

# Re-claiming Space: Challenging knowledge hierarchies and re-framing women, peace and security

## The Asia-Pacific Women's Alliance for Peace and Security (APWAPS)

*A call for women affected by conflict to develop learning communities that produce and share knowledge as an integral part of women's empowerment in building peace and security*

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### **The Peace Forum New York, 28-30 October 2015**

The women, peace and security agenda – initiated by the UN Security Council – was an imperative 15 years ago and remains so today as persistent gaps in understanding, analysis and implementation have not been eliminated. One critical gap is the inadequate knowledge and understanding by the international community on the complex realities, dilemmas and choices faced by the diversity of women during times of conflict and in post-conflict situations.

Unfortunately, the international discourse and negotiations to integrate women and their interests and gendered concerns into the peace and security agenda have mostly followed predefined frameworks set out far away from lived experiences and on-the-ground with over emphasis on commonalities across diverse contexts. Documentation of women, peace and security issues has mainly been carried out through the intermediary of experts in language and articulations that are often inaccessible or incomprehensible to those, living in conflict settings, who were the very sources of information. Such knowledge-building processes have mostly remained extractive in character and their results disconnected from women's concrete realities, needs and interests in addressing the difficult dynamics, complex causes and painful consequences of conflict on the ground.

At the same time, macro analyses on the political economic foundations of long-standing conflicts, which are informed by larger geopolitical interests and global trends in demographics and technological development, seldom

reach women who are affected by conflict in any meaningful way. These women are making decisions every day to deal with with the challenges of conflict and post-conflict situations and realities. But the experiences and lived realities of women and their critical insights continue to be isolated from experts and academics in the global centers of power and privilege who shape the policies and decisions that affect communities impacted by conflict.

The goal of just, inclusive and lasting peace and security around the world cannot be achieved if the knowledge hierarchy continues to prevail and systematically excludes the women most affected by conflicts and post-conflict situations. By perpetuating inequality in knowledge building on issues relevant to the women, peace and security agenda, we risk another 15 years of slow progress or, indeed, non-progress throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

**The Asia Pacific Women's Alliance on Peace and Security (APWAPS) calls on women in conflict-affected contexts to create and develop learning communities – based on the principle of a reciprocal exchange among equals – on issues and ideas relevant to the transformation of conflict and for the development of just, inclusive and lasting peace and security. Join APWAPS in creating spaces for path-breaking and context-specific conversations and collaborations among peers. Knowledge is power.**



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Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)

**The Asia-Pacific Women's Alliance for Peace and Security (APWAPS):** a space for collaborations and conversations to promote women's leadership for just, inclusive and lasting peace and security in Asia and the Pacific.

## About APWAPS

Women striving for justice and human rights in the conflict-affected communities of Asia and the Pacific have come together to strengthen their leadership and contribution towards just, inclusive and lasting peace and security in the region. As the Asia-Pacific Women's Alliance for Peace and Security (APWAPS), women from diverse backgrounds are building a movement with and among local women who are organizing for conflict transformation from the grassroots up.

APWAPS is creating a common platform to speak to all relevant actors and stakeholders of peace and security - including States, non-State entities, the United Nations, development aid agencies, and civil society organisations - with a commitment to building awareness of the realities on the ground for women in conflict-affected communities framed by the distinct regional characteristics of the Asia-Pacific region. Since 2014, when APWAPS was launched at the Asia-Pacific Feminist Forum, over 90 organisations from all sub-regions of the extensive Asia-Pacific region have joined in regional conversations and collaborations.

## APWAPS and the Global Study 1325

*"Women, peace and security is about preventing war, not about making war safer for women."*

Participant at the Asia-Pacific civil society regional consultation for the Global Study in Kathmandu, February 2015 and quoted in the Global Study on the Implementation of Resolution 1325 by Radhika Coomaraswamy.

- APWAPS and UN Women co-convened the first regional civil society consultation with Radhika Coomaraswamy, lead author of the United Nations' Global Study on Implementation of UNSCR 1325. Held in Nepal, in February 2015 the consultation enabled over 60 activists, many from conflict-affected areas in the Asia-Pacific region, to engage directly in the 15-year review.
- An online dialogue was hosted by APWAPS and Women in Governance-India to share experiences and perspectives on UNSCR 1325 among women activists in Asia-Pacific. A written report of the dialogue outcomes, entitled "Spectrum of Perspectives: Review and Analysis of UNSCR 1325 in Asia-Pacific Region," was submitted to the Global Study.
- APWAPS affiliates participated in the CSO survey for the Global Study on UNSCR 1325, facilitated by Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and Cordaid.
- APWAPS made a special written submission to the Global Study on the use of CEDAW and its General Recommendations as an accountability mechanism for women, peace and security.
- APWAPS is a co-sponsor of the Peace Forum: Accelerating the Implementation of the Women, Peace, Security Agenda (UNSCR 1325): Mobilizing Women & Men to Work Together, 28-30 October 2015, New York.
- APWAPS will host a panel discussion at the 1325 anniversary Peace Forum, profiling a new knowledge building initiative, "From Deep in the Shadows of War and Peace: A Feminist Critique of Power and Politics in Peace Building."

### 5 areas of common concern

- Accountability and combating impunity**
- Militarization**, small arms and the continuum of violence in everyday life
- Structural inequalities** and their links to development policies and practices
- Rising cultural and religious fundamentalisms**
- Women's full and **meaningful participation in building peace and security**

### APWAPS' three pathways for change:



**Knowledge Building:** APWAPS creates a space for the development of innovative and empowering methodologies to build and enhance our knowledge about conflict, peace and security and what it means for women to transform conflicts and build peace based on our own experiences and lived realities on the ground. The alliance is developing a peer-to-peer knowledge building initiative among women in conflict and post-conflict situations. We consider this a political act that will change the terms of our engagement as women on these issues.



**Advocacy:** We are keenly aware that the global community is at an historic moment of reflection and consensus building. The 20-year review of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the 15-year review of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and the negotiations on the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals all converge within the first year of APWAPS' establishment. This is not a coincidence. APWAPS is actively engaging in all of the strategic forums influencing the above review and negotiation processes to ensure that the views and contributions of women in Asia and the Pacific, particularly women affected by and working on conflict transformation, are meaningfully integrated into these discussions.



**Capacity Sharing:** APWAPS is comprised of a diversity of women who are located in different geographical locations and contexts. We consider this diversity a collective asset and are developing ways and means to share our experiences, analysis and expertise. We are conducting a survey to capture and understand our diversity and commonalities, and have taken part in training on the CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.