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Women, Peace, and Security: An Assessment of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 Implementation Policies in Different Peacebuilding Contexts

Mariana González Mejía

Abstract

This article examines the impact of policies inspired by UNSCR 1325 on women's participation in peace and security processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, and the Philippines. Through a comparative analysis, the study identifies common challenges such as structural barriers, cultural resistance, and inconsistent policy implementation. Despite progress in formal inclusion, the practical influence of women remains limited. The findings highlight the need for stronger institutional support, sustained funding, and cultural change to fully realize the transformative potential of gender-inclusive peacebuilding.

Keywords: gender mainstreaming, gender-based violence, institutional challenges, post-conflict settings, women's empowerment.

Introduction

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), adopted in 2000, marks a pivotal moment in international security and peacebuilding efforts, emphasizing the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and the crucial role they play in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction (UN Women, 2015). The resolution highlights four key pillars: prevention of conflict, protection of women's rights, participation of women in peace processes, and relief and recovery efforts that address gender-specific needs. These pillars establish a new framework for integrating a gender perspective into global security policies, advocating for the active involvement of women at all stages of peace processes and beyond (UNSCR 1325, 2000).

The implementation of UNSCR 1325 has varied across different geopolitical contexts, reflecting the unique socio-political landscapes, conflict histories, and institutional structures of each country. Despite widespread recognition of its principles, translating these commitments into tangible change on the ground has proven complex and uneven (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, n.d.). This study addresses the core question: What impact have policies inspired by UNSCR 1325 had on women's participation in peacebuilding processes, and how can those policies be more effective? To explore this, the article examines the experiences of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, and the Philippines—three countries that have adopted National Action Plans (NAPs) aligned with UNSCR 1325 to address gender issues within their distinct peacebuilding frameworks. The study aims to analyze the successes, challenges, and implications of these policies in reshaping security environments and enhancing women's roles in peace efforts.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's engagement with UNSCR 1325 must be understood against the backdrop of its brutal conflict from 1992 to 1995, which resulted in deep ethnic divisions and widespread human rights abuses, including systematic sexual violence against women (Björkdahl & Selimovic, 2019; OSCE, 2020). The Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended the war, established a complex political structure that has often impeded coherent governance and reform (Kapur, 2020). In the post-conflict period, Bosnia developed its first National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in 2010, focusing on integrating women into peace and security sectors, combating gender-based violence, and promoting gender equality in decision-making roles (ARS BiH, n.d.). These NAPs represent an effort to address the legacies of the war by incorporating women's voices into the rebuilding of state institutions.

Colombia's long-standing internal conflict, which lasted for more than five decades, involved various armed actors, including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) (International Crisis Group, 2021). The conflict resulted in severe humanitarian consequences, including mass displacement, violence against civilians, and widespread human rights violations (Restrepo & Moser, 2021). In 2016, the Colombian government and the FARC signed a historic peace agreement, which included specific provisions addressing the needs and rights of women, largely influenced by UNSCR 1325 (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2023). Colombia's National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325 have played a crucial role in recognizing and formalizing the contributions of women to peace negotiations, transitional justice, and community-level peacebuilding. The NAPs emphasize the need to protect women from ongoing violence, promote their participation in leadership roles, and ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into post-conflict reconstruction efforts (UN Women Colombia, 2023).

The Philippines has experienced multiple armed conflicts, particularly in the southern region of Mindanao, where separatist movements and insurgencies have long destabilized the area (Magno & Bautista, 2022). The 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) marked a significant milestone in the peace process, aiming to establish greater autonomy and address the longstanding grievances of the Muslim minority (PeaceGov, 2023). The Philippines was one of the first countries in the Asia-Pacific region to develop a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in 2010. The Philippine NAPs focus on the protection of women in conflict-affected areas, their empowerment, and meaningful participation in peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, n.d.).

The implementation of National Action Plans inspired by UNSCR 1325 in these three countries highlights both progress and ongoing barriers to achieving gender-inclusive peace. Each case illustrates the potential for UNSCR 1325 to drive significant policy changes aimed at enhancing women's roles in peace and security sectors.

Literature Review

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina's experience with UNSCR 1325 is shaped by the post-war context and the Dayton Peace Agreement, which largely excluded women from formal peace negotiations (Björkdahl & Selimovic, 2019). Bosnia was one of the first countries in the Western Balkans to adopt a National Action Plan (NAP) in 2010. Efforts to integrate women into the defense and security sectors have included measures to enhance their representation in military and police forces, as documented by the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARS BiH).

Despite these initiatives, the literature identifies considerable obstacles to implementation. Institutional resistance, limited funding, and deeply rooted gender norms have significantly hindered progress (OSCE, 2020; Kapur, 2020). Evaluations by UN Women reveal that while policies exist, their application is inconsistent, with women's roles often relegated to symbolic participation rather than meaningful influence in decision-making. The OSCE has similarly reported that while awareness about gender issues has increased, the practical integration of a gender perspective remains uneven across various institutions, including the military and law enforcement. Furthermore, political instability and frequent changes in government leadership have created additional hurdles, disrupting the continuity and effectiveness of policy implementation (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

A critical gap identified in the literature is the lack of long-term evaluations of the impact of UNSCR 1325 policies on women's security and participation in Bosnia. Most studies focus on immediate outputs rather than sustained outcomes, leaving a gap in understanding the true transformative potential of these policies over time (UN Women, 2021). Additionally, there is limited research on the specific barriers faced by women in rural and ethnically divided areas, which are often the most affected by the legacies of conflict (International Alert, 2021).

Colombia

Colombia's implementation of UNSCR 1325 is closely linked to its extensive history of internal armed conflict and the landmark peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The inclusion of a gender subcommission during the peace negotiations marked a pioneering step, making Colombia one of the few countries to explicitly integrate gender considerations into formal peace

processes (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2023). The NAPs, first introduced in 2016, were designed to enhance the role of women in peacebuilding and address gender-specific impacts of the conflict (UN Women, 2022).

However, persistent challenges are highlighted throughout the literature. Reports by UN Women and the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed that despite formal recognition, the practical implementation of gender-responsive policies faces significant barriers, including ongoing violence against women and deeply entrenched patriarchal structures (Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). Women's involvement in peace processes is frequently described as symbolic, with their contributions often minimized in formal settings. Additionally, the security environment in Colombia continues to pose severe risks, as armed groups and criminal organizations maintain control in many areas, undermining efforts to protect women's rights and ensure their active participation (International Crisis Group, 2021).

The literature also points to the lack of resources and coordination among governmental bodies as a main difficulty. A report by the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs notes that funding for gender initiatives remains inadequate, and there is a clear need for stronger institutional frameworks to support the integration of women in peacebuilding efforts. The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security (n.d.) emphasizes that while NAPs have set ambitious goals, their execution often falls short due to insufficient financial and institutional support. A significant gap in the literature is the evaluation of the effectiveness of these NAPs in rural and Afro-Colombian communities, where traditional gender roles are particularly entrenched and data on women's participation is sparse (UN Women Colombia, 2023).

Philippines

The Philippines is recognized as a leader in the Asia-Pacific region for its early adoption of a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in 2010. The NAPs prioritize the protection, empowerment, and meaningful participation of women, particularly in conflict-affected areas like Mindanao, where decades of violence have deeply impacted communities (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, n.d.). Collaboration between the government and civil society organizations has been central to these efforts, with specific initiatives designed to promote women's roles in conflict resolution and peacekeeping (Asian Development Bank, 2020).

Nevertheless, the literature underscores a persistent gap between policy and practice. According to research from the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, while the NAPs establish a solid framework, the implementation is undermined by cultural norms, ongoing conflict dynamics, and limited institutional capacity. Studies by UNDP (2022) and Alano & Tigno (2023) highlight that traditional gender roles and resistance within local governance structures often impede the execution of gender-sensitive reforms, particularly in rural and conflict-affected regions.

A notable gap in the literature is the lack of studies that measure the long-term impact of these initiatives on women's empowerment in conflict zones. Most evaluations focus on short-term outputs, such as participation rates in workshops or training sessions, rather than long-term changes in women's roles and influence within their communities. The absence of comprehensive data on the sustained effects of NAPs on women's status in Mindanao and other conflict areas underscores the need for more robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to better capture the transformative potential of these initiatives (PeaceGov, 2023).

Methodology

This study has a qualitative case analysis approach to examine the impact of policies inspired by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on transforming security structures and enhancing women's participation in peacebuilding processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, and the Philippines. A qualitative approach is particularly suitable for this research as it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena, such as the intersection of gender, conflict, and peace. This approach focuses on understanding the contextual and dynamic aspects of how UNSCR 1325 has been implemented and adapted within different socio-political environments.

The study uses a multiple case study design, which facilitates comparative analysis across diverse contexts, highlighting both shared challenges and unique country-specific factors. The cases of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, and the Philippines were selected due to their distinctive conflict histories and the presence of established National Action Plans (NAPs) aligned with UNSCR 1325 in their social reconstruction processes after a conflict. Bosnia and Herzegovina offers insight into a post-conflict European setting marked by ethnic divisions, Colombia provides a perspective on integrating gender into ongoing peace negotiations in Latin

America, and the Philippines presents a case of a protracted conflict in the Asia-Pacific region with active civil society involvement.

Sources for this analysis were carefully selected based on their relevance, credibility, and direct relation to the topic. The primary sources include government reports, NAP documents, and evaluations from recognized international organizations such as the United Nations, OSCE, NATO, and UN Women. Secondary sources consist of academic articles, policy analyses, and reports from reputable non-governmental organizations that have actively monitored the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the selected countries.

Despite the robust methodological approach, the study faces several limitations. First, the reliance on secondary data sources means that the analysis is contingent on the availability and quality of existing reports and studies, which may vary across countries. Some regions, particularly rural and conflict-affected areas, are underrepresented in the literature, leading to potential gaps in understanding the localized impact of these policies.

Another limitation of this study is the potential bias inherent in qualitative research methods, particularly in the interpretation of data from diverse socio-political contexts. The analysis relies heavily on the perspectives and interpretations of existing reports and documents, which may reflect the biases of the authors or organizations that produced them. Additionally, the study's focus on specific countries may limit the generalizability of the findings to other conflict-affected regions with different cultural, historical, or political backgrounds.

Language barriers also pose a challenge, as key documents and local perspectives might be inaccessible or inadequately translated, potentially leading to a skewed understanding of the implementation and effects of UNSCR 1325 in these countries. Lastly, the absence of direct engagement with local stakeholders, such as women's groups and community leaders, restricts the study's ability to capture nuanced, on-the-ground experiences and grassroots perspectives, which are crucial for a comprehensive assessment of the impact of these policies.

Results and Analysis

Women's Participation in Peace and Security Processes

Women's participation in peace and security processes, central to UNSCR 1325, faces entrenched barriers embedded in institutional, cultural, and security

dynamics. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, while National Action Plans (NAPs) aim to enhance women's roles in security sectors, these efforts often lack depth and genuine impact. The country's post-war governance structure, characterized by complex ethnic divisions and a fragmented political landscape, leads to significant inconsistencies in policy implementation (ARS BiH, n.d.; European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE], 2021). This fragmentation inhibits a unified strategy for integrating women into decision-making roles, confining their contributions primarily to lower administrative levels. According to the OSCE (2020) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women, 2021), institutional resistance and the perpetuation of male-dominated hierarchies hinder progress; for instance, gender sensitivity training programs are often implemented in a perfunctory manner, treated as mere formalities rather than as transformative tools. This reflects a superficial institutional commitment to addressing deeper cultural and structural power imbalances that exclude women from meaningful participation.

In Colombia, the inclusion of women in the peace negotiations with the FARC was a significant step forward, but it also exposed the limitations imposed by prevailing power dynamics. The establishment of a gender subcommission during the negotiations was pioneering; however, its influence was often marginalized due to entrenched patriarchal norms that permeated the negotiation process (Cancillería de Colombia, 2023; Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2023). Analysis of negotiation transcripts and interviews with participants reveal that women's contributions were frequently sidelined or reframed by dominant male negotiators, resulting in diluted gender provisions in the final agreement. Furthermore, the implementation of these provisions has been uneven, especially in rural and conflict-affected regions where armed actors continue to exert control (International Crisis Group, 2021; UN Women Colombia, 2023). Key gender-related commitments, such as land rights for women and protections against gender-based violence, remain largely unfulfilled due to weak state presence, ongoing violence, and a lack of enforcement mechanisms (UN Women, 2022; OSCE, 2020). This highlights the gap between the formal inclusion of women and the actual empowerment necessary to influence peacebuilding processes.

The Philippines, despite being one of the first Asian countries to adopt a NAP, presents a context where women's involvement in conflict-affected areas like Mindanao remains constrained by deep-seated cultural norms. While women are visibly active in peace negotiations and local mediation efforts, their ability to effect substantive

change is curtailed by the persistence of patriarchal structures that continue to prioritize male authority (Asian Development Bank, 2020; Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, n.d.). Studies, including those by International Alert (2021) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022), show that although women are often present, their roles are typically confined to supportive or advisory positions, lacking the authority to shape key decisions. Training programs aimed at enhancing women's leadership have achieved some success in skill development, but the absence of institutional mechanisms to integrate these skills into national security structures means that gains are often not sustained (PeaceGov, 2023; UNDP, 2022). The disconnect between capacity-building efforts and institutional adoption underscores the need for more robust policies that go beyond symbolic participation, ensuring that women can influence peace and security outcomes meaningfully.

Protection Against Gender-Based Violence

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, conflict-related sexual violence has left a profound and enduring impact on the social fabric, with thousands of survivors still grappling with the physical, psychological, and social consequences of wartime abuses (UN Women, 2021). Although National Action Plans (NAPs) have been established to enhance support for survivors—through healthcare, legal aid, and counseling services—there are persistent gaps between policy frameworks and actual support (ARS BiH, n.d.). According to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE, 2020), the legal system often lacks the capacity and commitment to adequately prosecute sexual violence cases, hindered by outdated legal definitions, insufficient resources, and pervasive mistrust in institutions that survivors perceive as indifferent or even hostile. A report by NATO (2011) further emphasizes that "the societal stigma attached to survivors acts as a silencing mechanism," effectively obstructing their access to justice. This stigma is not merely a social issue but a significant barrier that perpetuates a cycle of impunity, allowing gender-based violence (GBV) to persist unchecked.

In Colombia, the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war by various armed groups has been systematically documented, with women and girls disproportionately affected (International Crisis Group, 2021). The peace agreements and NAPs explicitly addressed GBV by incorporating gender-sensitive provisions, including reparations and legal protections for survivors (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2023). However, the enforcement of these provisions has been plagued by

challenges. Residual armed groups and a weak state presence in rural areas create a precarious environment where survivors remain vulnerable. As highlighted by UN Women (2022), the Colombian justice system is fraught with patriarchal biases that frequently result in the re-victimization of women during legal proceedings. Moreover, security threats posed by armed actors deter women from seeking legal action, fearing retaliation or renewed violence. A study by the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2023) points out that "the fear of reprisals is a major factor discouraging survivors from pursuing justice," revealing the ongoing dangers women face even post-conflict.

The Philippines presents a similarly complex landscape, particularly in conflict-affected regions like Mindanao, where GBV remains pervasive. The Philippine NAPs have introduced several initiatives, including gender-sensitive training for law enforcement and the establishment of women's help desks in police stations (Asian Development Bank, 2020; Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, n.d.). Despite these measures, cultural norms deeply embedded within communities continue to stigmatize survivors, dissuading them from reporting incidents of violence. According to a report by the United Nations Development Programme (2022), many women endure the dual burden of social shame and fear of reprisals, which significantly hampers the effectiveness of protective measures. Additionally, local authorities are often perceived not as allies but as obstacles, hindered by corruption, incompetence, or biases that diminish the severity of GBV cases (PeaceGov, 2023). This perception "undermines the trust in protective systems designed to aid survivors," as noted by International Alert (2021), and underscores the critical need for more comprehensive institutional reforms to effectively combat GBV.

Integration of The Gender Perspective in Security Institutions

In Bosnia, gender sensitivity training mandated by NAPs often lacks depth, perceived as symbolic rather than substantive. UN Women (2021) notes that many security personnel still hold traditional views that marginalize women, limiting their access to leadership roles and perpetuating a male-dominated culture. This indicates a persistent disconnect between policy and practice, as highlighted by the OSCE (2020), where reforms are frequently superficial.

In Colombia, gender units and targeted training within the military and police have faced similar obstacles. According to the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies (2023), these initiatives are not consistently applied, particularly in conflict zones where gender is deprioritized. Reports from the International Crisis

Group (2021) emphasize that without institutional commitment and resources, these units lack the influence necessary to transform entrenched power dynamics within security forces.

In the Philippines, efforts to promote gender-sensitive practices face cultural and institutional barriers, with initiatives often underfunded and poorly integrated into everyday security operations (Asian Development Bank, 2020). The establishment of women's help desks in police stations is a step forward, yet their impact is limited by inadequate training and persistent biases within the forces (PeaceGov, 2023). This underscores the need for stronger enforcement mechanisms and continuous institutional support to achieve meaningful gender integration.

Structural Challenges and Cultural Barriers

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, structural challenges are deeply connected to the fragmentation of the political system, which stems from the complex web of entities, cantons, and municipalities established by the Dayton Peace Agreement. This structure hinders the uniform implementation of gender policies. According to Kapur (2020), "institutional fragmentation not only slows down decision-making but also fosters local resistance to national gender equality policies, which are often seen as external impositions." Additionally, the legacy of conflict and the prominence of nationalist leaderships create a context where gender policies are sidelined in favor of ethnic and political priorities (Björkdahl & Selimovic, 2019). Culturally, machismo and traditional stereotypes about women's roles significantly limit their participation in security and politics, especially in rural areas where women are still primarily viewed as caregivers (Bailliet, 2021).

In Colombia, the implementation of NAPs faces multiple structural and cultural barriers that complicate the effective mainstreaming of gender perspectives into security institutions and peacebuilding processes. The persistent presence of armed groups and weak state presence in rural areas severely restrict the reach of gender policies. Restrepo and Moser (2021) highlight that "the lack of state infrastructure in conflict zones undermines efforts to protect women and implement gender-focused reforms." Moreover, the pervasive influence of machismo and patriarchal norms across all levels of society creates an environment where gender initiatives are often dismissed or poorly implemented within security sectors. Salcedo and Prieto (2022) argue that these entrenched biases within the military and police contribute to a "culture of resistance" against gender reforms, where women's participation is frequently marginalized. Additionally, the challenges are compounded

for Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women, whose roles are deeply intertwined with traditional cultural identities, making gender integration efforts more complex and requiring culturally sensitive approaches (O'Rourke, 2021).

In the Philippines, the structural and cultural barriers to implementing UNSCR 1325 are influenced by the decentralized governance system and strong traditional norms. Local political dynamics, particularly in Mindanao, often involve powerful clans and local elites who exert significant control over the implementation of policies, including those related to gender (Magno & Bautista, 2022). This decentralization allows local leaders to selectively enforce national gender mandates, often aligning with personal or political interests rather than broader gender equality goals. Cultural factors also play a critical role; the influence of the Catholic Church and Islamic traditions reinforce conservative gender roles, viewing women's involvement in security and decision-making as contrary to established norms. Alano and Tigno (2023) note that "religious leaders and traditional power structures significantly shape local attitudes towards gender, frequently viewing gender equality initiatives as external or irrelevant." This cultural resistance undermines the impact of gender policies, particularly in areas where religious and traditional authorities hold sway over governance and societal norms (Rigual, 2022).

Policy Effectiveness and Sustainability

The long-term effectiveness and sustainability of UNSCR 1325-inspired policies face a myriad of challenges across Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, and the Philippines, rooted not just in funding and political shifts but in deeper systemic and structural limitations. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, international investment in gender-sensitive programs often lacks integration into national frameworks, resulting in initiatives perceived as externally imposed rather than locally owned. According to the OSCE (2020), these efforts are frequently ad hoc, with limited long-term commitment from local institutions. ARS BiH (n.d.) highlights that without embedding gender-sensitive practices into domestic reforms, these initiatives risk being seen as temporary rather than sustainable. Weak institutional capacities, compounded by political instability and frequent government changes, further undermine these efforts, reflecting a need for deeper integration into national governance structures.

The gender provisions in Colombia within the peace process with FARC initially represented a significant step forward; however, their sustainability remains vulnerable due to ongoing security issues and shifting political priorities. The Kroc

Institute for International Peace Studies (2023) notes that while early momentum existed, the focus on gender has waned as government attention diverted to immediate security challenges, leaving gender initiatives underfunded. Additionally, the persistent presence of armed groups, particularly in rural areas, obstructs the implementation of gender-sensitive policies (International Crisis Group, 2021). UN Women (2022) emphasizes the need for robust support systems that can endure political fluctuations and ensure that gender considerations are consistently embedded in peacebuilding efforts, even under adverse conditions.

In the Philippines, the effectiveness of gender policies is often compromised by a lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The UNDP (2022) reports that although National Action Plans aim to advance gender equality, the absence of comprehensive data collection and assessment tools hampers the ability to track progress and make necessary adjustments. This deficiency weakens the case for sustained funding and political backing, as the impact of these policies remains difficult to quantify. Furthermore, the decentralized governance system in the Philippines leads to inconsistent implementation of gender policies, with significant disparities across regions depending on local leadership and resource allocation (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, n.d.). The Asian Development Bank (2020) notes that this fragmentation highlights the need for a more cohesive approach that ensures uniform policy execution and accountability across all levels of government.

Discussion

The analysis of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, and the Philippines reveals the multifaceted challenges of implementing UNSCR 1325, highlighting not only cultural dilemmas but also a broader set of structural and political barriers. A critical challenge that emerges is the tension between promoting gender equality and respecting local cultural and religious norms. While cultural sensitivity is crucial in ensuring community acceptance of gender initiatives, it also poses dilemmas when such norms conflict with human rights principles or hinder the progress of gender-sensitive reforms (Alano & Tigno, 2023). For example, in the Philippines, deeply ingrained gender roles influenced by religious beliefs often clash with international gender equality standards, raising the question of where to draw the line between respecting cultural practices and upholding women's rights. This dilemma extends to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where nationalist narratives and traditional

views on gender roles often limit the reach and acceptance of gender policies (Björkdahl & Selimovic, 2019).

Beyond cultural issues, the effectiveness of UNSCR 1325 initiatives is undermined by significant political and institutional barriers. Political instability and shifting government priorities frequently disrupt the momentum of gender initiatives. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the fragmented political landscape leads to inconsistent policy implementation, as local and national authorities often prioritize ethnic agendas over gender equality (Kapur, 2020). Similarly, in Colombia, the ongoing conflict and the presence of armed groups severely restrict the application of gender-sensitive policies, particularly in regions where state presence is minimal (International Crisis Group, 2021). Political interests often shape the agenda, with gender reforms being deprioritized in favor of more immediate security concerns, revealing the fragile nature of these initiatives when confronted with broader national crises.

Institutional weaknesses also play a critical role in hindering the implementation of gender policies. In all three countries, limited institutional capacity and a lack of coordination between national and local entities contribute to the inconsistent application of NAPs. For instance, in the Philippines, the decentralized governance system results in significant disparities in how gender policies are enforced across regions, often reflecting the varying levels of commitment from local leaders (Asian Development Bank, 2020). Furthermore, inadequate funding remains a pervasive challenge, as gender initiatives frequently rely on external donors whose support can be unpredictable and insufficient. The UNDP (2022) highlights that without stable financial backing and comprehensive monitoring mechanisms, gender policies struggle to achieve long-term impact, often reduced to short-term projects rather than sustainable reforms.

Another critical barrier is the lack of integration between gender policies and other key sectors, such as education, healthcare, and economic development. These sectors are essential in supporting the broader goals of UNSCR 1325, yet they are often underfunded or overlooked in the design of gender initiatives. In Colombia, for example, gender provisions in the peace agreement are not fully supported by complementary social services, leaving gaps in areas like mental health support for survivors of gender-based violence (UN Women, 2022). This lack of a holistic approach underscores the need for more interconnected strategies that address the multifaceted needs of women in conflict-affected settings.

These findings open a critical discussion on the broader systemic issues that hinder the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Addressing these barriers requires not only culturally sensitive approaches but also a recognition of the need for stronger political will, institutional reform, stable funding, and cross-sectoral integration. This raises an important question: are UNSCR 1325 and similar resolutions adequately designed to effect change, or do they need to be accompanied by clear implementation pathways and capacity-building strategies to translate their goals into effective policies? The challenge of embedding these resolutions into real-world contexts suggests that without a structured roadmap and support mechanisms, these initiatives risk remaining aspirational rather than transformative.

Conclusion

This study of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, and the Philippines underscores the urgent need for tailored approaches to implementing UNSCR 1325 that go beyond general frameworks and address specific barriers unique to each context. To make gender policies more effective, it is essential to develop clear implementation roadmaps and capacity-building strategies that consider local realities, including political, cultural, and institutional constraints. Our findings suggest that fragmented governance in Bosnia, ongoing security threats in Colombia, and deeply ingrained cultural norms in the Philippines each demand customized strategies that incorporate gender considerations into broader reforms rather than treating them as isolated initiatives.

One crucial recommendation is to prioritize the integration of gender policies into national and local governance systems through mandatory, context-specific guidelines that hold institutions accountable. Building local capacity is key; training programs should be aligned with the socio-political realities of each country, ensuring that those tasked with implementing these policies have the skills, resources, and support needed to succeed. Developing dedicated funding streams and stable financial mechanisms can mitigate the disruptions caused by political changes, ensuring that gender initiatives remain resilient over time.

To bridge the gap between policy and practice, a stronger focus on cross-sector collaboration is necessary. Linking gender policies with education, healthcare, and economic development can create a more supportive environment that amplifies their impact. This interconnected approach can help address the broader needs of

women in conflict-affected areas, making gender policies not just aspirational but practically effective.

Moreover, engaging local communities, including religious and traditional leaders, in the design and promotion of gender initiatives can foster greater acceptance and reduce resistance. Creating culturally sensitive communication strategies that resonate with local values while challenging harmful norms can be a powerful tool in shifting attitudes. Lastly, enhancing monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress and adapt strategies in real time is essential for ensuring that gender policies are continuously refined and effectively implemented.

Ultimately, the success of UNSCR 1325 and similar frameworks depends on moving from high-level commitments to actionable, context-specific solutions that are deeply embedded in the realities of each society. By focusing on capacity building, stable funding, local engagement, and robust accountability, these policies can become more than symbolic gestures, driving genuine change and advancing the role of women in peace and security in a meaningful and sustainable way.

Given these insights, it is recommended that the United Nations accompany resolutions like UNSCR 1325 with detailed implementation guidelines and capacity-building support tailored to diverse contexts. Developing a clear, adaptable framework with practical steps for countries to follow, along with mechanisms for continuous evaluation and local adaptation, can significantly enhance the practical impact of these resolutions and ensure they are not just aspirational but truly transformative on the ground.

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