female peace leaders involved in peace processes from Cambodia, Kashmir, the Philippines and Sri Lanka to share lessons from the region.

The eight-month intensive program is building the knowledge and expertise of 13 influential female peace leaders so they can have greater impact on peace efforts in their countries. These peace leaders draw on the knowledge and expertise of a vast pool of international specialists to help them refine their advocacy skills. Their training concentrates on lobbying, communication, advocacy, conflict analysis and strategic engagement with conflict parties.

Importantly, the Women's Peace Leadership Programme gives participants the opportunity to reflect on their experiences, renew their strength and create a strong network.

⁵ The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies is a Cambodia-based NGO, working in the field of peacebuilding and conflict transformation in the Asia region.

The vision with the Women’s Peace Leadership Programme is to create a strong network of peace leaders who feel equipped to lead and who can support one another in their ongoing and challenging peace processes.

Women’s Peace Leadership Program participant from Burma

Australia is promoting stability and lasting peace in Burma by working with community-based and international organisations to build an environment conducive to peace negotiations between Burma’s government, military and ethnic armed groups and ensuring women’s active participation. The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies supports the peace process through close engagement with ethnic armed groups and other stakeholders in Burma.



Women peace leaders gathered to share lessons from across the region as part of the Women’s Peace Leadership Programme, January 2015. Credit: Tikka Hun

Putting it into practice—with the Caribbean and the Arms Trade Treaty

Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security highlights the importance of involving women in the control of small arms and light weapons that have specific impact on women and girls in conflict situations. Active participation of civil society, particularly women's rights organisations, is essential to bring women's lived experience of armed violence into global negotiations. Australia's support of civil society engagement in the development and negotiation of the Arms Trade Treaty⁶ and addressing small arms and light weapons is one example of this.

Australia supported the Caribbean Coalition for Development and Reduction of Armed Violence to build a common approach to the Treaty for the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). The Coalition represents civil society organisations across 10 countries and is coordinated by Folade Mutota, Executive Director of the Women's Institute for Alternative Development in Trinidad and Tobago.

The treaty, which prohibits the sale of arms if there is a risk that the weapons could be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian or human rights law, is the first ever treaty that recognizes the link between gender-based violence and the international arms trade.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Reaction to the adoption of the first ever Arms Trade Treaty, media release, 2 April 2013

Women's civil society groups were an important part of this process. With funding through the Australian Direct Aid Program (DAP), the Coalition held workshops that brought together technical experts, diplomats, representatives from UN agencies, members of negotiating teams, and front-line workers responsible for the shipment of arms across borders, customs and immigration. The workshops enabled strong civil society engagement in developing a regional CARICOM strategy for Treaty negotiations. Australia also supported 18 government and civil society delegates from the Caribbean and Pacific to attend preparatory meetings for the Treaty in New York.

⁶ Australia ratified the Arms Trade Treaty in June 2014. It came into force on 24 December 2014. Australia is one of the seven co-authors of the original 2006 General Assembly Resolution calling for a Treaty and chaired its successful negotiation in April 2013.

Ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty (from left): Samoa; International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War; St. Vincent and the Grenadines; UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs; Jamaica; Luxembourg; Burkina Faso; Belgium; Australia and Austria.
Credit: Champion Hamilton/Champion Eye Media/Control Arms



Ms Mutota highlights the inclusion of gender-based violence provisions in the final Arms Trade Treaty as a significant achievement. Civil society advocates helped negotiate the provisions and ensure that the role of women in addressing peace and security concerns was recognised during negotiations.

The Arms Trade Treaty work consumed our time, energy, resources and creativity. There is so much insecurity and suffering as a result of guns in our communities and homes. It has disrupted our lives and has changed our social, economic and political culture. Our work required extensive mobilization across 14 countries, getting people on board, getting resources to host workshops, developing a team, building consensus, researching for preparatory meetings and being fully involved in the process with governments. It took over our lives.

Folade Mutota, Executive Director of Women's Institute for Alternative Development and Coordinator of the Secretariat for the Caribbean Coalition for Development and Reduction of Armed Violence

Resolution 2117 was adopted in September 2013—the first dedicated to small arms and light weapons—under Australia’s Presidency of the Security Council. For the first time, the Security Council recognised the importance of women’s full participation in combating the illicit transfer, accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, and directly linked the misuse of such weapons to risks to civilian populations, particularly women and children.

Specific actions to prevent sexual violence must be included in security sector reform, rule of law initiatives, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. As Resolution 2117 recognised, the misuse of small arms and light weapons exacerbates sexual violence.

HE Gary Quinlan, Former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN (2009–14), Statement to the Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict, April 2014



Folade Mutota, Executive Director of the Women’s Institute for Alternative Development in Trinidad and Tobago (left), and Candice Shade, Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the UN, in front of a stop cluster bombs poster. Credit: Cluster Munition Coalition

Putting it into practice—in Timor-Leste

Since independence in 2002, the important role played by women in shaping Timor-Leste's post-conflict peace has been increasingly recognised. Yet, despite women's participation in the liberation movement and post-conflict development, and state commitments to promote equality, gender inequality remains pervasive in all aspects of Timor-Leste society.

To strengthen women's voice in peacebuilding at community and national levels in Timor-Leste, Australia has supported UN Women's From Communities to Global Security Institutions: Engaging Women in Building Peace and Security program. At community level, this program has trained self-help groups to improve their leadership and conflict-resolution skills, and enabled them to access social and legal support.

At national level, UN Women has been working closely with local partners in Timor-Leste to support the development of a national action plan on women, peace and security. The plan will detail the actions that the government will take to implement Resolution 1325.

Since 2013, the Secretary of State for Security, within the Ministry of Defence and Security, has led this collaborative and locally-owned process in Timor-Leste. Security sector institutions, the national women's machinery, relevant ministries and civil society organisations have also been engaged. Programs have included training trainers to raise community awareness on preventing and resolving conflict; as well as training members of the Defence Force and National Police on Resolution 1325.

Now as a facilitator, I can help communities do advocacy for prevention activities, talk to women about how to protect themselves from conflict, how to prevent conflict, and how they can participate in the post-conflict agenda.

Laura Pina, training facilitator for UN Women's From Communities to Global Security Institutions program

UN Women also supported the establishment of Women, Peace and Security—Yes!, a community of practice that promotes collaboration between women's civil society organisations, the security sector, development partners and peacebuilding organisations. Such collaboration encourages an inclusive process to develop the national action plan and embed women's rights in peace and security concerns.

Women, Peace and Security—Yes! developed a learning pack on women, peace and security—launched by the Secretary of State for Security in December 2014—that will be used by 27 government departments, NGOs and civil society partners.



Laura Abrantes and Laura Pina are training facilitators for the From Communities to Global Security Institutions: Engaging Women in Building Peace and Security program. Credit: UN Women/Betsy Davis

Working on issues regarding Resolution 1325 may feel new to many of us, but ultimately it isn't because we have been dealing with domestic violence for many years. It's only new now because we're beginning to link these issues to official peace and security policy. Therefore, only the approach is different.

Dr Anacleto da Costa Ribeiro, Advisor for Conflict Prevention and Security Management to the Secretary of State for Security, Timor-Leste

With funding from Australia and the United Kingdom, the From Communities to Global Security Institutions: Engaging Women in Building Peace and Security program has operated in Timor-Leste, as well as in Haiti, Liberia, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda. This program supports women's engagement in decision-making and peacebuilding, national peace negotiations, gender-responsive security sector reform and Resolution 1325 implementation.



Mariam and her family escaped the war in Syria when her twin babies were one-month old. She and her family now need employment and housing. Credit: Sam Tarling/Oxfam

Responding to women's needs in conflict and post-conflict settings

The specific needs of women and girls are often overlooked during and following armed conflict and resulting humanitarian crises. Gender inequalities and the absence of protective structures and norms mean women and girls have a particular vulnerability in times of conflict. Women frequently bear the brunt of many harmful consequences of armed conflict.

For women and girls displaced by conflict, access to life-saving sexual and reproductive health services remains a gap in humanitarian responses. Reproductive health issues are the leading cause of women's death and disability worldwide. These services are often neglected in humanitarian emergencies, when they are most needed.

Ensuring women can access housing and land in post-conflict settings is essential to regain physical and economic security. A safe and secure environment is needed for women to restore livelihoods and be active in social, economic and political recovery.

Housing and land are crucial to recovery efforts, in particular for women in female-headed households, the number of which tends to rise in crisis owing to family separation and widowhood. Women's limited and unequal access to property becomes particularly damaging in post-conflict situations, especially when displaced women who have lost husbands or close male relatives return to their homes.

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, 2014

Putting it into practice—in Uganda

The Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme in Crisis and Post Crisis Settings (SPRINT) is a practical response to women's reproductive health needs. Coordinated by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), in collaboration with UNFPA and IPPF national member associations, SPRINT provides life-saving services by implementing the Minimum Initial Service Package for Reproductive Health.⁷

In times of crisis, critical SRH [sexual and reproductive health] services are not prioritized or recognized by key humanitarian responders. SPRINT delivers the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP)—a set of priority life-saving interventions to be implemented at the onset of every humanitarian crisis along with other critical priorities.

Lucien Kouakou, Africa Regional Director, IPPF, SPRINT Initiative to deliver life-saving SRH aid to refugees in Uganda report, 25 November 2014

In Uganda, SPRINT delivers sexual and reproductive health services and support to refugees who have fled conflicts in neighbouring South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Working with its local partner, Reproductive Health of Uganda, SPRINT has provided support to more than 40 000 refugees in eight settlement camps in Northern and Western Uganda.⁸

Access to any sexual and reproductive health services, especially family planning, is very limited in these refugee settlements. Human resources to support the delivery of reproductive health services and commodities are also inadequate.

Jackson Chekweko, Executive Director, Reproductive Health of Uganda

7 The Minimum Initial Service Package for Reproductive Health is an internationally agreed set of priority practices for health care professionals in emergency situations. It focuses on preventing and managing the consequences of sexual violence; reducing HIV transmission; preventing excess maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity; and planning for comprehensive reproductive health services.

8 Included Adjumani, Arua and Kiryandongo in Northern Uganda, which host South Sudanese refugees, and Kyaka, Kyangwali, Nakivale, Orukinga and Rwamwanja settlements in Western Uganda, which mainly host Congolese refugees.



A peer educator with Reproductive Health of Uganda, SPRINT's local partner, explains the benefits of family planning to South Sudanese refugees in Adjumani District, South Sudanese settlement. Credit: IPPF/ Reproductive Health of Uganda

Denis Bakomeza, SPRINT Coordinator for Reproductive Health of Uganda, says SPRINT provides antenatal, safe delivery, and post natal care to pregnant and lactating women, care for newborns, and caters for family planning needs of women and men of reproductive age. Local partners operating in each refugee settlement provide medical services and psychosocial support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence as well as elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV services to all pregnant women.

Australia supported the establishment of SPRINT in 2007 and continues to provide funding. SPRINT has assisted emergency responses benefiting more than 140 000 people, mostly women and girls. It has been involved in 32 humanitarian responses and conducted training for coordination teams in 95 countries. Its work has resulted in policy change in 23 countries on sexual and reproductive health services in disasters, conflict and post-conflict settings.

Putting it into practice—in Syria

The ongoing conflict in Syria is the largest humanitarian and security crisis facing the world today.⁹ Millions of refugee and internally displaced women and girls fleeing conflict inside Syria and the region face extraordinarily harsh conditions, including rape, sexual violence and other human rights violations and abuses.

Sexual violence is a persistent—and deliberate—feature of the conflict, brutalising civilians, displacing populations, and a constant threat in the refugee camps.

HE Gary Quinlan, Former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN (2009–14), Statement to the Security Council Open Debate on Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict, 25 April 2014



The humanitarian crisis in Syria has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls such as Sara. Sara fled Syria when pregnant and lost her child. She now lives in a small camp in Jordan with her husband and three children. Credit: F. Muath/Oxfam

The deterioration of informal protection systems, including family, faith-based and community organisations, and the breakdown of formal protection mechanisms, such as policing, is increasing the vulnerability of women and girls. In Syria, this includes

⁹ As at January 2015, more than 12.2 million people required humanitarian assistance in Syria and more than 3.8 million people had fled to neighbouring countries.

increased risks of child, early and forced marriage, and undermining economic opportunities for women, all of which can increase the risk of sex or labour trafficking.

In response, Australia has assisted more than one million vulnerable women and children in Syria through UNFPA by providing reproductive health care and psychological support, and coordinating the response to sexual and gender-based violence. This includes funding for emergency obstetric supplies for 780 000 women inside Syria and delivering 57 000 dignity kits.¹⁰

Australia has also provided funding to the UN's No Lost Generation initiative to support Syrian refugee children, including child survivors of sexual violence.

Syrian women must be central to designing humanitarian responses if recovery is to meet everyone's needs. In response, Australian Government support to Australian NGOs and their local partners ensured that the needs and rights of refugee women and girls were integrated across their programs through gender action plans.¹¹ For instance, Oxfam closely monitored protection issues facing refugees in Lebanon by ensuring women were included on refugee committees. This enabled a more comprehensive and balanced assessment of protection threats facing women and girls and men and boys and the design of more effective solutions.

Women's key contributions to relief and recovery efforts must be recognised and valued. Humanitarian, early recovery and peace-building efforts that promote and support women's meaningful participation are more effective and can create opportunities to address gender inequality.

Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012–18)

Addressing the needs and rights of women and girls is part of Australia's broader package of humanitarian assistance in response to Syria's humanitarian crisis.

10 A dignity kit is a package of basic necessities that displaced women and girls need to maintain feminine hygiene, dignity and respect in their daily lives. The kits contain toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, soap, sanitary pads, underclothes and other culturally appropriate clothing items.

11 The Australian aid program provided financial support in 2013 through the Humanitarian Partnership Agreement to five Australian NGOs responding to the Syria crisis in Lebanon and Jordan: CARE Australia, Caritas Australia, Oxfam Australia, Save the Children Australia and World Vision Australia. The Humanitarian Partnership Agreement is the Australian Government's primary mechanism for humanitarian funding for Australian NGOs.

Putting it into practice—in Iraq

Australian support for women and girls in Iraq contributes significantly to help the country protect its people from the ongoing instability in the region. As the security situation in Northern Iraq deteriorates, the humanitarian needs of women and young girls continue to escalate.¹²

Women and girls are being disproportionately affected, facing a higher risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Sexual violence must not be accepted as an inevitable consequence of crises. We must improve prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence, including through trauma, health and sexual and reproductive health-care services.

Peter Versegi, Minister-Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Australia to the UN, Referring to Iraq in the Australian National Statement to the Humanitarian Debate in the UN General Assembly, December 2014

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where almost half of displaced Iraqis are located after fleeing violence, Australia funds Plan International Australia and its partner, International Medical Corps, to provide emergency medical assistance and psychosocial support. The needs of vulnerable women and girls, including survivors of gender-based violence, are a priority. In temporary displacement camps in Duhok and Erbil Governorates, women lack access to social and protection networks and to security and justice mechanisms. They also face the threat of sexual violence from armed actors and community members, and a higher risk of domestic violence. Psychosocial and community health workers trained in gender-based violence case management are helping to address this issue. Mobile psychosocial teams have been deployed in displacement sites, and these services are being integrated into health, maternity clinics and community services.

Australia also funds UNFPA to scale up its response to the needs of women and girls in the Kurdistan Region and other parts of Iraq. Needs include reproductive health, family planning and obstetric services for around 250 000 pregnant women. In early 2015, UNFPA estimated that more than 380 000 pregnant women require assistance, including 50 000 women in desperate need of emergency obstetric care.

¹² In January 2015, 5.2 million people were in need of assistance in Iraq, including 2.1 million people internally displaced by violence since January 2014 and more than 235 000 Syrian refugees.

UNFPA collaborates with local and national women’s organisations, including Al Massalah, Al Amal and the Baghdad Women Association. It also coordinates with UN Women to connect women and girls supported by reproductive health programs to additional programs on girls’ primary education and economic empowerment for female-headed households.

To respond to violent extremism in Iraq, women must be at the centre of humanitarian action, playing lead roles as human rights defenders, humanitarian workers and in peace and recovery efforts. Australia has provided funding since June 2014 to support humanitarian efforts in Iraq, including to Plan International Australia and UNFPA.



Dignity kits being distributed by UNFPA to displaced Iraqis in Khanke Displacement Camp, Duhok Governorate. Credit: UNFPA/Millat Horiria

Putting it into practice—in Sri Lanka

More than 25 years of conflict came to an end in Sri Lanka in 2009. Many people suffered through years of displacement, returning to their villages to find their homes badly damaged or completely destroyed. Recognising the importance of women's access to land and housing in Sri Lanka, Australia supports families to reconstruct and repair their homes in the conflict-affected North and East of the country through the Improving Living Conditions in Returnee Areas of Sri Lanka through Housing Program.

Uthayarasa Caroline Nirmala, from Iranapalai in Mullaitivu District, was badly affected by the conflict. Her family was forced to live in temporary shelters and displacement camps over many years. In 2009, Nirmala was seriously injured in a shell attack and had to have her leg amputated. Her husband was later killed in a road accident, making her a single mother.



Uthayarasa Caroline Nirmala with her parents and son, outside their new permanent home.
Credit: UN Habitat

Returning home in 2012, Nirmala found much of her village's infrastructure and many of the homes, including her own, were damaged beyond repair. Nirmala's village was one of the last to be resettled because the area needed to be cleared of unexploded ordnance. After living in a transitional shelter, which was even more difficult due to her disability, Nirmala received a cash grant through this program to reconstruct her home. Nirmala led the construction of her new home with technical support from UN-Habitat and by hiring skilled masons with her grant money.

Nirmala now provides a safe environment for her young son and elderly parents. With the physical security of a home, Nirmala is concentrating on making a living through sewing garments.

This home has provided a safe haven for me and my son. I feel so much more secure in this house as it can be locked. It is also much cooler than the temporary shelter and we feel very comfortable. I am grateful to the donors for giving us a cash grant to build our home.

Uthayarasa Caroline Nirmala, Iranapalai, Mullaitivu District

The Improving Living Conditions in Returnee Areas of Sri Lanka through Housing Program (2013–15) is funded by the Australian Government and European Union and jointly implemented by UN-Habitat and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. It supports the reconstruction of 4600 conflict-damaged homes in the districts of Killinochchi, Mannar and Mullaitivu in Northern Province and Batticaloa in Eastern Province. It also helps build preschools, community centres, wells and roads. The Australian aid program in Sri Lanka aims to expand economic opportunities for the poor and address barriers to employment, participation and productivity, particularly for women.

Preventing and responding to violence against women

We cannot accept a world where women are considered collateral damage of war. We have to work together—this is a matter for the good minds in all sectors—legal, military, government, policing, humanitarian, diplomatic, judicial and NGOs. We need practical, tangible actions. We need clear, tough laws, so perpetrators can be prosecuted and survivors can be heard and vindicated. We need frontline services so women can rebuild their lives and communities. Rape and sexual violence must be crimes in any language, in any context, in any conflict, anywhere.

The Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Address to the Australian Dialogue on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 2014

Sexual and gender-based violence is a violation of women's human rights. It is also often an invisible, yet critical, impediment to effective peacebuilding. International evidence shows that violence against women escalates during conflict and remains at high levels after conflict has ended. Reducing and responding to such violence, including in conflict and post-conflict settings, require improving women's access to justice, increasing women's access to support services, and preventing the violence itself.

The Australian Government has a zero tolerance approach to violence against women and is committed to supporting and partnering with other countries to end it.

Putting it into practice—in Afghanistan

Following decades of conflict in Afghanistan, violence against women and girls restricts their active engagement in social, economic and political life and limits women's roles in peace and reconstruction. As many as 87 per cent¹³ of Afghan women suffer at least one form of physical, sexual or psychological abuse, or forced marriage, with more than half experiencing multiple forms of violence.

Australia is committed to supporting the social and economic development of Afghanistan, recognising that gender inequality and discrimination against women are significant barriers to sustainable peace and reconstruction. Australia is promoting efforts to improve respect for women and girls in Afghanistan and address gender-based violence and support survivors. This is in addition to international diplomatic efforts, including at the Security Council, to support the Government of Afghanistan to implement its Ending Violence Against Women Law and support women's roles in the country's reconstruction.



Police Officer Mariam Mohammadi works on the frontline in Kabul City dealing with violence against women. She transfers the knowledge and skills gained from her UNFPA training to others operating in Afghanistan's provinces. Credit: UNFPA

¹³ Global Rights, 2008, *Living with Violence: A National Report on Domestic Abuse in Afghanistan*, March 2008, p. 1. http://www.globalrights.org/sites/default/files/docs/final_DVR_JUNE_16.pdf

We look to Afghanistan to ensure full implementation of the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law, and to finalise and implement a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security to ensure women have a role in the peace and reconciliation process.

HE Philippa King, Former Australian Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, The Situation in Afghanistan, Statement to the UN General Assembly, 20 November 2014

On the ground, many issues hinder implementation of the Law. Incidents of violence remain largely under-reported due to cultural restraints and social norms, limited policing capacity to respond, a weak justice system and limited prosecution. Other issues include lack of awareness on women's rights and protections, difficulty in accessing support services, a shortage of trained female professionals, and limited knowledge across the law and justice sector on the new Law.

The Afghan police are on the frontline of the legal response to violence against women. To address issues in implementing the Law, Australia supports the Strengthening the Capacity of Afghanistan's National Police Force to Combat Violence Against Women and Girls Program, implemented by UNFPA. The program improves services and access to justice.

In collaboration with Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior Affairs, UNFPA has trained more than 2500 police recruits to respond to violence against women in an ethical, timely and culturally sensitive manner. Police officers have improved their understanding of this and other relevant laws and how to implement them. Female police officers, who only represent one per cent of Afghanistan's police force, are being prioritised for training. Strengthening women's participation in the police force also helps Afghanistan implement its National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

Mariam Mohammadi is one courageous police officer operating on the frontline in Kabul City. She says training has improved her skills and changed her mindset and the mindset of some of her male colleagues.

The training was a positive experience– it was an eye-opener. I can use my knowledge on a daily basis. I am now more capable of recognising gender-based violence. Although I could do that before, this was based on my own field experiences as it was not covered in my Police Academy of Kabul training.

Mariam Mohammadi, Afghan police officer

Once Mohammadi receives a file on violence against women, she contacts the local police station to understand how they have dealt with the case. Sometimes she talks to victims directly, explaining the role of the police in supporting their case. In special situations, Mohammadi visits survivors to better understand how cases are being managed and supports and advises provincial police officers.

In Afghanistan, UNFPA works to eliminate violence against women through a multi-sectoral approach that includes supporting health, legal and justice sectors and coordinating activities between government and civil society.

This program is also:

- changing attitudes of religious leaders, village councils and young people, on violence and harmful traditional practices
- training 425 judges and prosecutors and 375 government and NGO staff on standard operating procedures, data collection and ethical guidelines to process cases
- integrating the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law into the curriculum of the National Police Academy and Staff College.

This program is a component of Australia's broader efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women in Afghanistan. Australia is committed to supporting the social and economic development of Afghanistan, recognising that gender inequality and discrimination against women are significant barriers to sustainable peace and reconstruction.

Putting it into practice—in Solomon Islands

Promoting the equality and security of women needs to be upfront in the new government’s mind to ensure that Solomon Islands can grow and prosper into the future. The women of Solomon Islands deserve a better life and a chance to realise their potential. This is in the best interests of the nation as a whole.

Justine Braithwaite, Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) Special Coordinator



Female Royal Solomon Island Police Force officers gather for the annual White Ribbon Day march in Honiara to highlight domestic violence in Solomon Islands. Credit: RAMSI Public Affairs

Women in Solomon Islands have always participated in traditional conflict prevention, resolution and peace mediation. However, the role of women in formal peace processes following ‘the Tensions’¹⁴ between 1998 and 2003 has been limited and women are under-represented in political and government institutions.

Violence against women in Solomon Islands is pervasive and continues to prevent them from participating in society, business and politics. RAMSI Special Coordinator, Justine Braithwaite, says that Solomon Islands, like many other countries, is being held back by disturbingly high rates of gender-based violence—around two-thirds of women experience violence first-hand at some point in their lives.

The Australian Government, through its bilateral aid program and RAMSI—a regional police mission led by Australia—works to support the Solomon Islands Government to deliver on its commitment to prevent and respond to violence against women.

The Family Protection Act 2014—the first piece of legislation addressing the issue—is a major milestone. Australia and its partners played an important role in assisting the Solomon Islands Government to develop the Act. Australia provided technical assistance through a Legal Policy Adviser, Legislative Drafting Adviser and Family Protection Act Implementation Adviser who remain embedded within government ministries.

Working with the Solomon Islands Government is a high priority for Australia, to ensure women can participate in social, economic and political life. Implementing the Family Protection Act remains a significant element of Australia’s cooperation to ensure Solomon Islands agencies are trained, equipped and resourced to implement the Act, including through the police and justice sector.

Local police are on the frontline in preventing and responding to family violence in Solomon Islands. RAMSI supports the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force in its work to tackle this pervasive problem.

Since 2013, with RAMSI’s assistance, local police have conducted family violence education campaigns with more than 178 000 Solomon Islanders. This has helped improve community awareness, with formal reports to the police increasing from 70 in 2013 to 806 in 2014.

14 In December 1998, existing ethnic tensions on Guadalcanal in Solomon Islands escalated, and violent clashes destabilised Solomon Islands and undermined national institutions. This lasted for more than four years. In April 2003, Solomon Islands requested Australian assistance to address the violence. Since then, RAMSI has worked to create the conditions necessary for stability, peace and economic growth.

In addition to this community outreach, RAMSI's family violence prevention program includes:

- specialist training and support for local police sexual assault units and family violence prevention teams
- training for local police to work with survivors of violence and promote awareness that family violence is a crime, not a private domestic matter
- helping local police promote women's participation in the police force.

Teams of experts working to support local justice mechanisms can make lasting impacts. As part of the regional peacebuilding mission to Solomon Islands, Australia mentored female Solomon Islands police to take victim statements, compile evidence and support survivors throughout court processes. Such models exist elsewhere and should have broad application.

HE Gary Quinlan, Former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN (2009–14), Statement to the Security Council Open Debate on women, peace and security, 24 April 2014

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Cover image: A woman peacemaker from WE Act 1325 participating in the Speak Out For Peace Campaign, which aims to enhance awareness on women's participation in peacebuilding.

Credit: WE Act 1325

