CHAPTER TWO

TRANSLATING UNSCR 1325 INTO PRACTICE:
LESSONS LEARNED AND OBSTACLES AHEAD

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INTRODUCTION

In his report to the Security Council on the tenth anniversary of its adoption of UNSCR 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) the UN Secretary-General stated that ‘[d]espite an apparent firm foundation and promise, 10 years after the adoption of Resolution 1325 (2000), significant achievements are difficult to identify or quantify.’¹ This statement is echoed by others within and without the UN who see, at best, moderate progress in UNSCR 1325’s first decade. That said, however, there have been important moves in the right direction. 37 UN member states have committed themselves through National Action Plans to the implementation of UNSCR 1325. In fact, one of the successes of UNSCR 1325 and the broader WPS (Women, Peace and Security) agenda has been the willingness with which international stakeholders have endorsed it and pledged to implement it as part of their own programs. This has included states, their armed forces and aid agencies, civil society, and a range of inter-state actors. Furthermore, UNSCR 1325’s core principles are increasingly integrated into principles and doctrines adopted by the UN. This suggests that UNSCR 1325 has received global traction. Its demonstrated success in highlighting the gender-specific impact that armed conflict can have upon men and women has been supported by the proliferation of gender-specific and gender-aware data and has provided a focal point for the work of WPS advocacy groups, practitioners and researchers. For these reasons, the core principles of UNSCR 1325 could be described as an emerging norm within the global rhetoric of peace and security.

Efforts to mainstream UNSCR 1325 into all areas of the UN’s peace and security work does, however, raise fundamental questions about how policy concepts are translated into practice. While policy concepts themselves may appear uncontroversial, the manner with which they are practiced, and seen to be successfully practiced, can be disputed. When it comes to these nuts and bolts concerns, debates and differences between stakeholders are immediately apparent. In the case of UNSCR 1325 familiar feminist questions emerge: ‘who are the women in the WPS agenda?’ ‘what does it mean to participate in the global peace and security project?’ and ‘what does it mean to achieve success for women’s participation in peace measures?’ These questions are debated between feminist groups and between feminists and other global peace and security practitioners. Compounding these debates is the reality that there are not necessarily fixed answers to these questions. They are live questions whose debates change across social and political landscapes. However, they are questions worth re-visiting as the WPS agenda gains traction and is integrated into a range of global peace and security programs and mechanisms. This is no more true than in the growing body of literature which analyses the links between the 2001 Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine and the WPS agenda. While R2P’s architects failed to substantially consider or incorporate UNSCR 1325 (passed in the previous year) into their original analysis and report, for feminists, the overlaps are self-evident. As UNSCR 1325’s key principles become linked to the R2P agenda, it is important to reflect on the first decade of both projects. This chapter is therefore concerned with the evolution of the key concepts of UNSCR 1325 and the challenges faced by their implementation.

UNSCR 1325 is a living document but it is nonetheless necessary to critically analyse and, if need be, challenge the inconsistent manner in which its core concepts have been translated into practice. In short, while implementation may need to be adapted to different contexts, it is important to ensure that the vision of UNSCR 1325 is consistently and coherently practiced. This chapter will focus particularly upon one of the main pillars of UNSCR 1325: the participation of local women in the UN’s peace and security program. Participation is primarily referenced in section 8(b) of the Resolution which calls upon all actors involved in peace processes to adopt “Measures that support local women’s peace initiatives and… involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace

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