

## Post Conference Summary

### "The NAPs on UNSCR1325 and the impact of armed conflicts on children"

Organized by the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict and  
the Institute of Political Studies "S. Pio V"

A project supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

*24 July 2023- 9.00 am – 5.30 pm at the Hotel Taj Samudra, Colombo.*

The conference was organized within the framework of the project "**The National Action Plans on UNSCR1325 and the impact of armed conflicts on children: a study and analysis of the International Universities Network**", carried out by the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict in collaboration with the Institute of Political Studies "S. Pio V" and supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

### The Conference

Armed conflict subjects children to widespread systematic violations of their human rights with physical, mental, emotional and material repercussions.

Amongst the participants, we are pleased to note that we had Her Ladyship, Justice Khema Swaranadhipathi as a speaker. She was instrumental in developing the special Children's Court in Sri Lanka. She has also pledged her support for future endeavors. Also present were members from UNICEF, Kindernothilfe, World Vision, Emerge Lanka Foundation, Sisters in Law and the Association for War Affected Widows.

We also had the pleasure of having Mr. Jeevan Thiagarajah as a speaker. Mr. Thiagarajah has extensive experience working during the conflict to protect vulnerable communities. He was also the Governor of the Northern Province therefore; we were able to gain very important insight into the national perspective on the subject.

This conference provided the opportunity to build a comparative analysis of NAP's of selected Asian countries vis a vis the IV Italian Action Plan in accordance with Resolution 1325. From the countries selected for the study, it was only Sri Lanka that had a current and published NAP to compare with the Italian NAP.

The objective of this conference was to create a narrative and collate ideas on how Resolution 1325 can impact and support the global movement to reduce the direct and indirect impacts of armed conflict on children. There was interesting discussion in each work group and very strong common discussion points came through.

A significant point to note was the question as to why UNSCR 1325 needs to expand its purview to children as there are resolutions specifically for children. The other was from an operational perspective; participants who work closely with extremely marginalized communities (post war), made a very noteworthy statement where they expressed their concern as to how far the NAP will filter down to these communities that need the protection and the empowerment of Resolution 1325 and the WPS Agenda the most. In reality, the operationalizing of resolutions does not seem to reach the communities most affected by war. It is also important to note that Sri Lanka is a Post War nation and, in many aspects, has not transitioned to a Post-Conflict nation as yet.

There was strong consensus and opinion amongst all participants across multiple sectors about the value add of NAPs and other high-level documents when there is a significant gap between NAPs per se and the operationalizing of the plan through policy and ground level implementation. The other strong question was based on accountability and how the international community can be more proactive about ensuring

accountability is realized. There was a heavy sense of doubt and the comments centered around a thematic idea of, 'why/how would it be different this time'.

The key takeaways from this conference were the links that were forged between multiple groups and organisations that work on the ground with the Universities Network and amongst themselves. All the participants are keen to further their involvement with the Universities Network on future projects.

The key outcomes from this conference will be reflected in the comprehensive report that the regional team is compiling.

## **Media Coverage**

### **UNIVERSITIES NETWORK Print Coverage**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>PUBLICATION</b>	<b>SECTION</b>	<b>PAGE</b>	<b>HEADLINE</b>
30.07.2023	Sunday Ceylon Today	Echo	7	Understanding Impacts of Armed Conflict of Children
31.07.2023	Hesh (Celeste)	Instagram Stories		The National Action Plan on UNSCR1325 and the Impact of armed conflicts on Children
01.08.2023	Daily Island	Financial Review	8	The National Action Plan on UNSCR1325 and the impact of armed conflicts on children

### **Online Coverage UNIVERSITIES NETWORK**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>PUBLICATION</b>	<b>SECTION</b>	<b>HEADLINE</b>
27.07.2023	Ada Derana Biz	Online	<a href="#">The National Action Plan on UNSCR1325 and the Impact of arm</a>
27.07.2023	Lanka Business News	Online	<a href="#">The National Action Plan on UNSCR1325 and the Impact of arm</a>
27.07.2023	Eye View	Online	<a href="#">The National Action Plan on UNSCR1325 and the Impact of arm</a>
27.07.2023	LMD	Online	<a href="#">The National Action Plan on UNSCR1325 and the impact of arm</a>
01.08.2023	Daily Island	Online	<a href="#">The National Action Plan on UNSCR1325 and the Impact of arm</a>

# UNDERSTANDING IMPACTS OF ARMED CONFLICT ON CHILDREN

*Sri Lanka to host Asian region conference on National Action Plan on UNSCR1325 and the Impact of Armed Conflicts on Children*

BY SHANUKA KADUPITIYAGE

Sri Lanka was selected as the official venue for the international conference for the Asian region on The National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and the Impact of Armed Conflicts on Children, organised by the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict (UNETCHAC) on 24 July at the Taj Samudra, Colombo. Supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the conference is a step forward in understanding how the lives of children are affected in on-going or post-armed conflict environments.

Established in November, 2020, UNETCHAC is the first international academic network with the aim to enhance the role of the academic community in protecting children affected by such circumstances. Academics from all over the world will fly for the conference, which is also in the framework of a qualitative and quantitative research which will contribute towards a report on the global scale, reporting by geographical area on the affect the violence of armed conflict. It will also conduct a valuable analysis of post-conflict reform,



Laura Guercio

Simona Lanzello

Shyamila Hettiarachchi

rehabilitation and reintegration of children in post-conflict situations. *Ceylon Today* had the opportunity to take part in an official press conference marking the occasion.

Speaking with the press, UNETCHAC Project Manager Simona Lanzello, a prominent lawyer specialised in criminal and family law and international criminal law shared that, "This conference that is being held in Sri Lanka is part of a series of conferences which are being organised across the globe. These conferences will provide an opportunity to build a comparative analysis between the national action plans of selected Asian countries focusing on the issue of children living in armed conflict and post-conflict environments." She said that the UNETCHAC is working with national non-government organisations as well as UN organisations on each

country and was hopeful that the outcome will be illuminating and fruitful.

Also in the panel Sustainable Development Consultant Shyamila Hettiarachchi, who was part of the conference, and explained with renowned lawyer, and Secretary General of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Human Rights at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Professor Laura Guercio, about the project and its impact.

"This research is being done to analyse the sociological, normative and cultural factors that contribute to the harm that children experience during armed conflict. Furthermore, it is a study that considers the Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security which established the ground breaking idea that women are not only victims but also agents of change." She continued,

explaining that children too, have a voice and the capacity to change the world not only in the future, but in the present day, and that they must be protected, which this research will help strengthen the efforts towards.

"The working groups gathered today are collectively working on the key aspects that the national action plan should consider, and what we are coming up with are recommendations that aren't limited to Sri Lanka. It is to be given over to both the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Special Representative to the United Nations on Children Affected by Conflict," Hettiarachchi added. In addition, *Ceylon Today* learnt that the global report on the research is set to be completed and made available to the public at the end of the year.

Hettiarachchi also noted that the research and work that will take place will help fill-in the gaps that are often unnoticed and unrecorded because of the nature of the definitions used when conducting previous research on the subject. This research in turn will be complementary to obtain a complete picture, capturing the data and information that would have otherwise, 'fallen through the cracks'.

(Pix by Manjula Dayawansa)

# The National Action Plan on UNSCR1325

## Impact of armed conflicts on Children



Laura Guercio

The Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict and the Institute of Political Studies "S. Pio V", supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation organised a conference within the framework of the project "The National Action Plans (NAP) on UNSCR1325 and the impact of armed conflicts on children: a study and analysis of the International Universities Network".

The project aims to carry out qualitative and quantitative research and produce an insightful report, by geographical area, of the serious violations against children by armed conflict situations. The research also makes a valuable analysis of post-conflict reform, rehabilitation and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict and this is the critical path where UNSCR1325 can and should play a pivotal role.

Speaking about the objectives of this conference Laura Guercio, Professor of Sociology of Human Rights and International Cooperation to Development at the University of Perugia and a Professor of International Relations at the University Cusano Rome. A member of the Council of the European Law Institute in Vienna said, "The NAP is to create a narrative and collate ideas on how Resolution 1325 can impact and support the global movement to reduce the direct and indirect impacts of armed conflict on children. To achieve this, we must expand the understanding and impact of Resolution 1325 from its gender perspective to reach children affected by armed conflict as well as create a wider umbrella of sustainable peacebuilding via the four pillars of Resolution 1325 - Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery. The impact of armed conflict on children needs to deep dive into the areas."

**Participation** - how can we create a dialogue from a gender perspective to mutually include the protection of children under Resolution 1325 and how should the National Action Plans reflect this?

**Protection** - how does the jurisdiction of the national and interna-



Francesco Perale, Simona Lanzellotto, Laura Guercio

tional communities work together to create a system of sustainable protection of children from armed conflict under the umbrella of Resolution 1325? (Considering that internal civil wars create a jurisdictional question for international community intervention)

**Prevention** - what specific areas of direct and indirect impacts of armed conflict on children can Resolution 1325 address?

**Relief and Recovery** - can Resolution 1325 play a larger role in the relief and recovery of children affected by armed conflict (as this is a critical impact point that tends to see a lot of children fall through the cracks)?

**Accountability** - how do we improve accountability measures to support children and women affected by armed conflict?

Armed conflict causes severe direct and indirect consequences for children and most often the indirect consequences are not addressed due to the grave nature of the direct consequences, which are broadly defined as death, injury, recruited as child soldiers and violence against children. The dire consequences of the indirect harm caused to children during the armed conflict have a lasting impact on these children due to the double-barrelled trauma such as gross violations of being abducted, forced removal from their families, illegal detention and recruitment as child soldiers. In addition, these children are also deprived of their fundamental rights to education, shelter, and the right to build a fruitful and holistic life.

The project will also include videos and a photo exhibition by two Italian photo reporters, Marzia Ferrone and Vittorio Alonzo, on the

condition of children living in armed conflict and post-conflict.

This conference provides the opportunity to build a comparative analysis of NAP's of selected Asian countries vis a vis the IV Italian Action Plan in accordance with Resolution 1325.

In the presence of conflict, it is observed time and time again that women assume the key role of ensuring family livelihood amid armed conflict and destruction.

ble and willing to carry forward with the global community looking beyond the umbrella of protection of women per se. This is the narrative that will make UNSCR 1325 stronger and able to reach further to the protection of children.

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 is a landmark international legal framework that addresses not only the inordinate impact of war on women but also acknowledges the pivotal role of women in conflict management, conflict resolution and sustainable peace. It is an internationally recognised legal framework for promoting gender equality, but not a treaty (Centre for Gender and Social Transformation Feb 2013). The resolution includes several significant appeals:

### The UN Secretary-General Must:

Increase the number of women working on all levels of decision-making in national, regional and international institutions as well as in the field.

Include a gender perspective into conflict prevention, conflict resolu-



Universities\_NAP

Women are also seen as being active in cultivating peace and collaboration in their communities at a grass root level. A strong example of this is; during the armed conflict and post-conflict in Sri Lanka, we saw the transformation of battle-hardened women into successful entrepreneurs. What started as a desperate shift for survival has now mainstreamed and evolved into a community of businesswomen that challenged the patriarchal gender norms and changed the socio-cultural landscape. Therefore, the narrative must begin to reflect the strong agency women are competent, capa-

tion and post-conflict reconstruction; peacekeeping personnel must be trained accordingly.

such as National Action Plans (NAPs) lies with the national government. UNSCR 1325 is not a treaty, therefore the signatories will design their National Action Plans according to their individual socio-political, socio-cultural and gender-sensitive frameworks. The question then is how far UNSCR 1325 has the reach to involve itself actively in NAPs and if it is practical and sustainable to look towards creating cohesive NAPs to reach a global benchmark. Pix by Nishendra Silva

# The National Action Plan on UNSCR1325 and the impact of armed conflicts on children

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## Background to Conference and Research Topic

The charter of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is the maintenance of international peace and security. Security must be present, and its presence must be realised - this is a critical indicator of peace. As the popular saying goes, "The absence of war doesn't necessarily mean the presence of peace".

In 2000, The UNSC Resolution 1325 recalled 1261 (1999), 1265 (1999), 1296 (2000) and 1314 (2000) and:

expressed concern about the fact that the majority of people affected by armed conflict are women and children,

reaffirmed the role of women as "agents of lasting peace": their equal participation in peacebuilding, maintaining and promoting peace and security and the increase in decision-making for conflict prevention are crucial for peace and secu-

reaffirmed the need for humanitarian and human rights laws that protect the rights of women and children during and after conflicts.

The Beijing Declaration (1995) states the hard reality of women and children being most vulnerable during conflict and further states that women and girl-children are even more at risk due to their social status and sex.

In the presence of conflict, it is observable time and time again that women assume the key role of ensuring family livelihood amid armed conflict and destruction. Women are also seen as being active in cultivating peace and collaborations in their communities at a grass root level. A strong example of this is; during the armed conflict and post-conflict in Sri Lanka, we saw the



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transformation of battle-hardened women into successful entrepreneurs. What started as a desperate shift for survival has now mainstreamed and evolved into a community of businesswomen that challenged the patriarchal gender norms and changed the socio-cultural landscape. Therefore, the narrative must begin to reflect the strong agency women are competent, capable and willing to carry forward with the global community looking beyond the umbrella of protection of women per se. This is the narrative that will make UNSCR 1325 stronger and able to reach further to the protection of children.