

About the Women Waging Peace Policy Commission

The Policy Commission is conducting a series of case studies to document women's contributions to peace processes across conflict areas worldwide. The studies focus on women's activities in conflict prevention, pre-negotiation and negotiation, and post-conflict reconstruction—including governance; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; and transitional justice and reconciliation. This body of work is pragmatic and operational, offering suggestions, guidelines, and models to encourage policymakers to include women and gender perspectives in their program design.

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Women, Peace, and Security

Wars and internal conflicts do not end simply with the signing of peace agreements. To avoid a resurgence of violence, it is necessary to develop and support measures for strengthening governance, security, justice, and socio-economic capacities of a state. This is a complex task in any society, but daunting in post-conflict situations. While the international community can provide assistance and valuable resources, the local population, which has no “exit strategy,” has the greatest commitment to building sustainable peace. It is therefore essential to draw on the assets, experiences, and dedication at the local level and among all sectors of society. One sector often overlooked and underestimated is women. In most post-conflict societies women are more than 50 percent of the population and are actively engaged in peace building while addressing the basic survival needs of their families and communities. Yet they are often portrayed as passive victims, and little regard is given to their actual and potential roles in fostering security.

In October 2000, for the first time in its history, the United Nations Security Council acknowledged that women have a key role in promoting international stability by passing Resolution 1325 on woman, peace, and security. It called on all parties to ensure women's participation in peace processes, from the prevention of conflict to negotiations and post-war reconstruction. The Women Waging Peace Policy Commission was established to examine peace processes with a particular focus on the contributions of women. This study, *Negotiating the Transition to Democracy and Reforming the Security Sector: The Vital Contributions of South African Women*, documents the strategies women used to gain full participation in the negotiations and in the transition, as well as their influence in shaping security sector policies and institutions. For the full report, go to www.womenwagingpeace.net.

Published Case Studies

Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform

- El Salvador
- Sierra Leone
- South Africa

Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Transitional Justice and Reconciliation

- Bosnia

Conflict Resolution: Prenegotiation and Negotiations

- Colombia

Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Governance and Political Participation

- Cambodia
- Rwanda

Women Waging Peace

Women influence through consensus building rather than through coercion and force. Women are thus experts in ‘soft power,’ an increasingly important approach in modern conflict.

Joseph S. Nye
Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics

Bringing women to the peace table improves the quality of agreements reached and increases the chance of success in implementation, just as involving women in post-conflict governance reduces the likelihood of returning to war.

Donald K. Steinberg
Director, Joint Policy Council
US Department of State

Nations consumed by conflict need the strength of their women. In times of chaos, women bring stability; and at the war's end, women ensure sustainable peace.

Noeleen Heyzer
Executive Director
United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

Women's capacity to take a sliver of opportunity and widen it to create a new political forum for moderation is invaluable in efforts to recover after the war.

Rina Amiri
Political Affairs Officer
United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Women Waging Peace

A program of Hunt Alternatives Fund

Hunt Alternatives Fund advances innovative and inclusive approaches to social change at local, national, and global levels. Founded in 1981 by Swanee Hunt, the Fund currently has three program areas: ARTWorks for Kids, Prime Movers, and Women Waging Peace.

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South Africa | Security Sector Reform

Women Waging Peace

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An operating program of Hunt Alternatives Fund, “Waging” advocates for the full participation of women in formal and informal peace processes around the world. More than 400 women peace builders in the “Waging” network, all demonstrated leaders with varied backgrounds, perspectives, and skills, bring a vast array of expertise to the peacemaking process. They have met with over 3,000 policy shapers to collaborate on fresh, workable solutions to long-standing conflicts.

Negotiating the Transition to Democracy and Reforming the Security Sector: The Vital Contributions of South African Women

Key Findings

1. By taking the visionary steps of consulting the public about the role of the security sector and placing human security and development at the center of its national security framework, South Africa went beyond mere reform to transform the security sector. These steps helped repair the security sector's legitimacy and credibility with the country's people.
2. Despite differing views and values, women of all races—as pacifists, militarists, feminists, and grassroots activists—were central to articulating a vision and shaping the process by which the security of the people became a priority for the state.
3. Women from across the political spectrum mobilized to attain 50 percent representation in the negotiations leading up to the 1994 election and 28 percent of parliament afterwards. In parliament and throughout the government, they continue to encourage public participation in policy shaping and remain the strongest proponents of human security.
4. Within the security establishment, it is increasingly acknowledged that women 1) bring a critical perspective to the planning and implementation of programs, 2) have a positive influence as members of the security forces—including peacekeeping units, and 3) are critical to building peace and security.
5. Security sector transformation will remain incomplete if the institutional culture is not changed; overcoming gender-based discrimination, as with racial discrimination, is a key indicator of transformation.

Recommendations

In promoting security sector reform the **international community** should

1. Encourage countries to use public consultations to ensure that
·Public opinion regarding security threats are heard and addressed; and
·The security sector gains legitimacy and credibility with the public.
2. Undertake capacity-building programs to enable women to participate effectively in discussions about the security sector.
3. Encourage defense ministries to promote full inclusion of women and gendered perspectives in regard to peace and security issues. South Africa's innovative programs, including focal points in defense structures, gender budgeting, and the “Women at the Peace Table” initiative—could be adapted elsewhere.

The **South African government** should

1. Strengthen peacekeeping units by increasing gender-based training for all personnel and creating mechanisms to hold accountable personnel who violate international codes of conduct.
2. Renew its policies of engagement with civil society on security and defense issues.
3. Ensure adequate support and funding for programs that promote gender equity and awareness.



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Introduction

A decade after its transformation from an aggressive state grounded in racial discrimination and supported by a ubiquitous secret security system, South Africa is now a democratic country in which civilian structures control the military. To reform the security sector—including the military, police, and secret services—and dispel tensions among soldiers, South Africa, led by the African National Congress (ANC) and its supporters, took the extraordinary and courageous step of revisiting notions of state security. They explored basic questions—such as “what is security?” and “what are the threats facing the nation?”—through a participatory approach involving civil society. As a result, while widening the scope and definition of security, they also “democratized” the debate, enabling the population to articulate its concerns in a national dialogue. This inclusive approach enhanced the security services’ public credibility and legitimacy but also altered the national security framework. In effect, South Africa demilitarized security by recognizing that “human security” issues, such as “underdevelopment, poverty, lack of democratic participation, and the abuse of human rights are...grave threats to the security of the people. Since they invariably give rise to conflict between individuals, communities, and countries, they threaten the security of states as well.”¹

Despite their differing views and values, South African women—as pacifists, militarists, feminists, and grassroots activists—were vital in shaping and articulating this innovative vision of security. They injected new perspectives and influenced the debate via cross-party alliances. During multi-party negotiations and in every committee, they also fought for gender equality, an end to sex-based discrimination, and the inclusion of gendered perspectives. As decision makers, they have stood by these values and struggled to realize this inclusive vision of security. This study documents the strategies women used to gain full participation in decision making and their subsequent contributions to the transformation of security sector policies and structures.

A Place at the Peace Table: Women’s Strategies

Women were essential to the struggle against apartheid through trade unions, the Communist Party, and other forums. In the 1970s, increasing numbers of women joined the guerrilla forces, including the ANC’s armed wing, the Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). Simultaneously, white middle-class women became the leading voices of important opposition efforts like the End Conscription Campaign (ECC).

As the potential grew for a transition to democracy, women in the ANC and other political movements struggled to gain equal representation in the negotiations. In 1992, ANC women led the formation of the Women’s National Coalition (WNC), an initiative of some 100 organizations, to develop a common agenda for women’s rights. A seminal gathering, the WNC assembly was the first venue at which representatives from across the political and ideological spectrum met publicly. A subsequent two-year consultative process involving hundreds of workshops and an estimated three million people nationwide resulted in the “Women’s Charter,” which included demands for full participation in political decision making.

As the broader women’s movement gained strength, women in the political sphere secured 50 percent representation in the 1993 Multi-Party Negotiations Process (MPNP), which led to the 1994 elections. They also began asserting their views regarding the security sector. A key outcome of the MPNP was the establishment of the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) to monitor and work with the apartheid government in preparing for the elections. Women were active in the TEC, including in the sub-councils addressing defense and security structures. Despite pressure to define “security” more traditionally, they pushed to maintain the focus on human security broadly, and gender equality in the armed forces.

Following the 1994 elections, women made up 28 percent of the National Assembly. They also held key posts in parliamentary committees, including defense. In 1996, the publication of the *White Paper on Defence for the Republic of South Africa* (“White Paper”) enshrined the principle of civilian control over the military, gave priority to human security, affirmed a commitment to gender equality and affirmative action based on race and sex, and promoted distinctly non-militaristic values within the framework of national security.

Influencing Defense and Security Policies: Women’s Contributions

Attaining full representation in the 1992 to 1994 negotiations and a strong presence in subsequent parliamentary and government structures, women had both the necessary critical mass and the expertise to help redefine and ensure implementation of the new security agenda. They influenced the development of the new security paradigm as academics and activists, as members of the MK and ANC leadership, and as voices from the grassroots.

Academics and Anti-Conscription Activists

A relatively small group of anti-apartheid, anti-militarist white women successfully promoted the view of demilitarization as a precondition for viable democracy. As leaders of groups such as Black Sash and the Ceasefire Campaign (an offshoot of the anti-conscription movement), their demands ranged from calling for reductions in military expenditures and transfers of resources to development, promoting disarmament, and advocating for the elimination of the arms industry in South Africa.² While mainstream, largely male military strategists focused primarily on technical issues such as the size of the military, budgets, and weaponry, Jacklyn Cock, a leading academic and critic of the apartheid regime, was among the first South Africans to reveal the extensively militarized nature of the apartheid state and to emphasize its social and political costs. The highly influential Military Research Group (MRG), cofounded by Cock, developed and tested ideas for the ANC within the international and national security and development communities. Drawn to the new discourse on “human security” emerging from North America and Europe, the MRG and others argued that militarized states siphon power and resources from development, cause ecological harm, and tear at the fabric of society.

ANC and MK Women

Women members of the ANC and those who served in the MK were also critical in developing the security agenda. They were strong advocates for the inclusion of gender equality principles into the policy and programs of the security sector. They were also extremely supportive of human security as the normative framework for national security. This was a result primarily of their political training, which had given them a solid grounding in the political goals of the liberation movement, including the interrelationship between gender, class, and racial oppression. They exerted influence, says Jenny Schreiner, ANC member and chair of the Constitutional Committee on Security Services, because they were “coming through the mainstream political party. They [could] hold their own in the leadership structures of those parties.”³ Deputy Minister of Defence Nozwise Madlala-Routledge, the first woman and Quaker to hold a senior defense post, agrees: “The [approach] that women brought into the discussions was that security is a broad issue. It is not simply about state security, but it is about human security—where the security of the person, of the individual, is part of the whole equation.” Schreiner notes that men in the ANC delegation also advanced the human security framework during the talks; however, she says, the women “wouldn’t allow anyone to budge off the issues.”

Grassroots

Women at the grassroots level and in rural areas also helped shape security policy. They were involved indirectly in the conceptual processes through consultations and workshops the WNC and think tanks organized, pre-election negotiations, and post-1994 parliamentary activities. These women conveyed the spirit of “human security” as they reflected on their own experiences and demanded greater freedom; equality in the eyes of law and society; the right to property ownership; access to safe housing, employment, and education; and protection from all forms of violence. Commenting on the evolution of the human security paradigm, Frene Ginwala, speaker of the National Assembly, gives particular credit to women’s movements in Africa and their ability to “[link] the struggle for national independence and security to the struggle for equality and social equity.”⁴ Thandi Modise, former MK fighter and chair of the Joint Committee on Defence from 1999 to 2004, suggests that South African women drew on their own experiences to define peace and security and to identify priorities for moving forward. She credits women with having “acted as the conscience of the nation” on military issues, embracing the principles of defense and conflict prevention rather than armed action: “[They have] demanded that the defense force should not be a machine used against the people, but that its function should be broadened to include preventive and rescue work.”⁶

Shaping the New Security Sector: Women’s Roles

In the decade following the transition to democracy, women’s roles were central in several initiatives related to security reform.

The Defence Review

Conducted between 1996 and 1998, South Africa’s National Defence Review identified the military needs of the country. The Review fulfilled a mandate of the 1996 White Paper, which had provided a normative framework for security sector reform and emphasized the need for the military to serve the citizens. At the insistence of women parliamentarians, the Review was undertaken as a nationwide consultative process. The defense establishment hosted numerous public

meetings during which people could express their views. Grassroots women’s organizations were vital in drawing attention to the links between security and the environment. Their focus on the military’s use of land and the resultant impact on the health and livelihood of local populations was a significant contribution to the national debate. Most importantly, the consultative and transparent nature of the process changed the perception of the military in the eyes of the public, giving the Review revitalized legitimacy and credibility.

Women and the Arms Scandal

In 1998, following the Defence Review, the Sub-Committee on the Procurement Program of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) recommended six defense procurement programs and suppliers to the cabinet. By December 1999, at a cost of approximately \$4.5 billion, the government had contracted five major arms transactions. Despite initial outcries from civil society that the deal made no sense in the absence of a credible military threat, and despite internal governmental questioning of the details, the ANC launched an aggressive inquiry only after several months. As the arms deal moved forward, women parliamentarians from across political parties spoke out. Female ANC parliamentarians resigned from key positions in protest, and others risked their positions to criticize political parties’ involvement. Across the spectrum, according to Inkatha Freedom Party parliamentarian Suzanne Vos, “When [women MPs] spoke out, it wasn’t about helicopters and dealing with obsolete equipment, it was about the amount of money being spent on the military when the country needed it so much more for development.” Such activism demonstrated a continued focus on human security priorities and an ability to unite across party lines for a cause.

Peace Support Operations

Given the apartheid regime’s policies of destabilizing neighboring countries, involvement in regional military operations was a sensitive topic for the new government. From the outset, however, there was a desire within the ANC to support international peacekeeping operations while taking a more holistic approach. According to General Rocky Williams (Ret.), there was recognition that if “the root causes of human insecurity are what are deeply ingrained ... you can’t simply have a military approach.” A new notion of peace operations emerged, one that expanded beyond deployment of troops. Deputy Minister of Defence Madlala-Routledge notes that women policymakers helped broaden the scope. She observed that the new policy that emerged from the Defence Review “is more holistic and comprehensive,” adding that “[women have contributed to the fact that you have to assist with reconstruction ... with the rebuilding of communities where there has been violence. In order to have lasting peace, you have to get involved in the development of that country.” Today, South Africa is one of the few countries in the world that has recognized the need to integrate gender-based training into peacekeeping operations and has drawn on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide expertise for them.

Although the policy frameworks are in place and significant changes have been made, particularly in terms of ensuring civilian oversight of the military, the broader transformation of the security sector remains incomplete. In addition, the rise of HIV/AIDS among South African military personnel has limited the military’s capacity to engage in peacekeeping efforts, causing some concern among neighboring countries.⁷

Institutional Mechanisms for the Promotion of Gender Equality

To promote women’s inclusion in the security sector and redress policies that discriminate against them, ANC leadership and the defense ministry have used a number of strategies, including:

- The appointment of women to senior positions within the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Secretariat as role models and to demonstrate high-level commitment to gender equality;
- The provision of gender training to personnel at all levels of the defense ministry;
- Changes in personnel policies that affect women most directly, including those governing maternity leave and equal benefits for dependents of men and women in the forces;
- The creation of a gender focal point within the Equal Opportunities Directorate, with outreach across the services and divisions within the ministry; and
- The annual organization of “Women at the Peace Table,” a Deputy Defence Minister-hosted gathering of women in the armed forces and in civil society to explore and address peace and security issues.

Many of these measures are new and underfunded. If supported, they could promote gender equality and foster continued transformation of the security sector. Moreover, like many South African initiatives, they could be used to inform efforts in other countries.

Conclusions

Women played a creative and influential role in South Africa’s democratic transition and security sector reform. They were critical in pushing the defense community toward greater openness in its strategic deliberations. By widening the scope and definition of security, they in effect “democratized” the debate, enabling large sectors of their population affected by security policies to articulate their concerns and contribute to the national dialogue. This not only helped to strengthen the security services’ credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the public but also led to a new framework that placed human security—the security of people and the need for development—at the center of the national security framework. This human security paradigm has proved prescient, as new security threats have increased, including the spread of HIV/AIDS, regional immigration, street crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism.

At the same time, the slow pace of change frustrates many of the original architects of reform, including those in civil society. Tensions among the political leadership, the needs of the traditional military and defense establishment, and the interests of the arms industry have hindered progress. Since the 1999 elections, there has been a gradual shift towards increased executive power, diminished parliamentary control, and decreased public participation. Additionally, external challenges and new security threats have meant that the more far-reaching ideals of the 1996 White Paper have not become reality.

Despite these challenges, South Africa’s vision and its transformation of the security sector are groundbreaking. Women’s participation in the decision-making process and implementation of this reform was and remains a key component of its success. Whether security sector reform is undertaken as a means of conflict prevention or as a means of establishing security in post-conflict societies, South Africa’s process is a model from which lessons should be drawn.

Endnotes

- ¹ *Ready to Govern: ANC Policy Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa Adopted at the National Conference, 28-31 May 1992*. 30 June 2004 <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/readyto.html>.
- ² See Beri, Ruchita, “South Africa: An Overview of the Defence Industry.” *Strategic Analysis* XXV.4 (2003): 569-584.
- ³ Unless otherwise stated, all quotes are drawn from interviews conducted by the author between November 2002 and February 2004.
- ⁴ UN Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now*. New York: UN, 2003. 28 June 2004 <http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/finalreport/FinalReport.pdf>. 3.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ Harker, John. “HIV/AIDS and the Security Sector in Africa: A Threat to Canada.” *Commentary* 80 (2003). 14 June 2004 http://www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/eng/comment/com80_e.html; UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. “South Africa: HIV-Testing Row in the Military.” *Integrated Regional Information Networks*. 29 October 2003. 14 June 2004 http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=37541&SelectRegion=Southern_Africa.

About the Author

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini joined Women Waging Peace as the director of the newly formed Policy Commission in 2002, with the goal of producing 15 field-based case studies on women’s contributions to peace processes. Prior to joining Waging, she was the senior policy advisor at International Alert on the global campaign Women Building Peace, advocating for UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security. She has written numerous pieces on the role of women in peace processes, including Women at the Peace Table: Making a Difference for the UN Development Fund for Women in 2000 and Women’s Leadership, Gender, and Peace for the Ford Foundation in 2001. Prior to her work on women and peace building, Ms. Anderlini was the managing editor at the Forum on Early Warning and Early Response, a conflict early-warning network, and in 1996 she co-authored Civil Wars, Civil Peace: An Introduction to Conflict Resolution. Ms. Anderlini has conducted numerous workshops worldwide, including Fiji, Iran, and Jordan, on women’s involvement in conflict prevention and peace building. Anderlini holds an Masters of Philosophy degree in Social Anthropology from Cambridge University. She was born in Iran and currently lives in Washington, DC with her husband and twin daughters.