



IPI MEETING BRIEF

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN POSTCONFLICT JUSTICE

Involving women in postconflict justice processes is essential to their success and contributes to sustainable peace. This was the key conclusion from the inaugural event in IPI's new *Women, Peace & Security* series, which focused on the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Featuring the four top officials from this hybrid court and the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the event examined how the aims of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security are being put into practice in postconflict justice processes.

The event, co-organized with UN Women and UNDP, produced four key takeaways:

1. The Special Court for Sierra Leone could prove a useful **model for empowering women and girls** in postconflict justice processes elsewhere. It set multiple precedents in this regard—recognizing forced marriage as a crime against humanity; laying the foundations for jurisprudence that addresses child soldiers, including girl soldiers; and recognizing sexual violence as a form of terrorism.
2. A **gender-sensitive outreach program** proved essential after a conflict in which women were victims and targets. Bringing the work of the court into communities around the country helped to set people's expectations about its goals and promote understanding of its working methods, which in turn helped people to feel satisfied that justice was being done.
3. The hybrid nature of the court also contributed to its success since **local ownership and input** could be combined with international perspectives and expertise. Sierra Leonean women working in the court—who also make up two of the four female principals—helped to ensure that gender-sensitive justice was applied to the local context.
4. While justice and peace are sometimes thought to be at odds in postconflict contexts, the special court may provide a compelling example of **justice contributing to sustainable peace**. The court experienced many challenges, but studies show that 91 percent of people in Sierra Leone believe the court contributed to peace in their country.

Finally, participants recognized that justice is a long-haul commitment. The Special Court for Sierra Leone will continue its work, not least in protecting the witnesses that came forward to testify.