



SPARKS OF CHANGE

Inspirational stories from men and women
working on Women, Peace and Security

A publication by

1325 / DUTCH
NAP
PARTNERSHIP

The Dutch National Action Plan is being coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform

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PARTNERS OF THE DUTCH NAP



Dear reader,

'In a male-dominated society like Sudan, you have to bring in women for successful mediation.'

The above quote is just one of the thought-provoking observations you can read in this booklet. This and other insights, from 'hands-on' experts and other authorities on the position of women in countries like Sudan, Afghanistan and Iraq, show that inclusive peacebuilding leads to better outcomes.

This publication is a collection of inspirational initiatives and lessons learned on the part of signatories and partners to the second Dutch National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325. It recognises what positive experiences have taught us and looks ahead to how these lessons might be applied in the future.

It is true: conflict areas do need women in order to take meaningful steps forward. If this collection of stories shows anything, it is that the role of women must be expanded. Not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because it leads to better outcomes.

Fortunately, more and more women are making a stand, and more and more men are taking their side. Women like Marcelina, the head of a police unit in Yambio, South Sudan, who takes a particular interest in protecting the rights of women and children and stopping sexual violence. Or the Afghan Aref Dostyar, a young man who took a critical look at his own cultural prejudices and became conscious of the stigmatisation of women in his country.

I have to emphasise that this initiative is a result of women and men working together, from the North and South, from different backgrounds and religions. UNSCR 1325 brings people together, and I am proud that we as the Netherlands can contribute to this unity.

I would like to thank all the contributors who have made this publication possible. We hope this booklet will inspire better and more innovative initiatives on UNSCR 1325, gender-conscious responses to peace and security, and effective contributions to conflict prevention and the protection and participation of women.

Lilianne Ploumen
Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation



UNSCR 1325 - Ambitious and Challenging

UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325

UNSCR 1325 (2000) and the following Women, Peace and Security resolutions are the result of dedicated efforts of civil society and the international community to recognise the importance of gender justice and women's empowerment to the goals of peace and development. UNSCR 1325 follows on the Beijing Platform for action, and its message is a transformative and inspiring one, which has helped to galvanise women and men all over the world working to end systemic human rights violations and to create a more just and sustainable peace.

UNSCR 1325 has provided a vehicle for bringing together economic, political and security interests to address the link between gender and conflict. Moreover, UNSCR 1325 has helped to boost a human rights based approach to security, to leverage the efforts of dedicated women activists, and to better understand the effects of conflict on women and men. The resolution is an important tool for women,

giving recognition to their peace work, enabling them to mobilize on a global scale to assert their claims and demands for a place in peace and security-related decision making. It has also strengthened the relationship between civil society, international organisations and national governments in working together to contribute to inclusive peace and security.

THE NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

UNSCR 1325 is ambitious and challenging on a scale that is sometimes difficult to implement through concrete guidelines, quotas and timeframes alone, and requires multiple actors working together. The National Action Plans developed to implement UNSCR 1325 illustrated the critical role of member states at the national level in making UNSCR 1325 a reality. National Action Plans provide a vehicle for the continued advancement of the Women, Peace and Security Framework. The National Action Plans can also help to create a holistic implementation strategy which also identifies opportunities to learn, to reflect and to move forward with the goals of UNSCR 1325.

THE DUTCH NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

Signatories and partners in the Dutch National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 have good reason to be proud. Developed in collaboration between government and civil society actors, the Dutch National Action Plan is widely recognised as a model of cooperation and coordination between civil society and government institutions. The inclusive, participatory and multi-disciplinary nature of the NAP reflects the principles it seeks to implement. It works by bringing together and creating space for civil society, knowledge institutes and government actors committed to advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda where it matters most. The strength and diversity of the actors involved is one of the biggest assets of the National Action Plan. The second Dutch National Action Plan works by committing funding to actions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs commits four million euros annually for NAP-programming in six conflict-affected countries and one region, and dedicated an additional fund for smaller-scale organisations in 2015. NAP-signatories contribute to



NAP-programming or to the broader Women, Peace and Security agenda through additional funding and dedicated resources. Moreover, the Dutch National Action Plan also serves as an important lobby and advocacy platform at international level.

The National Action Plan remains an evolving process. It is a living document that should guide us in moving forward, in reflecting and in learning collectively from our experience of implementing UNSCR 1325. For example, from our first National Action Plan (2007-2011) we learned that we needed to integrate a stronger thematic focus, a better coordination mechanism and allocate funding. This is what we did in our second National Action Plan (2012-2015). As we prepare for the 3rd National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 we remain committed to keeping Women, Peace and Security high on the international peace and security agenda. Understanding and addressing the impact of conflict on women and the role they can play for peace and security is challenging, but the more we persevere, the more we learn.

IN THIS PUBLICATION

The stories and contributions in this publication present some of the diverse ways in which the Dutch National Action Plan has come to life. It includes examples of cooperation between NAP-signatories here in the Netherlands and – most importantly - illustrates its added value and effect on communities where it is implemented.

This work is taking place in all of the focus countries of the Dutch NAP; from Afghanistan, Burundi and Colombia, to the DRC, South Sudan, Sudan, and the countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as well as in the Netherlands and internationally. We developed this publication to highlight our work as NAP signatories and to be able to share this with others engaged in the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

The examples from these countries illustrate that the NAP is not just about paper, it's about people. It is people who carry the NAP 1325 forward. In this publication you will find their inspirational stories, including those of NGO-workers, police women, civil servants, and game changing men and women working in (post) conflict areas. For instance, this publication tells the story of Aref - founder of an Afghan NGO - dedicated to ensuring more women in leading societal positions, and of Marcelina, the Sudanese police woman who has become a local leader, protecting rights of women and children. These stories illustrate some of the successes we have had in implementing UNSCR 1325 and in boosting the people-centric approach to peace and security which underpins this resolution.

For the purpose of this publication, we have categorised these stories into five themes, although many stories cut across many themes. Some stories highlight the importance of linkages **(LINKING FOR WOMEN, PEACE AND**

SECURITY), because the causes and solutions of a conflict often reach beyond geographical borders and are rooted in the involvement of multiple actors. Other stories illustrate the need to strengthen women's leadership **(WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP)**. We also acknowledge the need to engage with and support women in contributing to their own safety and security **(SUPPORTING WOMEN'S SECURITY)**. Other stories underline our belief that we cannot reach genuine peace without the involvement of women in peace processes **(INCLUSIVE PEACE PROCESS AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION)**. Last but not least, we know that the Women, Peace & Security agenda is not only about women. It is also about men and masculinities, as reflected by many of the male interviewees who shared their stories with us **(MASCULINITIES)**.

Integrated into the stories, you will find QR-codes of various short movies showing the work of the Dutch NAP and the broader Women, Peace and Security agenda.

As we move forward, the third Dutch National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 will build further on these successes, and find new ways to address new challenges and opportunities to remain relevant and innovative. The implementation of UNSCR 1325 needs persistent effort and dedication and – through collaboration – this is proving possible.

Let's take a moment to reflect on some of these achievements and move forwards together.

RETHINKING MASCULINITY IN THE MENA REGION

Integrating masculinities in UNSCR1325 in MENA region

The Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) started introducing a masculinities perspective in the Women, Peace and Security agenda with a pilot training for male activists in 2009. The pilot expanded into a series of trainings in Asia and the MENA region. Based on the lessons learned from these activities, involving men in UNSCR 1325 implementation became a pillar of NAP II. Together with ABAAD, WPP launched a Training of Trainers cycle for the MENA region, named "Together for Transformation: Gender-Sensitive Non-violence for Sustainable Peace" in 2011 and 2012.

WPP and ABAAD work together in close partnership through jointly organising regional consultations, trainings and special events such as in New York around UNSCR 1325. They also collaborate within the framework of the NAP-programme "Amplifying the Voices of Women from the MENA Region".



In a response to women's voices in the field, the Women Peacemakers Program initiated a pilot Training of Trainers cycle for 19 male peace activists from 17 different countries in 2009 / 2010, entitled "Overcoming Violence: Exploring Masculinities, Violence, and Peacebuilding". Here you find an impression of the training.

FEW WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS IN THE MENA (MIDDLE EAST AND NORTHERN AFRICA) REGION HAVE MEN ON BOARD WHO ARE AS FURIOUSLY FEMINIST AS ANTHONY KEEDI FROM ABAAD, RESOURCE CENTER FOR GENDER EQUALITY, IN BEIRUT, LEBANON. 'I WAS RAISED IN A PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY. AS FAR AS TRADITIONAL MASCULINITY IS CONCERNED, I WAS A MAN'S MAN.' NOW HE IS A GAME-CHANGER. HE CHALLENGES MEN AND WOMEN TO RETHINK THEIR UNCONSCIOUSLY GENDERED BEHAVIOUR. 'IT IS LIBERATING TO BE ABLE TO BE VULNERABLE.'

Anthony is Programme Manager for the Masculinities and Engaging Men unit at ABAAD, an organisation founded in 2011. The American-Lebanese psychologist is an activist and trainer on masculinities. He tells about his personal transformation: 'For a long time, I was largely unaware of the emotional and psychological violence in my relationships with women. I was not comfortable feeling hurt or vulnerable. I realised what I was doing as I started reading about the topic, and after undergoing therapy of my own as a psychology student. Now, I am in the fortunate position of being educated and in this line of work, I feel like I can give back a little. That is why I do what I do.'

TACKLING THE ROOTS OF GENDER INEQUALITY

Anthony and his team of trainers invite NGO staff throughout the MENA region who work on the Women, Peace and Security agenda, to challenge their own ideas about masculinities. What makes a man? It is a challenge to get these NGO workers, who are focused on National Action Plans, to see the need for a better understanding of the building blocks of the socialisation process for men. 'Work on Women, Peace and Security needs to go beyond empowering women only,' Anthony says. 'We need to understand the people we are negotiating with at the end of the day, the people at the base of the patriarchal structure, and how we're socialised every single day towards male privilege.'

An innovative way to rethink masculinity in trainings is through role-play exercises. 'We ask people to think about the first time they wanted to do something badly but they couldn't, because of their sex. We use that as a starting point to talk about how women are taught to play non-competitive games, to be caring, submissive, to accept abuse, to not have a say in society, and not to be a leader. Men, on the other hand, are encouraged to be competitive and violent, to have a high threshold for pain, and to never show their emotions.' ABAAD uses football as a way to show young men how many of the rules that apply to football, about teamwork, communication, and violence, also apply to relationships between men and women.

BREAKING PATTERNS

'It is not easy to be someone who breaks roles and patterns,' Anthony says. 'Sometimes I also find it hard to be called 'weak' when I do not respond to a situation in a 'manly' enough way. It is a constant struggle. It takes a lot to take it,' he says. Shattering familiar roles and behaviours is particularly difficult in times of conflict. Fear of violence makes people feel unsafe. When people feel unsafe, they rely on what they know best, which is patriarchy. Anthony observes a vicious cycle: war reinforces fear, fear reinforces patriarchy and patriarchy reinforces violence, against women and men.

Another challenge is the narrow focus on numbers, both from governments and donors. There is little time and space for follow-up, while this fragile process of behavioural change in politics and playgrounds really needs continuity. Otherwise these moments of revelation will only remain moments in time or even risk having a boomerang effect.

THE RIGHT ROAD

ABAAD aims to set an example in the region of how men and women can work together, equally and productively. The Center is ambitious. Only a handful of organisations really assimilated the concepts of masculinity and are engaging men into their organisational structure. Anthony understands this: 'Now all of a sudden we are saying to organisations that have been built around women only, that men should be involved. But we cannot have a society where one half believes in equality and the other half in a patriarchal system.' Anthony and the ABAAD team have noticed a desire to know more about masculinities within organisations in the MENA region. ABAAD, together with Women Peacemakers Program, is responding to this need. 'When we can critically reflect on ourselves, without blame, but understanding that we've all been shaped by a patriarchal society, then any work that comes out is phenomenal. It might be the longer road, but it is the right road.'

Dutch NAP 1325 – a diverse, challenging and rewarding network

FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS, SOPHIE KESSELAAR HAS BEEN WORKING INTENSIVELY ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION OF THE DUTCH ACTION PLAN 1325, FROM THE HEART OF THE THE HAGUE OFFICE OF WO=MEN. 'I FEEL THAT, UP TO NOW, THE SUCCESSES OF THE NAP-NETWORK ARE MOSTLY AT THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS-RAISING: CREATING A UNIQUE BROAD SUPPORT BASE IN THE NETHERLANDS THAT PROMOTES WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY WORLDWIDE. DESPITE VARIOUS SETBACKS, THE NETWORK HAS PROVED TO BE SOLUTION-ORIENTED AND RESILIENT.'

Sophie Kesselaar is a policy officer at WO=MEN, with a background in Anthropology and Conflict Studies and Human Rights. Since the summer of 2011 she has been closely involved in civil society efforts for the development of the NAP II. In her view, 'as the Netherlands we are responsible for implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda in our own country, and promoting the position of women in (post) conflict countries around the world. It is not only a fair thing to do; it is also smart. Taking into account the gender dimension is essential in peacekeeping and conflict resolution. What's more, this has become increasingly relevant if you look at the various violent conflicts at the doorstep of Europe, from Syria and Mali, to the Ukraine.'

ADDED VALUE OF THE NETWORK

Since the launch of NAP II, awareness about UNSCR 1325 has grown among Dutch actors. Currently, there are 57 signatories working together towards one collective goal: peace and

security for men and women worldwide. The Dutch Action Plan is internationally renowned for its collaboration between government and civil society. Also—unlike most NAPs—it has a budget of €4 million a year which triggers the implementation of country-specific projects. Furthermore, Sophie adds: 'We see strong political support in the Netherlands and engagement of Ministers as never before. They strongly advocate the Women, Peace and Security agenda at international forums.'

'What I value most about the Dutch Action Plan is the great diversity of signatories who are committed to the collective goal of Women, Peace and Security. These actors range from women's peace organisations to the military, and from diaspora organisations to universities, each with its own network and expertise.'

Among the specialisations are advocacy in the Netherlands, official diplomacy, and peace missions; some also have experience running large in-country development programmes. As

coordinator, WO=MEN has the crucial role of mobilising civil society partners within the NAP-network. Sophie: 'We always try to look for collective solutions that engage all parties while keeping in mind the different interests of the signatories. In the NAP-network everyone should bring ideas to the table and complement as equals.'

NAP II CHALLENGES

'There is still much to be done,' Sophie adds. For instance: 'We find it difficult to measure the impact of our work.' Also, reality has changed dramatically since the second action plan was set up in 2011. Budget cuts in development cooperation have heavily affected the budget of NGOs, the government and its embassies, including their staffing capabilities. And it also affected the intensity of contributions to the NAP-partnership. The NAP has proved to be an ambitious plan but it also demands a lot from its signatories. Yet Sophie puts into perspective: 'Last December during the NAP 1325 Academy



WO=MEN and NAP 1325
 WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform is responsible for the coordination on behalf of the civil society signatory organisations in the NAP 1325. This task is partly financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and partly by WO=MEN-members.

in Washington I learnt that other NAPs struggle with similar problems and that, in comparison, we actually do quite well in the Netherlands.'

A RESILIENT NETWORK

Despite various setbacks along the way, the network showed its ability to tackle problems. The resilience of the NAP-network is remarkable. 'When obstacles arise within the network, they are openly shared and discussed in order to come up with a joint solution. It is about trial and error and we try to learn.' For example, when small organisations found themselves ineligible for appropriate funding, members, including organisations with no direct interest, collectively developed the NAP 1325 pilot fund Small Seeds for Big Baobabs. The

pilot fund, which kicked-off activities in January 2015, provides both capacity-building and funds for smaller and rapid action initiatives.

'We will try to incorporate the lessons learnt in the development of the next action plan,' Sophie says. 'It would be great if we are better able to strategise on a more local level in the countries we focus on. What could each of the Dutch parties in a particular context do to support the work of the brave men and women on the ground?' For Sophie, more attention should be paid to the institutionalisation of Women, Peace and Security in both our foreign and domestic policies and practices. As she reflects: 'We made a good start, but there is still much work to be done.'



**SOUTH SUDANESE
POLICEWOMAN
MARCELINA DOES
IT HER WAY**

IN THE SOUTHERN TOWN OF YAMBIO, SOUTH SUDAN, CLOSE TO THE CONGOLESE BORDER, ALMOST TWENTY WOMEN CAME TOGETHER IN NOVEMBER 2014 TO PRACTICE THEIR LEADERSHIP SKILLS. AS PART OF THE PROGRAMME UNSCR 1325 IN SOUTH SUDAN, SUPPORTED BY A CONSORTIUM OF PAX, ICCO AND VOICE FOR CHANGE, POLICEWOMAN MARCELINA MOSES SIMANGI WAS INVITED BY THE SOUTH SUDANESE ORGANISATION EQUATORIA WOMEN ASSOCIATION (EWA), TO JOIN THE TRAINING. WHAT DOES LEADERSHIP MEAN FOR A POLICEWOMAN IN CONFLICT-RIDDEN SOUTH SUDAN?

Civil war often brings to the surface many personal wars hidden away in homes: domestic violence, sexual violence such as rape peak during wartime. Marcelina was one of only a few women to join the police force in Juba in the mid-1980s, in the midst of the civil war. The male-dominated police force was not much interested in cases of gender based violence. These were, and still are, considered family matters rather than criminal offences. Why would a girl report rape when she is not heard, not understood and risks being accused of seduction? She would have nowhere to go.

POLICEWOMAN IN A MAN'S WORLD

Once she was transferred to Yambio, Marcelina was determined to change this situation. 'Sexual violence is one of the worst things that can happen to you as a woman. As police officers we have the responsibility to act against these offences.' And so she did. While her colleagues looked away out of fear, indifference, or discomfort, she handled complicated cases of domestic and sexual violence. At first, she faced resistance, but it slowly turned into admiration. She inspired other women in Yambio to join the police, which led to a much healthier gender division within the police force. She no longer feels the need to behave like a 'tough man' with her male colleagues, like she did when she was younger. Motherhood has made her softer, she says.

WOMEN OF YAMBIO SPEAK UP

Marcelina is now head of the Yambio Special Protection Unit, which guards the rights of women and children and specialises in cases of gender based violence. She brought a wealth of experience to the female leadership training facilitated by PAX. During the training, the women – who stemmed from civil society, fire brigades, the local government and the police – exercised their public speaking skills for example by debating,

negotiating and role playing. They also learnt how to make human rights and women's rights more tangible in their daily work. The local radio was present at the scene and the women were excited to put into practice their newly gained media skills.

Leadership for Marcelina means not being afraid to tell the truth. 'Without truth and justice we cannot change society.' And change is what these pioneering women of Yambio can no longer wait for. Each of them wants to learn how to contribute to change from their own discipline as policewoman, firefighter, peace activist or social worker. As part of the training, one Arab-speaking participant, still shy and unsure about her English, delivered her first public speech in English in front of thirty critical listeners. Proud and confident she stood upright, ready to tell the truth.



Female Leadership Training and NAP 1325

The female leadership training in South Sudan is part of a NAP-financed programme, named UNSCR 1325 in South Sudan, led by a consortium of ICCO, PAX and Voice for Change in partnership with Equatoria Women Association (EWA), New Sudan Women Federation (NSWF), Women Organisation for Training Programme (WOTAP), Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation (CEPO) and South Sudan Law Society (SSCS).

Speaking out about women's rights in Afghanistan

IN THE MIDST OF THE ARAB SPRING, YOUNG ARAB AND AFGHAN WOMEN AND MEN DISCUSSED ONLINE NEW FORMS OF ACTIVISM. IT WAS THE INSPIRATION TO DEVELOP AN SMS-BASED SOCIAL PLATFORM CALLED 'FROM ARAB SPRING TO AFGHAN SUMMER', WHICH SUPPORTS POLITICAL CHANGE AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN. AND IT RESULTED IN THE BAYAN PROGRAMME, A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT BETWEEN OXFAM NOVIB, CORDAID AND GENDER CONCERNS INTERNATIONAL, AND SEVEN AFGHAN ORGANISATIONS. IN THE AFGHAN LANGUAGES DARI AND PASHTO BAYAN MEANS 'TO SPEAK OUT'.

The first Bayan pilot promoted youth debate through Facebook, text messages and radio spots that were meant for young people to learn from one another and ultimately to change perceptions about the role women can play in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

The follow-up builds on the pilot's success, which exceeded all expectations: 80 young change-makers, 1,500 active users from among 23,500 online participants, and 1.2 million people reached. For Bayan II an improved structural policy-influencing approach was developed. The objectives are political participation of women and inclusive security, supported by public awareness-raising. Throughout the two-year programme, each of the consortium partners is responsible for one of these key topics, and collaborates with two or three local partners who lead the project.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Sabra Bano started her career as a student leader in her native Karachi, Pakistan. Currently, she is the director of Gender Concerns International (GCI). She first came to the Netherlands in 1984 to study Women and Development at the International School of Social Studies, returned to Pakistan after her graduation and later went back to the Netherlands to do research and lecture at several universities. Her mission is to 'convince the unconvinced' when it comes to gender equality.

'The strength of Bayan is that it connects grassroots organisations with policymakers,' Sabra says. Gender Concerns seeks to strengthen the power of women's organisations to influence policy. Sabra explains the organising strategy: 'We always encourage women to speak for themselves—to have one collective powerful voice. It has worked,

and will work.' Gender Concerns also taps into its previous experience. For example, it will train female members of parliament after the upcoming elections, in areas like policy-making, to help them assume their newly gained responsibility and accountability in the interest of people. Sabra adds: 'I believe in equal democratic participation of men and women—as voters as well as candidates. We have supported Afghan women as future parliamentarians. It is my wish to get them elected.'

INCLUSIVE SECURITY

Jorrit Kamminga has been working in and for Afghanistan for the past 10 years, and started working for Oxfam Novib one year ago. He has supported the development of Bayan II. 'It isn't only about quotas, or having more women involved in the police, ministries and politics in general. Our strategy is to link to common goals: Which 1325-issues they themselves consider add value? Which challenges can



Bayan support? A clear illustration is having policewomen carry out stop-and-search procedures with women. Oxfam also supports a NGO that runs a hotline where police and military women can report incidents and get support. 'We have seen in the past that forced change doesn't bring structural improvement. Afghan police and ministries will only act when they see a benefit.'

In the framework of Bayan, Oxfam and its local partners are responsible for inclusive security, bringing in experience from a previous project, 'Women and the Afghan Police'. The last time Jorrit was in Afghanistan, he had twenty meetings with donors, at Ministries and at the High Peace Council in the space of three weeks. With a female senior director at the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs he discussed the needs of women within the organisation. At the Peace Council he met three male representatives – who felt there were not enough skilled women – to discuss the participation of women in peace talks. 'We stress that an agreement will be more tenable when the other half of the population, that is to say women, also agrees on it.' Furthermore, it will highlight issues in the media, talk to donors, and connect to its network. 'Connecting the dots,' as Jorrit puts it.



Women are monitoring their security in Afghanistan.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Stephanie Joubert works as a specialist for Cordaid's programme on women leadership for peace and security. Cordaid has been in Afghanistan since 2000. It focuses on women and girls, and their rights and opportunities. It also brings in expertise on engaging the Afghan government for improving policies that affect women's security. Stephanie is very excited about Bayan: 'It connects generations, men and women, in the plight for a better protection and participation of women in Afghanistan.'

Cordaid supports Bayan by creating an environment that allows to raise awareness and acceptance of female leadership, and to select women as leaders. Among the activities that local partners perform are (social) media campaigning and old-school theatre performances. Youth and women with access to social media, and their ability to influence the political discourse, are given a central role in the public debate. In turn, public consent can push for changes in government structures, policies and practices, and allow for more female leaders.

CHANGE IS COMING

The first results from the pilot-project are promising. For example one of the participants said: 'I am a girl so I thought that no one would agree with my ideas. On the Bayan network, I have more male followers than female ones, and they are all friendly and respectful.' Also, the context is becoming more supportive:

Bayan and NAP 1325

Bayan (see also www.facebook.com/AfghanSummer) is a NAP-financed project by Gender Concerns International (GCI), Oxfam Novib and Cordaid, together with seven Afghan organisations*. Jorrit Kamminga from Oxfam Novib and Sabra Bano from GCI are both co-chair of the Afghan 1325 country group, where next to Cordaid amongst others also Police NL and the Ministry of Defence take part.

A NAP 1325 has been adopted by the Afghan government. With the signature of the President it could be more high profile for others to work on it. There is still a need for support of the international community on how to implement the NAP.

* Afghanistan Capacity Development & Educational Organization (ACDEO); Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT); Afghan Women's Educational Centre (AWEC); Afghan Women's Resource Centre (AWRC); Development and Support of Afghan Women and Children Organization (DSAWCO); Equality for Peace and Democracy (EPD); Research Institute for Women Peace & Security- Afghanistan (RIWPS); and Women Human Rights and Media Organisation (WHMO).

now, university enrolments include 50% female students, who are also able to find jobs at NGOs, banks and offices. 'And do you remember last election and the long queues of female voters? So many women were taking part,' Jorrit adds. 'Bayan brings together the best of different groups, organisations and strategies. They all have different expertise, target groups and networks, like youth, women, media and security,' Stephanie says. 'It is the joint work and connections that have impact and make a difference.'

'The effect over two years will obviously be modest, although it can contribute to structural change,' Jorrit feels, 'it's a process of taking three steps forward, and two back. Nevertheless, change is afoot and cannot be reversed. Afghanistan will never go back to the situation in the 1990s when the Taliban regime oppressed the country.' Yet, the participating Dutch NGOs need to be cautious when providing support to local women: 'because of the negative propaganda spread about the international community.' Sabra praises the courage and commitment of women in Afghanistan: 'They risk their lives to fight for women's rights. They do so because the alternative is that the Taliban wins. Without a doubt, we need to support these women.'

MAKING POLITICAL SPACE FOR WOMEN'S TESTIMONIALS

La Ruta Pacífica and Dutch NAP 1315

La Ruta works in partnership with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) based in the Netherlands. WILPF capacitated La Ruta staff to effectively use the political framework provided by UNSCR 1325. La Ruta's work has not yet been financed through Dutch NAP funds, though they are applying for the new Pilot Fund together with WILPF and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD).



An impression of the work of the Truth and Memory Commission of La Ruta.

THREE YEARS AGO, LA RUTA PACÍFICA DE LAS MUJERES BEGAN WORKING ON A TRUTH AND MEMORY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN VICTIMS OF THE ARMED CONFLICT IN COLOMBIA. ALEJANDRA MILLER RESTREPO COORDINATED LA RUTA'S WORK IN THE CONFLICT-RIDDEN CAUCA REGION. TOGETHER WITH A TEAM OF 80 FEMALE INTERVIEWERS, SHE COLLECTED OVER A THOUSAND WOMEN'S TESTIMONIALS IN THE VILLAGES SCATTERED ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS OF SOUTHWEST COLOMBIA. 'WITHOUT THE VOICES OF WOMEN, THERE CANNOT BE PEACE.'

Alejandra has lived in the Cauca region for more than 20 years, and teaches economics at Cauca University. Her personal affinity with women empowerment and her need to contribute to healing a society torn by violence led her to begin working for La Ruta Pacífica 16 years ago, in the Cauca, the area where the rebel forces, the FARC, first appeared in 1960. While the region has been the most affected by constant violence, it has also been the area of most civil society movement and action. 'They have sacrificed most bodies in this 50-year war,' says Alejandra, 'but some of the most innovative reactions to the conflict have also come from the Cauca.'

BREAK THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

Although generally truth and reconciliation commissions take place after the conflict has ended, Colombians had the need to record the experiences and truths of those living in conflict. And for La Ruta, women's voices are most valuable, not the least because they are often drowned. During the process of collecting the testimonies, the researchers found out that there is a continuum of violence against women. Women reported between 4 and 6 acts of violence against them, each. Women were recruited, raped, (sexually) tortured, and displaced. And violence went beyond the context of conflict. Women were also victims of domestic violence, right inside their home.

Remarkably, the women who were interviewed did not want revenge. Rather, they wanted actions to fight the institutionalisation of violence that is rampant in Colombia. They asked for a demilitarisation of civilian life, and symbolic reparations like being asked for forgiveness, or the recognition of their family members as victims. More importantly, they wanted development, better living conditions, access to education, health, land and shelter.

COURAGEOUS WORK OF LISTENING

The work of collecting the testimonies was almost clandestine. This was done to protect the women who were brave and came forward. One indigenous woman said: 'I want to speak, because this is the only chance that victims will have to speak. In this country, only perpetrators get a space to give their version.' And there was yet another woman from a rural family whose 14-year-old daughter was forcibly recruited by

an armed group. She followed them into the jungle for 5 days, until she found their camping grounds. This tiny woman, standing at 1.50 m. and unarmed, faced an armed group, and reclaimed her daughter. Reading stories like that moved Alejandra, and the team of La Ruta to tears, and to emotional breakdowns. But it also gave them the strength to keep going, collecting, classifying, and safeguarding the more than 1000 testimonies, in spite of the threat, and the presence, of violence. At some point a bus full of explosives went off in a 200-house hamlet, close to where they working.

INTERNATIONAL LOUDSPEAKERS

What La Ruta seeks to do now is to lobby with the material testimonies that they collected, so that these experiences and solutions are taken into account in the peace processes. 'Without the voices of women, there cannot be peace.' Government plans for a National Truth Commission are in the making. To ensure that the new Commission incorporates women's perspectives in their operations and builds upon the work already done, La Ruta has set up an ambitious lobby plan.

La Ruta has partnered with foreign organisations and gained more visibility for their work. The groups outside Colombia act as a loudspeaker, and this increases the political cost of aggression against them and their work. But they also bring about possibilities for inter-government lobby, that other governments hold the Colombian government accountable. Last, but not least, there is a feeling of sisterhood, of sorority, that permeates their work and makes them feel like they are not alone in their non-violent approach.

RADIO BRINGS VOICES OF RURAL CONGOLESE WOMEN TO THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL.

IN THE VILLAGES OF SOUTH KIVU, WOMEN TEXT FEMME AU FONE WHEN THEY FACE SECURITY PROBLEMS, LIKE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. JOURNALISTS EXPLAIN THESE ISSUES, AND TALK ABOUT WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE POPULAR WEEKLY RADIO SHOWS. IN TURN, THE PROJECT'S SOLIDARITY NETWORK LOBBIES TO STOP IMPUNITY AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL. ANNE-MARIE ZAAT SPENDS HER TIME TRAVELLING BETWEEN THE NETHERLANDS AND DR CONGO, AND HAS COME TO THE REALISATION THAT MEDIA IS AN ESSENTIAL INSTRUMENT IN BUILDING DEMOCRACY. AND SHE BRINGS HER OWN INSIGHTS TO THE PROJECT: 'I SEE HOW THE PUZZLE OF ALL OUR PARTNERS, SUPPORTERS AND THEIR EXPERTISE FITS TOGETHER.'

Femme au Fone and NAP 1325

Femme au Fone is a NAP-financed project implemented by seven organisations; Sundjata Foundation is one of them. Cordaid functioned as an intermediary for the relationship with the financier and will use the data of Femme au Fone in their barometer instrument to increase the voice of local women to influence their daily security situation.

Anne-Marie Zaat from Sundjata used to be the coordinator of the country group DR Congo. And she supported the Monitoring & Evaluation coordination group of NAP.



An impression of the work of Femme au Fone and its journalists.



Ex-combatant Joseph Rwamakuba, founder of ADDIS, tells his story about masculinities in the DRC.

Anne-Marie Zaat is the founder of Sundjata and advises organisations as a consultant. Her experience working at government and civil society organisations is part of her contribution to organisations like Femme au Fone. She first volunteered with Femme au Fone when it was still Kivufoon. A feminist activist since the 1970s, she strengthened the gender perspective in the project and connected it to the 1325 principles. At first almost all participating journalists were men, but that has changed entirely. Anne-Marie is passionate about her work: 'Femme au Fone genuinely strengthens the voice of women that are severely hit by the conflict in DR Congo.'

NETWORKING FOR SUCCESS

Femme au Fone is a network of organisations like Radio Maendeleo, a Congolese-Dutch youth network and women peace organisations. They join their diverse expertise, ranging from quality knowledge of radio-making and social media, to the needed technical skills to bring radio connection to remote areas. Being a network organisation, Femme au Fone does not have a specific main contractor or lead. Anne-Marie explains: 'The value of a network organisation is not easily acknowledged and it's a complicated process to be on the same page at the same time with everyone. But eventually it leads to the best results, because it builds on diverse skills and abilities and creates actual solidarity, linking people with similar expertise worldwide. For example we have brought together Congolese media organisations with Spanish and Dutch journalists.'

Although Anne-Marie stresses that teamwork is the secret to the successes of Femme au Fone, in her role as a connector and organisational and cultural intermediary she certainly has been part of the organisation's success. 'I bring people together and connect organisations to strengthen the network of partners and link to financial support. It is self-evident to me: I understand how financiers or government institutions and larger NGOs think, but I also understand the activists' ways. Moreover, I am able to see common ground between all those actors, where others see differences.' Anne-Marie took up responsibility for relations in the Netherlands, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Dutch 1325 network, Congolese organisations in the Netherlands, and the Dutch embassy in DR Congo.

FROM THE VILLAGE TO INTERNATIONAL LOBBY

Femme au Fone constantly encourages women to speak out about their security situation. The stories broadcast provide recognition for the women involved. Women are taken seriously and learn more about women's rights. The weekly radio shows by Femme au Fone are aired on radio Maendeleo, a station with about 1 million listeners. Media is essential to the continuous work of raising awareness and encouraging change. There are major challenges, however, like the intimidation and interrogation of journalists. Sometimes the phone of Meandeleo director, Jolly Kamuntu's rings and a voice tells her: 'We know where your children are.' Anne-Marie wholeheartedly believes that 'we need to support these women who risk their lives speaking out.'

The information from women's text messages and journalist reports are being used for national and international lobby to stop impunity in DR Congo and to force the government to take action and reform institutions, especially courts of justice, the police and military. The strategy is to bring rural women voices to the ears of urban influential women, who can take the issues and fight for them at the country level. 'It is certainly a challenge we need to work on, because rural issues are often not in the minds of women in cities.' In terms of international lobby, Femme au Fone collaborates with the UN Peace Network and the Women's Peace Network in Brussels.

WOMEN'S ISSUES REVEALED

So far Femme au Fone has reached out to 500 women who sent in 1700 text messages about their security issues. It has conducted 90 interviews with these women. This approach revealed the issues that really matter to rural women, such as economic insecurity—not knowing if there will be food on their table tomorrow—and exploitation by the authorities—like when they are asked to pay (illegal) tax on the way to the market by military, police and tax officers. By far, the most pressing problem is domestic violence, an issue which often worsens in post-conflict areas like South Kivu. Anne-Marie concludes: 'One of the most notable results of the project is that we really gained insight on security issues of women in rural areas.'



Change that
takes into
account the
needs of all

AS PART OF A TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN PEACE OBSERVERS, CARE SUPPORTS THE CENTRE FEMMES ET PAIX IN BURUNDI. ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS, SÉRAPHINE, HAS AN INSPIRATIONAL STORY THAT MUST BE SHARED. SHE IS THE FACE OF THE MANY WOMEN THAT ARE CONTRIBUTING TO A MORE PEACEFUL SOCIETY WITH MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Séraphine Baranyibikiye is an elected local leader, a 'chef de colline'. This widowed mother of three (she passed the age of 50) does not have any formal training for her job. And yet she represents 1157 households, and more than 5500 people as a part of her duties. She's a 'self-made woman,' from rural Burundi, where changes in the patriarchal culture have been slow, to say the least. Séraphine feels committed to her community and committed to peace. As the president of a local solidarity-group working on loans and savings she was offered training in conflict management and conflict transformation at the Centre Femmes et Paix. Now she's a member of one of the Peace Clubs in the Peace Under Construction (PUC) Programme.

BUMPY ROAD

Like all of us, Séraphine has faced difficulties in her work. Her ambitions often clash with her role being a mother. Luckily women from her community take over her household tasks when needed. Also there have been misunderstandings with her male co-workers. Some of them have a difficult time working for a woman with such a strong personality. And yet the community supports her. Also the partnership between Care Burundi and CFP supports her by helping her strengthen her communication-skills and by working with the men and male political leaders in Séraphines communities to discuss and address gender norms and relations. The aim is to contribute to a broader transformation of gender perceptions and to encourage women leadership and participation in peace clubs.

AMBITIOUS LADY

Being able to vote and be elected are important issues on Séraphine's agenda. As a chef de colline, she managed to mobilize five people to take part in the last election, four women and one man, who were all elected. Quite a stunt in a country where politics are traditionally seen as a male domain and women are given the role of caretaker. In the upcoming elections – in June of 2015 – Séraphine will work together with all political parties to make sure that as many women as possible are registered to vote. She uses her newly established cooperation with political leaders to advocate for more women's names on the voting lists.

Being transparent and able to find mutual interests is paying off. In Séraphines community the rate of payment of communal taxes is remarkably high. People seem to agree with her on the benefits of

solidarity. And Séraphine's neutral attitude makes the political system understandable and therefore less threatening for most. The result is more stability and peace. Séraphine's neighbourhood is known for having fewer violent incidents involving youth than other areas.

NOT FINISHED YET!

This woman knows how to connect. Last year she was awarded the 'prix pour la paix et la sécurité'. She's an example of how women from rural areas are acknowledged by the authorities, and have the potential to become leaders in their community. Could her strength lie in the way she addresses people? Could her secret be that she's not against change, but rather looking after the needs of all, men and women, conflict or no conflict?

Séraphine is ambitious about her future. She hopes for more partnerships, more cooperation, more female candidates, and more female voters in the coming elections. In her view this will lead to better conflict preventions, better mediation during conflicts and – equally important – more chances for economic development in Burundi.



CARE Burundi and NAP 1325

The work of both CARE Netherlands with the Centre Femmes et Paix (CFP) is NAP-inspired. In the NAP Burundi country group in the Netherlands a lot of information comes together and this is where organisations synchronise on matters like the coming elections in Burundi. For example the Ministry of Defence and NGOs exchange concerns on security (for example gender based violence) and access to justice (for example women participation).

CARE Netherlands cooperates with other NAP-signatory Impunity Watch through the peace centres. Where CARE is focusing on conflict prevention and early warning-networks of women, Impunity Watch collaborates with the CFP as well and they focus on post conflict transitional justice.



Bringing out
the best in
1325 partners

A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE UN-BROKERED SYRIAN PEACE TALKS BEGAN IN GENEVA IN JANUARY OF 2014, ALMOST FIFTY SYRIAN WOMEN LEADERS CAME TOGETHER IN THE SAME CITY TO FORMULATE JOINT DEMANDS FOR PEACE. 'THAT RIGHT THERE WAS NAP 1325 IN FULL SWING,' SAYS MIRJAM KRIJNEN, HEAD OF THE GENDER TASKFORCE OF THE DUTCH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. BY CONNECTING THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE HAGUE, NEW YORK AND GENEVA, THE MINISTRY WAS ABLE TO STRIKE A BLOW FOR SYRIAN WOMEN'S PLEAD FOR PEACE.

As the coordinator of Women Peace and Security at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mirjam had two main tasks. First, she coordinated the NAP from the government side, together Dutch gender platform WO=MEN. This included managing a €4 million budget annually, and working with the civil society partners who received parts of this budget. Then, she was also responsible for finding and creating leads to integrate '1325' into broader government policy. When both mandates come together, the magic happens. 'It requires constant creativity and attentiveness to find the intersections where both mandates reinforce each other,' she says. The cooperation between Dutch aid agency Hivos and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is one of those intersections. The two organisations partnered and achieved the goal of making Syrian women's voices visible on the international stage.

A FLIGHT TO NEW YORK

In August of 2013, UN weapons inspectors concluded that chemical weapons had been used in an attack that killed about 300 people in the Ghouta area of Damascus that same month. In the middle of that tragic Syrian summer, Hivos contacted several Syrian women activists and invited them for a side event during the United Nations General Assembly a month later. A side event dedicated to the efforts of Syrian women to stop the violence in their country. Hivos prepared and trained the selected women on skills they would need in New York, such as UN language and lobby techniques, so they would be able to make the most out of their visit to New York.

Then it was up to the diplomats at the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands at the UN in New York to bring the right people together. Who do Syrian women need most? The Dutch diplomats organised interesting conversations, with the Special Envoy for Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi, UN Women staff, members of the mediation team for the peace talks, hosted by Frans Timmermans, the Dutch Foreign Minister at the time.

FOLLOW UP IN GENEVA

A General Assembly side event is successful when it creates an opening for action. UN Women, equipped with the 1325 mandate within the UN,

discovered this opening. The aim was to generate momentum for greater participation of Syrian women in the upcoming peace talks in Geneva in January 2014. Like Minister Timmermans said: 'The future of Syria should not exclusively be decided by those who carry arms.' The group of women, now organised under the flag of Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy, only had three months to make themselves ready for Geneva.

By January 2014 the small group that had participated in the side event in New York the previous fall had grown into a full-scale force of around fifty Syrian women leaders. A three-day conference in Geneva was organised by UN Women and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After days of heated discussions the women presented a public statement in presence of international politicians and press. 'We are Syrian civilian women with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, from all over Syria. We represent a wide variety of women's and civil society organisations. We are meeting in Geneva under the sponsorship of UN Women, to unite our positions and issue a document that affirms our shared vision regarding the peace process for our country.'

'This was a very impressive moment,' Mirjam remembers. 'Before then, very few Syrians had been able to organise themselves and to voice such a powerful message together, regardless of differences and loyalties.' Their story travelled around the world. The peace talks began—and got stranded—without the participation of a single woman. But these women now knew how the game was played. They are determined to be part of it the next time around. The Ministry will remain committed to support the Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy and other initiatives for inclusive peace processes around the world.

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NAP 1325

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs is coordinator for the NAP1325 on behalf of the government signatories, together with Dutch Gender Platform WO=MEN that fulfils this role on behalf of the civil society partners. The Ministry also makes available 4 million Euros annually for implementation of programmes in support of the NAP objectives in the focus countries/regions of the NAP. These programmes are implemented by civil society signatories of the NAP with their partners in these focus countries. In 2015 the Ministry provides funding for smaller organisations through a specific pilot fund.

DUTCH POLICE SOLVES CONFLICTS THROUGH COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

DUTCH COMMUNITY POLICEWOMAN ANGELIQUE LINK WORKED FOR HALF A YEAR AT A SMALL IDP CAMP IN BOR, SOUTH SUDAN. THE CAMP IS HOME TO 3700 REFUGEES, MOSTLY NUER. SHE ESTABLISHED PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH THE RESIDENTS THAT HELPED HER TO DETECT AND UNDERSTAND CONFLICTS AND TO MEDIATE THEM SUCCESSFULLY. THE CONDITIONS FOR CHANGE ARE RIPE, NOW THAT WOMEN AS WELL AS MEN LEAD MEDIATION SESSIONS IN THE CAMP.



The Dutch Police and NAP 1325

The Dutch Police is NAP-signatory and committed to the *Women, Peace and Security* agenda. And UNSCR 1325 is an important guideline in international police work, including (scripting) military exercises and training police. The contribution of the Dutch Police to South Sudan was part of an UN mission.

Within the NAP network, Police NL collaborates with several NGOs. In the framework of NAP, signatories can learn from each other's methods, question each other, which leads to new insights and collaboration that complements each other's expertise.

This was Angelique's second mission to South Sudan. While the mandate of the Dutch police initially focused on local police training, the outbreak of the conflict in December 2013 changed it into the responsibility for security at the camp for Internally Displace People (IDP). Back in the Netherlands, Angelique is a policewoman in Leiden. She works on emergency and domestic violence cases, some of which are reported through 112, the national emergency telephone number. For her work in South Sudan, she was able to combine her expertise and the mission's aim, and focused on gender roles, domestic violence, and conflict resolution.

SENSITISATION MEETINGS

Under the shadow of a tree Angelique and her Zambian colleague held sensitisation meetings about domestic violence. Men and women participating in adult-education groups could learn about how to recognise domestic violence, and what a community can do about it. 'We also triggered discussion on gender roles by presenting new ideas in a theatrical way. For example, during lessons on de-escalating behaviour I started yelling at my language assistant, who in turn yelled at me. The audience started to laugh. It was clear that this is not a good way to have a discussion. That's how I managed to get people to listen to the message. During my presentation I looked up at some point, and there weren't only twenty women listening, but a group of 130 participants! I also noticed that the meetings inspired women to present themselves differently, and then they got more attention for their viewpoints too.'

MEDIATION

Facilitating communication and interaction on a personal level is the essence of her work. That is why you could always see Angelique walking around the IDP camp together with her language assistant, drinking tea with men in the local pub, and chatting with women who were preparing food. As a result, when conflict arose, people talked to her more easily, and they would come to her and tell her their

problems. In their work they came across problems in the camp related to sanitation, food distribution and education and they referred the cases to one of the responsible NGOs for further action. 'You cannot do without all these different organisations working in the camp, you really need each other.'

More formal mediation tools included advising elders or contributing to the process herself. For example, Angelique remembers a conflict in which an 18-year old girl –married off at the age of 15– fell in love with a 21-year old boy. She hadn't seen her husband for years, since he was fighting in the civil war. The husband's cousin was furious at the girl's new boyfriend, who had to stay in a holding-facility for four days for his own protection. Angelique went to talk to all family members involved and engaged the cousin's best friends to persuade him. Finally, there was an agreement that the girl's parents would pay back the dowry to the husband's family and add an extra cow. 'We manage to solve conflicts and problems successfully by making use of the already-existing community network, and all parties are involved to come to a collective solution, whether it is a fine or community service.'

IMPACT

One of the women Angelique worked with was Elisabeth, from the camp's Women's Association. Elisabeth was a very strong woman, who used to work at the Ministry of Social Welfare and was able to respond to incidents swiftly. She was pivotal in motivating people to attend the sensitisation meetings, and arranged a shelter for victims of domestic violence. Together Elisabeth and Angelique managed to get women involved in mediation and decision meetings. 'Did our mission contribute to a transformation on changing gender roles, I wonder. But then if we do not do anything and when there are no female role models, we are sure that change won't come. I would like to think that there is a chance for change in the long run. What's more, our activities could have a lasting impact because they will be continued by female leaders like Elisabeth.'

TRAINING INSPIRES TO CHALLENGE CULTURAL BELIEFS

IN 2013, THE UNITED NETWORK OF YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS (UNOY) INVITED TWENTY OPEN-MINDED YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN FROM NINE (POST) CONFLICT COUNTRIES FOR A ONE-WEEK TRAINING IN NOORDWIJK, THE NETHERLANDS. ONE OF THEM WAS AREF DOSTYAR. DURING THE GENDER AND YOUTH IN FRAGILE STATES TRAINING AREF LEARNED, SHARED AND EXPERIENCED THAT CHANGING VIEWS ABOUT GENDER ROLES AFFECT OUR ACTIONS.



UNOY and NAP 1325

The *Gender and Youth in Fragile States Training* of UNOY is a NAP-inspired project. It was financed by NAP-signatory Oxfam Novib within their Global Link fund.

UNOY – a NAP-signatory – recognises the value NAP II adds to its network. UNOY brings expertise on young people's concerns to the table. In addition, the UNSCR 1325 framework is helpful for the gender work they were already doing.

Afghanistan has developed a NAP 1325 which helps the country to set goals, for example to see more women in police, government and parliament.

'I have always considered myself a global citizen who believes in humanity, which involves all of us: men and women, people from different ethnicities, and with different languages,' Aref says. He is the founder of Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT) and currently a master's student of international peace studies in the US. 'During the training it was very encouraging to understand that people all over the world are struggling with similar issues: we shared ideas, learned from each other and noticed that we are not alone in challenging existing stereotypes. The training of UNOY brought women's issues more into my focus and inspired me to work more purposefully for women's rights.'

CHANGING VIEWS

A saying in Palestine goes 'consult a woman and do the opposite.' There are similar cultural assumptions in Afghanistan where it is a public belief that women in leading positions cannot do well. This belief influences people's actions, and negatively affects women. After the training Aref kept on reading, discussing and thinking. For example, he read Carol Cohn's *Women and Wars*, and wrote papers on gender-based violence in Bolivia, and veiling (chadari) in Afghanistan. 'I really became angry when I realised what has been done to women and how women have been oppressed in Afghanistan. I came to the conclusion that gender roles are assigned by our societies. It's a human creation. I realised that we can actually change. And we can challenge cultural beliefs about gender roles.'

INSPIRED ACTIONS

To follow up on the training, Aref organised a research programme with twenty students from four different universities in the city of Mazar-e-Sharif. In four teams, they researched the previous and current situation and role of women in Afghanistan, and presented their personal conclusions and analysis for the future on specific topics

like Women & the Economy in Afghanistan. The students met weekly to share their findings. During the research, Aref noticed that the student's views were changing, also those of the female students. For instance, one of the students said that 'a society will never be civilized if the women of that society are illiterate.'

In addition, Afghans for Progressive Thinking attracts more and more women to leading positions. Aref: 'During the employment application procedure for a new director I was thinking to myself, 'if the male and female candidates are equally competent, I'll choose a woman in order to support women in Afghanistan. Currently, our director is a 23-year old woman and she is doing a great job, leading our staff and collaborating with local and international partners and donors. I am pleased with my decision to raise my voice to support her. UNOY's training affected my decision to appoint a female director.'

WE CAN ACTUALLY CHANGE

'We can actually challenge cultural beliefs,' Aref noticed, for example by having role models like women in leading positions. 'In the short-term we can support these powerful women who have the courage to challenge stereotypes right now. In our organisation we support and defend our female leaders. And we can actually change.' In the long-run, structures need to be replaced by supportive policies; there needs to be a fair representation of women in public and leadership positions. 'However, cultural change to free women in Afghanistan will take decades.'

Aref feels it is important to talk about gender roles and share ideas about them, as it improves our thinking and affects our actions. He adds: 'It is my hope that women might be encouraged by my views, and men who think alike feel supported. If not, it could at least challenge some people's beliefs, which is the first step to change.'



Summer School of Changemakers

WHAT BEGAN AS A PILOT TRAINING FOR A GROUP OF OXFAM NOVIB PARTNERS IN 2010 HAS GROWN INTO A FULL-BLOWN WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY SUMMER SCHOOL. THE COURSE, OPEN TO ACTIVISTS, SCHOLARS AND PRACTITIONERS, IS HOSTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF LEIDEN. LIESBETH VAN DER HOOGTE FROM OXFAM NOVIB HAS BEEN INVOLVED SINCE THE VERY BEGINNING. SHE IS NOW DREAMING OF EXPANDING THIS PROJECT INTO REGIONAL SUMMER SCHOOLS ACROSS THE WORLD.

She started her career as a biology teacher in the Netherlands, but soon left for Peru to research people's use and knowledge of traditional medicine. In 1990 she joined Oxfam Novib, where she now works as a conflict and humanitarian advisor. The Women, Peace and Security agenda offers plenty of space for cross-fertilisation, and that is exactly what Liesbeth is good at: making fruitful connections. And it so happened that Oxfam Novib, the City Council of The Hague, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Leiden University got together and decided to run a summer school to fill the missing link between activism, policy and theory in the field of Women, Peace and Security, in the capital of international justice, The Hague.

CLASSROOM FULL OF STORIES

The Women, Peace and Security Summer School is a theoretical, political and practical exploration, according to Liesbeth. What does conflict mean? How does conflict affect the position of women in society? 'A violent political conflict polarises society and changes the dynamics between men and women, and often reverses previous gains of women's movements. I have seen women's rights activists from Zimbabwe and women from Congolese communities saying: our men are not the same anymore. Masculinity has become more violent. We have to analyse how this happens and how we can respond to it.'

The groups of students are always highly diverse. Around twenty participants, mostly women but fortunately always some men, from countries like Myanmar, Sudan, Uganda, DRC, Burundi, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Iraq and South Sudan are selected each year. Their experiences and reflections enrich the course and address certain key issues. It is important to learn how to address impunity, how to change discriminatory attitudes and how to challenge the lack of political will. These are concrete questions that ask for an in-depth discussion of theories, treaties and tools at hand.

TOWARDS A MORE PRACTICAL CURRICULUM

The design of the curriculum is a learning trajectory in itself. The first editions focused more on theory about human rights, relevant resolutions and advocacy; the later editions incorporated also more practical trainings on communications and negotiation, masculinities and peace building

practice and mandates of peacekeeping missions. A new curriculum also means new partners. The Summer School now collaborates with WO=MEN, the Women Peacemakers Program and Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice to develop a course that is challenging, innovative and responds to students' needs.

One of the best parts of the Summer School is the public debate at the end of the course, says Liesbeth. The public debate is an open space for both students and representatives of Dutch society to discuss the urgent issues on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. 'We invite decision makers, members of the military, politicians and activists. For some students it is an amazing experience to sit on a panel next to an army officer in uniform. For them it's the world upside down.'

REGIONAL SUMMER SCHOOLS

Liesbeth has also faced some disappointing realities. She would like to see a more inspired debate amongst all human rights practitioners to link knowledge of international treaties to the wider discussion on gender equality. 'Knowledge of treaties is important for everyone, I would never deny that, but when you see that even human rights lawyers do not internalise women's rights resolutions in their daily work, it makes you wonder how this agenda is ever to become real.'

To increase knowledge exchanges with real-world impact, Liesbeth would like to see more regional summer schools take shape. A Women, Peace and Security summer school in Bogotá, Bujumbura, or Baghdad could thoroughly examine the problems —and solutions— of this specific region. Such a summer school would be cheaper and could host more students per country and connects regional players who share similar languages, legal contexts and security challenges. A public debate hosted by Kinshasa University between a Congolese army commander and a Cameroonian women's rights lawyer? It may yet be possible.

Summer School and NAP 1325

The course is organised by Oxfam Novib in partnership with the International Law School of Leiden University (The Hague Campus), WO=MEN, Women Peacemakers Program, Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The Summer School is financially supported by the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Oxfam Novib.

BREAKING NEW GROUNDS FOR AN IRAQI NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

NEED AN IRAQI NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FROM SCRATCH? SUSAN AREF, DIRECTOR OF ERBIL-BASED WOMEN EMPOWERMENT ORGANISATION, CAN WRITE YOU ONE. AFTER TWO YEARS OF PUSHING AND PULLING IRAQI STATE ACTORS TO JOIN HER CAUSE, SHE IS NOW THE ONE EVERYONE CALLS FOR ADVICE. HERS IS A STORY ABOUT HOW THE TABLES HAVE TURNED.

She has always been a pioneer. Susan, business administrator by training and women's rights activist by profession, gave up her job in 2004 to establish her own NGO, the Women Empowerment Organisation (WEO). Unlike other NGOs in Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, WEO is an Iraqi organisation with national ambitions and activities. The WEO team consists of trainers, scholars, activists and lobbyists who want to strengthen women's participation in all areas of Iraqi society. They took up the UNSCR 1325 as a political instrument to make their ambitions real.

PERSUADING POLITICIANS AND POLICY-MAKERS

In 2012 Susan brought together a select group of Iraqi women's rights advocates. They called themselves I-NAP Initiative 1325 and were determined to launch the first NAP in the Middle East. After having formulated the six pillars of the future I-NAP it was time for politics. Without state ownership, the NAP would lack institutional strength. The women of the I-NAP Initiative kept knocking on doors until they had arranged meetings with every single minister relevant for the NAP agenda. 'I remember our visit to the Ministry of Interior Affairs. They asked: "why do we need this NAP?" Look, I said, this is your portfolio. Imagine the good impression you will make when you present this initiative on international forums. And on top of it: we are supporting you!'

In February of 2014 the Taskforce submitted the draft I-NAP to the Prime Minister for approval. His authorisation followed two months later. The members of the I-NAP Initiative were excited that the real work — the

implementation of UNSCR 1325 — was about to start. However, not long after approval, the government presented an altered version of the original I-NAP, stripped from its legal pillar and, even worse, its budget. 'Did we come all this way, to let this happen?' Susan wonders. Real commitment to implementing the UNSCR 1325 meant allocating money, and willingness to change patriarchal laws. She had to pull herself together and convinced herself that she was not alone in this fight. As it were, she found support, and support found her.

A BOOST FROM NEW YORK

Upon the suggestion of Dutch aid organisation Hivos, Susan was given the chance to share her experiences with fellow civil society leaders working on Women, Peace and Security in the MENA region during a regional consultation on UNSCR 1325 in Amman, Jordan, in May 2014. The meeting was organised by the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) and the ABAAD Resource Center for Gender Equality, based in Lebanon. Based on the outcomes of the Amman consultation, the WPP invited Susan to participate in a panel discussion in New York in October 2014, hosted by the Permanent Mission



of the Netherlands at the United Nations on the occasion of the 14th anniversary of UNSCR 1325. Upon her return to Erbil, she was thrilled to see the direct impact of her visit. UN Women in Iraq was informed about Susan's trip and about her speech criticising UN agencies for showing no support for the implementation of the I-NAP. 'I heard that UN agencies decided to support the work on I-NAP and have already allocated some funds for that,' she proudly expressed.

Susan's visibility in New York made her visible in Iraq too. 'Being part of this international consortium opens many doors for me.' Learning from her colleagues during the regional consultation in Amman and being able to voice her complaints in New York made her more self-assured. How the tables have turned in two years time: 'Instead of me chasing Ministers, now they are calling me for an appointment!'

Amplifying the Voices of Women from the MENA region and NAP 1325

Women Empowerment Organisation is a partner of the 'Amplifying the Voices of Women from the MENA region programme', funded by Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the NAP 1325 MENA fund. Within this programme, Oxfam Novib, Hivos and the Women Peacemakers Program consortium, comprising of WPP itself, ABAAD Resource Center for Gender Equality, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), work together to connect and support women from the MENA region to voice their needs on UNSCR 1325 implementation on national, regional and international level.



A short movie portraying Iraqi speaking about their security

The programme was inspired by the focus of the Dutch NAP, to strengthen women's leadership at all policy levels. Cooperation between the organisations enables to build on each other's expertise and strengths, ranging from local strengthening, regional training and international advocacy. The programme also includes a masculinities approach, aiming to increase men's understanding of and support for UNSCR 1325 implementation.

A woman wearing a grey chador is shown in profile, looking towards the right with a distressed expression. She is standing next to a green military vehicle. The background shows a wooden building and a paved area.

GENDER ANTENNAS IN THE ARMY

SHE LOOKS LIKE SHE IS HALFWAY THROUGH HER PREGNANCY. HER HAIR TUCKED AWAY UNDER HER CHADOR. SHE DOES NOT WANT THIS BABY. THE FATHER IS A RAPIST. SHE BREAKS INTO TEARS IN FRONT OF A GROUP NATO SOLDIERS. HOW DO THE SOLDIERS RESPOND? THIS STAGED SCENARIO WAS PART OF A GENDER TRAINING FOR NATO MILITARY PERSONNEL. STELLA ISMAEL, LEADER OF DIASPORA ORGANISATION AFRICAN SKY, AND MARY RIEMENS, GENDER ADVISOR AT THE DUTCH MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, TALK ABOUT THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN GENDER TRAININGS.



As a representative of African women diasporas, Stella amongst others was asked by WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform to contribute to the gender trainings at Peregrine Sword, a large-scale international civilian-military exercise held in Germany, in September of 2012. Stella helped write the scenarios for the role-play and played the pregnant woman herself. 'The exercise was very confrontational,' she remembers. 'It is quite intimidating to face a group of armed soldiers whose language you can't speak.' Communication is crucial in these situations. For example, what does it mean when a refugee woman does not speak? Listing all options of how to interpret silence made the soldiers realise how easily, and quickly, they judge.

NAP 1325 and the Ministry of Defence

African Sky and the Ministry of Defence are NAP-signatories. As integral part of the NAP-partnership, the Ministry and Civil Society aim to strengthen gender responsiveness of units and individuals in missions, in order to be more effective. It is essential that men and women are both considered especially when local customs indicate exclusion of one or the other.

RECOGNISING WOMEN'S ROLES IN WARTIME

Another goal of the gender trainings at Peregrine Sword was to make soldiers aware of the different roles played by women in a warzone. Seeing women as more than just victims—but also as negotiation partners, refugee camp leaders, and businesswomen—can contribute to the operational effectiveness of a mission. When she went on mission to Afghanistan in 2013, Mary Riemens decided to do away with the images she held of Afghan women as being submissive or invisible. 'At some point I thought: from now on I will just look at what Afghan women do instead of what they don't do. Then I started seeing strong women everywhere. As artists, sportswomen and policewomen. It did not only open my eyes, it also opened many doors.'

As a gender advisor, Mary was working with one Swedish Gender Field Advisor who was in charge of coordinating the gender focal points in the Swedish Armed Forces in Mazar-e-Sharif in Afghanistan. Gender focal points are men and women of all ranks who have been trained to tune into their special antenna for gender, for example through discussing cases in small groups. One case was about a bridge being built with help of NATO forces to link two villages on each side of a river. How do you look at this bridge through gender glasses? 'When soldiers were given this assignment, they came up with lots of creative questions. Indeed, how do men and women travel, by car or on foot? Is there a difference? To what purpose? And how will the bridge change people's lives on each shore?'

'Gender trainings preferably take place in the Netherlands prior to deployment and during exercises like Peregrine Sword, but the reality is that most training happens during the mission itself. Experience and learning by doing,' Mary says.

CHALLENGES OF COORDINATION

What amazed Mary was the lack of coordination between the different players on the ground, be it the military or

international NGOs—and the waste of time and money this meant. 'Before I went to Afghanistan, I participated in a very interesting course on the Afghan context given by experts from various NGOs. We exchanged lots of knowledge. But right there, in Afghanistan, as in most operations, the practicality of coordination and cooperation leaves room for improvement. Sometimes just because of the challenge for transportation facilities for parties to get together.' The lack of alignment of activities is illustrated by an incident during the training of policewomen in the Kunduz region, that was facilitated by the Dutch Armed Forces. The policewomen said: 'This is the third time we receive shooting training. We can shoot now. What we do need is driving lessons.' On the one hand, this came as a surprise to the Dutch trainers. On the other, they had apparently been able to create an environment that was safe enough for the Afghan policewomen to speak up about what they really needed. Then, through some flexibility and improvisation a unique women-only driving course for policewomen was launched.

OPEN EYES AND EARS

'Whenever gender was mentioned, people would look at me,' Mary says with a smile. 'Sometimes the title of gender advisor works against you. It can create distance instead of closeness. What I realised is that many of us know much more about gender than we give ourselves credit for. And I felt it was my task to trigger this knowledge.' Whenever she is given the chance to share her experiences, she feels like she is back in Afghanistan. 'I once had to hold a presentation for a group of soldiers, and I introduced it with a video clip of an Afghan women's song. Images can say so much more than words. I could see this beautiful song and the images touched many just as they had touched me. The song expressed Afghan resistance in a very subtle form. There are so many ways to resist and thus create movement. You just have to open your eyes to see them.'

VOND and NAP 1325

The LEAP-pilot is a NAP-financed project. ICCO functioned as an intermediary for funding, as part of their project with Sudanese NGOs. Another NAP-partner is Peace Brigades International (PBI), which brings expertise on security issues.

VOND led the NAP 1325 country group for Sudan, before handing over to ICCO in 2013. The NAP-partnership brings VOND knowledge, and inspiration to work for peace using the principles of the Dutch NAP, and the strong tool of UNSCR 1325.

Sudan is a focus country of the Dutch NAP. The Sudan government does not have a National Action Plan on 1325.



Diaspora encourages women to work for peace in Sudan

IN SEPTEMBER 2013, TEN JOURNALISTS FROM DARFUR AND SIXTEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS CAME TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TRAIN-THE-TRAINER SESSIONS AND COACHING CONDUCTED BY VOND (VROUWENORGANISATIE NEDERLAND DARFUR). MEKKA ABDELGABAR AND THE TRAINEES MOBILIZED WOMEN AND STRENGTHENED THEIR ACTIVE ROLE IN PEACE BUILDING ALL OVER DARFUR. TODAY, FEMALE DARFURI LEADERS ARE INVOLVED IN NETWORKING, PROMOTING A DIFFERENT MINDSET, AND IMPLEMENTING MEDIATION TO ENRICH THE SUDAN PEACE PROCESS.

Mekka grew up in Darfur. She first came to the Netherlands in 1981, because her husband had a job at Radio Netherlands Worldwide. With her academic background in public administration and IT she worked in various capacities in both the Netherlands and Sudan, where she taught at Umdurman University. When the civil war started in 2003, Darfur was thrown into chaos by a policy of divide and rule, with neighbours fighting each other. 'At one point, the tribe of my mother and the tribe of my father started killing each other.' Mekka wanted to support peace in her country, and that's when she founded VOND. 'My passion for the work is deeply rooted and I am proud to contribute.'

TRAINING THE TRAINEES

Together with the trainees of the five-month pilot Women's Leadership for Peace Building in Darfur (LEAP), Mekka organised workshops, encouraging female leaders to work for peace in each of the five regions of Darfur. As the coordinator of the project, she introduced each meeting and coached the trainees. In the apparently endless sceneries of Darfur, we could find her travelling to each of the workshops, passing abandoned villages and cities in turmoil along the way. And despite intimidation and interrogations by government security services, her team could carry out most of the planned workshops.

During these meetings Mekka informed participants about legislation and resolutions like UNSCR 1325, the importance of women's participation in the peace process, and about the Darfur Peace Agreement (DOHA). In addition, she shared concrete examples of mediation strategies, like the Youth Association in Nyala that uses a successful method of group pressure, and approaches the family of combatants one by one telling them: 'Please tell your son to stop fighting.' More traditional mediation

instruments are to use the customary agreements that tribes apply in these situations: to pay Diya (a fine in cash, cows or camels), and to forgive each other publicly.

WOMEN FOR SUCCESSFUL MEDIATION

Among the methods VOND promotes to enhance peace are networking, a different mindset and mediation, all with women involvement. One of its main strategies is to engage female Darfuri leaders and prominent women in powerful positions, including government officials. Leaders are mostly teachers, since they are respected by the community and can mobilize religious leaders, leaders in IDP camps, and traditional women leaders (Hakkamat and Sheikhat). 'Women in politics sincerely want to work for peace but are constrained by their political parties and so we provide them our support. They are key persons in the communication that supports our work,' Mekka says proudly.

These female community leaders have the power to bring people together and to promote and create different mindsets. Besides, VOND is always sensitive to the plight of young men, both as perpetrators and victims of the ongoing war. The female leaders will ask rebels and military "Why are you fighting?". Mekka explains: 'Young men are fighting but they don't even know what they are fighting for, since it is a political power struggle.' Besides, it is important to overcome tribal differences in order to work for sustainable peace. 'You have to live peace in order to ask others to do it.'

'In a male dominated society like Sudan, you have to bring in women for successful mediation,' Mekka says firmly. When Thuria Ibrahim Salih, a council member, spoke in a peace gathering to mediate between two tribes she said: 'Our sons are dying, our husbands are dying, and our brothers too,' and the audience broke down in tears. Her speech had great impact in the willingness to stop war between these two tribes. Women like Thuria are able to reach out to the tribal leaders and warlords in faraway regions to talk peace.

AFTER THE PILOT PROJECT

A major success of the LEAP-pilot is that female community leaders are now joining the mediation (or Ajaweed) committees that approach conflicting parties and talk peace. These female leaders are now organised in a platform called Women's Alliance for Peace in Darfur. In the coming years, LEAP wants to increase the number of mediators and engage key persons such as lawyers, religious leaders and parliamentarians as well as train female leaders to be effective in the Ajaweed committees. 'It is our wish that the project will contribute to peacefully living together in Darfur,' Mekka concludes.

Searching for democracy in Damascus hair saloons

IT IS IN PLACES LIKE DAMASCUS AND ALEPPO THE SYRIAN WOMEN FORUM FOR PEACE WORKS TO SENSITIZE LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND THE AUTHORITIES ABOUT THE ISSUES DESCRIBED IN UNSCR 1325. MOUNA GHANEM REACHES OUT TO SYRIANS THROUGH APPEALING ACTIVITIES, LIKE CONVERSATIONS AT THE HAIR SALON. 'WE AIM FOR LEADING ROLES FOR WOMEN IN THE PEACE PROCESS AND A NON-VIOLENT ROAD TO THE NEGOTIATION TABLE.'

To tell her long and impressive story in such a short space is a challenge. Mouna is, among many other things, a medical doctor who has worked for several UN organisations on Women, Health and Family Affairs. She's a Fulbright scholar who regularly publishes several articles in Syrian and Arab websites and newspapers. In 2012 she founded the Syrian Women Forum for Peace (SWFP) which she now coordinates. She shares her vision for Syria's future through two recent projects carried out by her organisation.

NETWORKERS

Without women, no democracy. That is one of the fundamental ideas of SWFP. Mouna explains: 'women are networkers by nature, that's why we train them in negotiation-skills and empower them to assume leadership roles

in the peace process. We strongly believe that peace can only be achieved at the negotiation table. The women that are joining us for the three-day training are from all over Syria, and have very diverse backgrounds. For us it is important that we all agree on the same non-violent point of view, so we also make great efforts to build a common understanding during the training.'

PEACE WALLS

Mouna is an engaging speaker with vivid examples of projects that make her points come to life. Last September a group of activists, volunteers and art students met up to participate in a project called 'Peace Walls'. The goal was to change a scene of war into a more hopeful and peaceful environment. The plan was to cover an 82 metres long cemetery

wall in Nabik, rural Damascus, with colourful and friendly paintings. 'It can be difficult to prepare for projects like these because we are an opposition, and therefore unofficial organisation,' says Mouna. But the SWFP has its network in the local communities and that's what made it possible to find partners. It is this same network that has helped SWFP gain the trust of community and religious leaders, which is crucial to involve the population.

Activities were scheduled for 1 October 2014. The road to Nabik was dangerous and there were risks to the safety of all participants. But that didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the young volunteers from all over Syria who wanted to show solidarity with the people of war-destroyed Nabik. They had exactly one day for the entire 82 meters of work and that was quite



Amplifying the Voices of Women from the MENA region and NAP 1325
 The Syrian Women Forum for Peace (SWFP) is a partner of the 'Amplifying the Voices of Women from the MENA region programme,' funded by Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the NAP 1325 MENA fund. Hivos is the direct partner of SWFP in this programme.

'Amplifying the Voices of Women' is also implemented in Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Yemen. Besides Hivos, consortium members are Oxfam Novib and Women Peacemakers Program (WPP).

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

exciting. Once the volunteers started painting, the locals came to have a look. Some even took up the brush and paint spontaneously, and got down to work as well. Mouna: 'I think that shows the impact of these kind of projects on local communities. People experience that they can actually do something, there's no need to wait for the authorities. This sense of citizenship is only growing in Syria.'

HAIR SALON-CONVERSATIONS

A project in Aleppo shows another way of reaching out to Syrians, and particularly women. 'We invited women for a nice pampering session at the hairdresser. Like in hair salons worldwide, conversations bubbled up. The women enjoyed being listened to. They shared

their problems and grievances, even their life histories.' The stories were collected and written down by members of the SWFP and used to better understand the situation and needs of these women. For SWFP these projects are also a good way of finding partnerships and attracting new members.

GRASSROOTS

Projects like those in Nabik and Aleppo are a way of reaching new audiences, expanding the SWFP-network and spreading the SWFP word. They make Mouna's organisation stronger. Looking back, Mouna can see the impact of their activities since they began working in November 2012. 'There are more people on the ground, we are covering everything in our path, slowly

but surely, like an oil slick. The issue is not an organisation, the issue is awareness and change within the communities.'

Looking to the future there's plenty still to be done. 'We are working really hard to sensitize people and the authorities about the issues described in UNSCR 1325. It would be great if one day Syria had its own NAP. My plan for the future is to keep on working with the Syrian Women Forum for Peace towards a democratic Syria where men and women are treated equally within a framework of the citizenship.' Or, as a motto of their organisation, based on a quote of Brigham Young promotes: 'You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation.'

INSPIRED BY THE PAST; LOOKING AHEAD

IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER WE PRESENTED A NUMBER OF STORIES TO ILLUSTRATE THE INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN IN THE SPIRIT OF - AND SOMETIMES FUNDED BY - THE SECOND DUTCH NATIONAL ACTION PLAN (NAP) ON UNSCR 1325, SUPPORTED AND/OR UNDERTAKEN BY THE NAP SIGNATORIES. THESE STORIES COVER A DIVERSE SET OF THEMES, ARE IMPLEMENTED IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES AND INVOLVE A VARIETY OF ACTORS. ALTHOUGH THESE EXAMPLES SHOW ONLY A SNAPSHOT OF ALL THE WORK THAT IS TAKING PLACE, THEY ALREADY SERVE TO DEMONSTRATE THE EXPANSIVENESS OF THE WOMEN, PEACE & SECURITY AGENDA.

INSPIRED BY THE PAST...

For the Netherlands – politically and in wider society - addressing the importance of women's rights nationally and internationally, including supporting women's participation, is important. Moreover, the Netherlands invests significantly in (post) conflict contexts. Stemming from a need to respond systematically to UNSCR 1325 (which emerged from the wider Beijing Agenda) the first Dutch NAP was developed in cooperation between government and civil society. It started in 2008 and ran until the end of 2011. This first NAP initially had 19 signatories, including three government ministries. In order to learn from experiences, a mid-term review of the NAP was conducted where the NAP was readjusted to give it more focus (in terms of countries and in themes). This learning created the basis for the development of the second Dutch NAP, which started in 2012 and runs through 2015. Currently, the NAP brings together almost 60 signatories, including four government ministries, the Dutch police and more than fifty civil society organisations and knowledge institutes.

Reflecting on the first two NAPs, we have seen that having a NAP is important for a number of reasons. First of all, it is a concrete tool for implementation. We have also seen that joint collaboration on the same action plan by a broad variety of Dutch actors strengthened the support base for Women, Peace & Security in The Netherlands. The fact that these actors have different perspectives and mandates in the field of Women, Peace & Security can also provide innovative and value-adding cooperation between the signatories. The National Action Plan increases the support for the topic within civil society organisations, knowledge institutes and ministries. Moreover, the National Action Plan is an entry point for concrete financing and targeted monitoring and evaluation, which is pivotal to accountability and learning.

LOOKING AHEAD

We know that change does not happen overnight. We haven't achieved complete integration of women's views and gender perspectives into the peace and security policy debate and implementation as of yet. Continuous attention and dedication is required to keep pushing the issue forward. With this in mind, we plan to develop a third NAP.

As in the previous NAPs, we want to ensure that the development of NAP III will be an open and democratic process where all engaged actors are able to provide input from their learnings, experiences and the identified contextual changes. Although we have not yet officially started this process, many Dutch NAP-signatories and their partners are already reflecting on the process of NAP-development and the potential focus of NAP III. As food for thought, we would like to share some of these current reflections.

Identifying a niche

During the implementation of NAP I we learned that integrating a specific focus into the National Action Plan was essential for its success. Consequently, NAP II focused on the participation and leadership of women, an important pillar of UNSCR 1325 and pivotal for helping to ensure the joint efforts of men and women in creating shared peace and security. To date, women are often included as 'add-ons' to formal peace processes (if they are included at all); they may be given an *extra* seat at the table, or involved parallel to the official processes, but genuine and meaningful inclusion is still too often lacking. The leadership and participation of women needs to become part and parcel of analytical, societal, political and governmental changes, including in security sector reform (SSR), the protection of activists, investing in conflict prevention alternatives and in economic empowerment. We need to see how we can genuinely contribute to changing

the game, instead of only adding players. When developing NAP III, discussing the focus will be on the agenda.

Accountability and cooperation

Monitoring and evaluation has been a challenge in the first two Dutch NAPs though improvements have been made in NAP II. The diversity of players implementing UNSCR 1325 is a great added value, as this way we are able to cover the multiple dimensions of implementation. It does however require a thorough monitoring and accountability system that can capture investments and initiatives from all parties to ensure improved cooperation and measurement of effects. The learnings of the current and previous NAP will feed into an improved impact monitoring and evaluation system in NAP III.

Analysis

The first two Dutch National Action Plans were focused on Dutch support to the situation in partner countries. As the world and the context are changing, adding new challenges to and opportunities for the Women, Peace and Security agenda, we need to ensure a stronger global analysis. This means working jointly with our local partners and other actors on the root causes of violent conflict, the role and impact of women and men in conflict, as well as reviewing our own roles in it.

THE CURRENT MOMENT - 2015

This current year, 2015, will be a very important year in many ways. A High Level Global Review is being undertaken after fifteen years of UNSCR 1325 coming into existence. The Sustainable Development Goals should be officially agreed upon at the UNGA in September 2015, which will be crucial for gender equality for sustainable peace. And here in the Netherlands, we will work hard to give our best contribution to global efforts to address Women, Peace & Security.

COLOPHON

Interviews conducted:

Story 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 14: Inemarie Dekker / www.svikaworks.nl

Story 1, 3, 5, 8, 11, 12, 13: Suzanne Hoeksema

Story 7, 15: Saskia Derks / www.vanvroegervoorlater.nl/

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Movies:

Movie workshop masculinity / WPP (p. 8)

Movie monitoring security Afghanistan/ Cordaid (p. 15)

Movie Ruta Pacifica (Colombia) via WILPF (pa. 16)

Movie Femme au Fone (DRC) via Sundjata (p. 18)

Movie DRC: (p. 18)

Movie Iraq: (p. 31)

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Rieneke de Man/ PAX

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Photo p. 37 – Painting the wall – SWFP

Photo p. 40 – Leaving the refugee camp Al Za'atari – Guido Koppes/ BZ

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