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Women, Peace and Security

Reflections from Australian male leaders

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Foreword

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has come a long way in understanding the importance of gender diversity to our organisation. We recognise that our future defence capability will depend on recruiting the best people from all sectors of society. Women represent over 50 per cent of Australia's population and we need to tap more effectively into this talent pool.

Initiatives over the past two decades have seen an increasingly successful integration of women into the three services. More recently, there has been a concerted effort to incorporate gender considerations into policies, training, planning and on operations. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has been a critical guide in this learning process. I, and the ADF senior leaders, strongly support the Defence Implementation Plan (DIP), part of the Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012–2018. We are committed to fully integrating women and gender considerations into the ADF.

New policies and programs and senior leadership efforts are not enough to bring about the deep cultural change that is needed. The change we seek is not just about employing more women. We need to normalise WPS and incorporate its principle into our everyday decision making. In order to achieve this, all members of the ADF and those we work with in Defence need to understand WPS principles.

This publication aims to move past the theoretical by drawing together the real-life experiences, reflections and lessons of male leaders—from the ADF, the Australian Federal Police and civilians. The publication was developed as a means to demonstrate, through practical example, how WPS can be incorporated into military or organisational planning to improve operational outcomes and achieve mission objectives. It demonstrates how good leadership is predicated on creative, responsive and inclusive thinking, and an ability to accept new ways of seeing the world.

I expect the publication will become a useful tool for those who seek to understand why we need to broaden our thinking within the ADF and to help us change the way we do business. WPS may be only one element of an evolving global landscape, but it is a most important one. By embracing WPS and its principles the ADF will continue to develop its capability and, importantly, will ensure we are better positioned to more effectively help the people and communities we serve.

Mark Binskin
Air Chief Marshal
Chief of the Defence Force

In an organisation built on a chain of command, senior leaders can make a very real difference when they are determined to implement change ... there is no more important element to bring in non-believers with you than enlisting leaders and role models at every level ...

Former Chief of the Australian Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison,
Speech to the United Nations International Women's Day Conference, New York, 2013

Introduction

Australia has a proud history of contributing to international peace and security. Since 1947, Australia has deployed personnel and resources to more than 60 operations overseas, including longstanding contributions to some of the United Nation's oldest peacekeeping efforts.

Over the last 15 years, Australia's operational experience has coincided with a growing awareness and understanding of women's unique experiences in conflict-affected environments and their valuable contribution to peace and security efforts. Gradually we have seen change in policy, practice, knowledge and understanding, behaviour, values and expectations within institutions such as the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the Australian Federal Police (AFP), as well as in United Nations (UN), NATO and other multilateral operations.

There has been deepening appreciation of the differential impact of conflict on women, men, girls and boys, and their different roles in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding, women's right to participate on deployed operations; the benefits associated with increasing the number of deployed women; and the operational utility of gender expertise and capacity. This awareness and understanding has been motivated and guided—in large part—by the Women, Peace and Security agenda and mandate, which was established in 2000.

'Women, Peace and Security' (WPS) is a UN agenda and mandate for action, an international legal framework (see page 33) an international advocacy tool, and a global movement focused on protecting women and girls, supporting women's participation and gender equality in armed conflict and post-conflict environments, and integrating a gender perspective into peace and security efforts.

> *Male police and members of defence forces have a key role to play in promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women in conflict and in post-conflict settings.*
>
> —The Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012–2018

Good leadership tenets inherently support Women, Peace and Security concepts. Women's participation in overseas operations—both military and civilian—has been a focus for change as organisations, including military and police, seek to more closely reflect the broader civic values of the society to which they belong.

Values of respect and equal opportunity underpin effective leadership.[1] Military doctrine suggests that leaders need to foster and maintain an organisation or force that is 'flexible, adaptable and responsive', and able to seek out and integrate new information and have a 'constantly updated appreciation' of the operational environment in which they function. A gender perspective is a core tool to help a leader achieve this.

1 See Department of Defence 2007, Executive Series ADDP 00.6: *Leadership*.

Leaders have a key role to play and a responsibility not only to encourage women's participation, but to also actively create an environment that allows women to contribute to their full potential.

Men are important partners in the Women, Peace and Security effort.[2] As Former Chief of the Australian Army Lieutenant General David Morrison said, 'true and enduring progress in the status and security of women and girls will only be achieved through the collaborative efforts of women and men'.[3]

This publication *Women, Peace and Security: Reflections from Australian male leaders* builds on the growing acknowledgement of the importance men play in the WPS effort, as well as the importance of leadership and commitment to advancing the WPS agenda. It aims to explore how operational effectiveness is enhanced through incorporating gender perspectives and Women, Peace and Security principles in decision making. It also seeks to highlight how gender considerations impact positively on deployed contingents and contribute to mission outcomes.

By drawing on the experiences of male leaders, this publication translates WPS principles in a practical way for those who are unfamiliar with the issues and uncertain about their relevance and applicability in Australian operations. It is hoped that the reflections featured here will 'speak' to military, police and civilian personnel at all levels and assist them to understand the operational significance of the WPS agenda.

Six contributors were drawn from the ADF, AFP, the public sector and civil society. They have held leadership roles in overseas operations—on land and at sea—over the past 20 years, beginning with the UNTAC peacekeeping operation in Cambodia in the early 1990s. Contributors were invited to write a short essay reflecting on their personal experience of incorporating a gender perspective and WPS principles into their leadership/command decisions—perhaps at times unconsciously—to meet operational objectives. Of particular interest is the learning process that led them to recognise the value and utility of including a gender perspective in their leadership thinking. The ACMC identified six WPS themes and designed questions around sub-themes to help guide contributors' reflections. In order to retain their individual voices, editorial interference was limited.

As a strategic framework, the WPS agenda has applicability and utility across a wide range of environments and situations. This is made clear in the contributors' reflections about engagement with WPS matters from operational experience in a wide range of environments. Contributors examined different dimensions of WPS demonstrating the range of issues that are covered by the WPS agenda. Some essays have focused on women's participation within operations, including gender balance and opportunities for participating. Others have explored WPS issues in relation to better

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2 For instance, in 2014, UN Women launched the HeforShe 'solidarity movement' to 'engage men and boys as advocates and agents of change for the achievement of gender equality and women's rights'. See UN Women 2014, 'HeForShe UN Women Solidarity Movement for Gender Equality Action Kit'.

3 Speech delivered to UN International Women's Day Conference, New York, 2013, accessed 17 March 2015, www.army.gov.au/Our-work/Speeches-and-transcripts/United-Nations-International-Womens-Day-Conference.

understanding local women's experiences of conflict and post-conflict dynamics, and how operations can and should engage with them.

The essays demonstrate the many different avenues for learning about WPS matters: through gender training, through seeing firsthand on deployment the differential impact of conflict on women and girls, through interaction with local women and women's organisations in conflict-affected environments as well as training situations, through observing the particular benefits and impact of having women in the field, and through leadership by example.

The six essays are honest reflections by men in leadership positions. Each reached a turning point or 'a-ha' moment when they realised the significance of WPS considerations in their work. They have acknowledged the importance of being honest about what they do not know and being open to the learning process. Even the act of writing their essays was part of this learning process. It is a process that continues, because the WPS agenda is continually evolving and expanding. There is consensus across the essays that the 'journey' is not over.

This is not a text book. It does not seek to provide doctrine or policy guidance, rather through the contributors' stories and a series of text boxes on WPS related topics it aims to familiarise readers with and to help them reflect on the many complex issues and understanding of WPS.

The final contribution in the publication provides a case study of practical steps that can be taken to build and grow understanding of WPS issues in an operational context through military exercising.

Where applicable, references are provided throughout the publication to encourage further reading and reflection.

'Women, Peace and Security' is not a new concept. In the context of the 15th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 in October 2015, it is hoped that this collection of essays by senior male leaders can contribute to ongoing debate on WPS and a global commitment to progress and increase our understanding of the significant role women and gender considerations play in building international peace and security.

A ‘helluva change’: The Force Communications Unit, United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, 1992–93

Colonel Martin Studdert, AM (Ret’d)

This is a personal account of a specific command experience in the Force Communications Unit (FCU) in the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in the early 1990s. I describe one aspect of the approach that I took in relation to command, and I do so in isolation of the other myriad aspects of that year. At the time there was no such thing as an *Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*, nor was there a United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Some of the things I chose to do and some of the outcomes of those actions can now be described and interpreted within the themes and principles of UNSCR 1325. But contemporaneously, I considered them simply in the context of leadership and command. I took what now might be called a ‘gender perspective’ on my command role because I considered that it would contribute to the operational effectiveness and wellbeing of the contingent. The evolution of these leadership and command principles into a national action plan is a welcome and worthwhile codification that is entirely consistent with the increased role of women in the armed services. While I may have enabled this approach, it was the women of the Force Communications Unit UNTAC who implemented it, very often supported by the men of the contingent, and at other times having to overcome significant barriers and resistance along the way.

I took what now might be called a ‘gender perspective’ on my command role because I considered that it would contribute to the operational effectiveness and wellbeing of the contingent.

In December 1992 I assumed command of the FCU UNTAC. I was the second Australian Service Contingent (ASC) Commander and Commanding Officer of the FCU,[4] replacing my old friend and colleague in the Royal Australian Corps of Signals (RASigs), Steve Ayling.

It was an exciting event for me: my first command as a lieutenant colonel, on overseas deployment to an exotic but troubled country and responsibility for a tri-service, combined Australian–New Zealand contingent of roughly 500 people.[5] The deployment was for 12 months and would include the conduct by the UN of the first ever democratic election undertaken in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

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4 As Commander ASC UNTAC, I commanded the FCU, the Australians working within UNTAC Headquarters, an MP Detachment, a Transport and Movement Section and a flight of six Blackhawk helicopters from 5 Aviation Regiment with its accompanying Infantry Security Platoon from 2/4 Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment.

5 Despite my lazy but convenient use of the term ‘soldiers’ throughout this piece, I want to acknowledge that there were in fact ‘soldiers, sailors, airmen and air-women’ from both the Australian and New Zealand Defence Forces within the FCU. Additionally, while the largest Australian Army numbers were drawn from RASigs, almost every other Army Corps was represented within ASC UNTAC.

While the formal mission of UNTAC was to supervise the ceasefire, maintain the peace between the four factions[6] and oversee the conduct of free and fair elections, its underlying intention was to put a gap between Cambodia's horrific immediate past 30 years and its future.[7] The combined impact of those 30 years—the collateral damage from the Vietnam War, the appalling impact of the Khmer Rouge period, the subsequent Vietnamese invasion and the civil war between the armed components of the four Cambodian political factions was evident and dominant around the country.

UNTAC was the largest and most ambitious UN peacekeeping effort up to that time. Australian diplomacy since 1989, led by the then Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, had been instrumental in negotiating the 1991 Paris Peace Agreements that led to the establishment of UNTAC. Australia's role in the negotiation of those agreements was reflected in the appointment of an Australian, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, as the commander of the military component of the mission.

I was taking over a unit that had received mixed reviews. Operationally, the unit was flawless; its contribution to the successful first phase of UNTAC through the provision of communications to the four factions and more broadly in support of UN military observers across the entire country was acknowledged and applauded. The environment in which the FCU had been required to work in the first nine months of UNTAC was uncomfortably primitive, infinitely complex and extremely dangerous and the FCU had undertaken its role superbly.[8] And yet, from firsthand reports that I received as part of my pre-command consultations, the FCU was not a happy unit and had some morale and behavioural characteristics that were worrisome.

It was clear to me that there were a number of causes. The 12-month posting to the FCU was the longest unit deployment, overseas or domestically, since Vietnam. People were used to a month or two away on a 'Kangaroo' exercise, but such an extended time in a harsh environment away from families and friends was difficult. There was no Internet and very limited telephone access to home. The living conditions were harsh and there were real limitations on where people could go because of landmines in the fields, muggers in the back streets at night and armed factions that were very active after dark. These things meant little individual privacy, a continuous low-level feeling of insecurity and limited opportunities for recreational activities. A very active sex trade had grown up in parallel to the UN mission and booze, bars and brothels were in abundance. Contingent members worked extremely hard six days a week, but socially they were bored. Heavy drinking was common and some

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6 The four groups were the Vietnamese-installed government of the State of Cambodia, which was supported by the Cambodian People's Armed Forces; the communist Democratic Kampuchea (commonly known as the Khmer Rouge) supported by the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea and the two non-communist factions, the Khmer People's National Liberation Front supported by Khmer People's National Liberation Armed Forces and the United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia supported by the National Army of Independent Cambodia.

7 For a history of the years before UNTAC, see D Chandler 1991, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: politics, war and revolution since 1945*, Yale University Press, New Haven; and W P Shawcross 1979, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the destruction of Cambodia*, Cooper Square Publishers.

8 The predecessor to UNTAC, the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia, deployed in November 1991 and was subsumed by UNTAC in March 1992.

pretty undesirable interactions with the local community were starting to occur. Of course there were unit regulations about standards of behaviour, but these were hard to enforce in a city the size of Phnom Penh. The first contingent of the FCU had only a small number of women within its ranks. They were generally junior in rank and, I think it is fair to say, had limited, if any, influence on the tone or behavioural standards of the unit.

Prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation and abuse in UN peacekeeping settings

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), including prostitution and trafficking, have commonly thrived in countries that host peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. SEA was reported in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Cambodia and Timor-Leste in the 1990s. SEA received global attention in 2002 following allegations against humanitarian aid workers and peacekeepers in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In 2004, there were revelations of serious misconduct by UN peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). More recently, allegations have been reported in the DRC, Haiti, South Sudan, Liberia, Mali and Central African Republic, to name a few.

Incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse have included sex trafficking, solicitation of prostitutes and prostitution rings, rape, transactional sex—or the exchange of sex for food and non-food household items, the production of pornography, paternity claims, and abandonment of 'peacekeeper babies'.

There are a number of enabling factors in peacekeeping environments. Peacekeepers and aid workers can earn significantly more money working in conflict-affected environments than the local population, who often face extreme poverty, food insecurity and high rates of joblessness. The income disparity, as well as uniform and, in some cases, weapons, creates 'inherently unequal power dynamics' that can be exploited by international personnel. Their income also represents a source of survival for local populations encouraging the exchange of sex for food and other basic necessities. In addition, peacekeeping missions continue to be made up of predominantly unaccompanied foreign men, many of whom might come from countries that either accept or condone prostitution and other types of sexual and gender-based violence.

Since 2001, the UN has instituted a wide range of reforms to improve its ability to prevent and respond to SEA. This includes establishing a zero-tolerance policy and revised model memorandum of understanding binding troop and police peacekeeping personnel to the standards in the policy and a Misconduct Tracking System. One result is a steady decline in allegations of such acts of misconduct, particularly in the past few years. Nonetheless, SEA continues. In response, the UN has recently been focused on ways of further strengthening their response to SEA in the areas of prevention, enforcement and remedial action.

This text is drawn from ACMC Occasional Paper *Conflict-related Sexual and Gender-based Violence: an introductory overview to support prevention and response efforts* (1/2014). To see the full text and references, visit https://www.acmc.gov.au/publications/conflict-related-sexual-and-gender-based-violence/

For more information, see the UN Conduct and Discipline Unit website: https://cdu.unlb.org/AboutCDU.aspx

It seemed to me, admittedly from the distance of Land Headquarters Sydney, that the contingent was out of balance; that it was operating in very abnormal circumstances and was starting to show signs of that abnormality. I felt that some element of normalcy needed to be restored. Inevitably, we draw on our own experience when we consider solutions to perceived morale or organisational problems. My experience had been in units of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals. With the exception of my time at the Signal Squadron of the Special Air Service Regiment, I had always worked in units where women served at all ranks and in all jobs.[9] A gender mix was my norm and my experience of that norm had been very positive. Without wishing to idealise the service of women in these units, in my experience, they were terrific soldiers and active, effective leaders who were very well respected by their male counterparts. Importantly also, in the context of my perception of the FCU UNTAC, they had a disproportionately positive impact on unit behaviour, morale and therefore, on operational performance. This is not to suggest that it's the 'job' of women to take on this role; that is neither fair nor necessary. It's a commander's job to work out what a unit needs and to assume the responsibility for implementing a solution. In the case of the FCU, women were not going to solve the problems alone, but I firmly believed that a better gender balance would be a good first step.

I approached the Land Commander Australia, Major General Murray Blake AO MC, and talked to him about my concerns. I told him that I wanted to select 10 key positions within the regimental structure and that I intended to seek to fill as many as possible with women. Blake was an Infantry officer with a reputation as a very hard, no nonsense leader. His battle experience as a company commander in the Vietnam War made him generationally and experientially very different to me and he gave me a strange look. But he knew about leadership and he believed in supporting his commanding officers and, though it must have seemed to him a strange manifestation of leadership, he supported my wish to get some gender balance and some gendered thinking into the contingent. I was very grateful to him.

Leading Aircraftwoman Kylie Kiddle and Corporal Mick Hicklin in the Communications Centre at HQ UNTAC, 1992

In contemporary times, when WPS is a well-defined concept, this would be described as 'promoting and enhancing women's participation'. But in the context of the early 1990s, I looked at it in simple leadership terms and saw it as being about the wellbeing of the unit and the operational effectiveness of the contingent.

My placement of women in key positions was based on two basic ideas. First, there needed to be, as far as

9 This gender mix was a reflection of the fact that the Royal Australian Corps of Signals was one of the corps that women were allowed into at that time.

possible, a 'normal' spread of women across all ranks. Of course a 'normal' spread in this context was not in any way a balanced, equitable spread. The proportion of women in the FCU ranged between 10–15 per cent; at the higher end of the range among the officers and lowest within the senior non-commissioned officers and warrant officers. Secondly, as far as possible, the women had to be in what were perceived as 'influential' positions. This was about setting a very clear leadership example; I wanted an unambiguous recognition by all ranks that these individuals were a trusted and influential part of the command group.

The result was that at the start of my term as commanding officer, my unit included women posted into the roles of squadron commander (one of three), adjutant (also the senior subaltern), quarter master, regimental medical officer (RMO) and three senior non-commissioned officers. These soldiers and the rest of the 'First Rotation' accompanied me through pre-deployment training at Randwick Barracks Sydney and on to Cambodia in December 1992, as we replaced about 10 per cent of the FCU UNTAC.

In early 1993, a little before his own rotation home, my Regimental Sergeant Major, Warrant Officer Class 1 Barry Martin, who had been in Cambodia for the entire UNTAC deployment, reported to me a 'helluva change' in the ambience of the FCU compound in Phnom Penh. It certainly seemed to me, as I wandered around the compound, that there was vibrancy about the place. Of course, some of that was just the normal stimulation of having some new faces, but I hoped also that there was a 'new normal' that was more balanced and that was partly attributable to the women that I had placed throughout the organisational structure. Any overall change was certainly reflected within the Officers Mess, where, according to two female members from the First Contingent, the 'tone' had been 'significantly elevated' since the arrival of the first rotation. I never asked what was meant by that description but took it as a good thing.

As we moved into the first quarter of 1993, it was obvious also that the women in the FCU were becoming actively involved in humanitarian interactions within the local communities. There were many activities; the work done with street kids in Battambang, for example, was amazing,[10] and some really impressive support was provided to orphanages, schools and cultural centres. A number of these projects had been started by the first contingent and were enthusiastically taken up by later groups. It was generally the women of the contingent who made the initial connection with an orphanage or school or village. After the violence and terror of the previous thirty years, I think it was easier for the local population to trust women. Once that trust was established, the men who joined in the support work were also readily accepted. We never really knew if the welcoming cry of 'Aussies number one' changed depending on the nationality of the visitor, but it always accompanied our arrival in a village and we took it as genuine.

The personal interaction with the local population had a number of positive effects. The commitment was hugely appreciated by the local communities and the Australians grew in the eyes of the locals. In stark contrast to some other national contingents, we were always welcome in villages and could

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10 For a description of the work of Sergeant Norma Hinchcliffe, Sergeant Jodie Clarke et. al., with the street kids of Battambang, see C McCullagh (ed) 2010, *Willingly Into the Fray: One Hundred Years of Australian Army Nursing*, Big Sky Publishing, Newport.

Lieutenant Colonel Studdert boarding Army Black Hawk helicopter with women from the Australian contingent, 1993

talk with locals and discover what was happening below the surface and why. This was classic 'human intelligence'; an informal gathering of information that stood us in very good stead on a number of occasions, not least when we were warned about the likelihood of an attack by the Khmer Rouge on one of our troop locations in the north-west. But the value of the interaction with the local population was much more than just operational. The Khmer are a warm, friendly and generous people and the interaction provided those involved with an emotional outlet and a sense of satisfaction that they were doing something personally for this badly damaged country. Being there, away from family and loved ones was 'worth it'. As more people got involved in the different projects, this satisfaction became a group satisfaction and then a group pride. This was a powerfully positive influence on morale in more than one location.

The FCU was spread very widely across Cambodia. There was a concentration with the regimental and two squadron headquarters in Phnom Penh and a smaller concentration in Battambang in the north-west where a third squadron headquarters was located. But the general layout was a troop headquarters in most of the capitals of the 25 provinces and individual or sometimes two specialist communicators deployed with UN Military Observers (UNMOs) to around 30 border posts and hamlets in some very isolated locations across the country. The communicators supporting the UNMOs were the only armed members of the UNMO group and were always the most junior. There were many incidents where Australian communicators did heroic and effective work under artillery and small arms fire in support of the military observers in these isolated areas.[11]

11 See for example the stories of Private Kelvin Richards, Trooper Nick Rose and Gunner Trenton Prince in M Prior and H Smith 1994, *Shooting at the Moon, Cambodian Peace Workers Tell Their Stories*, MPA Publishing.

In the early 1990s, there was still some reluctance to deploy women to the isolated, dangerous and overwhelmingly male UNMO monitoring posts. My policy was that women could deploy into these areas as long as they had another Australian with them. I don't recall ever being asked to decide if this meant that two women together was okay, but I took the decision that it was simply too dangerous for women to be deployed on their own. In many provinces, troop commanders deployed mixed gender detachments of two or three people to support the UNMOs. To me, that was not problematic. However, in my judgement, the risks involved in deploying a woman alone were just too high. These risks were not related to the military threat from gunfire and artillery or Khmer Rouge attacks—that danger was the same for women and men. Rather, and frankly, they were related to the unpredictable mix of people within the UNMO detachments, some of the reported behaviour of UNMOs towards women in isolated areas and the attitudes towards women of the Cambodian soldiers within the warring factions. My mental 'likelihood versus consequence matrix' just told me no. Some of the women were frustrated about being treated differently from the men, but they understood the reasons I think. They didn't like it, but they accepted it. As far as I recall, this was the only policy I implemented where women were not allowed to do the same as the men. In retrospect, I think it was the right decision, but I do wonder what a commanding officer would do now, in 2015.

A couple of examples highlight for me the benefit that can most readily, if not exclusively, be gained by the participation of women in a contingent. The Australian Contingent in UNTAC included a Military Police (MP) detachment. In an Australian context, it was quite normal for Military Police to work in mixed gender teams. But it was less common on a UN mission and even more unusual in the Cambodian context. Mixed gender MP teams proved to be very effective in Cambodia because so much of the MP work required close interaction with the local population, and in my experience, both women and men were more cooperative in an investigation when there was a female police presence. It was obvious any time one saw the mixed team operate. People would gather around and contribute to answering the questions. If it was an all-male team there was suspicion and reluctance to answer. This eventually broke down as the Australian reputation for fairness and good behaviour spread. The males were then accepted much better. It was like in the villages—30 years of male soldiers and bandits victimising people led to a lack of trust. Women had not been part of that.

Along similar lines, I have mentioned previously the boom in prostitution that accompanied the build-up of the UNTAC mission. All of our medical staff toiled tirelessly to educate the members of the contingent about the dangers of sexually transmitted infections, particularly HIV, which was a serious issue in Cambodia. No more tireless worker than Captain Susan Evans, my RMO, who later wrote that, 'One of my less conventional jobs was to visit the brothels, chat with the girls and encourage them to use condoms with the soldiers.'[12] Now, I have nothing to corroborate my conclusions except my own instinct and observation, but I firmly believe that the education of a contingent on the risks of sexually transmitted infections is more effective when delivered by women, and the outreach to female prostitutes is more effectively done, and perhaps only possible, by a woman.

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12 S J Neuhaus (during UNTAC Captain Susan Evans) and S Maschall-Dare 2014, in *Not for Glory: A Century of Service by Medical Women to the Australian Army*, Boolarong Press, footnote to page 179.

In my experience, a commander seldom has a single approach that is applied to every situation, to the multitude of considerations, actions, directions and decisions that must be dealt with. The nature of command is that sometimes judgements are hard, sometimes liberal, some stances are ideological some are pragmatic and some decisions are based on logic, while some are based purely on instinct or intuition. Each circumstance that arises has a past, a context and a future and a commander must respond separately to each of them in turn.
So it would be pretentious of me to suggest that I always deliberately and systematically looked through a gender prism before making judgements and decisions about the FCU. But there is another factor here. There is no doubt that having women within the unit hierarchy meant that the consideration leading to a decision and subsequent direction from me as commanding officer always included a gendered perspective—it had become normalised within the command group of the FCU. So, arguably, once I had committed to insisting women fill certain key positions, the rest just happened, as a 'normal' or 'natural' process.

In my command experience, taking a gendered approach to the organisational structure of the FCU proved to be more than just beneficial; in my judgement, it was probably the key factor in the success of the unit during my year in Cambodia.

There is a power in all diversity and there are particular benefits that can be gained from gender diversity. Seeking to adopt a gendered approach should not be done because it is politically correct to do so. No one wants that, women most of all, in my experience. Rather, gender considerations should be applied because it is beneficial to do so. Indeed, in my command experience, taking a gendered approach to the organisational structure of the FCU proved to be more than just beneficial; in my judgement, it was probably the key factor in the success of the unit during my year in Cambodia. There were clear operational, organisational, command and leadership benefits that accrued. Some were direct benefits, others had a second order impact, but the value cannot be denied. I took that understanding with me right through the remainder of my Army career and into my professional life after I left the Army in 1998.

Seven years beyond my Cambodian experience, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security. This eventually led to the adoption of the *Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security* in 2012. This reflects an evolution from the instinctive approach that I took to a more formalised and codified approach. Presumably, the concept will continue to evolve. By my observation, we are not there yet, but we have a better understanding of why it makes such good sense to apply UNSCR 1325—and a gendered approach—in all contexts. Perhaps the ultimate evolution will be when we no longer need to actively and deliberately apply it because it is already in place and normal.

Gender awakening for a ‘somewhat typical’ male naval officer

Captain Heath Robertson, Royal Australian Navy

I was, at first, taken aback when asked to contribute an essay on my experiences regarding Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and leadership. Not for one minute do I consider myself an exemplar of gender awareness and advocacy. Rather, upon reflection, I consider myself to be somewhat typical of a male naval officer of my generation. But, perhaps that’s the point. By reflecting on my leadership journey, it is apparent to me how far we have come. It is also clear that we have far to go. My example is one that is riddled with imperfection. It has arisen from a shallow grave of naïvety and blissful ignorance to a hunched and lumbering stagger propped up by a will and determination to eventually stand tall and stride long.

By reflecting on my leadership journey, it is apparent to me how far we have come. It is also clear that we have far to go.

While I would like to think my leadership style is an empathetic one, I sometimes suspect that much of any empathy I possess may have been learned rather than intuitive—including gender awareness aspects. In my early days at sea, women were sparse, serving in small numbers on support ships only. Early integration into warships must have been difficult for those women. Looking back, at the time I failed to appreciate how lonely and isolated our female shipmates might have felt. Their contingent generally comprised two junior officers under training in a ship of over 200 men. We judged them on how well they integrated with us, rather than judging ourselves on how well we assisted their integration. The unfairness of that is profound. It was not the result of any deliberate callousness on the part of my shipmates and I. It was simple cluelessness founded upon a prevailing culture where we were all just expected to ‘fit in’. Nevertheless, it resides in me as shameful. It reflects a culture of exclusiveness versus inclusiveness. For reasons of brevity and scope as much as anything, I don’t intend dwelling on the highs and lows of my early career. Rather, this narrative commences midway through my career when I was first afforded the privilege and responsibility of sea command.

I was fortunate to get command quite early in my career. An inaugural recipient of a junior command initiative, I was fast tracked into command of a patrol boat in 2000 while still a lieutenant. *Cessnock* was a *Fremantle* class patrol boat with a crew of between 24 and 28 personnel, depending on the number of trainees embarked. The only females embarked were officers under training—*Cessnock* had two. My command of *Cessnock* straddled the MV *Tampa*[13] period. Pre-*Tampa*, we were focused

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13 In August 2001, the Howard Government refused entry into Australian waters to Norwegian cargo ship MV *Tampa*, which carried 438 asylum seekers rescued from a distressed Indonesian fishing boat in international waters. The incident triggered a diplomatic dispute with Norway and the introduction of a new ‘border protection’ regime in Australia for handling ‘unauthorised boat arrivals’, which included the ‘Pacific Solution’. For more information, visit http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Former_Committees/maritimeincident/report/c01

on illegal foreign fishing boats. When called on, our means for dealing with unauthorised boat arrivals was very much from a SOLAS[14] perspective, where we would assess the seaworthiness of vessels, and if assessed unseaworthy, transfer personnel to our patrol boats and ferry them to Darwin at best speed. As boat arrival numbers increased, a dedicated ferry was employed from Ashmore Island. Like today, the arrivals mainly comprised a mix of Muslim family groups and single males. Culturally naïve, with no gender training, we evolved practices and procedures through successive patrol boat lessons and experiences. Cultural and gender challenges faced by patrol boat crews ranged from food and hygiene to the delivery of medical services, including the delivery of a baby on one patrol boat. As the outcome for arrivals was a favourable one, our cultural and gender clumsiness was mitigated by mutual goodwill.

That all changed overnight after the *Tampa* affair and the follow-on 'turn-back' policy. The role for patrol boats became 'interdict' and 'hold', until larger more capable ships could take up the challenge of 'returning' the boats. As our operational intent became clearer to subsequent 'arrivals', tensions on the boats became extreme. The numbers on illegal entry vessels in those days were very high—generally between 150–300 people. Conditions were appalling, and we didn't have capacity to carry such numbers on single patrol boats safely. As best we could, single males were segregated from family groups. Most unauthorised arrival persons participated in disruption tactics to some extent, but the single males were more disposed to intimidatory tactics and general risk taking. In engaging with the women and children, we were particularly conscious of not taking action that could be seen as culturally offensive, whether real or perceived. The reasons for this ranged from genuine duty of care obligations to an operational necessity to not 'stoke the fire'.

Meanwhile, on board *Cessnock* we enjoyed a routine inflow of female junior officers. I suspect, unwitting to us all at the time, they imbued more grown-up discussion and banter among the Ship's company—something that I have observed occasionally lacking in 'stag' boats and ships. While their presence was sold as a step forward, it was conservatively managed. At one point when I was to be sent a new female navigator, thereby increasing my female numbers to three—for reasons of cabin design, our options were zero, two or four females—I unsuccessfully proposed a course of action whereby my second female trainee could remain embarked. With the consent of the executive officer's wife, we had derived a plan where one of the female officers would bunk in his cabin. A range of measures to debunk perceptions of potential impropriety were concocted such as direction for both individuals to always change in the nearby heads and showers, and that only the curtain (not the door) to the compartment could be closed. The proposal was declined by our chain of command as novel, but ahead of its time. This led to the untimely posting of one of the female officers under training. I have since been heartened to observe a system with similar principles now availing women the opportunity to serve in *Collins* class submarines. Of note, accommodation within our current generation of patrol boats is much improved, enabling men and women from all ranks and categories to be integrated readily.

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14 The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) is an international maritime safety treaty. It ensures that ships flagged by signatory states comply with minimum safety standards in construction, equipment and operation.

Able Seaman Carlee Joynes on board HMAS Parramatta in the Gulf of Aden, 2010

By the time I took command of HMA Ships *Perth* then *Parramatta* through 2008 to 2011, female presence at sea was commonplace. They were represented in all ranks and all categories, to the extent that I had replaced a female commanding officer in *Perth*. When I assumed command of *Parramatta* in late 2009, the cultural reform program, New Generation Navy,[15] was well underway and kicking goals. Almost none of the crew predated women serving at sea. As a consequence, gender-specific issues on the Ship were not front-of-mind—my focus was the preparation and planning for our forthcoming operational deployment to the Middle East and our (male) adversaries.

However, early in our deployment the reporting of unacceptable behaviour identified in HMAS *Success*[16] led me to delve deeper and validate the reality of my command philosophy—'a happy competent ship'. During induction briefs with the Ship's company I would explain what I meant by that simple command philosophy and how those two adjectives were co-dependent. While I had a range of indicators to measure competence, metrics for cultural health were more obtuse. While I enjoyed,

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15 New Generation Navy was a five-year program established in 2009 to address the 'Culture, Leadership and Structural changes required for Navy to meet the challenges of delivering future capability'. For more information visit http://www.navy.gov.au/navy-today/new-generation-navy

16 Following allegations of sexual misconduct and other unacceptable behaviour, an independent Commission of Inquiry was conducted by Hon Roger Gyles AO QC. The inquiry reported a pervasive culture of silence and mutual protection, a 'fiercely' tribal culture among marine technical sailors, and predatory sexual behaviour and physical and verbal abuse against female sailors. For more information, see http://www.defence.gov.au/publications/coi/success/.

appreciated and trusted feedback from my experienced command team, they were all male and of my generation (or thereabouts). To more directly address the matter, I instigated routine gatherings with the female members of our Ship's company. Their immediate comment in our first group gathering was to query why they were being 'singled out'. I explained that I was determined not to be surprised by any cultural deficiencies or associated unacceptable behaviour; that I was cognisant that we had no women in the Ship's command team and I was determined that their perspective would not go unheard; and that they represented a good cross-section of categories and ranks within the Ship, so were representative of broader issues within the Ship. I suspect they still left the first meeting uneasy that the meeting might be topical amongst the ship's company and draw attention to them for reasons of gender, which they were uncomfortable about. To the credit of the wider Ship's company, these meetings never became topical. In the main, the meetings were uneventful, with issues common to the wider Ship's company making up the subject of conversation. That in itself provided me with a comfortable level of assurance that the Ship's cultural state was healthy.

One gender-specific exception did arise in the lead-up to the Ship's visit to Saudi Arabia. Due to host nation requirements, female members of the Ship's company could not proceed ashore unless they wore an *abayas* paired with a *hijab*.[17] They weren't happy, but as a result of our established routine dialogue we were able to have a frank and constructive conversation about the issue. While none of our women would be forced to proceed ashore, I did encourage it, and they took up the opportunity. My case included:

- Despite the fact that they were wearing the *abayas* and *hijab*, it would be well known that they were female 'warriors', and that their example was who they were and what they did, rather than what they wore
- It was naïve for us to expect the entire world to reach a point of female equality and empowerment at the same time, and in this case at this time we were likely to be more effective representing the cause through understated example than overt remonstration
- An opportunity for relaxed dress standards would be provided in the expatriate residential compound.

Despite reaching consensus, I was subsequently deluged by complaints from *Parramatta*'s men complaining on behalf of their female colleagues. While their objections were well intended, I struggled not to chide them. *Parramatta*'s women could stand up for themselves. I still don't have it clear in my mind whether this was a case of shipmates sticking up for each other or chivalry. I don't believe the latter has a place within the confines of a ship's company. Perhaps it simply reflects my own uncertainty in navigating the chivalry/mateship minefield.

Our targets in the Middle East were invariably male—pirates, terrorists or drug smugglers. Similarly, albeit unintentionally, our boarding parties and linguists comprised men. Many boardings were

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17 *Abayas* and *hijab* are two types of Islamic garments worn by Muslim women. *Abayas* are robe-like dresses that cover the whole body and *hijab* are head coverings.

aimed at developing 'patterns of life' awareness of the business of these men. Our male boarding parties served us well when boarding fishing and merchant vessels. This was less the case with the semi-legitimate ferries that we boarded. Many of the passengers were women and children, and we reaped little from them, at least initially. Through circumstance, on one occasion, we sent our female medics across to render some minor first aid. The female medics proved to be unintended magnets for the women and children. For example, the women readily described their socio-economic situation and the push-pull factors that led to their presence and movement. In turn, we better understood the risks and opportunities associated with the region's semi-legitimate ferry traffic, and whence to apply our weight of maritime security effort. Through the lessons of our deployment, and others, female representation within boarding parties is more deliberately designed and demanded. Concerns that female boarding party members might heighten risky or inappropriate behaviour from the all-male Muslim-manned ships that we often board have not been realised.

The female medics proved to be unintended magnets for the women and children.

Following *Parramatta*, I took up an appointment as Captain Sea Training. In this position I had the privilege of training and assessing all the Royal Australian Navy's (RAN) ships and submarines. Overwhelmingly, the fleet impressed as a cohesive and culturally rich environment in which to work and live. Irrespective of their rank, men and women worked agreeably alongside each other demonstrating mutual respect, seemingly unconscious of gender. The members of my Sea Training Group were among the RAN's most experienced and capable officers and sailors. Through their intimate and enduring leadership role, they provided a valuable 'see what you can be' example for ships' companies.

Notwithstanding, I felt that the very low female representation in our team detracted from our look, feel and example. Generally tracking between 5 and 8 per cent, I instigated a program to increase Sea Training Group's female component to 25 per cent over a two-year period. While women make up 18 per cent of the broader Navy, I needed a higher percentage in Sea Training Group to provide leadership example across sufficient ranks and categories. Further, it aligned with Navy's target. Strategic buy-in to the initiative came easy. Actually realising the increase did not. While retention within Sea Training Group is not an issue due to strong *esprit de corps*, recruitment of personnel is challenging. The work involves long hours, uncomfortable conditions, and an environment burdened by the perpetual stress of 'working up'. By default, Sea Training Group candidates have already had considerable sea time and are looking forward to shore respite just when I am looking to employ them. Further, I deliberately reduced the already small pool of candidates by being picky—demanding personnel that not only had robust professional knowledge and recent sea experience, but more importantly possessed the communication skills that could effectively engage with individuals and teams from all ranks, categories and genders. With the fleet reconstituting from a contemporary dip in experience and manning levels at sea, I demanded mentors, not simply instructors. As a consequence, simply finding a suitable volunteer for Sea Training Group was a challenge in itself, let alone biasing recruitment to the 40 per cent female intake that was necessary if Sea Training Group was to sustain and grow to 25 per cent female representation within two years.

Lieutenant commander, warrant officer and chief petty officer are the predominant ranks within Sea Training Group. In ships and submarines at sea, I observed abundant stocks of high performing women—lieutenants, chief petty officers and petty officers with the right stuff to graduate to Sea Training Group positions. Realising the potential that these women represented for Sea Training Group was frustratingly difficult. Once ashore, they were often difficult to track down, not eligible due to non-promotion and/or not volunteers to join Sea Training Group due to work-life balance reasons. I suspect, through lack of example, many were resigned or prepared to accept a modest brace of seagoing experiences as their lot rather than a sustained seagoing career. Corporately, this is wasteful.

Petty Officer Steward Dave Nimmo observes Able Seaman Scott Eggins (L) and Leading Seaman Melissa (R) haul in messenger line as HMAS *Parramatta* carries out a Resupply at Sea with US Navy Ship *Rappahannock* in the Gulf of Aden during maritime security operations

In an attempt to address this, I challenged each sea trainer to identify, engage and groom potential Sea Training Group women over extended periods. Essentially, women who excelled during work-ups were encouraged and personally coached with a view to joining Sea Training Group sometime in the future. To be successful, this mentorship needed to be sustained over months and, on occasion, years in order to counter the abundance of naysayers seeding doubts. Additionally, I required all short lists identifying replacements for sea trainers to include at least one female. For this to be feasible, I needed to be (and I was) prepared to accept women who might be less qualified or lower in rank than their male counterparts. Appropriately, the final selection decision rested with the Career Management Agency. We had good buy-in from them.

Particularly heartening throughout this process was the buy-in by the sea trainers themselves. They were overwhelmingly middle-aged male Caucasians, but they got it—they understood the problem and were determined to play their part in fixing it. The initiative was in place for the last year of my tenure at Sea Training Group. When I departed, stocks had risen to about 12–15 per cent—not there yet, but the trend was encouraging. While applying to all ranks across Sea Training Group, the most important aspect of this initiative, for me, was that it provided a leadership example at the pinnacle of a sea-going sailor's horizon—Sea Training Group warrant officers. Of late, much focus has been given to increasing female representation among the Senior Leadership Group. While important, that example is beyond the horizon of our most junior personnel. Being able to 'see what you can be' is just

as important for our sailors as it is for our officers. After all, the lower deck is where the heart of our culture resides.

In 2014, I attended the Chief of the Defence Force's Conference on Defence Women in Peace and Security. It was a transformational event for me and, as a result, for Sea Training as well. As well as reinforcing my determination to increase female stocks within Sea Training Group, we immediately went about introducing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) into all aspects of sea training. The most obvious target for Navy operations was the review of our border protection activities under Operation RESOLUTE.[18] In the most basic sense, I was satisfied that we were conscious of the practical considerations of gender in our operations. Through long and hard won experience, we had developed robust procedures for engaging with women and children on unauthorised boat arrivals. We took all appropriate measures to ensure that the security, health and wellbeing of women and children were well attended. Tragically, numerous Coroners' enquiries had validated our rigour in this regard.

Being able to 'see what you can be' is just as important for our sailors as it is for our officers. After all, the lower deck is where the heart of our culture resides.

As previously discussed, we essentially went about minimising risk to women and children. However, by doing this, we may have been missing an opportunity to shape and influence the male detainee behaviours through their female counterparts' influence. Perhaps, implicitly characterising women as potential victims was a restrictive and one-dimensional approach. Having said that, operating in a volatile and topical landscape, we were never going to be adventurous in amending our successful tactics. However, to remain effective against determined and adaptable people smugglers, it was crucial that we understood every lever at our disposal if we were to remain effective, especially *in extremis*.

To optimise our training and consideration of such factors, I arranged for one of my Commanders Sea Training to become qualified as a gender adviser trainer through completion of a Gender Training of Trainers Course in Sweden. A key outcome I sought from his attendance on this course was to better understand how gender considerations could and should be considered in every line of operation. This included internal decision making within ships and submarines as well as external considerations concerning those we engaged and dealt with. My expectation was that gender was considered in each and every command huddle—in much the same way as we have come to consider and incorporate fatigue management and risk assessments. The Gender Adviser Trainer course was underway as I left Sea Training Group, so I never saw the results directly, but understand that the results have been positive. My decision to send a male on the course was simple pragmatism. To engender change, I chose the individual with the rank, influence and disposition who would most likely be successful. Notwithstanding, in my brief exposure to gender training, I had observed a dearth of male gender

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18 Operation RESOLUTE is the Australian Defence Force's contribution to the Australian Government's effort to 'protect Australia's borders and offshore maritime interests'. For more information, see http://www.defence.gov.au/operations/BorderProtection/

advisers, and felt that inclusion of a contemporary male frontline commander could only be a good thing.

Also late in my tenure as Captain Sea Training, I was Exercise Director for Exercise KAKADU.[19] The largest Navy-led exercise on the Australian station, it proffered too rare and valuable an opportunity not to incorporate UNSCR 1325 training and considerations. However, unfortunately, the planning conferences associated with Exercise KAKADU had preceded CDF's Conference on Defence Women. Therefore, I was hesitant to mess with exercise objectives previously agreed to by participating navies—navies that may have been on a different tier of the gender awareness pyramid (e.g. the risk minimisation step versus the capability optimisation step). To achieve my UNSCR 1325 training objectives, while avoiding potential embarrassment for our international participants, I endeavoured to isolate the UNSCR 1325 training to the Australian units only. I failed. Despite my best efforts, the Australian and international units had become too coalesced to be prised apart. As a consequence, personnel from countries across the region were collectively trained to operate according to Australia's progressive outlook. In turn, no embarrassment eventuated. Personnel from all units and cultures actively participated with good humour and without event. Indeed, only positive outcomes and feedback flowed.

My objectives for UNSCR 1325 inclusion in Exercise KAKADU were not clear and the bar I set was not high. As we were delivering collective training of UNSCR 1325 to navies for the first time, I fully expected our set up and execution to attract a fair degree of criticism. However, this first effort would set us up going forward—'we didn't yet know what we didn't know'. In the end, the results and feedback were positive. In many ways, that was due to the tremendous effort of our inaugural gender adviser for the exercise, Lieutenant Commander Jenny Macklin. My role was to ensure that she was set up for success, not failure. To do that, I needed to open the door for her (figuratively)—to explain in no uncertain terms to the various audiences she addressed, trained or observed, what she was doing, for what reason, and how I would hold them to account. A key message was that a gender perspective was not simply another equity and diversity lecture—rather, this was a capability improvement necessity. In explaining the requirement, I drew on an example sited by Commander Pete Steele stationed in the South Pacific:

> *At a regional island country, the oldest sister of the chief or tribal elder is second-in-charge and carries enormous power and influence as the doer. If we were required to carry out disaster relief operations there, effective engagement with her would be critical for mission success. To engage her effectively, we would need to not only engage her with a female, but with a matriarchal female. In this case, a combination of age, gender and family situation rather than rank and gender alone would be required.*

I'm sure this is but one example of many unique and unusual hierarchical systems across the region. Command teams can't be expected to know all socio-cultural systems, but such information for the

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19 Exercise KAKADU is a biennial exercise. In 2014, it was the Royal Australian Navy's largest maritime warfare exercise, with over 1,200 people, eight warships and 26 aircraft from 15 coalition forces participating.

Strong leadership is vital: reflections from participation in a gender training course

Air Commodore Scott Winchester, Commander Combat Support Group, Royal Australian Air Force

Western militaries are working hard on how best to successfully implement WPS in an enduring and tangible way. The ADF is not alone in this regard.

WPS is all about operational effectiveness and obtaining the best effect from our military planning process and then being able to execute at the tactical level to achieve the strategic effect. WPS needs to be informed by timely and accurate intelligence, enabled by military planners who understand WPS considerations, and conducted by tactical level commanders and their personnel who are responsible for achieving the desired effect either on the battlefield or conducting Humanitarian and Disaster Relief operations. Better understanding the differing requirements of women, men, girls and boys is critically important in how the ADF conducts its operations. Successful implementation of WPS considerations will result in better outcomes not only for the ADF, but more importantly, to the communities impacted by war or humanitarian or natural disaster events.

The Key Leader Seminar made me think how I, as Commander Combat Support Group in Air Force, could implement a meaningful WPS plan across my organisation. Many of my personnel are first responders to humanitarian assistance events within the region and in Australia. I recognise the benefit that WPS education, training and general awareness could make in the performance of their duties. WPS examples have now been incorporated into Mission Specific Training and Operational Readiness Exercises to better prepare contingency response personnel placed on very short notice to move. One practical exercise scenario involves monitoring potential refugees fleeing from violent internal conflict in a neighbouring island. Combat Support Group is currently developing gender perspective checklists to assist unit commanders, planners and combat support personnel to consider WPS factors. WPS content is also being incorporated into the Airbase Operations Support Course to better educate and prepare leaders in their role. A multi-faceted approach is essential to 'normalise' WPS in the ADF and strong leadership is vital.

Air Commodore Scott Winchester attended a Key Leader Seminar at the Nordic Centre for Gender Perspective in Military Operations in June 2015.

areas they are operating in should be among their routine 'requests for information', and through training, including gender training, they should become practiced at adapting to them. Community diversity exists in abundance here in Australia also. Whence deployed, I've been surprised and intrigued by the degree of socio-cultural diversity among the 'skin groups' within our remote aboriginal communities that needs to be mindfully negotiated when operating thereabouts. Gender training is a tremendous vehicle for developing empathy and processes to plan and adapt in such environments.

Since leaving Sea Training Group in late 2014, I have served as Deputy Commandant at the Australian Command and Staff College. Upon joining, I was impressed by the extent and normalisation of UNSCR 1325 throughout our joint training continuum. One of my units, the Australian Defence Force

Peace Operations Training Centre, is stationed in the forefront of this effort. Their mobile training teams deliver UNSCR 1325-fused training and education throughout the region—occasionally, as far as Africa. As the only UN-accredited peacekeeping trainer in the Southern Hemisphere, their contribution carries weight and influence across the region. Through their effort, Australia is making a difference in ensuring women are valued and viewed as 'agents of change' and not simply as 'potential victims' in the peacekeeping arena.

Another of my units, the Defence International Training Centre (DITC), is also making a heavy contribution. DITC is a mandatory learning centre that all foreign military students—undertaking training within Australia—attend. It purposely prepares students to fully integrate and contribute within an Australian learning environment that is occupied by strong women leaders, and to openly discuss forward-leaning gender issues. Now with an alumni of 10,000 foreign military personnel from the last 30 years, DITC packs a gender and cultural punch well above its weight.

For our programs to be effective, our staff requires an empathic and progressive disposition. To assist them in that regard, we have a range of programs in place. For example, all directors and directing staff now undertake unconscious bias training in order to better identify, within themselves, character traits that unintentionally inhibit their endeavour to create and foster a progressive and gender-conscious learning environment. Such programs and initiatives are important to ensure that our male military dominated numbers do not unwittingly dominate and stifle our perspective and roundness of thought.

In conclusion, the Navy (and the Australian Defence Force) has changed tremendously over the 28 years in which I have served in it. It is a better place to work and reside within. It is kinder. It is more inclusive. It is less tolerant of unacceptable behaviour. It is more intelligent. It is more progressive. It is more adaptable. For these reasons, I believe it is more capable. For it to be the best it can be, women need to be better represented through all levels of leadership, so that each generation can see a leadership example that pertains to them. To be effective on operations, collective training needs to validate that processes are in place to ensure gender and human factors are considered at every level of decision making. This is necessary if the full potential of what UNSCR 1325 can, and should be, is to be realised. While crucial, UNSCR 1325 is not only about protecting women and harm minimisation. If we are to counter the misinformed in an enduring way, the potential of female influence, shaping and leadership needs to be opened up and the sun brightly shone upon it so that all can see the mockery of not doing so.

Reflections of a leadership journey in the global justice movement

Archie Law, Executive Director ActionAid Australia

I've had the privilege of working with the United Nations (UN) and international non-governmental organisations throughout my 20-year career, and have lived in four countries and visited countless others during that time. Since 2008 I've been working as Executive Director of ActionAid Australia, which is an organisation dedicated to enabling women to stand up, have their voices heard and transform their lives. I've spent many an hour learning and sharing ideas with senior UN officials in offices in New York and Geneva as well as sitting in the dust with rural communities talking about their dreams and their struggles. I've met so many people who have inspired me, challenged me, shaped my thinking, shaped my values, enhanced my leadership and shaped me as a man.

I started working on global justice in Melbourne in 1994. Going in as a trainee project officer in the Emergencies Team at World Vision, I didn't know much, so I was trained a lot! While most of the training taught me a significant amount, the gender and development element of the training greatly confused me. From what I remember, it focused on socially constructed differences between men and women and the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations in the various contexts that the organisation was working in. But what that meant for me as someone working in emergency response wasn't clear and, to be honest, I couldn't see the relevance of this work to my role and awkwardly stepped around it.

In that first job, I worked on emergency responses in a number of countries. These included Bosnia and Herzegovina in the winter of 1995, where we were implementing an enormous winterisation project—rehabilitating shelter and providing families with support to rebuild their livelihoods. It's interesting what I remember. Much of what comes to mind immediately when I reflect on that time is women's experiences of the conflict[20]—and the inadequacies of our work in responding to their specific needs and ensuring that their rights were protected.

One memory particularly jumps out: a young girl on the corner of a road in Travnik in central Bosnia and Herzegovina bursting into tears for no apparent reason as we drove past her on the way to Sarajevo. I wondered what was making her cry. Had her house been destroyed? Did she have relatives

20 As part of the break up of Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence in 1992. This triggered a civil war between Bosnian Serbs, Muslims and Croats. Ethnic cleansing was a characteristic of the war and was perpetrated by all three parties. Sexual violence was widespread and used as a tool of ethnic cleansing against especially Bosnian Muslim women and also men. The Dayton peace accord was signed in 1995 creating an entity for Bosnian Muslims and Croats and a separate entity for Serbs. A NATO-led peacekeeping force was deployed to monitor implementation of the peace agreement.

who had been tortured or murdered? Was she a survivor of some of the horrible crimes committed during the war? I'll never know. We did nothing. We kept driving.

I remember meeting the women of Srebrenica, many of whom we were providing psychosocial care for as part of our emergency response to the genocide.[21] I remember meeting them, and feeling inadequate and quite useless, given the trauma that it was clear they were living with and the challenges they were faced with. I remember becoming aware at that point that these women had specific needs that weren't being responded to. They were disempowered, not only by the trauma they were experiencing, but by the fact that they weren't in a position to contribute to the decisions that were impacting their lives and their futures. And aside from providing psychosocial support, we weren't really ensuring their empowerment through our response. To me it felt like we were providing them with what we could, based on what they had told us. I didn't get a sense we were empowering them to seek justice.

It's interesting reflecting on this time some 20 years later. I do think about what I would suggest now to provide the women of Srebrenica with the support they needed. I would still ensure that those women were provided with psychosocial support, but rather than simply providing them with what we were able to provide, I would make sure we asked the women to provide leadership to determine that the support we provided responded to what they identified as their main needs. I believe it would have also affected longer-term social change through to today. I know now that women's leadership in humanitarian response and in social justice work is critical. It's critical for ensuring that women's needs and rights are met and upheld, and it's critical in ensuring the needs of their families and their communities are looked after. It's obvious to me now, but it's been a journey getting here.

Through that first role and my brief encounters with the women affected by each crisis that we responded to, I started to become uncomfortably conscious of the fact that women weren't being adequately considered or allowed to provide leadership when it came to our work. It started to become clear to me then that we have a collective responsibility to ensure that women weren't sidelined anywhere—but particularly not in the work we were doing as a humanitarian agency.

Some years later, I found myself heading up the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) in Cambodia in April 1998. Our program was significant. We had 300 deminers, who were all Khmer, clearing landmines in four heavily mine-affected provinces around the country, as well as teams of people providing education to communities on how to protect themselves from the mine threat they were constantly exposed to going about their daily lives.

Once again, I was faced with the gender question—but this time organisationally. It was impossible to ignore—we were faced with massive gender disparities. The unexploded ordnance sector was, at the time, a male-dominated world. Most of the mine action industry employed large numbers

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21 During the conflict, the UN established a safe haven for Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica. In 1995, Bosnian Serbs took over the town, guarded by Dutch UN peacekeepers, and massacred more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia ruled the 1995 Srebrenica massacre a genocide. For more information, see http://www.icty.org/sid/322

of demobilised Khmer soldiers to clear mines, which served the dual purpose of providing jobs in a country with few jobs for demobilised soldiers and creating a safe environment for their fellow Khmers. One of my predecessors, Chris Horwood, who remains a close friend of mine to this day, had taken the wise step of recruiting local women for the demining teams in an effort to provide Khmer women with the same opportunities that Khmer men were being provided with. Given the sector we were working in, this had been met with a certain amount of ridicule.

But Chris had pushed forward and created a quota, which ensured that 20 per cent of all roles in MAG Cambodia's demining teams were women. Starting with a low percentage was a strategy to get the male deminers used to the idea that women could do this exhausting, dangerous and physical work as well as men could. The men had accepted the women as highly skilled and hard working and, early in my tenure, I was regularly hearing the Khmer staff telling me that the women deminers were better at their jobs than most men. This was a big shift. Coming into the role, and having become conscious of women's empowerment over the years, I was confronted by the gender disparity that remained. I felt we needed to implement a 40/60 split and that this should also apply to leadership roles in the organisation.

I recognised that we could play a key role in bringing Cambodia closer to gender equality, through our public interaction and by changing the culture of our organisation and leading by example.

At the time, I felt we were only half serious if we were introducing women as deminers and not empowering women to assume leadership positions and equipping and supporting them to be successful. I spent much time talking about this with our Executive Director in MAG headquarters in Manchester, senior expatriate staff in the program as well as our Khmer leaders. Most agreed with the idea and I was convinced that women needed the same opportunities as men no matter how contextually challenging that might be, and through our actions we could promote women's leadership and gender equality in a country where women were often invisible. Despite not being an agency with a women's rights or gender equality mandate, I recognised that we could play a key role in bringing Cambodia closer to gender equality, through our public interaction and by changing the culture of our organisation and leading by example.

One of our big achievements at MAG Cambodia was the appointment of a Khmer woman demining supervisor, who was responsible for leading a team of 12 deminers, which hadn't happened in Cambodia before. In some ways we were very fortunate, as one of the most respected senior Khmer staff members was enthusiastic about an opportunity to become her mentor and coach on team leadership. He was one of the most senior and respected Khmer leaders in the program and his involvement ensured that the appointment was met with minimal resistance amongst our staff. His decision to support her taught me a great deal. Men can play a helpful role on the road to gender equality by actively ensuring that women are elevated to leadership positions and using their positions of privilege to push back on the gender divide.

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Isiolo, Northern Kenya

I helped out a bit by establishing an 18-month middle management program with a local vocational training organisation. This involved all of our middle managers and I ensured that we had a 40/60 quota, which included some of the current and emerging women leaders in MAG Cambodia. On a recent visit to Cambodia it was rewarding to see that the program's women alumni includes Demining Team Supervisors, the Director of Finance at MAG Cambodia and the Special Assistant for the UNICEF Representative in Cambodia.

Another thing I learned in Cambodia was from the communities we visited with our community liaison teams. These teams were our eyes and ears on the ground. They had a tough gig. They spent their days on motorcycles riding huge distances to visit remote communities to gather community perspectives that informed our mine clearance needs assessments—which was still a relatively new endeavour at that time. I accompanied them a couple of times early in my tenure and I remember that one thing really struck me. When we sat down with communities to talk about the land mine problem they faced, the men would sit together and the women would sit together. Men would do all the talking while the women sat behind them. They had no voice in the conversation and were, for the most part, invisible. I was conscious that our clearance plans were reflecting the wishes of 50 per cent of the community and that women had no voice in this process—which was compromising the positive impact our work would have on the whole community.

While I had been aware of the importance of women's leadership and representation for a long time, *this* was the moment when I realised that addressing gender issues was absolutely critical for the success of our work and something we needed to consistently prioritise and get better at.

We came up with a few ideas on how to include women in the conversations, such as facilitating separate discussions for men and women; although I can't say that this led to radically different

clearance plans for the community. We were still clearing land for community infrastructure (such as schools, health clinics and wells), which was built through our partnerships with 'development organisations'. On reflection we didn't have the champions in the organisation to transform how we worked on the ground. If I had my time again I would have employed a women's rights specialist, engaged in a learning process with the key stakeholders in the organisation, established a team of champions for women's rights and moved them out into the provinces to influence the rest of the organisation. Next time!

Joining ActionAid was what changed the game for me. I can still recall travelling in a car on the way to the mouth of the Irrawaddy Delta with the Head of ActionAid's International Emergencies Team when we were responding to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in 2008. He was telling me that his understanding of women's rights mushroomed when ActionAid stopped referring to gender and development and started working on women's rights. This was when the penny dropped for me too. On reflection, my understanding was being shaped by a growing realisation that it is a woman's right to have a voice in domestic and community decision making, it is a woman's right to access essential services such as health and education, it is a woman's right not to be subject to violence, and it is a woman's right to have control of her own body. Sure, men needed to be consulted, but men have to give up some power to enable women to have their equal share of power. This dawning realisation that women's rights is all about power and transforming power relationships so that women can change their lives was probably my biggest a-ha moment! This realisation made it clear that women's rights work needs to be a standalone activity rather than something that is neatly 'mainstreamed' into other rights work such as a right to education. The more I think about it, the more I wonder how successful gender mainstreaming has been for women.

This dawning realisation that women's rights is all about power and transforming power relationships so that women can change their lives was probably my biggest a-ha moment!

The more I understood, the more I uncovered evidence showing that women and girls are more vulnerable to poverty because of the systematic discrimination they face. This discrimination means they have less access and control over political, economic and social resources; they have fewer assets than men and boys; and they are less able to access education and healthcare, all of which contribute to their poverty. In fact it made so much sense that I now refer to myself as a feminist. I firmly believe that anyone who believes in gender equality should consider doing the same.

I have met some amazing women who inspired me and unknowingly shaped this journey for me. I recall visiting a women's group in rural Bangladesh in 2011 who were members of an ActionAid-supported Reflect circle.

Visiting women's empowerment programs in the Kushtia region of Bangladesh changed a lot for me. In rural Bangladesh, most women are excluded from all decision making in their community and are systematically marginalised to the point where they have no human rights, including the right to health and the right to education.

With ActionAid's support, the 24 women I met had, over the course of the preceding two years, identified their problems, the reasons for their problems and then developed their own action plans to address them. A number of significant issues had been identified, which included violence against women, which leaves women powerless and robs them of their safety and dignity.

I asked the women how they were responding to the violence now that they had been on the two-year empowerment journey that was continuing to build their awareness of their rights. One of the women told us that she had recently been bashed by her husband but this time things had been different. The 50 other women in her community—all of whom had participated in the same empowerment processes—marched to her house and spent a couple of hours with her husband demanding that he stop beating his wife, and explaining that his actions were against the law, violated his wife's rights and were unacceptable in their community.

The woman explained to me that although she was still getting beaten, the beatings were becoming less frequent and she was noticing a change in her husband's behaviour. The amazing spirit and shared humanity of the group provides a shared hope and determination to end the violence and enable women to claim their dignity and ultimately claim their human rights. I could see how women had been empowered to understand the structural causes of violence, how they needed to work together to understand their rights and entitlements and how to stand up and make the change happen in the community. I knew that if change could happen in this community it could happen anywhere.

Reflect Circles

Reflect is an innovative and diverse approach to adult learning and social change, used by over 500 organisations in 60 countries.

Reflect fuses the theories of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire with participatory learning methodologies. ActionAid uses the Reflect Approach to tackle a wide range of issues, from female literacy and gender discrimination in Malawi, training women farmers in Vietnam, to community forestry and housing development in Nepal.

The Reflect approach links adult learning to empowerment. Having begun life as an approach to adult literacy, Reflect is now a tool for strengthening people's ability to communicate through whatever medium is most relevant to them.

Reflect creates a democratic space that strengthens people's ability to speak for themselves at all levels. Although Reflect projects are diverse, they all focus on enabling people to articulate their views. The development of literacy and other communication skills is closely linked to the analysis of power relationships.

Groups develop their own learning materials by constructing maps, calendars, matrices, and diagrams or using drama, storytelling and songs to capture social, economic, cultural and political issues from their own environment.

While members of a Reflect circle learn the basics of literacy, they are also learning how to access information or demand their rights or different services more effectively.

Reflect circles often strengthen people's dignity and self-confidence, as well as having an impact on improving health practices, children's education and local community organisation.

We then met with the men for an equally interesting conversation. A number of the old men were strongly asserting that after a day working in the fields they expected to have their evening meal prepared when they arrived home and beating their wives was an acceptable punishment if such things didn't happen. They didn't consider this violence and believed violence against women was restricted to sexual violence. A number of men in their 20s and 30s then joined the conversation, strongly refuting this claim and pressing that violence was not constrained to sexual violence and that men should not be beating their wives. I didn't witness the change in that community although you could see there was a lot of change coming. For that change to happen, men have to be involved. Because power—in terms of money, voice and decision making—sits overwhelmingly with men. Unless and until we men are committed to creating change by sharing that power with women, the status quo will reign. We need champions to challenge the status quo in Australia and my fellow men need to stand with them.

Unless and until we men are committed to creating change by sharing that power with women, the status quo will reign. We need champions to challenge the status quo in Australia and my fellow men need to stand with them.

I've also had the privilege of meeting some inspiring women in countries such as Cambodia who inspire me to this day. On a trip to Cambodia I met with an amazing group of young women who had formed a band, the Messenger Band, with a strong and progressive political agenda. The band, comprised of factory workers in the garment industry and, initiated by the Women's Agenda for Change, has released one CD and even performed in Hong Kong during a World Trade Organization meeting. The group calls itself 'the first all-female protest song folk singers in the history of Cambodia'.

Inspiration for their songs, which range from topics such as globalisation, factories, drug abuse, domestic violence and sex work, comes from speaking to people to 'know the real situation'. Usually when I meet with local partners of ActionAid, particularly in a hierarchical country like Cambodia, there is an uncomfortable deference to me and those I'm with as we are possible donors and therefore need to be treated nicely. Not this time! The first questions the Messenger Band asked were 'We know ActionAid, so why are you here and what do you want from us?' It was so refreshing to hear these questions and witness the power these young women had.

We then had the most amazing conversation about the demonstrations after the 2013 election, hearing how the Messenger Band was on the stage at Freedom Park singing their songs such as 'Suffering from Privatisation' and 'Sex work is work'. These were amazing, courageous young women with a sense of humour as well and they need our support. They will make change happen in their country: they are unstoppable.

In many ways my feminist journey landed during the development of the first ActionAid Australia strategy which has been guiding ActionAid Australia from 2012 until 2017. At a seminal meeting of the Board and Staff of ActionAid Australia in mid-2011 we nailed our identity. We decided that ActionAid Australia was an organisation that would build movements that campaign for social justice by empowering people to stand up, claim their rights and change their lives.

There was unanimous agreement that we would put women's rights at the centre of all of our work, because women are both the most vulnerable social group and the most effective change makers. This focus on women's rights has led to the transformation of ActionAid Australia as a new women's rights organisation in Australia and when I look back over the last seven years, I feel that this is exactly where I was destined to land.

The emergence of ActionAid Australia as a women's rights organisation has led to a different kind of team and the need for a different form of leadership. I have consciously focused on giving women leadership opportunities in ActionAid to fulfil our commitment to gender equality. This has required an adjustment to my leadership style, which on reflection was a little 'Archie-centric'!

The women on the leadership team at ActionAid Australia are inspiring, positive role models, concerned about their team members; they are empowering, and push followers to be creative and take chances. By working with them I've learned to give more of myself and build personal, as well as professional, relationships with my colleagues, which has helped me become more connected, made me a better leader and ultimately more successful.

It's been interesting reflecting on my feminist journey, as much has changed for me in the last 20 years. In 1994, I wouldn't have seen myself where I am now. My understanding is building all the time, and like many male leaders I am spreading the word about feminist leadership, gender equality and how we can contribute to making this an immediate reality. We don't need lengthy targets, transition plans and key performance indicators. What we need to do is assume responsibility for gender equality and make that change happen now.

Women, Peace and Security basics

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda was formally established in October 2000 when the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The resolution acknowledges the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and their role on the frontlines of conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. It identifies the need for action by the UN system and UN member states across a wide range of areas:

- Increasing participation of women at all levels of decision making in institutions and mechanisms related to conflict prevention, resolution and management, including peace processes
- Increasing participation of civilian, military and police women in UN field-based operations
- Adoption of a gender perspective in peacekeeping operations, including through establishment of a gender component; peace processes, including implementation of peace agreements; in the design of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs and refugee camps and settlements; and in Security Council missions
- Provision of and increasing support to gender training efforts
- Protection of women and girls, and their rights, including in relation to sexual and gender-based violence.

Resolution 1325 is recognised globally as a landmark resolution. By adopting the resolution, the UN Security Council acknowledged that women's participation, protection and a gender perspective are central to the maintenance of international peace and security. This acknowledgement builds on previous commitments made, including in the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action in 1995.

The WPS agenda has since grown with the adoption of seven additional and related Security Council resolutions: 1820 (2009), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2010), 1960 (2011), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013) and, most recently, 2242 (2015). Four of these resolutions are particularly focused on conflict-related sexual violence (1820, 1888, 1960 and 2106).

The Security Council and UN member states review implementation during annual open debates in the Security Council as well as during special milestones such as the 15th anniversary in October 2015. The UN Secretary-General tracks and analyses implementation through reports, which are submitted to the Security Council. Civil society groups are on the frontlines of implementing the WPS agenda globally and also monitoring, analysing and advocating for its implementation at domestic, regional and global levels.

What is a gender perspective?

A gender perspective is at the heart of the Women, Peace and Security effort. It recognises that women, men, girls and boys experience armed conflict differently and therefore have different needs. To have a gender perspective means having a better understanding of the situation you are operating in. A gender perspective enables an operation sent in to a conflict or post-conflict environment to respond effectively to the needs, vulnerabilities, strengths, capacities and priorities of the population and the circumstances on the ground. According to the outcome document from a 2015 Royal Australian Air Force workshop on WPS, without a gender perspective, you are 'shrouded in ignorance'.

Why WPS?

The Women, Peace and Security agenda and the global effort built upon this agenda is a response to a number of pervasive realities: women are disproportionately vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence during and after conflict; men more often die during conflict, leaving women as breadwinners forced to assume responsibility for families and communities; women are at the forefront of conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding in their communities yet they are persistently excluded from formal peace processes; they are underrepresented in peacekeeping forces and in decision making; and they have often very different needs in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes, in displacement and refugee camps, and in post-conflict reconstruction. The agenda is a direct result of extensive advocacy by civil society groups, especially women's rights organisations.

WPS and Australia

Despite global enthusiasm and support for the WPS agenda, implementation has been slow and uneven. Beginning in 2002, the United Nations began calling on member states such as Australia, to develop national action plans (NAPs) to implement UNSC Resolution 1325 and the broader WPS agenda. NAPs are seen as a critical tool for implementing the agenda, in particular at the domestic level, and ensuring greater accountability for implementation by member states. In 2012, Australia adopted its first national action plan on Women, Peace and Security covering the period 2012–18. The Australian NAP organises the WPS agenda into five thematic areas: prevention, participation, protection, relief and recovery, and normative.

Within government, the Department of Defence has developed a Defence Implementation Plan that is housed in the Office of the Chief of the Defence Force and led by a Director National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security. Australia monitors its implementation through a biennial publicly available progress report. Australian civil society organisations closely monitor implementation and report their findings in an annual 'Civil Society Report Card'. An independent interim review of the Australian NAP is being conducted in 2015.

For more information

- Australian Government 2012, *Australian National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security 2012–2018*
- Australian Government 2014, *2014 Progress Report: Australian National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security 2012–2018*
- 2014 Second Annual Civil Society Report Card: *Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*
- Australian National Committee for UN Women 2013, *Women, Peace & Security: An Introductory Manual*
- For a recent global WPS analysis, see *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Security the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, Radhika Coomaraswamy, UN Women, 2015
- See also ACMC Occasional Paper *Conflict-related Sexual and Gender-based Violence: an introductory overview to support prevention and response efforts* (1/2014); and Occasional Paper

‘Talk the talk and walk the walk …’: the significance of Women, Peace and Security in policing

Commander Wayne Buchhorn

The nature of conflict since the Second World War has changed significantly. No longer are we seeing state-on-state conflict where massive armies stand and do battle at the ‘front line’. Conflict in the modern era is more likely to be intra-state conflict in the form of insurgencies or asymmetric warfare.[22] We see it on a daily basis in the news, coming from Iraq, Syria, the Central African Republic and many of the other conflict zones across the world.

The international community, largely through the auspices of the United Nations, and to a lesser degree other regional bodies, is often obligated to undertake peacemaking or peacekeeping responsibilities. It is important to recognise that peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of justice. To that end, the obligations of the international community need to be focused on the transition from conflict, not only to peace but also to the ultimate goal of a just society. Policing organisations and specialists, as part of any international mission, are well placed to support and assist a community or country along that continuum from conflict to peace to justice.

Throughout my career, I have had many first hand experiences of the positive impacts of what is now broadly called Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The inclusion of women and understandings of gender considerations are fundamental to successful policing. This is true in any environment or any country, but particularly so as a component of peacekeeping.

From a personal perspective, the dawning recognition of the importance of very specific gender considerations, both within and external to my missions, came to me when speaking with women about the key issues and planning for the mission objectives. My insights reinforced what many instinctively know: that men and women see things differently and come at problems from a different perspective. Regardless of how hard one works to recognise and acknowledge personal, inherent bias, we cannot overcome our natural, unconscious predispositions—and a gender perspective is one of these. I believe therefore that we all need to work to ensure gender perspectives are acknowledged and remain a constant consideration in our decision making. I have found that one of the best and most effective ways of ensuring a balanced gender perspective is to have women in senior and influential roles within the mission, to get their perspective, and to engage frequently and appropriately with women in the local community. After all women, girls and boys are more often than not the ones who suffer the most in conflict and post-conflict environments. Women are often the cornerstone of peace and justice discussions, keeping the family together, being too busy living to fight. We should listen louder. And if needed, be their voice.

22 To give one a very small insight into this changing face of conflict it is estimated that during the 1990s civilians constituted 90 per cent of casualties in the conflicts that occurred in that decade. Compare that to the estimated 5 per cent civilian casualties during World War I.

Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary Inspector Jennifer Wakore with AFP Sergeant Sonia Sawczak while undertaking a work placement at the AFP College in Canberra in 2014

There can be little doubt that gender issues require significant understanding and engagement by any (and all) components of an international mission. I see these gender considerations manifesting themselves in quite fundamental ways.

Women's representation

First, any international peacekeeping mission, whether military, police and/or civilian, needs a strong representation of women. Women must be an integral part of the mission structure and play an influential role in operational planning. All women, but particularly senior women within a mission command structure, play a vitally important role in developing relationships with women in the local community, both at the individual level and with local civil society and women's groups. Engagement with women in the affected community will always be critical, in my view, to success. Without having women embedded in and across the mission structure the mission will at best be less effective than it would be, or at worst, fail completely.

This is one reason why a policing element of any mission should have women in senior positions. One of their roles (with their male colleagues) will be to identify high achieving female members of the indigenous police force and provide guidance, mentoring and development opportunities that enable those identified to take high profile positions in their organisation. This reinforces the value that women police officers bring to the organisation, allows them to have a say in the direction of the

local police service and takes the (often) first small steps toward empowering women within what is generally a male-dominated hierarchy. The focus on supporting these women is very important for a number of reasons. It shows, in words and actions, the support for women in the local police force and in the broader community. It also provides an opportunity, and a level of comfort and confidence, for women to report domestic violence and other criminal actions to another woman, which almost always makes the reporting an easier experience.

A particular area where including women can have significant impact is addressing domestic violence. From a policing perspective, as a society transitions from conflict to peace to justice, the protection of women, girls and boys becomes one of the more critical aspects of the work undertaken in the struggle to (re-)establish law and order. The scourge of domestic violence—a significant problem in our own society—is often of such magnitude that a special focus is required in order to protect the victim, change behaviours and punish those responsible, not only in the immediate term when international law enforcement officers are in country but also into the longer term where, ideally, domestic violence will be a rare occurrence.

I saw this in relation to domestic violence in the Solomon Islands where such violence is historically and culturally embedded—part of the social fabric. It's a long road to change such deeply entrenched social mores, but when focused efforts are made to address the issue through education and law enforcement, progress is made. Notably, information is more readily obtained, insights gained and behaviours able to be influenced when the victim can speak with a woman officer.

Additionally, the establishment of specialist domestic violence units within an indigenous police force not only shows a strong focus on the issue to the community, but also has the additional benefit of reinforcing with the members of the police force that domestic violence in the community is not to be tolerated. Hopefully, it also gives male members pause for thought about how they conduct their own domestic relationships.

Strong male support

Second, male leaders in any international support and assistance mission must demonstrate their support for women within the mission and in the planning and command group. When opportunities present themselves to fill positions within a command structure, whether through the creation of new positions as the mission develops, or through changes in personnel, the placement of senior women is paramount. This is because it underpins the credibility of the mission's work and engagement with the local authorities and community.

Sir Robert Peel, the father of modern policing, in his nine principles of policing stated that 'the police are the public and that the public are the police'. To that end, having women in senior positions in the local police—an organisation that, in post-conflict environments in particular, the community is more likely to have dealings with (or at least see regularly) than any other body of the executive government—implicitly gives a level of comfort and confidence to the women and vulnerable members in the community. It can also serve to empower women within their communities. It is empowering to see women in senior positions 'mixing it' with men, both within the police force

AFP Assistant Commissioner Mandy Newton, National Manager International Deployment Group (2012–15), inspects a parade of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force while visiting the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands

and amongst the politicians and the community more broadly. These women provide a powerful example for others. Women role models may require additional support and assistance, but it is a highly effective use of time and resources and effort well spent on the part of the team in the support mission.

We need to be cognisant that the mission itself, and particularly its command structure, will be scrutinised by the host country's agencies and personnel, not only in relation to what it is that we say, but also very much what we do. We must model the behaviours and structures that we are espousing. We must not only 'talk the talk' but also 'walk the walk'. In my experience, if we are trying to move women into the senior ranks of a host country police service—say from Assistant Commissioner to Deputy Commissioner and beyond—it makes our justifications more difficult to defend if our mission structures do not reflect our own advice.

Further, we need to recognise that when women move into senior levels or into positions where women have not regularly held office, it is incumbent on us that they be provided additional and ongoing support. This is necessary to prepare them to move into new and/or more senior roles, and also to help them face the challenges of dealing with male colleagues—many of whom are likely to be uncomfortable with women in those roles or having women in command.

This is often true not only in the work environment, but also in the home environment. If a woman holds a position that is seen as more senior or prestigious than the role held by her male partner, this can lead to domestic difficulties and compound an already difficult situation for the woman.

This brings me to the importance of educating men. Men must also live the values of supporting women and not just see it as being imposed from outside on the workplace or 'at work'. Men must learn to see that not only is it the right thing to do, but that a true commitment to providing support to women will bring tangible benefits. Recognising the importance of men supporting women and making women's engagement 'normal' is an essential part of WPS training and should be a staple for all personnel deploying into international missions.

Women as negotiators

Third, women will often be at the heart of any peace process, whether informally or formally, in a society coming out of conflict, regardless of the nature of that society, whether it is strongly patriarchal or matriarchal. Notably, while women are often at the forefront of informal peace processes they continue to be excluded from formal processes, including negotiations. This begs the question, why? Whose social, cultural and societal norms are we using to address the issue? Given this and the fact that, despite not being part of a formal process, women will still be very influential within their communities, the opportunity to engage with, support and learn from them cannot be underestimated.

Similarly, in a multinational assistance and support mission, mission command deploying mixed teams of males and females, internationals and locals and mixed-race patrols or teams provides a very powerful example. It engages women at the forefront of community liaison and often brings more effective, less conflict-induced results.

To provide an example: A quickly growing and agitated crowd at a polling station during the 2010 Solomon Islands national election was a concern for police given the violence that erupted following the 2006 national election. Any potential for a repeat of that violence was something that we all knew could very quickly spiral out of control. The potential to cause significant personal injury within the community, as well as the police forces, was high, as was the certainty of significant property damage. The mission leadership decided it was essential that, before the situation escalated, the police attend to respond to the growing crowd numbers. The aim was to gauge the concerns of the crowd and to attempt to defuse the tension. The initial immediate response was led by a mission-based policewoman, her Pacific Island police colleague and their Solomon Islands police partners. The composition and diversity of the responding police officers, and the inclusion of women, was important and helped with the de-escalation of the level of agitation of the crowd. A job well done by the patrol members. Polling continued in a peaceful and orderly manner.

Support for women's rights

Fourth, widespread and high-profile support to women's rights is a very important element of any mission plan. Such support through International Women's Day marches, and initiatives aimed at countering domestic violence, through educative and enforcement activities, keeps the participation and protection of women in the community in the forefront of the mind.

I have seen the positive effects of having a large body of uniformed police officers, male and female, from the support mission marching with uniformed women and men (who would be encouraged to participate) in support of International Women's Day or other such opportunities, together with many others from the community. The effect is to strongly reinforce support for women in the community.

As the community continues its progress from conflict to peace to justice the linkages between women's rights and the rule of law need to be articulated and reinforced at every opportunity. The progress made in providing protection for women and women's rights is often slow. It can be frustrating, but it is progress nonetheless. Such progress is often evolutionary, not revolutionary and it is important not to be disheartened by the inevitable setbacks, either holistically or in specific circumstances.

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Standards of behaviour

Fifth, mission command needs to adopt, demand and enforce the highest standard of professional conduct of its members, both internally in terms of behaviours within the mission and externally in terms of its engagement, personally and professionally, with the broader community.
It is there to support and assist.

It is imperative, in my view, that mission command adopts a zero tolerance approach in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse, within the mission and with the local population. The inevitability in international support and assistance missions is that there is a significant power imbalance between the indigenous community and the international mission members there to provide that support and assistance. Unfortunately we hear all too regularly of sexual abuse of members of the community by mission members. This is absolutely unacceptable on a personal level and at the broader mission level. Such unacceptable behaviour should always be strongly sanctioned so there can be no doubt as to the expectations.

It is imperative, in my view, that mission command adopts a zero tolerance approach in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse, within the mission and with the local population.

Often, members of police agencies who have been selected to participate in international policing support and assistance missions gain a level of experience and exposure to issues they may not have the opportunity to experience in their home jurisdictions. On many occasions those opportunities also provide an additional level of payment and allowances above what a member would be paid at home. The positive benefits of participation conversely mean that any sanction imposed for inappropriate behaviour by a member can have professional and personal impacts. It is important to make abundantly clear expectations of behaviours and to enforce appropriate sanctions. A range of sanctions, including terminating a member's participation in the mission and returning them to their home jurisdiction, is important. It is a powerful incentive for members of the mission to adhere to the

rules, values and codes of behaviour and operation. Terminating a mission and returning members home can have a salutatory effect on others and is strong reinforcement of the high standards of behaviour demanded for an international mission.

Subject to the realities of the particular mission in relation to mandates, indemnities and other agreements there may also be the possibility of criminal sanctions for anyone who breaches the behavioural guidelines, particularly in instances of misconduct of a sexual nature. If such breaches are not dealt with criminally in the host jurisdiction they may be dealt with criminally (or administratively) in the member's home jurisdiction. Again the lesson such actions provide are valuable in reinforcing with mission members, and equally importantly with the local community and host country authorities, that they are accountable and will indeed be held to account.

Conclusion

The importance of gender issues in mission planning cannot be underestimated and needs to be an integral part of the process. To maximise the opportunities through engagement with women in the indigenous community, mission command needs senior women within its ranks to provide their perspective and to ensure that the mission itself is seen, in the eyes of the indigenous community, to be walking the talk of the importance of women. As a mission commander it is important to acknowledge the sociocultural and religious norms of the society or community in which you are engaged to help them move towards a more just and tolerant society.

Women provide a valuable insight and their views must be sought, welcomed and considered.

There is a growing body of empirical research that indicates different cultures use different cognitive processes as we move through decision making processes.[23] Once we recognise that different cultures think differently it is not unreasonable to assume that different genders within the same culture see issues through a different prism. Recognising those differences and using them to advantage, not only for the mission and its objectives but also for the benefit of the local community makes absolute sense. Women provide a valuable insight and their views must be sought, welcomed and considered.

Without using the diversity of perspectives or seeking differing gender, cultural, religious and social contexts suggests that we haven't taken complete advantage of all the avenues available to us to ensure we are as effective as we can be in our mission.

Having women in senior positions within the mission not only provides examples to the host country and its agencies but also reinforces the importance of gender equality within the mission, whether that mission is bilateral or multilateral. Our interactions with the local community, and in particular with women, will be significantly enhanced and will provide for better outcomes for the host country. It also provides a firmer foundation for sustainability of the mission's objectives along the path to a more tolerant and just society.

23 See for example Richard E Nisbett 2003, *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently … And Why*, Free Press.

Uruzgan: Women, Peace and Security in the home of the Taliban

Bernard Philip, DFAT

I was posted as an Australian diplomat to Uruzgan province in Afghanistan in 2010–11 to head up the Provincial Reconstruction Team.

The province

Uruzgan is a largely Pashtun province in the country's south, with a population of around half a million, wedged between the larger Pashtun provinces of Kandahar and Helmand and on the southern border of the Hazarajat, the traditional homeland of Afghanistan's Hazara minority. Kabul feels a long way away, separated by forbidding mountainous geography. Pakistan looms large. Indeed, the Pakistan border town of Chaman and the nearby provincial capital of Quetta—home to much of the Taliban leadership, including the so-called shadow provincial government that claimed to be the legitimate rulers of Uruzgan—are much closer and more accessible than Kabul.

Even by Afghan standards, Uruzgan is rural and remote—and deeply conservative.

But the province has often played an outsized role in Afghanistan's modern history.

It is perhaps best known as the home of the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, who grew up in Deh Rawood district in the west of the province. Omar trusted those he knew, and Uruzganis have always been disproportionately represented in the upper reaches of the notoriously closed and xenophobic Taliban. Uruzgan was central to the rise to power of the Taliban in the early 1990s, and later to the emergence of a Taliban insurgency following the US-led invasion that overthrew the Taliban regime in late 2001.

Uruzgan is also known for its connection to the post-2001 president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai. It was from the provincial capital of Uruzgan, Tarin Kot, that Karzai launched his rise to power in late 2001. Uruzgani leaders said Karzai retained fond memories of Uruzgan as a bucolic paradise in which, as a child, he swam down rivers teeming with delicious fruit falling from trees. Karzai's continuing close interest in the tribal politics of Uruzgan—and his efforts to promote the dominance of his own tribe, the Popalzai—were a central influence over political and security affairs in the province during his presidency.

The other famous Uruzgani is Bibi Aisha, a woman from Chora district who appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in August 2010. The Taliban had cut off her ears and nose as punishment for escaping from her abusive husband. Bibi Aisha was clearly a woman of great courage and endurance—qualities, I suspect, shared by many women in Uruzgan.

Underlining Uruzgan's outsized role, one of the best books on modern Afghanistan, *No Good Men Among the Living: America, the Taliban and the War Through Afghan Eyes*, by American reporter Anand Gopal, depicts the contemporary Afghan experience through the eyes of three main characters, two of whom are Uruzganis: Akbar Gul, a 'reluctant' Taliban commander from eastern Afghanistan; the notorious Jan Mohammed Khan, warlord, former governor of Uruzgan, kinsman of President Karzai (he reportedly saved Karzai's life in a street battle between the Popalzai and Barekzai tribes in Tarin Kot), and one-time janitor at the Tarin Kot boys' school; and Hilla Achakzai, a widow who moved to Uruzgan with her late husband (killed by the henchmen of Jan Mohammed Khan) and who subsequently represented Uruzgan in the upper house of the national parliament.

Conditions for women in Uruzgan are very difficult, even by Afghan standards (to revert to a phrase that we often used in Uruzgan).[24] During the time I was posted there, the female literacy rate was close to zero (the male literacy rate was only 10 per cent). Nine out of ten women gave birth at home without a midwife. The mortality of children under five approached 40 per cent. A survey conducted by Save the Children indicated that more than half the girls in the province were married by the age of 18.

The mission

One of the features of the post-2001 Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns is the notion of the 'decisive year'—inevitably the current year or the year to come. The two years in which I was posted to Uruzgan—2010 and 2011—were both touted as decisive years for the campaign. Neither was a decisive year, but both were probably more important than most.

2010 was the year of the surge—led by the two most celebrated US generals of the current era, Stanley McChrystal and David Petraeus—in which forces were poured into southern Afghanistan in an attempt to stem the tide of the Taliban insurgency, and then roll it back. The surge was not of the same magnitude as that in Iraq in 2007–08. But it was still intense and fast moving. Of the sobering memories I have of commanders' conferences at Regional Command (South) in the summer and autumn of 2010, two stand out.

First, commanders weighed up whether CH-47 (Chinook) helicopters could deploy into battle without seating. If they could, they would have the space to transport many more soldiers—an important operational consideration given limited rotary-wing assets. But if something went wrong and the helicopter was brought down, it would generate very high coalition fatalities in a single incident.

Second, the problem of house-borne IEDs—entire rows of houses that were booby-trapped as bombs in a district of Kandahar province in anticipation of the surge.

24 Data in this paragraph can be found in Save the Children research materials about the Children of Uruzgan program including 'Children of Uruzgan Afghanistan', brochure, http://www.childrenofuruzgan.org.au/about-children-of-uruzgan/; and 'Early Childhood Care and Development in Uruzgan' Research Brief, http://www.childrenofuruzgan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/cou_research_brief_ecd.pdf.

Australian PRT members Maryam Bell (left) and Lauren Patmore (right) discussing wheat crops with a farmer outside Tarin Kot

The surge having made solid progress against its objectives (including in Uruzgan), 2011 was the year in which transition—the transfer of responsibility for Afghanistan's security from international forces to Afghan security forces—became the central pillar of the international strategy. Transition itself was some way off—the eventual deadline was the end of 2014—but there was a clear signal from 2011 onwards that the ISAF period was coming to an end. The high water mark of the coalition effort was, in many respects, reached in 2011.

The time I was in Uruzgan was therefore a period of dissonance. The war economy was at its height. Cash was everywhere. It seemed like every entrepreneur in the province had his own 'NGO' looking to partner with the coalition. There was a building boom under way, which trickled down to much of the province. One statistic I remember was that Tarin Kot town centre had some 40 bakeries, most of which had not existed a few years earlier.

But it was a decade into the international intervention. There was an awareness that the end of the campaign was closer than the beginning. The foreigners and the locals understood, for the most part, that the premise of the surge was to get in, consolidate what gains were possible, and then quickly get out again.

The team

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) operated in most of Afghanistan's 34 provinces during the more than decade-long international intervention. They were usually a combination of civilian and military elements. Their purpose was to promote peace and security through political engagement with Afghan leaders and communities and through small and large-scale development projects—everything from schools, hospitals and main roads through to village wells and sewing workshops for women. PRTs worked alongside and in close partnership with international military forces. The latter were primarily focused on degrading the Taliban and other insurgent groups and on building the capacity of Afghan security forces.

Before I assumed leadership of the PRT in mid-2010, the Australian Defence Force had been in Uruzgan for about five years, initially through the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG), and later through the Reconstruction Task Force and then Mentoring Task Force (MTF). US Special Forces, who had spearheaded Karzai's rise to power and his march from Tarin Kot to the southern capital of Kandahar, had been in Uruzgan even longer. Their A-teams had deployed the length and breadth of the province, making friends and allies—and occasionally falling out with them—along the way.

The Dutch had been in the province since 2006—partnering with MTF in the training of Afghan security forces, but also providing civilian leadership of the PRT. They were now withdrawing as a result of shifting political alliances in The Hague. The Dutch-led PRT provided the basic model for the Australian-led PRT—civilian-led, with diplomats and development advisers, supported by military engineers and a military security force, and closely integrated with the military task force that oversaw the training of the Afghan security forces. In our case, the PRT was about 200-strong and included diplomats and development advisers from the United States and Australia, as well as a US military civil affairs team, an Australian military engineering team and a handful of Slovakian staff officers.

The women of Uruzgan

From this brief sketch, it should be no surprise that Uruzgan—and especially Uruzgan during a period of intensely kinetic military operations—was not fertile ground for pursuing a strong Women, Peace and Security agenda—although nowhere was the need greater.

The first thing to be said is that the women of Uruzgan were largely invisible to the international coalition, including the PRT. Our ability to engage with the women of Uruzgan—to speak with them; to obtain direct knowledge of their experiences and circumstances, and to incorporate their views into our political and development strategies—was very limited.

This reflected the politics, society and economy of Uruzgan. Family and tribe were paramount (though both would be trumped by cash). Women lacked any voice in political affairs. Power was constituted entirely in male terms.

A Pashtun society dominated by tribal identity, such as Uruzgan, was in some ways quite egalitarian. The *shura* was the main forum for debate and decision making. Turban-wearing male tribesmen had an inherent equality. There was significant scope for mobility—on the battlefield, through tribal

conflict, or through the acquisition of wealth. This was especially the case in an era of conflict, like that endured by Afghans since the late 1970s. The most prominent leaders of the province—the former governor Jan Mohammed Khan and the highway police commander and later provincial police chief Matiullah Khan, both from the Popalzai tribe—emerged from poverty and obscurity.

But this equality, such as it was, did not extend to women.

My personal engagement with the women of Uruzgan, as the head of the PRT, was limited to Uruzgan's two elected national representatives, the aforementioned Senator Hilla and the province's female representative in the national lower house, a feisty young Hazara woman called Raihana Azad; the female representative on the Uruzgan Provincial Council, a woman called Marjana from Uruzgan's Kuchi (nomadic) peoples; and Radha Wafa, the provincial director of women's affairs. I also had fleeting encounters with a handful of women in professional roles at the Tarin Kot Hospital and Tarin Kot girls' school and on visits to district centres.

The PRT's engagement with the women of Uruzgan, and that of coalition military forces, was largely limited to the same small coterie.

The four women we engaged with—three elected and one appointed—were essentially the product of quotas. Otherwise the number would have been zero.

These four women were all impressive—courageous, dedicated and modest. Looking into their eyes, one could see a world-weariness—though they would have only been in their 30s and 40s (or younger). If they had been international relations theorists, they would have been realists.

They participated in set-piece meetings in the province, including the weekly meeting chaired by the provincial governor and the main coalition-organised shuras. But looking back, their participation was largely token. It rarely influenced approaches and outcomes and was not central to the security and political affairs of the province. They were generally only able to travel around the province under the armed protection of the coalition.

The local culture was deeply hostile to female participation in public affairs. My successor as head of the PRT in Uruzgan tells the story of when the coalition distributed ballistic vests to senior officials in the province after one of the provincial ministry heads had been shot. A senior provincial leader, who was generally about as enlightened as they came in Uruzgan, got up at the weekly provincial meeting and quipped to the 50 staff present that he had 48 vests to hand out. The male line directors had a chuckle; the two women in the room did not. Amidst that kind of overt mocking, a woman seeking any kind of leadership role in Uruzgan needed to have an extremely thick skin.

Beyond the level of provincial politics, there was some other engagement with the women of Uruzgan.

As elsewhere in Afghanistan, the military forces employed Female Engagement Teams (FETs; see text box on p. 58). These teams deployed with units on operations in a variety of contexts—on night-time raids, patrols through villages, and consultations with local communities.

The PRT was able to engage with larger groups of women through its female diplomats and development advisers. Our International Women's Day events, hosted by the provincial governor, attracted some 150 local women.

Female members of the PRT were able to meet occasionally with the wives of key local leaders.

We were also able to engage with professional women—teachers, doctors and midwives—through our development program implementing partners, such as Save the Children.

My sense is that this engagement, as in the case of our engagement with the key female leaders in the province, was mostly of limited effectiveness in terms of promoting a Women, Peace and Security agenda. Insights gleaned during snatched conversations at the wedding of a local leader, or during a brief school or hospital visit—let alone during the stress of an early morning military raid—were inevitably fragmentary. Follow up was patchy and uneven.

The women of Uruzgan were a large gap in our engagement strategy.

The women of Uruzgan were also, it seemed to me, largely absent in the day-to-day deliberations of male leaders in the province. I can't say this with a great deal of confidence since the private and home lives of Uruzgani leaders were mostly closed to us. But while there was a great deal of emotion and intensity on display in the relationships between male leaders—be it friendship, camaraderie, shared military experience, deep rivalry or even a sense of romance and chivalry—women were unspoken of. Rumours abounded of chai boys[25] and relationships between adult males. Men, as best one could tell, hung out with other men. One didn't sense the same intensity when it came to male-female (husband-wife, brother-sister) relationships. Maybe this silence was a product of Uruzgan's tribal culture—Pashtun tribesmen being unwilling to be open about issues involving women, never mind with a foreigner. But I detected a larger void.

I remember a conversation one night with the head of the local television and radio station, who was also a poet. He spoke quite movingly about the themes—patriotism, religion, nature, love—that he addressed in his poetry; his writing was clearly central to his identity. When discussion turned to his family—namely his two wives and 14 children—I asked what his wives thought of his poetry. 'They know nothing of it!' he said dismissively.

Approaches

On a day-to-day basis, I think it's fair to say we didn't dwell too much on what was missing in our strategy because of this lack of female engagement.

Our judgement was that what we were doing was good for Uruzgan and good for the women of Uruzgan. If, our logic went, we could help improve security, strengthen political participation and kick-

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25 'Chai boys' are Afghan boys who are kept in sexual servitude to older, powerful men in the widespread—and illegal—practice of 'bacha bazi'. For more information, see for example http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/10/28/bacha-bazi-an-afghan-tragedy/.

Australian member of the Provincial Reconstruction Team Jessie Belcher in competition with Uruzgan Police Chief Juma Gul at an ADF patrol base in the Mirabad Valley

start development in partnership with the male leaders of Uruzgan, then this would benefit the women of Uruzgan. Looking back, this did represent a leap of faith given the absence of direct engagement with the women of Uruzgan.

The Dutch before us had tried harder, but had experienced frustrations. In the spring of 2010, for example, they very publicly invited women from Chora district to rally at a nominated spot and march to the top of a hill in a placed called Ali Sherzai. This 'Chora Women's March', they hoped, would be a demonstration of solidarity and a chance for the women of the district to assert themselves. On the day, a group of Dutch soldiers and diplomats gathered at the foot of the hill at the appointed hour ready to escort the women, but none showed up. Perhaps they had been intimidated, or simply understood there would be a price to pay for participating. Perhaps, isolated in their own homes, the women had no opportunity to encourage each other to get involved, so the idea never got momentum.

Certainly, an underlying assumption of our engagement was that the subordinate role of women was an important factor in the province's insecurity and under-development. Much as we engaged in light-hearted banter with Uruzganis about the backwardness of the province, the terrible condition of women—and the horrors endured by women such as Bibi Aisha—was never too far from our minds. We were, after all, in the birthplace of the Taliban, and the one thing that the entire world knew about the Taliban—up there with the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas—was their attitude towards women.

But we usually didn't mount a direct attack on gender inequality, at least not as a core element of our broader strategy.

This lack of direct action on gender inequality was not, in my experience, the result of a deeply considered approach based on a comprehensive assessment. It was instead the product of an intuitive judgement that a direct approach to gender equality would be counter-productive and constitute a red line for the male leaders of Uruzgan, including those otherwise well disposed to our peace and security initiatives. And we sensed the very real limitations—to have believed that we could have transformed a centuries' old culture in the few years we were there would have been naïve.

So our approaches to women's empowerment were mostly indirect: if tribal leaders could be persuaded to get along, or the Taliban driven from a particular valley, or a district centre bazaar made more safe, then this would expand the space in which women and girls could live better lives.

There are reasons to think this indirect approach made a difference. To give one illustration: a handful of Australian soldiers who had served in separate deployments at the beginning and end of the Australian mission observed that whereas they had seen no women in the Tarin Kot bazaar in 2006, there were plenty shopping there unescorted in 2013.

We did have more scope, too, to focus aid program investments on women and girls. While the detailed analysis of gender equality undertaken by program managers in AusAID had limited influence over our broader strategy during the surge in 2010–11, it did provide entry points for our later interventions. Our flagship vehicle was the $40 million Children of Uruzgan program, delivered through Save the Children. Thanks to the skill and dedication of the Save the Children staff and the mostly female development advisers in the PRT, Children of Uruzgan was able to mobilise the involvement of women and girls—as organisers, teachers, students and health care providers—across the entire province and to achieve solid outcomes in terms of female access to basic health and education services. It was a powerful demonstration of the hunger among Afghan women and girls—in one of the poorest areas of the country—for a better future.

It was only possible because of the involvement of committed Afghans, operating at arm's length from the coalition.

We also had some success in influencing local attitudes—especially those of leaders—through our day-to-day approaches.

> Female diplomats and development advisers…enjoyed some of the closest and most productive relationships with key tribal and government leaders.

Female diplomats and development advisers, who comprised around half the civilian staff of the PRT, played a central role in our political and aid engagement. They enjoyed some of the closest and most productive relationships with key tribal and government leaders. I remember one of our female diplomats being especially effective in strengthening the resolve of a key tribal leader to remain engaged with the government and to discourage his tribe from supporting the Taliban.

It has to be said that many Uruzgani leaders seemed amused and bewildered by the leading role of female PRT members. In my experience, however, they rarely if ever questioned it and engaged with our female officers mostly without qualm, and in some cases with enthusiasm.

This exposure of local Afghan leaders to women in leadership roles went well beyond their interactions with Australian civilians in the PRT.

The governor of Uruzgan and other leaders were certainly enthusiastic about meeting Prime Minister Gillard during her visit in 2010, and this must have sent some message of empowerment. The national commander of Australian forces in Afghanistan in 2011–12, Brigadier (now Major General) Simone Wilkie, was a frequent visitor to the province. Women were active in operational and headquarters roles across Australian and US units in the province, including at remote forward operating bases. This helped acclimatise local leaders to the role that women could play.

It wasn't of course straightforward. While Uruzgani tribal leaders—at least in the capital Tarin Kot and adjacent districts—were quite comfortable dealing with female members of the PRT, these leaders' expectations as regards the behaviour and demeanour of foreign women and local women were no doubt quite different (a distinction they could live comfortably with). Further afield in districts like Shahid-e-Hasas—ultra-conservative places even by Uruzgan standards—foreign women were viewed more as a threat.

The PRT's cultural adviser noted the fine line we had to maintain: if female members of the PRT and broader coalition were too 'overt' (i.e. didn't make some kind of effort to observe local customs, including with respect to head coverings); insurgents would use that in their messaging against the Coalition—look what the Coalition wants to do with your women, they would say.

Overall, there was perhaps an acceptance that we in the Coalition operated in a different world—they had their existence, we had ours. But, although it wasn't stated as such, I sensed some realisation on the part of Uruzgani leaders, even if it was unconscious, that the national success of Australia and its coalition partners was related to our country's empowerment of its women, including having a female prime minister and posting professional Australian women into a complex war environment. That, I think, is an important legacy.

Lessons

What other lessons can be taken from Australia's experience in Uruzgan for the Women, Peace and Security agenda?

One, drawing on the observation just made, is the importance of being true—to the extent possible—to our own norms and values.

We recognise in our own workplaces, and broader society, that inadequate female participation and advancement is a brake on output and performance.

Wherever possible, we should not shy away from this principle in conflict zones. If male leaders in a place as conservative and xenophobic as Uruzgan can recognise, even grudgingly, the role that female Australian diplomats and development advisers can play, then so can local leaders in most operational environments. Uruzgani leaders, for the most part, didn't want to live an Australian social existence, but they recognised that we have it pretty good; and, in my view, the exposure of these

leaders to our norms and way of life can and will have a positive impact on Afghanistan's long-term trajectory.

Could we have done more in this respect? I think we probably could and should have pressed more strongly for greater participation by the women of Uruzgan in decision making—if not at the village level, then at least at the provincial political level (the higher up, paradoxically, the easier it is). Doing so would have exacerbated the tensions in our dealings with provincial and district leaders, and risked some disengagement. But my sense is that we could have achieved modest results over several years through a more forceful and persistent approach to local female participation.

My sense is that we could have achieved modest results over several years through a more forceful and persistent approach to local female participation.

A related lesson is the importance of quotas, schemes, preferential arrangements—whatever it takes to promote female participation in political processes and decision making. Such measures are essential to establishing new norms in a country such as Afghanistan; they're a way of making political change less threatening in that men will retain a dominant position; and they provide a training ground for the emergence of female leaders who can break glass ceilings.

It is worth emphasising that our interest in women's issues was picked up on by locals very quickly. As the PRT spread out through the province, we received more and more requests for girls' schools—sadly, this was very likely because male leaders thought this was their best chance of getting a project, not because they had a genuine interest in schooling their girls. They knew what sort of language we wanted to hear. But it did provide openings—ones that we could perhaps have made greater efforts to pursue.

Third, work on younger male leaders—it won't always be the case, but in Uruzgan these leaders were more amenable to achieving cultural and attitudinal change. For a start, their own social attitudes were shifting. The most powerful (and problematic) leader in Uruzgan during my time there, the provincial police chief Mattiulah Khan, was keen to be recognised for his benevolence and charity towards widows and other disadvantaged women. The same was true, to a lesser extent, of other young leaders in the province.

Two other snippets about Matiullah that might be interesting in this context. One, he was bashful about his own polygamous practice. Two, when the small group of Sikh traders in Tarin Kot came under attack from local men after they started selling sex toys (the problem appeared to be that they were doing a roaring trade), it was Matiullah (according to the Sikhs' account) who came to their rescue. (Matiullah was assassinated while visiting Kabul in March 2015).

Fourth, notwithstanding the comments above about the limitations of trying to engage with the female population, make intense efforts to understand the ground truths of a situation.

The women of Uruzgan, while largely invisible and silent to the coalition, must surely have exercised important influence in the home and village. Our inability to understand and exploit the dimensions of this influence undermined the effectiveness of our strategy.

Here and there, the influence of women could be detected. Speaking to leaders in Deh Rawood district who knew Taliban supreme leader Mullah Omar as a boy, one has the clear impression of a young man with an Oedipal complex—a mama's boy wrestling with an abusive stepfather. Or the eldest son of Uruzgan warlord Jan Mohammed Khan—a young man alienated by his father's prodigious procreation (some 70 children) and the sidelining of his mother (Jan Mohammed's first wife), but an heir who felt strong pressures to avenge his father by targeting the tribal rivals believed to be responsible for JMK's assassination. There was clearly a lot going on, and our targeting—be it for the purposes of key leader engagement or disrupting insurgent networks—was the worse for not having a better grasp of the influence of women in the province.

One more snippet about mothers and sons. One of the roles of the PRT was to monitor the conditions of prisoners—mostly low-level Taliban operatives—who had been detained by Australian military forces and handed over to police authorities in Uruzgan. Interestingly, when asked about their conditions in detention, many of these young men commented that they missed their mothers.

Clearly, looking back, we did miss an opportunity to enlist the women of Uruzgan in a peace agenda—though the challenge of doing so shouldn't be underestimated given the broader political and cultural environment.

The PRT would have been much the poorer without a strong female presence.

Fifth, women made a vital contribution to the PRT itself—through their core professional skills as diplomats and development advisers, and through the gender expertise that they brought to the design and implementation of development programs and to engagement approaches. The PRT would have been much the poorer without a strong female presence. There was little risk that this would be the case in that female officers in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the then-AusAID volunteered for postings to Uruzgan (and the Australian Embassy in Kabul) in strong numbers. But it is a point worth restating.

In this context, I would also make the observation that Australian and US military commanders in my time in Uruzgan made very deliberate efforts and went to significant lengths to promote an environment in which women could serve. I saw on the US military side of the PRT, for example, an absolutely zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment.

Among the most valued—and in some cases indispensable—members of the PRT were our cultural/political advisers and interpreters, all Afghan but none Uruzgani. In retrospect, we could potentially have achieved stronger Women, Peace and Security outcomes—and expanded our outreach to the women of Uruzgan—by recruiting female cultural and political advisers, as the Dutch had done drawing on the Afghan expatriate community in the Netherlands. (I should add that some of my former colleagues in Uruzgan are of the view that a female Afghan cultural adviser would not have worked—the woman would have been under intolerable social and sexual pressure throughout.)

Australian PRT member Deahne Turnbull and local schoolgirls at the Provincial Governor's compound in Tarin Kot

Conclusion

Revisiting my experience in Uruzgan five years on through the prism of Women, Peace and Security reinforces to me the difficulties of pursuing a gender equality and women's empowerment agenda in a place like Uruzgan and in comparable environments—but also the importance of making greater and more considered efforts to do so, and the potential benefits this would bring.

During my posting, one of the PRT's biggest projects in Uruzgan was the construction of a new Tarin Kot girls' school in the centre of town. It was quite an impressive structure, on a par with a new school in an Australian city, with a library and basketball court and a stunning view over the Dorafshan valley. As is sometimes the case with significant Australian aid projects, the school was 'opened' on more than one occasion to coincide with high-level visitors. These were often quite uplifting occasions. During a visit to the school (after my time in Uruzgan), one very eminent Australian visitor told our Ambassador it brought back memories of organising the nascent women's movement in Australia in the 1960s.

Harder times are ahead for this school. Recruiting semi-qualified teachers, never easy, will be much more difficult with the withdrawal of the international presence. But for a period, which will hopefully linger in the memories of Uruzganis, the construction of the girls' school was the town's most visible manifestation of development and security. It no doubt enriched a few contractors (mostly Pakistan-based, not locals). Families from Uruzgan's districts moved to Tarin Kot so their girls could attend the school—driven by the economic motive of the girls receiving enough of an education that they could provide for their entire families. Although they didn't say it outright, you could sense that the leaders of Uruzgan thought we were a bit crazy to invest so much in a girls' school, a fragile enterprise at the best of times. But I think it sent a powerful and salutary message that will help get Uruzgan through the difficult times that are no doubt ahead, and hopefully point it towards a better future.

Women, Peace and Security makes for better and more effective operational planning

Major General Fergus (Gus) McLachlan, Australian Army

In 2014 I spoke at the Australian Dialogue on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict at Parliament House. At that forum were a wide range of practitioners and academics with deep knowledge of the extent to which violence around the world specifically impacts women and girls. During that event I drew attention to my own failings as a military planner through my lack of specific understanding of the impact of conflict on women and girls, and by extension a lack of training and doctrine in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) on the subject. My intention in this article is not to dwell on this history or attempt to give the impression that this was not an issue before the ADF reached a level of specific understanding; rather it is to describe part of the journey undertaken by the Australian Army to mainstream awareness of these issues in our training and doctrine so they do not need to be rediscovered by successive generations of military planners.

From November 2012 until November 2013, I was the senior military planner in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. I worked in concert with a group of planners from over 30 like-minded Western democracies to improve security and enable the emergence of civil structures and behaviours that had been taken from the Afghan people under Taliban rule. The nature of this mission meant that we sought to advance the security situation across the country so every member of Afghan society would benefit from our actions. However, analysis of how we went about achieving our aims has revealed that there were peace and security doctrines that could have been applied that might have improved outcomes for the most vulnerable members of Afghan society, and ultimately improved overall security conditions.

My return to Australia coincided with a commitment by the Chief of the Defence Force and the most senior leaders of the ADF to contribute to the development and implementation of an *Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*, to ensure our national compliance with UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. My recent operational experience, alongside those in the Australian military who have been entrusted with leadership of similar operations, allowed me to participate in the generation of training and doctrine on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) issues to inform those leaders and planners who will follow us in the future.

Having expanded my knowledge of the extent to which the effects of conflict fall disproportionately on women and children, I now know that our efforts in Afghanistan would have been better had the principles espoused in the National Action Plan (NAP) been at the forefront of our planning. This is not a statement driven by 'political correctness'. I am convinced that application of the military components of the NAP will lead to better operational outcomes. The realities we faced during the operation that displayed the disparity between experiences of conflict along gender lines demonstrated to me that a gender perspective must be included in the factors shaping our

approaches to planning future operations. Those in leadership positions must recognise more actively that, when operating in societies affected by violence, mission success can be exponentially enhanced by more actively engaging with women and girls and vulnerable members of society.

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My direct involvement with the campaign in Afghanistan commenced in 2010, when I was Commander of the Darwin-based 1st Brigade. At that time I was responsible for the organisation and training of Battle Group Tiger for their deployment into Uruzgan province—a remote province in the south of Afghanistan, birthplace of Mullah Omar the founder of the Taliban, and comprising a complex tribal structure. The brigade had been involved in each phase of the evolving mission—dubbed Operation SLIPPER. The task commenced with the deployment of a reconstruction task force—building schools and other infrastructure needed to transition the province into the modern era, and then transitioned to mentoring task forces, as Australia took responsibility for creating secure conditions alongside Afghan and Dutch partners, as well as for mentoring the 4th Afghan National Army Brigade so that they could eventually replace us as the lead security force.

The considerable experience our Army had gathered throughout our time in Afghanistan provided a strong foundation upon which to base training for those deploying to the region. For example, we had a sophisticated understanding of the threat posed by the increasingly ubiquitous improvised explosive device (IED), and our first aid training was the most realistic I have seen in my 30-plus year career. We also understood the need to prepare our soldiers for the extreme cultural differences they would face on the ground in rural Afghanistan. Our cultural awareness program was informed by input from expatriate Afghan men and women who acted both as advisers and role-players, participating in mock scenarios that mirrored the kinds of situations Australian soldiers would face on a daily basis. As well informed as this program was, its intention and scope were limited, as was the tenor of our interactions with the Afghan people.

Our day-to-day contact was largely defensive—we set out to 'do no harm' as we interacted with Afghans, seeking to avoid driving the population away from our efforts to achieve security gains. For example, we supported Western notions such as the need to emplace strong central government and the development of a national justice system because these could be mapped into specific military tasks such as the need to protect judges and prosecutors. However, we missed the opportunity to enhance local conflict resolution mechanisms based on well established tribal justice that was quicker and more enduring because to do so would mean supporting certain tribal leaders in a complex web of hierarchies and personalities that was largely opaque to us. We were able to give our soldiers clear direction on our policies should they encounter overt abuse of children, but the deeper issues of arranged marriages for girls as young as 10 continued behind the mud brick walls of Afghan compounds in transactions beyond our understanding.

Australia's whole-of-government strategy in Afghanistan included specific reconstruction efforts that sought to advance the status of women and, in particular, the education of girls.[26] We had a basic understanding of the specific security needs of women and the potential for Afghan women to be agents for change in their community, but this understanding did not extend to a fully formed implementation of more complete Women, Peace and Security doctrine. On a procedural level, we adopted the US Marine Corps technique of forming female engagement teams, designed to interact with Afghan women and girls in a community. These teams gained cultural and security information from their engagements with women and girls in the rural communities of Uruzgan, and conducted searches of women and women's accommodation areas for explosives and other contraband. These teams comprised courageous Australian women who filled a role well outside their core army training. They improved our understanding of the security dynamic, and they contributed to our 'do no harm' approach to cultural engagement, but a full understanding of the potential for Afghan women to be powerful agents for change in their community did not come until later.

Australian Female Engagement Team speaking with women in the Karrmisan Valley, in Southern Afghanistan

My own 12-month deployment to the International Security Assistance Force came in late 2012, at the end of my time as a Brigade Commander. By then, the 1st Brigade had deployed two task forces for service in Afghanistan, and had three soldiers killed in action. An Afghan, with whom our soldiers were partnered, murdered a fourth soldier from the logistic brigade. Though my training journey was different to that of the task forces based in Uruzgan Province, both in terms of overall focus and methodology, I recognise these losses shaped my perspective toward a focus on defeating the Taliban.

My preparation involved training at the NATO Headquarters in Europe, before further high-level briefings in Kabul. On reflection, it was during this period that my thinking surrounding WPS issues began to develop. The war in Afghanistan was the first engagement in combat operations since World War II for many NATO countries. In these countries, involvement in the war remained highly

26 These efforts included the construction of a school for girls that would allow them to access education in a culturally acceptable forum, though right from the outset local security officials feared it would become a target for the Taliban because it so directly challenged fundamentalist orthodoxy.

contentious so some political leaders downplayed the combat roles of their national contingents and promoted the development outcomes, in many cases leaving their military forces with ambiguous missions and unclear rules of engagement. However, it did mean that NATO training included very specific consideration of the status of women.

This period of training was an important part of my transition from an Australian commander to a NATO planner. My heavy focus on the security dimension of the conflict was in tune with US, British and Australian perspectives, following the success of the 'surge' of forces into the south of the country in the preceding 12 months. But it had to be placed in a broader nation-building context if I was to interact with my NATO staff members and their home countries. The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) was the focus of a number of national contributions and these weighted the development of health facilities, schools and agricultural training programs ahead of security development.

In addition to specific training about UNSCR 1325, our training included a day with a female civil society leader from Kabul who described the reality of life in a country that had effectively been at war for almost 30 years. I won't name this courageous advocate because even today her support for our efforts would make her a target. She described the country of her youth, King Zahir Shah's 'New Democracy' in which women and girls had been able to choose their mode of dress, to embrace opportunities for education and to move around their country with little fear for their safety. She then

Female Engagement Teams

Female Engagement Teams (FETs) were introduced by the US Marine Corps in Afghanistan in 2009 as part of counterinsurgency operations by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) (based in part on the US Marine 'Lioness' program in Iraq). FETs were groups of female soldiers who were sent out to engage with especially Afghan women, in order to 'win the women'. as part of ISAF's counterinsurgency strategy. Based on available information, FETs were used by the US, UK, Australian, Italian, Macedonian and Finnish forces. Part of the logic behind FETs was the perceived status of foreign women as a 'third gender': 'they are extended the respect shown to men, but are granted the access to home and family normally reserved to women' (Pottinger, Jilani and Russo, 2010: 2).

There is much we still do not know about the experiences, achievements, impact and utility of FETs in Afghanistan. FETs have been portrayed positively in the US, UK and Australian media and were considered anecdotally to be a highly successful outreach tool into local communities. However, there is limited literature on FETs in the public domain, in particular independent evaluations, and most analysis examines US experience.

The Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012–2018 explicitly mentions FETs as a specific strategy to 'promote the participation and protection of women and girls in fragile, conflict and/or post-conflict settings'. Australia adopted an informal approach to FETs in Afghanistan, directing their use at the tactical rather than operational level. As a result, it is difficult to locate quantitative data about Australian FETs. The Australian Defence Force considers FETs a useful operational tool that ought to be integrated into future operational planning.

For more information, see:

- Pottinger, M, Jilani, H and Russo, C 2010, ‘Half-Hearted: Trying to Win Afghanistan Without Afghan Women’, *Small Wars Journal*.
- FET fact sheets by the US Army Research Institute for the Behavioural & Social Sciences, 2014
- For an independent critique see Azerbaijani-Moghaddam 2014, ‘Seeking out their Afghan sisters: Female Engagement Teams in Afghanistan’, CMI.

compared this history with the current reality in Afghanistan where she was grateful for Western intervention and security gains, but explained these did not extend far beyond Kabul. In rural and regional areas, life for women and girls had regressed to a state reflecting a period at least 100 years in the past. Her input to our training was direct, sometimes brutally so. She was the first to make me understand the specific needs of women and girls and to understand there was more to mission success than defeating the Taliban.

I deployed into Afghanistan in the northern hemisphere autumn. Fighting in Afghanistan is heavily influenced by the seasons—it is a country whose mountain passes can be blocked by snow for months, making fighting during late autumn and winter very difficult—and where social and cultural considerations such as the harvest season and religious observance must be made to align with military operations. The end of the 2012 ‘fighting season’ made it possible for us to direct planning effort toward more than just security requirements for a number of months. We maintained contact with brave civil society leaders who risked retribution from insurgents to visit our headquarters, and from them we learned about the need to improve the safety of women and girls, many of whom faced more threat from the Afghan police than the Taliban. In one of these engagements I met a quiet, understated man who had remained in Kabul during the time of the Taliban and covertly ran a school for girls, at night, in a room behind his small factory. If the Taliban had seen any light escaping the blackout curtains surrounding his school he, his wife and their students would have faced a violent and public death. He remained a determined advocate for women and girls in Afghanistan and reminded me that there was more to this country than the public image of corrupt government officials or religious extremists.

We made autumn and winter the time to focus on the professionalisation of the police force. We assessed that the level of training and professionalism in the Afghan police force lagged behind that of the army by a considerable distance. This was largely because police training had to that point been conducted by military officers and had focused on paramilitary skills designed to have police contribute to the counterinsurgency fight. Importantly, the effort to create a police service that could be trusted by the community was led by Ambassador Catherine Royle, a British civilian official supported by police from Australia and the NATO nations, who understood the needs of a civil society and placed these ahead of the paramilitary skills favoured in early military-police mentoring. Specific efforts were made to recruit female police. These women were tough and courageous. They were targeted by the Taliban at work and in their homes because they were agents for the types of changes that threatened Taliban control. Sadly, the agency of female police officers was recognised by the

Taliban. In one very perplexing case a female officer was co-opted as an agent of the Taliban and killed a police mentor in a prominent green on blue attack that threatened to derail ISAF police mentoring efforts.

The Taliban knew 2013 was a pivotal year in the campaign and they came out punching hard when the mountain passes thawed in the following spring. 2013 was to be the year leadership for security operations passed from ISAF forces to the Afghans, and the Taliban sought to shatter the confidence of Afghan forces in a number of very high profile attacks early in the fighting season. I have to confess that the specific requirements of women and girls faded from my priority list. Instead we had to find a way to balance the relentless closure of ISAF bases linked to the withdrawal of troops from all countries, including Australia, with the need to prevent the failure of the Afghan Army. The Afghan security forces were losing as many as 100 soldiers a week killed in action during this period and there were times we feared their will to fight would collapse. There was a danger that they would not hold many of the areas gained at great human cost by the NATO surge the previous year. Attacks on ISAF troops by rogue members of the Afghan Army continued in this period, further risking the campaign, in this case by threatening ISAF cohesion.

During these months I was shocked by the brutality of the Taliban attacks on their own communities. I recall an attack on a bus full of women and girls that was part of a wedding party. In almost every case the Taliban would blame us for civilian casualties they caused, or at least claim that civilian losses were the collateral consequences of attacks against ISAF convoys, but in this case the bus was destroyed by an improvised explosive device planted on a road that had not been used by NATO vehicles for many months. The courageous local Afghan media made their way to the site of the attack and published graphic details that made it clear the bus and the women and girls had been directly targeted. I was reminded that brutalising women and girls is a tactic of the truly ruthless that aims to undermine social cohesion.

In response to these attacks we adjusted our tactics. In a campaign where resources were decreasing following the withdrawal of surge forces we could not be everywhere, but it was clear that we had to defeat the Taliban tactic of attacks on the social cohesion of the Afghan communities. We encouraged the Afghan Army to leave the population centres to the police—as we do in our nations—and engage the Taliban in the rural areas, away from the people. We used our sophisticated surveillance capabilities to pick up Taliban infiltration into these areas, giving less experienced Afghan army elements time to prepare and then respond. Despite the dislike of the Afghan Army for operations away from their defensive bases, the results were good. We created time and space in which the Afghan security forces could fortify and broaden their capabilities and as a result they held on, growing in confidence through the fighting season.

We made gains for the security of women and girls in Afghanistan by moving the violent clashes between the Taliban and the security forces away from population centres. In Kabul and Kandahar, Afghan police chiefs gained control of their cities—the two largest cities in the country became increasingly safe places for women and girls—but only as a subset of broader security gains. Our surveys of the population started to indicate a marked improvement in how secure people felt in their communities. As the fighting season progressed, it was clear the Afghan Army was gaining the

upper hand so we were able to turn back to higher order issues. These included critical issues such as improving the ability of the Afghan Army to conduct casualty evacuation for their soldiers wounded in action and improving their ability to deliver logistics to remote bases. But in spite of, or perhaps because of, our progress in creating improved security conditions we continued to be influenced by the demands of contributing nations to improve the status of women.

The NATO nations' focus on the status of women in Afghanistan became a consistent requirement in our planning and reporting. The NATO nations demanded that the headquarters in Afghanistan report specifically on our implementation of UNSCR 1325 and in mid-2013 sent an audit team to report on our performance. Our gender adviser, Australian Navy Captain Jennifer Wittwer (a long way from the ocean but tireless in her advocacy), drove initiatives to mainstream gender issues into all of our planning and maintained our contact with civil society groups in Kabul. But despite Jennifer's efforts, the audit found we had more work to do. In making the necessary adjustments to our headquarters and planning approach I was made to more fully understand the doctrine of WPS and its potential to drive enhanced operational outcomes as well as create a safe environment for women and girls. This is the same growing awareness that is driving the implementation of Australia's commitment to implement UNSCR 1325. In my lectures at the Australian Command and Staff College on this topic I have explained that, while this is a mandatory requirement, my own operational experience is that it has far more practical application. Put simply, application of the Women, Peace and Security doctrine makes for better and more effective operational planning.

The NATO nations' focus on the status of women in Afghanistan became a consistent requirement in our planning and reporting.

I left Afghanistan in November 2013 proud of my contribution, humbled by the strength and courage of the Afghan people, but only cautiously optimistic about the future of their troubled country. The challenge of securing and rebuilding nations traumatised by violence can seem insurmountable. In filling roles like mine in Afghanistan, military officers fall back on years of training. We are shaped by our operational experiences and our cultural context. We have long understood the need to defeat the enemy—in this case a ruthless insurgency based on a fundamentalist religious view—in the military context. We have an increasingly sophisticated understanding that we must also defeat the enemy across their range of objectives, including their deliberate targeting of women and girls. The scale and extent of sexual and gender-based violence must be acknowledged and placed at the forefront of our military planning. To my great regret, I did not understand the extent to which our adversary used violence against the most vulnerable members of the community to undermine social cohesion and national confidence until I was tasked with helping to rebuild a country whose populace had been traumatised by that violence for decades. Often the subject matter itself is so overwhelming that it discourages consideration of an effective means to respond to and prevent its occurrence in conflict and post-conflict settings. We simply cannot be cowered by the scale or seemingly intractable nature of the problem. I am part of an ADF leadership team committed to embedding an understanding of gender perspectives and the need to protect vulnerable members of a community in our operational planning as part of a national action plan.

Case study – How WPS was integrated into Exercise TALISMAN SABRE

Air Commodore Chris Westwood, Royal Australian Air Force[27]

Introduction

TALISMAN SABRE is a bilateral Australian–United States biennial military exercise series designed to enhance combat readiness and coalition interoperability in crisis conditions. The first TALISMAN SABRE exercise was conducted in 2005. TALISMAN SABRE 15 (TS15) took place in July 2015 and was the largest combined military exercise undertaken by the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The exercise consisted of two Combined Task Force groups: CTF 660 commanded by Commander US Navy 7th Fleet and CTF 661 Commanded by Chief of Joint Operations Australia. Approximately 30,000 US and Australian troops, together with 200 aircraft and 50 ships, conducted simulated and live activities across Australia and the United States. The scenario was based on a conflict operation, following a military coup in the fictitious country of Legais (in the East Australian Range Complex, North Queensland) and the installation of a puppet regime in the fictitious country of Monmir (in the North Australian Range Complex, Northern Territory).[28] The US and Australian Coalition has been provided with a Chapter 7 mandate from the United Nations to remove enemy forces and create conditions that would lead to democratic elections.

The selection of TS15 as the backdrop to the integration of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) into military planning and operations was guided by the Defence Implementation Plan (DIP), part of the *Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012–2018*, and was agreed at bilateral talks between Australian and United States government officials in 2014.[29] The inclusion of WPS into TS15 was discussed at Staffex in February 2015 and was included in the information briefs. It was at the Staffex that the majority of attendees, myself included, first became aware of this issue.[30] The WPS brief given by the Australian Civil-Military Centre at Staffex, struck a chord with the senior executive. We saw it as a chance to take WPS to the next level, to move beyond the theoretical into the practical. This resulted in Commander CTF 660, Vice Admiral Robert Thomas, Commander 7th Fleet, directing

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27 Wing Commander Lou des Jardins assisted in writing this case study.

28 TS15 forces were also assembled in Hawaii, San Diego, Bungendore near Canberra, HQ 1 Division in Brisbane, and on the USS *Blue Ridge,* which operated between Sydney and Brisbane.

29 See the Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) Joint Communique 2014 at http://dfat.gov.au/geo/united-states-of-america/ausmin/Pages/ausmin-joint-communique-2014.aspx

30 The planning activity was conducted on board the USS *Blue Ridge* in February 2015 by a WPS working group. The author acknowledges this team's work as forming the basis for this paper and is indebted to their outstanding support.

his staff to integrate WPS into the conduct of TS15. As the Chief of Staff for Vice Admiral Thomas, I took the lead on the task of incorporating WPS into the exercise.

The initial steps towards the integration of WPS occurred shortly after receiving the presentation with the drafting of a two-page brief outlining specific WPS objectives and initiatives to be incorporated within TS15.

The aims of the WPS activities for TS15 were simple:

a. To make a stepped change in the WPS conversation from theory to practicality

b. To operationalise WPS

c. To leave documented 'doctrine' as the start point for future WPS planning and execution in future military activities.

The brief provided direction to component commanders,[31] setting in motion a series of outputs designed to move WPS beyond 'education' and into the realm of execution. The aim was to integrate WPS and a gender perspective into CTF 660 operations[32] and make a lasting difference to the way in which warfighting commanders plan and execute WPS objectives. Effectively, the brief forecast the intent to 'operationalise' WPS.

TALISMAN SABRE 15 specific WPS strategies

WPS considerations were incorporated into commander's intent, strategic communications, rules of engagement, targeting directives and intelligence reports. Inclusion of WPS within the commander's intent and strategic communications provided a clear message across CTF 660 that highlighted the importance Vice Admiral Thomas placed upon integrating WPS. Related to that key message was recognition that WPS needed to be included within the rules by which forces were engaged and targeted and therefore it became essential that a gender perspective needed to be incorporated into the intelligence reports that fed the targeting process. In addition, there were three main strategies that were key to the integration of WPS within TS15.

First, CTF 660 forces would receive focused education and training on key messages and WPS themes. This was conducted in an incremental and targeted manner to ensure wide awareness and understanding. It included WPS briefings during the Senior Leadership Seminar, pre-deployment and Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration (RSOI) training. The focus during the RSOI brief conducted by the gender adviser, which all members of CTF 660 attended, was on providing

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31 Combined Task Force 660 consisted of a headquarters and four Combined Force Components—Air, Land, Maritime and Special Forces with a Combined Force Air Component Commander, Combined Force Land Component Commander, Combined Force Maritime Component Commander and Combined Force Special Force Component Commander. Additionally, there was a Crisis Response Coordination Group embedded within CTF660.

32 CTF 661 was primarily a notional force, therefore the focus for incorporating WPS into the exercise was through CTF660 operations.

Major Kristin Saling (Deputy Gender Adviser), Maria Poulos (DFAT Women, Peace and Security Adviser) and Wing Commander Lou Des Jardins (Gender Adviser) meeting to prepare for the Gender Advisers Steering Group on-board USS Blue Ridge *during TS15*

participants with an understanding of the significance of the inclusion of WPS within the military operational context while consolidating base level knowledge on UNSCR 1325. This education and training was assisted through the appointment and selection of gender advisers who ensured that commanders, both at CTF and component levels, had on-hand advice from subject matter experts on UNSCR 1325 to help them drive and realise the commander's intent.

Initially the goal was to appoint one gender adviser for each component and the CTF headquarters. However, at exercise start there was a total of 10 gender advisers across the CTF comprised of eight women and two men. Within CTF 660 Headquarters there were two military gender advisers (one Royal Australian Air Force and one US Army member) in addition to the civilian (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) gender adviser working within the Crisis Response Coordination Group. The Combined Force Air Component and Maritime Components both had one gender adviser (Royal Australian Air Force and US Navy respectively) the Combined Force Land Component appointed three gender advisers (one American civilian and two US Army members) and the Combined Force Special Operations Component appointed two gender advisers (both Australian Army).

The second strategy, and undeniably seen as the biggest challenge prior to exercise commencement, was the integration of WPS considerations into planning and execution phases. This was successfully achieved through a process of education and training, the presence and participation of gender advisers and a strong and committed command team who reinforced the importance and necessity of WPS at key times throughout the exercise. The two military gender advisers assigned to Commander

CTF 660, between them attended 12–16 working groups, steering groups or boards on a daily basis. This provided maximum exposure to the headquarters staff and allowed the gender advisers to establish good working relationships across the headquarters thus ensuring wide exposure to and understanding of WPS. A Gender Adviser Steering Group met daily and linked the CTF 660 gender advisers with those appointed across the components providing a network of experience and knowledge, which was shared and leveraged as the scenarios dictated.

The engagement with key leaders throughout the area of operations provided many opportunities for the advancement of WPS practices and understanding. Firstly, it was evident that to achieve a true community perspective, engagement needed to occur with both male and female leaders within local communities and that while female leaders may not fill government leadership roles—federal, state or local—they do fill community leadership roles; that is, religious groups, community groups and teachers. All key leadership engagement needed to be centrally managed and coordinated to ensure the messaging was consistent between the components who were conducting the engagement (typically the Land and Special Forces Components) to avoid mixed messaging and contradictions of intent. As the aim of leadership engagement is to begin a partnership between coalition forces and communities leading towards stabilising the region it is important that the local leaders are not seen by their communities as 'coalition puppets'. The impact of this engagement on the local leaders also needs to be understood. This became important as the exercise scenario developed and a negative side effect of key leadership engagement resulted in female leaders being targeted with threatening behaviour and violence due to their interactions with Coalition forces.

TALISMAN SABRE 15 specific WPS initiatives

A number of specific initiatives were also included within the brief released by Commander CTF 660 to assist in determining what works and what doesn't in order to focus WPS investment in future military operations. WPS was to be planned and executed across all phases of the exercise, emphasising the importance of the combat forces in shaping conditions for successful WPS integration in transition to peace. The design of the scenario for TS15 meant that much of the work in achieving these initiatives was through the operational planning team's output in preparation for transition to Phases Four and Five. As the focus of Phase Four was on stabilising the region and the focus of Phase Five was on enabling the transition to a recognised government there were very clear links between WPS and the military aims for these phases.

Amongst the initiatives considered successful during TS15 was the establishment of female population protection units and patrol plans, compilation and distribution of gender intelligence reports and the identification and engagement with key female leaders within local communities. Female engagement teams were considered 'standard' practice prior to exercise start following recent experiences within Afghanistan and evolved during the conduct of the exercise into mixed engagement teams. This is an important move as it recognises that each community is unique and not all communities allow only female-to-female engagement. Providing a mixed engagement team allows the tactical level commander the flexibility to communicate and establish relationships across local communities, among men and women.

Challenges and learnings

While there were many challenges associated with incorporating WPS into Exercise TALISMAN SABRE 15, perhaps the key three can be summarised as follows:

- Leadership must understand, embrace and value WPS as providing a valuable capability enhancement, and must set WPS objectives up front in a campaign
- WPS is a team game. All members of the CTF are champions of WPS
- One size does not fit all. WPS will demand different things at different times.

Conclusion

It is important to ensure that the lessons learned during TS15 were not isolated but rather are shared across the military forces in a manner that provides a sound basis for future activities.

Commander US 7th Fleet and the TS15 leadership team are all of the view that the three core objectives were achieved during TS15 and that the exercise program of activities has led to a significantly greater understanding of the art of the possible regarding WPS. Through the approach of the gender advisers, with the full support of their command teams, WPS was integrated into all aspects of TS15 in a manner that has begun the journey to normalising it within military planning and operations. There is, of course, a long road ahead until WPS is fully integrated across the wider ADF and US forces' activities. However, the achievements during TS15 prove that the inclusion of UNSCR 1325 within military operations is not a hindrance but can benefit the achievement of military aims.

An enduring outcome of TS15 has been the production of a *Commander's Guide to Implementing UNSCR 1325 in Military Operations and Planning*[33] which provides military commanders with a greater understanding of UNSCR 1325 and how to incorporate the intent of the WPS agenda into military planning and execution.

TS15, with its 30,000 participants, provided an extraordinary backdrop to the incorporation of WPS within military operations and planning and became one of the many success stories of the exercise. There has been real interest both during and after the exercise in ensuring that the experiences gained during TS15 continue to be built upon in future military exercises and operations no matter their scale. Given this groundswell of interest, which is supported by separate initiatives within the Defence Implementation Plan, it is evident that WPS will become a requirement, important not only for its humanitarian significance but also for the benefits to military operations focused on humanitarian support, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

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33 The Commander's Guide will be available soon at: http://www.defence.gov.au/Women/NAP/GenderPerspective.asp. In the meantime, contact CAPT Jennifer Wittwer (jennifer.wittwer@defence.gov.au) or COL Amanda Fielding (amanda.fielding@defence.gov.au) for a copy. Defence users can access it via the Defence intranet at http://intranet.defence.gov.au/oscdfweb/sites/NAPWPS/docs/Commander_s_Guide_to_Implementing_WPS_Artefact_of_TS15_AL1_17_Sep_15_.pdf

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Captain Heath Robertson is Deputy Commandant at the Australian Command and Staff College. In this position he is Director of Studies – Navy and Director International Education and Training. He has commanded HMAS *Perth* and HMAS *Parramatta*, deploying with the latter to the Middle East in 2010 and engaging in anti-piracy and counter-terrorism missions. Earlier in his career, he commanded the patrol boat *Cessnock*, undertaking border protection missions. He served as Captain Sea Training, and during this time was Exercise Director for Exercises KAKADU 2012 and 2014, the Royal Australian Navy's largest maritime warfare exercise.

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Archie Law is Executive Director of ActionAid Australia. He has worked with the UN and NGOs in conflict-affected environments across Asia, the Middle East and Africa, including World Vision's Emergencies Team and four years leading the Mine Advisory Group's Cambodia Program. He worked for the United Nations Development Program in South Africa on conflict prevention and recovery across the continent, and the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York. He also contributed to the UN's contingency plan for an emergency response to the conflict in Iraq in 2002–03.

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Wayne Buchhorn is Manager of Professional Standards at the Australian Federal Police. He has served with the International Police Coordination Board as Head of Afghan National Police Development, and as Senior Police Adviser to the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan. He was Commander of the Participating Police Force under the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, and Deputy Commissioner of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force. He also has served in Indonesia and Singapore.

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Bernard Philip is Assistant Secretary of the Human Rights Branch in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He has served overseas as Australia's Deputy High Commissioner to India, Head of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Uruzgan province in Afghanistan, and at the Australian Embassy in Washington. In Canberra he has worked in a range of positions in DFAT and the Department of Defence.

MAJOR GENERAL FERGUS (GUS) MCLACHLAN, AM

Major General Gus McLachlan is Head of Army Modernisation and Strategic Planning. He has deployed on operations in the Israeli Occupied Territories, Lebanon and Iraq. Most recently he served in Afghanistan with the International Security Assistance Force as the senior campaign planner. He also has served as Defence Adviser to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, and as Commander of Army's 1st Mechanised Brigade in Darwin. He was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 2008 for his service to the ADF, including his work in Iraq.

AIR COMMODORE CHRIS WESTWOOD

Air Commodore Chris Westwood is the Commander Surveillance and Response Group, Air Force. During 2007/8, he commanded No. 41 Wing, which deployed a Ground based radar along with a Control and Reporting Centre to Kandahar to conduct Air Battle Management operations. During that period, he deployed deployed three times to Afghanistan to head up an Air Worthiness accreditation team. He served as Combined Forces Air Component Commander during Exercise RIM OF THE PACIFIC (RIMPAC) 2014, a US-hosted biennial multinational maritime exercise: the first Australian to play this role. Most recently, he served as chief of staff to the commander of the US 7th Fleet for the bilateral Australian–US biennial military exercise TALISMAN SABRE 2015.

Editors

DR HELENA STUDDERT

Dr Helena Studdert was seconded to the ACMC as International Policy Adviser in 2014–15. She commenced her career in the Australian Army as a captain, moved to academia and has had over 18 years' in foreign and trade policy and diplomacy. Dr Studdert served as Australia's Ambassador in Belgrade, Serbia in 2010–13 and served as Economic Counsellor in Wellington, New Zealand in 2003–05. She has worked in consular, APEC policy, executive liaison and corporate management. Dr Studdert has a PhD in Australian History, a BA (Arts) with First Class Honours and a Graduate Diploma in Foreign Affairs and Trade.

SARAH SHTEIR

Sarah Shteir is an independent gender consultant and researcher with more than 12 years of experience working on WPS. She has NGO, UN and governmental experience in this field, including a deployment to the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Sudan (UNMIS) in Khartoum, as a gender affairs officer. More recently, she authored two ACMC publications: *Conflict-related Sexual and Gender-based Violence: an introductory overview to support prevention and response efforts* (Occasional Paper 1/2014); and *Gendered Crises, Gendered Responses: the necessity and utility of a gender perspective in armed conflicts and natural disasters—an introductory overview* (Occasional Paper 1/2013).

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