

On 27th January 2010 the Permanent Mission of the Principality of Liechtenstein hosted a panel discussion with the Women's Refugee Commission on: **The Link between Livelihoods and Gender-based Violence in Displacement Settings.**

The three panelists addressed: How must livelihood programs be design to effectively protect women from abuses? Can more rigorous research in humanitarian contexts inform better programming? Do increased economic opportunities for women help to decrease gender-based violence? What is the link between Gender-based Violence (GBV) and Livelihoods and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, particularly Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889?

Jina Dev, Senior Program Officer on Protection from the Women's Refugee Commission identified three factors which increase refugee women's vulnerability to GBV:

- i.) **Shift in household power dynamics:** Displacement affects men and women differently. Men are more likely to lose their status in society, while women often take on additional roles and responsibilities. Women's increased role as a breadwinner may increase their risk of gender-based violence by challenging established gender norms. Increased income does not guarantee women will have control over the money they earn and may result in a heavier burden of responsibilities. Based on the Women's Refugee Commissions data collection in Ethiopia in September 2008 (in Kebri Beyah and Aw Barre, in the Somali region and the Shimelba camp in the Tigray region) Refugee women in these settings have reported being abused, sexually harassed, and not paid.
- ii.) **Lack of economic opportunities:** In contexts where refugee's legal rights are constrained or a culture of impunity exists, refugee women often seek opportunities in the informal sector, such as domestic work, where the possibility of exploitation and abuse is much higher. In settings where refugees do not have legal rights, they feel that they cannot report abuse to the authorities for fear of deportation. For example, where urban refugees have no official right to work, refugee women often turn to domestic work, an unregulated sector under labor law. Refugee women in these settings have reported being abused, sexually harassed, and not paid.
- iii.) **Lack of sufficient income:** If a safe livelihood option doesn't sufficiently increase a women's income, she may resort to negative economic coping strategies. In Ethiopia, young refugee women will tolerate sexually exploitative relationships for protection and food when they do not have relatives to care for them, food rations are insufficient and there are no opportunities for livelihoods.

In the context of these vulnerability factors to GBV prevention must be operationalized by:

- i.) **Participation:** Both men and women need to have a voice in programs in order to positively impact uneven power dynamics in the household and challenge negative gender roles. Men may be included as participants, involved in discussions, or consulted at the onset of a project. However, it is important to maintain an equal balance of participation so that male participation doesn't eclipse female participation.
- ii.) **Protection:** We need to incorporate protective elements into programs. For example, one organization in Cairo that trains and places refugee women in Egyptian homes as domestic workers, accompanies them on their first day. The NGO records the name and contact details

of the employer. Protective elements can be built into economic programs such as simple accompaniment and requiring codes of conduct for employers.

iii.) **Market-driven approaches:** Economic opportunities must be market-driven so that they actually increase a person's income. Many programs are not grounded in the local market needs and therefore don't actually increase a person's income.

Gerald Martone, Director of Humanitarian Affairs and UN Representative from the International Rescue Committee stressed that the broad Women, Peace and Security agenda begins with Security Council Resolution 1325 and includes newer Security Council Resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1889. This agenda focuses on the basic tenants of Protection, Prevention and Participation (3Ps).

An important notion of 1325 is to reframe the position of women and girls from victims to agents for change. The important principle of participation is critical in this regard. Although these resolutions are blatant in their call for greater involvement of women in peace negotiations and political mediation, just over 1% of recent accords or agreements enlisted women in the process or had female signatories on final documents.

The Women, Peace and Security resolutions (1325, 1820, 1888, 1889) are a set of obligations that all Member States are committed to under international law and are not only the responsibility of the UN Security Council. To date, the implementation of these landmark resolutions has been inconsistent and underwhelming. The lingering question is whether or not these lofty principles have deterred even one attack of sexual violence to date. Hence, the reason these four resolutions must be integrated with the basic principle of Prevention, Protection and Participation.

The upcoming 10th year anniversary of 1325 must not be a self-congratulatory event. We should be circumspect and self-critical of how little we have been able to accomplish in terms of real change for women and girls who still suffer routinely from gender-based violence.

Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820 and the Beijing +5 review all recognize the inextricable link between the equality of women in a society, women's access to development and the prevention of violent conflict, and the prevention of sexual violence.

Important aspects of implementation of the resolutions are: an SRSG (1888), developing a monitoring mechanism (1889), data collection (1820 and 1888). The demand for information, reports and data on sexual violence has increased but so has the increasing recognition of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict as a serious security, health and human rights problem.

It is difficult to document and research this violence because of its sensitive nature. One of the key features of Security Council Resolution 1888 is that it *'encourages states to increase survivors access to services'* (para 14). Therefore, it is unethical to conduct research about sexual violence when no services are provided despite the demand for information and data.

Ada Williams Prince, Senior Advocacy Officer from the Women's Refugee Commission underlined the link between GBV and Livelihoods as well as the crucial role of research in understanding sexual violence in displacement settings.

The scope and scale of violence that women and girls experience as civilians and parties to a conflict is often radically different from that of men and boys, and has been recognized as such in Security Council Resolutions 1674, 1820, General Assembly resolution 62/134.

The need for collecting firewood, impunity, the lack of legal rights, insufficient rations, dependence and lack of economic opportunities, the shifts in household dynamics as well as social and cultural norms all increase women's and girls' vulnerability to violence in conflict and displacement settings. To address this vulnerability member states should:

- Support the creation of safe and effective livelihood programs that integrate GBV in humanitarian settings and enforce and advocate for the 3Ps Protection, Prevention, and Participation.
- Support programs that help to better implement SCR 1325 (and the subsequent resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1889) such as the Monthly Action Points (MAPs) of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. The MAPs – financed with the support of Switzerland and Liechtenstein – is a series of recommendations that show how each United Nations Security Council President, can provide leadership on, and how the Security Council and member states as a whole can systematically meet its obligations to women in conflict. These briefs are designed for Security Council Members, civil society actors, Member States, and UN entities. (<http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/advocacy/>)
- The Security Council and Member States should follow up on the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) as called for in SCR 1888 and ensure the SRSG's office has the expertise, credibility, and authority to effectively discharge the mandate.
- Address sexual violence in a holistic approach that takes into account issues of prevention, protection, women's participation, and access to services for survivors of sexual violence.
- All mandate renewals and sections of country reports that are due must address the protection and promotion of women's human rights in accordance with Security Council and GA resolutions including 1325, 1820 (OP 9), 1888 (OP 11), and 1889 (OP 5) and SC Presidential Statement 2009/1. As an example, the next report on the UN Hybrid Operation mission in Darfur, UNAMID, should detail how and to what extent women and women-led organizations – as recommended in SCR 1881 (OP 8) and requested in the Secretary General's report (S/2009/592) – have been consulted in the recent civil society consultation process.
- While natural disasters are different than conflict, many of the issues for women are the same, with protection, participation and prevention being at the center. In the current crisis in Haiti, the risk of sexual violence and exploitation increases, especially for women and girls. Treatment within three days of an assault can prevent HIV infection and within 5 days can prevent pregnancy. To ensure the safety of women and girls:
 - Provide immediate access to clinical care for survivors of sexual violence including emergency contraception and post exposure prophylaxis for HIV.
 - Prevent sexual violence and exploitation, and enable vulnerable people to access services safely. Support local resources to protect vulnerable people, especially single women and unaccompanied children.