

Who's making policy? What difference does it make?

Joan B. Kroc Distinguished Lecture Series
Women, War, Peace: Politics in Peacebuilding
Wednesday, October 18, 2006

Over 150 policymakers, practitioners, researchers, experts and students assembled at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice (IPJ) at the University of San Diego on Wednesday for the panel discussion Women, War, Peace: Politics in Peacebuilding. Three women leaders – representing Africa, Asia and Latin America – opened the conference *Who's making policy? What difference does it make?* co-convened by the IPJ and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

Irene Santiago, senior advisor to the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process in the Philippines and chair of the Mindanao Commission on Women, recalled her experiences at the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. While there has been significant progress to recognize and elevate women's role in security and development since that landmark event, political and official power remains primarily in the hands of men. Santiago urges a re-definition of power as the "the potency to act for what is good... If this is the definition, will women claim that kind of power? Yes!"

Alma Viviana Pérez, consultant to the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and professor at the Universidad Externado de Colombia, discussed the momentum generated at Beijing and the subsequent passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000. This groundbreaking document mandated women's participation in all aspects of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and is binding on UN member states. While Resolution 1325 is a powerful advocacy tool, implementation is the critical step. As Pérez notes: "It's time for all men and women to start implementation of the spirit of 1325 at home – in your country, your region, your neighborhood."

Miria Matembe, former member of the Ugandan parliament, discussed the work of women in her country to successfully create a national constitution that enshrines gender equality and the rights of women. However, while the existence of such language is critical to advancing women's agenda, it is only the beginning. Women in Uganda continue to face challenges to the passage of laws and policies related to land reform, domestic violence, and a host of other issues, again illustrating the necessity for action and implementation of national and international resolutions if women are to truly serve as equals in the quest for peace and development. Matembe affirms: "Without peace, we cannot develop. Without *equality*, we cannot have peace or development."

These extraordinary leaders are among over 20 expert speakers that will make presentations on topics of women, peace and security on Thursday and Friday. Plenary sessions on frontline experiences, governance, security, religion and economic development are open to the public. For more information, call (619) 260-7509.

Who's making policy? What difference does it make?

Thursday, October 19, 2006

From Colombia to Uganda, Nepal to Sudan, the experiences and contribution of women to governance and security filled the first full day of the conference *Who's making policy? What difference does it make?* Following the presentations of distinguished speakers from around the world, delegates engaged in in-depth discussion in interactive working sessions on issues such as quotas, constitutions, peacekeeping and gender justice.

The opening plenary session ***Making Democracy and Peacebuilding Work for Women and With Men*** highlighted the constraints and entry points for women in political positions following armed conflict. Women have drawn on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and various tools to advance women's participation. While quotas, constitutional mandates and institutional transformation can facilitate this effort, formidable obstacles remain and sustaining initial gains proves difficult. The independence, legitimacy and gender sensitivity of women officials, the challenges of implementation of mandates, quotas and laws and the complex environment of a new governance system are issues that must be addressed if gender equality is to be realized in post-conflict states.

Before democracy and governance can be addressed, security must be provided, and women have critical contributions to make in this area – the topic of the afternoon panel ***Getting Gender-Inclusive and Gender-Sensitive Military and Peacekeeping Policies into Action***. While women's role in peacebuilding has received increased attention in recent years, the area of security policy continues to neglect needs, concerns and contributions of women. Despite the existence of peace agreement, women experience violence and exploitation – even at the hands of those charges with their protection. It is necessary for women to assume military, police, civilian and leadership roles and work alongside gender-sensitive men if peace operations are to be effective at delivering real security for the entire population – men, women, boys and girls.

A human face to governance and security issues was revealed through case examples from East Africa, Lebanon, Nepal and the Philippines, which formed the evening panel ***Women on the Frontlines***. In Nepal, women played a key role in the movement for non-violent democratic transformation, but were relegated to the sidelines as the formal processes began. The subsequent outcry of women has led to some initial commitments for their participation by the parties, and the coming months will reveal their sincerity. Similarly, women's needs and gender sensitivity remain of secondary concern in the humanitarian response in Lebanon – despite international mandates in this area – and only intense advocacy and attention might rectify this situation. During bilateral peace talks in the Philippines, female negotiators operated with a “win-win” mindset and drew on a unique set of skills to resolve conflicts within and among the parties. While women in Somalia, Sudan and Uganda were able to make concrete gains for their constituencies during peace negotiations and post-conflict processes, many of these have been reversed by the resumption of violence, illustrating again the complex context on the ground and the need for support for women's efforts to bring sustainable peace.

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Friday, October 20, 2006

Women's roles in religion, business and civil society – and the impact of these sectors on peacebuilding – were the subjects of discussion for the final day of the conference *Who's making policy? What difference does it make?* In addition to plenary presentations by experts in these fields, delegates worked together in small groups to discuss issues ranging from nonviolence and the mobilization of religious women for change to enacting legislation for women to combating their sexual abuse and exploitation.

Despite the fact that religion can be used as justification for violence – often against women – faith and spirituality can also be powerful instruments in the quest for peace and gender equality, as discussed by the expert panel ***Gender-Inclusive, Faith-Based Strategies to Create Human Security and Peace***. Worldwide, women peacebuilders frequently build bridges across their faiths during times of war and draw upon the tenets and values of religion to work for good in their countries and communities. This mobilization of women through religious and inter-faith structures has the potential to propel them into the public sphere and political leadership, enabling them to continue their work on an official level.

Although women are more frequently found in leadership positions in business and civil society than in formal governance roles, we are still far from gender equality even in these sectors. ***Policy Frontiers for Reconstruction and Sustainable Peace*** outlined the gaps that continue to exist on corporate boards, in organizational policies, and in the coverage of issues of concern to women in mainstream media. Yet a vibrant, active civil society with the full participation of both men and women is necessary to hold governments accountable to the needs of the entire population and to ultimately realize sustainable peace and development.

The Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) will publish a conference report that includes context and analysis of the role of women in policymaking for peace and security, highlights from panel presentations and working groups, and recommendations for next steps to advance this agenda. For more information on the outcome document from *Who's making policy? What difference does it make?* email the conference rapporteur: Camille Conaway (cpcconaway@sbcglobal.net).