UNSCR 1325 AND FEMALE EX-COMBATANTS - CASE STUDY OF THE MAOIST WOMEN OF NEPAL

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The situation of women combatants and the roles they can play in conflict trans-formation and peace building is an area which has received minimal attention in the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda over the past 15 years. This is despite consistent accounts from countries emerging from armed conflict or war that show that women combatants face significant discrimination when the con-flict ends and post-conflict reconstruction processes begin.

Studies from these different contexts of conflict suggest that although many women are transformed by their experiences participating in armed resistance, they rarely gain equality through this engagement. In reality, new vulnerabilities and vulnerable groups emerge as a direct fallout of conflict, and gender inequali-ties that were entrenched in societies in the pre-conflict period often get accentuated post-conflict.

At the same time, there is an increasing realization that a post-conflict or post-war period can also be one of deconstruction and reconstruction, and that peace processes could offer a transformative moment to secure gender justice and ad-vance human rights for all members of society. A window of opportunity exists for societies emerging from con-flict to develop and institutionalize laws, policies and other measures to fully protect and advance women's human rights, as well as seriously engage on issues of accountability, reparations, human security, peace and justice, and social and political agency. This "post-war moment" – can provide stra-tegic opportunities for transformation in all areas of women's lives.

Within this context, it is important to reiter-ate that women in the WPS agenda are not a homogenous group. Instead, they belong to very di-verse categories such as peacemakers, combatants, sympathizers, human rights defenders, sur-vivors of sexual violence etc., with the concomitant diversity of needs, voices and perspectives. This understand-ing, particularly as it relates to female com-batants, has often been missing in UNSCR 1325 work despite the fact that the Resolution recognized the active participation of women in combat, and the im-portance of using a gender lens in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes.

This paper attempts to document and analyze the realities of Maoist women combatants in conflict and post-conflict Nepal within the contrasting nar-ratives of victimhood and agency. It looks at their experiences at entry, and during the ac-tive conflict, as well as in the post-conflict period, and examines the continuum of gender inequalities faced by these women right through to the peace building and DDR processes. It discusses the issue of their 'agency,' and the linkages between class, caste, ethnicity and historical context that informed this agency and shaped their political consciousness.

The research argues for the use of the CEDAW framework of substantive equali-ty to address is-sues faced by the Maoist women, including their

experiences of discrimination in the transition period, and their exclusion from peace building efforts. It suggests that meaningful reintegration requires a comprehensive ap-proach that factors in both victimhood and agency, and recommends going be-yond meeting a checklist of technicalities to an expanded and deeper engage-ment aimed at a full transformation of both the conditions and position of the Maoist women, to allow them to channel their agency towards building durable peace.

WOMEN AND THE 'PEOPLE'S WAR' IN NEPAL

Nepal experienced a decade of violent conflict (known as the 'People's War') be-tween government security forces and the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN)—Maoist, ending with a Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in 2006. One of the most reported aspects of the war was its high levels of female participation. Official records put this at about 30 per cent although during the height of the conflict some observers even put the estimates around 40 per cent.

In January 2007, the Interim Constitution of Nepal was adopted, where the Mao-ists joined the interim parliament and became part of the government with 33 per cent of seats reserved for women. A small percentage of Maoist women did en-ter the political fray, and during the DDR process, another small percentage were integrated into the Nepal Army.

The complex causes of the conflict in Nepal have been attributed to competition over power, politics and economics, rooted in deep seated and structural dis-crimination and social exclusion. The wide ethnic, linguistic, religious and caste distinctions in Nepali society added to this complexity, which was also com-pounded by deeply entrenched and pervasive gender discrimination. These fac-tors helped create the conditions that led women to join the armed struggle on the one hand, and increased their vulnerability to being forcibly recruited on the other.

The Maoists espoused an egalitarian ideology, and their 'People's War' provided a platform for challenging and ending the socio-political tensions in Nepal, while simultaneously taking advantage of the different aspirations of women in each community to energize the revolution. Comrade Parvati—or Hisila Yami —who was a Central Committee Member and Head of the Women's Department of CPN, described how the revolution helped Hindu women by unleash-ing their re-pressed energy "... to break the feudal patriarchal restrictive life imposed by the puritanical Hindu religion." For Tibeto-Burman and other wom-en who were al-ready relatively independent with greater decision-making power, the war provid-ed them with challenging work to do. Yami also pointed out that the war had a particularly important impact on those from the traditionally most exploited Dalit communities by mobilizing them and teaching them the value of using a collec-tive voice against repres-sive mainstream structures.

Various documented accounts and interviews with Maoist women in the course of this research corroborate that the Maoist leaders' egalitarian ideology—with its promise of gender equality, social justice and social inclusion—was tremendous-ly appealing to women. The Maoist vision of a revolu-tionary and politically transformed Nepal opened up spaces for women to participate in bringing about that change. Many thus joined the revolution driven by notions of freedom and adventure and a sense of agency and self-worth knowing that they were contrib-uting towards shaping a better future for Nepal. Furthermore, denial of their rights to abor-tion, inheritance and equal citizenship were issues that the Nepali wom-en's movement had long been grappling with, and these issues were afforded a special prominence during the revolution, one that continues today.

Many women, saw in the 'People's War' an oppor-tunity to escape from gender-based oppression notably child, early or forced marriage, domestic violence, po-lygamy or the tortuous rites and ritu-als surrounding widowhood. The Maoist leaders took strong positions on these issues, encouraged

widow remarriage and 'choice' in marital matters and above all, made property rights for women a key concern in their charter of demands. On the flip side however, in the rural and remote areas where the bulk of recruitment took place, extreme poverty and the undervalued status of women in Nepali society were thrown up in stark relief, with women having no choice but to join. Here, the Maoist's targeted recruitment drive required families to contribute at least one family member towards the cause. In many instances, families 'sacrificed' the least valued member of the family—either the daughter-in-law whose husband was away in India as a sea-sonal migrant, or a daughter rather than a son. Women had little say in the mat-ter. As a result, there were large numbers of female recruits from the indige-nous communities.

THE ROLES OF WOMEN COMBATANTS

The roles that women played as combatants in the Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) differed significantly and determined their relative power and position within the armed struggle. Studies have shown that the failure to adopt a gender perspective that recognizes these differences amongst former combatants can have negative implications for the reintegration process.

Contrary to more general gender stereotypes of women's roles within armed re-sistance groups, Maoist women were very visible as combatants. In the PLA, there were several female section commanders and vice commanders, and to encourage women's leadership, there were also separate women's sections with-in brigades, and female-only squads and platoons with large numbers of local level female cadres. Despite their subordinate status in Nepali society, within the rank and file, once recruited, women tended to be highly valued and seen as more loyal and disciplined than men.

According to Hisila Yami, women in the PLA were able to expand their capacity and skills beyond fighting to mobilizing, organizing and other long-term sustaina-ble work. Women acted as mass mobilizers—considered of strategic and crucial importance to the revolution—and an emphasis was put on developing women's leadership, with a separate department created for this purpose. Women also performed non-combat military roles ranging from intelligence gathering, serving as security guards within the organization, taking care of hostages, and other support (cooking, cleaning), administrative, and logistic roles (political mobiliza-tion, finance and communication).

Given the traditional attitudes surrounding the status of women, Nepali society outside of the PLA found it hard to accept that poor, rural, uneducated women were actually on the frontline of the revolution, sacrificing their lives for the so-cio-political transformation of Nepal. Within the PLA too, as pointed out by Hisila Yami, despite their new roles, women grappled with complex power hierarchies and ingrained gender stereotyping, which led inevitably to traditional divisions of labor remaining largely unchanged. Women's issues were rarely handled by the Maoist male leadership but relegated to women themselves. Programmes for women often did not get implemented or men monopolized the '...mental work and relegated women to everyday drudgery work.' Coming as they did from communities with entrenched gender inequalities, many women found it hard to assert themselves while male cadres, as Yami describes, had difficulty relin-quishing "...the privileged position bestowed on them by the patriarchal struc-tures."

Therefore, despite the 'People's War' offering new and oftentimes empowering experiences for Nepali women from different backgrounds, there remained for many women a deep sense of ambivalence, uncertainty and insecurity about their roles and positions within the PLA and wider Nepali society—this became highly pronounced in the post-conflict and reintegration period.

Adequate consideration of female ex-combatants in DDR programmes

UNSCR 1325, while recognizing that women's needs should be taken into ac-count by those planning demobilization and reintegration programs, also stress-es the importance of the equal participation of women in peace and security pro-cesses. In 2002, the Secretary-General's Study on Women, Peace and Security reiterated this commitment. It recommended that the needs and priorities of women and girls as ex-combatants, 'camp-followers' and families of ex-combatants be incorporated in the design and implementation of DDR pro-grammes, including the design of camps, the distribution of benefits and access to basic resources and services. It also called for women's full participation to ensure the success of such programmes.

Thereafter, a host of UN resolutions have called for a gender-sensitive and gen-der-responsive approach to peace building and DDR processes. The UN has emphasized that female ex-combatants should be informed of their options un-der the DDR and Security Sector Reform (SSR) processes, and incentives for joining a DDR programme should be linked to the option of a career within the security sector when female ex-combatants demobilize.

In addition, the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) developed in 2009 lay out gender responsiveness as a criti-cal guideline. It states that the 'absence of women from the security sector is not just dis-criminatory but can represent a lost opportunity to benefit from the different skill sets and approaches offered by women as security providers' and that 'if female ex-combatants are not given adequate consideration in DDR pro-cesses, it is very unlikely they will be able to enter the security forces through the path of integration.' The IDDRS further elabo-rates specific measures that must be undertaken including efforts at de-stigmatization to encourage women to enter the DDR process.

The recently adopted UNSC Resolution 2151 similarly stresses the importance of interlink-ages between security sector reform (SSR) and other important fac-tors of stabilization and reconstruction, such as DDR, as well as long-term reha-bilitation of former combatants, women and children in particular. It is clearly un-derstood now that the narrow definition of who qualifies to be a combatant for DDR, which has been motivated to an extent by budgetary considerations, serves to reinforce gender inequalities, and can be coun-terproductive in the long term, undermining the peace-building potential of DDR processes.

IMPACT OF NEPAL'S COMPLEX DDR AND SSR PROCESSES ON MAOIST WOMEN

DDR and SSR processes and broader issues of peace building and reconstruc-tion, are highly context driven and operationalized under different dynamics and political realities.

Given Nepal's history, the DDR and SSR processes have understandably been complicated. A full decade of violent political upheaval abolished the 240-year Shah Dynasty and established a federal republic. The State up until then was, by and large, dominated by a handful of feudal elites and a security sector that was particularly resistant to change. Historically, the military had always been commanded by the monarchy or the hereditary Rana oligarchy, and the Royal Nepal army was known to be highly loyal to the monarch rather than to the State.

In the post-conflict period, the integration of the Maoist Army into the new Nepal Army (NA) became one of the foremost challenges of the peace process—juxtaposing pro-monarchy loyal-ists with the leftist PLA cadres. The applicability of conventional DDR or SSR models was questioned. The CPN-Maoists argued that conventional mod-els could not be applied because the PLA had not been defeated but had simply entered into a period of political cooperation with former opponents to achieve state transformation. Since neither of the combating forces had been defeated, both the Royal Nepal Army and the Maoists pushed for significant numbers of their own cadres to be inte-grated into the new Nepal Army. The UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN)-led Joint Monitoring Coordinating Committee verified 19,692 PLA fighters as eligible

for integration, of which 3,846 were women. The long drawn out and contentious political maneuver-ing around integration (or reintegration) eventually evolved into a locally-owned but politically driven process without the mediation of the UN or the do-nor community. Reject-ing concerns, Nepal took an unprecedented decision to offer financial incentives to ex-combatants to make voluntary retirement attractive. 15,630 ex-combattants opted for reinte-gration back into their communities via voluntary re-tirement, while 1,422 opted for integration into the security forces.

The complex and protracted nature of the DDR and SSR processes had a signif-icant impact on Maoist women; somewhat ambivalent empowerment but none-theless gains during the conflict. This highlights the importance of making stronger linkages between DDR and SSR in peace negotiations and peace pro-cesses right from the start, making gender concerns an essential part of every formal peace negotiation, and ensuring that gender-sensitive provisions are well integrated in the resulting agreements.

Only a small number of Maoist women were able to meet the eligibility criteria for integration, which raised considerable resentment. As one ex-com-batant pointed out: "Everybody talked about the presence of large numbers of women in the Maoist

struggle but where did these numbers disappear during the DDR and peace process? When it came to getting something we were made invisible." Although not all the Maoist women qualified to be enlisted into the Nepal army many could have been included in other roles in the DDR process, such as being on DDR steering committees.

Notwithstanding the optimistic feminist analysis of the tremendous potential of a post-war moment to transform gender power hierarchies, historical experience shows that this window of opportunity exists for just a brief period. As peace processes and political negotiations become protracted, conflict fatigue begins to set in, alongside an emphasis on the restoration of 'normalcy.' In the pursuit of this normalcy, and in the interest of political expediency, gender concerns of-ten slip back to status quo. Inevitably, women are pushed back and their contributions are unrecognized and devalued. Regardless of the point of entry, wom-en's options, realities, roles and power relations, both during conflict and follow-ing demobilization, are embedded within broader gendered power structures and identities. Existing research and analysis of women combatants in fact surface the ways in which victimization is often intertwined with agency, and how for many of these women, times of peace may sometimes closely resemble times of war in terms of their marginality and power.

POST-CONFLICT REINTEGRATION: THE DISEMPOWERMENT OF MAOIST WOMEN

In post-conflict reintegration processes, programmes designed for female ex- combatants and agreed to by the negotiating parties often attempt to fit women back into stereotypical gendered roles, despite them having moved far beyond these roles during the conflict. The Nepal case is no exception.

The Maoist movement had dramatically radicalized the socio-political agenda, opened up spaces to redefine women's roles, and created a level of conscious-ness on issues of gender and social exclusion. There was unprecedented energy generated especially amongst rural and lower caste women. Having played an integral and equal role alongside men in determining the future of their country, the expectations of Maoist women were necessarily high. For a brief period, as mar-ginalized and disempowered women appeared to become part of the Constituent Assembly, it seemed as if Nepal would set a precedent in revolutionizing the sit-uation of women and progressive politics in a post-conflict scenario. But that was short lived.

Maoist women interviewed pointed out that once the disarmament and demobili-zation aspects (or the 'DD') of the DDR process were accomplished, there was very little focus on the reintegration (or 'R') part, especially for women. For in-stance, they were given reintegration packages that included training for gender stereotypical roles. The vast majority of female cadres simply became invisible and quietly re-turned to their communities deeply stigmatized and disempowered. Not only were they excluded from peace building efforts and the design of post-conflict programmes, but they also faced stigmatization from their communities for transgressing acceptable gender and societal norms.

The gender-insensitive design of Nepal's reinte-gration programmes demonstrat-ed the lack of a comprehensive understanding of women's roles in combat, and importantly, a deep political resistance to changing gendered norms and power relations. This resistance was evident at every stage of the patriarchal struc-ture of 'the peace architecture' starting from the local peace committees right up to the UN. For many Maoist women, their lack of skills, access to capital, credit or land pushed them back into the poverty they knew before the war, which many had joined the war to escape in the first place.

To avoid perpetuating the same pre-war conditions and situation, and to work towards a peace that is sustainable, it is critical that consultations are held with the women ex-combatants to identify the skills they want to acquire, rather than just offering skills that reinforce gender stereotypes. It is important also to pro-vide them with an array of different choices including resuming education; a proper analysis and understanding of the current job market; and emerg-ing liveli-hood options that the women may not be aware of given their time away during the conflict.

POST-CONFLICT REINTEGRATION: CHALLENGES FACED BY MAOIST WOMEN

According to the IDDRS, successful reintegration fulfills a common DDR/SSR goal of ensuring a well-managed transition of former combatants to civilian life, while also taking into account the needs of receiving communities. This requires an approach that recognizes female ex-combatants as a diverse group that in-cludes, among others, the disabled and sick, the wounded, the widowed, the ed-ucated and the illiterate, as well as the armed and the unarmed. This diversity and its implications for Maoist women integrating back into society did not get sufficient attention in Nepal's DDR process.

Furthermore, handling the dynamics and maintaining a balance between the in-terests of combatants and that of receiving communities is highly sensitive and contentious, requiring careful and strategic maneuvering, and longer and more sustained periods of engagement to ensure peaceful coexistence. In Nepal the-se issues have yet to get the nuanced attention, time and resource allocation needed to ensure community reconciliation and progress in changing gender bi-ased attitudes.

One area that received inadequate attention was the host of additional disad-vantages women ex-combatants faced as compared to men. Even in instances where men and women cadres were given similar economic or rehabilitation packages, there was a lack of analysis or monitoring to assess whether the re-sults or outcomes were equal for both the men and women. All the Maoist wom-en interviewed felt that it was far more difficult for women to reintegrate back into the community than men. Society readily accepted the men back while there were strong biases and resentment against women, who were perceived as 'wayward' women because they transgressed social norms by joining the war. There also

remains deep suspicion that these women led permissive lifestyles as Maoist cadres and were now being privileged with reintegration packages whereas community women bore the brunt of the war.

Maoist women have found it extremely difficult to transition back into the highly patriarchal and conservative social structures that they left behind. The PLA had attempted to break down the social structure of traditional Nepali society, includ-ing the caste, class, gender and ethnic divides. Women not only contravened traditional gender roles but crossed these other societal divides as well. For ex-ample, inter-caste and inter-ethnic marriages, and widow remarriages were great-ly encouraged amongst the cadres by the Maoist leadership. Many women who returned as widows with children from inter-caste/inter-ethnic marriages to fami-lies and communities where these divides are still strongly adhered to, faced stigma and discrimination. Some women said that it was humiliating to go back to their villages because they had achieved very little at the individual level: "we have been left behind" whereas other women in the village had moved

on eco-nomically and otherwise. As one woman put it: "When women came out of their homes to join the revolution they came for freedom. What do we say when we go back? We have no economic means, the gender inequalities and oppres-sion remain the same."

Many women opted not to go back to their com-munities and family, preferring instead to make a new life in the urban centers by themselves, where a few took on loans to resume the education they disrupted to join the war. But these Mao-ist women living in urban centers are largely isolated from tra-ditional support ba-ses, with no alternate support mechanism to help them cope with their socio-economic challenges, or the trauma of the violence they experienced or wit-nessed in the conflict.

It would be useful to move beyond a narrow focus on disarmament and demobi-lization, and ''hard'' security issues. This would help expand awareness and un-derstanding of often hidden problems faced by women. For example, many Mao-ist women, apart from being part of the violent struggle, were themselves victims of sexual violence perpetrated both by members of the Royal Nepal army as well as by fellow Maoist cadres. Since Nepali society deeply stigmatizes victims of sexual violence, putting the onus of responsibility on the victim rather than the perpetrator, for Maoist women to admit or report sexual violence is to be doubly stigmatized. In transitional justice processes therefore, the Maoist women are as much in need of reparations as other civilian women. Addressing issues of sex-ual and gender-based violence, apart from tackling trauma needs, also entails a long term commitment and in-terventions to bring about structural and systemic changes including unraveling the deep rooted causes of such violence.

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND PEACE BUILDING: EXCLUSION OF MAOIST WOMEN

Nepal was the first country in South Asia to develop a National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325. Nepal's NAP is cited as a model of best practice due to its content and strategy, as well as the participatory way in which it was devel-oped. In addition, the Nepal peace process has been an intense and prolonged one which saw a host of UN agencies, bilateral donors, INGOs, local NGOs and others participating through conferences, committees, funding, capacity building, monitoring and so on. A UN Peace Fund for Nepal (UNPFN); a multi-donor trust fund supported by Canada, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, and the United King-dom; a Ministry for Peace and Reconstruction; and local peace committees were set up, and an ongoing body of incisive and critical research and academic and journalistic accounts analyzed the changing situation rigorously.

Despite this, the situation of women ex-combat-ants has not been comprehen-sively addressed. Many programmes are 'about' them but not 'with' them, mean-ing that their voices have largely been excluded. Maoist women, for their own part, are ex-tremely skeptical about the funds that have come into Nepal for 'peace building work.' They pointed out that they are either not included or play a peripheral role in related initiatives. Much of the funds have seemingly gone to-wards creating jobs for others or for conferences, seminars or commit-tees, while no funds are being made available for the critical issues of reintegration. Accord-ing to the women, the NAP remains unimplemented with a 'resource crunch' be-ing cited as one of the reasons.

The participation of women combatants (or lack thereof) in formal peace negotia-tions and pro-cesses is an important gender marker that indicates the perception of the status and position of women within the armed groups, not only by their fellow cadres but also by the State. This has long-term implications for the rein-tegration of these women into their communities.

In addition, women combatants debunk the as-sumption that women naturally contribute towards conflict resolution and peace building. Just as there are for men, there must be peace dividends and incentives for women, including women ex-combat-ants, to want to build peace. The concept of women as peacemakers and nurturing mothers can be problematic for the women ex-combatants' reinte-gration back into the community for, among other things, it can polarize the women—pitting those who 'disrupted' peace against those who are consid-ered essentially peaceful and working for peace.

A formal place at the peace table is not the only marker. Peace processes are complex and can open up exciting opportunities for women's participation

includ-ing the emergence of a new, different rung of leadership. A sizable number of Maoist women, for instance, did become part of the newly established Constitu-ent Assembly. The question remains how-ever, what this opportunity meant in real terms for the women and whether their seats enabled them to have a voice in the peace building and governance processes. Several Maoist women as-sembly mem-bers admitted that there was very little they could do, and that they had to strictly follow the Party command and policies, which, given the post-conflict context, were even more stringent than expected.

It is crucial that women's representation at the peace table include those who understand and have lived experiences of social inclusion, gender justice and rights. Women ex-combatants must be integral to both primary and parallel peace processes in order for them to have a sense of ownership and responsibil-ity towards peacebuilding. The women ex-combatants interviewed strongly felt that they should have been consulted or involved in these processes, "in plan-ning or designing reintegration for us, talk to us for we know best our own reali-ties."

Even if the Maoist movement did not create long lasting change in the socio-political structures of Nepali society, it did contribute towards a histori-cal trans-formation of socio-political consciousness among Nepalis and an articulation of their rights. Women in particular felt that they had made some contribution to this change in consciousness and several of those interviewed expressed a strong desire to work for the betterment of society. They were frustrated that they were not being given an opportunity to do so. As one woman said: "I have great ability to mobilize people for a cause. I could contribute very well towards NGOs working for women but they don't want to involve us—maybe they do not trust us."

THE SECURITIZATION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

A basic limitation of UNSCR 1325 and the rest of the women, peace and securi-ty resolutions—and one that is increasingly being critiqued by feminists and women's rights advocates—is the securitization of women's rights and the state-centric interpretation of security rather than using a broader human security lens. The implementation of UNSCR 1325 has relied on UN security mecha-nisms, and the security sector has necessarily been the main focus for achiev-ing rights and equality in a post-conflict scenario. While the security sector has undoubtedly made important progress in engendering transitions, on the down-side however, DDR processes in particular have become entirely mired in securi-ty concerns. As a result, gen-der issues tend to be addressed because it makes 'good security sense' rather than to ensure gender justice and long-term social transformation. Using the formal equality lens, 'gender' is often reduced to num-bers and fitted into a 'male norm;' which is especially problematic during mo-ments of transition when societal norms are being reshaped and often renegoti-ated, and democratic goals are being established. It is especially challenging for the Maoist women with their contrasting realities of agency and victimhood, set against a historical backdrop of socio-political oppression, gender discrimina-tion compounded by class, caste and ethnic divisions, violence and impunity, and heightened insecurity. For these women, peace is understood neither in the narrow sense nor in the abstract. Instead, the aspiration is for a comprehensive peace that recognizes and builds practical access to human security.

The adoption of CEDAW General Recommendation 30 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict and Post Conflict Situations is of particular significance in the work on women, peace and security. It adds to the agenda the fundamental and crucial elements of gender equality and women's rights perspectives that have been diluted or missed in the operation-alization of UNSCR 1325 over the last fifteen years. It emphasizes that in situations of conflict, women are not a homogenous group and not only passive bystanders or victims. It creates a cohesive link between the issue of peace building and conflict transformation, and issues of human rights, gender equality and gender justice. Importantly, it focuses on accountability and state obligation. As the international Bill of Rights for women, CEDAW pos-sesses the analysis and the provisions to address the broader gender power structures and obstacles that impede the achievement of gender equality and women's human rights in conflict and post-conflict contexts, which as the Nepal case study shows, is at the heart of the challenges facing women ex-combatants in their reintegration and in the building of sustainable peace.

Ultimately, meaningful reintegration needs to take into account both women's victimhood and agency, and must be conceptualized and framed as a means to-wards social transformation to change the conditions and position of the wom-en ex-combatants. UNSCR's transformative core 'women build peace' can only reso-nate with the Maoist women if it is peace with justice, a recognition of their rights as women and an end to oppressive gender and class discrimination.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure all post-conflict reconstruction and reintegration processes undertaken utilize the CEDAW principles of substantive equality and non-discrimination.
- Address the needs and violations against women ex-combatants and develop strategies to involve them as peace builders and peace advocates.
- Include within the UNSCR 1325 mandate, manda-tory security sector and gov-ernance reform by all governments/countries that are signatories to peace agreements to ensure justice and security for women affected by conflict.

To ensure meaningful reintegration of female ex combatants -

- Recognize their contrasting realities of agency and victimhood, and their di-verse backgrounds and situations, with differing needs, voices and perspec-tives.
- Address the structural causes of inequality including gender, caste, class and ethnicity with long-term commitment and adequate allocation of resources.
- Ensure reintegration plans are made with women rather than for them and ac-tively engage them in steering committees on DDR and in the design and im-plementation of reintegration programmes.
- Ensure skills building for women are in areas that do not perpetuate gender ste-reotypes and that provide necessary access to credit, capital and land.
- Design and implement community-based reinte-gration approaches. Link reinte-gration activities, apart from community recovery and reintegration, with other development programmes.
- Plan and programme in ways which allow strong part-nerships to develop be-tween female ex-combatants, local communities of different ethnicities and

programme planners and implementers, and tailor reintegration interventions to be context specific.
- Prioritize community reconciliation through long-term support for work on gen-der equality and social justice, and ensure a balance between reintegration benefits for women ex-combatants with reparation programmes for victims.

To build durable peace and resilience in a post-conflict context:

- Invest in building long-term sustainability of peace efforts at the community level by: consolidating the knowledge, agency, resilience and abilities of fe-male ex-combatants to make them into local change agents; and working with community leaders to create a cadre of peace activists at the community level.
- Consolidate and capitalize on the empowerment of women and the positive so-cial changes around gender, ethnicity, caste and class issues, and social in-clusion, as in Nepal, and support continued chal-lenges to gender and social discrimination, including by institutions that perpetuate exclusion in the post conflict reconstruction and recovery period.
- Involve women ex-combatants in community programs for women affected by the conflict.
- Hold consultations with female ex-combatants to identify the skills they want to acquire rather than providing skills that further gender stereotypes and that are irrelevant to the women. Provide them with an array of different choices plus a proper analysis of the present job market and emerging and innovative liveli-hood options.
- Address issues of sexual and gender-based violence experienced by both fe-male ex-combatants and civilian women, and ensure justice and reparations within a given time frame.

DDR/SSR

- Move beyond a narrow "hard" security frame. Focus on broader issues of hu-man security, including challenges associated with sexual and gender-based violence.
- Ensure stronger linkages are made between DDR and SSR processes from the start in peace negotiations and peace processes, and that gender and DDR are an essential part of every formal peace negotiation, and are integrated into the agreements arrived at by all parties.
- Ensure gender-sensitive and gender-inclusive security sector reform which is key to developing non-discriminatory, gender-responsive security sector institu-tions that address the security needs of women and girls, including disadvantaged groups.
- Ensure DDR support is adequate, and not shaped by gender stereotypes. Women's economic empowerment can be limited if they are only provided with skills development hewing to traditionally female fields. Expand DDR support to deal with psycho-social counseling, trauma healing and economic manage-ment for female ex-combatants.
- Address and ensure DDR processes conform to the IDDRS guidelines on gen-der, as well as CEDAW GR 30 article 69.

ENDNOTES

1   Christine Chinkin, "The Protection of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Post-Conflict" (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2009), http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/women/docs/Paper_Protection_ESCR.pdf.

2   CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict and Post Conflict Contexts reiterates that in a situation of conflict it is important to understand that women are not a homogenous group and are not only passive bystanders or victims: "They have historically and continue to have a role as combatants, as part of organized civil society, human rights defenders, members of resistance movements and as active agents in both formal and informal peace building and recovery processes."

3   "Resolution 1325 (2000)," S/RES/1325 (United Nations Security Council, October 31, 2000).

4   The analysis draws on a review of existing literature on women ex-combatants in general and in Nepal in particular, as well as literature and UNSCR 1325 reports related to reintegration of women ex-combatants and women's leadership in peace building in Nepal. It also draws from preliminary interviews and interactions with former combatants in Nepal, conducted by the author in February 2015. The paper presents recommendations to the Global Study on implementation of UNSCR 1325 as well as general suggestions for reporting on women ex-combatants under CEDAW General Rec-ommendation No. 30

5   CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 highlights: "While women often take on leadership roles during conflict as heads of households, peacemakers, political leaders and combatants, the Commit-tee has repeatedly expressed concern that their voices are silenced and marginalized in post-conflict and transition periods and recovery processes"

6   Suvechha Adhikari, "Nepal: Women Combatants in Cantonments: Where Next?," *Telegraph Nepal*, June 26, 2007, http://www.telegraphnepal.com/backup/news_det.php?news_id=1360. See also J. Pettigrew and S. Shneiderman, "Women and Maobaadi: Ideology and Agency in Nepal's Maoist Movement," *Himal South Asian* 17, no. 1 (2004): 19–29.

7   Rita Manchanda, "Nepali Women Seize the New Political Dawn: Resisting Marginalization after Ten Years of War" (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2010).

8   Hisila Yami, *People's War and Women's Liberation in Nepal* (Kathmandu: Janadhwani Publication, 2007).

9   Hisila Yami, Interview, February 2015.

10 Satya Shrestha-Schipper, "Women's Participation in the People's War in Jumla," *European Bulle-tin of Himalayan Research* 33–34 (2009 2008): 105–22. See also Pettigrew and Shneiderman, "Women and Maobaadi: Ideology and Agency in Nepal's Maoist Movement."

11 Ibid.

12 Vanessa Farr, "Women Combatants and the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration Pro-cess in Rwanda" (UNESCO, 2006).

13 Yami, Interview.

14 Comrade Parvati, "The Question of Women's Leadership in People's War in Nepal," *The Worker* 8 (January 2003).

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 This includes the reporting on resolution 1325 (2000) in the Secretary-General's annual reports; res-olutions 1888 (2009) articles 17 and 18, 1889 (2009) articles 13 and 14, 2106 (2013) article 16, 2122 (2013) article 4; and the Secretary-General's 7-Point Action Plan.

18 United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, "Framework Module 6.10," in *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards* (United Nations, 2009), Para 7.11.

19 Ibid.

20 United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, "Framework Module 5.10," in *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards* (United Nations, 2009), Para 6.3.

21 A strict 'one man, one gun' eligibility requirement for DDR, or an eligibility test based on profi-ciency in handling weapons, may exclude many women and girls from entry into DDR programmes.

22 The involvement of women is the best way of ensuring their longer-term participation in security sec-tor reform and in the uniformed services more generally, which again will improve long-term se-curity.

23 Bishnu Pathak and Devendra Uprety, "Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration and Securi-ty Sector Reform in Nepal: A Preliminary Sociological Observation," Situation Update (Kathmandu: Conflict Study Center, March 7, 2010).

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 See resolution 2151 (2014), Framework Module 6.10 in *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards*, CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 para 66.

27 Maoist women in Nepal, Interview, February 2015.

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30 Ibid.

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32 Maoist women in Nepal, Interview.

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34 Women's Tribunal on Sexual Violence on Women During Conflict, "Verdict" (Kathmandu, Nepal: Women's Tribunal on Sexual Violence on Women During Conflict, December 8, 2014).

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37 Kumudini Samuel, "Reframing Peace and Security for Women," in The Remaking of Social Con-tracts: Feminists in a Fierce New World, ed. Gita Sen and Marina Durano (London: Zed Books, 2014).

38 Natalie Florea Hudson, "UNSCR 1325: The Challenges of Framing Women's Rights as a Security Matter," Policy Brief (Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, March 2013).

39 Dr. Renu Rajbhandari, Interview. Dr. Rajbhandari talked about a combination of economic, food, health, environmental and personal security as well as right to human dignity and freedom of a per-son and community and political security

40 According to CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30, women "have historically and continue to have a role as combatants, as part of organized civil society, hu-man rights defenders, members of resistance movements and as active agents in both formal and informal peace building and recovery processes."

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