

**THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN POST-CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE
BUILDING**

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INTRODUCTION

Today, civil strife and conflict affects many countries of the world.¹ Violence against women and children in conflict and transition countries has emerged as a major concern. Attention to the different experiences of women and men is particularly critical in designing successful conflict management and peace building programs.

While conflict inflicts sufferings on everyone, women are particularly affected by its short-and-long-term effects. Sexual assault and exploitation are frequently employed as tools of war, victimization leads to isolation, alienation, prolonged emotional trauma, and unwanted pregnancies that often result in abandoned children. As culturally designated caregivers, women must struggle to support their families and keep their household together while the traditional bread winners – husband – are caught up in the fighting and are unable to provide for their families.

The new role as primary provider exposes women to further abuse. Conflict shatters the comfort of predictable daily routines and expectations. Women and girls are equally affected in a fragile environment where social services they once depended on degrade or disappear.² Although conflict may in some cases, improve gender relations as a result of shift in gender roles, by and large its impact on women is devastatingly negative.

Given the fact that women suffer first as victims of conflict and also as victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, it has become necessary to recognize the role play by women in conflict resolution and peace building, otherwise they will continue to

be victims of conflict. It is therefore very important to make this vulnerable population the focus of international peace operations. Women should be at the forefront of decision-making to ensure that perpetrators are held responsible for actions committed against women and children.

In line with this consideration, the Security Council of the UN unanimously passed Resolution 1325 in October 2000 on Women, Peace and Security.³ Resolution 1325 recognizes the importance of women's participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and provides a series of specific measures aimed at women's full participation in decision-making in the area of peace and security and in peace processes.

While much of the work of conflict resolution and peace building focuses on the government or public level, the resolution of contemporary conflict is very much a holistic process that is simultaneously conducted at the private, grassroots level.⁴ That is why this paper will examine the role women play in post-conflict resolution and peace building, in order to identify the extent to which the resolution has been effective in changing the paradigm for women.

Part I will present an overview of salient themes particularly relevant to this discussion of conflict resolution and peace building. Part II takes a theoretical perspective look at women and post– conflict peace building. In doing this it will look at different views on the perceived role of women in post conflict resolution given the fact that they represent a population that is severely and distinctly victimized by conflict and also powerful agents

in conflict and post-conflict resolution. Part III will look at some institutional framework in place protecting women during conflict and war such as Resolution 1325. Part IV will take a comparative perspective of places where women have played prominent role in post-conflict resolution. Part V will address the problems women face in playing their role as powerful forces in post-conflict resolution and peace building. Part VI makes some suggestion on how to improve and enhance women's participation in post conflict resolution and peace building. Lastly, the paper concludes that lasting peace cannot be achieved without the participation of women and the inclusion of gender perspectives and participation in peace process.

CONCEPTUALISING CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE BUILDING.

Conflict exists in all countries and in every level of society. Conflict per se is no means a negative force; rather it is a natural expression of social difference and of humanity's perpetual struggle for justice and self. Conflict Resolution is directed at understanding conflict processes and alternative non-violent methods to help disputing parties reach mutually acceptable positions that resolve their differences.⁵ It is the process of attempting to resolve dispute or a conflict.

Conflict resolution is seen by Miller (2003) as 'a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts through the constructive solving of problems, distinct from management or transformation of conflicts.'⁶ Miall et al (1999), also indicates that by conflict resolution, it is expected that the deep rooted sources of conflict are addressed and resolved, and behaviour is no longer violent, nor are attitudes hostile any longer,

while the structure of the conflict has been changed.⁷ Mitchel and Banks (1998)⁸ refer to conflict resolution as:

- i. An outcome in which the issue in an existing conflict are satisfactorily dealt with through a solution that is mutually acceptable to the parties, self-sustaining in the long run and productive of a new, positive relationship between parties that were previously hostile adversaries; and
- ii. Any process or procedure by which such an outcome is achieved.

Rubin et al (1994) note that, people always respond to and attempt to solve conflicts by imposing their preferred solution on the other party, making concessions, climbing down from earlier positions or negotiating a mutually acceptable deal.⁹ A conflict may be said to be resolved when all parties freely accept a solution that has the following characteristics: by joint agreement, the solution satisfies the interest and needs underlying the conflict; the solution does not sacrifice any party's important values; the parties will not wish to repudiate the solution even if they are in a position to do so later; the solution meets the standard of justice and fairness; the solution is sufficiently advantageous to all the parties that it becomes self – supporting or self – enforcing.

Peace building is a relatively new field¹⁰ and there has been widespread adoption of the term since it was introduced by the United Nations Secretary-General in *An Agenda for Peace*.¹¹ Peace building is generally associated with the promotion of positive peace, though the precise definition remains unclear. It is therefore not surprising that there are

numerous and sometimes confusing definition of the concept. However there is a need to understand the concept in the particular context in which it is used.

Boutros –Ghali (1992)¹² defined the term peace building as ranging from specific tasks that might derive from a comprehensive peace agreement – such as helping to disarm the parties, canton troops, and hold or destroy weapons; monitoring elections; fielding civilian police; and repatriating refugees – through far broader and less tangible objectives such as the restoration of order, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation. Kofi Anan, defined peace building to mean ‘the various concurrent and integrated actions undertaken at the end of a conflict to consolidate and prevent a recurrence of armed confrontation’ (1997, 35).¹³

Moving away from the context of the UN, Luc Reyhler (2001)¹⁴ opines that peace-building refers to all the efforts required on the way to the creation of a sustainable peace zone; imagining a peaceful future, conducting an overall needs assessment, developing a coherent peace plan, and designing an effective implementation plan. On his part, Lederach (1999)¹⁵ characterizes peace building as the attempt to address the underlying structural, relational and cultural roots of conflict. This encompasses the full array of stages and approaches needed to transform conflict towards sustainable, peaceful relations and outcomes.

The objective of peace building is to strike a balance between ‘negative’ peace and ‘positive’ peace.¹⁶ Because conflicts usually leave their mark on the post-settlement process¹⁷ in form of broken lives, shattered and divided communities, distrust and hatred, the task of constructing a self-sustaining peace is never an easy one. The post-settlement peace building in such circumstances becomes what Grenier and Daudelin (1995) call the ‘peace building market-place’ (the cessation of violence) is traded for other commodities, such as political opportunity (election) and economic advantage (land). They argue that, ‘exchanging resources of violence against other resources is arguably the pivotal type of ‘trade’ in peace building’.¹⁸

Peace building is not designed to eliminate conflicts, if at all this was possible, but merely to develop effective mechanisms by which a state can manage the inevitable rival claims, grievances and competition over scarce resources that occur.¹⁹ Achieving sustainable peace, through peace building requires at least two steps: knowing what tools are effective in which circumstance, and devising and implementing multi-tooled, place-specific strategies to apply.²⁰

The way in which gender is integral to peace, and violent conflict makes clear that a gendered analysis of peacebuilding²¹ is essential to preventing and mitigating new violent conflict in societies while helping them recover from current conflicts. The paper adopts the Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative Strategic Framework definition of peace building. This describes peacebuilding as follows:

Peace building is the effort to strengthen the prospects for internal peace and decrease the likelihood of violent conflict. The overarching goal of peace building is to enhance the indigenous capacity of a society to manage conflict without violence. Ultimately, peace building aims at building human security, a concept which includes democratic governance, human rights, rule of law, sustainable development, equitable access to resources, and environmental security...Peace building may involve conflict prevention, conflict resolution, as well as various kinds of post-conflict activities. It focuses on the political and socio-economic context or humanitarian aspects. It seeks to ...institutionalize the peaceful resolution of conflicts. ²²

Peaceful conflict resolution must be institutionalized to be effective. This requires a fundamental shift in cultural norms and political institutions that sanction gender discriminatory actions, whether in war or peace. There must be an institutional context supporting legal, political, security, economic, and normative framework consistent with sustainable peace and human security. If peace building yields the institutional context, then 'resolution' introduces measure to address the root cause of the problem, resolve it. And give life to broader peace building goals.

Peace building and resolution are here considered to constitute simultaneous and reinforcing sets of activities with an intricate and organic relationship much as human rights principles relate to broad development goals. One cannot be done without the

other. It is therefore important that all sectors of society, which are present in one way or another in all aspects of an ongoing conflict, are represented in negotiations and actions that seek to lay the foundation for peace and post-conflict resolution.

WOMEN AND POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

During the last years, there has been an increasing recognition by government, international organizations and civil society of the importance of gender equality and empowerment of women in the continuing struggle for equality, democracy and human rights and for poverty eradication and development.

In nearly every country and region of the world, there has been progress on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, although this progress has been uneven and the gains remain fragile.²³ A great challenge facing the world today is the growing violence against women and girls in armed conflict. In today's conflict, they are not only the victims of hardship, displacement and warfare, they are directly targeted with rape, forced pregnancies and assault as deliberate instruments of war. Women are deeply affected by conflicts, which they have has no role in creating.

Armed conflict and its aftermath affect women's lives in ways that differ from the impact on men. In most conflicts, the traditional division of civilian space private as women's space and public as men's space- collapses. Men in communities under attack tend to abandon public spaces to avoid being conscripted, attacked, or taken hostage.²⁴

These therefore increase the burden placed on women in the absence of men at war. On the other hand, women as symbols of community and/or ethnic identity may become the targets of extensive sexual violence. Conflict in some places has highlighted the use of rape as a tool of warfare. In Rwanda, women were raped as a means of ethnic cleansing, serving not only to terrorise individual victims but also to inflict collective terror on an ethnic group.²⁵

The 1999 Women Watch on-line working group on women and armed conflict stressed that the priorities and roles of women in peace building differ from those of men, although there was no clear agreement on those differences²⁶. Most people find it difficult to categorize women in any on way, whether as peace activist, victims, or warrior. Some feel that, women's special strengths in peace building include a greater capacity for empathy, having often been victims of discrimination themselves. Women as frequent victims of conflict, feel the effect of conflict on their families, making them more likely to work for peace.

An intensive literature explores the interconnections between the roles of women and men in conflict situations and the politics of identity and agency. Literature on Rwanda, Mozambique, Palestine, and Sri Lanka shows that women may be victims, but they are also often active participants as soldiers, informants, couriers, sympathizers, and supporters.²⁷

Conflict brings with it terrible human rights consequences for all involved – children, women and men. Conflict impact on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of women in particular ways, often with devastating effects. In spite of the fact that conflict has a high level of impact on the lives of women, it is disheartening to note that they are not fully involved in the peace building process because the playing field is not level for both genders. Women’s interest has been neglected by the peace process, which has resulted in male-centered approaches to peace and security. The intrinsic role of women in global peace and security has remained unrecognized since the creation of the United Nations.

In the past decade, many countries have embarked upon the difficult transition from armed conflict towards resolution and peace building. The international community’s role in this transition has shifted from narrow humanitarian and relief activities to more comprehensive efforts to foster sustainable peace. At the same time, the community has shifted from a stepped approach from relief to development to one that combines a broader package of concurrent steps.²⁸ Development organizations have become increasingly engaged in activities during post-conflict, devoting time and resources to supporting this transition.

Building a lasting peace that sustains post-war economic, political, and social development requires the full participation of all citizens. Yet it is increasingly recognized that the role of women in post-conflict settings has received inadequate policy attention. According to Theo-Ban Gurirab, attempts to address the human rights

consequences of conflict, including the particular impact on women, can only be comprehensive and long-lasting if women play active part in all the relevant processes and mechanisms given the gender-differentiated impact of war on women.²⁹

Women can play an important role in determining the mandate and scope of Peace Support Operation (PSO).³⁰ In South Africa for example, women parliamentarians got involved during the post-apartheid discussions on the country's role in peace building. Their influence helped expand the definition of peace building operations beyond the traditional deployment of troops, to incorporate a more holistic, human security approach.

Having said all, it is important to know that, preventing a war is entirely different than resolving one once it has begun. In order to prevent conditions that give rise to violent conflict from coalescing, capable societies must be created. These societies are characterized by three components: 1) security, 2) well-being and 3) justice for all of its citizens, including its women.³¹ According to Lute (2002), women's roles in promoting these three causes provide examples of their activities towards preventing the emergence, spread or renewal of mass violence.³²

Women play often unacknowledged but vital roles in sustaining security. Women, despite their common image as victims, take care of their children, of their families and of their communities, especially during wartime. Women are very active on their own behalf in terms of self-preservation. As indicated by Lute (2002) "women are often the stabilizing force in the societies in which they exist. This is certainly true in post-conflict settings

where women represent essentially the backbone of reconstruction and rehabilitation and the re-integration of former combatants and the re-emergence of basic economic activity in a society, in a war-torn society, once a peace has been achieved.”³³ It is important therefore, for international community to take seriously the role of women in establishing security, well-being and justice in developing societies worldwide.

The belief that women should be at the center of peace building and resolution processes is not based on essentialist definitions of gender (Lisa & Manjrika 2005).³⁴ The field of sociology makes a distinction between sex,³⁵ and gender.³⁶ Human beings are not born ‘men’ or ‘women’. Masculinity and femininity must be learned, rehearsed and performed daily.

It would be naïve to assert that all women respond in a similar manner in a given situation or that women are ‘natural peace builders’ (Lisa & Manjrika 2005).³⁷ Gender identity is performed differently in different cultural contexts. Sex and gender identity must always be viewed in relationship with an individual’s other identities such as his or her race, class, age, nation, region, education, and religion. It is important to note that there are different expectations for men and women in various sector of the society and gender roles shift with social upheaval. In conflict situation, men and women face new roles and changing gender expectations. Their biological and sociological differences affect conflicts and peace building. In all, most societies value men and masculinity more than women and femininity (Lisa & Manjrika 2005).³⁸

Despite this existence of ‘sexism’ or ‘patriarchy’, there are some widely accepted reasons why women are important to all peace building processes. Women are important because they constitute half of every community, and the task of peace building which is so great must be done in partnership with both women and men. Secondly, women are the central caretakers of families in many cultures, and everyone is affected when women are oppressed and excluded from peace building. Therefore, it is essential that women be included in the peace building processes.

Women play important roles in the process of peace building, first as activists and advocates for peace, women ‘wage conflict nonviolently’ by pursuing democracy and human rights. Secondly, as peacekeepers and relief aid workers, women contribute to ‘reducing direct violence’. Thirdly, as mediators, trauma healing counselors, and policymakers, women work to ‘transform relationships’ and address the root of violence. Lastly, as educators and participants in the development process, women contribute to ‘building the capacity’ of their communities and nations to prevent violent conflict. This is made possible as a result of socialization processes and the historical experience of unequal relations and values that women bring to the process of peace building (Lisa & Manjrika 2005).³⁹

INSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION OF WOMEN DURING CONFLICT/WAR

The international context of peace building policies and, to a lesser extent, programs, has evolved markedly since the mid-1990. This evolution reflects the changing nature of conflict situations and complex emergencies, as well as the way in which nation

states and international organizations continue to redefine the roles of various actors engaged in or affected by the conflict.

This session provides a brief overview of major policy instruments, resolutions and commitments made by members' states of the United Nations (UN) and regional inter-governmental organizations on issues specifically relating to women and decision-making in peace and security issues. Some key international policies include:

- ❖ **UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security:** UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) is the most important commitment made by the global community with regards to women's participation in the maintenance of peace and security (Ancil Adrian & Sanam 2004).⁴⁰ This law was unanimously adopted in October 2000 by the UN's most powerful body and the resolution has officially endorsed the inclusion of civil society groups especially women in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements.

The resolution calls upon the council, the UN Secretary General, member states and all other parties to take actions in four interrelated areas: ⁴¹1) the participation of women in decision-making and peace processes; 2) integration of gender perspectives and training in peacekeeping; 3) the protection of women; and 4) gender mainstreaming in UN reporting systems and programmes.

Women peace activists worldwide are using 1325 as a tool for raising awareness about women's experiences of conflict and for holding local authorities and governments accountable. In 2003, a resolution drafted along the lines of 1325 was introduced in the US Congress. In Israel Knesset members have introduced a bill

based on 1325 as a means of raising awareness about the issue of women's participation in peace and security issues.⁴² In Sri Lanka, women peace activists run workshops on 'taking 1325 to the village' – introducing the resolution to local women and informing them of their rights under international law.⁴³

In Fiji in 2003, the local Women, Peace and Security Committee demanded that the national defense review process acknowledge the role of women in peace and security issues and successfully advocated for the inclusion of the Minister for Gender Affairs on the National Security Council.⁴⁴

❖ **The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).** CEDAW has provided women with a framework to structure their own national debates and advocacy related to attaining the goal of gender equality. Ratified by 177 (out of 188) countries, it was the first legally binding international convention to set out principles on the rights of women in all fields.⁴⁵ Countries that have ratified it have an obligation to implement CEDAW. It prohibits discrimination, seeks to eradicate it in all areas of women's lives (Mazurana et al 1999)⁴⁶ and prescribe the measures needed to ensure that women world wide are able to enjoy their rights.⁴⁷

CEDAW covers both public and private acts of violence and sets out recommendations for states to address violence against women, including legal protection, prevention and reporting.⁴⁸ CEDAW's calls for increasing women's participation in decision-making processes has been used by national and local governments, as well as regional inter-governmental organizations.

❖ **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action:** At the 1995 world conference on Women in Beijing, China, a Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) was produced by member states that highlighted twelve critical areas of concern regarding women. The BPFA is not a binding document, but since its conclusions were reached through consensus and states are signatories to it and they do have commitment to fulfill their obligations. BPFA states that “the full participation of women in decision-making, conflict prevention and resolution and all other peace initiative is essential to the realization of lasting peace.”⁴⁹ Recommendation E.1 calls for the increase of women participation in conflict resolution at decision making level and protect women living in situations of armed conflicts or under foreign occupation by states.⁵⁰

❖ **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):** The OECD has thirty member countries including all major bilateral donors and works with governments and civil society in seventy countries worldwide. The organization produces internationally agreed instruments, decisions and recommendations to promote rules of the game in areas where multilateral agreement is necessary for individual countries to make progress in a global economy.⁵¹ The main body within the OECD is the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has 23 members, that addresses development issues.⁵²

In 1997 OECD/DAC issued Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation⁵³ which explicitly recognizes that women “play special roles as bridging partners in dialogue, peace negotiations, reconstruction and rehabilitation strategies

and contribute their special experience and perceptions to peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts.”⁵⁴

❖ **The UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM):** UNIFEM plays a leading role in promoting the implementation of Resolution 1325 by advocating on women’s behalf at international forums and supporting women’s efforts to enter peace processes across the world, from Burundi to Afghanistan. ⁵⁵ UNIFEM provides concrete recommendations to support women’s effective participation at all stages of peace process. It also promotes gender sensitive peace negotiations and agreements; encourages the mainstreaming of gender perspective in the implementation of peace accords.⁵⁶

Having established the fact that there are institutional protections in form of resolutions and mechanisms put in place to protect women during conflict and that can benefit women and bring about more egalitarian societies, it is important to state here that the Security Council of the UN is committed to protecting the rights of women in conflict situations. At the 5766th meeting of the Security Council held on 23rd October 2007, in connection with the Council’s consideration of the item entitled ‘women and peace and security’, the President of the Security Council reaffirms its commitment to the full and effective implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace.⁵⁷

The Security Council recognizes the importance of ensuring the respect for the equal rights of women and in this regard, reaffirms the importance of the equal role of women

in the prevention and resolution of conflict and in peace building, and stresses the need for their full and equal participation in peace processes at all level.⁵⁸

The Council urges member states, regional and sub-regional organizations and the United Nations System to enhance the role of women in decision-making with regards to all peace processes and post-conflict resolution and rebuilding of societies as vital in all efforts towards the maintenance and promotion of sustainable peace and security.⁵⁹

WOMEN IN POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The international community acknowledges that peace is a precondition for sustainable development and post conflict resolution. Peacebuilding is seen as multidimensional goals which necessitate a multi-faceted response from many actors including the old; the young, men and women (Ancil Adrian & Sanam 2004).⁶⁰ Women constitute at least half of the population and have a basic right to have their views and concerns heard regarding the resolution of conflict and peace building. Excluding them from peace talks therefore, is a rather serious omission because it is denying the rights if these majority of people from being heard. Below, the paper we do a comparative study of the role of women in some peace processes in the Horn of Africa.

Women Participation and the Sudan peace Process

The peace process for the conflict in Sudan started as early as the 1980's and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the Government of Sudan have always been seen as the only parties to the conflict. The first phase of the peace process was from

1985 to 1988 which resulted into the endorsement of the Kokadam Declaration and was an initiative of SPLM and the Democratic Unionist Party. The second phase started in 1989 after the fall of Nimeiri, after the National Islamic Front (NIF) took over power. Initially, the talks between SPLM and NIF proceeded without mediation but in 1992 during the Organisation of Africa Unity (OAU) meeting, Abuja, Nigeria was asked to mediate (Elizabeth M 1995).⁶¹

The third phase saw the introduction of Inter Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGAD) as mediator and in 1997; the Declaration of Principles (DOP) was accepted and signed by GOS and SPLM as the main agenda talks. The final phase started in 2001. The Machakos protocol was signed in June 2002 and resolved with the right for self-determination for the South; geographic treatment on the issue of state and religion and the establishment of three levels of government (Elizabeth M 1995).⁶²

Despite all this, women are still placed as insignificant party to the conflict. But in 1997, the Royal Netherlands Embassies in Nairobi and Khartoum launched ‘the Initiative to facilitate the participation of Sudanese women in peace processes’.⁶³ It was observed that men generally dominated both politics and conflicts in Sudan whilst women’s contribution extended only to inter-clan disputes.

The initiative took the assumption that women’s participation was limited due to such constraints as lack of recognition of their roles: low level of formal education; poor access to information and lack of space for debate. The initiative in seeking to address the

imbalance exposed women to various relevant skill building workshops and also regional and international conferences. This helped not only to build their skills but also instill confidence in them to articulate issues that affects them. The initiative sought to establish working groups representing different communities and parties from the North and South. The committee set up made it possible for women to voice their concern and also established link between different conflicting communities.⁶⁴

By January 2000 the women came up with a 10-item Sudanese woman's minimum agenda for peace, while in April of the same year they produced the Maastricht Declaration of the Sudanese Women's Peace Initiative. They continued to lobby for their inclusion at the negotiation table and after persistent and consistent lobbying; four women allied to SPLM were invited o the second round of the Machakos talks as observers.

This not only gave women the opportunity to make contributions during the break but it also exposed them to issues first hand. Though women appreciated the recognition given them so far, still felt they were not adequately represented at the talks for three reasons. The first was in the numerical strength which was small, secondly they were only observers and lastly and more importantly, the women who were selected to represent them were selected by the party which consisted of men. Women therefore continued to press to be allowed as SUWEP to select their own representative to avoid given allegiance to the sponsoring party when the party does the selection, and not to the cause of women.

Women in Southern Sudan appreciate and are grateful to the UN Security Council for adopting Resolution 1325 which takes cognizant of the impact of armed conflict on women girls and calls for affirmative action to address their protection as well as the increased participation of the women at all levels. While Sudanese women have continued till date to support the peace process, they have also kept on mobilizing support through statements and position papers.⁶⁵

Women Participation and the Burundi Peace Process

Burundi has been in a crisis which will have shaken the country since its independence in 1962, more particularly since 1993 with the assassination of the first democratically elected President and his closer collaborators, as well as widespread mass killings in ethnic matter.⁶⁶ Consequently, Burundi thrown in an institutional crisis, characterised by armed groups, war and insecurity. With this situation of war, political and social instability, several alternative solutions were attempted, passing from a convention of government in 1994, government of partnership in 1998, then with the transitional government in 2000, but without carrying significant results which could restore peace and security.

In Burundi, women's participation in the peace process was enhanced when the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation, under whose auspices the peace talks took place, invited UNIFEM to brief the negotiating parties and facilitation team on gender issues relating to the peace accord. With experts from Guatemala, Uganda and Zambia, UNIFEM provided advice on

post-war and reconstruction issues such as land rights, repatriation, women's access to serve in public office, the resettlement and reintegration of refugees, judicial and electoral systems, and constitution and land reform.⁶⁷ The successful integration of gender equality into the Arusha⁶⁸ process by Burundi women was pivotal in demonstrating to the world that women's participation can make a tangible and substantive difference to peace processes. This played an important role in bringing the Security Council, in October 2000, during Namibia's Presidency, to convene its first open debate on Women and Peace and Security.

In 2002, UNIFEM continued to provide support the Government of Burundi in the development of a national gender policy. In collaboration with AFRICARE Burundi supported a four month reconciliation program for women IDPS, returnees and stayees in Gitega and Kausi focusing on concepts of conflict resolution and peace building with an emphasis on communication, networking and both gender sensitive and culturally appropriate values that promote reconciliation and peace.⁶⁹

Women Participation and the Somali Peace Process

Somali is a case in point of collapsed state following decades of civil war that started in the early 1980s and ended in 1991 with the fall of Siad Barre's rule (Elizabeth M. 1995). Fourteen peace initiatives have attempted to bring lasting peace and stability in the war-torn country and currently, the IGAD led 15th peace process is underway in Nairobi.

The fourteen peace initiative, however, presents a unique case in regard to the participation of women. It all started during a symposium which was held to collect the

views of Somali people in diaspora in preparation of the 14th peace initiative. It was suggested at the symposium that negotiation would be on a clan basis and any participation of women would be to rally behind their respective clans. Four major clans were identified as parties to the negotiations and a fifth being a coalition of all the other minor clans.⁷⁰

The sixth clan played a very unique role in the Arta Peace Talks. The women, though from different clan worked together as if from one clan, to effectively act as a unifying force in bringing other delegates from the different clans together. They were seen as a rather neutral force in the talks.⁷¹ The sixth clan formed a much-needed critical mass in advocating for the participation of women in national issues. Their presence at the negotiations led to the Federal Charter requiring that a minimum of 12 per cent of National Assembly seats go to women.

As current negotiations in Somalia's peace process continue, women are playing a crucial role, working among different clans and militias to advocate for peace and non-violence so that Mogadishu remains a safe place for the talks to continue. Women's networks, with their extensive local, and increasingly, regional reach, are key allies in building and sustaining vital public support for ongoing peace processes. Advocacy efforts by women's civil society groups can be instrumental to initiating formal peace negotiations, maintaining public support for their continuation until a peace accord is signed, and then assisting in its implementation.

Over the last 5 years, UNIFEM⁷² has been supporting and documenting the critical role that women play in promoting peace-building and conflict prevention worldwide.

UNIFEM has provided assistance to women as they conduct advocacy, awareness-raising and peace education, support efforts to dispose of small arms, secure justice and psychosocial assistance for survivors of gender-based violence, and develop gender-based early warning indicators at the grassroots level - all with the explicit goal of preventing the emergence or recurrence of violent conflict. The Fund has also supported national and regional women's networks to build a 'culture of peace' in areas where there are no active or formal peace processes such as the Southern Caucasus. In that region, women's organisations in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan have mobilised to create a Regional Coalition – 'Women for Peace' - in order to back women's efforts to build a 'culture of peace' in their communities in the absence of a formal peace process.

In all the case studies highlighted above, women played prominent roles in peace processes in the Horn of Africa. In Sudan peace process, although the views of women were not sought, they were granted observer status and they continued to play peripheral role. For the Burundi peace process, although women were able to lobby for inclusion in the peace process but this was done along party lines and were also granted observer status only. The Somali peace process represents a situation where women were able to lobby for inclusion in the peace process.

THE LIMITING DIMENSIONS

Women and many men all over the world have been energized by resolution 1325 and political support for its implementation by UN members, international organizations and, most importantly, civil society is growing every day. The potential of Resolution 1325, its implications and its impact in real terms, are enormous.

An analysis of gender-disaggregated data on armed conflict reveals that efforts to foreground the perspectives of women in peace processes and to prevent gender-based violence have met with limited success. For instance during the genocide in Rwanda from April 1994 to April 1995, it is estimated that about 500 000 women were raped. During the Bosnian conflict from 1992 to 1995, an estimate of about 50 000 girls and women were sexually assaulted as part of the campaign of ‘ethnic cleansing’. In the Kashmir conflict in India, it is estimated that between 7 000 and 16 000 women have been sexually assaulted by militants groups and the security forces in the region.⁷³ This form of abuse do generate fear and also help to silence campaigns for social, economic and political rights.

Women’s participation is hindered by the fact that they are most likely to have fled conflict. They are particularly likely to have shouldered economic and social responsibilities as primary carers and providers for dependants. These women often take on additional work as resources become increasingly scarce. This in turn affects the health of women and girls as preference is given to other members of the family in

sharing the minimum food that is available. All of these make participation in post-conflict resolution and peace building more difficult for the women.

Women are more likely to be subjected to cultural pressures not to put themselves forward, to refrain from travel, and not to engage in important public arenas. In cases where women want to participate, they may not have the required education or training, since their education might have been disrupted by the conflict. This therefore makes political group that take formal processes to be male-dominated.

Access to social network also affects women participation in post-conflict resolution and peace building. Many social network involving women may have broken down during conflict. Some that have not broken down have been neglected by many of the women as a result of sexual violence they have passed through. Many women's lives are changed fundamentally by conflict, which also affects how they engage in post-conflict activities and institutions.⁷⁴ While some return to traditional roles, others may seek expanded roles, becoming organized and actively participating in national debates and in post-conflict resolution and peace building.

Women's organization also cite lack of resources as one of the basic limiting dimension that needs to be overcome in participation in post-conflict resolution and peace building. These resources include women's access to employment opportunities and productive assets like land, capital, health services, training and education.

Women's efforts to represent themselves and their concern in official post-conflict resolution and peace building also pose significant challenges, even since the passage of 1325 mandates women's participation.

For instance, at the Arusha peace talks to end the civil war in Burundi, only two of the 126 delegates were women, although they had leading voice within their communities in the region. Only two women served on the 15-member National Council of Timorese Resistance in East Timor, although women had played a valuable role in sparking the resistance. Only five women were in leadership position in the UN mission to Kosovo, although women had forged the way for groups to cross ethnic barriers and rebuild fractured relationships. There were no Bosnian women at the Dayton peace negotiations to end the war in the former Yugoslavia, even though this conflict had affected women in a most devastating manner. In the Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Iraq, women in the past few years have held only a small proportion of seats at peace negotiations.⁷⁴

All these factors form limiting dimensions to women's participation in post-conflict resolution and peace building. Unless effort is taken in order to overcome such obstacles, women will remain absent, their voice will not be heard, and issues of particular importance to women are likely to be ignored.

THE WAY FORWARD

Though much progress has been made in recent times by the US government, NGOs, and the UN system especially with the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). There is a

proliferation of women's organizations, local, national, and international organizations that are well organized and inclusive of wide range of women's interest and needs. They have been able to make progress in linking issues of development, the environment, and human rights with standards of participation, transparency, and accountability in decision making. However, much progress has not been made in its role in conflict resolution and peace building.

But there are a number of suggestions that can help to improve, and enhance women's effort in peace building and conflict resolution. The UN, US government, all governments and NGOs has a lot to do to encourage and assist women, women's movements and organization in developing their role in post-conflict resolution and peace building activities.

Government Actions

Government must:

- Implement UN security Council Resolution 1325 in full
- Include women in peace negotiations at all levels and especially in decision making
- Ensure that women play key role in the design and implementation of post conflict resolution and peace building activities
- Support and strengthen women's organizations in their peace building efforts by providing adequate and sustained financial and technical support

- Strengthen the protection and representation of refugee and displaced women, by paying special attention to their health, rehabilitation and training needs, and
- End impunity and ensure redress of crimes committed against women in war and violent conflict.

Nongovernmental Organisations Action

NGOs must:

- Integrate gender perspective into their project
- Build partnerships and collaborate with other NGOs
- Involve in trauma counseling during and after the conflict which could help to recognize the different ways in which men and women deal with trauma
- Provide safe space for non-war action and creating alternative economic source to the military, and
- Increase women's participation through training, awareness raising, campaigns and quota implementation.

United Nations Action

The UN should act as an example to other nations by fully integrating gender perspective into the terms of reference of the Security Council Resolution, and also engage women fully in its own peace building efforts. The UN must:

- Call upon member states to establish measures to address non compliance
- Call for the inclusion of peace building elements in the consolidation of peace agreements and in the mandates of peace building and post conflict resolution

- Urge peace builders to focus on gender-based violence and women's human rights
- Encourage states to provide gender sensitive training to the peace builders before they arrive in zones of conflict
- Encourage peace education which is the most important ingredient in all, and lastly
- Call for the establishment of reporting systems for sexual abuses; provide resources for monitoring and enforcing mechanism.

CONCLUSION

Conflict situations often force women to organise themselves in order to safeguard their basic necessities and to carry out activities related to education, health care, food distribution and care for family, internally displaced persons and refugees. Women also assume political responsibilities due to the temporary absence of men in conflict and post conflict period. All these activities engaged in by women have an emancipating function despite difficulties encountered in the process. It is therefore suggested that these should be continued in the post-conflict phase.

Given the examples of women's role in peace building in Rwanda, Burundi, Somali and many other places in the last decade highlight the importance of moving women beyond humanitarian phase. Women have and continue to influence post conflict resolution and peace building processes so that they go beyond defining peace as the absence of violent

conflict and focus on the principles of inclusion. Women need to be present to discuss issues such as genocide, impunity and security if a just and enduring peace is to be built.

The UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in October 2000, reiterates the importance of bringing gender perspectives, the issues of concern to women as well as men, to the center of attention in all UN peacemaking, peace building, peacekeeping, humanitarian activities, and rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. This account for the progress made so far in regards to women's participation in post conflict resolution and peace building. But more can still be done if some of the suggestion given can be followed.

ABBREVIATIONS

SPLM	Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
BPFA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
UN	United Nations
PSO	Peace Support Operation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
UNIFEM	The UN Development Fund for Women
NIF	National Islamic Front
OAU	Organisation of Africa Unity
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought
DOP	Declaration of Principles
SUWEP	Sudanese Women’s Empowerment for Peace
IDPS	Internally Displaced Persons

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ABOUT THIS PAPER

This paper argues for the involvement of women in post-conflict resolution and peace building. Women for long have been tagged as victims of conflict, though this is true but it has been realized that they are not only victims of conflict but they do play prominent role in post-conflict resolution and peace building. They mobilize for peace and have played key roles as activist and peace makers in conflict situation whilst at the same time holding together their families and communities. The paper concludes that for women to overcome the challenges facing them in participating in post-conflict resolution and peace building there is a need for governments, and the UN to have a consistent and high level commitment to gender equality and women's equal representation in peace building activities.