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UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING  
INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

## **“Meet-the-expert” interview on *“Gender, Peace and Security” issues***

Question and Answer with  
*Kristin Valasek*, Gender, Peace and Security Specialist  
United Nations International Research and Training Institute  
for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)

**[Question] As the INSTRAW Security Specialist, what do you mean by “gender , peace and security”? What kind of issues does this concept cover?**

[Answer] When you talk about gender, peace and security issues, I think that the basic principle is to understand that women, men, girls and boys are impacted differently by threats to their peace and security and in turn take different actions to mitigate these threats. Rather than using the term “women, peace and security”, as Security Council Resolution 1325 does, INSTRAW chose the term “gender” to encompass issues of masculinity and men’s roles in ensuring peace and security issues.

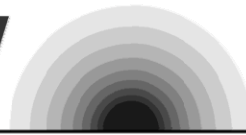
**[Question] Are only conflicts areas and war zones included? Do security concerns apply to other regions such as the European Union or North America?**

[Answer] Definitely. Gender, peace and security issues is a very broad concept. It encompasses developed and developing countries; countries that are in peace and in conflict, as well as transitional countries. For instance, a large threat to the security of women in Sweden would be the issue of domestic violence. Another gender, peace and security issue would be young men dying from small arms violence in Brazil. On the other hand, in Uganda, a gender, peace and security issue would be that girls are being forcibly recruited into the opposition groups armed forces. There are a large variety of issues. Threats to peace and security do not only exist during time of war.



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**[Question] When looking at war, women are often portrayed as merely helpless victims. Is this perception far from the battlefield's reality?**

[Answer] Absolutely. It is the stereotype often picked up by the media that simplifies the roles of women and girls in war and in armed conflicts. Women are often more vulnerable to violence or the negative effects of war. For instance, the feminisation of poverty may make it really hard for women to escape countries in conflict. There are a bunch of different issues that place women in conditions of vulnerability. However, it does not mean that women are intrinsically more vulnerable. They also take on strong roles as combatants, as workers in NGOs creating peace and security, and there is a large variety of roles that women take on in the government. They should definitely not be portrayed as helpless victims.

**[Question] When adopted in 2000 by the United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1325 was viewed as a pioneering initiative mainstreaming gender issues into the context of armed conflict. What made it so groundbreaking? What was new about?**

[Answer] It was the first time that a UN Security Council resolution actually discussed the roles of women in the context of armed conflict, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and conflict resolution. It also gives highly specific mandates for the UN and UN Member States. Nowadays, Security Council Resolution 1325 is one of most specific and strongest binding of the women, peace and security mandates.

**[Question] Almost six years after the adoption of the Resolution 1325, how do you assess the progress made in terms of its implementation?**

[Answer] We see some progress. There really has not been a very systematic or sustainable implementation. There have been initiatives, mainly by the NGO community, to raise more awareness and to implement some of the goals of Resolution 1325. They [NGOs] are training women in conflict resolutions or informing about the existence of the Resolution. However, there is still a large lack of funding and a lack of initiatives taken by Member States to implement



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this Security Council Resolution. For instance, it has already been six years since the adoption of the Resolution and just now countries are starting to create national action plans for the implementation of Resolution 1325. There is still a long way to go to have this Resolution fully implemented.