The PRIO Gender Peace and Security Update is an electronic newsletter launched by PRIO’s Gender Research Group in response to growing interest among the public for information about women, peace and security issues. The newsletter will keep readers informed of the latest developments both internationally and in Norway in relation to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security and subsequent resolutions.

Betty Bigombe, former chief mediator in the conflict between the government of Uganda and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), visited PRIO on 20 March to talk about her experiences. The seminar was chaired by PRIO Researcher Torunn L. Tryggestad and introductory remarks were made by PRIO Director Kristian Berg Harpviken. A video of the seminar is available online.

“I just decided that I am going to do it!”

Bigombe noted that, when mediators are appointed, usually they need a mandate and, more importantly, the parties have to accept him or her. These days, the UN or regional organizations usually appoint mediators, and the parties will most often accept them based on the assumption that their interests are taken care of by the presence of a regional organization. A mediator must be mindful of the concerns of the parties, must protect their interests. “Me, I didn’t even think about being appointed. I just decided that I am going to do it! So the question was why would the parties accept me to mediate? Given the atrocities committed by the LRA, why would they believe that I would care about their interests? Did they think I could protect them, or at least be fair?”

The LRA is a rebel organization which had committed horrible atrocities. But, at the same time, the people of Northern Uganda had issues with the government, feeling marginalized, which is why they at least in part supported the rebels. According to Bigombe, the government wanted to win the war.

Betty Bigombe is currently Uganda’s Minister for Water. In the field of mediation, she is best known for her efforts to create peace in Northern Uganda. She tirelessly played the role of chief mediator, peace advocate and advisor to the warring factions, and became a voice for the people of Northern Uganda during and after the Lord’s Resistance Army’s (LRA) war with the government of Uganda. In 1988, she was appointed Minister of State for pacification of North and Northeastern Uganda. In this capacity, she began her pursuit for peace, a process that eventually led to the peace talks in 1993/1994, today known as the Bigombe I initiative. To this day, Betty Bigombe is actively involved in assuring peace and reconstruction in Northern Uganda, particularly in her home district Amuru. Photo: Julie L. Lillesæter, PRIO.
militarily; mediation was consequently not on their agenda. But out of the conviction that military victory never brings sustainable peace – because it doesn’t give people opportunity to address the underlying causes of the conflict – Bigombe took up the work of persuading the government of Uganda to let her mediate.

**Including women: more than solidarity**

*We often assume that* women mediators will automatically be more sensitive to the inclusion of women and gender perspectives. Betty Bigombe’s tale illustrates the problem in assuming that women universally possess specific gendered qualities. “At first I totally ignored women. I thought I should talk to those who carried weapons. Until one brave woman said to me in a meeting: ‘You are going to fail if you only engage the men. Us women, we are the wives and mothers of those fighters. We have less to gain from conflict.’ And she was so right. Because when I tried to reach out to the rebels, it was letters of blanket amnesty that were passed up to parliament.” Bigombe reached a point where she thought to herself “why don’t I use these women to organize mass demonstrations to end the war?” – and followed up. The demonstrations were widely covered by the media, and addressed not only the rebels but also the government troops, many of whom profited from the war.

**As a mediator,** Betty Bigombe needed to find out who had an interest in keeping the war going, who were the rebel leaders with their constituencies, suppliers of weapons, and so on. She did this by sitting and talking to people in the communities. But even when she had finally identified these ‘rebel coordinators’, as she calls them, the next question was how to reach them? According to Bigombe, this was a “breakthrough in involving women; women would bring my letters, even personal letters to the rebels, so that we could start talking. This was important in getting the parties to the table.”

**At this point,** Betty Bigombe had gone from ignoring women to realizing their importance in mediation. About her experience she says that we talk about women as victims, and yes, women suffer consequences of war, but at the same time women are ‘doers’. **So what about** the negotiation table? Using South Sudan as an example, Betty Bigombe describes some of the challenges for the inclusion of women in the process. The government side did not have any women on their negotiating team, and the issue at hand was to persuade the government of South Sudan to include women on their team. Bigombe brings up what she calls “demographic power”: more and more countries in Africa now have a larger female than male population. Leaving women out of the process thus means that you are leaving out a majority of the population. Further, in the case of South Sudan, the constitution stipulates that 30% of all government delegations must be women. Eventually the government of South Sudan agreed to include women in their delegation.

**Referring to the** example of Liberia, Bigombe points to the indirect role women can play, by pushing for the process to continue, to move forward. “People walk away. Then the women come and say, let’s find another approach, as opposed to just abandoning the process. This is what I have seen in
peace talks. And you move in and you find in the corridors that women are begging them (the parties) to go back.”

Emotions – blurring or beneficial around the table?

As a mediator, Betty Bigombe had to reach out to Joseph Kony, the leader of the LRA. In their first meeting, Betty Bigombe explained her frustrations and how she wanted to open up his mind, so that she could understand why he had done all those horrible things of which he was accused. Later, she said, “through talking, sitting, and trying to understand him, eventually he started calling me ‘mother’. To Bigombe, this symbolic gesture meant that she was looked upon as a protector, a giver of welfare. When they all started calling her mother, she saw it as a very important step in the talks, as a signal of trust in her as a mediator.

Women are often construed as too emotional to mediate or participate in negotiations, especially when atrocities have been committed by the parties involved. Bigombe admits that mediation can be very straining, with parties trying to justify actions of rape, murder and abduction. “Emotions, yes, we can be very emotional,” she says, “but I also am convinced that even with a lot of frustration and anger, women have the ability to sometimes sit on their anger so that it does not overcome them.” There are now more women being appointed and these issues are being discussed more. “But it is still very much at the discussion level,” she argues.

Do women bring something new to the talks? According to Betty Bigombe, the emotions sometimes help to get people to think more objectively, beyond the mere pursuit of one’s own interests. Coming back to the example of South Sudan, she describes her experience with the women who were brought to Addis Ababa to address both parties of the conflict: “You could see that they talked from their hearts, talking about the costs of war, and I could see most of the men looking down because the message was so strong. So, what is wrong with emotions around the table if it can open up the hearts and minds of the negotiators? To think about the big picture, rather than just what they want?”

PRIO Researchers visit Congolese project partner

In January 2014 PRIO researchers Gudrun Østby and Ragnhild Nordås visited Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu, DR Congo, for a two-week fieldtrip. The main purpose of the visit was to launch the new collaborative project “Female Empowerment in Eastern DRC”, funded by the Research Council of Norway.

This project, which was introduced in the last GPS newsletter, is based on a partnership between PRIO and the International Centre for Advanced Research and Training (ICART), which is a collaborative initiative between researchers from the Panzi Hospital, Panzi Foundation DRC, and the Université Evangelique en Afrique in Bukavu, DRC.

The project focuses on how survivors of sexual violence can be empowered and reintegrated into society through socio-economic support programs, and explores the link between armed conflict and intimate partner sexual violence. The methodological approach combines surveys and in-depth interviews. In addition to the thematic research, a separate project work package is devoted to research capacity building.

In Bukavu, the PRIO researchers and the local research team met with representatives from five support programs that are all linked to socioeconomic reintegration and empowerment of survivors of SGBV. They also visited “City of Joy”, a center for healing and

PRIO Senior Researcher Ragnhild Nordås giving a presentation on how to write grants proposals, Université Evangelique en Afrique, Bukavu. Photo: Gudrun Østby, PRIO.
training for survivors of gender-based violence. After six months in City of Joy, women are reintegrated into their communities and by returning home they commit to fight for self-sufficiency, financial independence and freedom.

Several meetings were held between the PRIO researchers and the principal investigators from the Congolese project team to discuss the focus and design of the project and develop a detailed plan of action for the work ahead. On 24 January Østby and Nordås held a one-day workshop on academic writing, publishing, and grant proposal writing at the Université Evangélique en Afrique (UEA). This was the first in a series of trainings planned for building local research capacity.

At the end of the stay the PRIO researchers went on a field visit to Kavumu, some 30 km north of Bukavu, to visit one of the branches of the Socio-economic Strengthening Program. They met with one of ten women’s networks where female survivors of SGBV receive vocational skills training, such as basket making, as well as microcredit and training in various income-generating activities.

The PRIO team and associated experts from Norway and abroad will return to Bukavu later this year to follow up on the project development and conduct more specialized research trainings.

PhD course on Gender, Peace and Security

Under the auspices of the Research School on Peace and Conflict, PRIO researchers Inger Skjelsbæk and Torunn L. Tryggestad organized a three day PhD course on Gender, Peace and Security at PRIO, on 8-10 January 2014.

The PhD course focused on research linked to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000), and covered the following themes:

- Theories of peace and conflict: what changes with a gendered perspective?
- Normative changes: what is the normative impact of the efforts in the United Nations linked to the 1325 agenda?
- Security analysis: what are the core elements of security sector reform for men and women?
- Political violence: what is the status of knowledge about sexual violence in war?
- Post conflict: what does conflict mean for maternal health issues?

The overall aim was to show and critically assess the ways in which gender, peace and security are interconnected in normative and empirical ways.

Course lecturers Torunn L. Tryggestad, Inger Skjelsbæk, Annica Kronsell, Helga Hernes, Ragnhild Nordås, Christin Ormhaug, Gudrun Østby, and Antonia Potter Prentice presented cross-disciplinary research and insights based on different methodological approaches. 15 students from Norway, UK, Germany, Canada, Nigeria, Austria, Iceland, and Finland attended the course. The Research School on Peace and Conflict is a collaboration between PRIO, the University of Oslo (UiO) and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Book launch: Gender in the Armed Forces

A new book, edited by Anita Schjølset (Norwegian Defence University College) and with contributions from PRIO researchers Torunn L. Tryggestad and Ragnhild Nordås was launched on 24 January. PRIO Researcher Torunn L. Tryggestad gave a presentation titled “Resolution 1325: Relevant for the Armed Forces?”

Gender i Forsvaret: Fra teori til praksis [‘Gender in the Armed Forces: From

Transitional Justice in Colombia

On 4 February the Norwegian Centre for Humanitarian Studies (NCHS) organized a seminar at PRIO on political organization and land restitution in Colombia from a transitional justice perspective, giving particular attention to the role of women.

Colombia is engaged in a protracted civil conflict which has had an enormous toll on civilian populations, one aspect of which is the massive internal displacement in the country. At between 4.9 and 5.5 million, Colombia’s rate of internally displaced people (IDPs) is the world’s highest – despite a ten year old effort to create a system for transitional justice.

From 2012, the government and FARC, the largest guerilla group, have engaged in peace negotiations in Havana, with Cuba and Norway as países garantes. Among the six substantive issues on the negotiations agenda are land reform, political participation, and the rights of victims.

Julieta Lemaitre (Universidad de los Andes Law School, Bogotá and PRIO Global Fellow) and Kristin Bergtora Sandvik (PRIO) gave a presentation on displaced women and political organization, describing how and why displaced women attempt to influence policy design and implementation, as well as an observed shift in focus from “humanitarian crisis” to “transitional justice” engendered by the 2011 Victims Law.

Henrik Wiig (NIBR) and Jemima García-Godos (UiO) gave a presentation on the process and challenges of land restitution, which was also initiated by the Victims Law, as well as unexpected effects of implementation, including increased gender equality.

Visit the PRIO website for more information about the seminar.
Women, Peace and Security in Brazil

The seminar Women, Peace and Security in Brazil: overcoming challenges and bridging gaps was organized in Brasília on 13 March by the Igarapé Institute, a Rio based think tank working on emerging security and development issues.

UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security were the starting point for the discussions at this seminar, of which the aim was to increase awareness and inform the debate on gender-related issues in the field of peace and security in Brazil, as well as to inform Brazilian policy and opinion-makers on gender related issues to improve and strengthen public policies and contribute to enhancing Brazil’s engagement with the agenda.

The seminar also aimed to highlight ways to contribute to the UN’s implementation of a gender approach in peace operations by identifying positive Brazilian experiences which can generate positive outcomes in the field and serve as a source of inspiration to host societies and to the UN itself.

The seminar was attended by Brazilian government representatives, non-governmental organizations, academia and practitioners, and presented a unique opportunity to explore how Brazil can advance the agenda internally in such a way that it also contributes to the UN’s efforts internationally.

PRIO Global Fellows working on gender issues

Heidi Hudson, Professor of International Relations and Director of the Centre for Africa Studies at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein and Julieta Lemaître, lawyer and an associate professor at the Universidad de los Andes Law School in Bogotá were appointed PRIO Global Fellows in January.

Both of them will play a role in the research milieu on gender, peace and security at PRIO. Lemaître has already been involved in a project from July 2010 to March 2014 on The Significance of Political Organization and International Law for Displaced Women in Colombia: A Socio-legal study of Liga De Mujeres, led by Kristin Bergtora Sandvik. Hudson’s current research interests concentrate on discursive and material gender deficits of liberal peacebuilding in the postcolony, and she is co-editor of International Feminist Journal of Politics.

The PRIO Global Fellows programme was launched in January 2014 with the appointment of the first 13 fellows. Global Fellows are non-resident, but visit PRIO at regular intervals. The programme intends to institutionalize links between PRIO and leading international scholars representing various parts of the world, a variety of methodological and analytical perspectives, and different levels of seniority.
International News

The UN Security Council for the first time has women occupying one third of its seats (5 of 15 Ambassadors) after Nigeria’s Joy Ogwu and Lithuania’s Raimonda Murmokaitė began their two-year terms on 1 January 2014. Click here for more info.

Bineta Diop was appointed Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security for the African Union on 30 January 2014, “to ensure that the voices of women and the vulnerable are heard much more clearly in peace building and in conflict resolution.”

The United Nations and the African Union (AU) signed an agreement on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence in Africa on 31 January.

Hillary Clinton, former US secretary of state, presented the Hillary Rodham Clinton Awards for Advancing Women in Peace and Security to British Foreign Secretary William Hague and Dr. Dennis Mukwege of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 25 February.

The Igarapé Institute organized a seminar at PRIO on 8 January (see separate story).

The Norwegian Centre for Humanitarian Studies (NCHS) organized a seminar at PRIO on 8–10 January (see separate story).

Heidi Hudson and Julieta Lemaitre were appointed PRIO Global Fellows in January (see separate story).

Torunn L. Tryggestad gave a presentation on “Resolution 1325: Relevant for the Armed Forces?” at the launch of the book Gender i Forsvaret. Fra teori til praksis, in Oslo on 24 January (see separate story).

The Norwegian Centre for Humanitarian Studies (NCHS) organized a seminar at PRIO on the role of women in political organization and land restitution in Colombia on 4 February (see separate story).

Ragnhild Nordås and Gudrun Østby presented at a brownbag organized by the Gender Research Group at PRIO about their new project and recent field trip to the DR Congo on 3 March (see separate story).

The Gender Research Group at PRIO organized a seminar with Betty Bigombe on the Role and Relevance of Gender in Peace Mediation on 20 March (see separate story).

Jenny K. Lorentzen attended an event on Women, Peace and Security in Brazil organized by the Igarapé Institute in Brasília on 13 March (see separate story).

News from Norway

The Norwegian Council for Africa and Kvinnefronten (Women’s Front) organized a seminar on the commercialization of rape in the Congo at Litteraturhuset in Oslo on 29 January.

Launching of the book Gender i Forsvaret. Fra teori til praksis (Gender in the Armed Forces. From theory to practice) took place on 24 January in Oslo (see separate story).

Recent PRIO Publications


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**Other Recent Publications**


**Castillejo, Clare (2014)** Promoting inclusion in political settlements: a priority for international actors? NOREF Report. Oslo: NOREF.


**Schjølset, Anita (Ed.) (2014)** *Gender i Forsvaret. Fra teori til praksis* (Gender in the Armed Forces. From theory to practice). Oslo: Abstrakt forlag.


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**Upcoming Events**

**Call for papers (Deadline 1 May 2014):** International Conference on “Gender, Empowerment and Conflict in South Asia” Kolkata, India, 7–8 November 2014. The conference is jointly organized by the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (MCRG) and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).

**Call for papers (Deadline 1 June):** Conference and PhD course, “A multitude of encounters with Asia – gender perspectives”, Reykjavik, Iceland 13–17 October 2014. The conference is co-organized by the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS), Centre for Women’s and Gender Research (RIKK) at the University of Iceland, and EDDA – Center of Excellence at the University of Iceland.

**NOREF will organize a seminar** with Carol Cohn on “Why is it so hard to get women to the peace table? And why is that not even the right question?” on 11 April at 8.30-10.00 in Oslo. Sign up here.

**The third High-Level Seminar** on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Processes will take place in Helsinki on 13–15 May 2014. Participation is by invitation only. The seminar is organized by the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and PRIO.

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