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Gender Dimensions of the ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture: A Regional Perspective on UN Resolution 1325

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Introduction

With its unanimous adoption in October 2000, UN Resolution 1325 has emerged as the main global normative instrument for addressing peace and conflict from a gender perspective.¹⁵⁷ The major instruments that constitute the ECOWAS peace and security architecture also emerged around the same time. The task of this chapter is to examine the extent to which the main normative instruments that make up the ECOWAS peace and security architecture meet the main demands of UN Resolution 1325. Its objective therefore is to employ UN Resolution 1325 as the yardstick for the role of gender in peace and security in West Africa. The chapter spells out the main provisions of the principal ECOWAS peace and security instruments, with a view to measuring the extent to which they comply with 1325. Such an exercise would reveal the gender gaps (if any) in the ECOWAS peace and security architecture upon which the paper puts forwards policy recommendations.

Women routinely pay a disproportionately high price for conflicts. They, along with children, the aged and the physically challenged, are among the most vulnerable victims of war. Women are victims of inhuman treatment during conflict, being dehumanised and traumatised through rape and torture, forced to serve as 'bush wives' and other degrading roles in conflict and war which amount to a gross abuse of their human rights. As they are seeking to secure themselves during conflict, women also often have the duty of singularly taking care of other vulnerable groups such as children and the old. Thus, conflict imposes disproportionate and often unbearable responsibilities on women.

In post-conflict environments, women are, at best, only sporadically involved in peace negotiations and agreements. The traditional secondary role of women in mainly patriarchal African societies has meant that, even when they are engaged in peace-building, their views are often not taken seriously enough. Yet we need to recognise that, even in terms of simple demographic terms, women are half of the human race. Therefore, any human endeavour which excludes women amounts to operating at less than full human capacity. Certainly, building upon the energy of women would give an insight into the thinking and perspectives of half of the human race. It would reflect the position of a crucial peace constituency, and, thus, enhance the success of peace-building efforts.

There are two major challenges surrounding UN Resolution 1325. The first is that even though the resolution has been agreed upon, there remains the even more important need to operationalise and contextualise it, to ensure that each country – and region – comes up with its own particular programme for achieving the laudable goals set out in the resolution. In this regard, it is important to link the ECOWAS Peace and Security architecture with Resolution 1325. The second is to ensure that any such strategic linkage recognises, is based upon, and integrates the energies of ordinary women working at the grassroots level in several African communities and villages. Therefore, while recognising the leadership role of educated/elite women, there is a need to constantly pay homage to the role of ordinary African women and to ensure that any policy agenda that is concluded reflects their interests and perceptions.

This chapter is structured into three main parts. The first part discusses the role of women in peace and security, while the second enumerates the main elements of the ECOWAS peace and security architecture, and assesses the extent to which these comply with 1325. The third part identifies the challenges facing the implementation of 1325 in the West African context, while the final section concludes the chapter and puts forward policy recommendations.

The Role of Women in Peace and Security: Analytical Framework

On the whole and as a general trend, the reality of peace processes has been that those who take up arms are the main actors in peace negotiations, unwittingly creating the impression that peace agreements are rewards for the havoc that has been wrecked and the lives that have been lost. Thus, the more atrocious the human rights abuses, the more space belligerent actors seem to occupy at the table of peace negotiation. Peace processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone bear some credence to this fact, in which rebel groups who had been responsible for despicable acts against their own populations – particularly against women – featured as the main parties to peace agreements. Within the context of this paper, therefore, even though women have organised for peace at various levels (communities, national, regional and global levels), they are rarely visible in the

official processes for peace after conflict. As earlier stated, a main assumption and argument of this chapter is that peace processes that marginalise, ignore and/or exclude women are unlikely to lead to sustainable peace. Such processes lack the input and support of a large section of the population, and amount to, at best, a partial search for peace. Such exclusionary (so-called) peace agreements contribute to the resumption of violent conflict. The inclusion of the perspectives of women in peace processes and in decision making, is therefore not a mere human rights imperative which responds to the rights of women as human beings to be involved in decisions and processes that affect them directly and indirectly, critical as this may be. Crucially, the engagement and inclusion of women in discussions and decisions on peace is a necessary condition for sustainable peace and security. It is not a normative appeal but a necessary condition for peace.

Contrary to popular misconception, gender is not synonymous with 'women's issues'. Rather, gender describes the social roles and relations between men and women in society; it affects all aspects of life – economic, political and social. Such roles change over time and differ in other cultures and societies. Indeed, gender relates to how power is distributed and used between men and women. There are significant changes to the role of women during conflict, including the increased involvement of women in direct combat. In this regard there is a need to stress that women are not always victims of violence but have been known to be direct combatants and perpetrators of violence.

Some are even reputed to be better fighters than men.¹⁵⁸ It is however significant to note that while gender roles change (with women performing 'male tasks') during conflict, gender relations are hardly affected by conflict. It has been noted that:

There are unlimited examples of women performing 'male' tasks during conflict. However, once a peace deal is concluded and the men return to civilian life, they are inclined to restore the pre-conflict division of tasks and roles, again resuming activities and responsibilities outside the home, and relegating women to the domestic sphere.¹⁵⁹

There is therefore a direct correlation between gender and the role of women after conflict. The marginal and subsidiary role ascribed to women in most typically patriarchal African societies is socio-culturally determined. After conflicts, therefore, women either return to their pre-conflict roles or, worse still (especially in cases where there is public knowledge that they have been sexually abused) suffer public humiliation and relegated further in social hierarchy and societal roles. The end result is that gender defines power relations in society in a manner in which women are systematically disadvantaged.

Violence against women and girls has reached unprecedented and critical levels across Africa. Incidences of sexual abuse and wife-battering are ever on the increase. Harmful traditional practices against women and girls such as female genital mutilation, virginity tests, early and forced marriages and widow inheritance continue to retard efforts towards the emancipation of women. The Chair

of the African Union, Alpha Oumar Konare, has concluded that ‘the situation of women in conflict situations in Africa is deplorable’.¹⁶⁰

UN Resolution 1325 as a Yardstick for the ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture

The UN Security Council adopted Security Council resolution 1325 on the 31st October 2000, reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building. The resolution details the steps to be taken by the UN and its member states in order to improve the protection of women in conflict zones. It represents a critical component of international law that addresses how women are affected by war and the importance of their participation in the search for sustainable peace. In many respects, Resolution 1325 breaks new grounds. It is recognition that war and conflict affect women and men, boys and girls, in different ways and that for this very reason a gender perspective has to be included in all efforts towards peace and security. This recognition is at the basis of the decision by the UNSC to adopt SC 1325 in 2000. The resolution is a viable instrument which women can use to lobby national governments and regional organisations for their voices to be heard, and for the perspectives to be integrated into peace-building processes and post conflict reconstruction. It is also an instrument for advocacy and empowering women on the universal legitimacy and priority of their role in peace and security.

Box 1: Main Provisions of UN Resolution 1325

In this historic adoption of the first Security Council Resolution that directly addresses the issues of women, peace and security, it urges states and the United Nations to:

‘ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict...’ (para 1);

‘expand the role of Women in UN field-based operations’ (para 4);

‘incorporate a gender perspective in peacekeeping operations’ (para 5);

train peacekeeping personnel, military personnel and civilian police personnel on the protection, special needs and human rights of women in conflict situation (para 6);

adopt a gender perspective when negotiating and implementing peace agreements (in particular, special needs of women during repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction (para 8);

support local women’s peace initiatives (para 8);

adopt measures that ensure protection and respect of human rights of women and girls (para 8).

Security Council Resolution 1325 deals with women in situation of armed conflict and calls on states/parties to an armed conflict:

- to respect international law concerning the protection of women's rights,
- to adopt special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence
- to prosecute those responsible of violations
- to take account of women ex-combatants' needs in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes.

Having therefore evolved as the main global instrument for addressing questions relating to peace and security from a gender perspective, it is pertinent to examine the extent to which the resolution has permeated the activities and thinking of peace and security initiatives in various parts of the world. In this regard, West Africa presents a useful case study, with which the implementation of Resolution 1325 can be measured. In the discussions that follow, an attempt is made to measure the ECOWAS peace and security architecture against the provisions and demands of Resolution 1325.

The end of the Cold War and the marked decrease in the strategic interests of Africa to Western powers, notwithstanding the renewed scramble for Africa multiple resources, has both necessitated and facilitated the emergence of regional peace and security initiatives, with the West African sub-region being a pioneer. At the continental level it has been noted that the regime of the OAU paid little attention to the issue of women in peace and security, and in governance generally. According to Prof Maria Nzomo, 'in terms of gender representation in the OAU, African women, including women's organisations, were virtually absent from its organs and held no position of influence during its 39 years of existence'.¹⁶¹ Nonetheless, the establishment of the Africa Women's Committee on Peace and Development (AWCPD) by the OAU and UNECA in 1998 is commendable. The AWCPD functioned mainly more from outside than from within the OAU.¹⁶² The African Union, on the other hand, has, from the onset, recognised the pivotal role of women. Accordingly, the Durban summit of July 2002 took major decisions which provide the institutional basis for mainstreaming gender within the AU.

It is a positive coincidence that it was around the same time that negotiations were taking place regarding what eventually emerged as Resolution 1325, and must have impacted on developments at the AU. Assessing the AU's position on gender in 2007, the President of the AU Commission noted that:

The African Union has provided a legal framework that provides for gender equality and women's empowerment. The Constitutive Act of the Union, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Protocol to African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa all provide for the attainment of gender equality and

women's empowerment in Africa. From the onset, the African Union recognised the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment to the attainment of sustainable human development and security on the continent.¹⁶³

Accordingly, following the decisions of the Durban Summit, the AU Commission has 50 per cent representation of women. In addition, a Gender promotion Directorate has been created in the office of the AU Chairperson. As impressive as this and all other steps to protect women in war seem, there remains gaps between self-perception and self-reality; that is to say, between law and politics, between what the statutes stipulate and the reality on the ground. To this extent, women in the structures above are yet to veritably represent and valorise women interest.

At the level of West Africa, the end of the Cold War signified the start of the first Liberian civil war. This and subsequent conflicts in the sub-region exposed the challenges faced by women in conflict and post conflict settings.¹⁶⁴ Conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, and Cote d'Ivoire have displayed the demands on women, the multiple roles which they play, and the challenges which they face.¹⁶⁵ While gender-disaggregated data has been generally lacking, there is overwhelming empirical evidence of the link between gender, conflict, and the search for peace and security. In response, regional normative instruments have evolved which seek to address issues of women in peace and security in both preventive and post conflict peace-building.

As detailed in Table 1, 1325 calls for action in three major related areas.

• **Participation of women in decision making and peace processes:** The first four paragraphs of 1325 is focused on women's participation and representation in decision-making and peace processes, including in peacekeeping and other field-based operations. Paragraph 1 specifically 'urges member-states to ensure increased representation of women at all decision making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict'.

In consonance with the provisions of 1325, the ECOWAS Mechanism addresses directly the participation of women in decision making generally, and in peace processes in particular. Article 40 of the Mechanism provides that 'ECOWAS shall recognise, encourage and support the role of women in its initiatives for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peace-keeping and security'. Furthermore, the ECOWAS Council of Elders (now renamed Council of the Wise) is an important component of the ECOWAS peace and security architecture. It is composed of eminent personalities from various segments of society who are called upon to deploy their good offices and experience to play the role of mediators, counsellors and facilitators, on behalf of ECOWAS, for the purpose of managing and resolving conflicts in West Africa. While the Executive Secretary

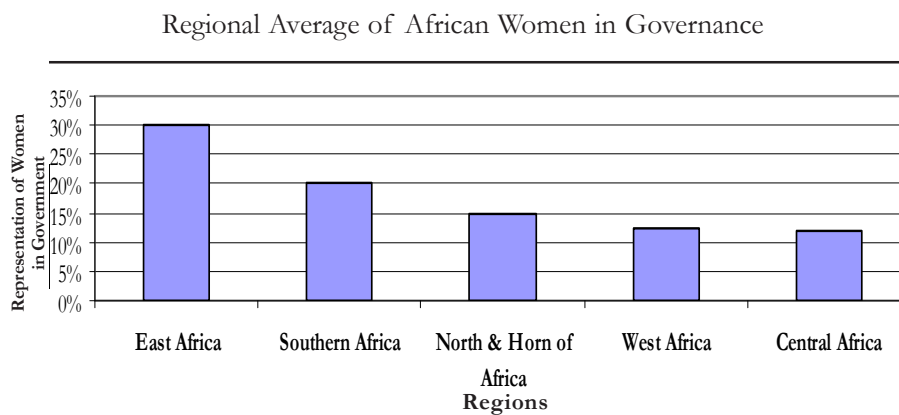
Table 1: Measuring the ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture against Resolution 1325

UN Resolution 1325 Benchmarks	Mechanism Protocol	Democracy and Good Governance (Supplementary) Protocol
Increased representation of women in national regional and international organizations and mechanisms on conflict (paragraphs 1-6)	Council of Elders (the Wise) to include women. (art. 20) Assistance to vulnerable persons, including children, the elderly, women (art. 44)	‘to take all appropriate measures to ensure that women have equal rights with men to vote and be voted for in elections, to participate in the formulation of government policies and the implementation thereof and to hold public offices and perform public functions at all levels of governance’. (art.2.3) ECOWAS election observation missions shall include women (art. 14)
Protection of women in armed conflict*, including adoption of mechanisms that ensure protection and respect of Human Rights of women and girls (paragraphs 9-13)	ECOWAS shall recognize, encourage and support the role of women in its initiatives for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peace-keeping and security. (art. 40.4)	Member States agree that the development and promotion of the welfare of women are essential factors for development, progress and peace in the society. Consequently, they undertake to eliminate all forms of discrimination and harmful and degrading practices against women (art. 40). The Executive Secretariat shall put in place all necessary structures within its establishment to ensure the effective implementation of common policies and programmes relating to the education and the promotion of the welfare of women and youth. (art. 43)
Gender perspectives and training in peacekeeping (paragraphs 15-17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · A policy to promote women’s education at all levels and in all fields of training shall be adopted and implemented in each Member State and at the level of ECOWAS. (art. 30.4) · Member States shall guarantee women equal rights with men in the field of education... They shall also ensure the elimination of stereotyped concepts of roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education. (art. 30.5). 	

of ECOWAS (now President) compiles a list of such individuals annually for the approval of the Mediation and Security Council, the ECOWAS Mechanism expressly states that such a list shall include women (Article 20). However, no specific quota is indicated. Out of a total of fifteen members, three are women in 2008.¹⁶⁶

Beyond conflict, however, there is a need to recognise that the inclusion of women in governance generally, is a veritable strategy for conflict prevention and for building the necessary conditions for sustainable development. In this regard, it is pertinent to note that the ECOWAS Democracy and Good Governance Protocol provides for equal rights of women to vote and be voted for, and to participate in the formulation and implementation of government policies by holding public offices (Article 2.3). In the specific area of election monitoring – a cardinal aspect of establishing the legitimacy and transparency of electoral processes – the Good Governance Protocol states that ‘the Executive Secretary shall appoint the leader and the members of the Observer/Supervisory Mission, who shall be independent persons and nationals of Member States other than the Member State conducting the elections. The Members of the Mission shall include women’ (article 14). Again, no specific quota of women representation is indicated.

There appears to be a marked gap between normative provisions and actual implementation. Within the ECOWAS Commission itself, only 1 out of 7 current commissioners is a woman. No woman has been Executive Secretary (now President) of the ECOWAS Secretariat (now Commission) since inception in 1975. Though a more detailed study will be needed to determine the extent of compliance with 1325 within ECOWAS states, there are some encouraging developments. It is indeed commendable that West Africa boasts of the first and, so far, only elected female African President (Liberia), and virtually all ECOWAS states have female ministers (including a female Vice-President in the Gambia), two significant observations are worthy of note. With few exceptions (such as the case of the former Nigeria’s Finance and Foreign Affairs Minister), Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, female ministers in West Africa are often located in ‘non-strategic’ portfolios. Therefore, while women’s participation in decision making has certainly witnessed quantitative improvements, the extent of qualitative changes can be easily exaggerated. Secondly, while specific assessment of women’s participation in governance on a country – by-country basis may not be feasible in the present exercise, available secondary data indicate that, even in terms of sheer numbers, West Africa compares unfavourably with other sub-regions in Africa.



Source: Kemi Ogunsanya, 'Gender Peace and Security in Africa', Presentation at the Gender and ESDP Course, Budapest, Hungary, 18-20 April, 2007.

In Eastern Africa, women occupy some 30 per cent of all posts in Government, 22 per cent in Southern Africa, and 16 per cent in the North and Horn of Africa. The corresponding figure for West Africa is 14 per cent, and only marginally better than the situation in Central Africa. There is no minimal quota for women's participation, which remains at the discretion of respective ECOWAS states. While the ECOWAS peace and security instruments appear to comply, in normative terms, with the provisions of resolution 1325, there is certainly much room for improvement in terms of effectively meeting such normative standards in practice.

• **Protection of women, including in armed conflict:** Paragraph 9 of Resolution 1325 'calls upon parties to a conflict to respect, fully international law applicable to the protection of women and girls...'. Paragraph 10 further calls for the adoption of special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict. There is ample evidence from the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars that both statutory and non-statutory combatants routinely disregarded, and indeed, actively abused the rights of women and girls.

The phenomenon of 'bush wives'— which refers to women who were captured to serve as sex slaves to combatants – the indiscriminate amputation of limbs, and despicable acts of disembowelling pregnant women suggest a wide gap between the provisions of 1325 and actual practice during conflict situations in West Africa.

There can be little doubt, however, that, at the level of legal and normative instruments, ECOWAS as a regional organisation has the utmost respect for international law concerning protection of women's rights. Virtually all ECOWAS normative and legal instruments expressly recognise the need for the protection of women during armed conflict and beyond. Even though it predates the

adoption of Resolution 1325, the ECOWAS Conflict Mechanism, in its preamble, recognised the need ‘to develop effective policies that will alleviate the suffering of the civil population, especially women and children...’. In the same vein, the Good Governance Protocol noted in its preamble that ‘women’s rights have been recognised and guaranteed in all international human rights instruments’. In the emerging additions to the ECOWAS peace and security architecture, the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms states expressly ‘taking into account Security Council Resolution 1325 on women peace and security which recognises the specific role of women in Peace-building’ (preamble). However, such enthusiasm with 1325 is hardly reflected in the body of the Small Arms Convention itself.

Various sections of the ECOWAS Conflict Mechanism and the Good Governance Protocol, (as detailed in Table 1 above) recognise the need for the protection of women during and beyond armed conflict. In the final analysis, however, the reality in West Africa is that states are only a part of the security complex. Therefore, while states and regional organisations such as ECOWAS are respectful of international law provisions on the protection of women, the same cannot be said for the wide circulation of non-state actors (such as armed groups) which are constant features in West African conflicts.

Paragraph 13 of Resolution 1325 highlights the need to take account of women ex-combatants’ needs in DDR programmes (art. 13). ECOWAS peace and security instruments do not directly address the special needs and concerns of women and girls in DDR programmes. While the paucity of data and information makes it difficult, nay impossible, to discuss the extent to which women’s special needs were met in ECOWAS peace missions, the general impression is one of a shortfall in this regard. Even in UN missions, it has been noted that in the case of Sierra Leone, abducted women in the fighting force (known widely as ‘bush wives’) were excluded from the DDR programme. They were, instead, regarded as official dependants of male combatants.

Thus, they had no rights of their own. In both the Liberian and Sierra Leonean DDR processes, Gender Advisers were not present at inception, resulting to the marginalisation of gender dimensions in DDR planning.¹⁶⁷ In the case of Liberia, however, the involvement of Women Associated with Fighting Forces (WAFF... a more respectable pseudonym for ‘bush wives’) has received better attention. Some 22,000 women were integrated into the DDR programme.

First-hand accounts have indicated that the initiatives of women’s groups in the DDR process often received a condescending reception. Proposals of Liberian women’s groups were rejected in the early stages of the DDR process on the grounds that they were not considered ‘experts’. Instead, the programme brought in ‘experts’ from other situations – Kosovo, Sierra Leone – but did not include Liberian women’s voices in their planning. The women who tried to get involved in the DDR process were told to ‘go home and take care of their children’¹⁶⁸

• ***Gender perspectives and training in peacekeeping:*** Paragraphs 4 and 5 of Resolution 1325 relate to the need for gender perspectives and training in UN peacekeeping missions. In this regard, while it has been noted that, thanks mainly to 1325 (and the Secretary General's Strategic Plan of Action A/49/587), the number of Gender Advisors had risen from 2 in the year 2000 to 10 by September 2005, the absence of ECOWAS peace missions for much of the period makes a comparison impossible. These include all the peace missions in West Africa: UNMIL, UNIOSIL, ONUCI. In addition, gender mainstreaming in the UN reporting systems and programmatic implementation mechanisms is increasingly visible. Focusing on UNMIL, for example, the Office of the Gender Advisor has registered a marked difference. A Police gender policy has been established for the Liberia National Police (LNP), while a police gender curriculum and training manual has been developed for the Police Academy. A Women's NGO Secretariat has been established with UN support. Also noteworthy is the production of various gender resources and materials, including the integration of gender into the country's PRSP, the development of gender-based training materials for UNMIL personnel.¹⁶⁹ Also, for the first time in the history of the UN, an all-female police unit has been part of UNMIL since January 2007.¹⁷⁰

It is, however, easy to exaggerate the pace of progress in mainstreaming gender within the UN peacekeeping mechanism and process as a whole. Five years after passing Resolution 1325, only 25 per cent of the total civilian personnel serving in UN missions were women; the percentage in the Police and the armed forces was, respectively, 5 per cent and 1 per cent.¹⁷¹

In the ECOWAS Conflict Mechanism, there is no provision on training of peacekeeping and armed forces personnel on women on the special needs of women, and on women and demobilisation and reintegration programmes. Beyond general statements such as in Article 44 of the Mechanism (see Table 1 above), there is no mention of special measures to be adopted in armed conflicts to protect women from gender-based violence and of the responsibilities of the state to prosecute those responsible for violations. There are, however, encouraging indications that ECOWAS is upgrading its gender instruments and institutional approaches to peace and security. The prospects for gender mainstreaming in regional integration generally, and peace and security in particular are positive.

At the 26th Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Governments held in Dakar in January 2003, an institutional mechanism for mainstreaming gender in the ECOWAS region was put in place. A Gender Division was created within the Executive Secretariat, while the West African Women's Association (WAWA) was transformed into the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre. The objectives of the gender development programme, among others, are to mobilise women and empower them to be active participants in the regional integration process, mainstream gender in ECOWAS institutions and member

States, and develop networks and partnership with relevant agencies for technical and financial support for ECOWAS' gender mainstreaming programme. The meeting of the Council of Ministers held in July 2004 strengthened the gender programme by adopting the Gender Policy document, the administrative structure of the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre, a strategic plan framework and guidelines on the structures and mechanisms of the Gender Management Systems (GMS) for ECOWAS.

Currently, the ECOWAS framework on gender is receiving a boost. Within the Gender Division, a *Training Manual on Gender and Child Protection Issues During Complex Emergencies* is under development. More strategically, Gender, Peace and Security is one of the fourteen components of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework, which has been developed.¹⁷²

Civil society has also been active in the task of engendering peace and security, with UN Resolution 1325 often featuring as a point of reference. A group of women's organisations on peace and security have emerged in the last decade, all of which increasingly seek to operationalise Resolution 1325 in part and in whole. The Femmes Africa Solidarité FAS was created in 1996 and, in its early years, played an active role in engaging women in conflict management and resolution. Regarding 1325, the Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) – network of more than 100 civil society groups, particularly women's associations, located in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia – emerged as an initiative of FAS in 2000 with the aim of advancing the role of women in promoting peace, security and development in the Mano River sub-region.¹⁷³

WANEP/WIPNET

Women In Peace-building Network (WIPNET) was created in 2001 as a programme of the West African Network for Peace (WANEP)¹⁷⁴ to mobilise women, build their capacity and encourage collaboration among them to build lasting peace and promote human security in West Africa. WIPNET's focus is on the integration of women's concerns and their participation in policy formulation and implementation in peace and security issues in the sub-region.

Its main objectives include the development of policy recommendations for mainstreaming women's issues in peace and security; strengthening links between policy makers, technocrats and women's groups; strengthening capacity of rural/grassroots women in peace-building at community and national levels; building strategic partnerships with women's networks in other regions; and sustaining women's participation in formal peace-building in West Africa. In November 2004, WIPNET held a consultation with women's groups and the ECOWAS Gender Unit to develop a policy framework for mainstreaming women's issues in peace and security in West Africa. WIPNET has also been active in the *localisation of training methodology and UN Security Council Resolution 1325*. WIPNET translated

its specialised training manual and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and security, into seven local/indigenous West African languages. In November 2005, the Fourth Annual WIPNET Regional Conference was dedicated to the theme of 'Revisiting United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325: Opportunities and Challenges for the Future.

Box 2: Draft ECOWAS Conflict and Prevention Framework – Women in Peace

The objective of the Women Peace and Security component of ECPF shall be to promote women's role and contribution to centre stage in the design, elaboration, implementation and evaluation of conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building initiatives while strengthening regional and national systems for the protection and advancement of women.

To enhance the visibility and impact of women in peace and security, the following activities shall be prioritised:

- a. The Department of Human Development and Gender and the Gender Centre, in collaboration with identifiable networks of women organizations in West Africa to study the gendered impact of conflicts on women and map out their role in the emerging ECOWAS security architecture.
- b. Adopt a regional policy to combat discrimination against women in all its forms, including in inheritance, pay differentials, female genital mutilation (FGM), arranged marriages and girl-child labour.
- c. Develop programmes to enhance the capacity of women organizations in project design and implementation and support them with targeted financial and equipment packages.
- d. Develop targeted programmes to enhance the leadership, negotiation and dispute resolution skills within women organizations.
- e. Adopt an ECOWAS policy to include women in the leadership of fact-finding and peace missions, and in peace negotiations.
- f. Establishment of 'Young Women's Fellowship' programme with the collaboration of institutions of higher learning and the private sector in ECOWAS and other regional institutions working on peace and security.
- g. Mainstream gender in all aspects of the ECOWAS peace architecture.
- h. Put women organizations at the forefront of community and crossborder peace initiatives, reintegration processes, as well as programmes to combat human trafficking, HIV/AIDS and STDs.
- i. Adopt affirmative policies to enhance girl-child education.

Women Peace and Security Network - Africa (WIPSEN-Africa) was formally launched at the Strategic Reflection Forum for Women in Peace-building, with the theme Institutionalising Women Peace and Security in Africa, held at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, Accra, Ghana, 21-24 May 2007.¹⁷⁵ According to its blog, WIPSEN is a Pan African network committed to institutionalising women, peace and security in Africa, with a core mandate to institutionalise women peace and security in Africa. WIPSEN-Africa is both women-led and focused; and envisions a 'violence-free, non-discriminatory continent that fosters peaceful coexistence, equality, collective ownership and the full participation of particularly women in decision making on peace and security'.

Broader in scope, the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) was created in 2003, arising out of 'the need to create an institutionalised dialogue between regional civil society organisation (CSOs) and the ECOWAS Secretariat' (now ECOWAS Commission).¹⁷⁶ Gender is one of WACSOF's programme areas.¹⁷⁷ As part of its recommendations to the ECOWAS Council of Ministers' Meeting in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (18-19 December 2006) WACSOF called for the implementation of Resolution 1325, and urged 'the implementation of the ECOWAS Gender Policy and the ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women'.¹⁷⁸

In a nutshell, therefore, Resolution 1325 has featured, and is increasingly featuring, on the West African peace and security landscape both within the peace and security architecture and in the activities and programmes of civil society organisations. However, gender peace and security mainstreaming in West Africa is not far beyond infancy, and several challenges remain on the path of the goals of 1325.

Challenges of Implementing 1325 in West Africa

The Resilience of Mindsets: In the final analysis, what 1325 seeks is a change in the mindsets of all the actors engaged in peace and security in the direction of gender mainstreaming and inclusion. Seeking a fundamental change in attitudes, social practices and ways of thinking which are centuries old is necessarily a long term project which requires sustained efforts. This is particularly so when the very institutions on which the success of 1325 depends continue to be dominated and directed by men. In this regard, it is important that 1325 has, ultimately, a political objective of altering power relations between men and women. A degree of resistance is therefore to be expected.

The increase in intra-state armed conflict, often deliberately targeting civilians, typically featuring armed non-state groups, means that state-based instruments such as Resolution 1325 are not sufficient to protect women as these groups deliberately disregard such normative instruments. 1325 therefore faces the dilemma of several other international legal and normative documents which are state-based and, to that extent, are of limited practical value on the ground.

For instance, despite the Security Council's many strategic initiatives to promote gender equality and support the empowerment of women, its attention to gender issues is not systematic. Since the adoption of Resolution 1325 in 2000, as of 30 June 2006, only 55 of 200, or 26.07 per cent, of country-specific Council resolutions include language on women or gender.¹⁷⁹ With specific regard to West Africa, women's representation remains marginal in ECOWAS institutions. Unlike the African Union which has agreed on a 50 per cent quota for women at the level of AU Commissioners, ECOWAS lacks such a quota. Among the latter's seven statutory Commissioners, only one is a woman. In addition, beyond standards setting at a macro level, there are accompanying benchmarks and timelines specified for the achievement of the lofty objectives of 1325.

1325 is Necessary, but not Sufficient: The sheer distance between norms and practice on gender and the depth of the marginalisation of women in social organisation and governance in Africa means that a lot more is required than the provision of adequate legal frameworks, useful and desirable as these may be.

The widespread and continued flagrant discrimination of women and girls; the use of rape as a weapon of war, torture and dehumanisation; the mere act of lip service exhibited by public office holders to gender equality and women's empowerment concerns and the concomitant lack of genuine political will on the part of governments to commit to the implementation of the instruments they have signed on to; persistent gender inequality, injustices, the reinforcement of patriarchy within typically male-dominated peace and security structures, are some of the factors responsible for the persistent gaps between the goals of 1325 and its realisation in West Africa. In addition to 1325 therefore, governance and legal reforms that address discriminatory laws against women are necessary at both regional and national levels. As noted elsewhere, while international law may seek to address gender inequalities, social norms do not necessarily advance in line with these changes, and women often remain politically and economically disadvantaged. The tension between discriminatory customary law and state or international law must be recognised in post-conflict reconstruction strategies.¹⁸⁰

Grassroots Imperatives of 1325: Undoubtedly, Resolution 1325 is a watershed political framework for addressing the challenges faced by women, particularly in post conflict reconstruction. In reality, however, a wide gulf often exists between the perspectives and priorities of ordinary, mostly uneducated and rural women, on the one hand, and African women elite who lead the gender debate and who (ostensibly on behalf of ordinary African women) lead the debate and enter into dialogue with international organisations and donors. The challenge therefore is the need to ensure that strategies for localising and contextualising 1325 in West Africa are based on, and reflect the energies and priorities of ordinary women at the grassroots level in several villages and communities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter used Resolution 1325 as template for addressing peace and security in West Africa from a gender perspective. It is not, and does not claim to be, a comprehensive assessment of the role of women in peace and security in West Africa. In any event, such an exercise is an on-going process, the scope of which is far beyond the reach of a single analysis. The paper's modest contribution has been that of a methodology for measuring the implementation of global legal and normative instruments in specific regional contexts. Conceivably, therefore, the methodology used here for ECOWAS, can be used for other regions within and beyond Africa, in assessing specific responses to global normative standards and frameworks. Given the fact that Resolution 1325 is only as good as its implementation, the use of Resolution 1325 as a yardstick for gender-based regional assessments is recommended for other parts of Africa and beyond.

The chapter noted that the main ECOWAS peace and security instruments largely reflect and comply with 1325. The more recent instruments such as the ECPF and the Small Arms Convention make specific reference to the Resolution. In terms of implementation, however, the paper concludes that several gaps remain. The ECOWAS bureaucratic decision-making structure still manifests a deficit with regard women. An overwhelming percentage of posts are still held by men, without any specific quota for women, or even a timeline in this regard. The interface between Resolution 1325 and the ECOWAS peace and security architecture and experiences raises several issues of policy relevance, for which the paper puts forward the following specific recommendations:

ESF Missions: ECOWAS has an impressive record of innovative regional peace-keeping missions, starting with the ECOMOG (now ECOWAS Standby Force) intervention in Liberia, followed by Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire. With the adoption of 1325, it is recommended that deliberate steps should be taken to ensure that subsequent ESF missions comply with 1325. As with UN missions, future ESF missions should include Gender Advisors, in addition to other gender mainstreaming approaches detailed in 1325. Special Representatives of the ECOWAS President should include women.

ECOWAS Gender Quota System: The ECOWAS Commission should introduce a quota system, so as to guarantee women effective participation in decision making related to peace and security and other aspects of regional integration. Within the larger ECOWAS Commission bureaucracy, affirmation action policies should be further entrenched to encourage the interest of women in working for the organisation, particularly in the field of peace and security.

Gender Disaggregated Information and Data: Gender-specific analysis, information and data are necessary to paint a clearer picture of the challenges facing women, particularly during and after conflict. Such an approach would enhance planning for ESF operations.

1325 National and Regional Plan of Action: 1325 Plans of Action: ECOWAS states should pass national implementation action plans for 1325, which should flow from, and comply with, a regional ECOWAS action plan.

Strengthening the ECOWAS Gender Unit: As detailed above, the ECOWAS Gender Unit is in the process of developing a viable policy framework, which forms an essential part of the draft ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework.

In this regard, it is important to ensure that the Gender Unit has the necessary human, financial and technical resources available to meet the demands of implementing regional policy frameworks and for supporting national action plans, as suggested above. The development of prioritised Plans of Action, with measurable targets, would be essential. Within the broader framework of regional integration and the indivisibility of human security, it is also important that the ECOWAS gender agenda is linked to (and, ideally, forms an essential part of), continental initiatives on gender and security, particularly of the African Union. In this regard, the AU Maputo Declaration of 2003 forms an essential guide for the ECOWAS Gender Unit.

Identifying and Multiplying Best Practices: A combination of factors enables good practices on women peace and security which should be identified and advocated (by the ECOWAS Gender Unit) for duplication within the ECOWAS region. For example, the post-conflict reconstruction process in Liberia manifests encouraging elements of gender mainstreaming which is worthy of duplication. The deployment of the UN's first all-female peacekeeping contingent, the quota policy of recruiting at least 20 per cent women in the police, the appointment of a female Police Chief are all worthy of encouragement and emulation in other parts of Africa. The specificity of context must, however, be stressed.

The post-conflict context of Liberia, propelled by the reality of Africa's first elected female President, makes it a unique but encouraging signpost for what is desirable and possible elsewhere.

Civil Society Advocacy: Civil society organisations should sustain sensitisation campaigns and localisation of 1325 in order to improve on the understanding of gender, and to bring 1325 closer to the teeming masses of ordinary, particularly rural African women.

