



Gender, peace and security in Africa

Brainstorming session

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ALC	African Leadership Centre	OSAA	Office of the Special Advisor on Africa
AU	African Union	SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
DCAF	Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control over the Armed Forces	SOP	standard operating procedure
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States	SSR	security sector reform
GBV	gender-Based violence	UFS	University of the Free State
GPS	gender, peace and security	UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
ISS	Institute for Security Studies	VAW	violence against women

Introduction

Photo 1 Cheryl Hendricks (ISS) and 'Funmi Olofinisakin (ALC)



The Institute for Security Studies (ISS), African Leadership Centre (ALC) and Fahamu successfully co-hosted a one-day brainstorming session on gender, peace and security in Africa. The meeting brought together 19 researchers, practitioners and academics engaged on issues of gender, conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction from across the continent. The event took place on 4 May 2012 at the ALC in Nairobi, Kenya.

The specific objectives of the brainstorming session were to:

- Map current discourses, research and practice and identify research gaps on gender, peace and security (GPS)
- Identify key areas that will begin to constitute an agenda for African scholarship on gender, peace and security (GPS) in Africa
- Explore the viability of a pan-African think-tank on gender, peace and security (GPS)

This report highlights the salient issues that emerged at this one-day meeting.

Session I

Welcome and opening remarks

Cheryl Hendricks (ISS) and Funmi Olonisakin (ALC)

The opening remarks by Dr Hendricks highlighted that research on gender, peace and security (GPS) in Africa is still largely generated outside of the continent and African researchers remain primarily suppliers of raw data and consumers of knowledge, rather than the key producers of knowledge and providers of policy advice. Yet, there is a rich history of feminist scholarship and of policy research on issues of peace and security by Africans. There are also a growing number of African researchers who are specifically focused on GPS, particularly through the lens of UNSCR 1325. This community of practitioners should be working more closely together in a collaborative engagement that seeks to share insights, reduce duplication and save on costs. With the necessary critical mass this community of practitioners will also make a qualitatively enhanced impact on the study and practice of GPS in Africa. The few African researchers that have engaged directly with the discourse on GPS have formed remarkably similar reflections about the assumptions and policy directives that dominate the current discourse. Given limited resources for research and projects on gender, it makes sense to see how we can effectively utilise human and financial resources so that we can generate the required knowledge and set the future debates on GPS in Africa. These debates and the generation of theories and policy recommendations should feed into and support larger continental and regional peace and security objectives.

The brainstorming session should therefore identify the 'who', 'what', 'why' and 'how' that could, in turn, inform a research agenda on GPS in Africa. Bringing our experiences and voices to bear on gender, peace and security will generate new narratives and theories that go beyond the 'women as victims' and 'gender mainstreaming' discourses. Our voices will begin to show African women's agency and posit the need to transform gender relations in society at large and in the security sector in particular. We seek to create and advocate for an inclusive and transformed security sector and the improved security of women and men in all our societies. This timely intervention therefore is about seeking to bring the breadth of knowledge together for new theory building on GPS in Africa and for improved policy formulation and implementation to create peace and security for all.

Dr Olonisakin's opening remarks highlighted the importance of breaking the mode of working in isolation in the field of GPS, as knowledge production will remain dispersed. She noted that current analysis is mostly from the perspective of the North and it is therefore important to develop local knowledge on the matter. Despite the resources that have been directed at peace and security, we have barely seen an impact: there is a roadblock somewhere. Part of the explanation can be located in the dominant notion of security itself, i.e. it is state-centric and the policies that have emerged are not designed to bring about structural change – UNSCR 1325, for example, is a minimum consensus framework. Although not designed to bring about fundamental change, this framework can, however, be used as the starting point for opening up a conversation on the security of women.

A glaring gap in the literature is the absence of dealing with the structural causes of insecurity. Much of what is being produced on the topic of GPS is based on anecdotal data developed in the North. There is therefore a need for a continental response on the matter that will both address the fundamental gaps and be able to bridge the divide between knowledge and power.

Dr Olonisakin noted that there are numerous think tanks in the world, but only eight per cent of these are located in Africa. Data from many of these think tanks remains largely mediocre because it lacks scientific rigour, is often regurgitated from the North and local power brokers are not adequately engaged.

We therefore need to be generating empirical data that can drive change and influence decision-makers. Despite feminist interventions on the discourse of International Relations and War Studies, women remain ghettoized. In addition, gender, peace and security has largely been reduced to a focus on women, and sexual and gender-based violence. It is important therefore that:

- Researchers not separate knowledge from the knowledge base
- Researchers guard against becoming merely data generators
- Think tanks act as filters and synthesisers of knowledge that will make a difference

- Researchers avoid boxing themselves as activists and lobbyists
- Researchers look at the strategic dimensions of gender, peace and security
- That we move towards evidenced based decision-making
- The think tank on gender, peace and security exists in a creative way so that we can produce alternative narratives and paradigms

Session II

Mapping the study on gender, peace and security in Africa

Chaired by Cheryl Hendricks

Dr Hendricks led this session, during which she indicated that the focus areas to date on GPS could be grouped as follows:

- **‘Women as targets’** – focus on VAW, GBV and SGBV
- **‘Women’s agency’** – focus on women and peacebuilding
- **‘Gender mainstreaming’** – focus on gender and SSR, gender and peacekeeping, UNSCR 1325
- **‘Gender transformation’** – focus on the construction of gender identities and/or militarism and the unpacking of the conceptualisation of security itself¹

INPUT ON THE STUDY OF THE SECURITY SECTOR AND GENDER IN WEST AFRICA

Ecoma Alaga

DCAF recently undertook a two-year study to assess the integration of gender into security sector institutions in 14 West African countries.² This was informed by the existing information and knowledge gap in the planning, implementation and evaluation of security sector transformation in these countries, the need to identify good practices and to provide comparative data between the different countries in the region.

This study identified eight main elements of or intervention areas in gender and security sector reform, namely i) the crafting of gender policies for security institutions or review of existing national security policies of security sector-specific policies to incorporate gender perspectives; ii) the development of a gender curriculum and delivery of gender training to security personnel; iii) the establishment of gender structures

and appointment of gender focal points within security institutions; iv) attempts to mainstream gender perspectives into security oversight functions of parliaments; v) support to female security staff associations; vi) engagement of civil society and especially women’s institutions in security discourses; vii) advocacy and campaigns for increased recruitment of women in the security sector; and viii) networking and partnership building between female security personnel in different countries.

The study revealed that most countries in the region have a gender policy or gender mainstreaming strategy for their security sector as well as action plans that address GBV, but the question of how we link these policies with core day-to-day security operations is still unanswered. Basically these policies are yet to be translated into concrete actions to bring about transformative changes and real impact for society. For instance, despite the existence of institutional gender policies, women remain under represented in the security sector. It appears as though the policies have limited reach, are intended to serve mainly political purposes, and consequently treated as stand-alone documents rather than integrated into all other policies and procedures (for example into standard operating procedures (SOPs)). Similarly gender structures, like the women or gender units in police stations, are under resourced and thus their ability to effectively perform their duties is undermined. The study also emphasised the need to more fully engage men in advocacy and implementation for women’s empowerment and gender equality given their dominance in the security sector an approach that isolates men will be counterproductive if applied to the security sector as its hierarchical and regimented nature

requires the full engagement of the command structure (which is largely male) for changes to occur.

Summary of observations concerning the DCAF report:

- More qualitative research and the employment of different methodologies is needed, rather than a mere focus on numbers
- It is a useful first step, rather than an end in itself, and more follow-up on the study is needed
- The document should be used to speak to the policy community
- More effort needs to be made in systematically documenting and critically analysing gender, peace and security initiatives in the region

DISCOURSES ON GENDER AND SRR

Prof. Heidi Hudson³

Drawing on her recent article, 'A Bridge Too Far? The Gender Consequences of Linking Security and Development', Prof. Hudson noted that the problem-solving approach to gender and SSR has emphasised the lack of resources, political will, coherence, lack of dissemination of UNSCR 1325, and so forth, for the limited progress. A critical approach, however, elicits the inherent conceptual contradictions of the neo-liberal governance model in which SSR is trapped. This model seeks to manage risks rather than deal with the root causes of insecurity. Protection and empowerment are assumed to go together because security and development are assumed to be linked. This nexus, Hudson asserts, is taken for granted and is derived from circular common sense arguments, rather than factual evidence.

The flaws of the nexus lead to flaws in SSR, which are perpetuated in approaches to gender and SSR. Neoliberal governance and peacebuilding frameworks prioritise liberal additive gender approaches with consequences for the choice of tools, and how notions of women and gender are defined. In this discourse women and gender, and GBV and VAW have become conflated and on the whole an essentialist portrayal of women and men's roles have emerged. The multiple identities of women

Photo 2 Ecoma Alaga (OSAA) and Samia El Hadi El Nagar



and men and performance of masculinity and femininity have been ignored.

Hudson identified a research gap on gender and private security. She noted the need to think fresh, to review issues of intersectionality, the ethics of care and to highlight the multiplicity of voices.

The panel discussion noted the tensions between what has been imported ways of seeing and doing, versus the home grown. There is an inherent power imbalance that has led to the dominance of reform models at the expense of transformation. Many participants spoke to the need to be more context specific and to recognise contextual opportunities for producing new narratives – Somalia was highlighted as such an opportunity.

The need to rethink the issues and frameworks, change the narratives and the messaging on gender, peace and security in Africa and for innovation was clearly evident in these discussions.

Session III(a)

Identification of research gaps and the setting of a research agenda

Chaired by Awino Okech (Fahamu)

Session III began with inputs from Ms Sandra Oder, Ms Eva Ayiera and Amb. Monica Juma. After a rich discussion on the inputs, participants went into working groups to discuss the issue further.

GENDER TRAINING IN THE SECURITY SECTOR

Sandra Oder

Increasingly, gender features as a mainstreaming tool in response to the need to create a gender balance in the security sector and to providing an all-inclusive security for men, women, girls and boys. This has produced a plethora of 'gender' training for police, military and civilian personnel. However, if this gender-sensitive approach is not reflected in the internal policies of the security sector, its reach is limited.

The gender-training environment in the security sector in Africa also tends to be skewed in favour of peacekeeping, where it is stipulated as a key requirement for deployment. Gaps still remain as the training varies considerably from one police and troop-contributing country, or peacekeeping mission, to another and the reach and impact are not well documented. Overall, there is a dearth of data on the impact of this training on the behavior of security sector personnel, as well the extent to which gender training is internalised in the overall strategies and policies in national security agencies.

It is pertinent to unpack the philosophy and the assumptions of the training and to more clearly identify when training should start and when it should end. For the police and military, there is also need to link training to effective rostering and deployment. It is also assumed that the skills already exist and that the training is merely an enhancement tool.

But, as budgets within the security sector are reduced, while demands to remain operationally ready exist, capacity building and training on 'soft' issues like gender are likely to be under-prioritised over hardcore

demands within the security environment. Needs and impact assessments were therefore clearly highlighted as a shortcoming in the training environment, as was the need to reflect on whether training is being adapted to the new contexts.

PRIORITISING WOMEN'S SECURITY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Ms Eva Ayiera

Ms Ayiera highlighted that most organisations working on women's issues hardly engage with the security sector and tend to remain predominantly focused on SGBV and VAW. She asked if this was because of a lack of capacity to engage. Ms Ayiera noted that it is important to establish how women at the local levels access security for their physical safety. What are the alternative security arrangements servicing women in conflict and post-conflict areas where the state is clearly not providing security? How do these new security arrangements impact women? Is there legitimacy to the decentralisation of security? She noted the need to map these new security actors. Conflict and post-conflict spaces are militarised spaces, where does this leave women, what are women's responses? The question that looms large, therefore, is how do women survive/access security in these spaces?

INSIGHTS FOR A GPS NETWORK IN AFRICA

Amb. Monica Juma

Amb. Juma expressed her delight at seeing this particular meeting take place and stated that the questions of how we can produce serious scholarship around post-conflict reconstruction and how do we bring groups working on these issues together had been raised four years ago already. She indicated the progress that had been made by organisations such as the African Union Peace and Security Council, but that there was still a

Photo 3 Awino Okech (FAHAMU)



long way to go (there is still silence, for example, on women's peace and security in the DRC, and a lack of urgency in addressing women's concerns).

Some security challenges are also strikingly overlooked due to glaring policy gaps and research/knowledge, for instance on the issue of border security and the security of women and communities in these areas. Existing policies are also not evidence driven and we need to find ways of generating knowledge that is useful and applicable. We therefore need to build a school of thought on GPS that is sensitive to the African context. This is the bar that the network needs to set for itself. Amb. Juma noted that the feminist debate still appears to be trapped in the debate on power and remains reluctant to engage the security sector. Knowledge produced on gender and security is therefore largely reactive and anecdotal, rather than a sustained effort.

Much of the debate has also been centered on the numbers and/or a functional level analysis. However, there is also a need to pay attention to the quality of the numbers and to ensure that women are empowered to function effectively. We need to be driven by a quest to produce 'knowledge for change', but we need to be clear on what we want to achieve – a 'safe society' or a 'just society'?

Some of the points that emerged during the panel discussion for this session were:

- Existing security sector structures have been inherited from Africa's colonial past and therefore may not necessarily be appropriate for the African contexts. The impact of SSR is therefore bound to be ineffective. The narrative on peace and security in Africa changed from civil-military relations to SSR, which has impacted the transformation of these institutions.
- Discussions on GPS should be critically framed within the development debate.
- Researchers and practitioners must start thinking strategically about funding and how to creatively influence the discussions. Donor attitudes and cultures are changing and this is creating space to better engage donors and to encourage their support for programmes that address structural challenges impacting on peace and security on the continent.
- We must be mindful that the interest of the state is to maintain the status quo. Researchers might therefore be producing a product for a consumer that does not need or want it, hence the importance of engaging states when setting research agendas.
- Most studies on GPS focus on the impact of war or conflict on women, rather than on how women have responded to it.

- Sustaining and measuring the impact of research or the work of think tanks is an ongoing challenge.
- African governments should increase funding for social science research.
- The nature and impact of donor funding for GPS should be analysed.
- The necessity for gender training and the philosophy behind it needs to be re-assessed.

Session III(b)

Group work–identification of research gaps and the setting of a research agenda

In this session, participants were divided into two working groups that debated the following questions:

- Identify what is missing from current debate on gender, peace and security in Africa.
- What contexts are missing?
- Who is asking/needs it?
- How do we present it?

The report back of the working groups highlighted the following:

WHAT IS MISSING?

- Conceptual framework for linking gender and security
- Focus on intersectionality
- Link to Africa feminism/ problematise Western feminism
- Lack of evidence-based / homegrown research
- Gendered inner working of institutions – need to investigate why and how institutions are resistant to change
- Donor mapping – who is engaged on the issue, what are they doing and the impact
- Regional contexts (Lusophone, Francophone representation as well as those from North Africa) in gender, peace and security debates. It is important that they are included
- Needs of communities (bottom-up approaches to research)
- Private sector engagement on GPS
- Identify what men's organisations are engaged with and more centrally bring in issues of masculinity into the GPS debate
- Need for more qualitative data and theory building

- Identify what is the transformation we want to see – change or shift the conversation to what?
- Who is shaping the GPS agenda?
- Would like to see a 'gendered African perspective on security'
- Identify the different strategies women are using to access security
- Focus on 'hotspots'
- Youth vulnerability and exclusion

WHAT CONTEXTS ARE MISSING?

- Regional representation
- Experiences from different conflict and post-conflict areas or contexts with specific peculiarities
- How do we engage the state?
- How do we factor in hybrid political orders?
- Focus on local communities and border communities
- Move from a silo approach – create linkages between sectors

END USERS

- Is the research for the state or society?
- How can the research fit into shifting relations with donors?
- Moved beyond merely responding to the cannon
- How do we develop networks that are effective enough to respond to the needs of AU/RECs on gender, peace and security?

HOW WE PRESENT IT

- Focus on different forms of packaging
- Need to market Africa's capacity for research

Session IV

Thinking through the formation of a Pan-African think-tank on gender, peace and security in Africa

Chaired by *Funmi Olonisakin*

There is clearly a critical need for a more rigorous approach to gender, peace and security and we need to conceptualise security from an African perspective. The proposed network should reflect on its relevance as a conduit for generating scientific knowledge, essentially generating a case statement that is a stepping-stone to a larger conceptual framework for re-theorising an African feminist scholarship. We need a think tank that is relevant to the societal context in Africa, that generates Africa knowledge with scientific rigour and that is creative and innovative. This initiative becomes even more crucial as the African governance landscape becomes one of a hybrid nature, where security significantly affects the changing patterns of governance at macro and micro levels, resulting in alternative security

arrangements and highlighting the inadequacy of state-centric security.

The Pan-African Think Tank on Gender, Peace and Security should:

- Develop a case statement that will lead to a solid conceptual and methodological framework
- Ask the relevant questions (frame a set of questions collectively) – this will also frame what we would like to do/ prioritise
- Be a space where we can become innovative
- Contribute to strengthening linkages between policy, practice and the academia and facilitating evidence-based policy and decision-making on gender, peace and security in Africa

Session V

Conclusions and way forward

Currently, there are few African women researchers working on the area of gender, peace and security and those that have, have been doing so in isolation. In order to pool resources, expand the number of scholars in this area, voice African experiences and generate theories derived from this context, a proposal was made to form a pan-African think tank/network on gender peace and security led by a working group.

Awino Okech (Fahamu), Cheryl Hendricks (ISS), Ecoma Alaga (OSAA), Eva Ayiera (independent), Funmi

Olonisakin (ALC), Heidi Hudson (UFS), and Sandra Oder (ISS) will constitute the initial working group. Their immediate tasks are to identify three priority research areas for the think tank and to draw in Francophone and Lusophone persons who can be part of the network. There will be sub-working groups/reference groups on identified themes. It is envisaged that the research generated should be presented at a conference next year.

Notes

- 1 See Cheryl Hendricks, 2011, *Gender and the Security Sector in Africa*, Nordic Africa Institute, Discussion Paper 63
- 2 Miranda Gaanderse and Kristin Valasek (eds), *The Security Sector and Gender in West Africa: A Survey of police, defence, justice and penal services in ECOWAS states*, Geneva: DCAF, 2011.
- 3 Heidi Hudson, *A Bridge Too Far? The Gender Consequences of Linking Security and Development in SSR Discourse and Practice* in Albrecht Schnabel and Vanessa Farr, *Back to the Roots: Security Sector Reform and Development*, Geneva: DCAF, 2012.

Annex A

Programme

Time	Agenda	Facilitator
08:30–09:00	Arrivals / Registration	
09:00–09:30	Session I: Welcome and Opening Remarks	Cheryl Hendricks/'Funmi Olonisakin/Awino Okech
09:30–10:30	Session II: Mapping the study of gender, peace and security in Africa	Cheryl Hendricks
10:30–10:50	Tea / Coffee Break	
10:50–12:30	Session III(a): Identification of Research Gaps and the Setting of a research agenda	Awino Okech
12:30–13:30	Lunch Break	
13:30–5:00	Session III(b): Thinking through the formation of a Pan-African Think-Tank on Gender and Security in Africa	'Funmi Olonisakin
15:00–15:20	Tea / Coffee Break	
15:20–16:00	Session IV: Conclusions and Way Forward	Cheryl Hendricks/'Funmi Olonisakin/Awino Okech

Annex B

List of participants

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