

**Defining our Space: Gender mainstreaming strategies in the work of GPPAC –  
the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict**

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**Introduction to GPPAC**

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a global civil society network of organisations working on conflict prevention and peacebuilding that calls for a fundamental change in dealing with violent conflict: a shift from reaction to prevention, as an approach that will save lives and prove more effective and less destructive. The Global Partnership seeks a world in which people and governments elect peaceful means, rather than armed conflict, to achieve greater justice, sustainable development, and human security.

Working across 15 regions, GPPAC has adopted a gender policy which focuses on ensuring gender balance in leadership positions. The gender policy addresses internal and external strategies, at global secretariat as well as regional levels. For example, through the appointment of a cadre of dedicated gender focal points who bring their own expertise into the implementation process, and through capacity development for both the gender focal points and the membership of the regional steering groups. Gender mainstreaming is carried out within the working groups of GPPAC, including groups on dialogue and mediation, human security peace education and preventive action. One example of this is the development of an early warning action toolkit with gender indicators.

Women's organisations and activists within the GPPAC network, including in the Pacific Island region, have been instrumental in bringing about a gender mainstreaming strategy within GPPAC; demonstrating not only models for inclusion but also leadership in peacebuilding.

**Key Strategies**

The importance of including a gender perspective in conflict prevention was recognised in GPPAC's Global Action Agenda, the founding document developed for the official launch of the network in 2005. Many local women's organisations took part in several of the regional consultations leading to the creation of this document. Leadership within the network recognised that there was a need for consistency in integrating women's human rights commitments including in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security).

Subsequently, by 2007, GPPAC's main governance body, the International Steering Group (ISG) took the decision to mainstream gender into the overall approach of the network. A draft gender mainstreaming framework, including a gender policy, was developed and presented to the ISG in 2008. Network members agreed on the aims of the document but also emphasised the need to tailor the implementation of a gender policy to the diverse realities in GPPAC regions.

FemLINKPACIFIC's role in the development of the gender policy was an opportunity to demonstrate how women-centred strategies could be incorporated into a broader civil society network. This could be done through a model that built enabling spaces for country and regional gender focal points within the network. The gender focal points have key roles and responsibilities to ensure accountability of the network to women's rights treaties and conventions, including UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

By the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UNSCR1325, the gender policy was being operationalised with the ISG Gender Liaison, the gender programme assistant and the gender focal points, who were engaged in three key initiatives: (1) a mapping of organisations and expertise on gender in GPPAC regions; (2) a first gathering of several gender focal points from the network in New York for advocacy on UNSCR 1325 in October 2010; (3) the development of a gender policy and implementation plan which was adopted by the ISG in December 2010. These activities helped to renew the discussion on gender mainstreaming in GPPAC and prepared the ground to move from the policy to the implementation phase.

### **Operationalising the Commitments**

GPPAC is now increasingly recognised as a champion and advocate for the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) by focusing on the prevention aspect of the resolution – arguing that enhancing women's participation in conflict prevention is vital to ensure implementation of UNSCR 1325:

*Prevention of armed conflict is a foundation to securing the rights of women as it prevents the creation of conditions that result in abuse of women and provides spaces and opportunities for governments and communities to prioritise development. Conflict prevention enables resources to be prioritised for the social sector and for economic productivity instead of military expenditures. Enhanced participation of women complements successful conflict prevention and peacebuilding approaches, which is emphasised in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).*

*GPPAC's advocacy work on gender focuses on strengthening the role of women in conflict prevention as a key element of UNSCR 1325. The global debate on UNSCR 1325 tends to focus on the so-called "3 Ps": participation, protection and prevention. In this debate, the use of prevention has become increasingly blurred, being used mostly to refer to prevention of violence against women rather than conflict prevention. By advocating for the integration of women's experiences in conflict prevention, GPPAC seeks to steer the global debate back to its original focus. This focus of GPPAC's advocacy and outreach work is part of the network's overall drive to bring different stakeholders in line with each other's activities to benefit governments, UN and civil society actors alike.<sup>1</sup>*

Activities have included advocacy from GPPAC gender focal points during the annual review of UNSCR 1325 in New York since October 2010, the hosting of two online dialogues on women, peace and security,<sup>2</sup> co-organised with the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), and annual policy statements on International Women's Day in 2011 and 2012.<sup>3</sup> These activities are connecting the GPPAC global network with the broader women's movement, while at a programmatic level the gender policy is being put into practice through, for example, links with GPPAC's human security work, notably through participation of GPPAC's Gender Liaison in the conference "Towards an effective and inclusive counter-terrorism policy", October 2011, New York, organised in collaboration with Cordaid.

## **Lessons Learnt**

While a lack of resources delayed the implementation of the commitments and proposals set out in GPPAC's gender framework, it certainly helped having an Executive Director at the helm of GPPAC who himself was dedicated to the process and took a lead role in moving the policy forward until the appointment of a full time gender coordinator. The members of the International Board of GPPAC, including the Chairperson, also continue to be strong champions of the policy as well as of gender equality in their own work and actions.

GPPAC has approached mainstreaming gender in the network by following a two-line strategy:

- 1 Integrating a gender perspective into GPPAC's work, at regional, global and programme level (internal strategy line)*

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<sup>1</sup> "Gender mainstreaming" and advocacy for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 – the approach of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) - Gesa Bent, Coordinator Gender, GPPAC Global Secretariat (July 2012)

<sup>2</sup> Held on the Peace Portal: <https://www.peaceportal.org/web/1325ineuropeandbeyond>

<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.peaceportal.org/web/taking-women-beyond-1325/rural-women-and-human-security>

## *2 Strengthening GPPAC's advocacy and outreach work on priority topics related to gender equality which are identified by the network (external strategy line)*

This approach enables GPPAC to make use of available expertise on gender to inform programmes and regions that need to build capacities, while at the same time providing an advocacy channel to specific members with a lot of experience and stories on the issue.

Simply having a policy is not enough. It is vital to effectively demonstrate the “how to integrate” or operationalise the policy, by responding to specific national and regional network needs, ensuring that there is a pool of active gender focal points (both men and women) and strengthening links with regional GPPAC network structures and programme areas.

The work of the gender focal points to articulate women's agency has not just claimed UNSCR 1325; it has transformed the resolution into a living document. But there is still a struggle to transform the political spaces where UN member states are engaging – whether it is the Six Party Talks for peace in the Korean peninsula, advancing the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, or transforming the peace and security architecture in the Pacific Island region where women and continue to experience multiple forms of conflicts and political crises.

For GPPAC the challenge for the future is to to “step up” commitments to women's leadership and to find a balance between mainstreaming and maintaining and supporting women's spaces.

### **About the author**

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To find out more visit the GPPAC Peace Portal [www.peaceportal.org](http://www.peaceportal.org)

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