



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE E WOMEN & ARMED CONFLICT

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES E

**Objective E.1** Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation.

**Objective E.2** Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments.

**Objective E.3** Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations.

**Objective E.4** Promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace.

**Objective E.5** Provide protecting, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women.

**Objective E.6** Provide assistance to the women of the colonies and non-self governing territories.

*'(134) In a world of continuing instability and violence, the implementation of cooperative approaches to peace and security is urgently needed. The equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Although women have begun to play an important role in conflict resolution, peace-keeping and defence and foreign affairs mechanisms, they are still underrepresented in decision-making positions. If women are to play an equal part in securing and maintaining peace, they must be empowered politically and economically and represented adequately at all levels of decision-making.*

*(Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA))*

### OVERARCHING CONCERNS

#### Women, Peace and Security

In the Australian context discussions on this critical area cover: the impact of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and its role in supporting the equal participation of women and equal opportunities for women to participate in all forums and peace activities at all levels, particularly at the decision-making level; the promotion of women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace and protection and support of refugee women and girls who have resettled in Australia.

Acknowledging the role Australia played in co-sponsoring Security Council Resolution 1888 (2008), there is concern that international discussions do not lay enough emphasis on the protection of women and children, in particular vulnerable groups such as women and children with disability, young girls and older women. Women with disabilities are doubly disadvantaged as there are few countries who resettle people with disability.

Community groups, NGO's and government are actively providing services to refugees, however, there appears to be a lack of coordinated approach to providing services across the sectors and a lack of training of mainstream providers in the particular issues and needs of refugee women and girls. Refugee women receive conflicting messages from support services and their sponsors regarding what is available. Lack of translators is also a major barrier for refugee women.

Private Defence contractors working in conflict areas and post-conflict areas are not obliged to adhere to the Security Council Resolutions on Women Peace and Security and in situations where there is no rule of law or little rule of law, fall in the gap of legislation on such issues as raping women and girls. There is currently no strong voice for gender issues to be represented at the high level in government, nor a strong ministerial position for input into UN Security Council Recommendations and actions.

### **ODA and its role in supporting the equal participation of women in forums of peace activities.**

It is recognised that Australian ODA plays a huge role in the region for the support and inclusion of women in forums of peace activities. It is particularly recognised that AusAID funds, directly or indirectly, many women's projects in the Asia Pacific region that assisted many other women to have a voice in the peace processes of their country.

Also recognised is the role AusAID, NZAid, UNIFEM (Pacific) and UNDP plays in supporting Pacific Island women to attend the Commission on the Status of Women sessions. The development of the AusAID Gender Policy was seen as a positive step towards bringing a gender lens to international aid, an industry dominated by male leaders and large organisations. However, implementation of this Gender Policy is required.

### **Protection and support of refugee women and girls who have resettled in Australia.**

Australia is one of 16 countries who participate in the UNHCR Women at Risk program. Research over the last 5 years has supported changes in this program to allow more women and families to enter Australia (previously men were coming in under this program). However, there is concern that such entrants are not provided with adequate services to support their social inclusion in resettlement.

For refugees arriving by sea, unduly long visa processing times in off shore detention camps causes further psychological stress, especially for women and girls. It is recognised that the current government is actively reviewing its policy on detention centres, and the pacific solution. NGO's in Australia have 'watching brief' on this situation.

Refugee women face multiple barriers in resettlement. Refugee flight and many years in refugee camps has caused families to stick together, in resettlement, with challenges to housing, work and settling into a new culture with new laws and norms, some family units break down. 'Social and cultural fabric is in turmoil' and a number of refugee women move away from their spouses and divorce. Stress from resettlement and trauma of the refugee journey remain and outside of urban centres, there is little trauma support and counselling for women, and none for girls and children. Harassment by refugee men to undermine women's role in the family and community is commonplace and domestic violence occurs. Support services for refugee women and girls vary across state and urban, rural and regional settings.

It is recognised that there are some excellent models of leadership, representation and social inclusion for refugee women, one such programme is the African Women's Advocacy Unit (soon to be the African Women of Australia – a peak body based in NSW). This group encourages linkages and collaboration with refugee and migrant women across all African ethnic groups and creates links and opportunities for African refugee women to come together with women from all areas of society to address common issues.

While acknowledging the efforts to remove women and children from detention centres in Australia and off shore, long term detention, by its nature, is widely recognised as having a seriously debilitating effect on the health of detainees. Specific health problems facing refugees can include: psychological disorders, such as post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and psychosomatic disorders; poor oral health; delayed growth of children; or under recognised and under managed hypertension and diabetes. These mental health issues may be compounded by experiences of immigration detention and uncertainty over their future in Australia. Long processing times for visas prolongs unnecessary suffering of refugee entrants.

## GAINS

- ✿ Australian Overseas Development Assistance has contributed to the improvement of women and children in areas of armed conflict in the Asia, Pacific and African regions.
- ✿ Community consultations on the options for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women Peace and Security) (2000) National Action Plan.
- ✿ Co-sponsor of Security Council Resolution 1820 (Sexual Violence as a Tactic of War)
- ✿ Australia co-sponsored Security Council Resolution 1888 (Mandating peacekeeping missions to protect women and girls from sexual violence in armed conflict) (2009), which builds on Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008). Passed in the Security Council on 30 September, 2009 Security Council Resolution 1888 (2009) calls for the appointment of a Special Representative to lead, coordinate and advocate efforts to end conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls.
- ✿ Australia supports the efforts of UN Action on its 'Inventory of Responses by Peacekeeping Personnel to War-Related Violence against Women' (2009).
- ✿ On 5 October, 2009 UN Security Council Resolution 1889 (commits the Security Council to developing an agreed set of global indicators to track and monitor the implementation of SCR 1325) (2009) was passed. This resolution requests the development of a set of global indicators within 6 months to track implementation and reporting on implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) in 2010 and beyond and requests the Secretary-General to submit a report within 12 months focussed on women in post-conflict situations (including update on Member States development of National Action Plans).

- ✿ Australia worked to ensure the renewal of mandate for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict during the 63rd session of the General Assembly (2009).
- ✿ In September 2008 Australia endorsed the Paris Principles on children associated with armed forces or armed groups and committed funding to UNICEF for its work on child soldiers, particularly in Sri Lanka.
- ✿ Australia supported full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1612 (Children and Armed Conflict) and began operationalising Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (2009).
- ✿ Australia officially recognised the International Day of Peace.
- ✿ The establishment of UN Peace awards.
- ✿ Reflections on Hiroshima Day.
- ✿ Abolishment of Temporary Protection Visas for Refugees.

## GAPS

- ✿ Gender-sensitive indicators of process and outcomes need to be developed to measure the performance of protecting women and children.
- ✿ Lack of national strategy to further develop and implement Security Council Resolution 1325 National Action Plan.
- ✿ Lack of comprehensive strategy for implementation of AusAID Gender Policy strategy both within AusAID and throughout the development sector.
- ✿ Refugee women appear to fall into the gap especially with housing. This group lacks specific support strategies for resettlement.
- ✿ Family repatriation issues and barriers for women who left families in refugee camps continue to impact on successful resettlement in Australia and on the health of refugee women especially.
- ✿ A notable escalation in defence funding rather than a reduction in military expenditure.
- ✿ Impunity of private Defence contractors in conflict areas.
- ✿ Long internments in detention centres (both onshore and off shore) and long visa processing times for those seeking asylum, especially women and children, remains a key challenge and severely impacts on the health and wellbeing of those in detention.

## EMERGING ISSUES

- ✿ High incidences of depression, stress and anxiety amongst refugee women and girls in Australia due to the issues of housing in resettlement and having to support families left in refugee camps.
- ✿ Impunity of private 'defence' contractors in conflict (e.g. Blackwater in Iraq). Lack of transparency and accountability to any nationally or internationally established authority.

## SUGGESTED UN LANGUAGE FOR KEY PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

- ✿ Calling on governments to strengthen the focus and impact of development assistance, specifically targeting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, in line with national development priorities, through both gender mainstreaming and funding of targeted activities and enhanced dialogue on issues between donors and developing countries, and strengthen mechanisms to effectively measure resources allocated to incorporating gender perspectives in all sectors and thematic areas of development assistance.
- ✿ Calling on governments to ensure a proportion of the ODA budget is allocated to women's full, equal and effective participation in at all levels in conflict prevention, management and resolution, peace negotiations and peace building, including adequate funding to ensure proper access to disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs for women and girls.
- ✿ Urge governments and UN Bodies to fully implement UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1880, 1888 and 1889, and to ensure the participation and leadership of women in peace processes especially in efforts to bring lasting peace and ending wars and conflicts; further to bring about just and inclusive dialogue based peace and processes which address the root causes of conflict through Security Council Resolutions and ensuring the availability of necessary resources for women's peace and dialogue initiatives.
- ✿ Calling on governments to bring an end to impunity by prosecuting and punishing those responsible for war crimes, including violence against women in past and present conflicts and strengthen the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court to deal with such criminals.
- ✿ Urging governments to develop and implement a National Action Plan (NAP) on UN Security Council Resolution 1325. (2000) The plan must clearly articulate protection as an integral component of the plan. In addition the NAP must link to Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008), Security Council Resolution 1888 (2009) Security Council Resolution 1889 (2009) which address the issue of rape committed during conflict.
- ✿ Urge governments to resource a high level gender position to undertake active engagement on Ministerial and Security Council discussions to further advance the women, peace and security agenda.
- ✿ Urging governments and UN Bodies to ensure speedy processing of refugee visas for refugee entrants and to ensure protection of women, children and families, providing services to address health, psychological and dental needs.

- ✿ Urge governments, UN Bodies, intergovernmental bodies and corporations to establish a clear accountability structure for private defence contractors with well articulated 'rules of engagement' and prosecution for non compliance to UN resolutions including 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889.
- ✿ Reduce excessive military expenditures, in order to permit the possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development, including for gender equality and the advancement of women.

## UN REFERENCES

### **BPFA**

Strategic Objective E.1 Action 142 (a) (b) (c)  
 Strategic Objective E.2 Action 143 (b) (c)  
 Strategic Objective E.3 Action 145 (c) (d) (e) (g)  
 Strategic Objective E.4 Action 144 (c)  
 Strategic Objective E.5 Action 147 (f) (h) (j) (l) (m)  
 Strategic Objective I.1 Action 231 (b)  
 Strategic Objective I.3 Action 233 (h) (i)

### **B+5 OD**

B+5 IV Action 68 (i), 86 (a) (b) (d), 89, 99 (b) (c) (d) (j) (l)

### **CEDAW**

Articles 8, 9

### **MDGs**

MDG Goal 8, Target 8A, Target 8C

### **Reference in other documents**

E/ESCAP/BPA/2009/CRP.1 para 45, 46

### **Security Council Resolutions**

S/RES/1325 (2000) para 8 (a), 11  
 S/RES/1820 (2008) para 4  
 S/RES/1888 (2009) para 6, 7, 8 (a) (b), 26  
 S/RES/1889 (2009)

### **CSW Outcomes Documents 2005 – 2009**

E/CN.6/2006/15 para 7 (g) (j), 10 (a), 14, 15, 17 (f)  
 E/CN.6/2007/9 para 14.2 (k), 14.7 (a) (b) (c) (d), 14.12 (b)  
 E/CN.6/2008/11 para 21 (a) (s) (t) (u) (gg) (hh) (kk)