

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 On Monday, May 24, 2010, the African Development Bank and the Government of Norway hosted a discussion on Women in Fragile States: From Passive Victims of Violence to Active Agents of Change. This was organized as a side event to the Bank's Annual Meetings in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire.

1.2 The objective of the side event was to initiate a dialogue on women's roles in the context of fragile states and to propose concrete actions that governments, the African Development Bank, and other partners can take to empower women and increase women's participation in conflict resolution and post-conflict situations. Recommendations from the discussion will be used to provide input to the mid-term review of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1889 on women, peace, and security.

1.3 Resolutions 1325 and 1889 call for increased participation of women in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. They also call for the prevention of sexual violence and the protection of women and girls from violence in conflict. 2010 marks the 10-year anniversary of Resolution 1325. It was the first resolution ever passed by the UN recognizing the impact of war on women and women's contributions to sustainable peace.

2. PANELISTS AND PARTICIPANTS:

2.1 The event was organized as a panel presentation representing different views and perspectives on the topic followed by a facilitated discussion and interaction with participants. The four panelists presenting their perspectives on the issues and challenges facing women and girls in fragile states were:

- Dr. Donald Kaberuka, President, African Development Bank Group
- H.E. Ms. Ingrid Fiskaa, Norwegian State Secretary, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- H.E. Mr. Sheku S. Sesay, Governor of the Bank of Sierra Leone
- Dr. Saran Daraba Kaba, President, Mano River Women's Peace-building Network

2.2 Ms. Yvonne Ndege, Africa Correspondent for Al Jazeera Television, moderated the discussion that followed the interventions.

2.3 The audience of approximately 100 people¹ included members of the Bank's Board of Governors, Executive Directors, Alternate Directors, Advisors, Vice Presidents, technical staff, member country delegations, civil society, and the media.

¹ A few audience members did not register upon entering the meeting room

3. PANEL PRESENTATIONS

3.1 Ms. Sunita Pitamber, Manager, Poverty Reduction and Social Protection Division (OSHD1), welcomed the participants, outlined the need for the discussion on women in fragile states and introduced the objectives of the meeting as well as the expected outcomes.



3.2 **Dr. Kaberuka** framed the discussion, stating that 75 percent of war fatalities and 80 percent of refugees are women and children. He noted that Resolution 1325 is a starting point for providing opportunities for women to participate actively in negotiating and building peace, but that full implementation of the resolution requires actions, resources, and leadership.

3.3 Dr. Kaberuka highlighted several case studies showing the results of women's leadership, including Rwanda, where women now hold 48 percent of the country's legislative seats and head the Supreme Court. He talked about the peace settlement in Uganda that Acholi women helped negotiate and the growing number of women in UN peacekeeping forces.

3.4 In concluding his presentation, Dr. Kaberuka outlined a role for the African Development Bank in promoting women's leadership in fragile states and in Africa. This included the following:

- i. Working with AfDB member countries to make sure women have a role in stabilizing and rebuilding fragile states;
- ii. Providing leadership and resources for the African Women's Business Initiative, which will help women access capital and financial literacy training and services; and
- iii. Continuing to build a cadre of women in professional and leadership positions at the AfDB.



3.5 **Ms. Ingrid Fiskaa, Norwegian State Secretary, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, provided a retrospective look at Norway as a post-conflict country after World War II. Its current peace and prosperity would not have been possible without the full and active participation of women.

3.6 She stated that gender equality and women's rights have been high priorities for the Norwegian Government for many years. This is true not only because it is just but also because it is necessary in order to ensure sustainable economic growth and development. In Norway, the use of quotas has been useful in making sure women can participate on an equal footing with men. In her view, quotas are simply a tool to display women's competencies.

3.7 Ms. Fiskaa said that the security of women is the best measure of national security. Indeed, rape has been the crime that has taken the longest to appear on the security radar. It is the least condemned war crime, often dismissed as a 'private matter.'

3.8 She questioned whether we have cause to celebrate our achievements on the 10th anniversary of UN Resolution 1325. She indicated that there is reason for celebration because women's issues are now largely accepted as security issues and also because there are now clear international and national norms on women, peace, and security. However, on the other hand, women still occupy a marginal position in the shaping of security policies; and the perpetrators of violence against women still largely continue to go free.

3.9 Norway launched a national action plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 in 2006. It is one of 19 states to do so. Governments must be the main driving forces behind such action plans and ensuring women's full participation. The international community can only assist, and donors can provide support.

3.10 Norway provides funding for the development of national action plans. It also emphasizes the recruitment of women for security forces. It supports training programs, including through the UN. Currently, Norway finances a program called Training for Peace with the aim of building a skilled pool of African civilian and police personnel that can be deployed in peacekeeping operations.



3.11 **Mr. Sheku Sesay, Governor of the Bank of Sierra Leone** discussed the grave effects of 11 years of war in Sierra Leone on women, including the abuse of 250,000 women and girls and the displacement of 1 million people. He also noted the public health consequences, with rising HIV infection rates. More than half of those living with HIV in Sierra Leone between the ages of 15 and 49 are women.

3.12 However, women continue to rally for peace. The Women's Forum helped apply pressure for a negotiated settlement and continues to bring women's perspectives on issues and policies. The 50-50 Group has called for equal representation in public office.

3.13 To address the abuses of the war, the Government of Sierra Leone set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Commission found that all armed groups had violated the human rights of women and girls. The Government set up the following to respond to the Commission's findings:

- Domestic support units throughout the country;
- National, multi-sectoral Committee on Gender-Based Violence;
- Counseling services in hospitals;
- Reparations for war widows; and a
- National action plan for Resolution 1325.

3.14 The President of Sierra Leone also formally apologized to the women and girls of the Country on March 27, 2010. Mr. Sesay then outlined the legislative framework being built by the Government of Sierra Leone to encourage the contributions of women. The framework is comprised of policies on gender mainstreaming, the advancement of women with disabilities, and on the aged. It also addresses such things as domestic violence, children's rights, human trafficking, inheritance, and HIV/AIDS.

3.15 He emphasized that Sierra Leone continues to face many challenges. The national action plan on Resolution 1325 has been written, but it must now be implemented. This requires political will and resources. A culture of impunity remains with few convictions in sexual violence cases and a security sector in transition. Those with HIV/AIDS are stigmatized, and common practices encourage the virus' transmission.

3.16 The national budget is fragmented when it comes to gender. Due to pressure on the national budget for resources to numerous development plans, gender mainstreaming activities have largely been supported by development partners. The Government intends to resolve this within the overall budget planning and implementation exercise.

3.17 Mr. Sesay highlighted some concrete actions his government must take. These included the following:

- Review of all existing gender laws with a view towards strengthening their implementation;
- Establishment of a National Committee to monitor the National Action Plan;
- Temporary institution of a 30 percent quota for women in public office;
- Reducing dependency on donor funding; and
- Access to credit and training for women.



3.18 **Dr. Saran Daraba Kaba, President, Mano River Women's Peace-building Network**, opened by saying that the Mano River Network came about because a group of women forced the door open at a time when leadership was needed. They saw the situation between Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone was at an impasse and pushed the leaders of Liberia and Guinea to negotiate a peace settlement. Since then they have spent a decade trying to ensure the region

does not relapse into war.

3.19 The Network focuses on training programs and making sure the right people are at the decision-making tables. They have achieved the involvement of traditional leaders in discussions with ECOWAS to encourage all sides to live up to their agreements. They have worked on disarmament and demobilization by training young people in trades that allow them to remain in rural areas instead of swelling the ranks of the unemployed in urban centers. In addition, they have trained radio operators to be ambassadors for peace and given them the equipment necessary to continue broadcasting.

3.20 One important success has been in the area of food security. Women traders in the border regions handle 80 percent of the cross-border market. They have been targets for violence because they often carry quantities of hard currency. The Network negotiated arrangements with Eco-Bank to enable the traders to deposit and retrieve their funds in any of the regional currencies. They also help the group disseminate information, so they know which commodities are needed in each area and at what prices, facilitating the flow of goods. The Network also arranged for briefings by customs officials, so the women traders have accurate customs information and are not cheated.

3.21 Dr. Daraba cited some of the lessons learned:

- Governments have signed many documents, but they often do not enforce them;
- Money and power have caused the quality of political leadership to deteriorate;
- Citizens also have the responsibility to enforce agreements and conventions;
- Women have to assume political positions; and
- Education is the key to behavior change.

5. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS



5.1 The moderator, Yvonne Ndege, opened the floor for questions. There was active participation from the floor after the panelists set the context for discussions. Participants commended the Bank and the Norwegian Government for creating the space to discuss an issue so important for gender equality and women's empowerment in fragile states. Drawing on the diverse experiences participants outlined the following as key issues of concern:

- Many governments and development agencies do not have mechanisms in place for monitoring their work and level of financing for gender equality. This could be a useful accountability mechanism. UNDP indicated that it was piloting a tool called the Gender Marker and their experience with this would be useful to others.
- There is urgent need for men as brothers of sisters, fathers of daughters and husbands of wives to give their support to the gender equality agenda.
- Social change does not happen because someone gives away an advantage. Women will need to be much more proactive in promoting change in attitudes and also at the same time be prepared to compete on an equal playing field with men.
- By depending on donors to finance UNSCR 1325 and other gender equality actions, African Governments stand the risk of being unable to pursue their own agenda.
- Though absolutely necessary and important especially in fragile states, there are challenges to having more women in the police forces. It is important to build commitment for this and to find mechanisms for other countries to learn from experiences of Liberia and Sierra Leone which have done this to a degree of success.
- Women's participation in decision-making processes is vital to their legitimacy and to ensuring decisions made reflect the interest and priorities of the whole population. It is essential for their economic independence and empowerment.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The event ended with some concrete recommendations on the way forward. Participants noted the need for a serious commitment at all levels to meeting national and international responsibilities, including development of legislative frameworks and making

resources available in less fragmented ways. They also stressed the importance of harmonizing action plans particularly within regions. Violence against women is not only a local issue. It is a national and regional one and progress locally can encourage progress internationally.

6.2 Participants also made the following specific recommendations on what the various parties, that is, governments and donors including the African Development Bank could do to strengthen the implementation of UNSCR 1325:

- **Governments:** Governments especially in fragile states need to develop and implement action plans on UNSCR 1325. They should be the main driving forces behind such action plans and should ensure women's full participation. They should commit adequate budgetary resources for the implementation of the action plans and should reduce dependency on donor funding.
- **International Agencies:** Donors (including the AfDB) and the UN System should avoid ad hoc interventions. They should provide funding through government systems and align their support with partner governments' National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325. They should also support learning and experience sharing across countries. International agencies were also called upon to invest in women by strengthening their focus on micro-finance but being mindful that women would need larger amounts of money to grow their businesses effectively.

ANNEX 1
List of Participants²

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² The number of participants were 150, however, not all of them registered upon entering the meeting room.

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ANNEX 2

Organization and Invitations Process

1. Invitations for the side event were sent to the following individuals:
 - Members of the Board of Governors
 - Executive Directors, Alternate Directors, Senior Advisors and Advisors to the Board
 - AfDB Vice Presidents and other selected senior staff
 - AfDB gender specialists
 - Coalition for Dialogue on Africa members
 - 37 Africa-based civil society organizations
 - confirmed participants from the “Investing Differently in Women” Dinner (scheduled for May 25th) from business, civil society, media, academic, and government
2. Following the initial dispatch of invitations, follow-up included contacting the offices of Executive Directors to request RSVPs from country delegations and the Coalition for Dialogue on Africa members.
3. In addition to individually addressed electronic invitations, the event was widely advertised by posters displayed at the conference venue (Hotel Ivoire), leaflets inserted into the conference materials of all participants arriving in time for the session, and in-person invitations to those who arrived at the venue in the days preceding the event. Participation was excellent such that there were approximately 150 people present at the session and interest from the press in interviewing each of the panelists.
4. Coxswain Social Investment Plus (CSI+) consultancy firm provided technical and logistical support to set up the event for successful execution
5. The following costs were financed through the Norwegian Trust Fund:
 - Tickets and accommodation for external discussants and moderator;
 - Moderator’s Fees
 - Communication material
 - Fees to Coxswain Social Investment Plus (CSI+) consultancy firm.