

Woman's Personal Security

Pilot Study report - General Introduction

Rula Quawas, Fatima Sadiqi and Pnina Steinberg

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Executive Summary

1. Project Goal and Rational

Our project, that was initiated in Berlin, October 2015, was intended to listen to women of the region, and to come up with local and regional definition of their security needs. The pilot Study's goal was to produce three country reports: Jordan, Morocco and Israel. This is the report of the pilot study in these three countries. Our aim in this initiative was to make space for women to voice their concerns, their experiences and their thoughts about securities they strive for. In the spirit of feminist methodologies we build our understanding of the concept and phenomena of security with women in which we are interested. In order to elicit concrete stories we ask women to share stories of security and of security-breaching.

Goal of this pilot research is twofold:

1. Collecting security stories of women in three countries: Jordan, Morocco, Israel¹
2. Based on these stories - conceptualizing women's security needs in each country

2. How do Women Perceive and Experience Security? A Literature Review

"Security" is a vague concept, and its definition in recent decades is controversial and debated among different disciplines. Within the framework of international relations, discussions traditionally focus on national security issues of peace and borders, emphasizing the aspects related to military strategy. According to this approach, the supply of security rests with the state, under the assumption that countries are those that protect the members of the political community against external threats. However, feminist approaches and other critical perspectives challenge this perception of security as it is too narrow, and endeavor to expand and enrich it in different ways, based on the perception and lived experience of various groups of people.

¹ See appendix: Rationale and guidelines for focus groups and interviews

The definition of the term "security" may be characterized by three major contemporary discourses:

- (1) The discourse of "national security"
- (2) The discourse of "humane security"
- (3) The gendered approach

Women offer non-traditional perspectives of security that extend the concept to the new dimensions, especially to gender dimensions embedded into each of its aspects. However, women, especially in conflict zones, are not expected to completely abandon the traditional discourse of "national security" affecting their lives so dramatically. One may ask – why do we need a gendered approach? Is not part of humane security? And indeed rationally it should, but reality is different: although the idea of human security requires the elimination of all violence and unjust social power relations, violence against women tends to be ignored in this context too. Gender perspectives does a lot more than allowing to formulate the security needs by women. They also demonstrate how these formulations cross traditional barriers that separate individuals based on different borders, inter alia on the basis of countries and regions. Therefore, women bring to the discourse on security a new border-crossing dimension, which includes the idea of developing an alternative discourse to security

3. Summary

The gender perspective in relation to security (just like with any other subject examined through a gendered lens) promotes exploration and examination of related issues from the perspective and everyday experience of women. This is a "bottom up" strategy of understanding. This perspective teaches us that women's security needs are best phrased by women, as long as the category "women" contains a variety of groups and social locations.

It would be particularly interesting to compare the women's national security perception especially between countries with complex relationship (eg Israel and Jordan). It is possible that in this case, when

applying female perspective on security, it will turn out that similarities are larger than difference.

1. Project's Goals and Rational

Our project, that was initiated in Berlin, October 2015, was intended to listen to women of the region, and to come up with local and regional definition of their security needs. The pilot Study's goal was to produce three country reports: Jordan, Morocco and Israel.

This is a joint effort of women from various Middle Eastern countries and from various social positions - to understand what “security” means to women in our respective countries and in our joint region. We know that women feel the need for security in many areas of their every-day lives. Hence our aim in this initiative was to make space for women to voice their concerns, their experiences and their thoughts about securities they strive for. In order to elicit concrete stories we ask women to share stories of security and of security-breaching.

In the spirit of feminist methodologies we build our understanding of the concept and phenomena of security with women in which we are interested. We know knowledge making is always specific to a particular situation and social location, always situated². Hence, in order to create a rich understanding of how we perceive security and what we need in order to feel secure - we reach out to women from various social positions, statuses, ethnicities and any other relevant parameters of local diversity.

Goal of this pilot research is threefold:

1. Collecting security stories of women in three countries: Jordan, Morocco, Israel³
2. Based on these stories - conceptualizing women's security needs in each country
3. Examining the feasibility and need of a regional women's security conceptualization

² Haraway, Donna (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies* 14, pp. 575-599.

³ See appendix: Rationale and guidelines for focus groups and interviews

Recently there are more and more Bottom-up projects seeking experience of local people such as "New Londoners"⁴ - a photo-voice project seeking to integrate young refugees and turn them into new Londoners. Or reports closer to our subject such as "What the Women Say"⁵ or "The Everyday Peace Indicator Project" aiming to investigate alternative, bottom-up indicators of peace⁶ (Ginty & Firchow, 2016)

These initiatives indeed are planned as participatory researches, striving for a bottom-up conceptualization. Yet – they are either not gendered or if they are – their focus is not on women's diversity and not in our MENA region.

Our project is different in two senses: diversity and reconstructing security. By diversity we mean to say that women, even local women (Israelis, Jordanians or Moroccans) cannot be referred to as to an homogenized group, and in reconstructing security – we mean including all concerns women from various local groups see as security concerns, in the new definition of security. In other words we want to know what do women of the region need in order to feel secure, and how can we account for differences and similarities in these needs.

2. How do Women Perceive and Experience Security? A Literature Review

2.1 Defining the concept of Security

"Security" is a vague concept, and its definition in recent decades is controversial and debated among different disciplines. Within the framework of international relations, discussions traditionally focus on national security issues of peace and borders, emphasizing the aspects

⁴ <https://photovoice.org/photography-for-integration-photography-with-young-refugees> retrieved 27.6.16

⁵ Anderlini, S. N., & Tirman, J. (2010). What the Women Say. Retrieved from http://web.mit.edu/cis/pdf/WomenReport_10_2010.pdf

⁶ Ginty, R. Mac, & Firchow, P. (2016). Top-down and bottom-up narratives of peace and conflict. *Politics*, 36(3), 308–323. <http://doi.org>

related to military strategy. According to this approach, the supply of security rests with the state, under the assumption that countries are those that protect the members of the political community against external threats. However, feminist approaches and other critical perspectives challenge this perception of security as it is too narrow, and endeavor to expand and enrich it in different ways, based on the perception and lived experience of various groups of people⁷.

The development of critical approaches, extending the meaning of security into new dimensions, does not replace the traditional approach, defining security in national, military terms. The two perspectives are incorporated into the discourse. As a result, the definition of the term "security" may be characterized by three major contemporary discourses⁸:

(1) **The discourse of "national security"** - reflecting the mainstream approach to security. "National Security" focuses on protecting the country's borders against external threats, or protect the authority of the state in the event of an internal conflict. In this case, "security" is perceived as a situation in which violent conflict does not threaten the state. This is a militaristic discourse, which allows countries to appropriate themselves the exclusive use of force, and limits the involvement of civil society in the development of strategies to promote security.

(2) **The discourse of "humane security"** - this discourse is not focused on a stresses the importance of seven (interrelated) categories that make up the term security: economic, nutritional, health, environmental, personal, community and political.

(3) **The gendered approach** seeks to apply the gender perspectives both into analysis of traditional security issues (such as violent conflict) and to analysis of other issues such as health, economic empowerment and political participation.

⁷ Blanchard, Eric M. 2003. "Gender, International Relations and the Development of Feminist Security Theory." *Signs* 28(4): 1289-1312.

⁸ Hamber Brandon, Hillyard Paddy, Maguire Amy, McWilliams Monica, Robinson Gillian, Russell David. 2006. "Discourses in Transition: Re-Imagining Women's Security." *International Relations* 20(4): 487-502.

Women offer non-traditional perspectives of security that extend the concept to the new dimensions, especially to gender dimensions embedded into each of its aspects. However, women, especially in conflict zones, are not expected to completely abandon the traditional discourse of "national security" affecting their lives so dramatically. Women in conflict zones may adopt traditional national security discourse, but they may do so from within their point of view as women. Women's security conceptions in conflict zones are multi-faceted. Their conceptions are expected to give voice to emerging experience at the intersection between gender and security, such aspects are described below.

2.2 Gender inequality as a factor inhibiting women's security⁹

According to feminist theory of Tickner¹⁰, security can be fully understood only by examining the gendered structures of inequality. Although the idea of human security requires the elimination of all violence and unjust social power relations, violence against women tends to be ignored in this context too. All types of violence and discrimination that hinder people freedom and social, political and economic choice are not compatible with the concept of humane security.

Discrimination is a symptom of gender inequality and structural violence that undermines the confidence of women. Gender inequality in access to education, health, political and economic resources, fertilizes the structural violence against women, namely their systematic socio-regulated exploitation. Violence against women is based on discrimination, inequality and the threat of violence.

Fear of violence in the private sphere leads to a feeling of insecurity of women, as reflected in avoidance of women entering certain places, at certain times, out of fear that they will experience violence in these arenas. Confidence in the private sphere is an essential component of

⁹ Carpioli Mary. 2004. "Democracy and Human Rights versus Women's Security: A Contradiction?" Security Dialogue 35(4): 411-428.

¹⁰ Tickner, J. Ann. 1997. "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled Engagements Between Feminists and IR Theorists." International Studies Quarterly 41: 611-632.

women's security, but is often excluded on safety assessments of the public sphere of rights and freedoms.

Violence against women stems from many causes, but the unequal power relations are the common denominator in all acts of violence. Structural gender-inequality is the factor creating the conditions for social control of women and undermines their security. In general, gender-based violence relies on stereotypes of women as inferior to men, encouraging treating them as objects. Systematic inequality thus creates the conditions that lead to violence that leads to women's insecurity.

In accordance with understanding gender relations in society as reflecting the level of confidence of women, we can characterize women's security by several indicators: personal safety and health, economic and political security, and measures of human rights and democracy. These indicators allows for comparison of the level of security of women from different countries.

2.3 Gender perspective on security¹¹

The spread of the concept of "human security", which refers to the individual rather than the state in defining the concept of security, dictates a research approach based on the individual. This approach will be reflected in a concrete and effective methodology that understands the security needs as worded by individuals, particularly those who are the least "safe".

Women's experiences illustrate the complexity of the realities and conceptions embodied in the concept of security. Re-conceptualizing the idea of security based on the experiences of women enables, for example, referring to the concept of violence in all its levels - local, national and international. Furthermore this extended idea of security also emphasizes the structural violence not just war violence that affects the safety of people. Only recognition of the interaction between local violence (e.g. domestic violence) and global violence (e.g. war), allows us to understand both.

Hence the gender perspective on security extends the general claim regarding security, and reminds us that security can be achieved only if

¹¹ Hoogensen, Gunhild & Svein Vigeland Rottem. 2004. "Gender Identity and the Subject of Security." *Security Dialogue* 35(2): 155-171

the social relations of control and oppression at all levels of life will be eliminated, and only if gender justice will be achieved¹².

2.4 Women's perception of security: examples from different countries

Gender perspectives does a lot more than allowing to formulate the security needs by women. They also demonstrate how these formulations cross traditional barriers that separate individuals based on different borders, inter alia on the basis of countries and regions. Therefore, women bring to the discourse on security a new border-crossing dimension, which includes the idea of developing an alternative discourse to security¹³.

The Border-crossing dimension is reflected in the various studies that have examined the concept of security of women in different countries. These studies show that women's unique security concept, based on their daily experiences and point of view, is revealed by listening to diverse women from different countries.

A major study in the field examined the security perceptions of women in three countries: Lebanon, Northern Ireland and South Africa, as part of a project to "re-imagine security and participation of women in post-conflict societies".¹⁴ For the study, 18 focus groups were conducted in three countries, with the participation of women from diverse social locations. The focus groups sought to examine the concept of security of these women and their attitudes about the transition from a state of conflict into post-conflict in their country.

For many women participated in the project, the term "security" had some negative connotations. In Northern Ireland, the term security normally binds with security forces, violence, conflict, terrorism and military.

¹² Hudson, Heidi. 2005. "'Doing' Security As Though Humans Matter: A Feminist Perspective on Gender and the Politics of Human Security." *Security Dialogue* 36(2): 155-174

¹³ Hoogensen, Gunhild & Svein Vigeland Rottem. 2004. "Gender Identity and the Subject of Security." *Security Dialogue* 35(2): 155-171.

¹⁴ Hamber Brandon, Hillyard Paddy, Maguire Amy, McWilliams Monica, Robinson Gillian, Russell David. 2006. "Discourses in Transition: Re-Imagining Women's Security." *International Relations* 20(4): 487-502.

Other women described security as a work done by an external manly force, and thus visited the patriarchal bias of security discourse. In this project, the concept of security emerged as a limiting idea, and not an empowering one. Some of the participants felt the need to abandon the language of security completely. One of them, for example, described "security" as a masculine word and "safety" as a feminine word.

The women in the study tend to re-imagine the term "security" in some non-traditional ways, although they do not completely abandoned traditional security discourse. When they imagine security as an empowering idea, they often emphasize that security should increase, not limit, their freedom. For them, the meaning of security is not to be afraid. Not to be afraid of hunger, not be afraid to travel, not be afraid of misjudgment (according to Lebanese woman), not to be afraid of physical violence, and to feel that you have the right to do and say whatever you want to do and say (participating Northern Ireland).

The collective border-crossing project of women who re-imagine what security is created together a holistic image of security, expressing the position that security includes a range of inter-related factors, and not just lack of fear of violence or conflict. Participants drafted security in practical terms and in mundane measures, rather than in utopian terms. Their perceptions indicate that security features different aspects of their life, including: economic security, protection from violence, and equal political participation for women.

These perceptions of women participants of the project do not conform to the established patriarchal approaches to security, but supports non-traditional approaches – empowering and context-dependent. The assumption is that change is needed not only in terms of participation and representation of women in security processes, but also a change is needed in the security discourse, to reflect a wider holistic approach.

Another study examined the perception of security among women from Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and other countries in South Asia, found that the meaning of security for respondents includes protection against sexual violence, domestic violence, economic discrimination and political

isolation. Also, these women have linked violence on the battlefield with economic insecurity and an increase in domestic violence¹⁵.

Another study examined perceptions of peace and security among women from East Timor (Timor-Leste), Fiji and Sri Lanka. Although the study focuses on the analysis of empowerment (and not security) in women's conceptions, this analysis also focus some insight into how women perceive security.¹⁶ One of the salient themes in this study is that empowerment can only occur when there is a sense of security.

Interviewee from East Timor, for example, working with the rehabilitation of victims of sexual assault, responded to a question about empowerment by its link directly to security. She said: "Security is very important. It is very important for women, especially for women. In my understanding, Security is the absence of violence, absence of war. Security is peace." Such statements have a significant impact on policy measures that are required, and on understanding the need for security as a basis for building local empowerment programs.

A similar link between empowerment and security made by another interviewee, gender consultant from East Timor. She pointed to the link between security, economic development and domestic violence, and claimed that they are inseparable. She claims that even non-provision of drugs and medical support or lack of access to justice, reflect a form of violence against women, and therefore security and empowerment are essential elements in relation to these issues.

3. Summary

The gender perspective in relation to security (just like with any other subject examined through a gendered lens) promotes exploration and examination of related issues from the perspective and everyday experience of women. This is a "bottom up" strategy of understanding. This perspective teaches us that women's security needs are best phrased

¹⁵ Hoogensen, Gunhild & Svein Vigeland Rottem. 2004. "Gender Identity and the Subject of Security." *Security Dialogue* 35(2): 155-171.

¹⁶ Porter, Elisabeth. 2013. "Rethinking Women's Empowerment." *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 8(1): 1-14.

by women, as long as the category "women" contains a variety of groups and social locations.

Studies show that women's concepts of security insert gender concerns to both traditional security issues (war and violent conflicts), and to non-traditional security issues (such as sexual violence or economic hardship). Security conceptualization that takes gender into account re-defines security and resources needed to achieving it.

Although the literature body on gender and security is developing and growing, only a minority of it is based directly on interviews with women. The studies that do so show consistently that security perceptions of women from different countries are non-traditional, expanding security dimensions into aspects beyond national security. Similarities between countries may be explained in that gender inequality is a universal phenomenon that affects in a similar (but not identical) ways security perceptions of women around the world. However, only a comparative study based on a uniform method can refine the similarities and differences in the perception of security of women from different countries. More specifically, it would be particularly interesting to compare the women's national security perception especially between countries with complex relationship (eg Israel and Jordan). It is possible that in this case, when applying female perspective on security, it will turn out that similarities are larger than difference.

4. Appendix: Rationale and guidelines for focus groups and interviews

This is a joint effort of women from various Middle Eastern countries and from various social positions - to understand what does "security" means to women in our respective countries and in our joint region. We know that women feel the need for security in many areas of their every-day lives. Hence our aim in this initiative is to make space for women to voice their concerns, their experiences and their thoughts about securities they strive for. In order to elicit concrete stories we ask women to share stories of security and security-breaching.

In the spirit of feminist methodology we build our understanding of the concept and phenomena of security with women in which we are interested. We know knowledge is always specific to a particular situation and social location, always situated. Hence, in order to create a rich understanding of how we perceive security and what we need in order to feel secure - we reach out to women from various social positions, statuses, ethnicities and any other relevant parameters of local diversity. This is an experimental effort of creating a knowledge community. Each member of the knowledge community is invited to share her own stories, and to take part in the interpretation of her own and others'.

This is done in four main steps:

1. Collecting stories in each county in interviews and in group discussions
2. Transcription of interviews and group discussions
3. In country interpretations - by local researcher
4. Regional interpretation - by all research team, in consultation with local participants of research and FGW convening participants

Some guidelines towards collecting stories

- **Who?** - Plan to interview a diverse group of women. It is best if main cultural/religious/ethnic/national group from your country is represented in the knowledge base we are building.
- **How?** - Whether we conduct an interview with one woman at a time or a group discussion it is suggested to record the session either on video or voice-recorder. Words said and the exact ways stories are told are our anchor and base data.
- **How many?** - 6 interviews and 2 group discussions.
- **Time planning of interview** - plan to spend about an hour with each interviewee (suggested questions are at the end of this document).
 - Five minutes - Introduction. Explain context.
 - 25 minutes will be devoted to open question
 - 25 minutes - some more structured questions as follows in the suggested interview plan
 - Five minutes - wrap-up, explain what is going to happen and thank participants (two last questions)

- **Time planning of group discussion** - compose a small group of women (3-10), calculate about 15 minutes per participant and keep good track of time:
 - Five minutes of introduction
 - Introduce open question (same as in interview) and allow time for personal stories, insights and reactions from the group. Allow group to respond, but keep track of time (This stage should take half of the time minus the five intro minutes and if you plan a break - minus half of the break time too).
 - Use structured questions (detailed at the interview plan) to loosely direct the discussion (This stage should take half of the time minus the five wrap-up minutes and if you plan a break - minus half of the break time).
 - Wrap-up, explain what is going to happen and thank participants.

- **What should happen in country, after the interview/group discussion?**
 - Transcribing recorded interviews and discussions.
 - Consolidating a corpus for interpretation.
 - Interpretation of local findings.

Suggested interview plan In short:

1. Introduction: explain context (5 minutes)
2. First part: open question: Please tell us stories of breaching security in which you were involved (25 minutes)
3. Second part: directing questions (25 minutes)
4. Wrap-up (5 minutes)

Detailed guidelines:

1. Name of interviewee:
2. Interviewer's name:
3. Date of interview: Time:
3. Place of interview:
4. E-Address:
5. Telephone #:

First part – 25 minutes

During our meeting today we shall talk about personal security. Every woman has her own personal security history, stories and insights. I suggest we will start with your stories of personal security, by you telling it any way you want. We shall spend 30

minutes talking about your personal security story, and then I will ask some supplementary questions.

Second part – 25 minutes

We now move to the second part of the interview, and I will ask you some questions. In this part we need short answers and I will direct you and help in focus.

2. What comes to your mind when I say “security”? and “personal security”?

3. Thinking back over your life, in which period of your life did you feel most secure?

3. Can you describe a specific moment when you felt secure?

4. What is your first memory of personal breach of security? How old were you at the time?

5. How did this breach of security influence your life?

6. Do you think your security needs have changed over the years? if yes - can you elaborate and tell us about this change?

7. Can you tell me a recent instance of security breach?

8. In what areas is security most important for you today?

9. What or who helps you overcome personal security breach?

10. Anything else you want to add?

11. How should we publish your involvement in regional personal security project (can we use your name? picture? associate name and picture with your security insights and stories?)

12. Would you like to participate in the interpretation process?

