

Strategic Blindness: Women in Community Security

DRAFT DISCUSSION PAPER



CREATIVE

Foreign assistance is not a giveaway.
It's not charity. It is an investment in a
strong America and in a free world.

John Kerry
Secretary of State

CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction
- 2 From UNSC 1325 Onward
- 3 Shifting the Paradigm: Re-characterizing “Women in Community Security”
- 4 The Way Ahead: From Community of Interest to Community of Practice
- 5 Conclusion

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Preface

It is time for a new approach to the way we view women and security. Including women in rule of law and security sector assistance is not merely an issue of access to justice or gender inclusion. It is a national security imperative. Around the globe, women are proving themselves as leaders of political change, drivers of conflict resolution, and anchors of stability for the communities in which they live. When they are connected to the security sector at the local level, they provide important niche capabilities that improve accountability, legitimacy and operational effectiveness. Where they are discounted, disconnected or disenfranchised, we risk losing them as positive change agents, and they risk becoming perpetrators of violence and victims of instability.

Creative Associates International (Creative) has identified five steps that will improve development organizations and donors' ability to strengthen the role of women as core contributors to community security:

- 1 Establish a community of practice around industry guidelines and operating principles that are guided by lessons learned.
- 2 Integrate the private sector¹ into the national dialogue on women, peace and security.
- 3 Review assessment and evaluation frameworks to ensure that gender programs are connected to security assistance.
- 4 Revise security assistance models so that gender inclusion meets community security needs.
- 5 Educate policy makers, planners, program directors and implementers on the role of women in ensuring safe, secure and stable communities.

1. For the purpose of this paper, the private sector includes those companies who work with and alongside the U.S. government development community to support U.S. national security objectives. These companies may be multi-faceted, with both for-profit and non-profit arms, but all share a common interest. We recognize that multi-national corporations operating in fragile states participate in development-like activities in order to mitigate risk, protect their investments, and practice greater corporate social responsibility. Finally, we believe that corporate foundations like Gates and Ford, to mention just two out of hundreds, should also be included in the discussions about creating better practices around the role of women in communities.

Introduction

As the United States emerges from more than a decade of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, strengthening weak and fragile states has become a central focus of its global development policy. Preventing and mitigating the impact of violent extremism and transnational criminality has created a growing need to use resources toward conflict management. Today, 60 percent of the Department of State's and USAID's foreign assistance goes to 50 countries that are in the midst of, recovering from or trying to prevent conflict or state failure. Still, our development capabilities have not been integrated across the different agencies, nor have we learned the lessons necessary to change our own institutions in order to meet the security challenge.²

For more than 36 years, Creative has worked with women, youth, civil society and even gangs as a means of bringing greater security to communities affected by violence, instability and conflict. As development practitioners, Creative's experts and partners have experienced firsthand the power that women have to address root causes of insecurity and provide a more stable platform for legitimate governance and economic development. At the same time, however, Creative has observed that women are more often treated as mere consumers of security services, with special needs that complicate security force assistance, rather than as important security actors in their own right. As Camille Pampille Conway said, "The realm of security is where women are traditionally the most marginalized, as so called 'hard' issues are frequently deemed irrelevant to women."³

Empowering women to assume a more significant role in security is no longer up for debate. It is part of national policy, and a strategic imperative. The Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review articulated this point when it recognized that "women are at the center of our diplomacy and development efforts – not simply as beneficiaries, but also as agents of peace, reconciliation, development, growth, and stability."⁴ However, subsequent discussion has largely focused on addressing the security requirements that are peculiar to women and women's concerns rather than the transformation necessary to develop effective female security actors. Furthermore, the private sector, which has a wealth of on-the-ground experience, has not been fully engaged in the current national dialogue.

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Creative recognizes that in order to move forward, we, as a community of interest, must re-characterize the issues in a way that incorporates three concerns:

1. Including women in community security is as much about meeting immediate security imperatives as it is about inclusion. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 states that including women in peace processes is a means to building lasting peace—a point that has been obscured by the related efforts to advance gender equality. If we do not take the time to understand and reinforce the role that women play in stabilizing their communities, we undermine local security structures and create gaps in rule of law and security assistance programming.
2. Involving women in community security cannot represent inclusion for inclusion's sake, but must instead be a link between citizen security and good governance. It goes to the heart of the relationships between governance and security, the government and its people, and the accountability and responsiveness of security forces to the populations they serve.
3. Women are not always benign actors but can also be perpetrators, instigators, enablers and motivators in conflict. This is particularly true in those areas where men have migrated due to war, civil unrest or economic hardship. Security forces must be structured to address

2. Department of State, *Leading Through Civilian Power: The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review*, Washington, D.C. 2010, p. 122-123.

3. Camille Pampille Conway, "The Role of Women in Stabilization." USIP, 2006, p.8

4. Department of State, *Leading Through Civilian Power: The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review*, Washington, D.C. 2010, p. 23

the full spectrum of roles that women and men play in violence. This is particularly important in cultures where security force performance is constrained by prohibitions on engagement between men and women.

When we re-focus our analysis on women as producers of security versus women as consumers, we are forced to confront several operational challenges and gaps. We should first question whether our current assessments and evaluation frameworks aid our understanding of the local culture in countries receiving U.S. assistance. Do they adequately ensure inclusion that will impact community security? Are they designed to leverage women's capabilities as producers of security, or do they only address the human rights imperative of gender inclusion and access? Do they, for example, consider the influence of women on violent or non-violent behavioral development as they fulfill traditional roles in child-rearing and education? Are we designing gender-integrated security and development strategies that address root causes of insecurity and exclusion before we shape the supporting organizations? And are we shaping institutions based on generic models and then trying to adapt them to meet the needs of the communities they serve and protect?

Through the years, where development was limited or undermined because of community-based insecurity, Creative practitioners often asked themselves: "Was there something different we could have done?" or, "If security forces had known how to react responsively to the needs of the community, would our outcomes have been more sustainable? Would our results have been more effective? More accountable?"

This discussion paper is intended to bring Creative's experience to bear in a way that encourages further conversation about how strengthening the role of women in community security can help close the development and security gap, while helping bring about a stronger America and a freer world.

I. From UNSC 1325 to the QDDR to the National Action Plan

More than a decade ago, the UN recognized that the participation of women was essential to the peace and security of states. UN Security Council Resolution 1325, approved on October 31, 2000, became the seminal document that created a non-binding policy framework and an agenda for promoting the protection of human rights for women and girls in both conflict and post-conflict zones.⁵ UNSCR 1325 urged the Secretary General to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys; it urged him to expand the role and contribution of women in UN field-based operations; and it expressed a willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations.⁶

Three subsequent Security Council Resolutions further refined the agenda as it related to protecting women against gender-based violence with secondary declarations about broader mainstreaming of women in peace processes. Security Council Resolution 1888 specifically created a Special Representative to address sexual violence in conflict.⁷

While there has been a growing recognition that women must be part of any overall strategy for ending conflicts and promoting development, the focus of such efforts has been more geared to looking at women as victims. This has resulted in a form of strategic blindness that, until now, has obscured the more positive view of women as also capable of producing greater security.

Starting in 2005, UN member states were asked to translate the aspirations of UNSCR 1325 into action plans.⁸ The United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security was completed in 2011. The Plan complemented the existing policy priority in the State Department's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, which recognizes that "women are at the center of our diplomacy and development efforts – not simply as beneficiaries, but also as agents



5. http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf UNSCR 1325 was actually the first of four resolutions that built up the specific needs of women and girls. UNSCR 1820 (2008) addresses the need to protect women in conflict zones from sexual violence, and UNSCR 1888 (2009) and UNSCR 1889 (2009) focus on gender mainstreaming in all post-conflict recovery processes.

6. See Megan Bastick and Daniel de Torres, *Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Resolutions in Security Sector Reform*, Tool 13, 2010, Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF).

7. See http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_war_peace/unsr_1888.html? for details about this Resolution.

8. The small number of states who have actually created and implemented frameworks is disappointing. To date only 21 member states have drafted such plans. They include Austria, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chile, Canada, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Denmark, DRC, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liberia, Nepal, Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland, Uganda, United Kingdom, and United States.

of peace, reconciliation, development growth and stability.”⁹ President Obama signed an Executive Order in February 2012 that transformed the Plan into a mandate that would help “accelerate, institutionalize, and better coordinate our efforts to advance women’s inclusion in peace negotiations, peacebuilding activities, conflict prevention, and decision-making institutions; to protect women from gender-based violence; and to ensure equal access to relief and recovery assistance, in areas of conflict and insecurity.”¹⁰

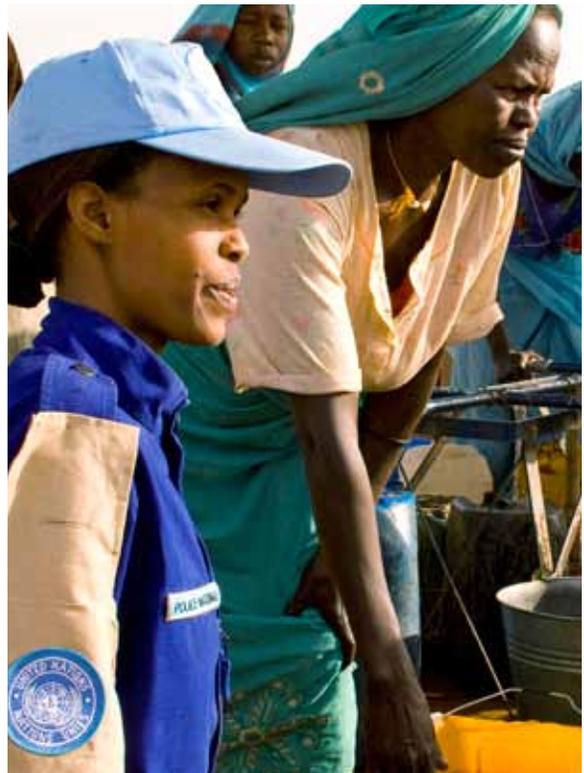
Five principles of the Executive Order guide this work:

- 1) Engage and protect women as agents of peace and stability;
- 2) Complement those policies articulated in the United States National Security Strategy and the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review;
- 3) Make the principle of inclusion the guiding policy by seeking out a wide range of stakeholders;
- 4) Coordinate among all relevant departments and agencies of the government, and also with international partners; and
- 5) Hold the United States Government agencies accountable for the implementation of policies and initiatives endorsed in the Plan.¹¹

The guiding principles and the national objectives have both been used to create communities among those in U.S. government agencies and civil society who are involved in the design, development and implementation of programs in fragile states and conflict-prone regions. However, the voice of the private sector has been mostly missing from these discussions.

Those in the business of supporting development and diplomatic efforts on the ground bring broad experience working in complex environments. But we rarely capitalize on their experience designing and implementing programs, working with women at the community level and integrating health and education into security initiatives. We believe this is a gap.

We also believe that despite the QDDR characterization of women as protagonists, or “agents” of peace and security, the National Action Plan has predominantly focused on the challenges of protection and inclusion. Creative suggests that the private sector experience may tell a slightly different story and specifically one that produces a more balanced vision of women that goes beyond the constraints of victimhood.

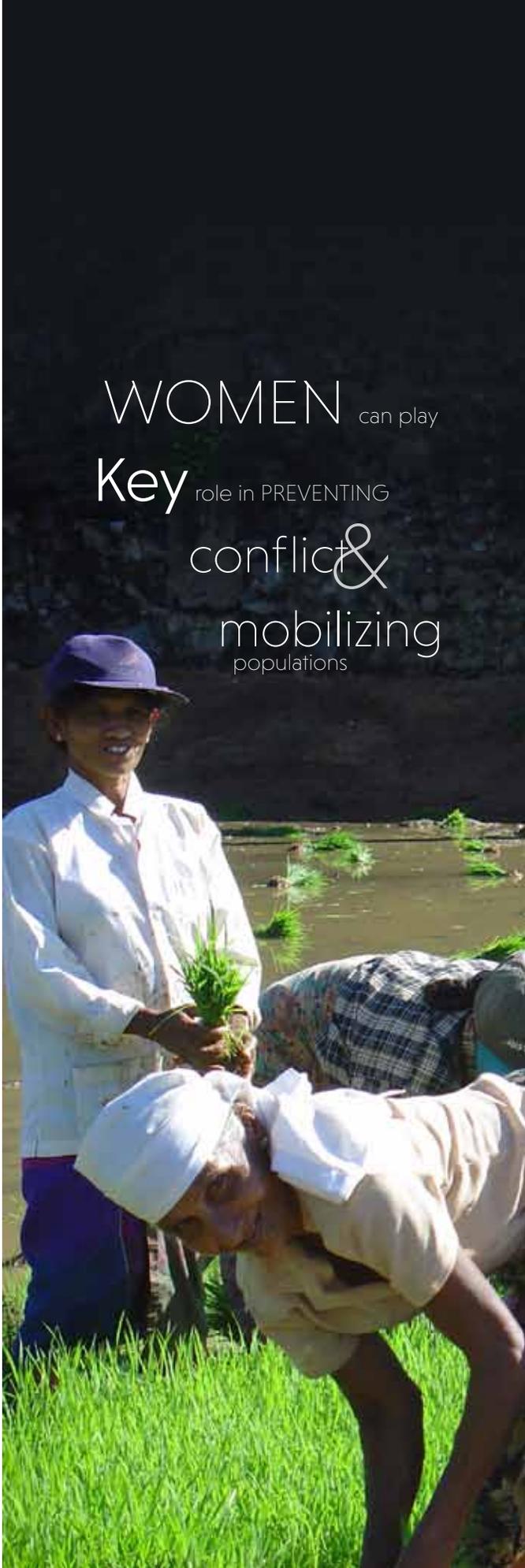


9. Department of State, Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review: Leading Through Civilian Power, December 2011, Specifically, Chapter 4: Preventing and Responding to Crisis, Conflict, and Instability.

10. The White House, United States National Action Plan, December 2011, p.1

11. The White House, United States National Action Plan, December 2011. The United States Action Framework for the Plan targets five high-level objectives that include:

- National Integration and Institutionalization, which specifically support institutionalization of “gender-responsive approach to diplomatic, development and defense-related work in conflict-affected environments.”
- Participation in Peace Processes and Decision-making
- Protection from Violence, which includes not only addressing prevention of violence, but also holding perpetrators accountable in conflict-affected environments.
- Conflict Prevention, which means using our soft power to help create conditions to create stable societies by promoting education, health, and economic opportunities for women that lays the foundation for lasting peace.
- Access to Relief and Recovery by those who provide humanitarian assistance.



WOMEN can play

Key role in PREVENTING

conflict &

mobilizing
populations

II. Shifting the Paradigm: Re-characterizing "Women in Community Security"

Regardless of culture, women can play key roles in community stabilization and security, particularly in preventing conflict, resolving disputes, and mobilizing populations. At times, women's contributions to peace and justice at the community level are an obvious element of local governance and customary practice. Just as often, their contributions are embedded in the fabric of traditional culture and as a result, hidden to outsiders. Gaps in our understanding of what those exact roles are, and the direct (or indirect) impact they have, lead to uncertainty about policies and programs.

With uncertainty comes overlooked opportunities and stalled initiative, as well as misguided, ineffective and even harmful interventions. When the picture is incomplete, foreign assistance can inadvertently undermine women's traditional stabilization functions within the community. Programs that exclude women altogether or fail to address malign influencers create security gaps that can be exploited by criminals and extremists. It is therefore essential that assessments contribute to greater awareness of women's roles in their communities, and that subsequent evaluations capture their impact.

Each of the examples listed below illustrates unique and necessary contributions by women that impact community security but were not recognized as essential elements of a security strategy. They illuminate gaps in our knowledge, and in the way we do business. The challenge is how to leverage these experiences and others like them to fill our knowledge and practice gaps in a way that will move us closer to inclusion and influence as we address immediate security imperatives.

Stopping the Violence Before it Begins: Early Childhood Education in Jordan

While there is a lot of momentum in Jordan around prevention of violence among young children, parents do not typically take an active role in their children's education. Women are the primary caretakers, but they often encourage aggression in their sons as a traditional manifestation of strength. Men are disconnected from parenting, and are the typical aggressors outside the home.

While implementing an initiative that trains women in how to more effectively prepare their young children for school, Creative's practitioners discovered an opportunity to advance women's role in community security. As part of a pilot program, mothers received Parent-Child Packages filled with guidance on children's development, nutrition and safety. In these poor, conservative and rural areas, tribal conflict is prevalent, positive government reach is a challenge and the conditions that foster extremism are rife. The packages help mothers learn how to teach non-violent social behaviors in a way that shapes their children's ability to control their emotional behavior and resolve conflict.

Both mothers and fathers believe the packages improve the parenting dynamic in the home and are strongly recommending it to their relatives and friends. The Ministry of Education is also supporting the initiative.

Parent-Child Packages were not part of a security-related program, but they may turn out to be a development success with positive security outcomes. By empowering mothers, the Parent-Child Packages have uncovered a new entry point to address the culture of dispute resolution and can now highlight the special access women have in changing attitudes within their family. These packages offer a special opportunity for further investigation into the informal role women play in community security by virtue of their role in families.

Preventing Gang Violence and Building Livelihoods in Honduras - Alianza Joven Regional

In a country where gang violence claims so many lives – 82 of every 100,000 residents—and 75 percent of victims are young men, it is no surprise that Honduran women embrace programs that address prevention. While women are not necessarily formally involved in community governance, they participate in meetings, work to build better community-police relations, and advocate for vocational training opportunities to improve their ability to earn a living when their husbands are imprisoned or absent.

Creative's Alianza Joven Regional program, modeled after similarly successful programs in El Salvador and Guatemala, seeks to improve security in 40 of the poorest communities in Honduras. It established community centers—kept up and running by mothers and grandmothers—to get young people off the streets and ultimately reduce violence and gang involvement. While boys are the primary focus, girls are also encouraged and included. In a country where police are often feared due to corruption and gang connections, these centers offer a place where they can connect with communities through sports and other non-threatening activities, and have become a platform for community engagement with police and other government officials.

These mothers and grandmothers make this program a success. They walk a fine line as they serve as interlocutors between community members, the

mayor's offices and the police, and negotiate police access to the poorest and most violent communities – often putting themselves at risk in areas controlled by narco-gangs. If the police are the face of the government, the women are the face of the community.

Formalizing these women's involvement in the community centers, and as liaisons between police, youth, and officials, could strengthen their role in community security and make better use of their valuable knowledge on security issues and needs within their communities.

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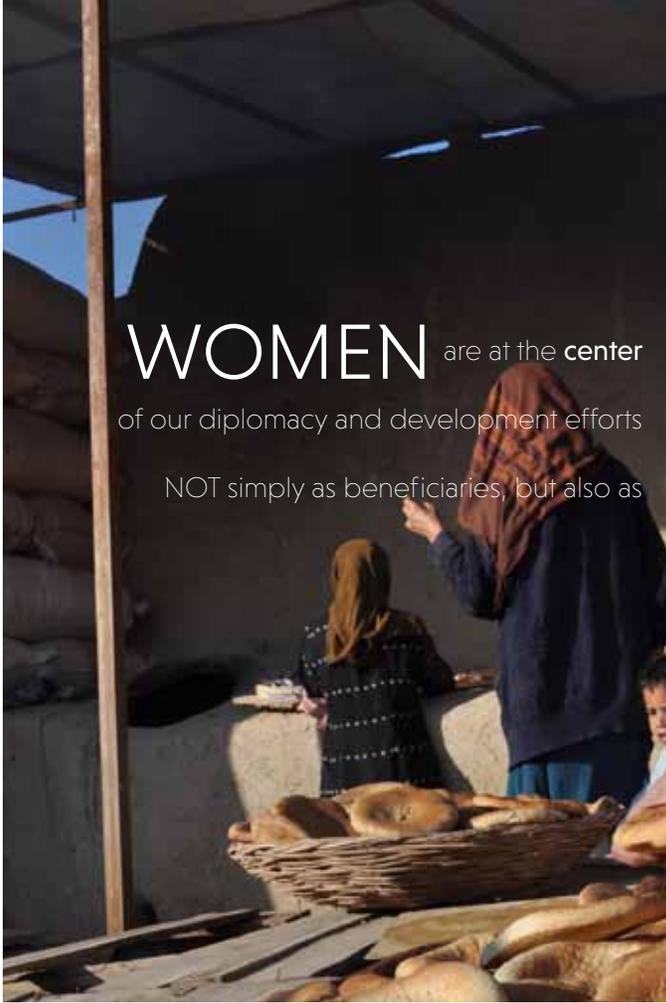
Conflict Resolution in Afghanistan

While working on a set of community-level programs in Afghanistan, Creative's practitioners observed that in most villages, women who were related to prominent male elders often played important roles resolving disputes within their communities. Although they did not hold formal leadership positions, their authority was acknowledged and accepted throughout the community, and it contributed to managing tribal and familial conflict.

As a consequence of the international community's emphasis on strengthening the formal justice system in place of informal processes at the sub-national level, women lost their roles as informal peacekeepers in many communities, and with them, their ability to contribute meaningfully to community security in a culturally appropriate way.

Some of these women were able to integrate into nascent formal governance or justice structures, but it was more the rare exception than the rule. This cultural phenomenon was either invisible to coalition planners, or misunderstood despite the fact that one of the international community's goals for Afghanistan was to empower its women.

This experience illustrates what can occur when upfront assessments, plans and programming do not accurately capture the contributions that women make to community security. It also provides a clear example of "strategic blindness" when it comes to women's central role in stability.



WOMEN are at the center
of our diplomacy and development efforts
NOT simply as beneficiaries, but also as



AGENTS of peace,
reconciliation, development
growth & stability.

III. The Way Ahead: From Community of Interest to Community of Practice

A number of organizations have looked seriously at the roles that women play in peacebuilding, stabilization and providing for citizen security and their work provides a useful guide.¹² Creative's practitioners have observed many of the following contributions:

1. Women provide knowledge about the security issues, needs, and status within their communities. Their knowledge represents a distinct perspective from that of the men that is essential to understanding the operating environment and guiding security force performance.
2. Women are often crucial to conflict resolution. Their understanding of community dynamics and their skills in conflict resolution can make the difference between reemerging violence and peace.
3. Women are security service providers. Even if they are not active members of the uniformed security forces, they deliver integrated and essential complimentary services such as shelter and counseling for victims of crime, psychological care and monitoring, prisoner support, and legal assistance.
4. Women are often the most effective trainers for security personnel on issues pertaining to human rights, gender violence, and their own roles in peace monitoring and oversight. Women perform critical security tasks that men are sometimes culturally or legally prohibited from doing. In traditional cultures where interaction between unrelated women and men is strictly controlled or frowned upon, it is essential that women are present in security forces to perform those tasks that only women can do (i.e. searching women's persons, collecting evidence from women, protecting female witnesses, and guarding women prisoners or detainees). Many nations have these constraints

enshrined in their laws. If trained and qualified women are not present in security forces in sufficient numbers to perform these tasks, security operations are compromised.¹³

5. In places where organized criminal activities have overwhelmed communities, women are playing an increasingly significant role in policing at the local level in order to enhance the tools available to counter the recruitment of youth, increase law enforcement intelligence gathering, and facilitate the reintegration and reconciliation of former gang members.

Armed with greater understanding, progress is possible. Gender-based program assessment and evaluation frameworks can be adjusted to include mapping the security dimension of women's development. Security assistance models that currently address gender solely through the lens of access to justice and equality can be modified to reflect a more operational focus that recognizes women's contributions to security organizations.¹⁴

When women are recognized as actors capable of performing security functions such as information gathering, investigation and analysis, conflict resolution, and community outreach, their value in promoting security becomes clearer. When women are involved in community security, they often bring a layer of responsiveness, oversight and accountability that might not otherwise exist. A development approach that starts with the premise that women are security partners and then builds organizations that leverage their contributions to that partnership will make a far greater contribution to stability.

How do we fill the gaps between policy and practice; ideas and implementation? We believe that the private sector is at the crux of the solution. Often excluded by governments from important operational planning, companies that operate in the commercial side of the private sector also rarely participate in civil society dialogue. Therefore, the first recommendations are designed to facilitate full private sector participation, and consolidate a more inclusive community of practice.

12. Megan Bastick and Tobie Whiteman, *A Women's Guide to Security Sector Reform*, The Institute for Inclusive Security and the Geneva Center for Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (2013).

13. Afghanistan provides an example of a nation that has a number of very specific restrictions on security force interaction with women. As Special Police Units matured and began to conduct operations independent from International Security Assistance Forces, for example, the absence of a sufficient number of trained police women became an impediment to operational success. Units would initiate raids on suspected Taliban-held compounds, for instance, only to be stopped from entering by the presence of women at the gates. When Afghan forces did force entry, they frequently could not completely clear buildings or gather evidence from certain parts of the houses because they were occupied by the women of the house.

14. Recent studies mapping women's police precincts in Brazil, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Peru provide an important advance in understanding the way women are affected by violence, but also about ways police practices can inform prevention. See *Regional Mapping Study of Women's Police Stations in Latin America*, IDRC and CEPLAES (Ottawa, Quito, 2008)

Step 1: Solidify the Community of Practice for Women in Security Development

Creative calls on other private sector companies that have robust, operational experience with gender development to join it as part of a community of practice that can translate isolated lessons in the field to cogent lessons learned. Currently, so-called “best practices” in gender and security are generally based on anecdote and theory rather than hard, empirical evidence. We have just begun to understand how programs directed at violence prevention provide insights into ways in which women contribute to their own security and the overall safety of their communities. Where such studies exist, they are not always applicable to the most challenging environments. This information is essential to the planning process for stabilization.

A common set of agreed-upon industry guidelines and operating principles would legitimize the role women play in creating and sustaining lasting peace, improve their ability to effectively engage in security-related community development issues and enable greater collaboration with civil society. The process of creating principles would improve information-sharing across governmental and non-governmental, for-profit and not-for-profit lines. Guidelines and principles could also lead to the creation of true best practices, private sector performance indicators and risk assessment guidelines that connect gender and security.

Step 2: Incorporate the private sector openly, objectively and appropriately into the national level dialogue on National Action Plan implementation.

While the mandate of the National Action Plan is clear – working with women is a national security imperative – mechanisms to ensure support for this mandate are not yet fully developed. There are already a few areas where leveraging private sector knowledge about local resources and constraints can make an immediate difference: this can inform how to use women as community advocates when designing programs, and how to recruit, train and equip gender-inclusive and gender-responsive security forces.

This step is important not only because it can lead to more realistic and coherent development goals, but also because greater private sector participation will encourage private sector investment that create livelihoods and transforms lives.

Step 3: Review program assessment and evaluation.

Armed with best practices and lessons learned, development practitioners are in a good position to help others find quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure progress. A Women’s Peace and Security Barometer developed by CORDAID in the Netherlands is one example of a nascent tool that tries to measure



the WAY AHEAD

- 1 GALVANIZE THE COMMUNITY OF SECURITY PUNDITS
- 2 INCORPORATE THE PRIVATE SECTOR
- 3 ESTABLISH A METRICS SYSTEM FOR EVALUATION
- 4 REVIEW SECURITY ASSISTANCE MODELS
- 5 CONDUCT ONGOING EDUCATION

and analyze contextualized information in order to develop indicators about women's inclusion and needs at the community level and other, similarly credible efforts are also underway.¹⁵ Within the United States, the private sector can be used to inform a similar effort that would directly support implementation of the National Action Plan.

Step 4: Review security assistance models through a gender-sensitive lens

There is consensus around the use of international women in peacekeeping; the United States supports this through government-funded programs as a matter of policy. But there is still skepticism and uncertainty surrounding the relevance of investments in women in restoring basic security. Only through gender sensitive security models can we provide an environment so other vital development programming – including justice, governance, security and education – can move forward.

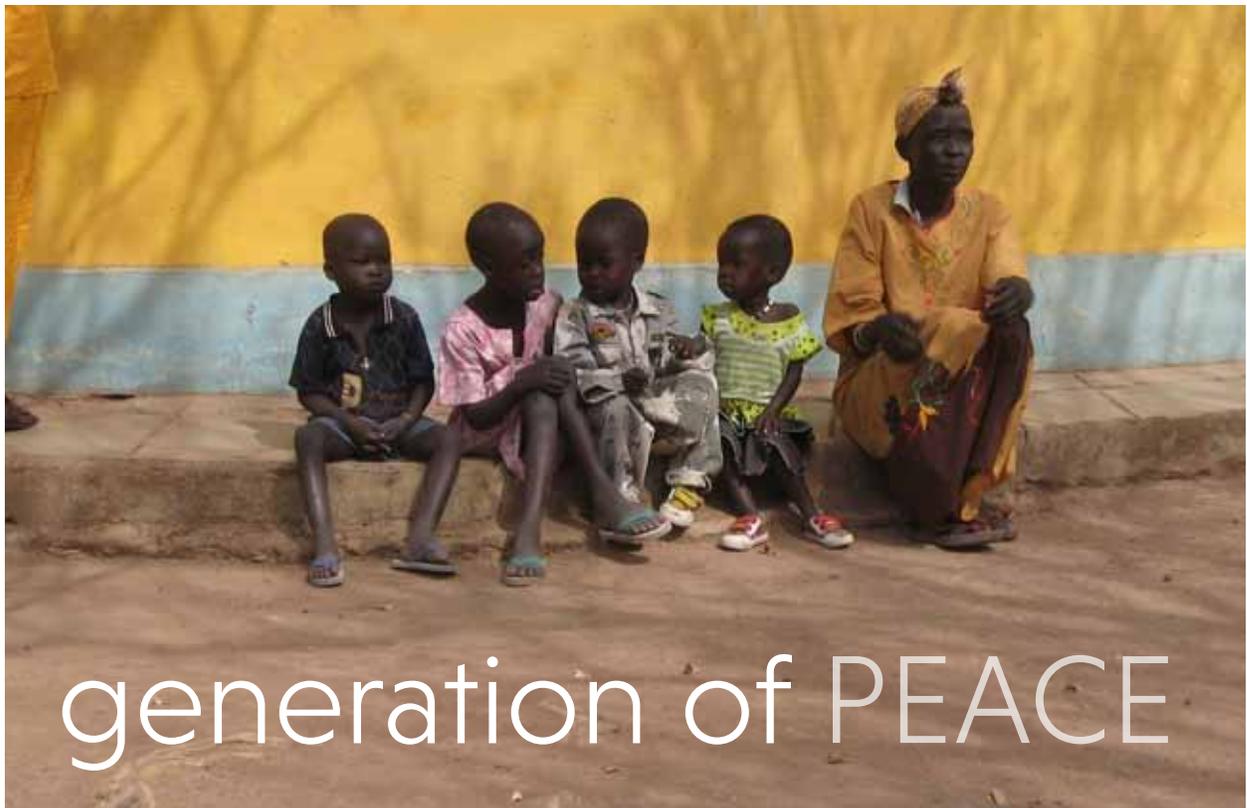
Private sector practitioners have first-hand experience trying to implement narrowly crafted gender-focused programs that are disconnected from related security development initiatives. As a result, they are well-positioned to dictate modifications to security assistance models that would facilitate gender-related coherence across the security sector and leverage

women's contributions to community security for the greatest impact.

At this point, we still need to connect security force development, both military and police, with better information about the role women play as local partners for improved security

Step 5: Continue our own education

A critical way to support innovation and creativity is to immediately identify training and education opportunities to ensure future programming transcends the traditional stovepipes in development. Private sector companies should be integrated into a community of practice. They should also bring their experience to bear as they train other actors on best practices and cross-sector interventions as points of entry in reaching women. Using field-based evidence to reach new levels of understanding will enable a larger audience in both government and the private sector to benefit, and should be a dynamic and ongoing process. As Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Conflict and Stabilization Patricia Haslach noted, "We need an approach to transitions that is more inclusive and attentive to the connections between sexual violence and community security and stability." This is a goal of government responsibility that a credible community of practice can adamantly support.



¹⁵. See Women's Community Barometer- CORDAID www.cordaid.org

Conclusion

Realizing the National Action Plan for Women, Peace, and Security's potential will require an end to "strategic blindness" and a willingness to embrace the private sector in an effort to understand what works. This means rethinking what we know about women, not only as victims of violence, but as part of our smart approaches to violence prevention. The lessons learned about the way women fill positive roles in community security, whether through community dialogues or mothers educating their children, provide practitioners with a key missing piece of the security puzzle. Intervention by women in transitioning communities can provide a powerful tool for local conflict management.

Creative is not the only organization calling for a re-characterization of our current gender and security paradigm. In 2011, a group of women leaders from the African Union convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to establish a dialogue on the progress of gender mainstreaming in African security sector reform. Their blunt assessment speaks for itself:

The [gender] policy agenda draws on a Victorian/colonial conception of the security sector that is based on the view that women are recipients of security and protection, while men are the providers and decision makers in matters of security. This approach positions women as security recipients not security actors, and fosters their exclusion from the security sector... As a result, policies on gender mainstreaming within security institutions have been based on a limited interpretation of gender to mean the inclusion of women. The superficial adoption of gender policies in security institutions has hindered tangible transformation of structural power dynamics within the very institutions and the communities they serve.¹⁷

This discussion paper suggests it is time to bring the voices of private sector practitioners into the conversation about ways to ensure a holistic approach to women as security actors in countries emerging from war and conflict. Creative believes that a community of practice can help the U.S. government achieve its national security objectives that put "women at the center of our diplomacy and development efforts –not simply as beneficiaries, but also as agents of peace, reconciliation, development, growth and stability."¹⁸

Insights about how women advance stability within their communities can easily be lost if overlooked. Women are at the nexus of security and development by their very role as producers of security; they must be considered a strategic asset. Only when the lessons of development practitioners are formalized and absorbed into plans will we meet the national security imperative of including women in the task of creating a more stable and secure environment. One of the best ways to begin this integration of learning is by greater inclusion of those in the private sector, who can transform policy aspirations to field based solutions that are in the national interest.

IT'S TIME
to bring the voices of
private sector
practioners into the
conversation about
holistic approaches
to **WOMEN**
as security actors.

16. Speech delivered to the IHRP Conference, Toronto, Canada, February 8, 2013. Haslach addressed the U.S. role in addressing sexual violence in Libya and Syria, noting that it could not be separated from the role women play in both countries as enablers of security in their respective countries.

17. A Policy Dialogue: African Union's Security Sector Reform Framework and Gender Transformation, Fahamu Networks for Social Justice and the African Security Sector Network (2011) at p. 10

18. Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton, Statement on the release of the Quadrennial Diplomacy, Development Review, March 7, 2012.

We've experienced the power that women have to address root causes of insecurity and provide a more stable platform for legitimate governance and economic development.

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